

Foreword

The Hong Kong Association for Customer Service Excellence (HKACE) was formed in February 2000 to promote customer service excellence in Hong Kong. To this end, we have initiated a series of publications on various subjects in the field of customer service.

This research, involving some 60 local secondary schools and training institutions and 30 leading service organizations in Hong Kong, was carried out to

- identify the core competencies for customer service excellence;
- evaluate the training currently provided by service organizations to frontline staff and the training provided by local secondary schools and training institutions to students; and
- evaluate the practices adopted by leading local service organizations to foster service excellence.

The findings of this research are summarized in this document - "Guide to Customer Service Excellence (4) - Development of People Competencies for Customer Service Excellence". It should appeal to service organizations, educational institutions and relevant government departments. We hope it would provide useful input for the review and enhancement of their training methodologies as well as teaching curriculum and programmes in relation to Hong Kong's need to provide superior customer service in the global marketplace.

Allan Chiang
Chairman
Hong Kong Association for Customer Service Excellence

February 2003

About HKACE

Mission and Objectives

Mission

To foster customer service excellence in Hong Kong and among members

Objectives

1. To share best customer service practices among members and with other service sectors in Hong Kong and overseas
2. To pursue continuous customer service improvement among members
3. To promote the benefits of customer-focused culture in Hong Kong
4. To establish and maintain relationship with service excellence providers and advocates
5. To act as catalyst of positive changes and improvements in Hong Kong service culture
6. To interface with the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region on customer service matters and research findings
7. To advise the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region on customer service issues

Member Organizations

	Cathay Pacific Airways Limited
	Centaline Property Agency Limited
	CLP Power Hong Kong Limited
	Dah Chong Hong (Motor Service Centre) Limited
	Hewlett-Packard Hong Kong Limited
	The Hong Kong Jockey Club
	Hongkong Post
	The Kowloon Motor Bus Co. (1933) Ltd.
	Motorola Asia Pacific Limited
	PCCW Limited
	Pacific Century Insurance Company Limited
	Shell Hong Kong Limited
	Standard Chartered Bank

Honorary Patron

The Honourable Henry TANG Ying-yen, GBS, JP
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- The secondary school principals and practitioners of professional training institutions who took the time to fill in the questionnaire and gave us tremendous useful feedback and suggestions.
- The project team at the Hong Kong Productivity Council (HKPC), for their professional work in the design and carrying out the fieldwork on behalf of the Association.

Finally, we thank you, the reader, for choosing this practical guidebook as a resource for yourself and your organization. We hope you enjoy reading it and that it proves to be an informative and useful resource.

Research Team

The Hong Kong Association for Customer Service Excellence (HKACE) has appointed the Information & e-Publishing (IEP) and Human Resources Consultancy (HR) Units of the Hong Kong Productivity Council (HKPC) as the consultant for the project.

The HKPC is a multi-disciplinary non-profit making organization established by statute in 1967 to promote increased productivity and the use of efficient methods throughout Hong Kong's business sectors.

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Part 1

Introduction

The Hong Kong Association for Customer Service Excellence (HKACE) appointed the Hong Kong Productivity Council (HKPC) in August 2002 to conduct a research project on the development of competencies for customer service excellence.

The project aims to identify the desirable competencies for customer service excellence; evaluate the training currently provided by local service organizations, secondary schools and tertiary training institutions; and evaluate the best practices adopted by local service organizations to foster service excellence.

The project adopts the following approach and methodology:

The single most important thing to remember about any enterprise is that there are no results inside its walls. The result of a business is a satisfied customer.
~ Peter Drucker ~

Identify the Desirable Competencies for Frontline Staff

The identification process commenced with a brainstorming session between representatives from HKACE and HKPC to develop a tentative list of desirable competencies, with reference to the competencies identified in a previous HKACE study. The tentative list was enhanced and verified through a series of six focus group meetings with frontline staff, customer service/human resource managers of service organizations and individual customers. In addition, 27 face-to-face interviews were carried out with human resource managers of HKACE member companies and other service organizations including small- and medium-sized enterprises (SME) in various service sectors. Comments on competency regarding requirements, level of importance and proficiency; training and staff development plans for frontline staff and related good practices, etc., were collected. The results of focus group meetings and face-to-face interviews were used to compile a list of desirable competencies for frontline staff.

Training Programmes Provided by Secondary Schools and Professional Training Institutions

Based on the desirable competencies identified, two postal surveys on educational institutions - secondary schools and professional training institutions - were carried out between September and October 2002 to assess the current education and training offerings, and the degree to which these programs developed competencies. Prior to the survey, focus group meetings with principals of secondary schools were conducted to verify the competency model from the perspectives of principals. For the survey, a structured questionnaire was distributed to 488 secondary schools and 49 professional training institutions in Hong Kong. Follow-up telephone calls were made to all targeted respondents in order to increase the response rate. By comparison of the requirements and proficiency levels specified by educational institutions and service organizations, significant gaps were noted.

Training Programmes Offered by Local Service Organizations

To investigate the training programmes designed to cultivate competencies, the 27 service organizations participated in the face-to-face interviews were also invited to complete the survey on their in-house training, external training courses and staff development plan for their frontline staff. The result of the survey was used to compare to the identified competencies for any significant gaps.

Practical Guidelines in Cultivating Competencies

Based on the survey findings and desktop research, HKPC developed the practical guidelines in cultivating competencies and recommended measures to narrow the gaps.

This book is divided into six parts:

Part 1 gives a brief introduction to the research project, its objectives and survey approach and methodology adopted.

Part 2 defines the term "competency" and describes its components. A discussion on why competency development is essential to the long-term sustainability of a company is presented.

Part 3 lists and defines the key competencies for frontline staff to achieve excellent customer service. A generic competency model consisting of behavioral indicators and proficiency level for the top 20 desirable competencies found across the service sector of Hong Kong is presented.

Part 4 presents the current education and training programmes on competency development in Hong Kong, and attempts to identify the training gaps. A description of the overall performance of frontline staff of service organizations and their current and future training needs is given. This part goes on to highlight the feedback collected during the survey and gives recommendations for narrowing the gaps.

Part 5 presents some of the practical guidelines and approaches which best practices companies have used and which have had positive impact on customer service.

Part 6 summarizes the importance of and the need for competencies, and concludes by recommending actions for relevant parties to work together to foster training and development of competencies.

Part 2

Basics of Competency Development

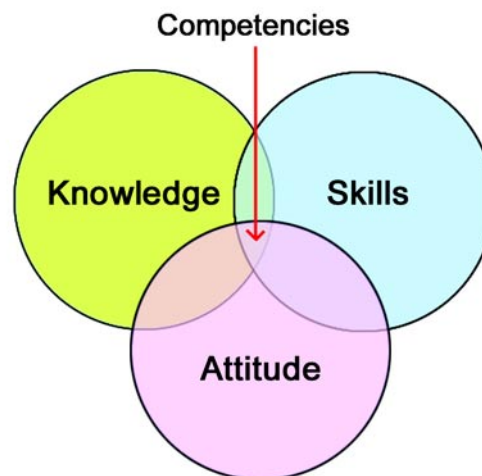
What is Competency?

Competency is defined as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitude that allows a person to perform a role or function at a specifically defined level of proficiency.

Identifying competencies gives people a clear idea what they need to do to prepare themselves to succeed at their jobs. An organization must have the people who possess the competencies it needs to achieve its goals and objectives. It is the only way to make sure that employees are prepared to assume responsibilities dictated by current and evolving organizational objectives.

The differences between a competent person and an incompetent person are demonstrated in his environment (surroundings).
~L. Ron Hubbard~

Figure 2-1:
Components of Competencies



The value of competency is the expression of the behaviour. Certain things that people do and certain behaviours indicate that they are competent. Therefore, competencies are not confined to just skills and knowledge. Competencies are all about being qualified to do a position's work. Good and effective performers in the organization normally demonstrate these behaviours more consistently than average or poor performers.

A competency model is a set of success factors, often called competencies that include key behaviours required for effective performance in a particular job or role. The model is important because it provides a road map for the range of behaviours that is needed for effective performance. Competency is generally presented with a definition and key behavioural indicators, for example:

Competency: Active Listening

Definition: Listens attentively to fully understand and address customers' enquiries in a timely and efficient manner.

Behavioural Indicators:

- Demonstrates patience and keeps calm when listening to customer enquiries, using verbal or non-verbal communications to discern and respond to the feeling and underlying message of customers
- Listens attentively so as to understand the problem and to identify customer needs appropriately, e.g., eye contact in face-to-face situation and appropriate telephone skills

Competencies are developed through a process of identifying the business needs and clarifying the company strategies to determine how the model would be used. Some models are meant to identify the "core or generic competencies" which are relevant and necessary to all employees of a company, no matter what their level or role is. An example is product knowledge. Other models are intended to pinpoint the competencies required for effectiveness in a given unit, type of job (such as call centre), or position (such as customer service officer). Next, data is then gathered in structural interviews, focus groups and job observations. The data collected is then analyzed, tested and validated. The finalized model is then translated into appropriate end user tools and applications.

Improving competence involves continuing professional development ... That is the really crucial thing, not just passing an examination.
~ Colette Bowe ~

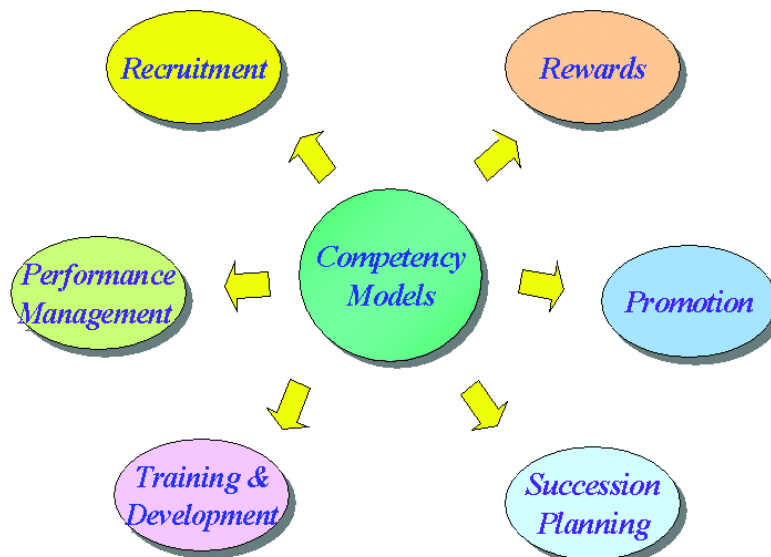
Why Competency Development is Essential to the Long-term Sustainability of a Company?

Competency model provides a tool for companies to determine what essential skills, knowledge and personal characteristics are needed to meet the changing needs of today and the probable needs of the future.

In recent years, the use of competencies has been adopted by companies in a wide range of ways, in virtually every human resources domain. They provide the criteria that can be applied to each of the human resources practices such as recruitment, promotion and rewards, training and development, performance management and succession planning.

People differ not only in their ability to do but also in their 'will to do'.
~ Paul Hersey ~

Figure 2-2:
Applications of Competency Model



In recruitment systems, a competency model provides a complete picture of what it takes to perform the work, thus ensuring that the interviewers are looking for the characteristics needed to do the job well in addition to the required skills and knowledge. In training and development, the model provides a list of behaviours and skills that have to be trained and developed to maintain effective levels of performance. For succession planning, the competency model ensures employers focus on the same set of attributes and skills that are important to the success in the position under consideration.

By clarifying job expectations, competency model also serves the interests of individual employees and the company as a whole. Some of the benefits of competency model are summarized in the following table:

Table 2-3: Benefits of Competency Model

For the Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reinforces company strategy, vision and culture - Focuses on resources and maximizes productivity - Clarifies job standards and work expectations - Aligns employees' behaviours with values and strategies of the company - Creates empowerment and accountability in performance - Provides a systematic approach to professional development - Develops equitable, focused appraisal and compensation decisions - Improves job satisfaction and employee retention - Ensures that skills are available for future business environment
For the HRM Systems	
Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifies the job requirements - Ensures a systematic interview process - Increases the likelihood of recruiting the right person who will succeed in the job - Minimizes the investment in people who may not be able to meet company's expectations
Training & Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focuses on the training and development of competencies that have the most impact on effective performance - Provides a list of behavioural skills that must be trained and developed to meet future company needs - Makes the most effective use of training and development time and cost
Performance Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides mutual understanding of what is being monitored and measured - Facilitates the performance appraisal process
Succession Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides a method to assess a candidate's readiness for the role or job - Focuses on training and development plans to address missing competencies
For the Employee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifies the behaviours (success criteria) necessary for outstanding performance in the job - Creates a common language and facilitates communication among employees about performance, development and career related issues - Provides an objective assessment of employees' strengths and areas for improvement - Provides training and development tools and methods for enhancing employees' skills - Offers a road map for recognition, reward and possible advancement

Part 3

Competency Model for Frontline Staff

Key Competencies for Frontline Staff

Based on focus groups meetings with service organizations and individual customers, the survey identified 20 most desirable competencies that are essential for frontline staff to perform their job effectively.

20 Most Desirable Competencies for Frontline Staff

	Rank
Communication skills	1
Job knowledge	2
Active listening	3
Work enthusiasm	4
Work efficiency	5
Interpersonal skills	6
Customer care	7
Sense of responsibility	8
Presentation skills	9
Emotional control	10
Positive attitude	11
Use of language	12
Responsiveness	13
Team spirit	14
Problem solving	15
Judgment	16
Image	17
Empathy	18
Initiative	19
Analytical ability	20

Communication is not only the essence of being human, but also a vital property of life.
~ John A. Piece ~

One of the most valuable things we can do to heal one another is listen to each other's stories.
~ Rebecca Falls ~

Efficiency is doing better what is already being done.
~ Peter F. Drucker ~

Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success.
~ Henry Ford ~

No problem is insurmountable. With a little courage, teamwork and determination a person can overcome anything.
~ B. Dodge ~

A Cautionary Note

While an attempt was made during the survey to identify competencies for different industries, the majority of companies tended to have generic or essential competencies that are fit for frontline across the service sector in Hong Kong. As a result, the survey identified the 20 most distinguishing characteristics of effective performance in frontline job. The behaviours included in each of the generic competency definition are therefore specific and applicable to the service sector in delivering excellent customer service.

A particular noteworthy point is that certain competencies - such as communication skills, use of language, positive attitude and analytical skills - can be learnt very well in formal school training. Others, such as customer care, empathy and image, are better learnt in the real world via on-the-job training, on-site training and vocational training.

Competency Groups

Competencies in the list were further organized into four groups or clusters, with each group/cluster containing three to nine competencies:

- (A) **Personal qualities** - such as emotional control, sense of responsibility, initiative, responsiveness, positive attitude, team spirit, work enthusiasm, work efficiency and job knowledge - are prerequisites for the individual to become competent and to lead to a virtuous life. These qualities are considered to be best-trained and developed in childhood and adolescence so as to form an indispensable foundation for the development of other unusual or unique capabilities. Personal qualities also reflect some aspects of an individual's frame of mind and maturity in relation to others and to work.
- (B) **Logical and mental orientation** - this involves high order thinking like problem solving, judgment and analytical ability. Logical and mental orientation contains foundation skills which can best be trained and developed via formal training and extra-curricular activities in school.
- (C) **Interpersonal communications** - it is the ability to hear accurately and understand the thoughts, feelings and concerns of customers, and be able to communicate tactfully. Communication skills, active listening, interpersonal skills, presentation skills and language skills are the competencies in this group. Like logical and mental orientation, interpersonal communications can be learnt very well in formal training and extra-curricular activities in school.
- (D) **Customer centric** - ranging from prompt and courteous service to meeting customer needs, is an essential part of the frontline staff model. The customer can be an actual customer or end-user within the same organization. Included here are competencies such as customer care, empathy and image.

Table 3-1 depicts the competency model developed for frontline staff. This model can be seen as an attempt to fit all the frontline individuals into a common mold. Under the four broad groups of competencies, each individual competency has a narrative definition accompanied by two to six behavioural indicators, or specific behavioural ways of demonstrating the competency in the job, and the level of proficiency required at frontline level.

The proficiency level for frontline positions has a connotation of requiring "medium-high" and "high" level of skills to meet the standards for a frontline job.

Table 3-1: Competency Model for Frontline Staff

Group	Competency	Behavioural Indicators	Proficiency Level*
Personal qualities	<i>Emotional control</i> Ability to maintain emotional stability when encountering impolite behaviour or being provoked	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Constantly maintains self-control and emotional stability - Maintains one's own point in an objective manner - Maintains composure in unhappy incidents (e.g., customer complaints) 	Medium-high
	<i>Sense of responsibility</i> Willing to undertake responsibilities and be accountable for one's own personal behaviour and decisions in striving to complete duties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Willing to undertake assignments - Completes tasks and services before agreed deadline - Ensures work efficiency complies with standard - Strives to complete target including overtime - Takes initiatives, is honest and accepts responsibilities - Treats customers needs as one's own problems 	Medium-high

Group	Competency	Behavioural Indicators	Proficiency Level*
Personal qualities	<p><i>Initiative</i> Takes proactive steps to resolve issues before turning into problems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proactively assists customers and colleagues and seeks problem-solving solutions - Proactively reports to company about customers requests and eager to suggest recommendations for improvement - Takes initiatives to learn so as to add value to one's own self 	Medium-high
	<p><i>Responsiveness</i> Responds quickly and effectively to the needs of customers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability to respond appropriately according to different situations - Ability to handle emergency incidents in a fast and efficient manner - Maintains a clear and sound mind, and possesses a high level of alertness 	Medium-high
	<p><i>Positive attitude</i> Maintains a positive frame of mind when interacting with customers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintains an enthusiastic work attitude - Displays a positive and up-to-standard service attitude - Optimistic in managing and solving problems - Demonstrates patience in handling difficult customers - Not afraid of failure, adopts a positive frame of mind to face challenges - Maintains a cheerful outlook 	High
	<p><i>Team spirit</i> Understands how to collaborate with team members, and contributes to the department's team spirit in achieving its common goals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shares a common vision and direction with team members and colleagues and contributes to the accomplishment of set targets - Eager to help colleagues - Understands the job responsibilities of colleagues and departments so as to facilitate collaboration - Focuses on the whole team / company rather than on the individual 	Medium-high
	<p><i>Work enthusiasm</i> Devotes to one's assigned duties and performs them with a positive and proactive work attitude</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability to work effectively and strives for the very best - Displays a tenacious and positive attitude in work - Demonstrates persistence, initiative and enthusiastically does what is necessary to get the job done - Shows respect and enthusiasm for the profession and job 	High
	<p><i>Work efficiency</i> Ability to provide prompt, accurate and quality services to customers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allocates and completes work effectively and within deadline - Demonstrates fast, accurate and appropriate services to meet customers needs - Minimizes unnecessary procedures and mistakes 	High

If you take responsibility for yourself, you will develop a hunger to accomplish your dreams.

~ Les Brown ~

Group	Competency	Behavioural Indicators	Proficiency Level*
Personal qualities	<i>Job knowledge</i> Possesses a clear understanding of one's own work requirements & knowledge (in relation to products & services), procedures and daily duties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understands clearly one's own job requirements - Understands the daily procedures and duties of one's own job - Understands the different job duties and procedures in connection with one's own job - Demonstrates the completion of tasks within established procedures - Displays knowledge of products / services and company information so as to provide accurate information according to customers needs - Displays knowledge of company's latest policies and market situation 	High
Logical & mental orientation	<i>Problem solving</i> Addresses problems and looks for positive resolutions to tackle them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifies the problem and be able to seek problem solving solutions - Provides appropriate services / assistance to customers according to their needs 	Medium-high
	<i>Judgment</i> Ability to comprehend problems, and make the proper analysis and judgment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability to analyse problems in an objective manner - Analyses data from different angles, so as to provide decisive, fast action and judgement 	Medium-high
	<i>Analytical ability</i> Ability to identify the cause of the situation for further actions as instructed by superior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understands the details of the incident in an objective manner to find out where the main problem is - Acts appropriately according to the situation, so as to prevent the occurrence / worsening of problem - Constantly aware of changing environment and customers needs, so as to improve one's own analytical ability 	Medium-high
Interpersonal communications	<i>Communication skills</i> Ability to express the meaning of the message clearly to customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability to pick up customers inquiry and request correctly - Ability to use appropriate words to convey message clearly to customers - Ability to use proper body language to assist the conveyance of messages 	High
	<i>Active listening</i> Listens attentively to fully understand and address customers enquiries in a timely and efficient manner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listens attentively so as to understand the problem and to identify customers needs appropriately, e.g., eye contact in face-to-face situation and appropriate telephone skills - Demonstrates patience and keeps calm when listening to customers enquiries, using verbal or non-verbal communications to discern and respond to the feeling and underlying message of customers 	High

**The finest language is mostly
made up of simple unimposing words.**
~ George Eliot ~

Group	Competency	Behavioural Indicators	Proficiency Level*
Interpersonal communications	<i>Interpersonal skills</i> Interacts in a friendly and courteous manner with customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Constantly maintains a courteous manner (including greetings and smile, etc.) - Eager to provide services to customers 	High
	<i>Use of language</i> Ability to communicate verbally in Cantonese, English and Putonghua when interacting with customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Uses simple and appropriate words to communicate fluently with customers - Chooses appropriate words to speak the same level with customers 	Medium-high
	<i>Presentation skills</i> Ability to present ideas/convey messages to customers in a professional and credible manner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Uses simple and easy-to-understand methods to convey message to customers - Tailors appropriate presentation to different customers according to their type, mood and situation - Ability to provide positive and effective cases to clarify and explain the company's standpoint 	Medium-high
Customer centric	<i>Customer care</i> Demonstrates customer-focus, and understands the needs of customers so as to provide quality services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understands clearly customers needs so as to provide appropriate feedback - Treats customers feedback with courtesy (no matter the feedback is feasible or not) - Follows-up on customers request, and finds positive resolutions to problems - Strives for continuous improvements to meet commitments to customers 	High
	<i>Empathy</i> Ability to think and feel like customers during the course of providing services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expresses empathy for customers' situation - Listens actively and takes initiatives to understand the needs of customers - Displays care and concern to customers, and lets them know that they are respected and their grievances have been understood 	Medium-high
	<i>Image</i> Appears in proper attire and be polite and courteous when dealing with customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Displays proper attire and pleasant manner - Communicates in a courteous manner and demonstrates self-confidence - Exhibits professionalism in work and possesses experienced industry knowledge 	High

Note: *Proficiency level of frontline staff (1-6): 1-1.5=Elementary; 1.6-2.5=Medium-low; 2.6-3.5=Medium; 3.6-4.5=Medium-high; 4.6-5.5=High; 5.6-6=Expert

Rule # 1 — “Use your good judgment in all situations.” There will be no additional rules.
~Nordstrom Employee Manual~

Part 4

Current Education and Training Programmes on Competency Development

Secondary schools and tertiary training institutions were surveyed on their current education and training offerings, and the degree to which these programmes developed specific competencies¹. The actual proficiency level of competencies developed for students was then compared to the targeted proficiency level of service organizations (employers). Gaps or mismatches between the existing proficiency level of students and the required proficiency level of service organizations (employers) were identified.

Out of the 537 questionnaires dispatched via mail, there were 69 questionnaires returned (56 questionnaires from secondary schools and 13 questionnaires from training institutions). This represents an overall response rate of 12.8%.

There is nothing training cannot do. Nothing is above its reach. It can turn bad morals to good; it can destroy bad principles and recreate good ones; it can lift men to angelship.
~ Mark Twain ~

Local Secondary Schools

Academic Training

On average, the curriculums for F.5 & F.7 students cover the development of core competencies. While all of the students are trained in the areas of problem solving, analytical ability, judgement and use of language, only slightly more than half of all the students have formal training in customer care. Students are also relatively less trained in the areas of empathy and image when compared with other competencies (Appendix B - Tables 4a & b).

Competency	% of Secondary School Students Trained	
	F.5	F.7
Customer care	54%	53%
Empathy	87%	86%
Image	89%	87%

F.7 students in general are better trained than F.5 students. Their overall targeted proficiency level of core competencies developed is higher (5.2, in a 6-point scale) than F.5 students (4.8). Their gap between targeted and actual proficiency level is also relatively lower (1.1) than F.5 students (1.4).

¹ 3 competencies - job knowledge, work enthusiasm and work efficiency - were not included in the list of competencies in the mail survey to schools and training institutions (Appendix B – Table 4b).

Chart 4-1: Average Proficiency Level of F.5 Graduates

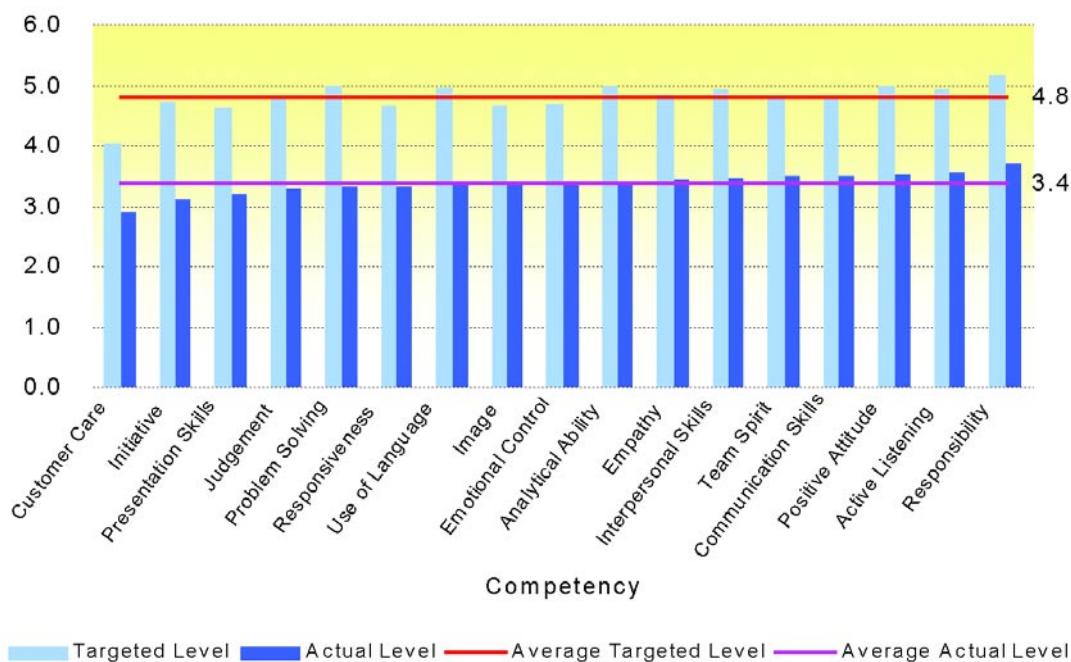
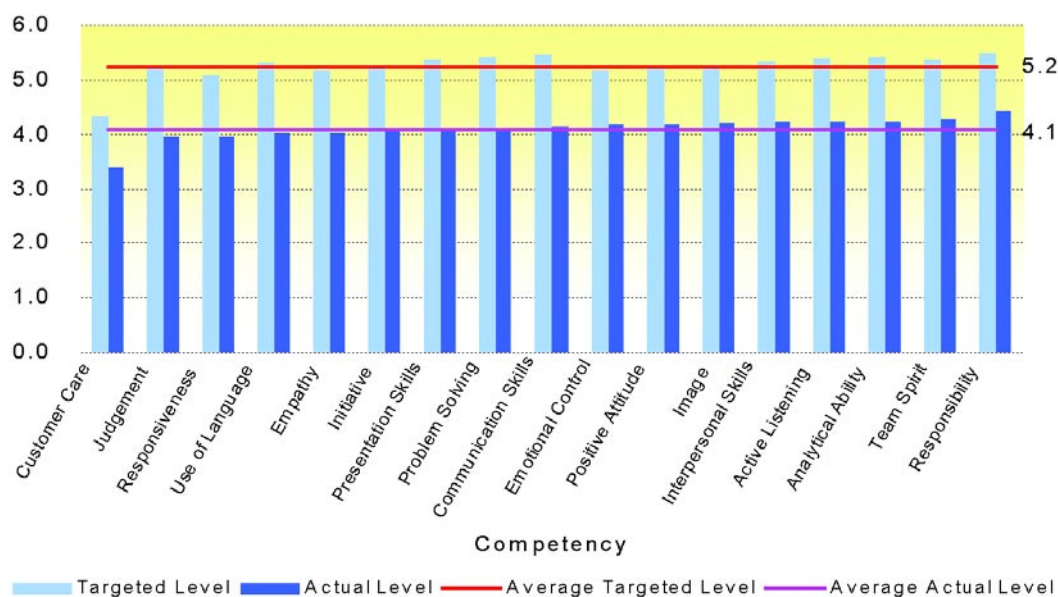


Chart 4-2: Average Proficiency Level of F.7 Graduates



F.5 students are less proficient (below the average overall actual proficiency level of 3.4) in the following competencies:

F.5 graduates	Competency	Average actual proficiency level
	Customer care	2.9
	Initiative	3.1
	Presentation skills	3.2
	Judgement	3.3
Problem solving	3.3	

And F.7 students are less proficient (below the average overall actual proficiency level of 4.1) in the following competencies:

F.7 graduates	Competency	Average actual proficiency level
	Customer care	3.4
	Judgement	4.0
	Responsiveness	4.0
	Use of language	4.0
	Empathy	4.0
	Initiative	4.0

Comparing the targeted and actual proficiency levels of F.5 & F.7 students, we found larger gaps (top 3 in each form) in the following competencies:

F.5 graduates	Competency	Gap
	Problem solving	1.7
	Use of language	1.7
	Initiative	1.6
	Analytical ability	1.6
	Sense of responsibility	1.5
	Positive attitude	1.5
	Judgement	1.5
F.7 graduates	Communication skills	1.4
	Problem solving	1.3
	Presentation skills	1.3
	Use of language	1.3
	Empathy	1.2
	Judgement	1.2
	Initiative	1.2
	Analytical ability	1.2

(Appendix B - Table 4c)

**Education is not the filling of a pail,
 but the lighting of a fire.**
 ~ W. B. Yeats ~

Other Informal Training on Competency Development

In order to provide a balanced curriculum to students, all secondary schools in the survey have extra-curricular activities or special programmes that are conducive to cultivating competencies.

Informal Training	% of schools that have training
Language club	89
Local field trip & visit	80
Competition	79
Interest group	77
Speech/debate	75
Trip abroad	66
Social club	59
Workshop	57
Seminar	54
Role-play/simulation exercise	43

Note: *Others that include student union, leadership training, community service, training camp and spiritual development programmes constituted about 59%.

Throughout the academic year, various activities such as educational visits, competitions, trips abroad, talks, seminars, training camps, community services, etc. are held regularly to broaden students' experiences and to arouse their attention to issues outside the academic field. Most of these activities can help develop students' skills in communications, problem solving, listening and team spirit. However, they do not quite cater to improving students' ability in customer care, empathy and image building (Appendix B - Table 4d).

Of the extra-curricular activities implemented, the top 3 most effective activities for competency development are: competition, trips abroad and local field trip and visit.

Most effective activities	Rank
Competition	1
Trips abroad	2
Local field trip and visit	3
Social club	4
Student union	4
Interest group	6
Speech / debate	6
Leadership training	8
Workshop	8
Language club	8
Seminar	11
Role-play / simulation exercise	11

Note: *Other activities that are considered effective include community service, training camp and spiritual development programmes.

Any training that does not include the emotions, mind and body is incomplete; knowledge fades without feeling.
~ Anonymous ~

Training Gaps: Actual Proficiency Level of Secondary School Graduates and Targeted Proficiency Level of Service Organizations (Employers)

Upon graduation, many students will proceed to higher studies in local or overseas tertiary institutions, or start a career in the service sector. Findings from the Education Department "Survey on Educational Status of S3, S5 & S7 Graduates, 5/2002" (Appendix B - Table 4e) show that among the 105,246 graduates of F.5 and F.7 in the 2000/01 school year, 12,945 graduates (12%) were studying in the Universities, 31,156 graduates (30%) were taking diploma/post-secondary courses at the VTC and other institutions; while 7,999 graduates (8%) were working full-time and 9,534 graduates (9%) were working or studying part-time as at October 2001. It is therefore important that the secondary school training could equip students with the generic skills necessary to adapt to the new environment.

Overall speaking, F.7 graduates are able to meet the requirements of service organizations / employers. They have a smaller gap of 0.4 (targeted proficiency level of employers minus actual proficiency level of secondary school graduates) than F.5 graduates (1.1).

Chart 4-3: Gap Analysis-Targeted Proficiency Level Required by Service Organizations and Actual Proficiency Level of F.5 Graduates

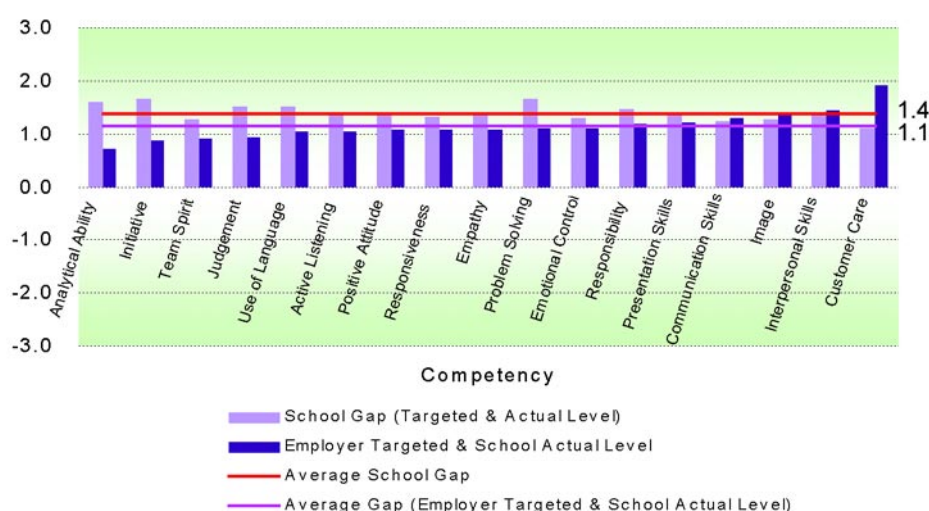
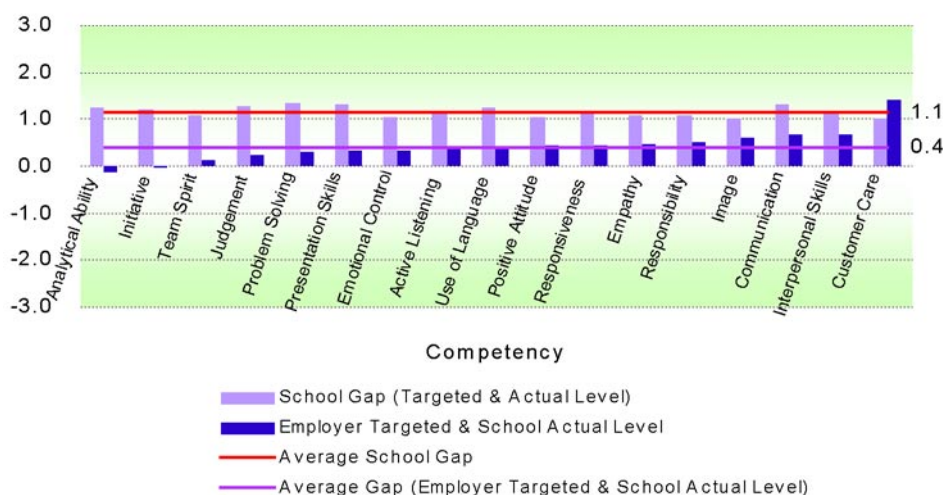


Chart 4-4: Gap Analysis-Targeted Proficiency Level Required by Service Organizations and Actual Proficiency Level of F.7 Graduates



In terms of meeting employers' expectations, both F.5 and F.7 graduates have larger gaps in the same type of competencies (Appendix B - Table 4f):

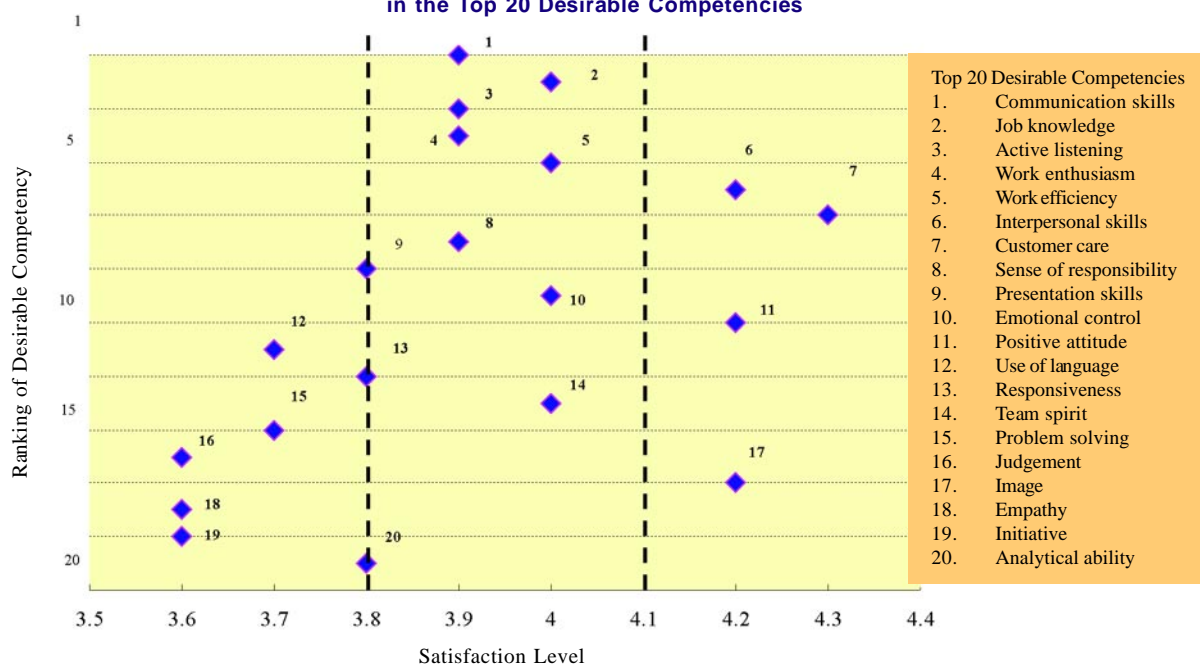
	Competency	Gap
F.5 graduates	Customer care	1.9
	Interpersonal skills	1.4
	Image	1.4
	Communication skills	1.3
F.7 graduates	Customer care	1.4
	Interpersonal skills	0.7
	Communication skills	0.7
	Image	0.6

While the average school gap (i.e., targeted and actual proficiency level of secondary school graduates) appears larger than the average gap (i.e., targeted proficiency level of employers and actual proficiency level of secondary school graduates), we have to take into account that secondary schools provide a variety of curricular that aims to develop students' generic skills and to prepare them to take up new roles (further studies or work) in life. Hence, secondary schools have high expectations of their students in training and development. On the other hand, the gap between the employers' targeted and students' actual proficiency level measures only a selective group of employees (i.e., frontline staff) with those of secondary school graduates. In meeting the expectations of employers, F.7 students on average have outperformed in their analytical ability (negative gap of proficiency level of 0.1).

How Frontline Staff of Service Organizations Actually Performed in the Top 20 Desirable Competencies

Based on the competency model developed for frontline staff, service organizations in the survey were asked face-to-face to rate the average performance of their frontline staff. Most of the organizations rated between 3.6-4.3 (based on a 5-point scale), indicating that they were generally "satisfied" with the overall performance of their frontline staff in the top 20 desirable competencies (Appendix B - Table 4g).

Chart 4-5: Satisfaction Level of Actual Performance of Frontline Staff in the Top 20 Desirable Competencies



*Satisfaction level (1-5): 1-1.5=very dissatisfied; 1.6-2.5=dissatisfied; 2.6-3.5=neither; 3.6-4.5=satisfied; 4.6-5=very satisfied

Overall speaking, customer service level of frontline staff has improved in recent years. With global economic downturn, rapidly changing markets, intense competition and unpredictable external factors, more and more people are realizing the importance of customer service. However, the concept of customer service is still not clear to most of the young people. In order to match the fast pace of changes and to minimize the gap between existing and required competencies, employees in the workplace must constantly update their skills and knowledge and be flexible and adaptive. Organizations, in return, have to provide training and development support and resources for skills development. Once performance gaps have been identified and discussed, it is time to develop the training plan to meet the needs. Training can take place in a variety of settings like workplace, classroom and simulated work environment using a range of methods such as coaching, mentoring, case studies, role-playing and professional skills training. Organizations have the responsibility to create a positive climate that enables and encourages employees to grow.

Training Plan and Training Needs of Service Organizations

There are various on-the-job and off-the-job ways to develop the needed competencies. Taking up a new project and receiving coaching from supervisors are examples of the former while attending workshops, seminars and courses are examples of the latter. The survey found a variety of in-house training programmes available for frontline staff to develop and maintain their professional knowledge. For new hires, they must go through an induction and orientation programme to acquire the necessary knowledge before they could operate independently by themselves. For existing frontline staff, on-going day-to-day coaching, briefing, mentoring and role-playing are vital to continuously update skills and knowledge. Staff are also encouraged to attend job-related external training programmes to enrich their professional knowledge. In the survey, the following types of course are found to be popular among frontline staff of service organizations:

- Use of language (English & Putonghua)
- Complaint handling
- Customer service skills
- Mindset training
- Interpersonal skills
- Teambuilding
- Frontline supervisory training
- Selling techniques
- Communication skills

In order to cope with constant changes and future business strategies, organizations in the survey indicated that their upcoming training needs for their frontline staff would be on:

- Positive thinking and mindset; service culture
- Customer care, such as customer service skills, complaint handling techniques; customer relationship management (CRM)
- Communication and language skills
- Initiative and creative thinking
- Selling techniques
- Interpersonal skills
- Emotional intelligence
- Stress management

Bridging the Gap Through Vocational Training

Currently, most of the courses related to customer service / competency development offered by training institutions are generic in nature and are applicable to many industries. According to the training institutions, the more popular courses attended by frontline staff of service companies are:

- Customer service skills
- Telemarketing skills
- Complaint handling
- Stress management
- Communication skills
- Call handling techniques and manner
- Selling techniques

**Training is useless unless you have a purpose,
it's knowing for what purpose to train for that can
break men's fulfillment.**
~ Anonymous ~

The proficiency level of students after completion of training courses, ranked by training institutions, is delineated in the following table. As these short courses and certificate course are attended by frontline staff with job experience, they are useful to narrow or even close the gaps based on employers' targeted proficiency level.

Competency	Students' Average Actual Proficiency Level After Training		Employers' Average Targeted Proficiency Level
	Short course	Certificate course	
1 Communication skills	4.3	4.7	4.8
2 Active listening	4.3	4.7	4.6
3 Customer care	4.3	4.2	4.8
4 Responsibility	4.3	4.3	4.9
5 Empathy	4.5	4.2	4.5
6 Team spirit	4.6	5.0	4.4
7 Problem solving	4.2	4.4	4.4
8 Interpersonal skills	4.3	4.4	4.9
9 Emotional control	4.2	4.3	4.5
10 Presentation skills	4.3	4.5	4.4
11 Positive attitude	4.6	5.0	4.6
12 Responsiveness	4.3	4.4	4.4
13 Judgement	3.8	3.7	4.2
14 Initiative	4.1	4.4	4.0
15 Image	5.0	5.3	4.8
16 Analytical ability	4.0	4.8	4.1
17 Use of language	4.2	4.7	4.4

Note: Proficiency level is 0-6. 0=not covered/not applicable; 1=lowest; 6=highest.

Ways to Develop, Strengthen, and Expand Education and Training to Instil Competencies Needed for Customer Service Excellence

In addition to the specific training courses for customer service, the education system should be structured to encourage customer-focus/positive thinking among all students. Education provides the long-term foundation for the development of customer service excellence. From empirical evidence, good customer service thrives in cities/countries with a strong customer-focused culture. Promoting customer service excellence is not just an educational issue. A wider social policy is essential in nurturing a territory-wide customer service excellence.

The survey collected useful feedback and comments from service organizations, secondary schools and training institutions regarding their needs and suggestions on ways to elevate the training on competency development in Hong Kong (Appendix B - Table 4h):

**The roots of education are bitter,
but the fruit is sweet.
~ Aristotle ~**

Comments on Education	How Competency Development Could be Incorporated into Secondary School Training
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language is a major concern for the service industry - Curriculum of secondary school is too academic and neglects practical training - Strengthen the teaching of soft skills and mindset for customer service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stronger emphasis on the teaching of language skills applications (listening, reading, writing and speaking) - On-site visits to service organizations - Communication sessions between service organizations and students - Participate in seminars and talks on Hong Kong's service industries - Introduce subjects such as customer care, customer service, interpersonal skills, etc., into academic training

Comments on Training Institutions	How Training Institutions Could Enhance the Training on Competency Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhance relationship with employers to better understand their training needs - Invite people from the industry to develop practical training programmes - Deliver more industry-specific and customized courses for frontline staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communication sessions with employers in the service sector to understand their requirements on training - On-site visits to service organizations - Involve service sector in the design of course curriculum - Talks / seminars on the requirements of specific sectors - Customize industry-specific courses on competency development for frontline staff - On-the-job training / internship / placement of students

Comments on the Government and Related Organizations	Support and Resources to Building up of a Customer-focused Culture in Hong Kong
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide an overall direction and guidance in building up a customer-focused culture in Hong Kong 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organize and support promotion campaigns on customer service, e.g., advertisements in the media and government award schemes - Organize and support seminars / forums / experience-sharing sessions for companies to share their best practices in delivering customer service excellence - Organize and support large-scale exhibitions to invite local and overseas companies to showcase their best practices on customer service - Publish booklets / guidebooks on customer service for service industries - Collective training and subsidies / tax relief for SME - Trade associations and employers to support internship of graduates

Part 5

Practical Guidelines to Customer Service Excellence

The following checklists highlight some of the practical approaches that best practice companies have used and that have had positive impact on customer service. They are applicable to companies, large and small, across the service industry and are organized under seven headings.

Every man's ability may be strengthened or increased by culture.

~ John Abbott ~

Checklist on Corporate Mission and Culture

- A total service quality approach that emphasizes the whole customer service process starting from initial greeting to after-sales services is important.
- Top-down support is a must. The "How" and "Why" need to be clearly understood at all levels.
- Let people make the difference. Employee understanding of the organization's focus and involvement is absolutely necessary. Communication is the key to employee involvement. Allow for empowerment for performance opportunities.
- Be receptive to new ideas and constantly embrace innovative ideas to enhance service and products. For example, introducing new or value-added services to enhance customer satisfaction.
- Establish service pledges and / or guidelines for customer service excellence. Constantly monitor employee performance against set targets.
- Mobilize employees to continuously learn and improve. Provide adequate resources and support on training. Reinforce skills and knowledge for continuous improvement. Actively participate in experience-sharing sessions, seminars and public awards on customer service.
- Cultivate teamwork and encourage competitions among teams. Recognize team as well as individual performances. Rewards must be meaningful.
- Maintain a positive working environment and encourage open communications, continuous learning, active participation and personal growth.

When you hire people that are smarter than you are, you prove you are smarter than they are.

~ R. H. Grant ~

Checklist on Hiring the Right Person

- Select against core competencies: Hire the right person with the right attitude is the top focus. A customer service mindset is what makes a company great.
- Other core competencies include initiative, creativity, communication skills, interpersonal skills, analytical thinking, adaptivity and flexibility.
- Make use of a variety of selection techniques such as initial telephone interviews, followed by extensive face-to-face interviews, group discussions, panel discussions, psychometric tests to examine the potential and competencies of participants.
- New hires must go through an induction and training programme to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills before they could operate independently by themselves.
- Periodically review progress with new hires to understand their concerns and problems in adapting to the new work environment, and to set objectives and performance targets for the year ahead.
- Thereafter, meetings can be arranged on a monthly and one-to-one basis to provide coaching and feedback on performance.

Checklist on Effective Communication

- Effective communication should be clear, open and honest that allows positive and negative feedback. It is the best way to motivate and to inspire employees, and to let them know that they are valued.
- Keep employees as timely informed as possible. Information and key messages, whether good news or bad, should be shared with employees through ongoing communication programmes. Employees who understand the real issues facing the organization, whether downsizing, salary reduction, layoff, etc., will be able to address customers' concerns effectively.
- Top management needs to constantly communicate and reinforce the organization's mission, values and business initiatives to all levels.
- Formal communication channels include regular briefing and updates, meetings, quality circles for experience-sharing, case reviews and presentations. Informal channels include daily encounters, luncheons, interest groups and staff recreation activities.
- Other channels include company's Intranet, video programmes, notice board display, in-house magazines and newsletters. In addition, employee feedback card, suggestion boxes, emails, employee opinion surveys and leadership quality index encourage more feedback and input from employees. These opinions and survey results help top management to identify weak areas for immediate improvement as well as strong areas to further build on and reinforce.

Words are just words and without heart they have no meaning.
~ Chinese proverb ~

Checklist on Measurement of Staff Competencies

- Competencies can only be assessed by performance. Common methods of assessment include observation, demonstration, test or quiz and documentation review.
- A variety of surveys can be used to measure competencies: mystery shopper/caller, opinion survey, benchmarking exercise, customer focus group, customer service audit, feedback form, suggestion box, email, etc. The findings must be shared with top management and employees to determine areas for improvement and training.
- Address the competency gaps via training and development plans. Training can include formal courses; policy and procedure reviews; videos; supervisory instruction and review; and self-directed learning modules.

Motivate them, train them, care about them and make winners out of them...we know that if we treat our employees correctly, they'll treat the customers right. And if customers are treated right, they'll come back.
~ J. Marriot Jr. ~

Checklist on Effective Training and Continuous Training

- Encourage training at all levels and view training as part of the organization's philosophy. Top management should support training programmes.
- Training needs are determined on an annual needs analysis by the training manager/line managers.
- Get input from employees on training needs, and have them "buy-in" to the programme. If employees believe the training is important and benefits both them and the company, they will be more eager to participate.
- Development activities include on-the-job training, classroom-based courses, internal and external programmes and job rotations.
- Focus on those development activities that could build employee capability and improve organizational performance.
- To stretch training budget, organizations may consider encouraging their staff to "self-learn", or aligning with other companies or industry associations needing similar training.
- Work closely with educational and training institutions to access additional resources in establishing / implementing training programmes and to develop curricula and instructional materials.

- Use employee surveys to evaluate the effectiveness of training and refine the programmes.
- Build training into performance appraisal process. This will increase participation and reinforce the importance of training.

**You have to perform at a consistently higher level than others.
That's the mark of a true professional.
~ Joe Paterno ~**

Checklist on Performance Monitoring and Management

- Involve employees in the design, evaluation and implementation of performance management.
- Align employees' performance target with organization's goals and business targets. Communicate openly and clearly employees' target to increase understanding.
- Tie performance to results, i.e., financial results, employee development and customer satisfaction.
- Conduct mid-year evaluation to review progress of the achievements to date. Involve employees in the evaluation process. Areas of agreement and disagreement should be discussed, explored and understood. An action plan may be necessary to close any gaps identified.
- Management should deal with problem performance in a positive manner. When a problem is noted, the employee goes through counseling and retraining. If the problem continues, the employee will receive a verbal warning, and if required, will be followed by written warning.
- Annual evaluation and feedback at end of the fiscal year.
- Foster the well-being of employees and try to resolve any problems so as to create a positive and healthy working environment.

**A reward cannot be valued if it is not understood
~ Phillip C. Grant ~**

Checklist on Rewards and Recognition

- Rewards do two things: indicate what is valued and reinforce valued behaviors.
- Reward criteria must be clearly defined and well communicated. Criteria include actual performance achieved, teamwork, skills and knowledge acquired.
- Pay tied to business performance: Motivate employees to achieve business target and overall performance. Distribute monthly or quarterly reports to employees to show progress towards business targets. Improve financial literacy in all employees.
- Recognize top performers (individuals and teams) and reward outstanding performance. Rewards can be in monetary (cash, coupons, salary, promotion) and/or non-monetary (prizes and awards, luncheon with management, recognition parties or publication via the company Intranet, newsletters and notice boards, etc.) form.
- Informal, day-to-day recognition is equally important because it is frequent, personal and can create a sense of belonging and accomplishment.
- Review and evaluate reward systems frequently. Constantly evaluate what employees value and what the market is doing.

**Quality is never an accident; it is always the
result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent
direction and skillful execution; it represents
the wise choice of many alternatives.
~ William A. Foster ~**

Part 6

Conclusion

Basic competencies are the characteristics that all of us need in order to perform our jobs effectively. However, we need to continuously train and develop the required competencies if we are to meet the changes and challenges of the future. It is through this ongoing process that we will ensure and retain our competitive edge.

We have identified an important set of competencies expected of our frontline staff to meet the current and future needs of our society², and to evaluate the training programmes designed to cultivate these competencies. While the current survey found that most employers are satisfied with the overall performance of their frontline staff, significant gaps are located in the training and development of competencies. To ensure that the required competencies could be better trained and developed and to meet the increasing demands of employers, all relevant parties should work closely together to raise the proficiency level of competencies for customer service excellence:

Government and supporting organizations

- The Government and supporting organizations should provide the overall leadership to build up a customer-focused culture in Hong Kong. Most respondents suggested that the government should take an active role in raising the awareness of the general public in customer service. The role may include organizing and supporting promotion campaigns, seminars, forums, experience-sharing sessions, large-scale exhibitions and publication of booklets on customer service;
- The Government should also allocate more resources such as collective training and subsidies/tax relief for SME; and
- Trade associations, in collaboration with the education and service sectors, should support the internship of students in their member companies.

Education sector

- Educators should put stronger emphasis on the teaching of language skills and introduce new subjects related to customer care into the curriculum.
- Besides formal training, educators should open up new learning opportunities, such as on-site visits to service organizations, participation in seminars and talks regarding the service industries, etc., for students to develop their skills outside the academic field.

2

Group	Competency
Personal qualities	Emotional control; Sense of responsibility; Initiative; Responsiveness; Positive attitude; Team spirit; Work enthusiasm; Work efficiency; Job knowledge
Logical & mental orientation	Judgment; Problem solving; Analytical ability
Interpersonal communications	Communication skills; Active listening; Interpersonal skills; Use of language; Presentation skills
Customer centric	Customer care; Empathy; Image

Training institutions

- Trainers should work closely with employers in the service sector to understand their needs and requirements, and deliver more industry-specific, customized and focused courses for competency development; and
- Arrange on-the-job training, internship or placement of students.

Service sector

- Employers should regularly communicate with their staff to understand their needs and concerns so as to ensure a positive working environment;
- They should support and provide training and development opportunities such as on-the-job training, role playing, coaching/mentoring, delegation, job rotation, professional skills training, etc.; and
- They should also provide incentives, motivation and reward to employees to encourage good performance.

Parents

- Most of the competency development starts in early childhood. Outside the school, parent education and support is very important to the individual. Parents should cultivate in their children an interest in learning and to maintain a positive attitude in life.

Other issues

The absence of good coordination among the various bodies (schools, training institutions, companies, government and related organizations) could hinder the development of competencies. We recommend the government to lead a more organized and coordinated linkage among the various bodies and to co-ordinate the overall development of a service culture and core competencies for customer service excellence in Hong Kong.

**You'll never have a product or price advantage again.
They can be easily duplicated, but a strong customer
service culture can't be copied.**
~ Jerry Fritz ~

Appendix A

List of Participating Companies and Institutions

HKACE members

Cathay Pacific Airways Limited
Centaline Property Agency Limited
CLP Power Hong Kong Limited
Dah Chong Hong (Motor Service Centre) Limited
Hewlett-Packard Hong Kong Limited
The Hong Kong Jockey Club
Hongkong Post
The Kowloon Motor Bus Co. (1933) Ltd.
Motorola Asia Pacific Limited
PCCW Limited
Pacific Century Insurance Company Limited
Shell Hong Kong Limited
Standard Chartered Bank

Service Organizations

Asia Airfreight Terminal Company Limited
Bank of America (Asia) Limited
Chevalier (OA) Limited
Chow Sang Sang Holdings International Limited
Chow Tai Fook Jewellery Company Limited
Hong Kong Dragon Airlines Limited
Exel Hong Kong Limited
Hong Yip Service Company Limited
New York Life Insurance Worldwide Limited
ORBIS
ParknShop
Rainbow Seafood Restaurant
Shangri-la Hotels and Resorts
Smartone Mobile Communications Limited
The Spaghetti House Restaurants Limited
Topsy Company (HK) Limited
Tsit Wing Coffee Company Limited
Zurich Insurance Holdings (HK) Limited

Secondary Schools

Buddhist Fat Ho Memorial College
Buddhist Leung Chik Wai College
Buddhist Mau Fung Memorial College
CCC Heep Woh College
CCC Yenching College
Cheng Chek Chee Secondary School
Christ College
Christian Alliance SW Chan Memorial College
Delia Memorial School (Taikooshing)
Good Hope School
Ha Kwai Chung Government Secondary School
Helen Liang Memorial Secondary School (Shatin)

Ho Yu College (Sponsored by Sik Sik Yuen)
Holy Carpenter Secondary School
King Ling College
Kowloon Tong School (Secondary Section)
Lingnan Secondary School
Lions College
LST Leung Chik Wai Memorial School
LST Yu Kan Hing School
Man Kiu College
NT Heung Yee Kuk Tai Po District Secondary School
Po Leung Kuk Lee Shing Pik College
Pui Shing Catholic Secondary School
Raimondi College
Sai Kung Sung Tsun Catholic Secondary School
Saint Too College
Sam Yuk Middle School
SKH All Saints' Middle School
SKH Chan Young Secondary School
SKH Lam Woo Memorial Secondary School
SKH Lui Ming Choi Secondary School
SKH Tsang Shiu Tim Secondary School
St. Francis Xavier's College
Tack Ching Girls' Middle School
Tak Sun Secondary School
Tang King Po School
True Light Middle School of Hong Kong
Tsuen Wan Public Ho Chuen Yiu Memorial College
Tsung Tsin College
Tsung Tsin Middle School
Tuen Mun Catholic Secondary School
Yuen Long Lutheran College

Training Institutions

Civil Service Training and Development Institute
Hong Kong College of Technology
Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (Chai Wan)
Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (Haking Wong)
Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (Morrison Hill)
Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (Tsing Yi)
Hong Kong Productivity Council
Li Ka Shing Institute of Professional & Continuing Education, The Open University of Hong Kong
PCCW Contact Centre
Proserve Solutions (HK) Limited
School of Professional & Continuing Education, University of Hong Kong
Vocational Training Council
YMCA College of Continuing Education

Appendix B

Survey Tabulations

Table 4a: Profile of Responding Secondary Schools

Table 4b: Secondary School Training in Competency Development

Table 4c: Targeted and Actual Proficiency Level of Competencies of F.5 & F.7 Students

Table 4d: Types of Informal Training Offered by Secondary Schools and Specific Competencies Trained

Table 4e: Distribution of F.5 & F.7 Graduates of 2000/01 School Year by Their Activity Status in October 2001

Table 4f: Targeted Proficiency Level of Employers and Actual Proficiency Level of Secondary School Students

Table 4g: Satisfaction Level of the Actual Performance of Frontline Staff in the Top 20 Desirable Competencies

Table 4h: Feedback from Secondary Schools and Training Institutions on How to Improve the Training on Competencies for Customer Service Excellence

Table 4a: Profile of Responding Secondary Schools

(1) No. of Responding Secondary Schools by Form & Class

	F. 5	F.7
Arts	54	48
Science	56	50
Commerce	26	18
Total	56	50

(2) No. of Responding Secondary School Students by Form & Class

	F. 5	F.7	Total
Arts	4,067	1,269	5,336
Science	4,345	1,778	6,123
Commerce	1,193	331	1,524
Total	9,605	3,378	12,983

Table 4b: Secondary School Training in Competency Development

Competency	Form 5 graduates				Form 7 graduates			
	Arts % of Student Trained	Science % of Student Trained	Commerce % of Student Trained	Overall % of Student Trained	Arts % of Student Trained	Science % of Student Trained	Commerce % of Student Trained	Overall % of Student Trained
1 Communication skills	99%	96%	92%	97%	99%	96%	93%	97%
2 Active listening	97%	96%	92%	96%	96%	96%	93%	95%
3 Customer care	54%	50%	70%	54%	53%	51%	70%	53%
4 Sense of responsibility	98%	98%	95%	98%	97%	97%	97%	97%
5 Empathy	88%	86%	89%	87%	87%	86%	85%	86%
6 Team spirit	96%	92%	92%	94%	95%	95%	89%	94%
7 Problem solving	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
8 Interpersonal skills	96%	93%	88%	94%	94%	94%	85%	93%
9 Emotional control	93%	91%	88%	91%	91%	91%	83%	90%
10 Presentation skills	99%	98%	97%	98%	99%	98%	96%	98%
11 Positive attitude	98%	95%	97%	97%	99%	98%	96%	98%
12 Responsiveness	95%	91%	90%	93%	93%	90%	90%	91%
13 Judgement	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
14 Initiative	98%	97%	95%	97%	94%	95%	97%	95%
15 Image	92%	88%	88%	89%	88%	88%	83%	87%
16 Analytical ability	100%	100%	100%	100%	97%	98%	100%	98%
17 Use of language	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
17a - English	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
17b - Cantonese	99%	97%	92%	97%	99%	98%	94%	98%
17c - Putonghua	74%	69%	73%	72%	67%	65%	64%	66%
Overall	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 4c: Targeted and Actual Proficiency Level of Competencies of F.5 & F.7 Students

Competency	Form 5 graduates						All Form 5 graduates		Form 7 graduates						All Form 7 graduates	
	Arts		Science		Commerce		Targeted Proficiency Level	Actual Proficiency Level	Arts		Science		Commerce		Targeted Proficiency Level	Actual Proficiency Level
	Targeted Proficiency Level	Actual Proficiency Level	Targeted Proficiency Level	Actual Proficiency Level	Targeted Proficiency Level	Actual Proficiency Level			Targeted Proficiency Level	Actual Proficiency Level	Targeted Proficiency Level	Actual Proficiency Level	Targeted Proficiency Level	Actual Proficiency Level		
1	4.8	3.4	4.7	3.5	4.9	3.7	4.8	3.5	5.5	4.2	5.4	4.1	5.4	4.1	5.5	4.1
2	5.0	3.5	4.9	3.6	4.8	3.5	4.9	3.5	5.4	4.2	5.4	4.2	5.4	4.3	5.4	4.2
3	4.1	3.0	4.1	2.9	3.5	2.7	4.0	2.9	4.2	3.3	4.5	3.5	4.1	3.1	4.3	3.4
4	5.1	3.7	5.1	3.8	5.2	3.7	5.2	3.7	5.4	4.4	5.5	4.4	5.6	4.4	5.5	4.4
5	4.8	3.4	4.8	3.4	5.0	3.6	4.8	3.4	5.1	4.0	5.2	4.0	5.4	4.2	5.2	4.0
6	4.7	3.5	5.0	3.5	4.5	3.4	4.8	3.5	5.2	4.2	5.4	4.3	5.3	4.2	5.4	4.3
7	5.0	3.3	5.0	3.4	4.7	3.2	5.0	3.3	5.4	4.1	5.5	4.1	5.3	4.0	5.4	4.1
8	4.9	3.5	4.9	3.4	5.0	3.5	4.9	3.5	5.3	4.1	5.3	4.2	5.5	4.5	5.3	4.2
9	4.7	3.4	4.7	3.4	4.9	3.5	4.7	3.4	5.1	4.1	5.2	4.2	5.7	4.5	5.2	4.2
10	4.7	3.3	4.6	3.1	4.6	3.2	4.6	3.2	5.3	4.1	5.4	4.1	5.3	4.0	5.4	4.1
11	5.0	3.5	5.0	3.6	4.8	3.4	5.0	3.5	5.2	4.1	5.2	4.2	5.4	4.4	5.2	4.2
12	4.6	3.2	4.7	3.4	4.8	3.5	4.7	3.3	5.0	3.9	5.1	4.0	5.3	4.1	5.1	4.0
13	4.8	3.2	4.8	3.3	4.7	3.3	4.8	3.3	5.2	3.9	5.2	4.0	5.3	4.0	5.2	4.0
14	4.7	3.0	4.7	3.2	4.8	3.2	4.7	3.1	5.2	4.0	5.2	4.1	5.4	4.0	5.2	4.0
15	4.5	3.3	4.6	3.4	5.2	3.9	4.7	3.4	5.1	4.1	5.2	4.2	5.7	4.5	5.2	4.2
16	5.0	3.3	5.0	3.5	4.8	3.4	5.0	3.4	5.4	4.2	5.4	4.3	5.4	4.2	5.4	4.2
17	4.9	3.3	5.0	3.3	4.9	3.5	5.0	3.3	5.3	4.0	5.3	4.0	5.2	4.1	5.3	4.0
17a	5.0	3.0	5.1	3.1	4.8	3.0	5.0	3.1	5.5	4.0	5.6	4.0	5.6	4.0	5.5	4.0
17b	5.4	4.3	5.4	4.2	5.5	4.5	5.4	4.3	5.6	4.8	5.7	4.8	5.5	4.8	5.6	4.8
17c	4.2	2.6	4.3	2.5	4.1	2.9	4.2	2.6	4.3	2.9	4.4	2.8	4.2	3.2	4.4	2.9
Overall Proficiency Level	4.8	3.3	4.8	3.4	4.8	3.4	4.8	3.4	5.2	4.0	5.3	4.1	5.3	4.1	5.2	4.1

Notes: 1) Proficiency level (0-6): 0=not covered/not applicable; 1=Lowest; 6=Highest.
 2) Proficiency level of each competency is weighted by the no. of students in F.5 & F.7 and class (arts, science & commerce).
 3) Overall Proficiency Level is calculated as the sum of proficiency level divided by number of competency.

Table 4d: Types of Informal Training Offered by Secondary Schools and Specific Competencies Trained

Informal training	Have informal training		Specific competencies trained																
	No. of schools	% of schools	Communications skills	Active listening	Customer care	Sense of responsibility	Empathy	Team spirit	Problem solving	Interpersonal skills	Emotional control	Presentation skills	Positive attitude	Responsiveness	Judgement	Initiative	Image	Analytical ability	Use of language
Workshop	32	57%	14 44%	11 34%	4 13%	12 38%	7 22%	10 31%	15 47%	12 38%	6 19%	5 16%	7 22%	4 13%	9 28%	5 16%	5 16%	6 19%	4 13%
Seminar	30	54%	14 47%	14 47%	5 17%	12 40%	8 27%	6 20%	14 47%	9 30%	9 30%	2 7%	12 40%	4 13%	6 20%	8 27%	5 17%	7 23%	4 13%
Role-play/ simulation exercise	24	43%	14 58%	10 42%	4 17%	6 25%	10 42%	12 50%	5 21%	11 46%	7 29%	10 42%	6 25%	8 33%	7 29%	6 25%	5 21%	5 21%	7 29%
Competition	44	79%	18 41%	8 18%	3 7%	15 34%	7 16%	27 61%	16 36%	12 27%	14 32%	9 20%	14 32%	13 30%	9 20%	11 25%	7 16%	7 16%	5 11%
Interest group	43	77%	16 37%	12 28%	9 21%	18 42%	11 26%	17 40%	15 35%	18 42%	11 26%	12 28%	15 35%	12 28%	13 30%	15 35%	11 26%	10 23%	4 9%
Language club	50	89%	24 48%	12 24%	1 2%	8 16%	4 8%	6 12%	2 4%	11 22%	2 4%	15 30%	3 6%	6 12%	3 6%	4 8%	3 6%	4 8%	29 58%
Social club	33	59%	12 36%	10 30%	6 18%	13 39%	8 24%	9 27%	8 24%	12 36%	4 12%	4 12%	6 18%	3 9%	4 12%	6 18%	4 12%	5 15%	4 12%
Speech/ debate	42	75%	20 48%	12 29%	2 5%	4 10%	4 10%	11 26%	7 17%	5 12%	7 17%	20 48%	2 5%	11 26%	12 29%	3 7%	6 14%	10 24%	17 40%
Local field trip & visit	45	80%	6 13%	13 29%	4 9%	12 27%	7 16%	12 27%	14 31%	8 18%	4 9%	3 7%	6 13%	5 11%	7 16%	9 20%	4 9%	11 24%	7 16%
Trips abroad	37	66%	18 49%	11 30%	4 11%	12 32%	9 24%	14 38%	15 41%	16 43%	7 19%	7 19%	9 24%	8 22%	9 24%	7 19%	8 22%	6 16%	13 35%
Others	33	59%	17 52%	12 36%	8 24%	18 55%	11 33%	17 52%	14 42%	15 45%	13 39%	12 36%	13 39%	9 27%	11 33%	9 27%	13 39%	9 27%	11 33%

Notes: 1) Others include student union, leadership training, community service, training camps and spiritual development programmes
2) Total no. of responding schools is 56

**Table 4e (1): Distribution of F.5 & F.7 Graduates of 2000/01
School Year by Their Activity Status in October 2001**

Status	F. 5 Graduate		F. 7 Graduate	
	No.	%	No.	%
Full-time studying	59,631	77%	23,146	84%
Full-time working	6,165	8%	1,834	7%
Part-time working or studying	7,749	10%	1,788	6%
Neither working nor studying	4,154	5%	806	3%
Total	77,699	100%	27,574	100%

**Table 4e(2): Distribution of F.5 & F.7 Graduates of 2000/01 School Year who were
Studying in Day Schools in October 2001 by Type of Course**

Status	F. 5 Graduate		F. 7 Graduate	
	No.	%	No.	%
F.5/F.7 course	9,544	16.0%	830	3.6%
F.6 course	28,302	47.5%	n.a.	n.a.
Degree courses offered by UGC-funded institutions	n.a.	n.a.	12,945	55.9%
Foundation Diploma/ Vocational Certificate/ Diploma courses run by VTC	4,826	8.1%	2,102	9.1%
Higher Diploma courses run by VTC	553	0.9%		
Post-secondary courses offered by UGC-funded institutions	213	0.4%	3,156	13.6%
Courses of post-secondary or higher level offered by other institutions	n.a.	n.a.	1,796	7.8%
Other full-time courses*	16,193	27.2%	2,317	10.0%
Total	59,631	100%	23,146	100%

* Other full-time courses included courses run by CITAs, Youth Pre-employment Program, Project Yi Jin, studying abroad, private commercial / computer courses, etc.

Source: Survey on Educational Status of S3, S5 & S7 Graduates, 5/2002, Education Department.



Table 4f: Targeted Proficiency Level of Employers and Actual Proficiency Level of Secondary School Students

Competency		All Form 5 graduates			All Form 7 graduates		
		Employers' Targeted Proficiency	Students' Actual Proficiency	Gap Between Employers' Targeted & Students' Actual Level	Employers' Targeted Proficiency	Students' Actual Proficiency	Gap Between Employers' Targeted & Students' Actual Level
1	Communication skills	4.8	3.5	1.3	4.8	4.1	0.7
2	Active listening	4.6	3.5	1.1	4.6	4.2	0.4
3	Customer care	4.8	2.9	1.9	4.8	3.4	1.4
4	Sense of responsibility	4.9	3.7	1.2	4.9	4.4	0.5
5	Empathy	4.5	3.4	1.1	4.5	4.0	0.5
6	Team spirit	4.4	3.5	0.9	4.4	4.3	0.1
7	Problem solving	4.4	3.3	1.1	4.4	4.1	0.3
8	Interpersonal skills	4.9	3.5	1.4	4.9	4.2	0.7
9	Emotional control	4.5	3.4	1.1	4.5	4.2	0.3
10	Presentation skills	4.4	3.2	1.2	4.4	4.1	0.3
11	Positive attitude	4.6	3.5	1.1	4.6	4.2	0.4
12	Responsiveness	4.4	3.3	1.1	4.4	4.0	0.4
13	Judgement	4.2	3.3	0.9	4.2	4.0	0.2
14	Initiative	4.0	3.1	0.9	4.0	4.0	0.0
15	Image	4.8	3.4	1.4	4.8	4.2	0.6
16	Analytical ability	4.1	3.4	0.7	4.1	4.2	-0.1
17	Use of language	4.4	3.3	1.1	4.4	4.0	0.4
Overall Proficiency Level		4.5	3.4	1.1	4.5	4.1	0.4

Notes:

- 1) Proficiency level (0-6): 0=not covered/not applicable; 1=Lowest; 6=Highest.
- 2) Proficiency level of each competency is weighted by the no. of students in F.5 & F.7 and class (arts, science & commerce).
- 3) Overall Proficiency Level is calculated as the sum of proficiency level divided by number of competency.

**Table 4g: Satisfaction Level of the Actual Performance of Frontline Staff
in the Top 20 Desirable Competencies**

Ranking of Competency		Satisfaction Level of Actual Performance of Frontline Staff *
1.	Communication skills	3.9
2.	Job knowledge	4.0
3.	Active listening	3.9
4.	Work enthusiasm	3.9
5.	Work efficiency	4.0
6.	Interpersonal skills	4.2
7.	Customer care	4.3
8.	Sense of responsibility	3.9
9.	Presentation skills	3.8
10.	Emotional control	4.0
11.	Positive attitude	4.2
12.	Use of language	3.7
13.	Responsiveness	3.8
14.	Team spirit	4.0
15.	Problem solving	3.7
16.	Judgement	3.6
17.	Image	4.2
18.	Empathy	3.6
19.	Initiative	3.6
20.	Analytical ability	3.8

* Satisfaction level (1-5):
1-1.5=very dissatisfied; 1.6-2.5=dissatisfied; 2.6-3.5=neither;
3.6-4.5=satisfied; 4.6-5=very satisfied

Table 4h: Feedback from Secondary Schools and Training Institutions on How to Improve the Training on Competencies for Customer Service Excellence

Secondary Schools

Not interested at all

Very interested

Training	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Stronger emphasis on the teaching of language skills applications (listening, reading, writing and speaking)	4%	4%	13%	13%	67%	(54) 100%
On-site visit to service organizations	0%	4%	25%	35%	36%	(54) 100%
Communication sessions between service organizations and students	4%	7%	27%	33%	29%	(55) 100%
Seminars/talks on Hong Kong's service industries	11%	16%	29%	27%	16%	(55) 100%
Introduce subjects such as customer service/customer care, interpersonal skill, etc., into academic training.	7%	11%	41%	31%	9%	(55) 100%
Others, such as leadership training, trips abroad, community service and image building *	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	(4) 100%

Note: *only 4 respondents indicated "very interested".

Training Institutions

Not interested at all

Very interested

Training	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Communication sessions with employers in the service sector to understand their requirements on training	0%	13%	0%	25%	63%	(8) 100%
On-site visit to service organizations	0%	0%	13%	38%	50%	(8) 100%
Involve service sector in the design of course curriculum	0%	0%	25%	38%	38%	(9) 100%
Talks/seminars on the requirements of specific sectors	0%	0%	33%	33%	34%	(8) 100%
Customize / introduce industry-specific courses on competency development	0%	0%	11%	56%	33%	(9) 100%
On-the-job training / internship / placement of students	0%	0%	50%	25%	25%	(8) 100%