

THE CUSTOMER SERVICE FOCUS OF INVESTMENT RECOVERY

By Paul Wengert, CMIR Fellow

Investment recovery (IR) is, above all, a service organization to all groups and subsidiaries of any company. Service to the operating groups and staffs must be the key word. This is true for in-house IR departments as well as outsourced service providers and contractors.

While hard work and dedication accomplish much in terms of cost savings from reutilization of company surplus and dollars generated by the sale of surplus equipment and materials, you must also work every day to improve your reputation for service. Below are some thoughts on how to accomplish this.

BE AN ASSET

Most companies have reduced operations and field staff to the point where the IR department has to be a “full-service” business function. That means you have to do “it” [whatever “it” is—locate, identify, inventory, catalog, enable redeployment, market and/or sell] the surplus if you expect to increase the contribution of IR to the bottom line. Expecting operations, engineering, manufacturing or field personnel to do anything other than make you aware that surplus exists is probably asking for more than they have the time, resources or interest to provide. Remember the old cliché, “If it is to be ... it is up to me.” Follow that philosophy and you will expand your scope and increase your contribution to the corporation.

BE RELIABLE

Be a consistent performer. Complete what you say you will, on time, the first time. Be a fanatic about following through. Don't raise false expectations by promising what you may not be able to deliver. One disappointed client can damage a reputation you have spent years trying to establish.

BE CREDIBLE

Be realistic in your judgments and estimates and then go the extra mile to keep your promise. Establishing realistic time frames lets your clients know you are working smart and hard to provide the needed support. If people do not believe you can deliver what you say, you may never get a chance to prove yourself.

BE PROFESSIONAL

Your effectiveness is judged by your sense of organization, the quality of your correspondence, and how you and your workplace look. Do you and your office surroundings present a businesslike appearance? Does the quality of your work create the impression of being well managed? Does your demeanor convey a sense of chaos or controlled organization? Do your homework. Prepare for client meetings by knowing as much about the situation or project as possible.

BE PROACTIVE

Investment recovery cannot be performed from behind a desk in some corporate office. IR is a field—or plant—centered function that requires IR specialists to have “face-to-face” contact with assets and with their location. Conduct site visits, be known by the operating personnel and know the facilities. IR is truly a function that benefits from the style of management known as “managing by walking around.” Follow this principle and increase your worth to the organization.



BE RESPONSIVE

Be accessible. Ensure that phones are covered and messages (including email) are responded to within 24 hours. Act on the clients' requests promptly and remember that their deadlines are your deadlines. Provide feedback and regular updates on your progress. KEEP THEM INFORMED! Utilizing email provides a progress tracking file where phone calls do not.

BE EMPATHETIC

Try and evaluate your job performance through the clients' eyes. All the users of your services have their own problems, pressures, deadlines and obstacles to overcome. It is our job to help them become more successful at what they do. When you help clients improve their bottom line, the recognition of investment recovery as a significant value-added function increases. And your sense of value increases along with it! ■

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