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This document summarizes:

Clark, Doug. "Customer Service: Back to Basics is Better." *Public Management* December 2004: 6-9.

In his article, "Customer Service: Back to Basics is Better," Doug Clark focuses on the importance of customer service in public and private organizations, and he points to some key ways to sustain customer service training and programs in these organizations.

Clark highlights a major problem with customer service programs: employees often see the initiatives as fads. In order to remedy this, the author believes that employees must understand that the initiative is not a fad, managers are serious about customer service, there is accountability—including promotions and continued employment—for meeting service standards, and that the local government is serious about addressing problems in customer service. If employees do not accept these basic tenants, then the initiatives will likely fail.

Clark also focuses on ways to help organizations sustain the initiative. He brings up four important elements. First, a core group of employees must be trained in the basics so that the message continues after training is complete. This could mean establishing a team within a department that can communicate expectations. Second, supervisors should focus on working *with* subordinates instead of controlling them. Third, the organization must accept mistakes in an effort to encourage employees to find their own solutions. Finally, it is necessary for top managers to embrace the principles that they are trying to instill in their employees. Clark believes that these basic principles will help organizations sustain efforts in customer service.

Clark also argues for the importance of a coordinating committee within organizations. A coordinating committee should be made up of the "stars of the organization" and should represent all levels of employment in order to be successful. The committee should also hold two-year terms with half of the group rotating out each year. This will ensure new ideas, and the short time frame will keep employees focused and excited throughout their term.

Finally, Clark outlines nine customer service fundamentals: mission and value statements, assimilation, hiring practices to ensure the right people are hired, feedback, standards, training, winning attitudes, support, and celebration and recognition. While Clark understands that there is no "cookie-cutter formula" for customer service and initiatives must be ongoing, this article does help managers understand a few basic principles to help them start with an initiative. It also stresses the idea that customer service initiatives must be ongoing and well established within an organization.