**B. Customers**

**Principles of Customers -** Performance in any field is guided by a few core principles. Say you want to improve at swimming. One way would be to go for a daily swim at your local lake. Will you improve? Sure. But only until you reach a certain plateau. A deep understanding of a field’s core principles sets you up for an autonomous and continuous path of improvement.

**Speed-** Speed or responsiveness shows up in almost all studies as a main determinant for service quality. According to a Warwick University study, responsiveness has the highest impact on both customer satisfaction (fast response) and dissatisfaction (slow response).

**Accuracy-** Besides being fast, your service answers should, obviously, be correct. Johnston's study shows that customers regard accuracy as the minimum. It won't raise customer satisfaction, but inaccuracy definitely causes dissatisfaction.

**Transparency-** "What the hell is taking so long!?" We all recognize this feeling. Not knowing what is happening or why makes us feel uneasy. Which is why transparency is just as critical to service as speed and accuracy.

**Accessibility-** If your customer has a problem, how easy is it for him or her to get in touch? For a long time, the entire customer service theory focused on delighting the customer — on exceeding expectations. A research by CEB, however, showed that it pays off more to focus on reducing customer effort instead. While effort also depends on factors like speed and accuracy, accessibility is its biggest hurdle.

**Empowerment-** We all like to feel in control. A good service offers this feeling to its customers.

**Flexibility.** The reason we hate bureaucracy is because it lacks flexibility. When there's a corner case issue, and there always is, a bureaucratic machine jam. That's again why empowered employees are crucial.

**Ratings/comments.** If you've just received the best or worst service of your life, you want to express that. Besides providing valuable feedback to the company, a service rating gives customers a sense of control.

**Self-service.** There are few things more empowering than taking care of things yourself. Some people don't like to be assisted at all. For them, well-structured self-service options are crucial.

**Transparency.** "Knowledge is power." Not knowing what is happening or why makes you feel powerless, which makes transparency worth repeating here.

**Friendliness-** There's one major downside to eCommerce. It has stripped away most of the human interactions that used to be commonplace in everyday transactions. Service experiences are one of the few remaining moments of humanity. Yet plenty of companies manage to ruin that as well by making their service entirely inhumane. They speak in overly formal language, use service clichés, withhold service rep identity, etc.

**Efficiency-** You can have the world's best service, but what's the use when it's eating up all of your profits? Efficiency will always be a crucial factor in customer service. What has changed is technology; some tools let us bypass yesterday's tradeoffs. Take speed and costs. Back when phone was the only channel, you couldn't offer fast service at low costs. To offer instant service, you'd have to maintain an army of idle phone reps to cover for peak times. Queueing was the only way to press costs.