

Engaging & Thanking Customers and Partners Discussion Sheet

The pandemic has affected our customers and our partners. From the stresses relating to cancelled fairs to the challenges of doing everything online – many things have changed. Volunteers are taking care of some things but frustrated by other things. Most of us have returned to offices. Some of our partners never left, others have not returned. Almost all of our “routine business” practices and work have been impacted. This means those we serve, those we partner with, pretty much everyone we encounter in Extension is feeling the affect.

So, how do we reaffirm our relationships? Think about how you and your office have reached out to various customer groups (volunteers, clientele, county officials, partners, etc). What do they need? Are there things we can do to thank them? Are there needs that other parts of OSU Extension can help via zoom or other ways?

As we settle into our telework and office return situation, take time to brainstorm with your staff about this part of customer service. What can we do to bolster our friendships? How can we thank those who have been so supportive?

Discussion Guide

Gather the entire staff. Send these questions a day before the meeting. Ask them to complete by themselves. On the day of the meeting, compile the answers by asking someone to take notes. Summarize the common themes. Look for volunteers to start to implement the ideas. After this, revisit the topic as we continue to open offices and deal with this ever-changing situation.

Define your main customers.

Who are they? Have we been communicating with them? Have we made a personal contact lately?

Our Customers

Staff (including office colleagues)_____

Volunteers_____

Funders_____

Partners_____

Other Clientele_____

Who should/could be our customers?

Are their new clientele we could be reaching out to right now?

What can we offer these groups? (zoom use? Zoom training? Microsoft team facilitation? Skype for business intro?)

How best should we reach out and/or communicate our potential partnership?

Think about the customer relationship.

- 1) What are they experiencing and what they are feeling during this time?
- 2) How do they view what we have been doing and are able to do?
- 3) Do they feel we understand their issues?
- 4) How do they think we can respond to community needs during this time?
- 5) How can we demonstrate (actions, words, office environment) our appreciation for their continued support? (Remember everything speaks)
- 6) What details/information/outreach can we provide them?
- 7) How can we respond to their requests for details/information/outreach?
- 8) What 'moments of WOW' can we create for them? Remember, small wows add up.
Examples: Calling to ask how things are going, sending a thank-you note, small gestures of appreciation, etc.

Action steps

1. Who will reach out to each of these customer groups?
2. How will we reach out?
 - i. Form of communication (phone/virtual visit, email, etc.)
 - ii. Define customer wow! (Thank yous, re-engagement plan, recognition)
3. Make a plan for re-engagement
4. Develop quick wows
 - i. By program areas?
 - ii. Specific tasks for specific partners?
 - iii. Engaging with county government (What can OSUE help you with?)

Recognition Ideas

1. Are there local businesses already recognizing community? Is there opportunity to partner with for-profit entities?
 - a. Example: reach out to local coffee shops to request coffee donation/discounts
 - i. Send to volunteers saying "thanks a latte" as a gift card to "re-energize" them in their continued service role with us
 - b. Example: connect with local floral/greenhouse/etc... for seedlings/small plants
 - i. Send to stakeholders or new partners with wording about "helping us grow" or "we want to grow stronger together"
 - ii. Another touchpoint for corporate sector that aligns with our ANR area as a bonus on top of recognition gift or partnership appeal
2. USE social media!
 - a. Great time to feature staff/volunteers/partner agencies more in depth
 - b. Increased online traffic right now due to more teleworking conditions
 - c. FREE
 - d. Staff may have more time to focus on virtual opportunities to develop these stories
 - e. Good PR for us. Demonstrating our appreciation while noting programs we offer, and could offer in the future.
3. Anything else you can think of that is creative!