

Looking at Customer Service in Varied Fields – A visual to help you answer this question: “If students aren't the customers of the university, who are?” ([More](#))

With color coding marked row by row to help you avoid “similarity matching,”^A that is, a tendency to respond to similarities more than to differences.

Customers (Users, Clients, Stakeholders) and Issues	Storefront Retail	Attorney in Private Practice	Local Political Campaigns	Product Development-Custom		Corporate Training	Higher Education
				Hardware	Software		
1. Customer as user?	Shopper	Varied clients	Client: Candidate	Operators, plant	User/operator	Employee	Student
a. Commitment by the user?	a. Almost always	a. Almost always	a. Almost always	a. Always	a. Almost always	a. Almost always	a. Varies
b. Preparation of the user?	b. Almost always	b. Occasionally	b. If incumbent	b. Always	b. Almost always	b. Almost always	b. Varies
c. User as part of product?	c. If focus groups	c. Always	c. Always	c. Often	c. Almost always	c. Almost always	c. Almost always
2. Customer as who pays?	Shopper	Client	Client: Candidate	Company	Company	Corporation	Student, parents
3. Customer who may help to pay the bill?	Varies	Taxpayers if type of case/relatives	Donors	Taxpayers if gov. contract	Taxpayers if gov. contract	Rarely	Almost always taxpayers
4. Customer as creator of the product/service	Business owner; vendors	Rarely	Consultant	Manufacturer/consultant	Programmers - patents ^B	In-house or vendor	Almost always faculty ^C
5. Customer as the field of knowledge behind the product/service?	Never	For attorneys, the law—our first allegiance	Rarely	Rarely ^D	Rarely	Rarely	For professors, almost always their disciplines
6. Customer as the regulator (such as a certifier, accreditor, or standards organization)?	Regulators - If BBB member	Texas Bar Association	Regulators – Texas Ethics Commission	Manufacturer; regulators	Technical or industry standards	Never	Accreditors; some regulators/industry standards as well
7. Customer as the region?							
a. Need for qualified workers?	a. Never	a. Occasionally	a. Never	a. Never	a. Never	a. Never	a. Often ¹ to Always ²
b. Need for good jobs?	b. Never	b. Occasionally	b. Never	b. Never	b. Never	b. Never	b. Often ¹ to Always ²
c. Need for safe communities?	c. Never	c. Occasionally	c. Never	c. Never	c. Never	c. Never	c. Often ¹ to Always ²
d. Need for a solid tax base?	d. Never	d. Occasionally	d. If client issue	d. Never	d. Never	d. Never	d. Always
8. Customer as the nation's economic competitiveness?	Occasionally (Walmart effect)	Occasionally	Almost always	Never	Never	Never	All customers above
9. Customer as the nation's decision-making in a republic?	Never	Occasionally	Almost always	Never	Never	Never	All customers above
10. The product/service is							
a. For short-term use?	a. Almost always	a. Always	a. Almost always	a. Occasionally	a. Rarely	a. Almost always	a. Occasionally
b. For long-term use?	b. Rarely	b. Always	b. Occasionally	b. Always	b. Almost always	b. Rarely	b. Almost always
c. On-going but changing?	c. Almost always	c. On-going only	c. If incumbent	c. Rarely	c. Almost always	c. Rarely	c. Almost always
11. Measurement of the user as part of the product and of the product/service is?	Transparent, and the shoppers got what they wanted	Transparent, and it has public records	Transparent, and it has constant media	Transparent, and it has constant metrics	Intransparent, but it has metrics and an outage system	Intransparent, but the company got what it wanted	Intransparent and in transition
12. Rewards of success go to?	Business owner	Both client and attorney	Both client and consultant	Company	Client, but varies with the founder	Corporation	All customers above
13. Risks from failure go to?	Depends on contract, liability	Attorney: 20% Client: 80%	Consultant: 20%; Client: 80%	Depends on contract, liability	Depends on contract, liability	Corporation	All customers above

¹With colleges and universities often serving this purpose ²With community colleges focusing on teaching, rather than research, and serving this purpose from their beginning
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Last Updated: 2012 – 06/04
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^A The term “similarity matching” is James T. Reason’s. The quotation itself is from page 95 of Dietrich Dörner’s *The Logic of Failure: Why Things Go Wrong and What We Can Do to Make Them Right*.

^B With some programmers and engineers retaining patents

^C With faculty in universities expected to add to the discipline’s body of knowledge and faculty in community colleges to maintain knowledge in the discipline and to find or create ways to help diverse learners of their disciplines

^D Engineers, especially in fields where safety is involved, do adhere to the discipline and its standards.