

CUSTOMER SERVICE GUIDE

Exceptional Customer Service

*We will meet the needs of our customers with
responsive, respectful and accurate service*



Listen • Assess • Identify • Communicate



Department of Workforce Services

"DWS will be the best-managed state agency in Utah."
—Jon S. Pierpont, Executive Director



CUSTOMER SERVICE GUIDE

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“Customers don’t expect you to be perfect. They do expect you to fix things when they go wrong.”

—Donald Porter, V.P. British Airways

PREFACE

As a public agency administering government programs, we are responsible for meeting customer needs and enhancing customer satisfaction related to those programs.

We pledge to provide **exceptional customer service**—defined as responsive, respectful and accurate service.

Our commitment to **exceptional customer service** is driven by our role in the community and the respect we have for our customers. As an agency with integrity, we value the public perception of the quality of our services. Providing **exceptional customer service** also creates a positive environment.

While successful customer service can be accomplished using our best judgment and individual techniques, we have identified a specific, strategic vision for our **Exceptional Customer Service Cornerstone** which includes:

- I. METHODS**—Core customer service principles, fundamentals and workflow
- II. TRAINING**—Setting expectations
- III. CULTURE**—Challenges and recognition
- IV. EVALUATION**—Customer service delivery improvements

It is your responsibility to understand the customer service principles in this guide and make every effort to enhance customer satisfaction while performing your assignments. This guide serves as a universal reference for professional, consistent and unified customer service delivery across all divisions.

“Thank you for providing quality service that our customers can truly appreciate!”

—Jon S. Pierpont



I. METHODS

By under-promising and over-delivering, we exceed our customers' expectations. With this attention to creating a positive experience, we meet customer needs, improve public perception and increase job satisfaction. In order to provide **exceptional customer service**, we need to understand what defines it and how to deliver it.

What does **exceptional customer service** look like and how do you know if you are providing it?

EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER SERVICE



Responsive—We promptly identify customer needs and react appropriately

- *Engage the customers by making eye contact, ask how you can help and then listen to their situation and ask appropriate follow-up questions*
- *Take notice and offer assistance when lines begin to form or when customers appear confused*



Respectful—We treat customers considerately

- *Smile and offer a friendly greeting with a positive tone*
- *Be polite and courteous when providing information*



Accurate—We provide correct information to match customer needs

- *Be confident in knowing how to handle customer inquiries or how to connect them to the appropriate resource*
- *Ask follow-up questions to verify that they were able to complete their business*

Characteristics that exemplify **exceptional customer service** include:

- Friendliness
- Active listening
- Empathizing
- Critical thinking
- Professionalism
- Attention to detail
- Patience
- Promptness

CUSTOMER SERVICE BASICS

When a DWS customer describes a positive experience, they report that the staff member was engaging, listened to their situation, clearly explained what was needed, and assisted them courteously and timely. Whether by phone, online, or in person, each unique customer interaction requires this approach to achieve customer satisfaction:

- 1. LISTEN**
- 2. ASSESS**
- 3. IDENTIFY**
- 4. COMMUNICATE**

Each customer interaction can be summarized in terms of what service the customer received (the **transaction**) and how they received the service (the **experience**.)

We exceed customer expectations by creating positive experiences through the application of the core principles and the fundamentals in this guide.

EXAMPLE: A customer received a letter stating that they need to turn a verification form into ESD. The customer was unsure what to do so he went to the Employment Center to figure out how to send in what is needed. Following is an example of a mere transaction vs. a positive customer service experience:

“Here is a simple but powerful rule: always give people more than what they expect to get.”

—Nelson Boswell

Transaction: *The customer walks in, looks around and finds someone to ask for help. He is logged into a computer by a DWS worker, asks for help with single-sign on to myCase, and asks for help again to find the form. He gets the form from the printer, and asks someone else what to do with it. He fills out the form and asks another staff member how to send it in.*
He asks for help six times.

VS.

Experience: *The customer walks in and is greeted courteously by a DWS worker who identifies what the customer needs, and walks the customer through the entire verification process—from logging in to using the fax machine. The worker also finds out that the customer is a veteran and thanks him for his service and provides the overview of Priority of Service. The staff member asks if he is looking for work and he says he has a temporary job so a brief overview of the resources and how to navigate the web is given, including how to update his resumé. Staff near the copy/fax area readily offer assistance if needed and provide a friendly closing.*
A DWS worker assists him through the entire process before he asks.

In both cases, the customer’s needs were met. Yet how would the customer rate his satisfaction in each scenario? When we are **responsive, respectful and accurate**, the customer is more likely to be satisfied. Conversely, if the customer feels ignored, confused and frustrated, the customer is less likely to be satisfied and more likely to complain.

SERVING THOSE WHO PROUDLY SERVED

“Have you or your spouse ever served in the U.S. Military?”

“Thank you for your service.”

U.S. Military service members and their families make a tremendous sacrifice for our country. We have a responsibility to identify covered persons and provide priority of service. DWS employees are expected to ask the military service question at some point in **each** customer conversation. As veterans and spouses are identified, they should be thanked for their service. Explain that DWS has a variety of employment and training services and provides priority of service to covered persons. Identify the customer’s needs, ask appropriate follow-up questions and connect them to appropriate services.

Not a veteran? Maybe they know someone who is, who could benefit from DWS services. Educate the customer on the DWS menu of employment and training services and priority of service policy for veterans.

Some customers enter an employment center and begin working on a computer without an assessment. When there is time available, checking in on customers to see how they are doing is a wonderful way to go above and beyond. Don't forget to ask the military service question.

CORE PRINCIPLES

Always keep the following principles in mind to help you deliver **exceptional customer service**:

- Smile and offer a friendly greeting
- Engage the customer through eye contact
 - Listen carefully
- Treat others the way you like to be treated
 - Ask appropriate questions
 - Provide thorough information
 - Go the extra mile



Remember to ask about military service:

"Have you or your spouse ever served in the U.S. Military?"

MAPPING THE DWS CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Customers call, chat or ask for help in employment centers when:

- something has gone wrong—closures, denials or other notices received
- they are confused

Our customers may be embarrassed or frustrated about their situation. In addition they may experience long lines or wait times. How staff handle negative emotion from customers will ultimately determine how many staff hours are spent solving the problem. Customer conflict creates stress and tension in the workplace affecting everyone present. **We want to do everything we can to create a positive environment.**

Sometimes when you are doing everything you can to provide responsive,

“Kind words can be short and easy to speak. but their echoes are truly endless.”

—Mother Teresa

respectful and accurate service, the customer situation can still become challenging.

When the customer interaction becomes difficult, or if the customer asks to speak to a supervisor, it is important you know what to do. Follow the workflow provided to navigate your way through the process.

CUSTOMER SERVICE WORKFLOW

Listen, assess, identify and communicate:

Smile and offer a friendly greeting. Listen carefully and ask appropriate questions.

LISTEN

Using the core principles and critical thinking skills, do all you can to help your customer complete business.



ASSESS

If you are unsure how to serve the customer:

Continually offer encouraging words and consult with your peers and/or supervisor to solve the issue.



IDENTIFY

Connect the customer to the appropriate supervisor or manager to resolve the issue. Do not refer angry customers to the telephone or online chat.



COMMUNICATE

The supervisor or manager may refer the customer to Constituent Services if appropriate.



Constituent Services will consult with a DWS expert to find resolution.

CUSTOMER SERVICE FUNDAMENTALS

BEST PRACTICES

When in doubt, there are basic fundamentals that can be used to handle situations ranging from simple customer inquiries to complicated cross-divisional customer complaints. In addition to the core principles, other best practices from DWS staff include:

- Before you end the transaction, ask yourself, “will the customer need to call or come back?” If so, take a little more time.
- Be familiar with resources so basic information can be easily accessed and explained:
 - ♦ Online UI information:
<http://jobs.utah.gov/ui/ContinuedClaims/UIAccountHome.aspx>
 - ♦ Online eligibility case information (myCase):
<http://jobs.utah.gov/myCase/>
 - ♦ The UI Help Desk (801) 526-9874 or DWS UIHELP@utah.gov for customers with an unemployment related issue
 - ♦ The UI chat option located at:
<http://jobs.utah.gov/ui/ContinuedClaims/UIAccountHome.aspx> and for employers at <http://jobs.utah.gov/ui/employer/login.aspx>
- If there is work that needs to be done on the case, you may be able to complete it in the after-call or between customers.
- Transfer customers between myCase and UI if the customer accesses a chat through the wrong portal. The ESD chat option is located on the myCase link home page online from jobs.utah.gov.



EMPATHIZING

Empathizing means to understand and share the feelings of another—putting yourself in someone else’s shoes. A little bit of empathy can go a long way. Treating the customer as you would like to be treated will enhance the customer experience.

In our customer service experience example on page six, the staff member showed empathy by guiding the customer through the entire process. Without that offer of assistance from staff, you could imagine that the customer might feel lost and ignored.

When customers are angry, permission questions also convey empathy and help empower the customer to make a choice. For example:

- Bob called because his Food Stamps closed at the end of last month. It is now the 11th and he was told to submit his review and his benefits would be pro-rated. *“Bob, it sounds like you’ve had a really frustrating time with this. While I’ve got you on the phone, I’d like to take a close look at your case to let you know exactly what needs to be done. Does that sound ok?”*
- Renee is being interviewed for Food Stamps. She starts giving details of her abusive relationship, how she is facing homelessness and doesn’t know what to do. She goes on and on after each interview question. *“Renee I can tell this is an extremely stressful time for you and your child. I’d like to get the information we need so we can help you as soon as possible, is that ok?”*

If assisting an unsatisfied, angry or frustrated customer, try to diffuse the situation:

- ♦ Listen carefully and acknowledge their concern
- ♦ Offer encouraging words: *“Let me see what I can do to help”* or *“Thank you for your patience while we work on resolving your issue”* or ask a permission question: *“Is it ok if I check with someone to get you the best possible answer?”*

“There are no traffic jams along the extra mile.”

—Roger Staubach

PROBLEM SOLVING

If you cannot resolve the issue yourself, consult with peers or leadership in your division or other divisions. Your peers may have expertise on how best to resolve the customer's issue. They may not be able to fix the issue, but they can be supportive.

DO NOT tell unsatisfied customers to use the phone or online chat. Passing off angry customers creates extra work and potentially exacerbates the issue while delaying critical services.

If a customer asks to speak to a supervisor, contact a supervisor immediately. Talk with your supervisor or manager if you need additional training on dealing with difficult customers.

Use your professional judgment and creative thinking. Remember:

- ♦ **Listen**
- ♦ **Assess**
- ♦ **Identify**
- ♦ **Communicate**

INVOLVING YOUR MANAGER OR SUPERVISOR

If you cannot resolve the issue yourself or by involving a peer from another division or if the issue requires help of an on-site supervisor or manager, make sure to involve your leadership for help. When the customer interaction involves a supervisor or manager, the supervisor or manager should:

- Research the issue by gathering as much information as possible from the customer(s) and staff involved. If the issue has escalated to a supervisor or manager and involves a complaint or concern pertaining to another division, contact a supervisor or manager in that division.
- Take ownership of the issue. Supervisors and managers need to close the loop on the issue, even if they cannot personally process the case, approve benefits, or provide the customer with that specific service. They should work to find a creative solution that follows policy, but also includes a big picture perspective of how we can best serve the customer.
- Ensure your customer understands why the decision was made and the action taken on their behalf.

“Under promise and over deliver.”

—Toby Bloomberg

CONSTITUENT SERVICES

When the customer interaction escalates to the point of complaint with the supervisor or manager, the supervisor or manager may refer the customer to the Constituent Services Specialist:

Nikki Stark
801-526-4390 or 1-800-331-4341
dwsconstituentservices@utah.gov

Sometimes the customer is looking for a fair hearing. If appropriate, the customer may file a request for a fair hearing at jobs.utah.gov/appeals/index.html

Referrals to Constituent Services should only be made following a referral to a supervisor or manager or, after having spoken with a supervisor or manager, by direct request from the customer

**“You are serving a customer, not a life sentence.
Learn how to enjoy your work.”**

—Laurie McIntosh

II. TRAINING

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXPECTATIONS, TRAINING AND SUPPORT

The most crucial part of implementing this universal guide to **exceptional customer service** is setting the expectations, providing appropriate training and sharing best practices. All employees should use this guide and supplemental materials as a reference to support the department’s philosophy and meet the expectations for providing **exceptional customer service**.

All DWS staff are expected to:

- Review the Customer Service Guide and supplemental materials and discuss any questions with their immediate supervisor.
- Be responsive and respectful to customers at all times.
- Provide service and resources to the best of your ability and involve other DWS staff as needed.

Supervisors and managers are encouraged to train, observe and support staff in meeting these expectations:

- Support the concepts provided in the guide and utilize the supplemental materials through coaching and mentoring staff.
- Spend quality time observing and discussing customer service with employees. Document and share best practices and opportunities for improvement in the Utah Performance Management (UPM) system.
- Review expectations with staff and refer to them in staff meetings and individual performance meetings.
- As the staff demonstrates challenges in meeting expectations or customer complaints arise, reference this guide and supplemental materials, identify specific, measurable customer service goals and discuss a plan for improvement. Document these efforts in the UPM system.
- Model exceptional customer service for staff and share your best practices for achieving customer satisfaction.
- New staff should be encouraged to job shadow staff with strong customer service skills.
- Recognize staff who consistently identify and serve veterans and who demonstrate excellence in customer service.

**“If you want to lift yourself up,
lift up someone else.”**

—Booker T. Washington

**“The goal as a company is to have customer service
that is not just the best but legendary.”**

—Sam Walton, Walmart

III. CULTURE

Excellence in customer service will be recognized with the quarterly cornerstone award. Excellence in customer service to Veterans can also be recognized with the Service to Veterans Incentive Program. These awards recognize special achievements and we also strive to establish a culture of customer service where day-to-day challenges are solved with **exceptional customer service** and successes are recognized.

Keep the following ideas for identifying challenges and celebrating successes in mind to support the idea of a developing a DWS culture of **exceptional customer service**:

- De-brief the difficult situations and learn from them. Share with others.
- Collect and celebrate successful customer service examples from customers and staff during staff meetings, and express appreciation for these efforts.
- When you observe your peers doing something great, tell them and tell others! Supervisors and managers should know and recognize staff with exceptional customer service skills. Encourage exceptional staff to mentor.
- Are there specific scenarios that your teams can discuss to be on the same page with standard responses? Examples may include EBT exceptions; verifications needed to process eligibility benefits; a denial for eligibility services; customers not able to find a job using jobs.utah.gov; customers not able to file their weekly claim online; or customers threatening to go to the Governor's office or call a Senator because they feel like they were mistreated by one of our staff.



- Inadequate staff coverage is one of the barriers to exceptional customer service. The lower the staffing level, the more challenging it is to provide responsive and prompt service. All staff (including supervisors and managers) should be aware of the minimum coverage necessary to maintain exceptional customer service and work together to close the gaps.
- What inspires you to provide exceptional customer service? Share your passion for customer service. Your inspiration can be motivational and contagious to those around you!
- Does your office have a particular philosophy, local pathway or system of measuring or recognizing day-to-day successes? As you identify ways to promote a culture of Customer Service, share these with your coworkers.

IV. EVALUATION

DWS serves a broad customer base with varying needs and interests. The Department is interested in the experiences of those who receive DWS services as well as the perceptions of those who do not. Are DWS services widely known and accessible to the general public? Are customers satisfied with the services they receive? These are just a couple of the questions the department intends to answer through semiannual surveying.



A very small percentage of complaints elevate beyond the assistance of one or two staff. This is a strong indicator of the quality of care and attention that our staff provides each day.

CUSTOMER SERVICE CHALLENGE

**Incorporate the principles in this guide
in a manner that makes a positive
impact
on our customers.**

**We indeed want to be
the best-managed state agency
with the best customer service in Utah!**

The Customer Service Guide was created for staff and by staff.

Special thanks go to:

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Equal Opportunity Employer/Program

Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities by calling 801-526-9240. Individuals with speech or hearing impairments may call the Relay Utah by dialing 711. Spanish Relay Utah: 1-888-346-3162.



Department of Workforce Services

Find this guide at

dws.utah.gov/divisions/edo/cornerstones/customerservice/cs_guide.pdf