

Ambiance in Parking®

Enhancing Employee Performance: Frontline Training Leads to Quality Customer Service



All major parking management companies train their employees, so what's the big deal about the Standard Parking training and employee development system? The difference, as they say, is in the pudding—no other parking company places as high a premium on customer service enhancement and its positive linkage to a professional, in-house training department.

The company's clients across the country have taken note of this achievement. In the words of Karen Gaines from Lowe Enterprises in California, our "staff consistently exhibits positive attitudes and energy, and a willingness to go the extra mile to help ten-

"Employees get the mentored, on-the-job training they need right from the start, and are expected to immediately contribute to facility performance."

ants, all while racing around to fetch cars, keys and elevators."

During their first week on the job, frontline parking employees—cashiers, valets, main-




Frontline employees receive mentored, on-the-job training as soon as they begin employment.

tenance employees and shuttle bus drivers—receive in-depth technical training on how to do their jobs. Employees get the mentored, on-the-job training they need right from the start, and are expected to immediately contribute to facility performance.

Within the first three months of employment comes the enhancement of customer service skills through a targeted *Three Keys to Customer Satisfaction* training program. The training department has also developed and implemented a *Strive for Excellence* program to reinforce positive customer service and operations standards at specific locations. *Strive for Excellence* is comprised of

more than 40 distinct employee motivation and rewards programs supporting the day-in, day-out implementation of what was learned in the technical and customer service training classes.

"The challenge in training 8,000 frontline employees located in 2,000 facilities is to balance our corporate performance objectives with our client-specific needs," according to Colleen Niese, Standard Parking's Assistant Vice President of Corporate Training, Recruitment and Communications. "We've established a training system that both teaches our customer service performance standards and communicates our individual client expectations as well." 

Three Keys Open the Doors to Customer Satisfaction

Proudly watched over by the marketing department, a rather large folder of documents rests comfortably protected and secured in a filing cabinet. No, it's not the company's tax forms or financial statements. Rather, the folder contains unsolicited testimonial letters from customers about the high quality customer service they receive from



employees of Standard Parking. Enhancing employee customer service skills is the domain of the company's Customer Service Coordinators, supported by a team of dedicated, full-time regional training specialists.

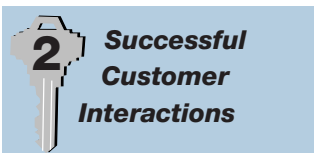
Classroom-based customer service training begins soon after orientation and the completion of the required technical skills training. Frontline employees



quickly learn the secrets to successful customer interactions and how to open the customer service doors with the *Three Keys to Customer Satisfaction*.

Key #1—First Impressions: Facility and Employee Appearance.

Employees learn the importance—both for themselves and the parking facility—of maintaining a well-groomed appearance. As the company's classroom trainers point out, in just ten seconds a typical customer forms eleven distinct impressions about Standard Parking and the service to be received.



Key #2—Successful Customer Interactions.

Nary a minute goes by without cashiers, valets and bus drivers interacting in some way with parking customers. To make sure these interactions always proceed smoothly, company



Colleen Niese, AVP of Corporate Training, explains the "Three Keys" to the company's Regional Training Specialists.

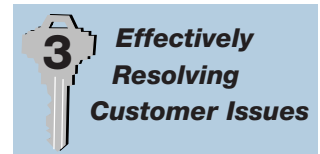
trainers emphasize the importance of looking good, warmly greeting customers, communicating in a polite and professional manner, and saying good-bye with a sincere thank you.

Key #3—Effectively Resolving Customer Issues.

Some customers want information, some want solutions and some just want an ear to bend. Training helps frontline employees to identify the issue and the appropriate approach to take.

One of the letters sitting in the company's testimonial letter folder—received from the editor of the Harvard

Health Letter—clearly reflects the value that our customer service training program imparts:



"I don't know what kind of training program Standard Parking has for their employees, but it certainly works. Instead of being a source of irritation—which a high-tech facility like this easily could be—the Harvard Medical School Garage is an underground oasis of civility."



Newark Airport Sees Big Improvement in Customer Service Ratings

The hustle and bustle at major international airports is not confined to just the ticket counters and baggage claim areas. Parking facilities also are abuzz with customer requests for high quality and timely services. APCOA/Standard Parking recently took over the parking operations at the Newark International Airport, with a mandate to improve customer service ratings at a parking facility that handles 500,000 vehicles per month in 20,000 public and employee self-park spaces. In short order, things were turned around.

“Employee turnover was quickly reduced from 12% to under 4%.”

In just a matter of months, APCOA/Standard Parking put together a dedicated workforce focused on and trained to provide excellence in customer service. Employee turnover was quickly reduced from 12% to under 4% through training programs and implementation of benefit incentives such as tuition



Customer service complaints were reduced to one in 27,500 transactions at Newark International Airport.


reimbursement and employee referral programs.

The training department developed site-specific team-building exercises such as the “Newark Buck” program, which financially rewards and recognizes employees who demonstrate exceptional customer service, good attendance and come to work in full uniform. The “Perfect Paperwork” incentive program cut customer service and audit paperwork errors in half.

The “Newark Buck” and other targeted recognition and training programs were instrumental in reducing customer service complaints to one in 27,500 transactions, while at the same



time producing a distinct increase in positive customer service letters. Also proving beneficial were the array of amenity programs implemented at the airport, which included a fleet of 20 service vehicles providing the full range of complimentary emergency services such as car battery and tire inflation assistance, and the company’s audio taping **Books-to-Go**® program at the valet station.


APCOA/Standard Parking’s employee benefit, training and recognition programs, combined with first-class facility amenities, have given the Newark airport a big boost in its customer service reputation. 



From the CEO

Things certainly have changed since the days when parking facility cashiers only made change, valets only parked cars, and maintenance employees only cleared the aisles. Those simpler images are now history, replaced by higher customer service demands and competitive pressures to deliver quality products and services. I’m happy to report that we lead the industry in all the benchmarks of customer satisfaction, and our training department is no small part of our success.

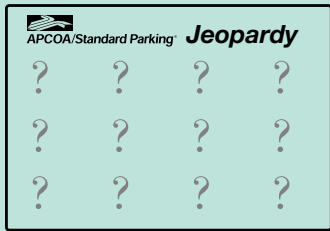
Our frontline employees, through their professional appearance and provision of services, are the people most responsible for meeting our customer service goals. We know that our continued success—and client satisfaction—depends on exemplary service provided everyday by cashiers, valets, shuttle bus drivers and maintenance employees. Accordingly, we’ve built a first-class training department specifically designed to address the customer service training and recognition requirements of our employees.

From the first orientation folder and technical training courses through any number of *Strive for Excellence* reward and recognition initiatives, our employees learn that our business is much more than parking cars. As we continue to grow, we will continue to emphasize excellence in customer service training for the benefit of our clients. 

Myron C. Warshauer
Chief Executive Officer

**Some of our popular
Reward and Recognition
Programs:**

Frontline Jeopardy



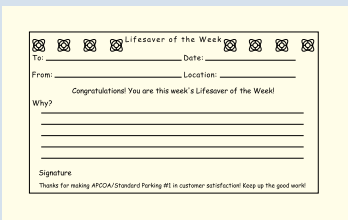
Employees win prizes for correctly answering operational and customer service questions.

Frontline Bingo



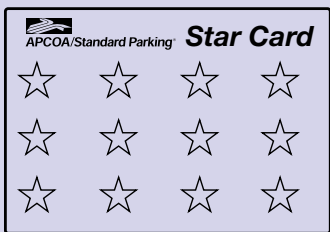
Players match policies and procedures instead of numbers.

Lifesaver of the Week



Rolls of Lifesaver candy are given to employees who provide superior customer service.

And the Oscar Goes to...



Employees nominate each other in different categories, then vote for a winner.

After the Classroom: “Jeopardy” Without a TV

So how do Standard Parking employees remain motivated to excel on the customer satisfaction front once the technical and customer service training has been completed? Using a unique *Strive for Excellence* initiative, the company backs up its training ideals with over 40 different reward, recognition and communications programs.

Strive for Excellence is launched at facilities through a weeklong introductory program entitled “Mission Possible,” during which employees receive their “mission” papers, better known as the program goals. The upcoming *Strive for Excellence* reward and recognition programs, which have been specifically selected for that facility, are announced at this time.

“Awesome Attendance” rewards team efforts at being on the job every day for a month.

Then, any number of conventional and unconventional programs are used to sustain the customer service effort and reward employees for jobs well done. One very popular program developed by the corporate training crew is “Frontline Jeopardy,” a month-long game led by facility supervisors to encourage employee knowledge of operational and customer service poli-



“A is for Accuracy” recognizes cashiers who complete accurate daily revenue reports.

cies and details. Employees who answer 12 questions correctly in a given month receive a prize such as a gift certificate. No, Alex Trebek doesn’t present the awards.

“Awesome Attendance” rewards team efforts at being on the job every day for a month. Company teams from Louisville, Akron and Indianapolis recently won pizza parties and certificates of achievement. On a related front, “Beat the Clock” is designed to eliminate tardiness by rewarding employees who show up early for work each day. “Looking Good” involves giving a playing card each week to employees in full uniform that week. At the end of the month, the employee with the best poker hand wins a gift certificate, although everyone gets a prize.

Many *Strive for Excellence* programs target specific job positions. “A is for Accuracy” recognizes cashiers who

complete accurate daily revenue reports, while “I’ve Got the Drive” showcases shuttle bus drivers and valets who provide top-notch customer service and meet performance goals.

The ultimate goal of *Strive for Excellence* is to help employees meet ever-increasing customer service expectations, all while holding down payroll costs for clients. When customers evaluate the quality of their parking experience, Standard Parking is confident that its frontline employees will be rated the best in the business.

Anyone for “If I Were Boss?”

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