

IMPACT



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UI Gold Standard of Customers Relations

The Situation

Providing outstanding customer service is an essential competitive advantage for small businesses. According to research, organizations who deliver high quality customer service keep customers 50 percent longer, have 20-40 percent lower marketing costs, and see a 7-17 percent increase in net profits.

In rural communities businesses seldom have access to quality customer relations training. Often organizations are left to either pay trainers to travel into their community or send a few employees out of town for training. Seldom do managers provide training opportunities for all employees or are training opportunities given uniformly across the company.

Our Response

UI Extension Educators Susan Traver, Sarah Howe, Steve Hines and Grace Wittman worked with local steering committees, businesses and non-profit organizations to develop a customer relations curriculum and approach that was suited to the local needs and culture.

The resulting customer relations program, *The Gold Standard in Customer Relations* is based on research into effective customer/business interactions. The Gold Standard frames customer service as relationship or partnership between people: customers and sales staff; employees and managers; internal and external customers; and between the organization and the community. This concept which is the foundation of the program goes beyond service to explore the relationships that sustain successful enterprises.



*Employees of West Bonner School District,
Priest River, Idaho.*

Best practices in customer service and a systems approach to customer service are the foundation for the program.

The *Gold Standard of Customer Relations* program includes a PowerPoint presentation and an instructor guide with activities, evaluation tools, and a choice of videos that highlight the workshop objectives.

Program Outcomes

This program has been presented at three train-the-trainer workshops within the state of Idaho and to Extension faculty throughout the Western Region. Forty-six Extension faculty from across the West, including twenty-six from the University of Idaho, have been trained to deliver the program. Five Idaho educators are currently offering the program.

Since the first workshop was offered in May 2004 more than 1,200 employees and managers have completed the course.

In North Idaho, 29 classes have been taught to 697 participants. In Valley County, 137 people participated in 4 classes. Throughout the Magic Valley, Extension Educators have conducted 13 classes to a total of 368 participants, 185 of whom were youth.

Participants were asked to compare their understanding and behaviors before and after attending the class using a retrospective post-test methodology. All participants indicated increased knowledge as a result of the instruction they received. Specifically, participants reported increased understanding of the elements of quality customer relations. Participant data indicated the course met their needs and they would recommend it to others.

For More Information

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