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## ustomer Service

Customer Service lies at the heart of the facilities management paradigm. FM is not essentially a technical built environment discipline but a management function aimed at supporting organisations to fulfil their core objectives through the provision of services which include the workplace.

The Institute of Customer Service (ICS) defines Customer Service as “the sum total of what an organisation does to meet customer expectations and produce customer satisfaction.” Thus a facilities organisation focused on customer service must identify customer needs, must meet and manage customers’ expectations with regards to those needs and must seek to satisfy them.

Customer service is more directly important in some FM roles than others. For receptionists, catering staff, mailroom people, cleaners, help desk and switchboard operators and any other team members in customer-facing roles including the FMs themselves, customer care should be a core element of the job description and training program, and a core criterion when recruiting.

However customer care is a key issue in every facilities role including back office functions. For instance, accounts clerks or engineers may have minimal direct contact with customers, but their performance has a major impact on customers' satisfaction with the FM operation.

A huge range of factors can contribute to customer satisfaction and each customer’s issues will vary but all will be concerned with how well the FM function matches their needs and wants and the value for money that the function delivers. Every customer is concerned with the FM teams efficiency and reliability in service delivery and the professionalism, friendliness and expertise of FM team members. Effective and timely communication with regard to strategies and policies, workplace changes, faults and repairs will all affect the customers’ perception of the FM service.

An effective customer care programme should encompass all of these things including a thorough understanding of customers’ needs and wants, a process for measuring customer satisfaction, an ongoing customer communication plan, a mechanism for managing complaints and resolving issues and a continuous training programme for team members in customer service and communication.

*The Institute of Customer Service (ICS) provides support services and information to those committed to improving customer care in industry. [www.instituteofcustomerservice.com](http://www.instituteofcustomerservice.com)*