

# Customer Service Professional

Course Content Sample

Award Level

Module 4: Topic 3

## Topic 3 - Adapting to and responding to change in services

### 1 Change within local government

You and your customers live in an environment of constant change. Change is something everyone has to be able to accept and deal with.

However, change is something which can bring out strong emotions in people and not everyone responds in the same way to a particular change.

Generally people tend to have a selfish view towards most change - the first question they will ask themselves is 'What is in it for me'? In other words, they want to know how the change will affect them.

The same principle will be shown when you make changes to how customer service is delivered.

Your and your customers' attitudes towards change will be influenced by how you and they will be affected by the proposed change.



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#### Example

Let's say you are a librarian working within one of the local libraries. A change is made to the opening hours - so that late-night opening moves from Tuesday to a Wednesday.

**As the customer**, your attitude to this change will depend on the following.

- How regularly do I use the library?
- Do I tend to go in on a Tuesday night?
- What else do I do which might prevent me from going on a Wednesday night?
- How easy will it be for me to remember the night has changed?
- How inconvenient will it be, if I make a mistake and turn up on the wrong night?

**As the librarian**, your attitude to the change will depend on the following.

- Do I do anything on a Wednesday night which will be affected?
- Does my family do anything on Wednesday night which will be affected?
- What can I do on the Tuesday night which will become free?
- Is the change seen as an inconvenience or an opportunity?

This is a simple example, but shows how different customers could see the same change as good or bad and how different members of staff could see the same change as good or bad.

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Most changes you put into practice will aim to bring about improvements.

However, you cannot assume that everyone will have the same attitude towards the changes that you make. To assume that everyone will see the changes as an improvement would be a mistake. That is why continual feedback is crucial.

Providing customer service in local government has the challenge that you have a high number of customers using a particular service and also a wide range of minority groups where you need to consider their specific needs.

And, as we discussed in Module 1, you are also dealing with customers who may have particular sensitivities which you need to be aware of (for example, they may be on benefits, have poor educational qualifications, have poor personal hygiene, be behind with their council tax payments and so on).

Also due to the political nature of providing services within local authorities, you may have to introduce a change which you know will not be seen as positive by your customers, because it is in reality a reduction in service standard or provision.



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### Remember



#### **Reasons for introducing change within local government can be brought about by:**

- changing customers' needs or expectations;
- more activity from competitors;
- the law;
- politics or central government initiatives - changed priorities;
- local priorities;
- changes in resources and manpower; and
- changes in technology.

So, we can categorise any particular change to a service in a number of different ways.

- Planned or unplanned
- Wanted or unwanted
- Positive or negative (or a mix)
- Beneficial to customers or beneficial to staff (or a mix)
- Costs resources or saves resources

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### 2 Customers' changing needs and expectations

As well as there being many factors which can result in the organisation needing to change a service they provide or the way they provide it, at the same time customers' needs and expectations can also be changing.

This can result in the gap between expectations and the service provided becoming wider and wider.

As customer service professionals you need to be constantly focused on the general and specific changes in customers' expectations that are developing and also use these as part of your considerations in developing improvements.

#### Remember



#### **Keys to success - General changes to customers' expectations and the service provided**

- Choices in the way customers contact service organisations.
- Technology made simple and effective when it is used.
- Service organisations to be joined up.
- Service staff who care.
- Service staff who are knowledgeable.
- Customers want to receive reliable services.
- We keep our service promises.

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#### Remember



#### Customer service - changes within local government

- There is more of a focus on delivering customer services - to meet expectations - through standards, training, and qualifications.
- The organisation develops contact centres - one point of contact.
- The organisation develops one-stop shops and service points.
- There is improved computer software and databases - to manage information.
- There is more joined-up working.
- There is more and varied use of technology - e-mails, texts and mobile phones.
- Service knowledge is expanding - through joint working, partnerships and working with others.



#### Activity 4.7

#### Identifying Balance in the Need for Changing?

- List the key challenges in local government to introduce change?

You have reached the end of this module.