Manager’s Corner

Knowing Your Customer

PROJECT COORDINATOR
Pat Richardson, MEd

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Aleshia Hall-Campbell, PhD, MPH

Key Area: 4 Communications and Marketing
Code: 4140 Communication Skills
2019
The Institute of Child Nutrition was authorized by Congress in 1989 and established in 1990 at the University of Mississippi in Oxford and is operated in collaboration with The University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg. The Institute operates under a grant agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service.

PURPOSE
Improve the operation of child nutrition programs through research, education and training, and information dissemination.

VISION
Lead the nation in providing research, education, and resources to promote excellence in child nutrition programs.

MISSION
Provide relevant research-based information and services that advance the continuous improvement of child nutrition programs.

This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service through an agreement with the Institute of Child Nutrition at the University of Mississippi. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. government.

The University of Mississippi is an EEO/AA/Title VI/Title IX/Section 504/ADA/ADEA Employer.

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights; Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

© 2019, Institute of Child Nutrition, The University of Mississippi, School of Applied Sciences

Except as provided below, you may freely use the text and information contained in this document for non-profit or educational use with no cost to the participant for the training providing the following credit is included. These materials may not be incorporated into other websites or textbooks and may not be sold.

Suggested Reference Citation:

The photographs and images in this document may be owned by third parties and used by the University of Mississippi under a licensing agreement. The University cannot, therefore, grant permission to use these images.

For more information, please contact helpdesk@theicn.org. November 22, 2019
Table of Contents

Professional Standards ........................................................................................................ 1
Introduction ...................................................................................................................... 1
Lesson Overview ............................................................................................................. 2
Questions for Staff .......................................................................................................... 2
Activity: How Well Do You Know Your Customer? ......................................................... 4
References ..................................................................................................................... 7
Employee will be able to develop plans that include involvement with school and community members, empower school nutrition leaders, and address excellent customer service.

4140 – Communication Skills
Develop communications skills.

Manager's Corner: Knowing Your Customer is designed to empower managers to use in training their staff. Each lesson is roughly 15 minutes. This lesson plan contains:

- Learning objective
- Statement explaining the importance of the topic
- List of materials
- Instructions on how to present the information
- Questions to ask staff
- An activity to strengthen or refresh the knowledge of the staff
Lesson Overview

Instructions for lesson:
- Review the lesson objective and background information.
- Review why it is important.
- Ask staff the questions.
- Facilitate the activity outlined.
- Provide time for staff to ask questions.

Objective: Identify who your customers are and how to determine their needs and expectations.

Background information: Your primary customer is the student. Meeting the needs and expectations of the student is accomplished by:
- Seeing the student as a customer.
- Recognizing the diversity of the students.
- Identifying the needs and expectations of the students.

Why it is important: One of the goals of the school nutrition program is to meet the needs and expectations of the primary customer. Students are diverse individuals with equally diverse needs and expectations. Their experience is a factor in determining if they are and will remain a consistent customer.

Questions for Staff

- Who are the primary customers, and who are the secondary customers?
  Answer: The students are the primary customers, and the teachers, parents, school administration, and community are the secondary customers.

- What about the students who do not eat in the cafeteria? Are they customers?
  Answer: Yes. All students are potential customers. The customers’ experience is a factor that contributes to whether they eat in the cafeteria and continue to eat in the cafeteria.
Manager’s Corner: Knowing Your Customer

• What about the students who are free eligible that eat lunch but do not eat breakfast? Are they customers?  
   Answer: Yes. They are also potential customers.

• What is meant by seeing the students as customers?  
   Answer: The school nutrition program is a business, and your primary customers are the students. Every student in the school is a potential customer. The school nutrition team needs a better understanding of their customers and what is happening in their customers’ world. The team must also see their customers as individuals, not as a group. Step to the other side of the serving line and see what the students see when they come through the line. What do you see? It should be a clean serving line with colorful foods that look and smell good.

• Can you recognize the diversity of the students?  
   Answer: There are many factors to consider in determining the diversity of the students. These factors include gender, age, cultural background, and race. Recognizing the diversity of students helps you develop strategies and activities that meet their needs. Physical needs differ among those in the first grade, and in the sixth grade, so do their social and behavioral needs. Understanding the needs and expectations of the many different students in your schools is a key to building a successful school nutrition program.

• What are some of the needs and expectations of our students?  
   Possible Answers May Include:
   o The same level of customer service as when they eat at a restaurant
   o A welcoming smile and friendly greeting
   o Suggestions to eat fruits and vegetables or try a new menu item
   o Exciting descriptions of the food being offered

   Please note: The answers provided are only examples and are not an inclusive list of possible responses.
Activity materials included in this document:
- How Well Do You Know Your Customer
- How Well Do You Know Your Customer Answer Key

Materials provided by the school nutrition operation:
- Copies of handouts
- Writing utensils

Activity Instructions:
- Print the handouts and worksheets
- Distribute How Well Do You Know Your Customer and writing utensils.
- Complete the activity.
- At the end of the activity, discuss the correct responses.
How Well Do You Know Your Customer?

Instructions: Circle the best answer to the following statements.

1. The students **always** know what they want to eat and should not be encouraged to try a new food.
   a. True
   b. False

2. School nutrition customers in all schools vary in age, gender, cultural background, and race.
   a. True
   b. False

3. The term “diversity,” when applied to student customers, refers to differences.
   a. True
   b. False

4. The primary customer of the school nutrition program is the school administrative staff.
   a. True
   b. False

5. Students want to be served by a welcoming and friendly school nutrition team.
   a. True
   b. False

6. Students expect good customer service from the school nutrition team.
   a. True
   b. False

7. The students that eat outside of the school cafeteria are not considered potential customers.
   a. True
   b. False

8. You should see the students you serve as a group, not individuals.
   a. True
   b. False
How Well Do You Know Your Customer Answer Key

Instructions: Circle the best answer to the following statements.

1. The students always know what they want to eat and should not be encouraged to try a new food.
   a. True
   b. False

2. School nutrition customers in all schools vary in age, gender, cultural background, and race.
   a. True
   b. False

3. The term “diversity,” when applied to student customers, refers to differences.
   a. True
   b. False

4. The primary customer of the school nutrition program is the school administrative staff.
   a. True
   b. False

5. Students want to be served by a welcoming and friendly school nutrition team.
   a. True
   b. False

6. Students expect good customer service from the school nutrition team.
   a. True
   b. False

7. The students that eat outside of the school cafeteria are not considered potential customers.
   a. True
   b. False

8. You should see the students you serve as a group, not individuals.
   a. True
   b. False
Manager’s Corner: Knowing Your Customer

References


The University of Mississippi
School of Applied Sciences

800-321-3054
www.theicn.org