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Do You Really Know who your Customers Are?

Most of the time we limit our definition of a customer to someone who is outside of our company (someone who pays for our services). Your customers can also be your co-workers. Yes, that's right! Your fellow workers can't do their jobs effectively, or satisfy your external customers, if You don't provide the tools or training and resources to do that job.

HERE TO SERVE ALL

People who buy products and services from your company are customers in the traditional sense of the word. Without them, there would be no sales, no business and no paycheck for any of us. But that's only half the picture.

The other half is the people who work inside your company and rely on you for services, products and information to do their jobs effectively. They need the same amount of care as your outside customers.

Look at the internal-customer chain this way: Sometimes you are the customer and other times you are the service provider. Let's say a co-worker comes to you and requests an invoice. In that case, you are the service provider: You are giving her what she needs. But later you might ask that same co-worker for help on a project. Now **you** are the customer.

As people better understand and appreciate the internal-customer chain, personnel problems decrease. A break in the chain can adversely affect work flow and relationships
....see how in the following example.

MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

Jeff, a copier repairman, was on site to fix a machine the company had rented from his business, but Jeff had a problem. He did not have the reference books to confirm the exact parts he needed. So he called his office to obtain the information. After waiting for almost 15 minutes, Jeff finally reached his support staff.

He asked a co-worker to order the parts and label the package "Express Delivery". Jeff assured the customer he would return to finish the job as soon as the parts arrived.

When Jeff didn't return after a couple days, the customer called and demanded to know why he hadn't heard from him. Since the package should have arrived by then, Jeff began looking for it in the office. He found the parts sitting on a shelf in a plain delivery box —without any special instructions. No one had informed Jeff that the package had arrived, because the box was not properly labeled. Even though Jeff worked hard to repair the equipment, he failed to do so in a timely manner, because his co-workers forgot who their customers were.

Remember, you are a key member of a TEAM of problem solvers. What you do and say can mean the difference between success and failure for you and your company!

Adapted from "First Rate Customer Service"