

CUSTOMER SERVICE TIPS

Customer Service Training

by Ed Wandtke

■ One method of helping lawn service company employees realize the owner's commitment to quality customer service is to provide specific training. In developing a customer service training program for your company, examine the following:

1. Determine where training is needed. You will need an internal and external written philosophy for your company explaining how you expect customers to be treated. With this philosophy in mind, you will need to identify what aspects of customer service your company needs to be changed.

2. Ask for employee opinion. Ask them where they believe more training is needed in areas of customer service.

Employee participation helps to improve the receptiveness and effectiveness of the training. Encouraging employee input may also help you discover where additional training is needed.

3. Make training a pleasant experience. Avoid developing a customer service training program as the result of employee and customer turnover. Putting employees under pressure to perform improved customer service often backfires. A relaxed atmosphere of both training and implementing improvements in customer service will result in more effective benefits to the company. Training geared to your employees' ability will be more effective in the long run.

4. Make training interactive and participatory. Employees need to be taught effective customer service techniques and have them applied to problems they deal with on a day-to-day basis. Let them try out what they've learned, by presenting them with specific problems in the class.

Customer service training needs to be provided for every employee in your company. Making this commitment will increase both employee *and* customer retention.

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JUNE

10: Lofts Field Day, Lofts Seed Research Farm, Chimney Rock Road, Martinsville, N.J. Contact: Lofts Seed at (800) 526-3890 or (908) 560-1590.

12-13: Florida Nursery Growers Association annual meeting, Indian River Plantation, Hutchinson Island, Fla. Contact: FNGA, 5401 Kirkman Road, Suite 650, Orlando, FL 32819.

14-17: AABGA annual meeting, Botanical Gardens & Arboreta of Ohio, Columbus. Contact: C.W. Eliot Paine, Holden Arboretum, 9500 Sperry Road, Mentor, OH 44060; (216) 256-1110.

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