The customer is king. Service is job one. Our customers are our guests. You know other customer-service slogans. But your organization still needs to put action behind the slogans for success. It doesn’t matter what your slogan is. It does matter how you deliver. The following three short principles may help you and your staff remember that the customer is the most valuable part of the work you do. And when the customer is internal the same guidelines are considered.

- **Be curious:** Questions are a magical way to initiate a discussion and to build a relationship. Have you ever gone to a party and found that a well-posed question opens the door for others to talk? In fact, you can go further. Often people will say you provided the most interesting conversation, when you didn’t say a word; you just listened. If you are not a spontaneous conversationalist, plan your questions ahead. What curiosity questions could you ask that could begin a solid discussion and continue to build a relationship? Here are a few question starters: How do you see . . . ? What if we . . . ? What do you think about . . . ? How do you believe we could . . . ? What interests you about . . . ? Have you ever . . . ? Ask more questions than others. You will build more relationships.

- **Fulfill customer desires:** Research shows that customers want several things to happen when they receive service:
  - respect for their time,
  - to be listened to,
  - admission of mistakes,
  - honesty and candor, and
  - appreciation

Identify how these translate into the customer-service policy of your organization. Is there room for improvement? Decide what you need to do about it.

- **Know the important words in customer service:** What are the most important words in customer service? Consider this list (or create one of your own.)
  1. “Yes.”
  2. “Thank you.”
  3. “Glad you’re here.”
  4. “How did we do?”

Introduce these statements to your team members in the organization. Hold a fun-filled contest that challenges the staff to identify 5, 6, 7, and 8 for customers. Set a date for all entries to be due. Make the prize a night out with friends at the organization. You may wish to have team members who don’t want to take part in the contest serve as judges. That way you can excuse yourself from making the decision. Announce the winner and post the “most important words” at strategic locations for all staff to read.