

## 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,”<sup>A</sup> 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 mandates for required action (funded or not)?	If larger business	Varies	Varies	Varies	Varies	Varies	Almost always
5. Customer as creator of the product/service	Business owner; vendors	Rarely	Consultant	Manufacturer/consultant	Programmers – patents <sup>B</sup>	In-house or vendor	Almost always faculty <sup>C</sup>
6. Customer as the field of knowledge behind the product/service?	Never	For attorneys, the law—our first allegiance	Rarely	Rarely <sup>D</sup>	Rarely	Rarely	For professors, almost always their disciplines
7. Customer as support staff?	Varies	Varies	Varies - may be volunteers	Varies with industry	Varies with industry	Varies with industry	Always, especially Student Services
8. Customer as leaders/managers?	If larger business	Not applicable	Rarely	Managers	Managers	Managers	Administrators
9. Customer as a board?	Rarely	Not applicable	Rarely	If incorporated	If incorporated	If incorporated	Board of Trustees
10. Customer as mission statement?	Rarely	Rarely	Rarely	Varies	Varies	Varies	Almost always
11. 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
12. Customer as the region?							
a. Need for qualified workers?	a. Never	a. Occasionally	a. If client issue	a. Never	a. Never	a. Never	a. Often <sup>1</sup> to Always <sup>2</sup>
b. Need for good jobs?	b. Never	b. Occasionally	b. If client issue	b. Never	b. Never	b. Never	b. Often <sup>1</sup> to Always <sup>2</sup>
c. Need for safe communities?	c. Never	c. Occasionally	c. If client issue	c. Never	c. Never	c. Never	c. Often <sup>1</sup> to Always <sup>2</sup>
d. Need for a solid tax base?	d. Never	d. Occasionally	d. If client issue	d. Never	d. Never	d. Never	d. Always
13. Customer as the nation's economic competitiveness?	Occasionally (Walmart effect)	Occasionally	Almost always	Never	Never	Never	All customers above
14. Customer as the nation's decision-making in a republic?	Never	Occasionally	Almost always	Never	Never	Never	All customers above
15. 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
16. 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
17. 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
18. 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 <sup>E</sup>

<sup>1</sup> With colleges and universities often serving this purpose    <sup>2</sup> With community colleges focusing on teaching, rather than research, and serving this purpose from their beginning

## Definitions

Term	Use of the Term in <i>The Logic of Failure</i>
Intransparency	Planners and decision makers ... must make decisions affecting a system whose momentary features they can see only partially, unclearly, in blurred and shadowy outline—or possibly not at all. (p. 40)
Retain	<p>How can we avoid this pitfall? Simply by keeping in mind, whenever we undertake the solution of a problem, the features of the current situation that we want to <i>retain</i>. Simple? Apparently not.</p> <p>As Brecht observed late in life, <b>advocates of progress often have too low an opinion of what already exists</b>. When we set out to change things, in other words, we do not pay enough attention to what we want to leave unchanged. But <b>an analysis of what should be retained</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ gives us our <b>only opportunity to make implicit goals explicit</b></li> <li>▪ <b>and to prevent the solution of each problem from generating new problems</b> like heads of the Hydra.</li> </ul>

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<sup>A</sup> 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*.

<sup>B</sup> With some programmers and engineers retaining patents

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

<sup>D</sup> With engineers, especially in fields where safety is involved, expected not only to adhere to the discipline but also to ensure that its standards are met

<sup>E</sup> Although all customers above take the risk from a failed system of education, the 1st customers to feel the result of a failed system of K-12 education may be:

- Business seeking qualified workers
- Higher Education trying to fulfill its mission with students who are unprepared