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*Sri Lanka:
Strengthening
the Regulatory
Framework
for Water
Supply and
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(2007)*

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IDP Consult, Inc.



ADB TA 4049-SRI: Strengthening the Regulatory Framework for Water Supply and Sanitation

WORKSHOP ON CUSTOMER SERVICE REGULATION



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Contents of Workshop

- Knowing the customer**
- Customer service**
- Management of complaints**
- Customer Service Guidelines**
- Establishing standards for response time**



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Objectives of the Workshop

- To know the customer, his needs and his expectations from a water utility firm
- To have an understanding on customer service, levels of service standards, dimensions of service quality, barriers to customer satisfaction among others
- To have an understanding on the management of complaints
- To discuss and agree on the scope and contents of Customer Service Guidelines
- To identify most common complaints, categorize them and agree on the standards for response time



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Session 1

KNOWING THE CUSTOMER



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DEFINITION OF CUSTOMER

Old: The ultimate entity/person who actually use the firm's products or services.

New: Anyone outside or within the firm who is the recipient of one's work outputs.

- External – people or company who uses water and sanitation services
- Internal – user of output which is internal to utility firm



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CUSTOMER NEEDS

1. Social contact

- support
- social relations
- to like others and be liked by them

2. Appreciation

- be seen as “someone special”
- be treated as an individual



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CUSTOMER NEEDS

3. Information

- to know, to understand, to clarify

4. Profit – to get “his money’s worth”

5. Security – free from risks and dangers



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CUSTOMER'S EXPECTATIONS FROM A WATER UTILITY FIRM

As an applicant

- **Outmost convenience when applying for a water service**
 - minimal requirements
 - one visit
 - water service when needed



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CUSTOMER'S EXPECTATIONS FROM A WATER UTILITY FIRM

As a customer

- **No water interruption**
 - if there is, minimal and short

- **Safe facilities**
 - manhole covers not missing
 - excavations for water-sewerage related projects with proper signs and fenced



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CUSTOMER'S EXPECTATIONS FROM A WATER UTILITY FIRM

As a billed user

- **Accurate bill**
 - simple, easy to understand
 - convenience in paying bills
 - several payment options



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Session 2

CUSTOMER SERVICE



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THE “Cs” OF CUSTOMER SERVICE

- 1. Commitment***
- 2. Communication***
- 3. Credibility***
- 4. Climate***



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THE “Cs” OF CUSTOMER SERVICE

5. Challenge

6. Courtesy

7. Caring

8. Creativity



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RESPONSIBILITY FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE

Every employee in a water utility firm plays a part in customer service

- those who come in contact with the customers
- those whose actions result in serving the customers



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LEVELS OF SERVICE STANDARDS

Customer Dissatisfaction:

not meeting customer expectations

Customer Satisfaction:

meeting customer expectations

Customer Delight:

meeting expressed needs which are beyond normal customer expectations



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DIMENSIONS OF SERVICE QUALITY

1. **Reliability** – is the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately
2. **Assurance** – is the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence



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DIMENSIONS OF SERVICE QUALITY

3. ***Tangibles*** – are thing which can be touched and seen
4. ***Empathy*** – is the individualized attention provided to customers
5. ***Responsiveness*** – is the willingness to help customers and provide prompt service



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FUNDAMENTAL STEPS IN ATTAINING QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Step 1: *Transmit a Positive Attitude for Others*

Through your APPEARANCE,
BODY LANGUAGE, VOICE

Step 2: *Identify needs of your customer*

By SKILLFUL LISTENING
By OBTAINING CUSTOMER FEEDBACK



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FUNDAMENTAL STEPS IN ATTAINING QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

How to become a better listener

- stop talking
- one conversation at a time
- empathize with the person speaking
- ask questions
- don't interrupt
- paraphrase what was heard
- show interest
- concentrate on what is being said
- don't jump to conclusions



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FUNDAMENTAL STEPS IN ATTAINING QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Types of Listening

- Ignore
- Pretend listening
- Selective listening
- Attentive listening
- Empathic listening



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FUNDAMENTAL STEPS IN ATTAINING QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Emphatic Listening

Listen for

..... What the person is **FEELING**

..... What the person is **WANTING**

..... What the person is **THINKING**



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FUNDAMENTAL STEPS IN ATTAINING QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

***Step 3: Provide the Customer's Needs
and Go for the Extra Mile***

Step 4: Make Sure the Customer Returns

By CONFIRMING CUSTOMER
SATISFACTION and DELIGHTED
TO RETURN



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BARRIERS TO CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Barrier 1: DIFFICULT PEOPLE

Barrier 2: LACK OF COOPERATION

Barrier 3: BURN-OUT



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Session 3

MANAGEMENT OF CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS



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REASONS WHY CUSTOMER COMPLAINS

- **Non delivery of expected services; timing of the delivery of services**
- **Inaccurate billings**
- **Not informed of water supply interruptions**
- **Feels being short changed; not getting their “money’s worth”**
- **Not informed of new developments (eg. new payment scheme)**



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REASONS WHY CUSTOMER COMPLAINS

- **Feeling inconvenience while doing business with utility firm**
- **Not satisfied with the resolution of their complaints**
- **Feeling of insecurity (being forced out of their comfort zones)**
- **Not being treated like a human being**



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TYPES OF COMPLAINTS

- **Water quality (eg. Dirty water, water has bad smell)**
- **Water supply/quantity (eg. No water, low pressure)**
- **Leaks**
- **Billing complaints**
- **Meter-metering related**



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Types of complaints

Non-technical

- a. **Billing complaints**
 - **Meter related causes**
 - **Erroneous billing**
 - **Connection categorization**
 - **Service connection**



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Types of complaints

Technical

- a. **Water quality deviations**
- b. **Service level deviations**
 - no water
 - low pressure
- c. **Bursts**
 - distribution mains
 - sewer lines



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Types of complaints

d. Leakage

- service connections
- sewer laterals

e. Illegal connections



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Types of complaints

Safety concerns

- a. open excavations/restoration works
- b. missing manhole covers



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PROCESS OF MANAGING COMPLAINTS

- 1. Receipt and recording of complaint**
 - logbook and data base of complaints
- 2. Responding to and resolving complaints**
 - Complaints should be classified (eg. Technical, financial, others)
 - Determine reasonable (acceptable) response time for each type of complaint
 - Whenever needed, conduct field investigation



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PROCESS OF MANAGING COMPLAINTS

4. **Tracing/monitoring the complaints**
 - **Determine the status of a complaint at any given time**
 - **Keep customers informed of progress of their complaints**
5. **Reporting of unresolved complaints**
 - **Submit list of unresolved complaints every week**
 - **For unresolved complaints over a month already, conduct field investigation and report**



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PROCESS OF MANAGING COMPLAINTS

6. Handling irresolvable complaints

- determine after field investigation if complaint is irresolvable
- Inform customer and state reason why complaint is irresolvable
- Responding to customers
 - Advise customers on status of complaint
 - Advise customer of expected time of resolution of complaint



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PROCESS OF MANAGING COMPLAINTS

Response will contain

- an apology if water utility firm is at fault
- an explanation of what went wrong or the relevant policy
- an explanation of action taken by the utility firm or advice to customer to prevent the problem from occurring again
- if appropriate, advise on what further action the customer can take
- the name and telephone number of staff to contact if there are further queries



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PROCESS OF MANAGING COMPLAINTS

8. Report on customer complaints

- submit monthly status report on complaints received, and its status
- include status of unresolved complaints of previous month(s) and reasons why complaints are still unresolved
- include list of complaints classified as irresolvable



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Establishing Standards for Response Time for each Type of Complaint

Response time is the number of days a complaint is satisfactorily resolved. It starts from the time a particular complaint is presented to the water utility up to the time the customer accepts the resolution of the complaint.

The establishment of an agreed response time for each type of complaint is needed in customer service regulation.



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PART B: ESTABLISHING STANDARDS

Session 1:

Draft Customer Service Guidelines



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PURPOSE

- ❑ To inform the customers of its rights and levels of service that they are entitled to receive from the Board
- ❑ To provide a guide to the Board on how to ensure that the rights of the customers are protected



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Scope

- Right to receive the promised levels of service
- Right to be heard and consulted
- Right to information



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Types of Customer Complaints

Types of Complaints	Response time
a. Billing complaints <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meter related causes• Erroneous billing• Connection categorization	14 days 2 days 7 days
b. Water Quality Deviations	1 day
c. Service level Deviations <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No water• Low pressure	1 day 3 days
d. Leakage <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Distribution Mains• Service Connections	2 days 3 days