# Customer Service – Company Outline

*It’s not enough to do good work; customers need to* feel *that we have done good work.*

*We aren’t chosen only for our product, but for the experience of* how *we deliver it.*

*Customer service is an action, not a department.*

## The Plan:

1. Clearly define outstanding service
2. Use this definition to guide everything we do
3. Reinforce constantly

### 1) Clearly define outstanding service

Everyone has an idea of what outstanding service means to them, but we need to agree and understand as a team. Our employees should be able to describe what outstanding service means, and their metrics should promote it.

Our core values include:

* Excellence
* Reputation
* Integrity
* Relationships

In service terms those mean:

* First class service
* Cohesion and belief in what we offer
* Follow-through
* Empathy

Our external goals for outstanding service are to:

* Marketing: great references and testimonials
* Leverage: turn problems into stronger relationships
* Sales and Retention: keep customers doing business with us

Our internal goals for outstanding service are to:

* Reduce the effort required for team members to accomplish the above
* Foster a workplace where team members feel good about accomplishing the above

### 2) Use this definition to guide everything we do

This includes processes for communicating both externally and internally. That encompasses everyone in the company; everyone’s service affects the “customer’s” experience—whether that “customer” is a client or coworker.

* **Commitment / turnaround time**
  + and/or first response (if it can’t be turned around immediately)
* **Set expectations**
  + e.g. when to expect a status update or resolution on a request
* **Address the perception, not just the problem**
  + Whether or not there is a technical or procedural problem, if the “customer” feels that there is a problem, address that feeling.
* **Anticipate questions, and proactively answer them**
  + e.g. “What do we tell the client?”
* **Systematize to minimize repetitive requests**
  + e.g. document FAQ’s, create processes
* **Communication soft skills**
  + Framing positively: instead of x, say y
    - e.g. four-letter words: “no,” “contract,” “I don’t know”
  + How to deliver bad news
  + How to make “customers” feel valued and appreciated over email
* **Partnering**
  + Empathizing, putting yourself in their shoes, advocating for their cause

It affects our policies with clients.

* e.g. Are there any company policies that consistently cause customer frustration?

It affects how we hire and train.

* Service should be viewed as an investment, not an expense.
* Hiring managers should take into account whether an applicant seems to like people, like working with people, and like helping people.

It affects how we manage our teams.

* See the document entitled “Outstanding Service Company Questionnaire”
* e.g. managing not only how efficient our teams are, but also the quality of their communication
* e.g. discouraging multitasking and instead allowing employees to focus on primary tasks—this greatly affects service quality and turnaround time

We should encourage feedback about departments to keep ourselves informed. And when we receive feedback, we should act on it.

* e.g. Perhaps department surveys would help as a precursor to further dialogue.

### 3) Reinforce constantly

Employees understand the importance of an activity or a cultural value by how it’s emphasized. To quote Dave Ramsey, “As a leader, if you are not sick and tired of saying the same thing over and over, you have likely not communicated with your team.”

* e.g. meeting regularly to discuss customer service
* e.g. frequently providing individual feedback
* e.g. delivering periodic refresher courses to reinforce service skills

Encourage a feedback loop and resolution process so that problems don’t grind our attempts to improve to a halt.

* Expect and encourage adhering to process. If something isn’t happening, ask the other person. If that doesn’t seem to resolve it, tell your manager.
* Tell teams: if someone appears to drop the ball, follow up. If there’s a repeated problem, tell your manager.
* Managers speak to other managers directly.