

CUSTOMER SERVICE AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Welcome to our occasional newsletter about customer service within Higher Education where we review topical issues of interest to the sector.

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We deny it!

Student retention

A leading American customer service researcher, Neal Raisman, claims that customer service issues account for 72% of student attrition:

30% leave because of perceived indifference 'no one cares about me as an individual',
29% report just not being happy, not fitting in and
13% leave because of staff issues.

Cultural issues

A cultural variation noticeable between students from different backgrounds can be measured on a dimension from 'achieved' to 'ascribed' status or what causes someone to respect someone else.

In an achieved status culture, respect is shown to people who have earned it through their demonstrable capabilities.

Whereas in ascribed status cultures, respect is given to the person with the titles and labels including age, gender, profession and job title. So, if a grey haired, male, university professor says something, it is probably accepted as being true. If a

younger, female administrative assistant says it, it may not be.

When it comes to giving information on the university's rules and regulations, the academic staff need to be thoroughly conversant or they should leave this to the professionals of the support staff.

Violence in universities

While the shooting massacres are mercifully extremely rare, a number of university staff we have been meeting have mentioned their fear of violence at work, both in the lecture rooms and in the offices.

Most of this is verbal, though still frightening, and we are advising university managers to consider what can be done to prevent occurrences and what support can be provided for staff both during and after such events should they happen.

Emails - the long and the short

Emails are so common that it is surprising how few people are ever trained how to write them or use them.

timrussell

Within universities they are a popular way of interacting between staff and students on matters both academic and administrative. So it is advisable to take great care over what is written and how the email is stored.

The offhand comment on the email discarded soon after being sent can turn up years later. The receiver may archive copies and even though deleted from the desk top computer it might still be stored on the hard drive or the server.

We recommend keeping all email correspondence on file until well after the student has graduated. Should the student ever bring a case against the university, it might be needed for evidence.

Critical analysis

An interesting website has been exposing the problem of students accepting information from the internet without necessarily conducting a critical analysis of the source. In a recent experiment in Singapore secondary schools, 34 of the 35 subjects believed the existence of the tree octopus. The only person to suspect a spoof reacted to the

name of the publishing company, 'Wild Haggis'.

<http://zapatopi.net/treeoctopus/>

Undergraduate blooper

Apparently a student wrote it in this year's exams:

"Control of infectious diseases is very important in case an academic breaks out."

We deny it!

There has been a great deal of publicity in the press about degree mills, offering university degrees in exchange for limited learning but considerable cash.

The biggest culprit is Belford University which offers:

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doctorate degrees to your
resume in just 7 days and open
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better jobs!**

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Yes, Belford is the address of our Australian office. No, it is most definitely not us!!!!

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