

A CHARM SCHOOL FOR INSTALLERS AND TECHS?

WHO NEEDS IT!

A Presentation To The National Cable Television Association

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A. Three reasons why your people don't need customer relations training.

The first step in the development and implementation of any training program is the establishment of a need for it.

The following are some of the objections that have been raised by those who are unfamiliar with the objectives and content of a customer relations program for installers and service technicians.

1. It's not our job!

"Our job is making sure an installation is done correctly and that our customers continue to have good reception."

"Let the salesmen and the people in the office worry about PR."

In a service-oriented business what the customer thinks about the people is just as important as the quality of the service.

It's critical that every contact with the customer is a positive one.

Installers and technicians are in the front line when it comes to influencing a customer's attitude about the system. In many communities they are the customer's only personal contact with the system.

2. There's no time!

"Customer relations is important, but we don't have enough time to adequately train our people to perform the technical part of their job."

Customer relations training doesn't require many hours of training if the program is well organized and structured properly.

3. We do it already!

"We believe that good customer relations is important, but there's no reason to set up a formal training program."

"We always tell the men to be pleasant to customers and not to let the few bad apples out there get to them."

Telling installers and service techs to be nice doesn't give them any information on how to be nice. Telling them not to let angry, difficult or dissatisfied customers bother them doesn't tell them what to do to diffuse these customers so that the reason for the problem can be found and resolved.

B. What are the objectives of a customer relations program?

The overall objective of the program is to create a better climate between your system and your customers.

This happens when training focuses on the following three areas:

1. "Sensitize" installers and technicians to the human relations part of service to customers.
2. Equip them with a clear explanation of company policies so they know what they can and can't do in dealing with customers.
3. Give them specific responses to customers' questions and complaints.

This will make the non-technical requirements of their job clearer to them so they in turn can be clear and helpful to customers.

With the proper program, installers and service techs will be able to spot problems and pass the information on to the right place for action.

Corrective activity in the early stages of customer dissatisfaction will minimize customer resentment which could result in either:

- . a refusal to order additional service
- . eventual disconnection

C. What are some of the topics in a customer relations program?

Each system is different, but in general, these are the topics which most installers and techs talked about during their interviews:

- . Professional attitude and image
- . Doing the job right
- . Listening to the customer
- . Attitudes about customers
- . Attitudes about the company
- . Initial customer contacts
- . Company policies
- . Possible customer conflicts and how to avoid them
- . Collecting money
- . Retrieving company equipment
- . Teaching customers to self-adjust controls
- . Responding positively to customers' questions about your cable TV services

D. How should a customer relations program be developed and implemented?

These are the main steps in setting up the program:

1. Interview the installers and technicians to identify the types of customer and company-related situations they encounter.
2. Review all customer-related policies and procedures relating to installation appointments and service calls.
3. Prepare a training manual.

We recommend organizing the information into 5 sessions with questions and answers at the end of each session.

4. Prepare a discussion leaders guide.
5. Select and train a discussion leader to conduct the workshop sessions.
6. Organize the workshop sessions.

The workshops last from 1½ to 2 hours. Reading the materials and answering the questions should last no longer than 45 minutes.

The remaining time is spent discussing the questions asked by the discussion leader and in role-playing.

Limit each workshop to 10 participants and schedule them at the beginning of the day so that appointments can be scheduled immediately following each session.

7. Provide support materials such as policy cards, questionnaires, etc. and a certificate of award for every participant who completes the program.
8. Provide incentives to reward their continued use of the techniques they've learned.

Customer relations training is not a charm school. It is a means of providing your installers and technicians with the tools they need in their daily contact with customers.

Providing these tools will yield many positive results:

Your people will be happier in their jobs because they will view the program as a sign that management cares about them; you'll have fewer customer related problems and complaints; and your productivity and efficiency levels will increase. It will be a better place to work for your staff, and greater profits for your system.

ABOUT SHELDON SATIN

Sheldon Satin is president of Sheldon Satin Associates, Inc., a New York-based management consulting firm specializing in the area of industrial communications.

In 1970 he founded Trockmorton/Satin Associates, Inc., a direct response advertising agency with clients in the fields of banking and publishing and various consumer products.

He was executive vice president of the Electrographic Corporation following their acquisition of VPI, one of the largest companies engaged in the operation of film and videotape production facilities, editorial and optical houses, film laboratories and print distribution companies. Mr. Satin was president of VPI.

He is a graduate of Oberlin College and Indiana University.

ABOUT SHELDON SATIN ASSOCIATES, INC.

Sheldon Satin Associates, Inc. is a management consulting firm engaged in a wide variety of activities for various industries.

The firm has produced all of the national affiliate training programs for Home Box Office and the first Satellite Seminar for Teleprompter.

Satin Associates has adapted the American Airlines' TACT program for the cable TV industry. TACT workshops train customer contact personnel to understand and to deal effectively with dissatisfied customers.

Leading independent and multiple systems operators in the cable industry are clients of Satin Associates. Among them are American Television and Communications, Communications Properties, Inc., Cox Communications, Canadian Cable-systems, Cablevision Systems on Long Island, Gill Cable, Rogers Cable in Toronto, Tele-Communications, Inc., Teleprompter, Times-Mirror, United Cable, Viacom Communications and Warner Qube.

Other clients include the Mobil Corporation, The Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Modern Talking Pictures, The Television Corporation of Japan and Wells National Services, a division of American Hospital Supply.