



**UNIVERSITY
OF LAGOS**



UNLEASHING HUMAN POTENTIALS

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS STAFF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT UNIT
Vol. 3 No.3 – MARCH 2026

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

INTRODUCTION

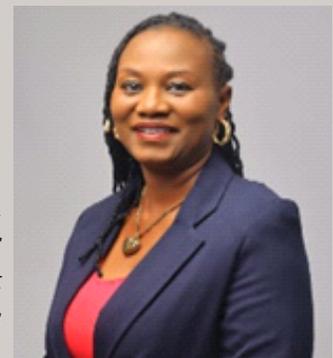
Every interaction between a public officer and a citizen either builds trust or erodes it. In public administration, service delivery is not merely a routine function; it is a visible demonstration of institutional values, accountability, and commitment to the public good.

In our previous edition, we examined **Setting and Achieving Performance Targets** as a foundation for effective service delivery and institutional growth. While performance metrics are essential, their true value lies in how they translate into meaningful, high-quality service experiences for those we serve. This edition therefore focuses on **Customer Service Excellence in Public Administration**.

As expectations for clarity, courtesy, transparency, and efficiency continue to rise, public institutions must consistently uphold the highest standards of service delivery. This newsletter explores the concept and importance of customer service excellence, the core principles that sustain it, the role of technology in enhancing engagement, and the need to cultivate a culture that places service users at the centre of public interactions.

THE CONCEPT AND IMPORTANCE OF CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Customer service excellence entails delivering prompt, reliable, transparent, and courteous services that meet or exceed the expectations of the public.



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In public administration, however, service users are more than customers in a transactional sense; they are citizens and stakeholders whose welfare, rights, and satisfaction directly influence institutional legitimacy and public confidence. Unlike private-sector customers, citizens often rely on public institutions for essential services that impact their daily lives and well-being.

High-quality service delivery:

- Strengthens public trust
- Enhances institutional credibility
- Encourages constructive engagement
- Promotes social cohesion
- Improves governance outcomes

For example, reducing complaint resolution time from two weeks to 72 hours, or clearly publishing service timelines for processing applications, can significantly improve citizens' perception of fairness and efficiency.

When individuals feel heard, respected, and fairly treated, they are more likely to cooperate with public institutions and support collective national development efforts.

PRINCIPLES OF EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE

Delivering exceptional service requires deliberate adherence to foundational principles that reflect professionalism, integrity, and respect. These principles are not optional ideals; they are operational standards that shape public perception and institutional effectiveness.



1. Responsiveness

Public organisations must respond promptly to enquiries, applications, and complaints. Timeliness demonstrates respect for citizens' time and needs. Establishing and communicating clear response timelines such as acknowledging complaints within 24 hours, can significantly enhance trust.

2. Transparency

Clear communication of processes, documentation requirements, fees (where applicable), and expected timelines reduces confusion and prevents misunderstandings. Publicly accessible guidelines and service charters help foster openness and accountability.

3. Courtesy and Respect

Politeness, empathy, and professionalism must underpin all interactions. The tone, language, and body language of public officers profoundly influence how citizens perceive the institution. Even in difficult situations, respectful communication preserves dignity and trust.

4. Competence

Staff must possess the knowledge, technical expertise, and problem-solving skills required to address diverse public concerns. Continuous professional development ensures that officers remain capable of delivering accurate, efficient, and high-quality service.

5. Accountability

Public officers must take responsibility for their decisions and actions. Clear escalation procedures, transparent complaint resolution mechanisms, and performance monitoring systems reinforce fairness and strengthen public confidence.

THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN ENHANCING CUSTOMER SERVICE

Technology has become indispensable in modern public service delivery. When thoughtfully implemented, digital tools enhance efficiency, accessibility, and transparency.

1. Online Service Platforms

Web portals and mobile applications enable citizens to submit forms, make payments, track applications, and make enquiries remotely. This reduces physical congestion in offices and improves convenience.

2. Automation and Artificial Intelligence

Automated systems and AI-powered chat services provide real-time assistance, reduce waiting times, and minimise human error. However, automation should complement—not replace human engagement, particularly in sensitive or complex cases.

3. Electronic Data Management

Digital storage systems improve record accuracy, enhance data security, and streamline retrieval processes. Strong data protection protocols are essential to safeguard citizens' information and maintain institutional integrity.

4. Social Media Engagement

Platforms such as X, Facebook, and Instagram facilitate timely information dissemination,

public awareness campaigns, and interactive feedback channels. Responsiveness on these platforms demonstrates openness and accessibility.

5. Digital Inclusion Considerations

While technology enhances service delivery, institutions must also consider digital accessibility challenges. Not all citizens have equal access to internet services or digital literacy skills. Hybrid systems—combining digital and traditional service channels—ensure inclusivity and equitable access.

BUILDING A CUSTOMER-CENTRIC CULTURE

A customer-centric culture embeds service excellence into the DNA of the institution. It ensures that policies, processes, and behaviours consistently prioritise citizens' needs and experiences.

1. Strong Leadership Commitment

Leadership must model service excellence, set measurable service standards, and allocate resources to sustain improvement initiatives. When leaders demonstrate accountability and responsiveness, these values cascade throughout the organisation.

2. Continuous Professional Development

Regular training in communication skills, emotional intelligence, ethics, and digital competence equips staff to adapt to evolving public expectations and deliver consistently high-quality service.

3. Feedback and Evaluation Mechanisms

Surveys, digital feedback systems, suggestion channels, and periodic performance reviews provide actionable insights. Analysing feedback trends enables organisations to identify service gaps and implement targeted improvements.

4. Empowerment and Motivation of Staff

When employees feel valued, supported, and empowered to make appropriate decisions, they are more motivated to deliver efficient and courteous service. Recognition systems and supportive supervision reinforce positive service behaviours.

CONCLUSION

Customer service excellence lies at the heart of effective public administration. It is not an optional enhancement but a core responsibility and a defining measure of institutional credibility.

By upholding sound service principles, leveraging technology responsibly, safeguarding data, ensuring inclusivity, and fostering a culture that prioritises citizens, public institutions can meet rising expectations and strengthen governance outcomes.

Ultimately, exceptional service delivery reflects an organisation's respect for the people it serves. When public officers commit to excellence in every interaction, they do more than provide services—they build trust, reinforce accountability, and contribute meaningfully to national development.