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Online

MindLeaders Customer Service

Reviewed by Jason Lewis for *Training Media Review*

The MindLeaders Customer Service series packs a lot of useful content into five four-hour courses. Unfortunately, they don't focus on just one audience. Within each course, the content is aimed at all levels of the organization. The users who'll benefit most from the sweeping content are managers new to the customer service environment and small-business owners looking to emphasize customer service.

Content

The titles are Defining Service, Communicating, Fixing Problems, Building a Department, and Tools of the Trade. After completing the series (23 hours), a beginning customer service manager will have an excellent idea of the role of customer service within the organization and how to set up a customer service system. Much of the information is practical, covering everything from dealing with complaints to how to set up a department and select equipment. MindLeaders advises users to take the Defining Service course first and then whichever courses are most applicable to their situations.

The series is strongest when it focuses on the tactical, everyday activities a new manager might face. I felt that it was less useful when talking about refocusing an organization on customer service. That strategic emphasis, though important for customer service, is out of line with the rest of the tactical content.

Each course starts with a self-assessment to guide your work. There's also a lot of excellent how-to information, but it's unlikely you'll need to cover it all.

Interface

The interface is easy to use. Tabs on the left side of the screen let you know where you are in the course, while the navigation tools allow you to move freely. It's easy to skip back and forth between topics, tools, and the learner homepage. The buttons on each page are clear, though I was unable to figure out how to print the whole course—something I would've liked for later reference.

I have only a few minor complaints regarding the design. To start, there are too many pages of text-based content. Though MindLeaders breaks it into digestible chunks, users end up with hundreds of text-heavy pages to click through. I advise you to navigate through the course using the directory in the left-hand tab. Also, the

graphics rarely support the content. Most are clip art of people in generic business situations. I would've preferred illustrative diagrams and tables.

Finally, the only interactivity comes in the form of test questions. Though the pre-assessment helped me focus on my weaknesses, I found that going through 30 questions and responses was cumbersome. I was more impressed with the fill-in-the-blank questions. The system was able to credit me with the correct answer even when I made a spelling mistake. Generally, the questions are easy, and I sensed they're intended more to check that you're reading the content than to test your understanding rigorously. I appreciated the immediate feedback on my answers.

Tools

The support tools are straightforward and functional. The glossary is accessible, and each course includes a search function, which makes an effective reference tool.

Recommendation

MindLeaders's Customer Service series is perfect for a new customer service manager who needs the big picture or a small-business owner who needs a handy reference tool. The content ranges from the strategic (setting up corporate-wide standards) to the tactical (how to answer the phone). However, the wide range dilutes the focus. It would be best to pick and choose from the five courses, especially because of their length. I'd prefer to see this content reorganized and focused at various levels: beginning CSR, advanced CSR, CSR manager, customer service executive, and small-business owner.

Video

Glad I Could Help

Reviewed by Jason Lewis for *Training Media Review*

I'd like to give a copy of *Glad I Could Help* to every call center I've dealt with as a customer. The video teaches customer reps how to resolve eight of the major customer service problems that plague every call center and store, such as delayed orders, phone interruptions, frustrating phone prompts, and unexpected charges. The package includes a 22-minute video, a facilitator guide, and a participant guide. The video and participant guide can be used in a two-, three-, or four-hour session.

Each vignette is introduced by a rather chirpy young host and has three scenes. The first scene describes the situation and stops at the point at which the staff person

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has to make a decision. Next, the host returns to give three to five steps for delivering “Glad I Could Help” service. Last, we see the rep solve the customer’s problem.

I was impressed with the video’s production values. The actors are convincing, and the scenes get to the point quickly. I also appreciated that the customers didn’t immediately become friendly just because they received decent service. I have only two small complaints: The narrator is a bit too familiar with the audience—she’s less than professional—and the camera work is shaky.

The facilitator’s guide is one of the best I’ve seen. It contains sample agendas, invitation letters, and step-by-step instructions. An inexperienced trainer can feel comfortable delivering the training after going through the guide. The program is also available as a DVD.

Recommendation

Glad I Could Help is focused and flexible. It’s best used in an inbound call center as quick-hit training for customer service staff of any level. At US\$800, it is expensive. But if you have a large call center, it’s worth the price. Content is relevant and concise, and the supporting materials provide a firm foundation for delivery.

Course Details


Customer Service, online, 23 hours, MindLeaders: 800.223.3732, www.mindleaders.com. Purchase: US\$29.95 (one user, one year, five courses); \$59.95 (one user, one year, nine series, 57 courses). Other material: pre- and post-skill assessment.

Glad I Could Help: Real Customer Service Situations for Discussion, video, 2002, 21 minutes, VisionPoint Productions: 800.300.8880, www.vppi.com. Purchase: US\$795 VHS; \$1095 DVD. Other material: leader guide, participant materials, self-study materials.

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Customer Service

★★★	Holds user interest
★★★★1/2	Production quality
★★1/2	Ease of navigation
★★	Interactivity
★★★★	Value of content
★★★★	Instructional value
★★★★1/2	Value for the money
★★★★	Overall rating

Glad I Could Help

★★★★1/2	Holds viewer interest
★★★★	Acting/Presenting
★★★★★	Diversity
★★★★1/2	Production quality
★★★★1/2	Value of content
★★★★1/2	Instructional value
★★1/2	Value for the money
★★★★1/2	Overall rating