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## People First, Last, Always

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Elation, *n.*: An exhilarating psychological state of pride and optimism

Does your customer service team exhibit service elation or service apathy? If you can't quickly and decisively answer this question with "service elation," odds are that your customer service center is not achieving its full potential.

Merely meeting customer needs is fine for a company that wants to provide only adequate customer service. But in this hyper-competitive era, it is service greatness that ultimately leads to customer loyalty. True customer loyalty is created when superior customer service is delivered on a consistent basis.

**Fact:** Great customer service happens only when you place your service team first and they, in turn, place the customer first. It is the wise, old adage: Put people first, last, always. This means that customers are valued and take precedence. It means that service personnel are continually coached and trained to put people first (including themselves).

Upon hire, most companies invest extensive time — and money — training service team members in appropriate service delivery techniques. Excited trainees are gung ho and truly believe they will make a difference. Many enthusiastically state, "I can't wait to get my first customer call!"

Fast forward a few months. That initial training seems to take a back seat. New phrases emerge: "I'm not feeling well." "I need to take another break." "I'm tired of stupid questions."

## New Program Helps Your Company Bridge Generation Gaps

The ability to recognize and bridge generation gaps can create a powerful competitive advantage. LIMRA's new *Managing and Training Across Generations* will help your company create a work environment that supports and includes the different styles of today's workforce. Participants will add tremendous value to your business by learning how to

- Create cross-generational synergies
- Reduce workplace conflict
- Better manage, train, coach, and retain employees from different generations

For more information, please contact  
Wendy Weston at 860-285-7727 or  
[wweston@limra.com](mailto:wweston@limra.com).

## Identify and Develop People Who Can Successfully Work Remotely

The new [Virtual Worker](#) assessment test identifies current employees and job applicants who can succeed as remote customer service, sales, claims, underwriting, IT, and operations personnel. Equally important, you receive the coaching advice and self-development information you need to enhance their on-the-job performance outside the office.

For more information, please visit us  
[online](#), or contact Rhonda Giacomarra  
(860-298-3951 / [rgiacomarra@limra.com](mailto:rgiacomarra@limra.com)) or

What happened to these gung-ho service professionals? *Their service focus wore off.* They forgot why their job was and is important. They lost that distinct feeling of job ownership and pride. They feel unappreciated and unimportant; the job has become meaningless and repetitive.

To achieve true customer loyalty, service professionals must feel they are important and believe in putting customers first. Their soft skills and positive service techniques must be reinforced, re-reinforced, and re-reinforced again to enhance:

1. **Attitude.** A positive attitude impacts overall performance. Optimism will be mirrored by other team members and directed toward customers.
2. **Professionalism.** A service rep who conveys self-confidence, poise, and assurance makes customers feel like they are in good hands. Customer faith in your company grows: They are pleased they chose to do business with your company.
3. **Growth and development.** Knowledge is power. It gives team members conviction in their job duties and performance. Customers can sense that self-assurance and conviction.
4. **Dedication.** Committed team members develop feelings of allegiance toward peers and customers. This translates into acts of kindness toward others.
5. **Connection to an idea.** When reps take ownership of their work, they take responsibility for their actions and perform with pride. Customers sense their gratification and delight.
6. **Continuity.** Team members perform better in a synchronized environment. This translates as an "ease of doing business" impression to customers and the public. Keep service professionals on track so they can focus on the customer.

#### **How to Fit Ongoing, Positive Service Reinforcement Into Busy Schedules**

High call volumes, impromptu meetings, and personnel issues can interfere with regularly scheduled formal training sessions. But there are other ways to reinforce service, so think outside the box. Here are a few ideas to help get you started:

##### ***Emailed Training***

Prepare a written training course and break it into short, easy-to-read chapters. Send one chapter at a time with a short quiz as a follow-up to confirm review. Print and hand out certificates of completion at the end of the session.

*Tip: Avoid using this format for procedural or policy training. Plan your sessions around customer service and positive personal growth. How about an "I am important" campaign? You want team members to look forward to these emailed sessions.*

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**Department Bulletin**

Design a colorful bulletin or newsletter. Keep it one or two pages in length and send it out monthly, bimonthly, or quarterly. Use graphics, photos, and positive quotes for impact. Let team members vote on the bulletin name.

*Tip: Keep it positive and focus on service tips to reinforce a positive workplace.*

**Encouraging Words**

Share motivating words and phrases. Hang a white board for penning inspirational or customer service quotes in your workplace. Get team members involved through a daily calendar rotation. Have each team member write their positive quote or phrase on the board when it is their scheduled day.

*Tip: Buy colorful markers to set the positive mood. Use praise often.*

Regularly reinforcing positive service skills and behavior regularly will kick apathy out of your workplace. Your reps will enjoy service elation when they put **People First, Last, Always.**