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# The Mathis Group's Messenger

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## Exceptional Internal Customer Service

When you think of customers, the first thing that pops into your head is usually the person buying your product or service. Those people are called external customers. Have you ever stopped to think about internal customers? Every organization has internal customers--your employees.

Internal customers include every employee in the company.

Frontline employees--The individuals who have contact with customers and are directly providing service to customers. They also deliver service, provide information, and solve problems

Department/support employees--The individuals who support the efforts of frontline employees  
Management

According to Anne Swartzlander, author of *Serving Internal and External Customers*, "Exceptional customer service cannot be delivered to external customers unless all employees provide support to each other." In other words, good customer service begins with your employees!

In order to provide exceptional customer service and to create and maintain loyal relationships with customers, a customer-first philosophy must exist among *all* people in an organization. Every employee ultimately serves your external customers. Happy employees result in happy customers.

There are several factors that contribute to employee happiness. Ways in which an organization can make their employees feel appreciated are: respect; thorough, honest, responsive communication; fair, attractive

compensation; supportive work environment; participatory decision making; and, opportunities for advancement.

The relationship between internal customers and external customers is what forms the customer chain. As with any change, the stronger each link is, the stronger the entire chain will be. Examples of "chain links" are:

- Packing or unpacking merchandise
- Maintaining the building
- Managing the employees
- Providing a copy of a report
- Giving advice or encouragement



In order to establish an effective chain, departments should not be isolated from each other. Each employee needs to understand what everyone does and how it fits into satisfying the customer.

Creating a positive work environment is not the sole responsibility of management. Each and every employee must do his or her part in ensuring that internal customer service is exceptional. A conscious effort must be made by all to guarantee your company is an enjoyable place to work. Even small things like dropping trash on the floor, not saying "please" and "thank you", not making coffee when the pot is almost empty, or walking away

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*There is a very thin line between successful people and unsuccessful ones; crossing over to the successful side requires only a subtle evolution in mindset.*

Gary Gabel  
Cofounder of Infinite Learning

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from the copier when it is out of paper are all examples of workplace incivility. Interpersonal incivility is also a threat to internal customer service. Making sarcastic or condescending comments, talking behind a co-worker's back, using one's power over someone inappropriately, or having an inconsiderate attitude toward others will negatively impact the entire workplace.

So, what can be done to improve internal customer service?

### ***Begin discussing the concerns with internal customers.***

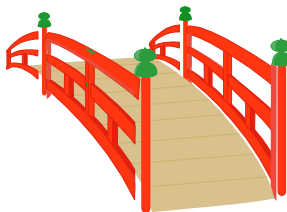
Ask your employees what needs to be changed. Your employees are the ones affected the most by incivility or problem areas. Let them tell you what areas need to be improved. Not only listen to them, but use their suggestions to make your company better.

### ***Take a survey of what the internal customer thinks is important.***

A survey is a great way to find out your employee's point of view without fear on his or her part. Some employees are hesitant to be honest when asked for suggestions; however, a survey can allow them to do so with anonymity.

### ***Examine where the gaps are and what can be done to bridge those gaps.***

Once you find out what needs to be changed, change them. Do not drag your feet in making appropriate adjustments to your organization. The sooner you can make your internal customers happy, the sooner you will be able to keep your external customers happy.



Once you have determined how to improve internal customer service, you should begin to see an improvement in employee morale. You will find that when your employees have a positive attitude toward their

job they will:

- Do what they say they will do
- Empathize with people even if they don't agree with them
- Genuinely try not to make mistakes
- Not make excuses when they do make a mistake
- Be on the job every day on time
- Not miss deadlines
- Not complain
- Solve problems
- Be great team members
- Set a great example
- Take pride in what they do

By focusing on internal customer service, external customer service will improve as well. Once all customers are being served properly, you will see greater organizational success.



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