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Self help module 10: Customer service

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Introduction

About this module

This module is presented in two parts. The first section (*Customer service and the Main Street/Small Towns Program*) explains why the whole community needs to be customer focused. *Improving customer service in your area* looks at overall customer service standards throughout the local community. These sections provide committees and coordinators with practical tools for assessing their town's customer service standard and suggestions for how to improve it.

The section on *Tips and techniques for businesses* is designed as a stand-alone resource for individual businesses. This section stresses the importance of finding out what customers think and provides tips and techniques for lifting performance. Committees and coordinators may wish to photocopy this section to distribute to local businesses. This might be included in a customer service improvement strategy.

What is customer service?

More than anything else customer service is about building relationships with consumers, guests and visitors. It involves everything that surrounds that relationship – the physical environment, the interaction between customers and staff and the product or service provided. This is sometimes called the customer service mix (see page 11). The customer service mix can apply to the town or to individual businesses.

Customer service is about perceptions

Customer service can't be tested before it is sold. It can't be stored, returned or exchanged. Service is an intangible quality that customers assess for themselves. You can't argue with their perception. Unfortunately, research has shown that most unhappy customers don't complain. They just don't come back. This fact has a tendency to make businesses complacent. "If it ain't broke, don't fix it".

What is worse is that an unhappy customer will generate negative advertising by telling others (about eleven people on average). On the positive side, a satisfied customer will generate free positive advertising.

Customers perceive service in their own unique, idiosyncratic, emotional, irrational, end-of-the-day, and totally human terms. Perception is all there is!

Tom Peters

Research tells us that...

- It costs five times more to attract a new customer than it does to keep the one you already have.
- About twenty-five customers in every hundred are unhappy enough with the service they get to look for alternatives.
- Only one of those twenty-five dissatisfied customers will ever tell you they are dissatisfied.

Source: Anderson and Zemke, *Delivering Knock Your Socks Off Service*, 1998.



Customer service and the Main Street/Small Towns Program (MS/STP)

The service revolution

In the 1980s and 1990s, observers noticed that companies that emphasised good service kept customers longer than their competitors and produced better financial results. An American customer service expert, Ron Zemke, calls this the 'service revolution'. Australian research has demonstrated that this trend is not unique to the United States. Australian customers have raised their expectations of service in every industry.

As consumers become more sophisticated through access to travel and new technologies, the service bar is lifting higher! For this reason customer service is a key issue for Main Street/Small Towns Program coordinators and committees.

Everyone is an ambassador

Good customer service is an absolute requirement for tourism. Every business and person is an ambassador for the area. One unfriendly encounter may be enough to persuade a visitor to move on to the next centre for dinner or groceries. If the encounter is warm and friendly, that person may stay the night, make return visits and persuade others to travel to your area. Hospitality is everyone's responsibility.

We tend to think of tourism and retail when customer service is discussed, but the local plumber, accountant, TV repairer and factory all depend on the good will of their customers.

Impact on local economy

Communities are in competition with each other for spending from both local residents and visitors.

The Rocky Mountain Institute in the USA uses the analogy of a bucket of water. Water (representing investment and spending dollars) flows into the top of the bucket from outside the local community, circulates around the bucket and leaks out of the bucket through holes (buying goods and services outside the local area, profits to external owners of businesses, taxation). The aim of any community is to maximise the inflow of resources, encourage its internal circulation and plug as many leaks as possible.

Good customer service is vital for attracting and growing investment for tourism. It is up to the local community and tourist operators to ensure that visitors enjoy their stay! The longer they stay, the more dollars are injected into the area, and the more likely they are to tell others to come.

Local consumer loyalty is an important strategy in plugging the leaks, and quality service is a vital component of this strategy. While local enterprises sometimes cannot compete on price, they can always compete on service.

In a globalised world, keeping local economies vibrant requires resourcefulness and opportunism. It is easier to retain and grow existing businesses than start new ones. Improving customer service is a practical initiative.



Improving customer service in your area

Lifting the overall standard of customer service is not easy. In the late 1980s and early 1990s some organisations tried to improve their performance with superficial 'smile training'. Customers continued to rate their service poorly, voting with their feet.

Improving customer service in your town will require good planning, leadership and plenty of sustained energy. The changes will not happen overnight and there may well be setbacks. At first you are likely to hear complaints, as people are more willing to express dissatisfaction. This feedback is necessary to understand what customers care most about. The hard work you and your colleagues do will pay off in consumer loyalty, improved business performance and the personal satisfaction that comes from knowing that customers are getting their needs met.

Port Macquarie

Port Macquarie used an accreditation program as incentive for getting local businesses to train their staff in customer service. The idea was driven by the business community. Businesses that had trained at least 50% of their staff were given a display certificate endorsing their status as a Quality Service Provider.

In the 5 years to 2000, Port Macquarie trained over 800 people in customer service.

Gathering together a core group

A good place to start is to identify and assemble a core group of motivated people to champion the change. This group will need to discuss the current customer service climate and be persuaded that there are benefits to be gained by improving it.

The core group is likely to be composed of half a dozen local business people. Put your time and effort into activating the people who are most likely to get to work right away. Those who are less keen may slow things down, and will probably become more enthused when there are some tangible results. In some areas, there may be a good reason to establish both a business sector group and a tourist sector group. Whether you establish one or two groups, the individuals selected must have influence with other businesses in the area.

The role of the core group is to act a guiding coalition, creating and communicating a vision, and developing strategies to achieve it. The group must generate a sense of urgency and lead by example. The coordinator's role is to encourage everyone to work together as a team.





Assessing customer service in your area

Businesses and communities often make assumptions about their customer service based on lack of complaints. As so few people complain (see box), this is an unreliable indicator of the standard of customer service. To get a true picture of your area's performance, you will need to do some research (refer to *Self Help Module 3 – Collaboration and Strategic Planning*, pages 9–13). This module provides a number of assessment tools to help you gain a better understanding of the issues that influence their buying habits.

Moments of truth

In the 1987, Jan Carlzon wrote about changes he had made as CEO of Scandinavian Airlines, where he turned an \$18 million loss into a \$54 million profit in eighteen months. He introduced the concept of “moments of truth”. This defined any interaction lasting 15 seconds or more between the airline and a customer. Booking a ticket, checking in, being served dinner and picking up bags are all “moments of truth”. Carlzon recognised that these many, small moments were very important to customers, often creating the overall image of the airline in their minds. He persuaded his staff to focus on improving service in these moments by a small percentage. The results were dramatic.

What are the “moments of truth” in your area? Identify as many as you can and focus first on improving the most important. Over time you will need to manage every “moment of truth” well.

“Moments of truth” – examples

Negative

- A visitor can't find the Information Centre
- A visitor is given wrong directions
- A visitor can't find a parking spot
- A visitor is treated gruffly at a supermarket checkout
- A visitor waits in a long line to check into their motel
- Goods are poorly displayed in a tourist store
- The petrol station, the bank, and the chemist are closed at unpredictable times

Positive

- The Information Centre is clearly signed in appropriate places
- A visitor is given good directions, and made to feel welcome in area
- Parking is easy
- The person at the checkout is friendly and efficient
- Checking into the motel takes a few minutes
- Goods are appropriate for the market and attractively displayed
- The petrol station, the bank and the chemist are open when visitors expect them to be open.



Surveys

General surveys are a useful and relatively inexpensive information gathering tool. Market research companies can be used for this purpose, but this will increase your costs.

Three simple-to-use surveys are designed for getting a general view of customer service in your area. The questions, categories and headings can be adapted to suit your needs.

If you decide to write your own survey, think first about the information you want to get. Surveys should be short and simple. It's vital to do a test run. If your questions are unclear or elicit strange responses, the pilot survey will let you know.

Other types of surveys, such as mystery shopper and 'first impressions' surveys are outlined here. A good strategic approach may be to use more than one type of survey. In one small rural community, the consumer survey gave the impression that customers were satisfied with service levels. When they followed up with a visitor survey, the picture was quite different.

THE RETAIL CONSUMER SURVEY in the *Resources* section of this module is designed to ascertain the buying habits and attitudes of local consumers. It also will identify areas of competition for local businesses and possibly new approaches to encourage local people to shop locally.

A VISITOR SURVEY (Jenolan Caves example) in the *Resources* section of this module is designed to provide a profile of current visitors to individual tourist attractions, and identify their attitudes and buying habits. The survey will assist in the search for ways that the area and individual operators can improve attractiveness as a tourist destination.

THE 'MYSTERY SHOPPER' SURVEY is outlined in the *Finding out what customers think* section of this module. In a larger community the mystery shopper approach can be extended to assess the overall customer service experience. Mystery shopper surveys are expensive because they rely on professional help to ensure that the survey is appropriately managed. Using this approach in a small community will be difficult because the mystery shopper is likely to be spotted easily.

You don't get a second chance at a first impression.





A 'FIRST IMPRESSIONS' SURVEY is a useful technique for capturing the initial impact of your area on visitors. Communities and their residents often have difficulty in developing an objective assessment of their own environment. This type of activity is a simple and inexpensive mechanism to get valuable feedback. One method involves groups of volunteers from two communities agreeing to visit the other community. The visiting group makes observations on a range of aspects, documents its findings and makes recommendations. The report can then be used as a basis for strategic planning. A First Impressions exercise is provided in the *Resource* section of this module.

An alternative approach is to conduct a 'FIRST IMPRESSIONS' PHOTOGRAPHIC SURVEY (see *Self Help Module 3 – Collaboration and Strategic Planning*, page 14) to capture both positive and negative images. Features to observe might include:

- Town entrance statements
- Main street/CBD appearance
- Industrial area appearance
- Residential area appearance
- Community facilities such as parks, playgrounds, public library, signs.

Focus groups

Structured focus groups are also useful to get in-depth information about the area or specific enterprises. Focus groups are described in the *Finding out what customers think* section of this module.

Unstructured interviews

There are also less structured ways of finding out what your customers think. Just ask a few customers what they like and what they dislike about the area or a particular service.

Unstructured interviews

In Hurstville the coordinator decided to find out what young people between 10 and 18 years of age thought about their area. It's notoriously difficult to get the ideas and opinions from this target group in surveys. She went out looking for groups in shopping malls and the street and asked them a few questions:

- How safe did they feel in the area?
- What activities do they do in the area?
- If they had money where would they spend it?
- What does Hurstville mean to them?
- If they could have a wish about Hurstville, what would it be?

Of interest: 10–16 year olds identified most strongly with the Town Centre as a place to exercise independence, meet friends and commute between activities.

The right business mix

Have you got the right mix of businesses for your area? (refer to *Self Help Module 9 – Business and Economic Development*, page 20).





Getting your message across

A key task is to persuade businesses that change is necessary vision. Use every vehicle possible to communicate the vision and change strategy. This is the time to get as many people as possible involved and enthused. Here are some of the ways in which you and your core group could get your message across:

- Write a newsletter targeting business and property owners
- Visit businesses (walkabouts) to talk about your survey results
- Set up a feedback session to alert businesses to the findings of the survey
- Write articles and letters for the local newspaper.

Port Macquarie

To launch its program, Port Macquarie printed a customer service kit, with a logo and a Charter for their quality accredited businesses. The Mayor or the Deputy Mayor made a point of attending Certificate presentations.



Getting your message across in a presentation or article

1. To focus your audience’s attention on the need for change, describe what happens to businesses that deliver mediocre or poor customer service

- Uncommitted customers. They will wait for or actively seek out alternative suppliers
- Increased marketing costs
- Poor job satisfaction, higher staff turnover
- Weaker competitive position
- Reduced sales and profit

2. List some of the benefits of improving customer service

- Increased customer retention rates
- Attracting new customers through word of mouth
- Reduced marketing costs
- Increased job satisfaction for staff
- Stronger competitive position
- Increased sales and profit

3. Question the image that your area presents, particularly to visitors

Customer service specialists tell us that first impressions are even more important in small areas, especially in prime places of business, such as a sole food outlet or petrol station. This is an opportunity to use your photo survey and visitor survey results.

4. Provide strategies for improvement

- Outline your plan
- Provide practical assistance

Keeping up the momentum

It’s difficult to get people used to a new way of doing things. One way to encourage change is to plan for and celebrate short-term successes. As part of your project, you may have organised a series of business breakfasts targeting specific customer service themes. When the series is complete, you could write a letter to the local paper or publish comments in your newsletter to acknowledge the participation of local businesses.

As the project gains credibility, get others involved in your activities to help consolidate the improvements you have made

Be sure to acknowledge everyone when you complete your project.





Evaluating the results

Without evaluation it is impossible to know whether the project achieved the promised improvements. The importance of this stage is self-evident, but it is surprising how many schemes are superficially evaluated, or not evaluated at all. It helps to set clear objectives at the start, and establish milestones to assess your progress.

Ongoing feedback from customers will help you determine whether you are travelling in the right direction. Don't be surprised if businesses report more complaints. Unless customers feel they are listened to, they don't bother to tell you what's wrong. It's common to receive more feedback when you start to pay attention to service.

At the end of the project, ask yourself these questions:

- Did the project achieve its original objectives?
- What original objectives were not achieved, and why?
- Specifically, what were the benefits for the area?
- Were there unexpected results, either positive or negative?
- What can be done to address the problems?
- What will be done to promote the positives?

To know whether your project has achieved the long-term benefits you want for the area, you may need to repeat your visitor and consumer surveys at a later date. Also see *Self Help Module 5 – Monitoring and Evaluation* for further information on evaluation.



Lismore customer service workshops – evaluating the results

A community workshop identified that local businesses felt they lacked customer service and shop presentation skills. The Employment and Training sub-committee decided to provide training in these areas.

The project objectives were to provide training to at least 10 retailers and individual consultancy to at least 5 businesses. A secondary objective was to create enough interest to run the workshops a second year.

The results were better than expected. Twelve retailers attended the workshops, and consultancy was provided to 7 businesses. Retailers were anxious to employ the customer service consultant the following year.

Tips and techniques for businesses

Serving customers well takes organisation, skill and hard work. It involves listening, answering questions, clarifying concerns and solving problems, suggesting alternatives, cutting red tape and soothing frayed nerves time after time and with good humour. Customer service staff must have a comprehensive array of personal and professional qualities to create and enhance the image of the business in each customer's mind.

The customer service mix

Customer service involves everything that surrounds your relationship with the customer – the physical environment, the interaction with staff and the product or service provided. This is sometimes called the customer service mix.



Components of the customer service mix

1. Image

- Tangible elements (physical facilities, staff appearance)
- Non-tangible elements (reputation)

2. Staff knowledge of products and services, including:

- Technical aspects
- Common customer requirements
- Quality and standard of the business's products and services
- Comparison with similar products and services
- Whether products and services match the needs of the customer

3. Customer access to products and services

- Signs and tourism information
- Telephone listings, Internet access
- Telephone answering and reception
- Trading hours
- Physical environment
- Parking

4. Staff attitudes and communication skills

- Greeting and listening skills
- Showing empathy
- Handling complaints
- Personal style

5. Customer service systems

- Returns
- Managing feedback
- Follow-up/after sales



Who are your customers, and what do they want?

Today's customers are demanding. They have more choices than ever before. People arrive at your business with priorities that vary according to the setting and their previous experience. When they go to a fast food chain, they are likely to expect speed, value for money and product consistency. If they are seeking advice from a health professional, they need expertise and confidentiality.

It is also true that different customers may have different priorities. Over the last twenty years, cinemas have abandoned one large auditorium in favour of several smaller ones. In this way they are able to screen a range of films simultaneously to appeal to different demographic groups. To deliver spot-on service, businesses must understand who their customers are and what is important to them.

When thinking about who your customers are, don't only think of current customers. Also include:

- Lost customers
- Potential customers
- Competitors' customers

Consider ...

Think about what your customers need and expect from **your** business.

Do different customer groups (age groups, occupation groups, geographical areas) have different priorities?

- Reliability
- Accuracy
- Responsiveness
- Timeliness
- Speed
- Courtesy
- Product expertise
- Technical support
- Value for money
- Equity
- Cleanliness
- Clarity
- Accessibility
- Variety
- Quality
-



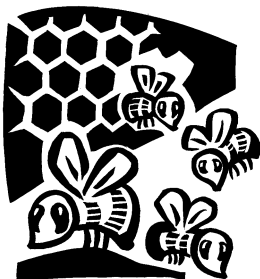
Finding out what your customers think

Service-focused businesses make an effort to find out what their customers think of them. They rely on facts, not assumptions. There are many ways to hear what the customer has to say about service.

Many companies use surveys to find out whether they are meeting customers' expectations. Sometimes the survey will accompany the service itself (point-of-sale survey). Most hotel guests will find a questionnaire in their rooms. Other surveys may be mailed to a sample of the customer database. Phone and email surveys are another approach. The best approach involves finding the most appropriate contact point and getting access to a carefully managed database.

The difficulty with all surveys is that people tend to be too busy to respond. For this reason, it's best to make the questions brief. It also helps to offer customers an incentive, such as an opportunity to win a prize if they take the time to fill in the form, or talk on the phone.

Focus groups can provide more in-depth information about what customers think than surveys. A focus group is a small group (between 6 and 12 people), facilitated by a skilled interviewer. The meeting is structured, but informal. Participants are often paid a small fee, and refreshments are provided. The interviewer uses a series of open-ended questions, moving from the general to the more specific. The group is asked to evaluate specific options as well as add ideas. Often a comment from one participant triggers others to add opinions. Focus groups are usually more successful than surveys at getting to underlying issues.



Observation is used by some businesses to find out what the customer may not be aware of. A Japanese hotel chain wanted to know how long customers were prepared to wait to check in. Asking people 'how long' was not helpful. People are not always able to tell you an exact answer. Instead the hotel used a video camera in the lobby and watched for signs of irritation (changing from foot to foot, looking at watch). This way they got an exact measurement that was used to keep check-in lines short.

Some businesses use mystery shoppers to provide reliable feedback (good, bad, or otherwise) about how well their staff look after customers. The mystery shopper is hired to make a purchase. He or she audits the customer service experience based on a detailed checklist. Staff are made aware that mystery shoppers are likely to visit, but they do not know when this might occur. In some cases, the results of mystery shopper surveys are taken into account in staff incentive packages. If this approach is used, professional help will be needed to manage the survey. A badly managed mystery shopper survey can alienate staff and result in worsening customer service standards.

There are less structured ways of finding out what your customers think. Ask a few customers what they like and what they dislike about your service.

Good questions to ask

1. Are we easy to do business with?
2. Are there problems with the product or service?
3. What is working well?
4. How can we improve the way we do things?
5. Which company do you most like to do business with? Why?

In service-focused businesses, complaints are taken seriously. After all, for every complaint, there are potentially 25 customers who felt similarly but did not complain.



Moments of truth

The way that ‘moments of truth’ are managed determines the grades customers give you on their mental report cards. Manage the moments well and you receive As and Bs – and earn a repeat customer. Manage them poorly and you earn Ds and Fs – and lose a customer in the bargain. Work to get good grades in this particular school and you’ll find your diploma has cash value.

– Kristen Anderson and Ron Zemke

Strategies for improvement

No matter how good you think your customer service is, in a competitive world it pays to keep improving. Success today doesn’t guarantee future success. Sometimes successful businesses become complacent. In 1975, Wrigley had 90% of the chewing gum market. When the competition introduced sugarless gum in the late 1970s, their market share dropped to 33%. At that stage, Wrigley’s newest product line had been introduced in 1914!*

Improving customer service takes time and effort. Get your employees involved in identifying and planning improvements, and be sure that the improvements you make are the ones customers really care about.

Attention to detail marks high performing organisations from mediocre ones. How does your business look? How do your staff speak to customers? How are phone calls handled? Customers will judge the quality of service either by the small courtesies you offer or the irritating oversights. These are sometimes called ‘moments of truth’. A moment of truth occurs every time a customer comes into contact with a part of your business, and makes an assessment against their mental scorecard.

Examples of moments of truth	Yes	No
Is the phone answered promptly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you keep your advertised promises (e.g. opening times)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are your invoices consistently accurate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a long queue for service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do customers enjoy the personal contact with you and your staff?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are mistakes fixed up professionally?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are your products attractively displayed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is your business environment visually appealing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What are the moments of truth in your business?

Invest in training

Customer service skills are not automatic. Although some people are more gifted communicators, a good training program will help staff at all levels to learn and practice new skills. It sets a good example if the business owner or manager is seen to be involved.

Be selective about the training you purchase. It’s always a good thing to check references. Consider the cost as an investment. The return on your investment will come from customer support and positive word-of-mouth advertising.



*Catherine DeVrye, *Service is Good Business*, 1994

Managing difficult customer interactions

No matter how good the service, there are always occasions when things go wrong. Sometimes the problem is caused by a service failure and sometimes the customer is wrong. Whatever the cause, good service means recovering from a difficult situation.

1. Acknowledge the problem

Whoever's at fault, acknowledge the problem. Customers want to know that you recognise there is one. Offer an apology even if you know you are not to blame. Apologising for the inconvenience does not admit blame. It *does* build rapport with the customer.

2. Listen, ask questions and show that you care

It's tempting to be defensive, but nothing makes customers angrier. Give your customer your full attention and listen. Asking a few well-placed questions will demonstrate that you are taking the customer seriously. It's also important to acknowledge that people have feelings and emotions, "I understand this is frustrating".

3. Fix the problem

Tell them what you can do, not what you can't do. Look for a way to fix the problem fairly. Some rules cannot be broken (those that relate to safety, for example). Others may be bendable. Empower your staff to bend those rules within reasonable limits. Customers want to be treated as individuals. According to research, one of the most common sources of customer dissatisfaction is 'lack of flexibility' from the service provider.

4. Follow through

To recover the situation you may have to make new promises. Be sure you can deliver on these promises (or don't make them!). Take time to check that things were resolved to the customer's satisfaction. Customers feel doubly cheated if the recovery process fails.

Tips for the telephone

Voice

Talking to customers on the phone focuses attention on your voice. We inadvertently communicate our mood through our voice. Customers can tell whether we are friendly, alert and interested, or bored and irritable. Developing a good phone voice is important. Use the following checklist to assess your own style.

Voice ...	Yes	No
Not too loud, not too soft	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clear speech	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not too fast, not too slow	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pleasant tone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shows interest in call	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you are not sure how your voice sounds to others, experiment with a tape recorder. Although it can be surprising to hear ourselves as others do, this is a very useful form of feedback.





Telephone etiquette

When making a call, decide what you want to say before you pick up the phone. When you answer a call, try to pick up the phone by the third or fourth ring. How you greet the caller may vary from business to business. Generally greetings contain three elements:

- The name of the business
- Your name
- An offer of help

"XYZ Enterprises, this is Jane Rose speaking. How may I help you?"

Sometimes you may need to put a caller on hold. Ask the caller permission – "May I put you on hold?" – and *wait* for an answer. Callers will appreciate your courtesy and almost always say yes. If you do get a refusal, try to change your priorities or offer to take their number and call back.

One certain way to annoy customers is to pass their call from pillar to post. Avoid this whenever possible. If you are unable to help with the query, arrange for the appropriate person to call the customer back. If you do have to transfer a call, let the customer know the name and phone number of the person they are being transferred to. If anything goes wrong, at least they can contact the right person.

The introduction of voice mail is both a blessing and a curse for customers. If you use voice mail be sure:

- You do not use it as a substitute for talking directly to customers.
- Your message is clear, friendly (your own voice if possible) and indicates when the customer should speak.
- You respond to your messages promptly. Try to return calls within the same day.

Don't say	Do say
"He's not in."	"He's not available right now. Can I ask him to call you?"
"Hold on."	"May I put you on hold?"
"What's your name?"	"May I take your details?"
"Hi Beryl!" (unless you know the person well)	"Hello Mrs Jones" (if you don't know the person well)
"Dear, duckie, darl, love" .	

Remember

If a customer spends **\$100** per week with you and you keep that business for:

- 1 year, they will bring you **\$5,200** worth of business.
- 10 years, they will bring you **\$52,000** worth of business
- A lifetime and they persuade 10 friends to become weekly customers, they will bring you well over **\$1,000,000** worth of business.





Resources

Retail Consumer Survey*

1. Do you live in the area?

Yes No

If no, in which area do you live?

2. Do you mainly shop locally?

Yes No

If 'no', can you give your reason(s) for shopping elsewhere?

3. Are you happy with the variety of shops and services in area?

Yes No

4. Can you indicate the main reason(s) that influence your shopping when purchasing the following items?

GROCERIES

- Price
- Range (variety)
- Quality
- Shopping hours
- Parking
- Convenient public transport
- Near work
- Near home
- Attitude of staff
- Speed of service
- Atmosphere
- Other

Please specify

If you do not buy these items in the area, to which area(s) do you travel to purchase them and why?

**Adapted from Consumer Survey in StreetLIFE Resources, Business Victoria*



Retail Consumer Survey* (continued)

MEAT

- Price
- Range (variety)
- Quality
- Shopping hours
- Parking
- Convenient public transport
- Near work
- Near home
- Attitude of staff
- Speed of service
- Atmosphere
- Other

Please specify

If you do not buy these items in the area, to which area(s) do you travel to purchase them and why?

CLOTHING

- Price
- Range (variety)
- Quality
- Shopping hours
- Parking
- Convenient public transport
- Near work
- Near home
- Attitude of staff
- Speed of service
- Atmosphere
- Other

Please specify

If you do not buy these items in the area, to which area(s) do you travel to purchase them and why?

**Adapted from Consumer Survey in StreetLIFE Resources, Business Victoria*



Retail Consumer Survey* (continued)

PETROL

- Price
- Range (variety)
- Quality
- Shopping hours
- Parking
- Convenient public transport
- Near work
- Near home
- Attitude of staff
- Speed of service
- Atmosphere
- Other

Please specify

If you do not buy these items in the area, to which area(s) do you travel to purchase them and why?

HARDWARE

- Price
- Range (variety)
- Quality
- Shopping hours
- Parking
- Convenient public transport
- Near work
- Near home
- Attitude of staff
- Speed of service
- Atmosphere
- Other

Please specify

If you do not buy these items in the area, to which area(s) do you travel to purchase them and why?

*Adapted from Consumer Survey in StreetLIFE Resources, Business Victoria



Retail Consumer Survey* (continued)

APPLIANCES

- Price
- Range (variety)
- Quality
- Shopping hours
- Parking
- Convenient public transport
- Near work
- Near home
- Attitude of staff
- Speed of service
- Atmosphere
- Other

Please specify

If you do not buy these items in the area, to which area(s) do you travel to purchase them and why?

GIFT WARE

- Price
- Range (variety)
- Quality
- Shopping hours
- Parking
- Convenient public transport
- Near work
- Near home
- Attitude of staff
- Speed of service
- Atmosphere
- Other

Please specify

If you do not buy these items in the area, to which area(s) do you travel to purchase them and why?

*Adapted from Consumer Survey in StreetLIFE Resources, Business Victoria



Retail Consumer Survey* (continued)

5. From your interaction with retail staff, how would you rate their

HELPFULNESS

- Extremely good
- Good
- Adequate
- Bad
- Extremely bad

Any comment

PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE

- Extremely good
- Good
- Adequate
- Bad
- Extremely bad

Any comment

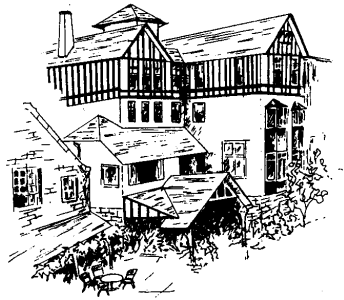
FRIENDLINESS

- Extremely good
- Good
- Adequate
- Bad
- Extremely bad

Any comment

*Adapted from Consumer Survey in StreetLIFE Resources, Business Victoria

STIMULUS SHEET II



Jenolan Caves Research Survey

To help us make your next holiday at Jenolan Caves even more enjoyable, we are anxious to have your impression about our Resort and its facilities.

Your response will give us a better understanding of your requirements to ensure we provide the services you want. Please complete this questionnaire and return it to the receptionist.

How to complete the Questionnaire

Please put a circle around the number next to the answer which is closest to your choice:-

Example: Did you have an enjoyable day?

1. Yes 2. No

Mr/Mrs/Miss (Optional)

Room No. Date of Stay.....

YOUR VISIT TO JENOLAN CAVES RESORT:

A) How many nights did you stay at Caves House?

- One. Two. Three. More than three.

B) Please indicate your satisfaction with the following services and facilities.

	Excellent	V. Good	Good	Average	Poor
Restaurant Food	1	2	3	4	5
Breakfast	1	2	3	4	5
Lunch	1	2	3	4	5
Dinner	1	2	3	4	5
Restaurant	1	2	3	4	5
The Lounge Bar	1	2	3	4	5
Reception Service	1	2	3	4	5
Bedroom Cleanliness	1	2	3	4	5
Bathroom Cleanliness	1	2	3	4	5
Room Maintenance	1	2	3	4	5



General Resource Material Sheet //

C) Through whom did you make your Accommodation Reservation?

1. N.S.W. Travel Centre, Sydney
 2. Jenolan Caves
 3. Local Travel Agent
 4. Other – Please Specify
-

D) How did you hear about Jenolan Caves Resort?

1. NRMA: Open Road/Accommodation Directory
2. Newspaper – Please Specify Name
3. Radio
4. Word of Mouth Recommendation
5. Magazine
6. T.V.

E) How many times have you visited Jenolan Caves before?

.....

F) Your last visit was –

1. Less than 1 year ago
2. 1-2 years ago
3. 2-5 years ago
4. More than 5 years ago.
5. Never before

G) In deciding to visit Jenolan Caves this time I was primarily influenced by:-

1. Past Experience
2. T.V. Advertising
3. Press Advertising
4. Radio Advertising
5. Word of Mouth

H) What was your reason(s) for visiting Jenolan Caves?

Please answer in priority order.

- Relax and get away from it all holiday.
- Recreational opportunities.
- Visit the Caves.
- Accommodation.
- Outdoor Environment.

I) Do you believe you received value for money?

1. Yes
2. No

J) Which of the following activities would you like to see developed at Jenolan Caves Resort.

1. Animal sanctuary and observation area.
2. Bus trip to Kanangra Walls for picnics.
3. Pleasant early morning and evening guided walks.
4. Informal tennis (for the more active).
5. Orienteering Trails.
6. Camping.

STIMULUS SHEET II (Cont.)

7. Gym.
 8. Other, Please specify
-

K) Please indicate the age group of you and your family.

1. Under 5 years
2. 6-12 years
3. 13-16 years
4. 17-20 years
5. 21-25 years
6. 26-30 years
7. 31-35 years
8. 36-45 years
9. 46-55 years
10. 56-60 years
11. Over 60 years

L) Where do you live?

1. Sydney Metropolitan Area
 2. Country Area of N.S.W.
 3. A.C.T.
 4. Melbourne
 5. Brisbane
 6. Other – Please Specify
-

M) How many people are there travelling in your party?

1. One
2. Two
3. Three
4. More than three.

N) Type of Group:-

1. Single
 2. Group Tour
 3. Couple
 4. Family
 5. Other – Please Specify
-

O) Would you stay longer if there were more facilities, activities and attractions?

1. Yes
2. No

P) What is the reason for your stay at Jenolan Caves?

1. Domestic Holiday
2. Part of an International Holiday
3. Honeymoon
4. Other

Q) We would appreciate any other comments you may have.

.....

.....

Thank you for your time and comments

Source: Tourism Commission of N.S.W.
Jenolan Caves Research Survey, 1986.



The Town Impressions Exercise

‘You don’t get a second chance at a first impression.’

Process

The Towns Impressions Exercise involves the following steps:

- Two communities, preferably comparable in size and other factors, agree to visit each other’s communities and provide feedback.
- Three to five residents form the visiting team and using the attached survey visit the other community and record their impressions. The dates and times of the visit are not announced.
- Each team compiles a report and forwards it to the other community.
- The feedback is shared with the visited community.
- The two teams then meet and share their reactions to the exercise.

Components

The survey has 5 parts:

- Initial impressions
- Drive about
- Walking tour
- Acting the part (tourist/visitor, potential resident/retiree, potential business operator)
- Overall impressions

Tips and techniques for visiting teams

- Ensure diversity (gender, age, background) in team.
- Get together before survey to go over the steps and the form.
- Avoid walking through town in one visible group.
- Avoid using props (such as a clipboard) that betray your research role.
- Use as many ways as possible to look at local services and facilities.
- Interact with locals about their views.
- Record both positives and negatives.
- Use a camera if possible, and make notes (without eliciting attention).
- Write the report immediately after the visit (while impressions are fresh).
- Include differences of opinion. Impressions are not about right and wrong.

Sourced with permission from IDEAS PO Box 606, York, WA 6302



Part 1 – Initial impressions

1. As you drive towards your 'visit community', what are your expectations?

2. Upon arrival and without speaking to other team members, what are your initial impressions?

3. Drive through the town and park at the other end. Without speaking to other team members, record your thoughts on such things as appearance, town scaping and signage.

4. Residential area appearance

For example, street signs, gardens, maintenance, sense of pride and acknowledgment of outstanding effort.

5. Community facilities

For example, range and condition of parks and gardens, playgrounds, public facilities and services and signage.

Sourced with permission from IDEAS PO Box 606, York, WA 6302



Part 2 – Drive about*

As a group, spend up to an hour driving around the community. Record both positive and negative impressions about the following:

1. Town entrance statement(s)

Signage, quality and quantity of advertising, community statements, logos and beautifying efforts.

2. Main Street/CBD appearance

Look at things like the condition of buildings, heritage themes, ratio of empty to occupied buildings, sense of pride and place and signage.

3. Industrial area appearance

For example, layout, activity, signage, directions, enhancement, location and accessibility.

**Part 2 and 3 can be carried out at the same time
Sourced with permission from IDEAS PO Box 606, York, WA 6302*



Part 3 – Walk about*

Wander individually around the town and comment on the following:

1. Physical state of businesses

Look at things like the physical condition of buildings, window displays and merchandising.

2. Range and diversity of businesses

Look at the types of business, the amount of product and range of services. Note gaps.

3. The people factor

Notice how friendly and helpful people are. Look for knowledge of local facilities, services and other businesses. Check out customer service skills.

4. Community information

For example, information boards, brochures and maps.

**Part 2 and 3 can be carried out at the same time
Sourced with permission from IDEAS PO Box 606, York, WA 6302*



5. Public toilets and other facilities

Look at the location, number and condition of toilets, post boxes, telephones and water fountains.

6. Parking

Location and accessibility.

Part 4 – Acting the part

Each team member assumes one of the following roles and records impressions while ‘in character’.

1. Tourist/visitor

Comment on the knowledge and attitudes of locals towards tourist attractions. Look at tourist services and information, the attractions themselves, their accessibility (for example, opening hours).

2. Potential resident/retiree

Comment on issues that might influence you if you were considering to move to, or retire in this town. Look at things like housing availability, recreation opportunities, community facilities, impressions of local education and services, welcome activities and aged services.

3. Potential business operator

Look at issues that would affect someone purchasing or establishing a business in town. Get comments from other business operators, customers and local people about the positives and negatives of doing business in the area. What are their perceptions of such things as business networking in the area, local loyalty, opportunities, the local chamber of commerce, access to supplies and labour issues?

Sourced with permission from IDEAS PO Box 606, York, WA 6302



Part 5 – Overall feelings

At the end of your visit, record your impressions and comments about the following:

1. Overall feeling about the community

2. List the 6 most positive features in the community

3. Describe one or two ideas you feel you could steal for your own community.

4. What do you consider the key area that the community should pay most attention to?

Sourced with permission from IDEAS PO Box 606, York, WA 6302



Contacts

AussieHost

AussieHost is a national training program designed to improve customer service standards in all businesses. Modelled on the successful Canadian 'SuperHost' and the New Zealand 'KiwiHost', it was brought to Australia by the Inbound Tourism Organisation of Australia. AussieHost provides interactive workshops where participants learn or refresh the basic skills of good customer service.

For further information contact:

AussieHost National
Level 2 Imperial Arcade
83 Castlereagh St
Sydney NSW 2000
Phone: 9221 5585
Fax: 9221 3385

Community Builders Website

In September 1999 the NSW Government launched a community builders web site aimed at helping local communities across the State share practical ideas on how to enhance and strengthen their communities.

The site provides information, resources and advice for communities in their efforts to build cohesion and to solve economic and social problems.

<http://www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au>