

Student name: _____ Date: _____

MODULE 14

Prioritize your activities as they relate to your job.

Objectives:

- A. Describe the customers for the work you do.**
- B. List the duties and tasks that make up your job.**
- C. Select and prioritize your most important duties.**
- D. Describe when you might prioritize your duties differently.**

MODULE 14: INFORMATION SHEET

TO THE STUDENT: Read and study the following information sheet and then complete the student activities at the end of this module.

Introduction

Prioritizing your duties on the job helps you deliver and maintain quality work. To understand which activities you do that are most important, you must consider what your employer needs. This module will help you prioritize the activities you do on the job to better satisfy the needs of your employer.

What does your employer need?

To stay in business! Employers hire employees to help them stay in business. They are hired to produce goods or provide services to customers, or to maintain facilities and equipment so others can provide the goods and services. Employers would like their customers to feel good about their business and come back again. If employers cannot make sales to customers, they are out of business!

Who are the direct customers?

You were hired by your employer to do a specific job. You may help to produce a product or provide a service. To do this you may be talking directly with the customers. This may be on the telephone, face-to-face, or in writing. It is very important that you present yourself and your employer in a way that keeps that customer coming back. That may

mean being very courteous to a customer who is unhappy with your product or service. It may mean helping a customer as quickly as possible. It may be as simple as a friendly smile.

If you communicate directly with customers, your most important job would be to make sure the customer is satisfied. If the customer is happy, the employer will be happy. (NOTE: This does not mean you serve your friends extra helpings of fries to make them happy—it means delivering what you are supposed to deliver in a pleasant way so customers keep coming back.)

Wal-Mart is a company that prides itself on excellent customer service. Every employee is trained to be cheerful and courteous to customers. Those employees stocking shelves are trained to smile and help any customer that comes within ten feet of them. Even the Wal-Mart truck drivers have a reputation for being the most courteous on the highways. This is a company that truly knows the value of customer service.

So while your "job" may be to produce a hamburger, stock the shelves, or replace mufflers, if you interface directly with the customer you will also need to be a courteous, helpful employee.

Who are the internal customers?

What if your job does not involve communicating with the customer at all? Does that mean you can do whatever you want, whenever you feel like it? No!

In any job you do, there will also be internal customers - other employees who benefit from the work you do. You may be making the first piece in a complex product. The employee that receives your work will want the product to be ready for the next step. If your work is sloppy or unfinished, the next employee will have to clean it up, fix it, or ask you to do it again.

In America during the early years of industrial manufacturing—the early 1990's— businesses were more concerned with how many goods could be produced as fast as possible. It was cheaper to throw half of them away. "OK" quality was good enough. (For example: When there was only one restaurant in town, any hamburger would do. Now that there is a restaurant on every corner, customers can choose which has the best food and service. They won't settle for poor quality.)

Today, businesses cannot afford to make poor quality goods and throw half of them away. So instead of producing many poor quality items, the emphasis now is on excellent quality. The only way to produce excellent quality is to make sure every person is trained and every process is designed to produce the best it can. Businesses now aim for "zero-defects", where no products have to be thrown away and every service is delivered in an excellent way.

Prioritizing Tasks

On the job you will be expected to do quality work to the best of your ability. Sometimes, however, you will have several tasks to do at the same time. Then you must determine which one should be done first.

Your work may involve a series of duties made up of a primary task, such as replacing car mufflers, and related tasks, such as cleaning up the work area at the end of your shift; answering the phone when your employer goes out to lunch; and checking what supplies need to be reordered. If you were to list these in order of importance, based on the job you were hired to do, you might list:

- a. replace mufflers
- b. clean work area
- c. check supplies
- d. answer the phone

However, if you consider your employer's needs to satisfy the customer, over lunch your top priorities should change to:

- d. answer the phone
- c. check supplies (if you can do this while you monitor the phone)

Near the end of your shift, knowing another employee will need to work in your space, your priorities might change again to:

- b. clean work area
- c. check supplies

Know your job description

Knowing what job you have been hired to do is the first step in prioritizing your tasks. As a co-op student this information may be part of your training plan. As a regular employee, it is your responsibility to make sure you understand exactly what your employer expects you to do.

Do you deal with direct customers?

Do you interact directly with the customer that buys your product or service? If so, your first duty is to make that customer happy by serving them quickly and courteously. If you talk to them on the telephone, you will have good telephone communication skills. You will answer their questions with a pleasant voice, giving them the information they request or taking their order.

If you meet customers face-to-face, you will be dressed appropriately, smile pleasantly and serve them courteously. If you interact with customers through written or computer network communications, you will respond promptly, with correct spelling and appropriate language usage.

Direct customers are essential to your employer's business. As an employee you have a responsibility to serve them well.

Do you deal with internal customers?

Does your work get passed on to another employee? Do you maintain equipment or facilities used by other employees? Then it is up to you to make sure you are doing your job with quality. One way to find out is to ask your co-workers if they are satisfied with your work. For example, ask questions like:

"Is the product I'm giving you made the way you need it to do your job?"

"Am I cleaning up the work area the way you want it so you don't have to clean up before you can start?"

You might be surprised how pleased your co-workers are to be asked! And they may have some great suggestions!

MODULE 14: STANDARDS ADDRESSED IN THIS MODULE**Pennsylvania's Academic Standards for Career Education and Work****13.3.11. Career Retention (Keeping a Job)**

- A. Analyze work habits needed to advance within a career.
- E. Evaluate strategies used to manage time and their application in different work situations.

Pennsylvania's Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening (RWSL)**1.1.11. Learning to Read Independently**

- E. Establish a reading vocabulary by identifying and correctly using new words acquired through the study of their relationships to other words. Use a dictionary or related reference.

1.5.11. Quality of Writing

- F. Edit writing using the conventions of language.
 - Spell all words correctly.
 - Use capital letters correctly.
 - Punctuate correctly (periods, exclamation points, question marks, commas, quotation marks, apostrophes, colons, semicolons, parentheses, hyphens, brackets, ellipses).
 - Use nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions and interjections properly.
 - Use complete sentences (simple, compound, complex, declarative, interrogative, exclamatory and imperative).

Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS)**THINKING SKILLS**

Decision Making Skills: Specifies goals and constraints, generates alternatives, considers risks, and evaluates and chooses best alternatives.

PERSONAL QUALITIES

Self-Management: Assesses own knowledge, skills, and abilities accurately; sets well-defined and realistic personal goals; self-starter.

COMPETENCIES

Resources: Identifies, organizes, plans, and allocates resources, including time and personal money.