

Connections

ConnectionsTM

Practice for excellence,
path to success



**Participant
Book**

Noel-Levitz[®]

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Session One: Understanding Why People Do What They Do _____

Session One, Section 1: Making First Impressions Lasting Impressions

Do you know how important you are to the success and satisfaction of our students? Several years ago a major study titled, “What Works in Student Retention,” asked almost 1000 college and university administrators around the country what characteristics of a school contribute most directly to student retention. The top five results, summarized below in order of importance, are very revealing:



1. Caring attitude of faculty and staff
2. High quality of teaching
3. Adequate financial aid programs
4. Student involvement on campus
5. High quality of academic advising

Think about that. Almost 1000 colleges and universities listed the caring attitude of faculty and staff as the most important characteristic connected to student retention—even more important than high quality teaching and advising. The work you do as a staff member is absolutely vital to the success of our students and to the success of this institution.

Connections was designed to achieve two main objectives:

- Increase the self-worth and self-image of every person within your school through mastery and daily practice of the Connections philosophy.
- Improve your school's position by concentrating on quality service, the key to continued success in the educational community.

The Connections program will help you activate and develop your communication and quality service skills to deliver that caring attitude to students and co-workers in the best way you know how. We believe your work is so vital to the mission of this school that we're making an investment in you through the Connections program. We also think you'll really enjoy the program!

On any given day we encounter a multitude of situations. As we go about our professional and personal lives, we connect with others in many different ways. It is usually sound advice to "expect the best and you'll get it." And yet, we have all had the experience of going into a situation feeling confident only to get our positive attitude shattered by a negative encounter.

The reverse can also be true. We may expect that a situation will be difficult and be pleasantly surprised by a positive experience.

What Determines the Positive or Negative Outcome?

Our own attitude and our ability to persist with a positive outlook can help us succeed in "getting the best." If we are resilient in the face of negative situations and people, we can often radiate positive vibes strong enough to change the situation and parties involved.

Other situations and/or people are so negative and so assertive that we fall victim to the wrath of their attitude. One such encounter can affect the rest of our day—if we let it. Imagine being told your parking sticker is expired and you'll have to park several blocks from where you need to be in five minutes. Then, arriving late at the appointment only to find the person

has left thinking you would not come. The secretary tells you the next available appointment is in three weeks. One disappointment on top of another leaves you feeling like you'd like to start the day over.

Our work on campus and the encounters we have with students and staff have a profound effect on our own well-being—and that of others. When we strive to present a positive, helpful spirit, we make lasting impressions that benefit us all.

Session One, Section 1 Review

Points to Remember

- A caring attitude of faculty and staff is an important characteristic connected to student retention.
- Our attitude and ability to persist with a positive outlook are key to “getting the best.”

Exercise 1: Making First Impressions Lasting Impressions

Question 1) In the last vignette, Miguel says he won't park in a handicapped space again. What did the Campus Safety Officer do to get the positive response?

Question 2) What is a typical response when we are confronted by a person of authority who neglects elements of common courtesy?

Question 3) In the bookstore scene, do you believe the student had a right to be upset? Why or why not?

Question 4) What would you want the bookstore clerk to do?

Question 5) Assuming this was the first contact with a campus employee for each of these students on any given day, what impact is each scenario likely to have on each student?

Session One, Section 2: Welcome to Connections

Congratulations on being selected to participate in the Connections quality service training program. Because you are an important member of this educational community, we are inviting you to step back and take a look at yourself and the people you interact with every day. Connections is a program designed to help us learn to excel in delivering quality service with a caring attitude to the students, faculty, and other staff members of our educational community.

Working Together

We use the word Connections because that's what a community is—a diverse group of people helping each other, all working together for a common purpose. As an educational community, our important purpose or mission is to develop human talent, and that's not just a mission for the faculty. As members of the community we're all responsible. To develop human talent we have to offer a quality education and the services that will interest students in coming here and make them successful and satisfied enough to stay.

You may think of your contribution to the educational community only in relation to the specific job you do, whether it's as a secretary, receptionist, telephone operator, clerk, custodian, food service worker, tour guide, public safety officer, bus driver, mechanic, electrician, or any of a hundred other jobs. But to students, you are much more. You are a friend, a teacher, a problem-solver, and sometimes even a substitute parent.

In the Connections program you will learn why your quality service and your caring attitude are so important in helping students feel connected to a whole new environment. These positive connections lead to the success and satisfaction of our students. And each of us shares in this critical process of making connections. That's why what we do and how we do it have a great impact, especially on those lasting first impressions that prospective students form about us.

A student's decision to attend or to remain at a school can be based solely on positive or negative contacts with staff members. These connections may be in the form of a telephone inquiry about the school, an in-person visit to the Admissions Office, or, perhaps, a parent's question about financial aid. If prospective students perceive that the person they are talking with has a non-caring, non-helping attitude, they inevitably will relate that indifference to the entire school. And the students may likely decide to get an education elsewhere.

Providing Quality Service

In this sense schools are not much different from businesses. We need to give our current and prospective students the same quality service that businesses are expected to deliver to their customers. When students are dissatisfied with the quality of service or care provided to them, they take their business to another school, or worse yet, drop out altogether. Students won't appreciate even the best academic program unless they feel "at home" at a school. And that's where you come in.

First, Connections will sharpen your awareness to the needs of students. When you have more positive

interactions with students, you will probably enjoy your job more. That in turn, will improve your job performance.

Second, you will not only do your job better, you will meet your responsibilities with less stress and strain.

Third, your work will be personally rewarding. You will enjoy more positive relations with co-workers, faculty, and students when you use your new communication skills.

Fourth, Connections will help you realize how important you and your performance are to the success of the educational mission of this school.

Fifth, Connections will give you specific “how to” tools and methods to enable you to communicate positively with students, staff and faculty, family, and friends.

Finally, Connections will help you feel better about yourself. In fact, that’s the key to this program: feeling good about yourself and the important role you play in helping students build connections vital to their future.

Taking Responsibility

In Connections we hope to show you that the quality of an educational community is everyone’s responsibility. Recruitment (the process of attracting new students) and retention (the process of

Connections Goals:

- To emphasize that recruitment and retention are everyone’s responsibility.
- To increase staff awareness of their importance as recruitment and retention agents.
- To show staff how they are sometimes perceived as unhelpful or inconsiderate, even when they think they are being helpful.
- To show staff how they can directly influence a student’s decision to enroll at your school and to remain at your school.
- To illustrate how critical front-line staff are in setting the tone or climate of the educational community.
- To fill the training gap in helping your school improve its overall recruitment and retention efforts.

keeping students enrolled) are also everyone's responsibility. These responsibilities are shared by staff in all types of educational communities—universities, private colleges, community colleges, vocational/technical schools, and proprietary schools.

Session One, Section 2 Review

Points to Remember

- Connections helps us learn to excel in delivering quality service.
- A community is a diverse group of people helping each other in working for a common purpose.
- Students may choose our campus or transfer elsewhere based solely on positive or negative contacts with staff.
- Recruitment and retention are everyone's responsibility.

Exercise 2: Making Connections With a Caring Attitude

Question 1) In the last vignette, the Financial Aid Director makes a point of re-connecting with the student. It's almost as if he said, "Is there anything else I can do for you?" Why is this an important step?

Question 2) Why is recognition and reinforcement of student responsibility important?

Question 3) What are some other examples of what campus employees can do to demonstrate a caring attitude toward students and co-workers?

Notes, Comments, and Questions:

Session One, Section 3: Why Do People Do What They Do?

What motivates us? What influences our spur-of-the-moment decisions as well as the important decisions in our lives? What factors do you consider in your decision-making process?



Feelings Are the Key

It's not easy to be certain about what makes us do what we do, but we can be sure most of the time when we know our feelings.

Your experience as a member of this educational community will be more rewarding when you realize how your feelings and actions affect others.

Feelings Influence Our Decisions

We like to think that our decisions—especially the important ones—are based only on facts. However, most of the time our feelings are the key to the decisions we make in everything from our choice of friends, to where we live, our jobs, and the cars we drive.

We back up these decisions by comparison or investigation; but, in the end, we all put a great deal of emphasis on our feelings (emotions and instincts).

The impact of our feelings isn't limited to big decisions. Feelings also influence where we shop, the restaurants

**Quality service
means we treat every
individual with:**

- Courtesy
- Dignity
- Respect

Every time. All the time.

we frequent, the products we buy, the schools we attend, and our attitude toward other people.

Because feelings are so important to what we do, it is imperative that we understand them better. At the same time, we must develop an understanding of how and why the feelings of other people need to be considered every time we communicate with them.

Quality Service Is the Goal

Regardless of the job we perform, we need to strive to deliver quality service. Remember, we're all "customers" numerous times each day.

When we go to the doctor, gas station, or dry cleaner, we expect courtesy, consideration, help, respect, and support. We expect to be treated as a valued customer.

This is true in our personal lives too. Subconsciously, we select friends who treat us as valued individuals. We want our families and loved ones to be courteous, helpful, considerate, respectful, and supporting. We are constantly searching for relationships that are compatible with who we are.

Each of Us Needs the Help of Others

Every day, we require the help and support of other people. Every contact we make with another person has the same element of give and take that we experience when we go into a store.

When we get the response we want, we feel good about the encounter. Our need for positive interaction with

other people is satisfied. We feel good about the experience and repeat it.

The Feelings of Others Count

Even if we view our daily contacts with students on the job as routine and boring, we need to consider their feelings. For them, contact with us may not be routine. They have the expectations of a “customer” built into their feelings.

Unfortunately, in our working lives we tend to think of the people we encounter as strangers or as “faces in the crowd.” That doesn’t have to be the case.

Opportunities to give good customer service exist in every human organization. Students appreciate it when you show you care about meeting their needs.

On the job, opportunities for friendship are literally limitless. That’s because our “customers,” the students we are here to serve, want to be treated well. They want to be treated as friends.

Students Expect Quality

It’s important to remember that many of our students are in a new and strange environment for the first time. They are trying to adjust to a new life away from friends and family. Students want us—the people they see every day—to treat them as friends.

Even though we may not always realize it, we’re important to our students. Students may become interested in our school because of its quality reputation, size,

We recognize courtesy, dignity, and respect in transactions when:

- We are called by name.
- We are treated fairly and the same standards apply to everyone.
- Promises made are kept.

The Golden Rule ...

- Treat others as you want to be treated.

The Platinum Rule ...

- Treat others the way *they* want to be treated.

location, financial aid, or other features, but their decision to enroll may be based on what we do to make their first experience a pleasant one. The quality of the personal relationships students have with us every day may greatly influence their decision to stay or leave.

The same is true of any encounter we have with other people. We tend to avoid those people we have had a negative experience with and seek out those who make us feel good about ourselves.

Quality Service Is Always Important

Have you ever been ready to buy something, then walked out of the store because you couldn't get anyone to wait on you?

Or avoided a restaurant with great food just because the service was slow?

Or used an automatic teller machine to avoid impersonal, uncaring bank tellers?

Or tried to avoid an assignment at work because you didn't get along well with people assigned to help you?

In the end, price, taste, personal service, or importance of the assignment didn't matter.

That's how much our feelings affect what we do every day.

Good Feelings Build a Win/Win Relationship

Feelings build habits. We do things because we feel good about doing them. Interacting with others gives us the opportunity to feel good about other people as

well as ourselves. This doesn't happen as often as it could, but when it does, it is a win/win situation for everyone involved.

When we treat people as special, they tend to treat us the same way.

For example, many people absolutely hate to wait. They want to get in and out as quickly as possible. That's because they see the experience as a real hassle. They feel that trying to get service is frustrating and not worth the effort.

Each Person Is Special

What people really want is help, support, consideration, and respect. We want to be treated in a special way, and that's what people expect from us. We must remember that every person we deal with, at home or on the job, is special. Why is this so important?

Positive Communication Equals Quality Service

The most important ingredient in developing relationships is to treat other people as special. When we do this, they tend to treat us the same way. Suddenly, we're no longer "just another employee," we're someone to be remembered. Life moves along more smoothly, with fewer problems, and our personal and work experiences greatly improve. We establish win/win situations.

How can we make this happen? One way is to consider our interaction with others in terms of positive communication and negative communication. More important though, is what this means to people when it is put into action. It makes the giver and receiver feel good about each other. Some examples are:

- Praise for a job well done

- A smile
- A “thank you”

Anyone who consistently receives positive feedback feels good personally and feels good about the person giving it.

Negative Communication Makes Us Feel Angry or Resentful

However, when we receive negative communication, we have the opposite reaction. Negative communication makes us feel angry or resentful. Think about your experiences as a customer. Have you ever been ignored when you were trying to get assistance in a bank, drugstore, or supermarket? How did you feel? Have you ever looked for an item in a store and an employee told you, “Never heard of it”?

How do you feel when you call a business and get transferred to several people without getting any real help?

These are examples of negative communication. They destroy the good feelings generated by quality service.

Our dealings with people tend to be a mixture of positive and negative communication. Since people base their decisions on feelings, it benefits us to generate good feelings as often as we can. In every educational setting, good feelings usually generate quality student service.

Co-workers Are “Customers” Too

What about the direct and indirect contact we have with co-workers? Does the way we do our job and the manner in which we respond to others at work have anything to do with quality service?

If we don't perform our jobs well, students, teachers, co-workers, and even our families are affected. Not performing our jobs has a ripple effect. Poor performance might involve wrong textbook orders, missed appointments, misdirected phone messages, inaccurate student bills, or a hundred other daily tasks. But the net result is the same: unhappy students and co-workers. Poor performance can also lead to reduced enrollment and poor student retention.

In these situations, your co-workers and the students have received poor service.

The quality of service that we provide to others within our educational community definitely reflects the quality of service students receive. It is almost impossible to treat co-workers poorly and treat students well.

Connections help us:

- Sharpen service skills.
- Do our job better.
- Make work personally rewarding.
- Realize every person is important.
- Learn how-to tools.
- Feel better about ourselves.

Positive Relationships Really Count

By consistently providing quality service to students and co-workers we create positive relationships. This not only helps us and the people we deal with, but also the entire school. Creating positive relationships creates an environment in which our students feel connected and satisfied, and that will make our students want to stay. Consistent quality service takes consistent effort from each of us.

Caring, courtesy, good service, and friendliness are key ingredients in successful dealings with co-workers.

Questions to Think About:

1. Throughout the Connections program you'll read and hear references to schools as businesses and students as "customers." Does this terminology make you uncomfortable? If so, why?
2. We talk about co-workers and even our families and friends as "customers." In what ways do you find this concept helpful as you think about your work and personal relationships?
3. How important is it for you to be well-liked by your co-workers and supervisors?

Session One, Section 3 Review

Points to Remember

- We make decisions based on our feelings.
- Each of us needs the help and support of others.
- Dealing with people is a special part of our lives.
- The way we provide help and support to others will influence their feelings.
- Students want to be treated as friends.
- We need positive communication. The more we receive, the better we feel!
- We dislike poor service because it makes us feel unimportant.
- Living up to the service expectations of others benefits everyone.
- We are all responsible for helping ensure the success of our students.

Exercise 3: Understanding Why People Do What They Do

Question 1) In your everyday life as a customer, what motivates you to choose one business over another? Please rate the importance of the following factors:

- _____ Cost
- _____ Quality of the product or services offered
- _____ Location/convenience
- _____ Reputation
- _____ Physical surroundings
- _____ Friendly, caring, and helpful staff
- _____ Advice from friends
- _____ Service after the sale

Question 2) Why do you think most students tend to choose our school over another?

Question 3) What makes students stay at this school after they start here?

Question 4) What message(s) come through clearly in the student interviews we just heard on the videotape?