

Manager's Corner

Knowing Your Customer

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NUTRITION



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Institute of Child Nutrition

The University of Mississippi

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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.

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Professional Standards

COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING – 4100

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.

Introduction

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.

- **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:

- The same level of customer service as when they eat at a restaurant
- A welcoming smile and friendly greeting
- Suggestions to eat fruits and vegetables or try a new menu item
- 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: How Well Do You Know Your Customer?

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

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References

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