

E1 – Customer Service

Applicant to provide a detailed example of a time they have demonstrated an excellent level of customer service within the utilities industry. This should be in a case study format with a two page limit.

The example should include:

- **The applicant's ethos to customer service**
- **The applicant's approach to the continuous professional development (CPD) of its workforce**

2 page A4, Arial 11 4%

Excellent scores will be awarded where the applicant effectively demonstrates the following:

- The Applicant's business objectives and core values are aligned and embedded throughout the organisation with evidence that customer service is appropriately considered at all levels (e.g. strategy, KPIs, action planning etc.)
- Robust systems and processes in place to monitor the delivery of the service to the end customer and how these are followed and adhered to
- How any applicable industry ODIs were met and what actions/measures/controls were put in place to drive a positive performance against these standards and any other relevant key business objectives or key performance indicators
- How skill gaps and training needs are identified and what processes are in place to upskill the workforce including new starter training and ongoing staff development/CPD opportunities

Introduction

At Morrison Water Services (MWS), customer care and safety are our top priorities when planning our approach to delivering all our schemes and projects; especially end-to-end new service connections and meters. In 2019, we worked with the Institute of Customer Service to benchmark our performance against other leading companies, leading to the development of our Every Customer Counts (ECC) strategy, which underpins our customer relations plans for all our contracts. ECC is fully aligned to the regulatory needs of clients and provides tangible tools and benefits to proactively support/influence our clients' overall customer satisfaction/perception by delivering a superior customer experience.

Our Thames Water Smart Metering Contract

MWS was awarded the Thames Water smart metering contract in 2015. Since then we've achieved significant outcomes, continuing to work with Thames Water on a compulsory and optional basis and for each situation we built a different customer journey. This ensures the desired customer satisfaction levels are met and performance commitments achieved.

We fully understand the elements and drivers of C-MeX (derived from CSS-CSAT and CES-CSAT surveys) and have aligned our approach to Thames Water's strategy and agreed customer journey; appreciating that our performance not only affects our CSS (Customer Satisfaction Survey) results but also indirectly affects our CES (Customer Experience Survey) results – both of which drive our C-MeX score.

To this end, we have set internal targets covering a range of metrics to ensure we receive the best feedback possible from our client's customers, knowing the main causes of customer dissatisfaction relate to poor response, inability to resolve issues quickly and poor communication and provision of information etc. These metrics allow us to identify areas of low performance and implement corrective measures before our C-MeX score and clients' reputation is adversely affected.

We set up a bespoke call centre on our main site for this contract, with a primary aim to book appointments, answer queries and handle first contact complaints from customers. The customer service agents are responsible for accurately recording information on every customer interaction, which is then used for the regulatory data provided to Ofwat. Our call centre has KPIs that require 80% of all calls to be answered in 45 seconds, an abandoned call rate of 3% or less and an average wait time of 60 seconds or less; which we easily achieve on average over the course of the year, managing peaks and troughs by flexing resource levels, where necessary.

Our dedicated call centre uses Vonage Contact Centre technology to allow for queued call backs, where the customer is offered the option of putting the phone down whilst remaining in a virtual queue and then getting a call back when it is their turn to be answered – this helps reduce lost calls and creates a more effortless experience for the customer. Data monitoring ensures the data our agents record for regulatory purposes is accurate and provides the information we need. Vonage provides granular reporting of our fully trained agents' performance and call data/monitoring, agents are also subject to productivity reports to ensure they are providing the required level of support to enable us to meet our SLAs etc. – for call centre response times and operational/contract targets.

We have now successfully completed 1,122,116 smart meter installations on this contract for Thames Water, which clearly demonstrates the effectiveness and success of our delivery approach. Over the last 12 months we have achieved 98.600% compliance with our appointment targets, missing only 126 appointments from a total of over 87,000.

We have recently introduced innovative technology that allows customers to track the journey of our operatives on their way to appointments via our 'Where's my Tech?' app; and use the innovative Blicher system for meter asset data and meter readings, which improves accuracy by recording readings and meter serial number photographically – again minimising the need for revisits.

Out in the field, our operatives present customers with a WOW card to gather additional feedback having finished the work. The cards ask customers to describe their experience of how the work was completed and rate our service by contacting our website or calling an 0800 number. Information received is fed back to the operatives concerned and allows us to celebrate work well done, or, alternatively, arrange for improvement measures such as additional coaching.

We adopt a range of measures to ensure disruption to customers is minimised to the greatest extent possible via our contract-specific communication plans, developed to ensure we identify, liaise and continuously engage with all third-party stakeholders, customers and community organisations effectively. These include:

- Delivering customer letter drops in advance of works and speaking with each customer before the job starts.
- Planning all activities with each customer via a site visit from the supervisor to organise the time and date and determine whether any special considerations associated with Priority Service Customers (Priority Service Register) are required.
- Providing continual training and guidance for operatives, including doorstep protocol and complaint resolution.
- Providing focused inductions and toolbox talks explaining the need for same-day reinstatement and maintaining driveway access etc.
- Final check inside customer premises following installation to ensure supply is connected and operating at correct pressure and no leaks; and speaking to the customer to explain any discolouration and ensure they are happy with the completed work – avoiding the need for return visits.
- Taking video footage to capture of running supply and meter readings.

Customers experiencing problems or wishing to make a complaint when our operatives have left the area, are invited to contact our dedicated call centre, where our Customer Service Team aims to resolve the issue swiftly, adding the resolution details to our complaints log for later investigation and review.

Customer needs are typically resolved over the phone or through a site visit from one of our operational staff members. 95% of customer contacts are closed within 1 to 2 days.

Approach to the continuous professional development (CPD) of our workforce

Our approach to CPD on our Thames Water metering contract is comprehensive, integrating structured training, performance monitoring, technology adoption, incentive programmes, coaching, and a data-driven methodology. This holistic approach incorporating the following key elements ensures the workforce remains skilled, motivated and aligned with the evolving demands of the smart metering industry.

- Investment in Training and Development – ensuring all personnel have access to opportunities that enable them to carry out their roles effectively and safely; and to further professional and personal development that aids career progression.
- Structured Learning Materials – such as the Metering Handbook and Method Statements.
- Performance Monitoring and Improvement – closely monitoring a range of internal performance metrics (e.g. productivity measures, defects, and staff turnover) to ensure they are meeting client service levels.
- Utilisation of Technology – developing and implementing integrated, agile work management systems to streamline operations help employees engage with new technologies, fostering continuous learning and adaptation.
- Recognition and Incentive Programmes incentive schemes such as 'Star of the Month' and 'WOW! Awards' to reward high-performing employees to motivate and encourage staff.
- Coaching and Mentoring – regular coaching and mentoring aimed at fostering continuous improvement; ensuring employees are trained for their current roles and prepared for future development.
- Customer Feedback and Quality Improvement – using customer feedback to drive improvements in systems, training, efficiency, and the customer journey. This feedback mechanism is integral to the CPD of the workforce, as it directly informs training needs and areas for development.