

# Abstract of the Good Practice Guide to... Customer Care

The purpose of this Guide is to provide a practical approach to building a customer service culture within your department. It provides an understanding of why customers have service needs and expectations and what can be done to meet those needs and expectations.

The Guide explains that Facilities Management (FM) is the integration of People, Place and Process. In other words the purpose of FM is to provide a physical environment, a place, and the support processes to enable people to execute the organisation's primary activities safely and effectively without having to "think" about the surroundings.

The Guide elaborates the three fundamental elements of customer care, namely

- Meeting customer needs
- Offering customer care
- Managing expectations

Within the first heading the distinction is drawn between corporate needs and departmental and individual needs, stressing that there can often be conflict between the two. As a consequence the FM team may be perceived as "business blockers" when all they are doing is following corporate policy. The Guide explains ways of keeping the culture

of customer care intact within the organisation's perception of the FM service in such circumstances. Offering customer care is all about focusing on solutions and positive behaviour; this influences how people feel. This applies not just to the customer but also to the members of the FM team, including suppliers. Three steps are explained, namely

- Setting the Direction
- Maintaining the Enthusiasm
- Communicating with the Customer

Customer expectations come from a range of sources, which can be unrelated to the business needs. This means they can be perceived by the FM team as inconsistent and sometimes unreasonable. The Guide explains that the FM team needs to understand those perceptions as well as manage the customers' expectation of how their needs will be met.

The role of Service Level Agreements and Performance Indicators in achieving a single vision for customer service is explained. A sample questionnaire is given that enables customer satisfaction to be measured. The Guide recognises that despite best endeavours, from time to time there will be service failures and it emphasises that excellence in service recovery is an important part of winning high ratings with customers. It explains the important features of a good recovery process.

The Guide recommends twenty DOs and DON'Ts of good practice.

*For more information on good practice guides email series editor Bob Anderson at [psc@bifm.org.uk](mailto:psc@bifm.org.uk). Guides are free to BIFM members and retail at £10 per copy to non-members. To obtain a copy, email [gpg@redactive.co.uk](mailto:gpg@redactive.co.uk)*

