Unconference Session – **Providing Quality Customer Service While Preserving Staff Resources**

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Because of consolidations, there are fewer workers to do the same or more work. Customers aren’t receiving the same amount of individual attention and don’t like it. They complain. What to do?

1 full time and 1 part-time. Difficult to get it all done. Customers don’t like answering machines. Many won’t leave messages. When there by myself, I can’t do it all. Tell me what I can do? Help!

With the new phone system, people need to be trained to leave messages. The RFID tagging would help save us time, but then they may cut staff even more. We need more money.

I’m the only one in my office, except for a couple of hours of help in the afternoon.

Cutting phone conversations is difficult, because people always say we are their lifeline, but then others aren’t being served. Do you put time limits on calls? Or close it? Yes, after time, which varies depending on situation. Oh look! I’ve got someone else who needs me. You may call me back next week. (Don’t just say you may call me back, because they’ll call back later that day or the next day.)

Maybe they aren’t reading all the books, but like getting the mail. It is comfort of calling in a hearing voices and getting/sending mail.

What else can I do for you today? Some customers will rack their brains to think of something. You learn to whom you can say that and not. Customer service is important, but must get work done.

Often problems are with those who don’t have social skills to know when to close or when to say goodbye or they may not ever say goodbye, so you don’t know when they’re finished.

Some people call just so someone knows they are still alive.

AOCs and subregionals help reduce the calls to the regional. That works well. Two-hour phone coverage rotation. Schedule out 2 weeks in advance so can plan when to do other duties. We are seeing increased calls because our number is now on the books themselves. We just serve them and don’t worry about it. Our phone volume is steady, and not often have calls waiting. Messages left after hours. Before the schedule, it was hectic. The schedule helped us manage our time much better.

We used to be assigned patrons. No longer. It helps us manage time better.

Customers who only want to speak with one person? Most are OK with speaking with whomever, and if the person they want is available, they’ll pick it up. Others will say when the requested worker will be back. . . .

Without an overflow of phone calls, and time pressures, we can spend time with customers when needed, talking about books.

Some hard and fast limits and some are patron-specific. Limit to 12 numbers of books from TBT. Other limit to 10. Some abuse ILL, so set artificial limits for some patrons – a couple a week or a few a month.

Trying to convince library director to stop repairing C1 machines. We lost our in-house repair position. The volunteer is now ill and can’t repair. We’re getting stuck. Would like to be RC free by end of year. Others are just keeping small amounts of C1s, but not many.

We ordered peach cartridges for downloading old books – not really dup on demand – but will use KLAS is identify what is good to put on cartridge.

ILL is more time-consuming activity. 500-600/month for a couple of libraries.

Patron processing unit – incoming, outgoing, transfers, address changes. They answer phones for 1 hour a day. So, when a RA answers the phone and gets an address change, they pass it on to patron processing unit to enter into KLAS, because KLAS often freezes, etc. and it takes more time. Quicker to jot down and pass along. We focus on getting books out. Two tiers of service – nightly and then assigning books. RAs can now focus on these activities, rather than KLAS entries.

Eliminating RCs will save time. Hard to identify those who aren’t digital and haven’t had a book for a year because we aren’t doing queues anymore.

Others are doing queues. Important because patrons may have dementia or not be good at calling in. So need to proactively contact folks – find time to so do.

I wished KLAS published cheat sheet on troubleshooting. Would save time.

PIMMS will save time, looking forward to that. Will pick up time with that.

The bigger you get, the harder it is to get everything done. Too many patrons and issues to cover. Can’t do it all.

Not mentioning cassettes to new customers. We can serve quicker and better. We don’t tell them about cassettes.

OK is no longer sending out C1s.

Reactive working – job is putting out whatever fire is burning. Feeling like we are chasing our tails. Weeding out RCs when have the time. Biggest issue is 4 ft staff and director 15 years ago. Now 1 fulltime staff and 1 fulltime director. Three part-timers answer phones when the 2 staff aren’t there. Otherwise, the 2 fulltime staff answer phones all day.

A lot of ILL is cassette.

Elderly people who don’t want to change is our problem.

I had customer like that and now she is downloading on BARD. We sent her a digital machine. She let it sit for the longest time, but gradually go into it. She calls and excitedly discusses the books she’s downloaded. We didn’t really do anything. She did it all.

Volunteers will help with inspections of incoming materials, help us with mailings – newsletters, XESS. We rely on volunteers to do heavy processing.

Juggling act to do work that volunteers used to do. Volunteers we no longer have.

Issues: Being available at reception, handling walk-ins, troubleshooting technology questions, etc. while juggling staff vacations. Absorbing customers from other offices that have changed and now people coming to them. More walk-ins.