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Engaging Your Community:

Addressing Safety & Liability Concerns While Improving Customer Relationships

Michael G. Fann, ARM-P, MBA

Michael Fann has engaged in a career dedicated to risk management and organizational development. With over 28 years' experience in consulting with organizations, providing training to leaders and line staff, and analyzing past behavior with an eye toward future improvement and excellence, Fann is passionately driven to help make organizations better, their employees safer, and their property and finances more secure. He has also been known to entertain with bad karaoke, grace the stage with a Blues Brothers routine, and sing an Elvis song at the insistence of Chinese officials.

Fann is a graduate of Middle Tennessee State University (B.B.A. – Finance & Political Science), and the University of Mississippi (M.B.A.). While in graduate school at Ole Miss, his concentration was in Management. Fann earned the Associate in Risk Management (ARM) designation in 1988, and the Risk Management for Public Entities (RMPE) certificate in 2001.

He has worked in the Risk Control field since January, 1986. Currently as Director of Loss Control for the TML Risk Management Pool, Fann is responsible for a department that provides loss control assistance and services to approximately 500 entities participating in the pool. Further, Fann has twice served on the Board of Directors of PRIMA, and has twice served as President of TennesseePRIMA. He currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Public Entity Risk Institute (PERI) based in Alexandria, Virginia.

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A native of Nashville, Dalton is a graduate of Tennessee State University (B.S., 1993) and East Tennessee State University (M.C.M., 1995). He has previous local government experience with the City of Alcoa as Assistant to the City Manager and Human Resources Director.

A member of the Loss Control staff since September, 1998, Dalton has served as a risk management resource for the municipalities, schools, utilities, housing authorities, human resource agencies, and other governmental entities throughout Tennessee. Dalton provides risk identification surveys for safety & liability exposures, and frequently conducts safety and liability loss control training classes for TML Pool participants. Dalton also assists in developing publications and bulletins. He received the ARM designation in 2001, his RMPE certificate in 2003. Dalton serves on the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Personnel Management Association (TPMA), and remains active with TnPRIMA, TCMA, TRPA. He is a Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI) through NRPA and the Playground Safety Institute.

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Objectives

- > Discuss how local government influences many elements of community life.
- > Outline how perceptions can affect citizens opinions about local government.
- > Outline why community engagement can help prepare your organization for when a community crisis occurs.
- > Discuss why improved customer experiences with local government are important.

The Nature of Local Government

Local government has influence (if not complete control) over the “what” and the “how” of many elements of community life:

- Land use
- Budgets and taxation
- Fire and Police
- Schools
- Utilities and rates
- Codes & Permitting
- Leisure, Streets, and Sanitation Services

The Nature of Local Government

If poorly managed, decisions made in these areas can create negative perceptions of local government by citizens.



Citizen Perception

A recent citizen perception study found the following:

- Citizen perception was formed primarily by a personal experience with the local government service provider.
- The nature of the interactions with government employees and agencies is critical to the way people judge an agency and government itself.
- Citizens expressed deep outrage and resentment when they were treated with disrespect.

Citizen Perception

A recent citizen perception study found the following:

- Citizens feel that some, but not all, governmental services are better in upscale neighborhoods.
- Despite their sophistication and interest in local government, citizens feel powerless and say that they cannot influence changes in how city services are delivered.
- People want and like information from government.

Citizen Perception of Government

When the perception about government is:

Bureaucratic
Poor Service
Poor Customer Service
Lack of Transparency
Will Not Listen



Citizens and Customers response is:

Disengagement
Indifference
Apathy
Anger
Frustrations

Are anger and frustration issues real?



Managing the Interpersonal Transaction

Positive &/or Negative Interpersonal Transactions

The vast majority of interpersonal transactions (interactions) are **neutral** until one of the parties assigns an emotional value to it. These values can be positive or negative. Even if you assign a positive value to the transaction, this does not preclude you from remaining diligent to the possibility that the transaction could turn negative (or even dangerous) based upon the actions/values of the other party(ies). For effective community engagement, our task is to continue to assign a positive emotional value to each of our interpersonal transactions until the other party(ies) makes it necessary for the transaction to become negative. Even then, it is imperative that the amount of the negative emotional value should rise to only what is necessary. For example, **Graham v Connor** [490 U.S. 386 (1989)] authorizes law enforcement officers to use force that is reasonably necessary based upon the totality of the circumstances. The values we assign to the transaction (& act upon) are part of that "totality."

Facebook post (June 2015) by a long-time friend:

Here is my rant on two items, same incident. Late today I am sitting in the Courthouse parking lot where I've picked up my wife most every day for two years. This lot is also a makeshift shuttle lot from garage parking over to the special event nearby. I back into a spot well out of everyone's way to wait on wife.

Black cop pulls in front of my parked truck hits his blue lights, and walks up to my window which is rolled down. He looks pissed, puts hand on gun and asks me ***if I can read signs?*** I said "excuse me?" With hand on his gun holster asks again if I can read (the shuttle lot signs)? I stated I was there to pick up my wife whose court worked over today and pointed at the Courthouse... He asked ***if I wanted to go to jail or move my vehicle out of that lot?*** He said the buses cannot pass through...

I never raised my voice, rolled my eyes, etc. Total bulls#!t and an abruptly rude a\$\$hole officer in my opinion. Truly a black eye on the department, or perhaps just the way the department has become? Could have just asked me to move from the lot rather than his harsh approach. This chief and the a\$\$es he has hired and fostered have lost any and all support from me. Point two: I observed bus after bus after bus drive out of a long line of waiting buses with only two or three persons on board! This absurd waste of taxpayer monies is far out of hand. What does each empty bus, driver, fuel, etc. cost us to haul three people over and over to an event? Nobody is paying attention to this leadership...

Of Wolves, Sheep and Sheepdogs

To paraphrase noted police training expert, Lt Col (ret) Dave Grossman, the public is made up of wolves and sheep... Law Enforcement's (and to a degree, public servants' in general) calling is to serve as sheepdogs... and we depend upon a public servant's ability to know the difference. You'd better not treat the wolves as though they are sheep for your own safety... but you absolutely can't treat the sheep like they are wolves... As Grossman points out, the primary difference between the wolves and the sheepdogs is compassion for the sheep. If law enforcement (and other public servants) can't discern the difference between the wolves and the sheep and act accordingly, society is in more trouble than we can imagine...

Let us resolve to interact with the general public with respect... as far as it is within my power to do so.

Organizational Issues

- What are possible results of citizen anger and frustration?
 - Contentious interactions
 - Increased employee stress
 - Decline in productivity
 - Increased incidence of employee absenteeism
 - Discontent among employees
 - Increased worker errors that can create liability issues



Organizational Issues

- What are possible extreme results of citizen anger and frustration?

Ferguson, Missouri



City Property Damaged



Citizens Arrested



Community Damage

No Community Trust, Loyalty, or Cohesiveness

Organizational Issues

- Some extreme results of citizen anger and frustration can lead to violence.



What Should Be Our Focus?

Community Engagement



Community Engagement

- What is Community Engagement?

This is a general term used to describe a philosophy and approach where local governments build ongoing community partnerships, provide improved public information, and establish service standards, in the hopes of strengthening the relationship with the "reasonable people" in the community.

Positive Community Relationships

Law Enforcement has realized the value of engaging the community when it developed community policing.

Community policing is a form of community engagement that is specific to law enforcement

The DOJ states:

Community policing is, in essence, a collaboration between the police and the community that identifies and solves community problems...The neighborhood patrol officer, backed by the police organization, helps community members mobilize support and resources to solve problems and enhance their quality of life.

Positive Community Relationships

- Why Community Engagement?
 - Better identification & understanding of community issues or concerns
 - Increased opportunities to provide context and balance to the discussion
 - Transparency & Increased trust
 - More civil discussions and interactions



Positive Community Relationships

- Why Community Engagement?
 - Improved local government decision-making and actions
 - Improved citizen experience with local government
 - Decreased chances of confrontation and even violence towards public employees



Community Engagement is Relationship Building



What's in your account?

From Customer Service to Customer Experience



*Going from "Good" to "Great"
as you serve your Citizens & Customers!*

Who Are We?

We are Public Service Providers



It is not about US, it is about our citizens and customers!

What is a Customer?

- A customer/citizen is a person who brings us their wants or needs and it is our job to “reasonably” assist them.



What is a Customer/Citizen?

- A customer/citizen is:
 - The most important person to us...by phone, email, or in person.
 - Not dependent upon us, we exist to serve them.
 - Not an interruption of our work... they are the purpose of our work.

What is a Customer/Citizen?

- We are not doing a favor by serving them... they are doing us a favor by allowing us the opportunity to do so.
- A customer/citizen is not someone to argue with... no one has ever won an argument with a citizen/customer.

Customer Service Definition

All interaction between the consumer and the product/service provider at the time of the sale/service.

It incorporates customer expectation and opinion by focusing on whether the product or service has met the customer's expectation. That "focus" is evidenced by the dedication, attitude, and integrity of the service provider.



Customer Experience Definition

Customer "Experience" differs from "Service" in that it is the sum of all experiences & perceptions a customer has with a services provider for the duration of their on-going business relationship. Customer Service is essential because it *is the foundation of* the total customer experience!



Customer Experience

The more we focus on the “Total Experience”, the more we are doing to pull the “reasonable people” to our side.



Bridge the Perception Gap



For most, perception is reality!

Engaging Your Customer

Understand that customers usually have two basic needs:

- *Rational – The basic assistance requested*
- *Emotional – How the customer “feels” about the service they receive.*

Emotions are directly related to the way customers rate your service. For instance, feelings of:

- Delight, relief, and sense of belonging – Good Service
- Frustration, anger, being unwelcome – Poor Service

“In many situations, customers want service and assurance.”

Engaging Your Customer

- Warm greetings. Smile and make eye contact, then greet your citizens/customers with enthusiasm and make them feel welcome and valued. Example, “Good morning” or “Good afternoon”, “How may I help you today?”
- Show professionalism and courtesy when engaging citizens/customers. Use the following terms, when and where they are appropriate: “Please”, “Thank You”, “Yes/No, Sir/Ma’am”



Engaging Your Customer

- Make the first move. Initiate contact with citizens/customers by greeting them first rather than waiting for them to come to you.
- As you learn the names of citizens/customers, use their names during the course of the engagement. "Thank you Mr. Fann for allowing me to serve you today!" or "Hello Mrs. Williams, it is good to see you again. How may I help you today?"
- Focus on one citizen/customer at a time.

When there is a Problem...

Manage Customer Expectations

- *Be honest*
- *Provide the worse case scenario, but tell them what you will seek to do, then do it--Under promise and over deliver.*
- *Give them your name and let them know you will follow-up with them (and when), then do it.*



Dealing with Irate Customers

1. Stay calm and try not to take it personally
2. Let the client vent, without interrupting
3. **NEVER ARGUE WITH THEM**
4. Acknowledge the client's emotions and apologize about how they feel (empathy).
5. Refocus them on solving the current problem



Dealing with Irate Customers

6. Seek a full resolution, if you can
7. Offer a partial resolution, if and when it is appropriate
8. Agree to disagree, only if you must



Barriers to Bridging the Gap



Who is Responsible?

Remember:

- Each employee is a "Good-will Ambassador" for your organization.
- When Citizens/Customers think of your organization, they think of you.

Therefore:

- We must listen & seek understanding
 - Remove the barriers!
- Go the "extra mile" to assist them.
 - Treat them like you want to be treated

YOU ARE!

Community Engagement Action Plan

- ❖ Leadership should make community engagement an organizational priority.
- ❖ Build your team and develop your engagement plan
- ❖ The Action Plan must address how to keep customer/citizen efforts current and how to infuse the appropriate culture into the organization.
- ❖ Train your employees on the soft skills (customer service, civility, communication, & diversity) and hire employees with good interpersonal skills.

Community Engagement Action Plan

- ❖ Know your community, citizens, and customers: assess and understand their needs.
- ❖ Seek greater opportunities to engage citizens, customers and community groups to build relationships and trust.
 - ❖ Seek multichannel approaches: *that includes a comprehensive array of communication vehicles (i.e. phone, mail, email, social, mobile, web, etc.)*
 - ❖ Appoint a Neighborhood/Community Engagement Coordinator
 - ❖ Develop relationships w/ Associations/Clergy/community leaders
- ❖ Community engagement must be deliberate, intentional, ongoing, and not in response to a crises!



**Be the Director of
Your Own Movie**



APPENDICES

**Additional Resources Designed to
Improve Interpersonal Skills,
Accelerate Customer Service,
and Intentionally & Positively Engage Your Community**

APPENDICES

Establishing Constructive Customer Relationships

Define Customer Experience

- To Create a Positive Impression
- You Know It When You See It... and You Feel It When It Happens
- Who Defines the Customer Experience?



First Impression

- How much time do you have to make a first impression?
- 30 seconds

First Impression/Greeting

- Eye Contact
- Tell the Customer Your Name
- Call Them by Their Name
- Ask How You Can Help
- Make Them Feel Important & Valued
- They are the Most Important Person

APPENDICES

Customer Perception

- **Reliability**
- **Responsiveness**
- **Assurance**
- **Empathy v Sympathy**
- **Tangibles**

Reliability

- Tell the customer what you are going to do
- Do it on time
- If you cannot meet the deadline, tell them
- Keep your word

Responsiveness

- Listen – Listen – Listen
- Take the issue seriously
- Be courteous
- Over promise/ Over deliver
- Do everything in a timely manner

- **Barriers to Effective Listening:**
 - We can think faster than a speaker can talk, and we jump to conclusions
 - We are distracted and allow our minds to wander
 - We lose patience, and decide we are not interested
 - We overreact to what's said and respond emotionally
 - We interrupt
 - Other barriers include the use of “absolutes” and “limits”
 - Thinking or speaking in absolutes:
 - “It will **never** work.”
 - “We **always** do it that way.”

- **How to Be a Better Listener**
 - Ask Clarifying Questions:
 - “What do you mean when you say...?”
 - “Have you really spent...?”
 - Verify by Restating What You Heard:
 - “So, you're saying that....”
 - “If I understand correctly, you said....”

APPENDICES

Customer Perception (continued)

Assurance

- Provide knowledgeable service
- Assure the customer they are important

Empathy v Sympathy

- Truly care
- Be accessible
- Do not tell them, "I know how you feel"

Tangibles

- Have working equipment
- Positive speech
- Appearance

Customers Complain

- When you...
 - Are rude
 - Are indifferent
 - Do not listen
 - Keep them waiting a long time
 - Do not provide what you promise
 - Do not provide what they expect

APPENDICES

Service Excellence



- **Exceptional Customer Experience**

ECS = Expectations + Perception + _____

How are you perceived in regard to your customer's experience?

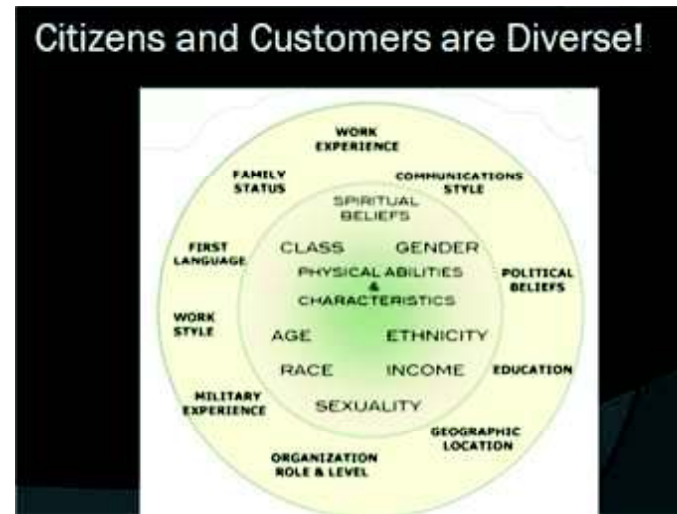


Going the Extra Mile

- **Use words/phrases like...**
 - No problem
 - I can do that for you
 - Sure
 - My pleasure

APPENDICES

Diverse Individuals, Families, Neighborhoods & Cultures



Diversity is growing!

- ④ By 2042, there will be no single demographic majority; people of color will comprise more than 50 percent of the U.S. population.
- ④ By 2050, 1 in 5 people living in the US will be Hispanic.
- ④ Disabilities affect 20% of all Americans – and growing – not as distinguishable as before!
- ④ There are an estimated 9 million LGBT individuals in the U.S.

References: US Census Bureau, The Gallup Organization, Employee Discrimination in the Workplace, Public Opinion Poll, December 8, 2005; Sirota Survey.

APPENDICES

Diverse Individuals, Families, Neighborhoods & Cultures (continued)

Organizational Challenges to customer diversity...

If not managed properly, chances for CONFLICT can occur.

➤ Challenging Customers:

- Older
- Disabled
- Different Ethnicity/Customs/Culture
- Angry



➤ Older Customers

- Be respectful
- Slow your speech and enunciate clearly
- Offer physical assistance
- Do not use slang



➤ Angry Customers

- Stay calm
- Do not take it personally
- Identify the problem
- Make it quick if possible
- Show appreciation
- Allow another employee to assist them



➤ When the Customer is at Fault:

➤ Remember...

- Customer satisfaction is the goal
- Don't place blame
- Get to the cause of the problem
- Be cooperative
- Find a mutually agreeable solution

APPENDICES

Difficult Employees

- **Belligerent** - hostile; sarcastic; spoiled; spread tension both internally and externally
- **Arrogant** - know more than anyone; often ignore policy and procedure
- **Deceptive** - do anything to get their way; create problems to solve them for attention
- **Discourteous** - often frustrated; angry; defiant; disrespectful
- **Are you someone who ... ?**

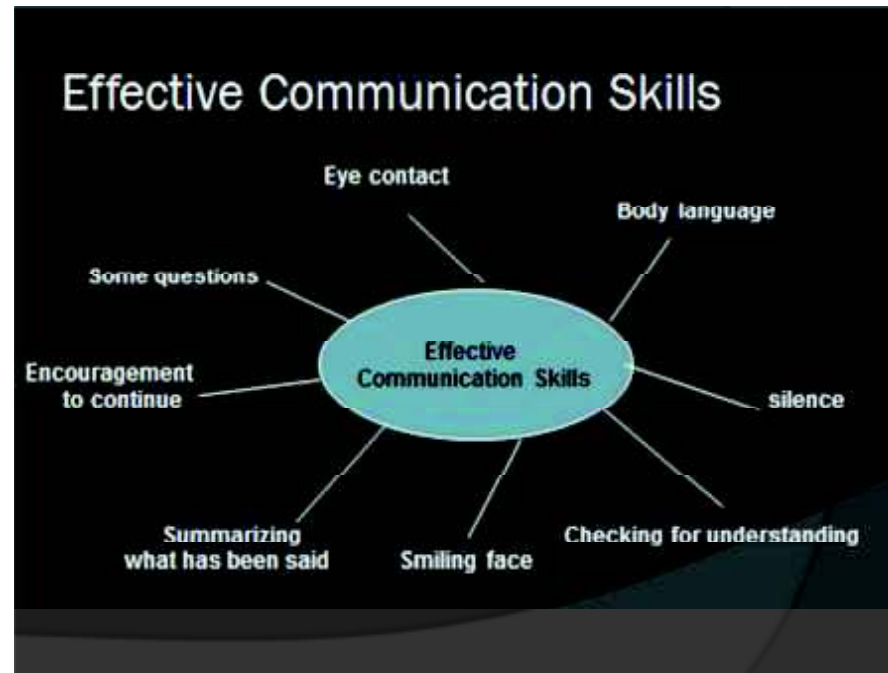
The Communication Equation

- **Communication is...**
 - **Hearing = 40%**
 - **Visual = 55%**
 - **Words = 5%**

Using Your Voice

- **Do you...**
 - Become loud when angry or upset
 - Speak faster when upset or frustrated
 - Stay aware of your tone at all times
 - Sound confident but not arrogant
 - Speak clearly
 - Modify your voice for the situation
- **Telephone Skills**
 - Know how to operate the phone/equipment
 - Speak slowly and clearly
 - Be courteous
 - State your name and position
 - Address the caller by name
 - Listen
 - Take notes
 - Do not eat or drink while on the phone

APPENDICES



Customer Service Basics

- Do not interrupt
- Do not change the subject
- Do not finish their sentences
- Do not give unwanted advice
- Keep casual eye contact
- Keep good posture
- Be aware of facial expressions
- Mindfulness
- Ask questions/ understand the issue

APPENDICES

The Seven Laws of Customer Service

- **Law #1 – The customer wants 3 things...**
 - To be heard
 - To be understood
 - To feel important
- **Law #2 – Remember to smile, make casual eye contact, communicate**
- **Law #3 – Listen – Listen – Listen**
- **Law #4 – Sympathize, do not empathize**
- **Law #5 – Determine a solution for the complaint**
- **Law #6 – Clarify the situation**
- **Law #7 – Follow-up**



Guidelines on Creating Your Personal Customer Service Vision

Great citizen/customer service starts with a clear and compelling vision that describes how you want your citizens/customers to feel about your service. This vision acts as a compass to guide your actions and keep you focused on delivering value.

Use the worksheet below to write your personal customer service vision.¹

| Step | Action |
|------|--|
| 1 | Why does my organization exist? Your organization might have a vision or mission statement that helps answer this question. If not Think about how your organization should serve its citizens/customers. |
| 2 | How do I contribute to organizational success? Describe your personal role in helping the organization succeed |
| 3 | How do I want my customers to feel about my service? |
| 4 | Write one Sentence that describes your personal customer service vision. Use your answers above to guide your answers. |

¹ Customer Service Fundamentals by Jeff Toister

Guidelines on Empathizing With Your Customer

Empathizing with your customer can come from a similar, relatable experience. Below are some steps that can be implemented to assist you:

Step 1 - Learn to listen actively to citizens/customers when they are speaking. Pay specific attention to the details as to why customers are angry. Often a citizen/customer may be angry at the lack of attention of a previous co-worker, and this may be a bigger problem than the issue with the product or service.

Step 2 - Apologize to the citizen/customer and relate that you understand why they are upset. A simple phrase such as, "I truly understand how that could make you angry," is often all that you need to convey to the citizen/customers that you are concerned about their plight.

Step 3 - Express a sincere desire to help. "Let me see what I can do," or "we'll get things straightened out for you," are simple ways to let the citizen/customer know you will do what you can to resolve the issue.

Step 4 - **Be polite even when the citizen/customer isn't.** Getting riled up by a citizen/customer who is out of line only fuels his or her dissatisfaction. Keep your tone pleasant and allow them the ability to vent at times while you refocus the conversation to a solution.

Step 5 - Ask the citizen/customer for input, such as a solution he would be satisfied with. They don't always expect the moon and will be loyal to the organization for a willingness to try and right any wrongs that may have been done. Finding out what the citizen/customer expects may help you exceed their expectations or negotiate a middle ground. ¹

¹ Adapted from:
How to Use Empathy With Customer Service
by Kay Miranda, Demand Media
<http://smallbusiness.chron.com/use-empathy-customer-service-920.html>

As the service provider, this worksheet can help you understand how a citizen/customer feels when he or she experiences a service problem.²

| Step | Action |
|------|--|
| 1 | Describe the problem: |
| 2 | Describe why you think the customer was upset. |
| 3 | Think about a situation where you had a similar feeling. What was it like? |
| 4 | What can you do to show that you understand and care about your customer's needs? |

²Adapted from: Customer Service Fundamentals by Jeff Toister

Guidelines on Building Rapport

Building rapport with your citizens/customers is an essential skill. Use the worksheet below to identify rapport-building techniques you may already use, as well as some new ones you might like to try.

- Warm greetings. Smile and make eye contact, then greet your citizens/customers with enthusiasm and make them feel welcome and valued. Example, “Good morning” or “Good afternoon”, “How may I help you today?”
- Show professionalism and courtesy when engaging citizens/customers. By using the following terms, when and where they are appropriate: “Please”, “Thank You”, “Yes/No Sir/Mam”
- Make the first move. Initiate contact with citizens/customers by greeting them first rather than waiting for them to come to you.
- As you learn the names of citizens/customers, use their names during the course of the engagement. “Thank you Mr. Fann for allowing me to serve you today!” or “Hello Mrs. Crawford, it is good to see you again. How may I help you today?”
- Focus on one citizen/customer at a time. We all know that serving the public can be hectic when things get busy. Even so, try to be fully present each customer so they don’t feel ignored.
- Follow-up. A great way to show citizens/customers you care is to follow-up with them after providing service. As time permits, it doesn’t hurt to follow-up with several citizens/customers by telephone and ask:
 - Was everything okay with your service?
 - If not, what do we need to know so that we may better serve you in the future?
 - Is there anything else we need to know?
 - Thank them for their time and comments.

What else do you suggest?

Telephone Etiquette Guidelines for Citizen/Customer Service

Telephone Etiquette Guidelines

1. Make sure you speak clearly as you answer the phone, and always identify yourself.
2. Before placing a caller on hold, ask their permission first and thank them.
3. It is better to return a call than to keep someone on hold too long. If the phone rings back to you, you've kept them on hold too long.
4. Do not forget to return the call as you promised.
5. Do not permit the phone to ring into the office more than three times.
6. Always use a pleasant, congenial and friendly tone.
7. Never interrupt the person while he/she is talking to you.
8. Never engage in an argument with a caller.
9. Do not handle an unhappy caller's concern openly, and in public.
10. Do not answer the phone if you are eating or chewing gum.
11. Do not give the impression that you are rushed. It is better to return the call when you can give the person the time and attention you need to handle the reason for their call.
12. Return calls promptly that have been left on voice mail.
13. Always get the best number (and an alternate) and the best time to have a call returned to the caller, especially if a manager or another employee must return the call.
14. Do not ever leave a message with someone else or on a voice mail regarding details of a delinquent account. Instead, leave a message asking the person to call you back. State who you are and the name of your organization.
15. Always make collection calls in private and away from the visitor flow or public areas.
16. Do not call a citizen/customer at home before 8:00AM or after 9:00PM, unless it is an emergency or they've given you permission to do so.
17. When hanging up the phone, make sure the caller or person called hangs up first; Otherwise, always hang up the phone, gently. ¹

¹ Adapted from: Avis Ward, "20 Business Telephone Etiquette Tips"
<http://www.customerservicemanager.com/20-business-telephone-etiquette-tips.htm>

Guidelines for Enhancing Your Likeability via Email

The checklist below describes five techniques you can use to enhance your liability with the citizens and customers you communicate with via email. Use the checklist to evaluate your own emails and identify any opportunities for improvement.

- Use of appropriate greeting. A short greeting, such as, “Dear Mr. Darden” or “Dear Mrs. Housley,” can start your email off with a friendly tone.
- Get straight to the point. Make sure the purpose of your email is included in the first paragraph. Citizens/customers often skim and scan messages, and it can be annoying when it is hard to find the main information of the email.
- Be helpful! First, ensure that you have answered their concerns. Second, try to anticipate any questions citizens/customers might have when they read your message, and include the answers to those emails too. Helpful emails are not only pleasing to citizens/customers, but also they often cut down on the amount of messages sent back and forth to resolve the problem.
- Proofread! Before sending the email, proofread it. Use correct punctuation, grammar, and spelling. Avoid writing emails as though you were sending a text message. A professionally-written email will create a more positive message to your citizen/customer.

What other techniques can you use to increase the level of professionalism and likeability your emails?

Panera Hosts OPD's Coffee with a Cop Thursday

POSTED: APRIL 1, 2015

The Oxford (MS) Police Department will be hosting "*Coffee with a Cop*" 7 to 9 a.m. Thursday at Panera Bread, 1902 Jackson Ave. W.



Deputy Chief James Owens and Chief Joey East at the Molly Barr Road station.

"There are no speeches or presentations planned. This is intended to be a casual environment for my staff and I to meet with the public without an agenda," Chief Joey East said. "The benefits line up with our core values including service, community relationships and integrity. We are committed as public servants to meet the needs of the citizens and our fellow employees. We are so excited to be hosting this event again."

The department made contact with Panera Bread staff who expressed an interest in their willingness to host the event plus provide coffee to members of the public that participate. Their response was overwhelmingly positive.

"We're happy to be committed to the cause and to combine community service with our restaurant," Panera general manager Joey Keough said. "We were very excited to provide the location for 'Coffee with a Cop' as we are relatively new to the community. We are committed as public servants to meet the needs of the citizens and our fellow employees."

The public is invited to come and participate in the OPD's Coffee with a Cop, meet the chief of police, members of the command staff, investigators, and most importantly some of the officers that patrol your communities.

Miller Hollingsworth is a HottyToddy.com staff reporter

Mt. Juliet police chief uses kindness on the job

Andy Humbles, ahumbles@tennessean.com March 30, 2015

Mt. Juliet Police Chief James Hambrick believes the community relations struggle many departments face in today's landscape can be overcome on the front end. "It's not us against them," he says. "It's us and them." Hambrick, 53, has a background that shapes that perspective.

He started his law enforcement career at age 33. Hambrick left his job working the third shift at a local Mapco after being recruited by officers who stopped in the store.

Now Hambrick is a modern day renaissance man an ordained minister who regularly preaches, a musician proficient at the bass and drums who plays regularly at Grace Fellowship Ministries in Mt. Juliet where he is an associate pastor. Hambrick has also been a chaplain, licensed counselor with a Ph.D. in psychology and adjunct professor who teaches criminal justice and church leadership courses at Union University.

It all shapes Hambrick as a man and a police chief of the growing suburb that seems at ease with its department while friction between residents & law enforcement have increased in many areas nationwide.

"Ferguson had challenges before Mike Brown, but that was the event that exposed the problems Ferguson had," Hambrick said. "Often the only interaction police have with a community are traffic violations or calls for service when usually something bad is happening. I try to be approachable, visible and as transparent as I can be."

Hambrick is an African-American in a predominantly white community with mostly white leadership. He was hired as Mt. Juliet's chief of police in December 2012, after eight years as the assistant chief.

In February while patrolling on a slow day at the office, Hambrick answered a call to remove a homeless man in a wheelchair for safety reasons. The chief then paid for his lunch and arranged for further help to get the man where he was going. "He does that kind of thing all the time," said Chuck Groover, friend and president of the Mt. Juliet Breakfast Rotary Club where Hambrick is a member. "His life journey has set his course, and I know he's had a real sense of God opening doors to use his gifts for serving the public."

Hambrick, a 1979 graduate of Stratford High School, joined the Navy and then returned to Nashville to work several jobs that included being a pastor and starting businesses. He eventually moved to Mt. Juliet, where his wife, Denise, grew up, and in 1994-95, he found himself working nights at a former Mapco in the city just off Interstate 40.



Mt. Juliet Police Chief James Hambrick drinks coffee at the department's monthly Coffee with a Cop.

(Photo: Shelley Mays / The Tennessean)

Mt. Juliet police chief uses kindness on the job (continued)

Several officers, including the late Sgt. Jerry Mundy, who was killed in the line of duty in 2003, would stop by the store when Hambrick worked and encouraged him to apply. Mundy and Wilson County Sheriff's deputy John Musice were both killed trying to help stop Fallon Tallent, who was on the run from police in a pursuit that began in East Tennessee. "I looked at the way the officers conducted themselves, and something started in the confidence they were showing in me," Hambrick said.

Hambrick worked as a dispatcher for several months and was hired as a patrolman in early 1996. He generally worked the third shift and also became the department chaplain. He tried to make arrests "a teaching moment," with encouragement and offering suggestions on how to "get back on track."

"You think of the chief of police as a powerful person, but he's one of us," said Luke Winchester, who owned the Sonic on Mt. Juliet Road in 1999. Winchester recalled Hambrick's influence on three siblings who were employees working at the restaurant when their mother unexpectedly died. "That was my first impression."

Mt. Juliet is ranked as the state's fourth-safest city, according to the most recent rankings released by Movoto Real Estate, which evaluates crime data. Mt. Juliet has minimal violent crime, according to Hambrick, but growth has presented challenges such as more shoplifting calls with the city's considerable retail development.

Hambrick hopes to add officers as the city grows, but his focus remains on community policing and interaction with residents. Hambrick and the department command staff are regularly available for group visits and speaking engagements. The chief also launched Coffee with a Cop, a monthly social event at a local restaurant, in June 2013 for the public to meet with officers. "This is a great learning model for any agency," said resident Larry Levy. "The playing field is level."

"Our department has built a good reputation for community outreach," Sgt. Scott Fulton said. "Chief sets the example for the department on how officers should act and interact with the community. When we interview new officers, it's are you going to fit these core values?"

Gallatin mayor to hold 'After Hours' meeting

Date: March 14, 2015

Gallatin Mayor Paige Brown will hold her first "*Mayor's Office After Hours*" meeting March 24.

This is an opportunity for residents to meet one on one with Brown and discuss issues or ideas. The mayor plans to have similar meetings throughout the year.

The event is 4:30-6 p.m. in the Mayor's Office at City Hall, 132 W. Main St. It is not necessary to make an appointment.



(Photo: Submitted)

East Knoxville residents back 'Officer G'

Former NAACP president: 'We are not Ferguson'

By: Don Jacobs

A crowd gathered as Knoxville Police Department Lt. Gordon Gwathney struggled with the screaming black woman in the public housing development. Gwathney already had shot his stun gun at the 5-foot-2-inch tall woman, but her crack cocaine high made her impervious to the electric jolt designed to freeze the muscles of large men. She ripped the metal wires from her body and continued to fight. As he tussled with the 110-pound woman, the crowd of onlookers in Walter P. Taylor Homes swelled. Gwathney's radio was ripped from his uniform as he forced the woman to the ground, so calling for help as the crowd closed in around him was not an option.

As he fought to get handcuffs on the squirming woman, two people from the crowd jumped into the fray.

"I saw something I thought I'd never see — people come to the aid of an officer," Dewey Roberts, former president of Knoxville NAACP, told a community group last week. "They were telling her to calm down and they got his radio that had been knocked loose."

Roberts witnessed the event through a window at the Dr. Lee Williams Complex, a senior citizens center he oversees in Walter P. Taylor Homes. Roberts had seen the confrontation develop despite Gwathney "trying to de-escalate the situation" and worried as he saw the crowd of black onlookers encircle the lone officer.

"With my experiences with police over the years, I was just amazed," said the 69-year-old Roberts who led Knoxville's black community through the racial tinderbox in the late 1990s when several black men died during confrontations with Knoxville officers. "And it wasn't just a few people, it was the whole crowd. I was shaking my head in disbelief, but it was a good feeling."

Gwathney, an 18-year veteran of the Knoxville Police Department, said the woman bit two of the residents who came to his aid. The 28-year-old woman, he said, was wanted on 10 outstanding warrants and had been ordered to stay out of Walter P. Taylor homes.

The gathering crowd was a reassurance and not a threat for him. These are his people. He knows their names. He goes to their children's graduations. To residents of East Knoxville, Gwathney is "Officer G."

"He treats us like people; he knows our names," said Linda Conner, a resident of Walter P. Taylor Homes whose two adult children benefited from Gwathney's influence. "One kind of got off on the wrong foot and he picked her up in the ninth grade and started to mentor her," the 49-year-old Conner said. "He came to her graduation. Other officers come through and they're going to run. Officer G comes through and he gets out and talks to people."

"Because they wear their pants low, Officer G knows that doesn't mean you're a drug dealer or criminal. We know and respect him. He's a blessing out here." Gwathney has spent 12 of his 18 years in Knoxville's housing projects. His Seymour upbringing suits him better in East Knoxville. "I worked West Knoxville, but I like this better; I fit in better," he said.

It wasn't always like this for Gwathney. When he joined the force, Knoxville Mayor Victor Ashe was trying to ease racial tensions twisted to the point officers were alerted to threats that snipers on rooftops would pick them off the street. Ashe in 1998 created the Police Advisory Review Committee to oversee investigations of alleged police misconduct in the black community.

"When I first came on, there's no way I would walk through Walter P. by myself," he said of the majority black development. "Now, I can do that at 3 a.m." Roberts recalls getting "10-15 calls a week about harassment by KPD" during his two decades leading the Knoxville NAACP. "Police have changed the trend with their training, and training is everything," Roberts said.

David Rausch, who this week celebrates his fourth year as chief of the Police Department, agreed training officers on diversity, treating people with respect, creating walking patrols and attending community meetings has dissolved boundaries and created relationships. Rausch said police training employs "procedural justice where we listen to people and not go into a situation with your mind made up, so people know they are being heard."

"They no longer see us as an occupying force," the chief said. "We're seeing a huge decrease in complaints, a decrease in resistance responses and an increase in compliments."

Roberts, however, cautions how fragile the nascent trust between police and minorities can be. "You can never rest because it only takes one incident to ignite the passion we've seen before. But our mayor and police chief are ready to de-escalate any situation."

"We are not Ferguson."



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