



critical in “remaking the facilities organization.” We recognized that we can learn about great customer service from other industries. In addition, we looked at transforming the facilities organization from the perspective of APPA’s four core competencies (General Administration & Finance; Operations & Maintenance; Energy & Utilities; Planning, Design, & Construction). Finally, we identified the benefits of this change to the institution and the facilities organization.

With respect to the customer-centric model, we found that the worst customer service experiences lack a customer service culture, are ineffective in their communications, with rigid, inflexible policies, and lack empathy, compassion, or concern for the customer. However, the best customer service experiences have three common threads: 1) an organizational culture and leadership that prioritize customer service; 2) policies, systems, structures, and processes that promote customer service; and 3) employees that demonstrate key traits (behaviors and attitude) “behind” great customer service.

To expand further on what comprises excellent

customer service organizations, the **essential characteristics** within the three common threads are:

- *Organizational culture and leadership prioritize customer service*
  - Where that customer service culture starts at the top
  - Extensive communication across the entirety of the organization of the value of customer service
  - Mission and vision consistently aligns with excellent customer service
  - Resources are available to support customer service
  - The organization knows who their customers are, what they need/want
- *The structures, policies, and processes of the organization promote customer service*
  - Workforce training and development is optimized
  - Customer feedback mechanisms are in tune with customer experiences
  - Employee empowerment and initiative is rewarded
  - Policies are transparent in their application
- *Employees demonstrate key behaviors and traits*

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“behind” great customer service such as:

- Ownership
- Initiative
- Mission and stewardship
- Empathy

Furthermore, in sessions given by subject matter experts from the **hospitality industry**, we gleaned the following lessons:

- Fine-tune workforce development to promote customer service.
- Monitor and reward customer service excellence at every level of the organization.
- Know your customers and pay attention when their needs/expectations change.
- Empower employees to make decisions and take initiative.
- Identify and use service standards to track and improve customer experiences.
- Make smart use of social media to listen to customers and be at the ready to respond.

Creating a customer-centric culture provides a framework for **driving change** in facilities organizations bringing about such opportunities as:

- Aligning institutional mission
- Understanding who the customers are, their needs and expectations
- Understanding what services are provided and how to connect to customer needs
- Analyzing how best to provide services
- Assessing quality of service delivery through feedback mechanisms
- Organizing systems, structures, and processes to replicate great customer service and achieve customer loyalty
- Empowering staff to take ownership and think creatively
- Promoting stewardship of campus resources
- Considering disruptive innovation as a tool to promote change


We recognize that the different core competency areas of the facilities organization will require different transformational pathways. Accordingly, we have provided much greater detail within the full mono-

graph. Yet, it will be critical to parallel the changing, evolving customer experience with facilities organization “**enabling tools**” such as:

- Mobile-enabled work order system
- Service standards and models
- Rigorous system for real-time data capture
- Metrics and predictive analytics for decision making
- Your own technology support team
- Real-time customer-enabling feedback mechanisms
- A communications strategy/plan
- Leadership and skills development plan

Certainly there are **clear benefits** to the institution and organization. A few representative ones follow:

- Strategic plan alignment
- Improved stakeholder experience
- Reduced risk with greater business continuity
- Compliance/sustainability goals
- Better community partner
- Lower operational costs
- Improved morale
- Improved reputation
- Employer of choice thereby attracting great talent
- Enhanced predictability and improved benchmarking
- Shift from being reactive to proactive, leading to less disruptions

For sure, this summary represents just a taste of what the full monograph will cover in much greater detail. We invite you to visit the website in early September for a downloadable PDF of the entire monograph. The content will also be available in print in the next two issues of the *Facilities Manager* magazine (September/October and November/December 2016). 

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