

Process. Procedures. Yes, they sound kind of boring. And let's face it, they can be. But as I found out the hard way, they can also make the difference between giving a customer an ok experience and giving a customer a great experience.

Challenges of Custom Training

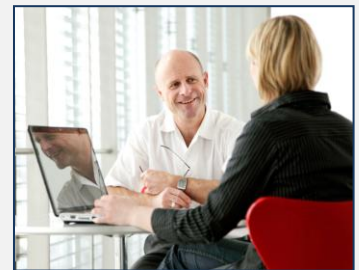
I managed the custom training group for MindLeaders from 2001 to 2004. My group was responsible for creating customized e-learning content for our corporate customers. At the height of its productivity, the group was responsible for approximately \$500,000 in revenue.



As anyone who has worked in providing custom solutions can tell you, it can be tough. Customers come in with their own expectations of how things will go. Sometimes those expectations are reasonable given your abilities and constraints. And sometimes they are not. An issue we had to face and overcome in our custom training group was how to educate customers on our abilities and constraints so that they had expectations we could not only meet, but exceed.

Meeting the Challenge

Our first project was tough. It went over schedule. It went over budget. The customer had expectations that were way out of line with what we could deliver. We were frustrated. And the customer was less than thrilled throughout most of the process. Luckily we were able to provide a deliverable they were happy with by the end of the project. However, we knew we had to make changes moving forward or risk having every project be as difficult as that one was.



The answer was examining that project to determine where we missed opportunities. Opportunities to communicate. Opportunities to explain. Opportunities to help the customer understand their role. We needed a process that positioned us as experts and gave the customer the security of knowing what step came next.

I worked with the rest of the team to determine how we could do things better. What should we have communicated sooner? How could we have helped the customer more? All the

suggestions were taken and put into a written process that we used for each customer going forward.

We also talked with customers to get their input. Which parts of the project did they find frustrating? Why? What information would they have liked sooner? Customer suggestions were integrated into the process and soon we had a custom development process that was not only efficient, but building great product for happy customers.

The Result

After a solid process was put into place, customer satisfaction and retention rates soared. In fact, nearly 60 percent of our projects were from repeat customers. We also asked customers to rate their experience and over 90 percent said their experience was excellent.

Repeat Customers	Rating "Excellent"
~60%	>90%