

# IMPACT

University of Idaho  
Extension

Twin Falls County, 246 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave E, Twin Falls, ID 83301; 208-734-9590; Fax: 208-733 9645

## Extension Provides Training Opportunities for Small Business Owners and Employees

### *The Situation*

Customer Service is an important tool that all businesses, government agencies, and non-profit organizations have to consider. With advances in technology, customers have choices; they can either go down the block, across town, or on the internet to get the product or service they are wanting. For a small business owner this can be detrimental and the only way they can compete is through the quality of service they provide.

The options for training employees on customer service are plentiful if a company has the desire. It can cost hundreds of dollars to have a professional company train employees. One option is to train employees with a series of videos or DVD's, and hope that your employees learn and retain information using this method. Many employees do not receive the benefit of customer service training because of either money or time issues. Companies that deliver high quality customer service are more likely to make a lasting impression with their customers.

### *Our Response*

University of Idaho Extension Faculty started offering customer service programs as a result of requests from businesses, Chamber of Commerce and schools in Burley, Jerome, Twin Falls, Buhl, Challis, Mackay, and Arco, Idaho. Through this partnership, we have presented over 24 workshops with 516 participants.

The curriculum used was adapted from Oklahoma State University "Oklahoma Pride." The updated and rewritten version of this is called "The Gold Standard of Public Relations." This curriculum is currently in the external review process for publication. Many hands on/participatory activities are used during the trainings as well as two outside videos on customer service that provide depth and another perspective to the program.

During 2007 educators continued to deliver the basic program and a Train-the-Trainer program. The need for this program came about as there were more requests for trainings than the educators had time to deliver.

The workshop ranges from 30 minutes to 2 hours and covers the importance of customer service. Through these programs we:

- Enhance the quality of customer service employees give
- Develop an understanding of what quality service is
- Have an understanding of how to handle difficult customers or customer complaints
- Help managers and owners support employees in their customer service endeavors

## ***Program Outcomes***

Since November of 2005, Extension Educators in District III have delivered 24 customer service workshops to 516 participants. As a result of these workshops, other community businesses and organizations have learned about the ability of the University of Idaho Extension System to conduct customer service programs.

Participant's evaluations indicated:

- They would emphasize teamwork
- All employees should be familiar with all aspects of the business
- They would remember to understand what "our boss" the customer needs/expects
- Positive attitude is important to make customers feel more satisfied with their experiences
- They would greet customers as soon as possible
- They would listen to the customers
- They would make a positive last impression
- They would be clear about company policies

### **The Future**

We will continue to offer this program to businesses as they request it. In 2007 some of our community partners took this program into the Twin Falls and Minidoka School Districts. In 2008 Extension will continue to cultivate these partnerships and expand the high school program as well as begin the development of a community familiarization program for portal business employees.

## ***For More Information***

Steven L. Hines, Extension Educator  
University of Idaho Extension—Twin Falls County  
246 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave E.  
Twin Falls, ID 83301  
208-734-9590x19  
Fax: 208-733-9645  
Email: [shines@uidaho.edu](mailto:shines@uidaho.edu)

Grace Wittman, Extension Educator  
University of Idaho Extension—Cassia County  
1013 West 16th Street  
Burley, Idaho 83318  
208-878-9461  
Fax: 208-878-7862  
Email: [gwittman@uidaho.edu](mailto:gwittman@uidaho.edu)