

Do's & Don'ts For Being Internal-Customer Oriented

By: Tim King

"When you come to a fork in the road, take it!" said Yogi Berra. Yogi lived on a cul-de-sac so his witty directions to find his home, while baffling at 1st, were appropriate. But when it comes to working with our internal customers, we are always positioned at a "fork in the road" where one direction leads us to their satisfaction while the other to their dissatisfaction. So choose... satisfy, or not.

Our behaviors with those who are downstream of our tasks, projects or process drive the end result. Much like external customers, our fellow associates and stakeholders cross their fingers and hope we act in ways that are empathetic and respectful of their needs, wants and desires. To do so, makes us "Customer Oriented".

Use the list below to see where you have strengths and opportunities to improve. And remember, what goes around, comes around... the golden rule is at work here!

Don't:

- Keep them waiting or wondering if you are following through as promised
- Control the conversation when they are upset; let them talk it out
- Hide behind a policy without any explanation of its merit and purpose
- Fail to act "with urgency" and cause them to try and do what was yours to do
- Take their frustrations personally, and then get upset yourself.

Do:

- Listen for their fundamental issue(s); state it back for verification
- Strive to get your work right the 1st time; and if you miss, fix it quickly
- Own downstream problems and do whatever you can to fix them at root cause level
- Follow-up to check if your work is meeting their needs; don't wait for them to tell you.
- Be a role model to others in your department; spread the spirit of internal customer orientation for your department's downstream customers.

Unlike external customers, your internal customers don't have a customer complaint system or call center to use to seek corrective action. However, what they can do is talk about you to others... it's what they say about you when you're not around!

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