



COLUMBUS
METROPOLITAN
LIBRARY

The
Customer-First
Experience

INTRODUCTION

We've all had really great customer experiences.

You walk into a business or organization to get or solve something. You leave feeling like you were the most important customer ever. Like they knew who you were and what you wanted. **They put you first. We, too, strive to create the same positive, memorable, and human experience.**

At the library, our customers come to us to find, explore, discover, solve, and do. We're available, engaged, and responsive. We listen to them. And we help them.

We put the customer first. Our to-do list comes second to the customers' to-do lists. Our positive attitude, meaningful interactions, and productive transactions make each and every customer feel like they're the most important customer ever.

THE CUSTOMER-FIRST MODEL



THE BENEFITS OF A CUSTOMER-FIRST EXPERIENCE

THE CUSTOMER FEELS

IMPORTANT

The customer has your full attention.

ACCOMPLISHED

They completed their task.

SMART

They feel informed and educated.

EMPOWERED

They feel more confident and capable.

VALUED

They're reminded that they are the reason the library exists.

PROUD

They feel pride in their local library.

THE STAFF FEELS

IMPORTANT

I am the expert they need.

ACCOMPLISHED

I make the difference.

SMART

My knowledge and expertise provides a solution.

EMPOWERED

I know the right thing to do and do it.

VALUED

I make the library an important part of the community.

PROUD

I feel pride in my branch and team.

“I’M HERE FOR YOU”

A customer-first attitude means saying “anything is possible” when a customer needs your help. It means being more than your job title or task of the moment. It means going above and beyond the expectations and doing what is right for the customer. Not because you have to, but because you want to.

BE EMPOWERED

You are the front-line of the library, whether you work directly with customers or not. Your actions define their experience.

Be proactive:

- Greet customers by asking how you can help.
- Position yourself so the customer knows you are available.
- Approach customers who look like they are in need.

Be adaptable:

- Remember that every customer has different needs.
- Provide individualized solutions to each and every interaction.

BE MORE

Our primary task is serving our customers. This comes before our job titles, tasks of the day, and to-do lists.

Go above and beyond:

- Go the extra mile even when you feel you don’t have the time.
- Put your task on the back burner when interacting with customers. You can return to it after the customer needs are met.
- Provide a complete solution. Our customers expect more than a quick and easy solution.

Look for ways to say “yes”:

- Figure out what is possible. Find a way to make it a positive.
- Make every effort.

BE PASSIONATE

We all love the library – its books, its programs, and each other. That passion should be passed on to our customers. Help them understand why you love the library and they will too.

Share your passion:

- Recognize that people have feelings about the library. It’s not just a transaction.
- Show your enthusiasm. When you’re excited, they will be too.

Have pride in your team:

- Remember that we are all part of a team, whether that’s a program area, a branch, or the entire library system.
- Support each other.
- Know each others’ strengths. And use them when appropriate.
- Remind each other why we’re there each and every day: to do great work for great customers.

“I SEE AND HEAR YOU”

A customer-first interaction means that our customers can find and approach us, ask us anything, and know that we will have a productive, two-way, and non-judgemental conversation where they feel heard and understood. When they feel like they’ve got our full attention, they’ll have increased confidence that we can solve any problem they throw at us.

BE ACCESSIBLE

You are the human face to the library. When a customer needs help, they turn to you. You should be easy to find and identify as CML staff. And you should always be open to customer questions.

Be visible:

- Be easy to find. Don’t hide behind a desk, monitor, or in another room.
- Be easy to identify as staff. Wear your name badge prominently. Dress the part. Customers should be able to scan the room and find you.
- Walk around the library so that customers don’t have to come find you.

Be approachable:

- Look up from your tasks frequently to see who needs help.
- Show that you are available. Even from across the room
- Be easy to approach and engage.

Know when and when not to help:

- Go to customers who look like they need help but are hesitant to ask for it.
- Assess the situation. Do they need help or do they need space?

BE ENGAGED

Our customers come to us because they seek knowledge or services we provide. Pay attention, listen, and show them that they are your first and only priority during any conversation.

Make them feel like the most important customer ever:

- Drop what you’re doing. When engaged with a customer, they are your first and only priority.
- Make eye contact.
- Be aware of and respect other customer factors such as time constraints, children, or other distractions.
- Provide a one-on-one conversation.

Listen to their needs:

- Listen fully. Understand what your customer needs. Don’t just hear.
- Remember that customers may not fully understand their own needs or be able to articulate their question.
- Ask questions or allow them to explain again if necessary to gain clarity.
- Repeat back to them what they’re asking. They will feel heard and you will have clarity.

Have a two-way conversation:

- Let them dictate the pace and direction of the conversation.
- Help them be specific. This will help the conversation be more efficient which will benefit you and the customer.
- Don’t answer until they are done talking.
- Let them end the conversation.
- Ask them if they got a full and complete answer.

Be non-judgemental:

- There are no stupid questions.
- Interact with customers equally regardless of who they are, how they act, or what they’re looking for.
- Remember that many of our customers come to us because they need help finding or doing.
- Be an educator. Help them gain the knowledge they lacked when they walked in.
- Provide unbiased information.
- Share your excitement of the discovery.

TRANSACTION

“I’LL HELP YOU”

A customer-first transaction means helping our customers accomplish whatever they came to the library to do. Our job is to help them with that. Sometimes that means we do it ourselves – seeing them all the way through. And other times it means transitioning the customer to another staff member.

BE A PROBLEM SOLVER

Before you hand off a customer to someone else, do everything you can to solve the customers’ needs yourself. You were hired for your skills and knowledge. And our customers see you as a problem solver.

Share your knowledge:

- Share what you know about the library’s resources.
- Share the process of discovery.
- Stay with the customer until they have what they need to complete their task or until your knowledge ends and you need to bring in another staff member.

Provide the best solution:

- Weigh options based on your conversation with the customer.
- Do what’s right, not just what’s easiest or what allows you to get back to your tasks. See the situation all the way through.
- Solve their specific need. There isn’t a one-size-fits-all solution.
- Be creative. Sometimes the best solution isn’t the most obvious solution.

BE A CONDUIT

It’s okay to not know all the answers. We can’t know everything about everything. Luckily, our staff is a collection of a vast array of skills and knowledge. Know when to ask for help and whom to ask.

Know when to bring in additional resources:

- Know when you cannot provide any (or any more) helpful information.
- Know your team members’ areas of expertise.
- Act as an advocate for your customer when transitioning to another staff member.
- Stay involved as long as needed to make the transition as smooth as possible.

Use your coworkers’ knowledge and skills:

- Know what knowledge and skills your coworkers have.
- Share areas of expertise and interests with your coworkers so they know what you have to offer.

Know what resources are available beyond your branch:

- Know whether additional resources exist in your branch, other branches, or beyond.
- Sometimes this means sending customers to a different branch or putting them in touch with another institution.

STAFF PERSONALITY

Customer expectations. The 14 words in this wordcloud represent the personality attributes that our customers expect of the CML staff. The scale of the words represent the importance placed on each word. Aligning our attitude and personality with the expectations of our customers is just another way we put them first.



As we continue to remind the customers and communities we serve of the importance of the library in their daily lives, we must remember that they use the library in ways that are as individual as they are. They are the reason we exist. And we are here to help and serve them. **We put customers first.** Be there for them. See and hear them. Help them. That's what we do.

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