

Taking the Mystery out of Mystery Shopping

Engaging and Empowering Our Customers



It's a Mystery?

- Over 60 customer face to face access points in Camden
- No universal standards or benchmarking on face to face access points
- How do we know how what our customers experiences are of the council?

How?

- Surveys?
- Consultation groups?
- Mystery Shopping?
- Experts?



Now here's a thought...



- Work with our customers
 - ✓ Engage our customers on service improvements in a tactile way
- Work across corporate teams
 - ✓ Embed customer focus and our 'one' council aims
- Better and cheaper over all

Ah ha!

- If the experience of our face to face reception points is improved for disabled customers – couldn't that help to benefit a lot of other customers too.
- And by working across departmental and project boundaries we can help with the improvements that need to be made under the Disabled Discrimination Act

“Customers”

- 1800 members of our residents panel, **CamdenTalks**, recently recruited and eager to get started
- Over 300 of which said they have a disability, long term illness or are a carer.



We are customer focused

Our customers will:

- ✓ be empowered
- ✓ be engaged
- ✓ be listened to
- ✓ know we value them



Other benefits to using customers as mystery shoppers

- Staff couldn't spot a shopper and weren't as suspicious of customers as they were in other mystery shopping programmes
- We receive valuable customer insight into the way customers experience our face to face services

The story unravels

- In early November 2004 **CamdenTalks** members conducted a mystery shopping exercise of 30 Camden reception points.
- All of the **CamdenTalks** members involved had a disability, which allowed us to test how well our reception points are meeting the needs of our disabled residents.
- The **CamdenTalks** member's mystery shopped each reception point for **customer service** as well as its **physical appearance**.

Challenge A

- Ensuring 'shoppers' aren't embellishing scenarios
 - ✓ We tried to control for this through the briefing we gave our shoppers



Challenge B

- Shoppers may use previous experiences with us to influence their current one
 - ✓ Yes, but, no but, yes! The reality is customers experiences will always be influenced by past experiences – this is all part of what we can learn

Challenge C

- How do we ensure that the ‘shoppers’ will complete their work within the timelines and reduce drop out
 - ✓ Practice what you preach and make it easy for them
 - ✓ Also £20 gift vouchers from Marks & Sparks can help

What happened

- Overall, the results were positive and reception staff were rated highly on their interpersonal skills.

“The desk staff were exceedingly courteous, friendly and helpful. All questions (mine and other people's) were answered thoroughly and in a non-confrontational manner.”

Results of customer service audit continued

- However, despite being courteous and polite, reception staff were found to be less expert at providing suitable information and responses to the queries presented.

“The two young men were nicely turned out, courteous and polite, just did not seem to have any knowledge of my request, although it seemed a simple request to me.”

Results of customer service audit continued

- Also, it was found that, when asked, only half of the receptionists were able to provide information in different formats, such as large print, Braille or audiotape - a provision required under DDA regulations.



Customer service audit results chart

Question 8 - How strongly do you agree or disagree that the receptionist... .?

- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree



Results of physical audit

- The results from the physical audits were also good, but not as good as the customer service assessments.

*“Alternative language leaflets curling.
Carpet stained, drawing pins and staple under a
chair. Poor board fixings. Ventilators dark.
Fixed seating and non-trip board made me feel
uncomfortable.”*

Results of physical audit continued

- The less positive findings related to a lack of:
 - adequate signage for disabled toilets;
 - useful information on display;
 - functioning loops for those with hearing difficulties.

What we did...

- ✓ Distributed an action plan for improvements to all access point managers and service heads
- ✓ Developed guidance on disability equality for our customer care standards



What else we did...

- ✓ Redesigned our intranet and integrated it with the internet. So that any member of staff can find information quickly and it is easy to print out and give to customers.
- ✓ Worked with our internal language service and communications staff to improve our information in alternative formats and signage

And ...

- ✓ Used information learned when redesigning reception points
- ✓ Developed disability training targeted at specific groups of staff including receptionists, communications, senior leadership group, senior personal assistants and telephone based customer service staff

Thank you
Any questions?

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