

Why Service Errors Occur?



KEY LEARNINGS: WHY SERVICE ERRORS OCCUR?

Overview

- Unlike machines, people are prone to error.
- Service mistakes arise from a combination of human and systemic factors.
- Understanding these five key causes helps us prevent errors before they escalate.

1. Human Error – Because People Aren't Machines

- Mistakes from distraction, fatigue, or rushing are inevitable.
- Examples:
 - Bank teller types \$1,000 instead of \$100.
 - Waiter forgets a “no onions” note on the order.
 - Receptionist books the wrong dental appointment time.
- Key Insight: Even well-trained people make honest mistakes under normal conditions.

2. Miscommunication – When Words Get Twisted

- Errors often come from misunderstanding, not forgetting.
- Examples:
 - “No ice” request ignored.
 - Flight time misunderstood (2:15 vs. 2:50).
 - Hotel room near elevators despite requesting a quiet one.
- Key Insight: Verbal instructions and assumptions often lead to clarity gaps.

3. Process Gaps – When the System Allows Errors

- Sometimes the system design enables mistakes.
- Examples:
 - Handwritten medical prescriptions lead to dosage errors.
- Key Insight: When processes are flawed, no amount of human accuracy or training can consistently prevent errors.
- Solution: Fix the system, not just the behavior.

Why Service Errors Occur?



KEY LEARNINGS: WHY SERVICE ERRORS OCCUR?

4. Time Pressure & Stress – The Hidden Culprit

- Under pressure, even top performers miss details or cut corners.
- Examples:
 - Fast-food worker grabs the wrong bag.
 - Call center agent misses key info during a high call volume.
 - Flight attendant miscounts meals.
- Key Insight: High workload and stress cause cognitive overload, leading to errors.

5. Assumptions – Trusting the Wrong Information

- Mistakes happen when employees assume rather than confirm.
- Examples:
 - Baggage agent assumes the tag is correct.
 - Spa therapist delivers “usual” service without asking.
 - Cashier assumes scanned price matches shelf tag.
- Key Insight: Assumptions lead to unchecked errors—one small oversight can affect the entire customer experience.

Final Takeaway

- Service mistakes are multifactorial—they stem from human, communication, system, emotional, and cognitive sources.
- Recognizing these five causes is the first step to designing error-proof service systems.
- Prevention begins by addressing both people and processes.

ADVANCED INNOVATION GROUP PRO EXCELLENCE
From Simple To Excellence