

KNOW YOUR CUSTOMER

OBJECTIVES

To illustrate the value of tapping the diverse knowledge and thinking styles of team members.

To serve as a meeting icebreaker or warm-up.

To accent the wealth that exists in customers if participants will just look for it.



MATERIALS REQUIRED

None, other than identifying an appropriate word for the group to analyze. You may wish to create a transparency of the key on page 65 that shows some of the possibilities for the word chosen.

PROCEDURE

Identify a key word that is relevant to your team meeting or central theme of the presentation. The example used here to illustrate the exercise is *Customer*.

Indicate to the group that their task, working alone, is to identify as many legitimate words as they can from the letters available to them, using each letter only once.

Ask them to make two predictions—the number of words they will individually identify, and the word score of the highest producer.

Then give them a tight time limit (e.g., 5 minutes) and start them on the task.

KEY: WHAT'S IN (A) CUSTOMER?

TRANSPARENCY

Us
Ort
Rest
Rote
Cost
Comer
Cut
Corset
Some
Sour
Tome
To
Mouse
Most
Custom

Ore
Use
Rut
Rose
Cote
Comes
Cur
Court
Sore
Set
Tore
Me
Met
Toes
Costume

Or
User
Rot
Cot
Come
Course
Core
Sum
Sot
To
Tomes
More
Must
Tour
Costumer

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How many words did you predict you'd find?
2. How does your own performance expectation compare to the expectations others held for themselves?
3. Did you exceed your own expectations or fall short? Why?
4. How many words did you predict could be found? How does this compare to the actual total?
5. How do you explain the actual results?
6. What does this exercise illustrate to you? (Are *customers* a rich source of information?)

TIPS

Members with high verbal skills typically do well on this activity. Those with lower verbal skills may experience some frustration. During the post-activity discussion, explain that some people are good with words, while others may be better with numbers or at analyzing spatial information. When all members contribute to the problem-solving process, both the team and the organization benefit.

If the topic of your meeting is sales or customer service, focus on the sales-oriented words within the word *customer* (e.g., use, user, more, store, cost). Point out that one of the elements of good customer service is knowing both the product and the customer.