Course Description and Overview

This course is designed to explore the complex organizational mechanisms that need to be in place for the delivery of world-class service. While many organizations understand the importance of service, the ability to consistently deliver on this service often eludes them. This is especially true in healthcare organizations.

Customer service is the end product, the outcome of a well-oiled machine that has the infrastructure, the staff, and the will to deliver on that service. It requires exquisite synergy among key organizational components: human resources - leveraging recruitment, selection, training, empowerment, coaching, recognition staff for service delivery; organization and systems design - implementation of an organizational structure that facilitates service delivery using customer-focused processes and systems; and the deliberate creation of a service culture that permeates all segments of the organization regardless of role, rank, or function in the organization.

This course will cover a broad range of service delivery topics including: defining service excellence, aligning core organizational and human resource systems for service delivery, seeing service from the customer’s perspective, improving systems and service, service failure and recovery, and benchmarking best practices in world class service organizations.

In addition to providing you with an understanding of current issues in service excellence, a second objective of this course is to develop your skills in applying these concepts. To do this, business cases, classroom exercises and assignments will provide individuals and groups an opportunity to practice analyzing and solving actual service problems. It is my intention that you leave the course with an expanded toolkit that can be applied to your work contexts as well as being better informed about organizational dynamics that impact customer service.

Course Requirements

This course is designed to be highly participatory using large group discussion, analysis of cases, articles and other readings. In addition, small group exercises and activities will make skills development a focus of each class. The course requires that you are in attendance and on time, thoroughly prepared by having completed all readings and assignments, actively engaged in class discussions/exercises and that your classroom comments build on those of others to move the discussion forward. The fact that you completed the assigned readings should be evident in your contributions and will directly affect your grade for participation. Readings and assignments are due on the dates noted in the syllabus. Late assignments will not be accepted.
Study Groups

The class will be divided into five study groups for the duration of the course. Each study group will be responsible for presenting an assigned case and an article introduction to the class; will work together during in-class group activities; and will work together on the “Service Blueprinting” mid-term team project.

As you prepare for your team assignments, your group should establish groundrules to clarify how you will work together, how you will approach the assignment, what role each team member will have, how you will make your work seamless, etc. The more you structure your team process at the beginning, the fewer problems you will have and the better the outcomes will be. The expectation is that the work is shared, equally distributed and that each group member follows through on his/her team commitments.

Team Case Presentation and Team Article Introduction - 30%
Each study group will prepare a Team Case Presentation and a Team Article Introduction.

Team case presentation: The team will present the analysis, highlights and key learnings of an assigned case based on the case content, past and current course readings and discussions and the corresponding case questions which can be found in the syllabus. The presentation by the team – or selected spokespersons - should be approximately 20 minutes. The presentation should not simply restate the facts of the case but should reflect analysis, linking ideas, concepts and learnings from current and past sessions. Your goal should also be to engage the class through questions and discussion beyond the presentation itself and to take the lead in the case discussion following your presentation. You will receive written feedback from the class and myself. You are also required to submit a written report supporting your case presentation. Grades will be based on the degree to which your team (a) delivered clear, convincing and thorough answers to the questions, (b) integrated theories and concepts from current and prior readings appropriately, (c) used illustrative examples from the case to support your arguments, (d) prepared an integrated, thorough, well-written supporting document of no more than 5 pages.

Each study group is also assigned a team article introduction. This requires the team – or selected spokespersons - to briefly introduce the key concepts of the article. This can be done from your seats. While the entire class is expected to prepare for and participate in the discussion, I expect this team to take the lead in the article class discussion. There are no accompanying questions for the article introductions.

“Service Blueprinting” Team Assignment - 20%
Each study group is required to submit the service blueprint of a work-based service delivery process following the format in the article “Service Blueprinting: A Practical Technique for Service Innovation” by identifying the components of physical evidence, customer actions, onstage (visible) contact employee actions, backstage (invisible) contact employee actions and support processes. This assignment is due in Session 5 and will be discussed in detail during Session 3.

Individual Service Improvement Action Plan - 30%
For your final individual project, you have the opportunity to apply course material to a situation that is relevant for you. You are required to identify a service improvement opportunity (a system that doesn’t work, staff service issue(s) that present a challenge, a new project that will improve service in some way, etc.) and develop this into your Individual Service Improvement Action Plan through the lens of course readings, cases, discussions, your own research, etc. The purpose of this assignment is to give you an opportunity to take course learnings and apply them to a new initiative. Feel free to consult with me to select your topic of focus. You will describe the service improvement opportunity, discuss the challenges you face and why this problem is occurring, identify your actions to remedy/improve the situation and provide a detailed implementation plan including a timeline that reflects the actions you will take to improve service. In your narrative, you will incorporate references to the course readings, cases, theories and discussions by noting citations and including a bibliography at the end of the paper. You should have your topic identified by Session 5. This Service Improvement Action Plan is due in our last class, Session 7 - hard copy only, please. Please note your mailbox number on the front of the paper to make filing easier for Puck staff.
Course Participation - 20%

Students should be actively engaged in all class discussions. You will need to complete all readings, assignments and case preparations before class. You should also prepare answers to the assigned questions for each case listed in this syllabus. Your goal should be to contribute to the discussion and build upon the comments of your classmates. The fact that you completed the assigned readings should be evident in your comments and will directly affect your grade for participation. Think about substantive contributions that will move the discussion forward. Absence, lateness, lack of preparation and uneven substantive participation will have a negative impact on your grade for participation.

Course Text - to be read prior to the first class session:


Course Readings:

There is a customized Service Excellence for Nurse Leaders coursepack of required readings and cases as listed below which is available from the NYU Professional Bookstore.

Service Excellence Course Schedule, Readings, Cases and Assignments – Fall 2010:

Session 1, Sept. 21  
Introduction to Service Excellence
Read: Towards a Better Understanding of Service Excellence
Read: What Customer-Centric Really Means
Read: Putting the Service-Profit Chain to Work
Read: Book - If Disney Ran Your Hospital

Session 2, Oct. 5  
In Search of Service Excellence
Read: Fixing Health Care from the Inside, Today º SG#5
Read: Unlocking Customer Service Excellence
Read: Manage Your Human Sigma
Read: Cultural Competence: Integral in Diverse Populations
Prepare: Case - Children’s Hospital and Clinics (A&B)* SG#1

Session 3, Oct. 19  
Organizational Alignment for Service Delivery
Read: Aligning Organizational Processes with Mission: The Case of Service Excellence º SG#4
Read: Note on Service Mapping
Review: Service Blueprinting: A Practical Technique for Service Innovation
Read: How The Ritz-Carlton Manages the Mystique
Prepare: Case - The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company * SG#2

Session 4, Nov. 2  
Service Through the Customer’s Eyes
Read: Want to Perfect Your Company’s Service? Use Behav. Science º SG#3
Read: Taking the Measure of Mood
Prepare: Mayo Clinic Cases: * SG#5
    Building a Culture of Service Excellence
    Lessons from the Mayo Clinic
    Clueing in Customers
Session 5, Nov. 16  Managing People, Managing Service

Read: Motivating Employees to Go Above and Beyond
Read: Impact of Participative Management Perceptions on Customer Service * SG#2
Read: My Week as a Room-Service Waiter at the Ritz
Prepare: Case - Managing Human Resources for Service Excellence at Singapore Airlines * SG#4
Submit: Service Blueprinting Team Assignment

Session 6, Nov. 30  Delivering on the Promise of Service

Read: Silo Busting-How to Execute on the Promise of Customer Focus * SG#1
Read: Service Excellence from a Customer-First Culture
Read: Patient Satisfaction: Focusing on "Excellent"
Read: The Art of Delivering Great Customer Service
Read: Closing the Customer Feedback Loop
Read: Service Recovery
Prepare: Case - Cleveland Clinic * SG#3


Read: Delivering Excellent Service: Lessons from the Best Firms
Read: The Four Things a Service Business Must Get Right
Read: Fast-Cycle Benchmarking
Prepare: Disney Cases - Best Practices in Healthcare - BB
Submit: Individual Service Improvement Action Plan

* Team Case Presentation
° Team Article Introduction
SG = Study Group
BB = On Blackboard

Team Article Introduction Assignments:
Study Group 5  Fixing Health Care from the Inside, Today (10/5)
Study Group 4  Aligning Organizational Processes with Mission (10/19)
Study Group 3  Want to Perfect Your Company’s Service? Use Behav. Science (11/2)
Study Group 2  Impact of Participative Management Perceptions on Customer Service (11/16)
Study Group 1  Silo Busting-How to Execute on the Promise of Customer Focus (11/30)

Team Case Presentation Assignments:
Study Group 1  Children’s Hospital and Clinics (A&B) (10/5)
Study Group 2  The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company (10/19)
Study Group 5  Mayo Clinic Cases (11/2)
Study Group 4  Managing Human Resources for Service Excellence at Singapore AL (11/16)
Study Group 3  Cleveland Clinic (11/30)
Case Analysis Questions

You should prepare answers to the assigned questions for each case. I will not ask you to submit written answers to the questions, but you should prepare notes for yourself that you can use during the class discussion.

Children’s Hospital and Clinics (A&B) * SG#1
(1) What is your assessment of the Patient Safety Initiative at Children’s? In particular, what do you think about blameless reporting?
(2) Evaluate Julie Morath’s leadership of the organizational change process at Children’s? Consider the challenges she faced at each stage of the transformation process and evaluate her effectiveness in addressing these challenges.
(3) What barriers did Morath face as she tried to encourage people to discuss medical errors more openly? How did she overcome these barriers?
(4) What specifically would you recommend that Morath do and say in the meeting with Matthew’s parents?
(5) What is her approach to customer service?
(6) Reflect on a time during your career when you were empowered to speak up at work. Then, think of a time when you felt very uncomfortable expressing your views, asking questions, etc. What factors contributed to the atmosphere of openness or discouraged you from speaking up?

The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company * SG#2
(1) “Service can be an elusive concept. What is the essence of the Ritz-Carlton experience? What is The Ritz-Carlton selling?”
(2) How does The Ritz-Carlton create “Ladies and Gentlemen” in only 7 days?
(3) In what may be a first for the hospitality industry, Brian Collins, hotel owner, has asked James McBride, Ritz-Carlton general manager, to lengthen the amount of time spent training hotel employees before hotel opening. Should McBride lengthen the 7 Day Countdown?
(4) Or, is this the time that McBride should consider a total overhaul of the hotel opening process? If yes, what should he change and how should he go about doing it? What’s different about experimenting in a service business?

Mayo Clinic Cases * SG#5
(1) What are the distinguishing characteristics of the Mayo Clinic’s approach to service?
(2) What can be learned from the Mayo Clinic’s strategy and infrastructure for service excellence?
(3) How is it able to consistently provide world-class service throughout its multiple “brands”?
(4) What is the role of evidence management in sustaining the service culture?
(5) What lessons can be applied to other healthcare settings?

Managing Human Resources for Service Excellence at Singapore Airlines * SG#4
(1) What are the core competencies that serve as the foundation of SA’s human resources practices?
(2) Describe the elements of SA’s HR service excellence strategy.
(3) What is SA’s philosophy for managing front-line, customer contact staff?
(4) How does organizational alignment with HR practices contribute to SA’s service success?
(5) What lessons can be applied to the healthcare setting?

Cleveland Clinic * SG#3
(1) The Cleveland Clinic has an impressive history of excellence and innovation. Which specific practices have contributed to creating this culture?
(2) What has surprised you most about the practices of the Clinic? How generalizable do you find the practices to other healthcare and non-healthcare organizations?
(3) Consider the new directions the Clinic is considering. How should it think about which initiatives to pursue going forward? What are the criteria it should use in evaluating alternatives? Are there alternatives not mentioned in the case that you feel the Clinic should pursue?
(4) What are the biggest obstacles facing the Clinic going forward? What do you recommend should be done to mitigate these obstacles?
Service Excellence for Nurse Leaders  
Course Bibliography – Text, Articles, Cases

Course Text:  

Coursepack Articles and Cases:


