



# Case Studies

**Name:**

Rosanne Taylor

**Title:**

From Awful to Awesome

**The Results:**

There is such a thing as bad customer service. And then there is appalling customer service. The representatives of a medical-equipment manufacturer, a client of Rosanne Taylor of RC Taylor & Associates, fell into this latter category.

“A nurse once called this company and said, ‘We have a patient cut open on the table right now, and your equipment isn’t working. What do we do?’ ” Taylor says. “The customer service rep’s answer was, ‘That’s not my job.’”

Naturally, the company had a terrible customer-satisfaction rating. So the organization’s leaders asked Taylor to help improve the communication skills of the workers in their technical assistance center. The workers in that unit were responsible for fielding calls about the company’s equipment, which meant customer questions could be about everything from simple maintenance to life-and-death emergencies.

Taylor accepted the challenging assignment, and she set out to observe the issues that plagued the center. She soon discovered that the problems were vast.

“People just hated their jobs,” Taylor says. “If you were assigned to this division, it meant that you were one step closer to the exit door.”

Indeed, turnover was enormous at the center. Arguments among the staff erupted frequently, and it was clear that the workers had no respect for each other. They also refused to cooperate or put forward even a mediocre effort.

“There would be 10 calls on hold, and workers were standing around gabbing or taking a cigarette break,” Taylor says. “They would ask, ‘What’s in it for me?’ ”

In such an obvious atmosphere of distrust, Taylor didn’t have to look far to discover the underlying causes for the problems. She saw that the employees’ needs received little consideration and that the workers had no connection to the company’s values or mission. Furthermore, the workers had adopted selfish attitudes or pessimistic mindsets, with many looking at themselves as victims.

As is too often the case, the managerial environment only aggravated the situation. The leaders’ ideas were implemented in haphazard ways, and motivation was nonexistent. The few hard-working employees received no attention for their efforts, while the slackers were allowed to get away with lackluster results. However, despite these clear managerial deficiencies, many leaders simply ignored their responsibility for nurturing the negative atmosphere.

“It didn’t help that it was like ‘management of the week’ sometimes,” Taylor says. “And when employee dissatisfaction was pointed out, some managers would say, ‘Well, that’s their problem.’ ”

But Taylor knew that it was the company’s problem. And she also knew that it was her job to help

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fix the problem. So she set up a program that would help managers and employees understand each other better. Her goals included getting participants to identify their priorities and teaching employees the importance of their roles. Of course, a vital concept she wanted to emphasize was that effective leaders manage the environment, not people.

“If managers don’t do that, they may have a spike of greatness, but it won’t last and then they’ll go back down to the valley,” Taylor says.

To avoid such a depressing scenario, Taylor adopted the Management Development Process<sup>ä</sup> (based on Keith Ayers’ system) and put the organization’s managers through it. She also created a separate Customer Service Optimization™ program for the workers that was conducted concurrently with the managers’ program. One of the methods used was distributive learning, where the managers distributed and taught their employees specific Inscape profiles. The *Work Expectations Profile* was a crucial component of both programs.

“*Expectations* is the best kept secret of all the profiles,” Taylor says. “It allows us to ask, ‘If your division could be the best it could be, what would that look like?’ ”

Taylor adds that the profile offers a nonthreatening, easy way to discuss priorities. She says that because the assessment has good face validity with those who take it, the results inspire participants to think about their goals and needs.

After discussing the profile’s insights with the managers, Taylor told them to administer the instrument to their employees, talk about the results, and define what the workers’ expectations were. This part of the distributive-learning process resulted in surprises.

“The managers said, ‘I always thought it was just about compensation with them,’ ” Taylor said. “So the managers had to answer the question of what they expected the environment to be like, aside from pay.”

With *Expectations* established as an integral part of the process, Taylor went on to emphasize the importance of a positive attitude and good customer service. In both training programs, she focused on the participants’ strengths, always keeping an eye on her objective of creating an environment where people want to apply what they’ve learned.

To that end, Taylor introduced the participants to the Platinum Rule, which advises to treat people the way that they want to be treated. Once the participants understood this concept, it became clear to them that people may have different priorities and yet still be valuable contributors.

“Previously, they had seemed to think that ‘If recognition or autonomy are important to me, they must be important to you,’ ” Taylor says. “But they learned that using the same approach with everyone could result in very different reactions.”

Further applying the lessons of the *Work Expectations Profile*, the managers opened a dialogue with employees over what needs could or could not be met. If possible, the managers and workers reprioritized goals to make everyone happier. But in situations where expectations could not be met, the managers offered a clear explanation.

“At least then, people knew why,” Taylor says. “So the employees had the choice to either let it go or let it eat them up. That got rid of a lot of victims.”



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Perhaps the subtlest of the insights that the training provided was on an interpersonal level. The managers discovered that employees will be more productive and stay longer if they are encouraged to use their skills. The employees, in turn, discovered that managers have expectations of their own.

More concrete measurements of success were soon evident, such as the fact that the customer-satisfaction rate soared from a pathetic 38% to an incredible 99%. Before long, the CEO of the organization was hailing the formerly troubled department as one of the new shining stars of company. And the division that had once been a dumping ground eventually morphed into a popular destination for the organization's best workers.

"There is now a waiting list to join the department," Taylor says. "It's night and day."

Credit for this transformation can be given to the insights gained by both the managers and the employees from the *Work Expectations Profile*, Taylor's expertise and guidance, and mainly, to the people who wanted to make a difference. Patience was also important. Taylor stresses that the dramatic transformation took time. She says that the company's ROI is monumental, and the workers have regained their sense of purpose.

"People forgot that when the phone rang, it was someone on the other end who might be trying to save a life," Taylor says, "They remember that now."