



The elements of great customer service

Last month, I had the pleasure of meeting Dusty, a 5-year-old Cairn Terrier who plays Toto in the touring production of *The Wizard of Oz*. Dusty was one of the dogs Cairn Rescue USA rescued from a puppy mill four years ago. He was adopted by a wonderful family in South Carolina and with much training and love found his way to the stage. Knowing this bit of trivia, the production company invited us back stage to reconnect with Dusty and meet the whole cast when the show came to Peoria. It was an awesome evening and an example of great customer service. The production company knew enough about Dusty to make the connection. It was this wonderful experience that leads me to believe that great customer service, on Broadway or in a library, includes:

1. **Hiring the right people with the right attitude.** This is fundamental. We can teach folks how to work the circulation desk or the box office, but if they don't want to work with the public, we can't teach them that!
2. **Essential training.** Each library needs to define excellent customer service. For example, is it a verbal welcome to all who enter or is it letting the phone ring no more than twice? Then, train the staff to meet and exceed that standard. There is no such thing as a turn-key employee; staff must be trained and retrained!
3. **Knowledge.** Nothing is more frustrating than dealing with a person who doesn't know what they are doing. Excellent customer service comes from staff members who know their job and who know how to make the library work for the customer.
4. **Teamwork.** If one link in the customer service chain is weak, the whole chain is weak! Staff must be empowered to help each other and to step out of the workroom when there is a line at the circulation desk or when the reference desk is backlogged! Teamwork starts at the top. Being the role model for great customer service will be the best training tool you have! Working the reference desk when they are swamped or answering a ringing phone is the best incentive for staff to be part of the team.
5. **Recognition.** Nothing empowers staff more than recognition (and a decent paycheck!). Do you have a staff customer service award? Try a day off with pay; you'll be amazed at how energizing recognition of great customer service can be!

Great customer service is all about hiring the right people for the job, defining great customer service, training them well, instilling confidence so they give their very best, and being liberal with praise and recognition. Certainly, the folks at the Wizard of Oz understand what great customer service is all about!