

2013 Future Connect Conference
Customers: Now and Forever (Operations Track Workshop)
Summary of Best Ideas from Table Teams

- Create a culture of service by personalized recognition and role modeling desired behaviors in the way store management treats internal customers (associates). It starts with management.
- Recognize great service at every huddle by handing team members a recognition card at the huddle – describing what the associate did. The recognition card has a tear-off tab that the associate can place in a drawing for a \$10 gift card. The giver of the card is also in the drawing for a \$5 gift card.
- There are a million ideas that exist. The best advice is to pick one and do it. Follow through and get your people to believe in it.
- Get ownership and buy-in from employees.
 - Incentivize excellent customer service/experience.
 - Develop and maintain the culture of customer service.
 - Inspect what you expect.
 - Recognize excellence publically to reinforce concepts.
- Provide immediate feedback and a base of treating your associates the way you want them to treat your customer.
- Phone calls by associates (not store manager) to customers randomly to see how their recent visit went – connects associate to customers.
- Employee of the Month.
- Reward vouchers for positive customer compliments.
- Posting positive customer remarks for associates and customers to see.
- The customer experience is contagious. You as a manager have to lead by example. You have to recognize the best way to sell the idea to each employee, as no two are the same. You have to get to know each one on a personal level, which will only make you better.
- When a customer comes in to pick up a birthday cake, especially for a child, if the birthday boy/girl is present, our bakery team announces the birthday on the intercom. It starts a chain of announcements, and the customer leaves feeling extraordinary.
- Executive “thank you” days; has no other purpose and doesn’t have to be limited to holidays.
- Create personal connections – instill in our associates that our customers are part of our family. Someone’s grandparent, brother/sister, etc., done through internal observations. Provide free lunch cards, public recognition and posting board.
- Praise Board – put up a white board in store backroom for employees to recognize other employees. Like Facebook, the board is a spot for peer-to-peer recognition. Also, when rewarding an employee with a reward card, give them two – one for them and one for them to reward a peer for excellent customer service.
- Tapping into social media – sharing a positive customer experience created by a team manager in a tweet. Sharing with our customers and team members. A first name, area and short tweet. Example: Sarah at store #210 “Mrs. Marley loved the cajun salmon recipe.”

- Empower your team members to take care of the situation on the spot. Give them (employees) the tools to take care of the customers right away.
- Utilizing social media feedback. It's immediate! Store director can call customer (if possible). Can address with appropriate department/employee – positive or negative. We can look at it for larger system issues (food safety, out-of-stocks, etc.). And we can address globally – post to our internal sites, external sites at our huddle, post on our boards in the store, etc.
- Have your department manager spend 15 minutes a day in the front end engaging customers and seeing how their products leave the store. Huddle with associates in a different department every day engaging customers. Invite customers and employees for a group photo for “fun” and post and share it.
- Regardless of area, empower your employees to take care of a customer and remedy a situation to ensure complete customer satisfaction.
- Inspire and empower employees through recognition. Observe and recognize employees with written follow-up.
- “Wall of Fame” – on that wall, we will put all positive customer experiences from customer letters. Those mentioned by name, we will attach their picture.
- The leader needs to first genuinely engage the employees to model the behaviors we want to project to our customers. Service behaviors and recognition programs are key to impact and measure the results.
- A little tasteful humor with your customers goes a long way. Make them smile, offer a high-five. Greet and thank each customer and associate by name.
- Challenge your employees, especially the younger generation, to think of customer service as a sports game – “can you top this?” Share a story. Example: a pharmacist drove an hour and a half earlier to a store to deliver a fertility drug that had to be taken by 7:00 am. Then months later, the woman came in to thank the pharmacist with her new baby in hand. She had never been able to get pregnant before! Think of how you can touch each person's life... for the better.
- Have a program in which full-time employees write on cards the great deeds of the part-time staff. The full-time employee tells the part-time employee they've been recognized and why. We then announce on the intercom to the store the good deed while the part-time employee is in the store.
- Acknowledge employee immediately and buy them lunch.
- Empower your associate to make it right with the customer and have them help empower other associates to do the same.
- Use social media to recognize great performance and great customer service. It's an immediate response to offer praise. Also, customers may connect positively to team members, which will also help us understand those that do a super job going above and beyond.
- Being an engaged leader and caring about your people. Being on the floor next to employees earns their respect.
- “Butler Experience” – a store actually has two employees that are butlers. Their job is to help customers find items and be that “helpful smile in every aisle.” These employees are dressed just like a butler – giving customers an experience they will never forget.
- We might teach customer service, but how will we train for feeling and caring for our customer?

- Utilize survey cards on the customer's experience on any specialized orders. Implement a five-point strategy from the initial phone call, or customer contact with your employees. Include in the survey if the employee was knowledgeable and thanked the customer at every greeting. Have the customer fill out the survey and return it. Either use a stamp or area for return or call us back. After we have the feedback from the surveys we can discuss the success and find ways to give back to create a better customer experience from our employees.
- Rainy Day Policy – when there is inclement weather, an associate will assist our guest with an umbrella in hand to their vehicle to assist in loading their purchases.
- Customer experience starts with a clean and clutter-free store. Empower team members to stay on top of all cleanliness details. It starts in the parking lot when they walk in and continues throughout the store. It's an expectation that's set during the orientation process and carried out through the day.
- Take the time to invest in each and every employee to train them in customer service and challenge them to give a customer positive customer experiences.
- Store director can use the intercom to announce they are "available" and meet guests to hear concerns, wants and needs. Sets example for ALL associates and department managers.
- Recognition program that inspires and shows associate appreciation.
- Take the social media idea to the physical hands approach at your store. Thank-you Board – associates can post any positive recognition for fellow associates for all to view.
- Recognition of employees that translates into better customer service. White Board – employee communication on a board in the break room.
- 10 Penny Recognition: Place 10 pennies in your left pocket at the beginning of a shift, by end of shift all 10 pennies should be shifted to right pocket. Pennies get moved each time you provide recognition, compliments and praise. This can be used with manager and employees.
- To develop a process in place to focus on the quote "you won't have a customer- first attitude until you have an associate-first attitude." Then execute!
- We empower our employees to satisfy customers by allowing the employee to give a customer up to \$10 worth of product if they were not satisfied with a product, no questions asked, no manager approval required.
- Daily Team Huddles – morning and afternoon. Will inform and keep team in the loop. It will make them feel part of the team and help increase service.
- When associates do well on a mystery shop they will be rewarded a \$2 break-on-us card. Also, when the whole store gets 100%, those listed will spin a roulette wheel and win whatever it lands on, e.g., a water bottle, camera, TV, movie tickets, a \$25 gift card, 4 break-on-us cards.
- Empower employees to satisfy a customer's situation immediately. Reward employee for awesome customer service and being quick on their feet to satisfy the customer.
- Mission Statement by Department. Allow the associates of the department to write it together because they are going to have to live it.