

CREATING SERVICE FOR SUCCESS

Current Trends Shaping the Customer Service Industry Do More Than Change Customer Perceptions – They Can Change Lives.

There is an old saying that, “there is nothing new under the sun,” and anyone who has sat through more than one traditional customer service-training seminar can attest to its truth. However, in summer of 2008, Maureen Ginty, Senior Vice President of Marketing and Human Resources at SMG, the world’s leading facility management company, set out to break that mold, and in doing so sought to create a program that enriched not only patron experience, but the employees’ perception of themselves and coworkers alike.

With 30 years in business and more than 200 buildings in their family of convention centers, stadiums, arenas, theaters, and specific-use venues, SMG welcomes millions of customers through their doors in venues the world over. So when launching a company-wide customer service training program, generic and old-fashioned just wouldn’t do. Thus, the new K’nekt was conceived: an innovative and interpersonal approach to customer service that stresses not only the patron experience but employee development and self-expression. According to Maureen Ginty, SMG is looking to make a much stronger, more personal connection, or “K’nekt-ion” with its employees.



“Creating a great guest experience,” says Ginty, “takes creativity and must be multi-dimensional. Today’s employees are smarter and more sophisticated. In any training, they’re looking for two things: relevancy and respect. Employees need a real reason to engage. They need to understand that there is personal value to be gained; that they are not just performing well out of a sense of obligation. So many of today’s new thought thinkers are teaching through their lectures and writings that, ‘what you give off is what you get back.’ In this program we are sharing these concepts with our employees not only so they can be better at their jobs, but also improve all aspects of their lives.”



How employees engage with guests and one another makes a difference. A program such as this attempts to teach employees that the same positive approach to personal interactions will make a difference in all aspects of their lives.

SMG piloted the new K’nekt program on September 9, at the Savannah International Trade and Convention Center in Georgia. Front-line managers from SMG’s Savannah facility and the Jacksonville, Florida complex took part in the training. In their anonymous evaluations, the attendees gave the program an overall score of 9.3 out of a possible 10.

The K’nekt program itself is a combination of live and virtual facilitator training. Beyond the focus on self-development, the program is tailored to the specific needs of each facility, providing a double dose of relevancy.

No one places more importance on the guest experience than SMG President Wes Westley. He also understands the key relationship between how employees treat themselves and how they treat SMG’s guests. A quote from Mr. Westley stressing courtesy, consideration and respect appears in every K’nekt work guide provided at every training session.

SMG is training their employees to be better people in and out of the workplace while advancing the facility management industry at the same time. Not a bad connection to be making.

“Our folks said the training was useful, relevant, and above all, inspiring!” – Bob Coffey, Savannah International Trade and Convention Center General Manager

“A super ‘Wow’ ...My first impression was that it was going to be boring, and we might fall asleep. It was the total opposite: fun, interactive, class participation, puzzles, links and valuable knowledge for the work environment and everyday life. Thanks.” – Charles/Security