EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE FOR FRONTLINE PROFESSIONALS

Customer Service is a broad topic that has been covered extensively. We would like to share the below three (3) key elements that has worked at the university, particularly at campusHELP.

Building and expanding your tool box to be able to do your job (and live life) better by focusing on three (3) things:

1. Build meaningful relationships – both internally and across campuses
2. Increase ability to handle challenging situations
3. Be a positive change maker → focus on small improvements to improve work and personal environment

We will also share five (5) tools to have in your toolbox to help achieve these goals.

In order for our work to have meaning, it is important to understand WHY we’re doing it and HOW we should do it.

What is one of the main reasons WHY the University of Hawaii exists? Why are we here at this conference?

• OUR STUDENTS

Students have to juggle multiple things when they attend UH. What are some examples? - classes, being socially accepted, finances, work, time management, finding the right resources, anxiety, depression, loneliness, stress management, peer pressure.

What do students need from us every day to succeed at UH?

• Academic support – tutoring
• Social opportunities – student clubs, sports
• Student growth and development - skills and abilities
• Guidance on relationships, how to handle anxiety, time management

We each have a vital role to help prepare students for success in the workforce and to make positive contributions to society.

How well we develop the WHOLE STUDENT will be evident in our retention and enrollment growth and the positive contributions to society.

Although students are our focus, the objectives and tools discussed below applies to everyone we interact with in our lives.
OBJECTIVE #1: BUILD MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS

WHY is this important? Social connections are not just good for us, they are really good for us. Good relationships keep us happier and healthier. It is not the number of people you know or friends you have but the quality of close relationships that matter. It has been found that good relationships not only protect our bodies, they protect our brains. It helps our memories stay sharper longer. Take every opportunity to build meaningful relationships and teach this to our students so they will have a healthy and successful life.

Another reason WHY....

Because we cannot do this alone and we are not in it alone. We are ONE UH. Ten campuses but ONE UH. Concept of Game Theory – individuals working together for a collective good will be more successful than individuals competing against each other for their own self-interest. Have a mission statement and develop annual goals together with your team.

“No one can to everything, but everyone can do something…..and if everyone does something, great things can be accomplished.”

ACTION ITEM: Connect or re-connect with someone every day.

Chinese Proverb

If you want happiness for an hour — take a nap.
If you want happiness for a day — go fishing.
If you want happiness for a year — inherit a fortune.
If you want happiness for a lifetime — help someone else.

TOOL #1: Choose to start the day in the right way. Happiness breeds success.

The formula many people follow has been WORK HARD to attain greater SUCCESS so you can be HAPPY. In 2019, the World Happiness Report has found that negative feelings are rising around the world. In current society, there has been an increase in stress levels and greater anxiety. Let us reverse the formula so our brains work more successfully. When a person is happy, it has been found that every single outcome improves – including productivity, satisfaction, reduced costs, increased revenue, and retention rates. This also is a key to providing excellent service.

Put yourself in a good state of mind BEFORE you service others. Have the right mental attitude. First impressions are lasting impressions.

So make yourself HAPPY so you SUCCEED in what you do and have a FULFILLING LIFE.
TIPS: How can we do this? What are things you can do to start each day with the right frame of mind?

- Practice Mindfulness – Take deep breaths, meditate, when we are calmer, we are more emotionally intelligent and make better decisions.
- Be sincere and genuine in your service to others.
- Be the first to greet and welcome the person. Introduce yourself.
  - “Good morning! My name is Mike. How may I help you?”
- Acknowledge when someone does something good or thoughtful.
  - Say “Thank You” and “You’re Welcome.”
- Respond – make eye contact, smile, nod, email, phone, text
- Ask them their name and use it throughout your interaction.
- Keep your attitude and actions positive.
- Create an inclusive environment where people feel comfortable, safe, and respected. Encourage students and colleagues to be supportive of one another.
- Exceptional service is all about emotional connection.

When your day is off to a rocky start, VALIDATE YOUR FEELINGS – Understand yourself. Take the time to feel what you feel, acknowledge, and when ready (accept), let go so you can move on.

“Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference.”

Winston Churchill
Former Prime Minister of Great Britain from 1940-1945 and from 1951-1955.

OBJECTIVE #2: INCREASE ABILITY TO HANDLE CHALLENGING SITUATIONS

Life is full of challenges. Help people feel understood. Acknowledge and validate how they are feeling/what they are saying/what they are seeking. Establish a connection with the person.

TOOL #2: Be professional and calmly handle the matter.

- PATIENCE is crucial. Many times, students and people who have questions or ask for help are often confused or frustrated about something. LISTEN TO UNDERSTAND so you will be able to ask the right questions to help resolve the issue and meet the person’s needs. Take the time to figure out what they truly need. Listen without judgement. After explaining and offering a solution, good to ask, “does that make sense?” to ensure person understands. Remember: Great service beats fast service every time.
- Allow the person to speak – do not interrupt until they are done.
- Show genuine interest in helping the person.
• Exercise micro-affirmations – tiny acts and gestures of inclusion and caring, graceful acts of listening. Be curious, not furious. Ask “what did you mean by that?”

• Be accessible if follow-up is needed. “Please let me know if I can be of further assistance.”

• Concentrate on how to fix the issue to satisfy the person. Remember, it is not about you. It’s about understanding what the person is looking for and providing them with what they need.

• Direct students to appropriate resources early on to avoid bigger issues down the road.

• Always provide what you promise. Call back and do what you say you will do.

• Be fully present for the person.

• Understand why you exist in your role, to be of service to others. To be useful and helpful.

Many of us have come across people who are so upset, difficult to help, and is never satisfied or happy with the response. Do not take it personally because often times, it’s not personal. If the negative experience is affecting you, acknowledge your emotions and do something to release it (step away, take a walk, write down your feelings, clear your mind, eat ice cream). It is not healthy to hold onto negative feelings and thoughts because it may be taken out on someone else and affect the quality of your work.

Example: I can understand you’re very upset. If the yelling continues, I will not be able to assist you. I will count to five (5) and, if not ready to talk, I will hang up. Please call back when you’re ready.

TOOL #3: Communicate clearly - Be respectful and inclusive.

• Learn to ask the right questions in the appropriate way.

• Relay important points clearly; keep it simple and leave nothing to doubt.

• If you do not know the answer to a question, say so. Take the time to find out the answer by connecting with appropriate office and follow-up with person OR have appropriate office follow-up directly with the person regarding their inquiry.

• Be aware of your body language at all times – be approachable.

• “Thank you for your patience,” “it’s been a pleasure talking with you,” “please let me know if I can be of further assistance.”

• Express your appreciation at the conclusion of every interaction, “Thank you. Have a nice day.”

OBJECTIVE #3: BE A POSITIVE CHANGE MAKER

It doesn’t have to be big changes......make small positive changes everyday. Eating oatmeal instead of a glazed chocolate donut for breakfast, hugging your kids before you
go to work, thanking your co-worker for picking up coffee, saying “Hi” or acknowledging students and co-workers you come across.

**TOOL #4: Acceptance** – Understand situations that are out of your control.

- Understand and accept people for who they are, how they think, what makes them comfortable, and things that are uncomfortable for them.
- It starts with each of us. We want people to accept who we are so practice the “acceptance” from your side. When acceptance is practice at deeper levels, people often experience a positive change in their own attitude, which in turn leads to changes in how others respond back.
- Provide constructive feedback and comments for the other person’s genuine improvement. NOT to expect them to change for you. Leave it up to the person to figure out whether they are ready and want to improve or change. It is their life so leave it up to them.

Service Recovery: We are human. We all make mistakes. Apologize and do your best to go beyond the person’s expectations to make things right. Disney’s approach to service recovery also highlights the importance of maintaining the trust developed with the customer by making sure they feel they can come to you again for help.

- Listen to understand to build connection and trust.
- **Empathy** – truly understand the person. Acknowledge what the person is telling you. Validate their emotion.
- Genuine apology.
- Problem-solving – Ask questions and find the answer for the person or have the appropriate resource contact the person with the required information.
  - What would you like to see happen?
  - Do you mind if I take a minute to explain our process so you don’t encounter this issue again?
  - Would it be ok if I explained a few options available and you let me know which is best for you?
- Make it right for the customer.
- Set a personal goal to have people leave the interaction better than when/how it started.

**TOOL #5: We have full control over what we say and do.** (sometimes we forget - we blame others for MAKING US do and say things).

- Know yourself. Take ownership.
- Take time to process, reflect, and prioritize. Think before replying. Avoid responding when angry or frustrated. Clear your mind first.
- Use positive language – goes a long way in creating happier students and positive perception of the university.
Example: Student asks – Can I change my major?
- (Negative) I don’t know. Go talk to your advisor.
- (Positive) Yes, you can. The first step would be to speak with your advisor. Do you know who your advisor is?
- (Positive) I’m not sure. Let me find out how you can go about doing that.

- Each interaction is an opportunity. End on a good note.
- Set a good example: If you see someone who needs help, reach out to them.
  - “Is there anything I can help you with?”
  - Practice random acts of kindness. Little positive actions makes a world of difference.
- Service is an emotional experience – it is all about how we make the person feel.

Exercising these points will help promote and keep a positive work environment, even in stressful times. Help each other out. Work as a team.

Choose to be your BEST self and make everyday a meaningful day. People are drawn to sincere positivity.

**ACTION ITEM:** Write three (3) things you are grateful for everyday for a minimum of 21 days → habit to express gratitude. At campusHELP, we often ask each other “what is one good thing that happened today?” or “What made you laugh today?”

- “You need to learn how to select your thoughts just the same way you select your clothes every day. This is a power you can cultivate. If you want to control things in your life so bad, work on the mind. That’s the only thing you should be trying to control.” -Elizabeth Gilbert, Eat, Pray, Love

We hope the above information is helpful in providing a framework to create an exceptional environment in your workplace and personal life through communication, collaboration, and caring. Please feel free to contact the campusHELP office at (808)956-5000 or uhmcrcsc@hawaii.edu if we can support you and your team in any way.

**Mahalo!**

Check out the campusHELP professional development resources page for additional information:

http://manoa.hawaii.edu/crsc/professional-development/