**Tamiko Humphrise**

**Lesson Learned Journal- Week 1**

**Facilitators: B. Jasmine Fierro, Lisa Clark – Orientation**

**Guest Speakers: Adenia Bradley – Diversity Awareness**

**Ron Frank – Expectations from the Sr. Mgmt Perspective**

**Class Content: SDI Ground Rules, Diversity in the workplace**

Week One- Tuesday October 4, 2011

##### Orientation- Overview and Diversity Awareness

Facilitators: Jasmine Fiero, Lisa Clark and Adenia Bradley

Week 1 Goals: Understand the purpose of SDI, understand the assignment and ground rules and understand the expected outcomes.

# Accountability/Ground Rules-

1. Can miss a maximum of two classes
2. 9:05 AM is late
3. 3 X late = an absence
4. If homework is not completed, an explanation must be presented to the class as to why time was not made to complete the homework.

**Diversity- acknowledging, understanding, accepting, valuing and celebrating differences among people.**

1. Age
2. Gender
3. Ethnicity
4. Handicap
5. Class
6. Religion
7. Sexual orientation
8. Public Assistance Status

Accept differences, be tolerant of others. Don’t concentrate on making assumptions on diversity. Base your decisions on “THE FACTS”

**Becoming a “change agent”**

1. Preconceived notions- making assumptions, pre-judging/prejudice and bias ideas
2. 3rd party information- gossip- DON’T feed into it.
3. Invalid Assessments- not willing to change even after all the facts have been presented.

**WORDS OF WISDOM:**

People do not care how much you know until they know how much you care.

Our job is not to manage people; it’s to manage task and goals

Part of leaving is knowing when and part of staying is to know how.

**Lesson Learned Journal Entry Week 2:**

Class Content: Professional Presentation Skills and Professional Writing.

During class, we discussed the importance of knowing your audience and understanding the purpose as well as the desired outcome of the presentation. I realized that I could apply these same skills when I present information to my team. I challenged myself to utilize these skills when I facilitate the next team meeting. Normally, I would shy away from volunteering to facilitate a team meeting because I not only felt uncomfortable speaking but also because I was uncertain what team building exercise I would add to the meeting.

I thought about what message I wanted the team to take away from the exercise. We have some communication challenges so I decided to pick an exercise that would teach all the importance of effective communication. During the exercise, five individuals were given the exact same directions at the same time. The instructions were only given once and no one could ask questions. At the end of the exercise, each person produced a different result. The objective of the exercise was to display that even when the exact same set of instructions are provided; it is possible to achieve different results based on the interpretation of the person receiving the instruction. At the conclusion of the exercise, I heard several team members make positive comments about the exercise and the message.

Unlike the first team meeting that I facilitated, I ended the meeting feeling more comfortable. The team responded well to the message of the exercise. The exercise produced a great lesson with some comic relief. Because I prepared, I conducted a successful meeting. I thought of a purpose that affected all team members. I reached my desired outcome of teaching the team that we must not get frustrated when we do not achieve the results we want because we all interpret information differently.

**LESSONS LEARNED JOURNAL WEEK 3**

Class Content- Strategic Thinking, Planning and Management. SWOT Analysis and Southern Management’s Strategic Foundation

I learned during a SWOT analysis, you must consider the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of a given situation. You must use all your resources when completing your analysis. Your resources can include finances, technology, time, and your team. We also discussed Southern’s Strategy Map. The base or the foundation of the map is our team. Our objectives are to strengthen our team relationships, enhance our technology and improve training. I agree with the foundation of the organization because without a strong team, it is very difficult to have a successful operation, a satisfied customer or to be profitable.

I decided that I would work to not only strengthen my relationship with my team but to also strengthen their feeling towards me as their manager and their feelings towards Southern Management. To do this, I started sharing more information with them. Instead of asking them to do a task, I explained to them the reason that it needs to be complete. This has allowed them to see the big picture. In preparing for our audit, I explained to the team why it was so important to make sure that all paperwork is completed accurately. We discussed the Star Card and I helped them understand what components are scored during the audit. I placed each team member in charge of one item that makes up the audit for the Star Card. My custodial technician is responsible for the key log. She makes sure that all keys are signed in and out with all required information in the book. Since she has been given this responsibility, I have seen her check the book daily. She has communicated if a key was not signed in and has made the necessary action to correct the entry in the book. Since she has taken over the key book, she has inquired if the audit is complete. She has taken interest in another aspect of the organization thus a more engaged team member.

**LESSONS LEARNED JOURNAL- WEEK 4**

**Class Content: Project and Time Management**

We are officially into the “meat and potatoes” of SDI. This week’s class discussed project and time management. This subject really hit home for me because it discussed several topics that I have struggled with in my career, delegation and time management. At the end of class, I left thinking that I must immediately go home and start working on my homework and my lessons learned journal for this week because as discussed, time waits for no one and it does not discriminate.

In my past journal entries, I took one topic and discussed my learning experiences about that topic. I am struggling to do the same for this entry because there were so many topics that I could immediately adapt and use daily. First, I was relieved to hear that there is no such thing as time management. Prior to joining Southern Management, this phrase was over-utilized. It appeared on appraisals and it was discussed during team meetings; so it was refreshing to hear that you cannot manage time. Time is constant and never changing so what is important is how you effectively use the time you are given. Everyone is given the same amount of time daily but everyone does not manage the time given effectively. I evaluated how I manage my 24/7. The exercise we completed in class was amazing. I completed the exercise again at home. I monitored my time for one week and averaged the time spent doing various personal and job-related activities. This really helped me put in perspective how I utilize my time. Through the exercise, I learned that not only professionally but also personally, most of time is spent performing non-essential task. I analyzed what I am currently doing and what changes I could make to become more efficient. Then, I had an epiphany. The reason I have mismanaged my time is not only due to performing non-essential task but also because I take on more than I can handle. During the project management discussion, it was recommended to consider the following:

* What else is on my team’s plate?
* Can we complete the task and deliver what is expected?

These same questions can be applied for me. Whenever the need to volunteer for additional responsibilities, I must ask myself these same questions. Without doing this or eliminating some other responsibilities, I will continue to run out of time.

The second link to making the most of my 24/7 was to determine what’s essential for me to complete and what I could possibly ask others to do for me. I wrote a list of tasks that I know I must accomplish daily, weekly and monthly. Of those tasks, I choose several that I could DELEGATE to others. By delegating my task to others, it created more time to concentrate on other tasks or better yet, myself. Delegation has always been difficult for me. My independent and “I got it” personality makes it hard to ask others to do what I know I can do myself. In the past if I was asked to do something, I personally did it and ignored the team of people I had that could have assisted me; only to later look back, exhausted and burned out, to say, “I should have given this to my team to complete.”

About a week ago, I was told that I had to plan a community event for our residents. The event is scheduled to take place December 6, 2011. Immediately upon receiving notice of the event, I felt anxious and nervous because I had less than one month to prepare. I thought about everything that I needed to do and did not consider that I would not have to do everything myself. I made a “to do” list and planned to work on the list alone, at least until this class. I took my “to do” list and I delegated. I told each team member what I needed them to do to make sure that the event is successful. Once I delegated, my anxiety left. I feel comfortable knowing that we are on schedule and all tasks for this event have been completed. I defined what was required. I selected the individuals to complete the tasks. I explained why I needed assistance and what I expected the results to be. In other words…I delegated and it works!

**Lessons Learned Journal Week 5 –**

**Leadership, Management Supervision, Organizational Structure and Culture Part 1**

Class Content:

* Difference between Leadership, Management and Supervision
* Change Management
* Leadership styles
* “Who Moved My Cheese”

Management isthe acts of organizing people together to reach desired goals and objectives with the available resources you have been provided. A leader is able to guide and influence their team so that the goals and objectives are met. In theory, an effective leader makes an effective manager but an effective manager is not always an effective leader.

There are a variety of leadership styles. Some of them include: Charismatic, Participative, Situational and Transitional. While discussing the various types of leadership styles, I asked myself these questions.

* What type of leader am I?
* Am I satisfied with the type of leader I am?
* Does my leadership style work well for me?

It wasn’t difficult to determine that I am clearly a charismatic and participative leader. As a charismatic leader, I clearly operate on the premise of being an admired manager. Where I recognize that it takes more than just being charming and well-liked, I make sure that I am very friendly and a great conversationalist with my team to make them realize that I am a trustworthy manager. I listen and take a genuine interest in not only my team’s job related interest or responsibilities, but also of those in their personal lives. In doing so, it helps us build a connection as a team, thus having a team that trusts me as their leader.

As a participative leader, I have involved my team in areas of my job duties. When there are task that I have to perform, I share them with my team so they understand what is expected of me. In doing so, it allows them to take more initiative to do things that may not be a part of their normal job responsibilities.

Just recently, I assumed the responsibility of processing payroll for the entire property. My team has witnessed me entering corrections into the Kronos system. They have asked questions on the complexity of processing payroll. I sat with my custodial technician and showed her the timesheet for the pay period. I explained to her what can occur when team members do not swipe, when vacations are taken and all the other reasons that can cause manual entries. It was a great lesson for her because she did not realize how extensive it is processing payroll.

I had to complete a task that required me to address fifty notices to the residents. Where the task was not extensive, I had shared with my team that I had a lot to do that particular day. Normally, I would address the notices and my custodial tech would deliver them. I had printed out the notices and the list of residents that needed to receive them. I placed them on my desk as I planned to address them later in the afternoon. As I was processing payroll, my custodial tech came into the office. As she briefly watched me enter information in the Kronos system, she saw the notices and list of residents. Without having to ask, she took the initiative and started addressing the notices. When she was finished, she took them and delivered them. By helping her understand my responsibilities, it gave her the initiative to assist her manager.

Even though the task was small, having my custodial tech work to assist me with my job duties proves that my leadership style works for me. I am satisfied in knowing that I can trust my team to handle additional duties and that I don’t always have to ask for them to complete those duties.

**Lessons Learned Journal Week 6-**

**Leadership, Management, and Supervision- Part 2 “Pearls of Wisdom”**

Class Content:

* David Hillman’s Pearls of Wisdom
* The David Hillman Show- Q & A
* Entrepreneurialism

David Hillman graced our class with his wealth of knowledge of being a great leader. He provided his “Pearls of Wisdom”. The pearls were tips given to help us all become better leaders. There were several pearls that I could really relate to and chose to use in my development.

David spoke on the importance of building trust within your team. It was said, “Trust is the toughest thing to earn and the easiest thing to lose.” As a manager, I have consistently operated on that idea. Since I have only been a manager with Southern Management for less than a year, I have worked with my team on building a strong trust factor between us. My two team members have shared information with me in confidence and I have assured them that the information they have shared will be kept in strict confidence.

Another statement that was shared by David is the importance of protecting your team and going to bat for them. This is another profound statement. Your team will work hard for you and go above and beyond when they feel that their manager has their back.

I was speaking with my maintenance technician about his family as the holiday season was quickly approaching. He was scheduled to take a vacation and I was inquiring about his plans for the holiday while he was vacationing. He shared with me that he had not been back to his country to visit his family in over eight years. I was astonished that he had not seen his parents in such a long time. As we continued to talk, I realized that he had not returned to his country due to his current immigration status and his “fear” of requesting a significant amount of time to return to his country.

I researched what documents he needed to submit in order to be allowed to leave and return to the country. I printed out the application, provided him with the resources he needed in order to submit the application and explained to him any potential steps that immigration may require in order for him to leave. I offered him assistance in completing the paperwork. I then explained to him that I would be willing to meet with the property manager on his behalf to discuss the option of taking an extended vacation. After the discussion, he shared with me his sincere gratitude and said that I was a great manager.

I know that I had a great relationship with him prior to this incident, but the relationship was definitely strengthened once he realized that I had taken an interest in his personal life and that he could trust me to represent him to our manager.

**Lessons Learned Journal Week 7**

**Team Development, Coaching and Mentoring**

**Facilitators: Jasmine Fierro and Lisa Clark**

Class Content:

* Difference between coaching and mentoring
* Establish methods for coaching different personalities
* Strategies to develop team members
* The Birds: The four behavioral styles
* Definition of Goals and how to set smart goals

Coaching occurs when an individual guides and develops another’s talent and skills. Coaching is not micro-managing. It can energize and inspire individuals to change behaviors, become more consistent, and be accountable for their job performance. Mentoring is quite different from coaching because it normally occurs when others ask for advice instead of guidance. Mentoring is performed by an expert so individuals can effectively learn or refresh their skills.

The four behavioral styles are Eagle, Peacock, Owl and Dove. We did an exercise in class where we divided ourselves into groups to represent each bird. It was interesting to see how the class divided and what bird each person had chosen as their behavioral style. The majority of the classmates are eagles. I suspect that eagles were the top choice because the bird represents strength, power and independence. There was a somewhat balance between the other birds amongst the classmates. Each team discussed how they would prefer to receive constructive feedback. The preferences revealed were all in line with the personality descriptions of each bird. The eagles preferred their feedback immediately and wanted the information straight to the point. My group, the peacocks, preferred to have the opportunity to share their feedback or reasons after receiving feedback from anyone. In other words, peacocks want an opportunity for a rebuttal. The owls preferred to have their feedback with fact based information and the doves expressed that they would like to be told in a private forum.

When we were first asked to choose a bird, I struggled with my selection because I honestly thought that I could relate to three of the behavioral styles. In class, I selected peacock because I could relate to the motivators and fears of the peacock although I felt like I could be an eagle or a dove too. I did some more research on the four behavior styles on the internet. I found information supporting how the styles relate. The Eagle and Peacock are both direct on how they approach goals and task. Eagles and Peacocks tend to be more straight-forward while Doves and Owls tend to be more indirect. This explains why I felt a connection to the eagle behavioral style. I also felt a connection to the Dove. Again, my research concluded that Peacocks and Doves both share the supportive behavior style. The supportive style focuses more on people-oriented or relationship-oriented instead of task oriented. This shared trait between Eagles and Peacocks and the Peacocks and the Doves helped me understand why I initially struggled making my selection.

I spoke with each of my team members to determine what type of birds they are. Before speaking to them, I suspected what they were and I was correct. I manage a solid dove and a dove/owl split. After learning their behavioral style, it made it easier for me to deliver constructive feedback when needed.

I had a discussion with my service technician regarding his willingness to assistance his fellow team member in another building. I had noticed that he assisted another service technician on several work orders. He did not notify me of his intent to leave the building to assist his teammate. As I was reviewing his service tickets, I noticed that he had worked in the other building for several hours. I immediately spoke to him regarding my concern with him leaving the building. I explained that his dedication to his fellow service technician and his willingness to offer assistance are great qualities and much appreciated. I asked him going forward to immediately notify me if he is leaving the building to assist another team member. I encouraged him to continue to be willing to assist the team. I assured him that he was not being reprimanded but just being provided with some direction. He was very open to the feedback provided and assured me that he will notify me anytime he is assisting outside of his building.

**Lessons Learned Journal Week 8**

**Communicating for Effective Outcomes**

**Facilitators: Jasmine Fierro and Lisa Clark**

Class Content:

* Definition of communication
* Strategies for Effective Communication
* Communication Barriers
* Types and forms of communication

Communication is the exchange of information and ideas from one person to another. Effective communication is ensuring that the information exchanged is received as intended without any causality. With over 80% of our lives spent communicating, it is important to be effective as poor communication can waste time and energy and lead to misunderstandings and conflict between people.

Communication Facts:

With face to face communication, the actual words you say only account for 7% of the message while 38% of the message relies on tone and 55% relies on body language. When communicating via email or telephone, the actual words only account for 14% and 86% of the message is based on the tone of the words chosen.

There are internal and external barriers that can impact the effectiveness of communication. Some internal barriers include: fear, lack of interest in the message, mistrust, negative attitudes, language and lack of confidence. Some external barriers include: noise, distractions, time of the day, environment and the sender using too many “technical” terms. Some of these barriers can be avoided or can be changed over time.

One of the major barriers that impact me daily is language. This is a prime example of a barrier that can change over time. My team’s primary language is Spanish. While they speak English, they, too, struggle to speak in English because of lack of confidence (an internal barrier). Currently both team members are enrolled in English classes. After each class, I speak with them to determine what they learned during the class. There have been instances where they were able to share several learning experiences and instances where things have seemed to be unclear. As they have been learning English, I have been learning and practicing Spanish. We have an agreement that if they say something incorrectly, that they are open to being corrected. One morning, I was asked the question, “What the difference is between have and has.” I was honestly stuck on how to explain it. I knew what the difference was but I was uncertain on the most effective way to communicate it. I thought in detail about the question and thought about what I had learned studying Spanish. I explained the difference to him using the Spanish verb for “to have”. I explained that it would be similar if I said in spanish “el tango” instead of “yo tango”. He immediately understood my explanation. Not only did I show the team my challenges with the Spanish language, I should them that I value the communication that we share by learning their language also.

**Conflict Recognition, Mediation and Resolution**

**Facilitators: B. Jasmine Fierro and Lisa Clark**

**Class Content:**

* **Definition of Conflict, Perception, Conflict Recognition, and Conflict Mediation.**
* **Causes or Sources of Conflict**
* **Ways to recognize conflict**
* **Steps to resolve conflict**
* **Styles of Conflict Management**

Conflict occurs when one or more individuals are in a healthy or unhealthy disagreement. The disagreement can stem from either factual information or from how the information is presented or perceived. Your senses can impact perception and behavior. Once you have experienced it, perception can become your reality even if it is factually inaccurate.

You can’t avoid conflict all together, but you can learn to recognize the cues that can lead to conflict. Once the cues are recognized, you can manage the conflict. It is important to understand your own limits and pay close attention to the indicators. Also, be aware of the cues from the other party. At times, we may view a topic as one that would not lead to conflict, but by watching and listening to others cues, realize that the potential for conflict exists. Once it is determined that there is conflict, it is important to follow the steps to resolve the conflict:

1. Collect the data
2. Approach the person calmly
3. Define the problem(Source of the conflict)
4. Brainstorm for ideas to resolve the concern
5. Develop an action plan and follow up

During class it was discussed that certain personality types are more open dealing and engaging in conflict then others. This was demonstrated in our class exercise as there were several classmates that actually appeared to enjoy the conflict that was created during the exercise. My peacock personality is definitely not one that thrives in conflict; I try to avoid it at all cost. Recently, my community changed the parking policy. I immediately knew that this change would create unwanted conflict for one particular resident because it required that he would have to park his additional vehicles further from the building where he resides and to provide us with the registration information for his 4 motorcycles. When we initially spoke about the change, it was not welcomed. The resident has very strong value and belief system. Because he has been a resident for over 37 years, he did not believe that he would have to follow the same policies as our other residents. He believed that an exception should be made for him based on his length of residency. He became totally irate and walked away from me stating that once again, I am discriminating against him. When he walked away, I immediately followed the “avoidance” conflict management style. I avoided the resident and the situation. Although, I knew I had to manage the conflict, I was not ready to do so.

I have not had many positive experiences with this resident, so I really prepared my thoughts about how I was going to re-visit the issue of the parking policy and to resolve the conflict. I followed the steps. I also used a tool bag tips discussed in class, choosing the time, place and my attitude before attempting to manage the conflict. During our monthly Southern Hospitality Night, we celebrated our residents. There were balloons, birthday cupcakes and giveaways. With all the festivities, I thought it would be a good time to speak to the resident. When he entered the building, I greeted him with a warm welcome home and presented him with the giveaway. The festivities appeared to have a positive impact on his attitude as he was more receptive to what I had to say. We discussed the parking policy and he was well aware of the documents that he had not returned. He voiced his concerns and disagreement regarding the policy. Following the tips for effective communication, I listened and only commented when needed. At the end of our conversation, I went from the “avoidance” conflict management style (lose/lose) to the “collaboration” management style (win/win). The resident willingly provided me with all the required documentation and he was more informed of the reasons that the policy change occurred.

**Introduction to Physical Assets Facilitators: Brad Patrick and Reginald Andrews**

**Introduction to Finance and Budgets Facilitators: Minh Tran and Kelli Mattox**

**Introduction to Physical Assets Class Content:**

* **What is PhAd and what are the benefits of having one?**
* **How to recognize capital expenditures**

A PhAD or physical asset directory contains documentation regarding the physical assets of the community. It is used as a tool when budgeting as it contains information as to what the community has, the condition of the current assets and what may be needed in the future. While updates to the community’s PhAD book should be done as repairs are made, all updates must be complete by September for accurate records when completing the budget.

During our class activity, we walked areas of Woodland Landing to determine any capital expenditures that are needed. We discussed the differences in determining if the work is a general repair or if the work required is more extensive and would be considered a capital expenditure. The activity was helpful as it made my daily walks at more community more productive. I have been more observant while walking, paying close attention to all areas instead of just those of my building. As Brad said in class, everyone’s job is to protect the physical assets of our entire community.

**Introduction to Finance and Budget Class Content:**

* **Definition of financial statements, budgets and GRP.**
* **The purpose of a budget**
* **Annual budget cycles**
* **Budget techniques**

A financial statement is a formal record of the community’s financial status. It helps to provide information about the financial performance of the community and helps when important business decisions are needed that impact the operations of the community. The financial statement shows actual amount of money spent and made as it relates to what was projected. The budget is the projection of what a community plans to make and spend over a specific period of time, normally a 12-month period. Budgets provide objectives for the community to work towards and to improve. When completing a budget, it is important to utilize all available resources to ensure the accuracy of the budget. Some of the resources include:

Use of historical data

Analyze past variances

Review 12 month spread report

Ask vendors for quotes for future work (at least 3 bids)

Way the options of using contractors to performing work in house

At the beginning of the year, I set a goal for myself to take control of my personal finances. I had started the process in my head, but had yet to develop a formal budget. One of our slides in class compared the concept of creating a community budget with a personal budget. I had created community budgets prior to coming to Southern Management, but the methods taught were quite different than what was explained today. That could explain my lack of success with maintaining my budget.

To begin, I pulled my historical data (last 3 months of bills and bank statements) to determine the average of each expense for a given month. I did the same for the household income. I used the average amount of the take home pay for my husband since his income varies and my actual take home income. I subtracted all my pre-determined expenses yielding my “NET OPERATING INCOME”. I deducted my special expenditures from my net income to determine what is left at the end of the month. Having all the information on paper helped me realize that I have a lot of special expenditures and I could be in a better financial situation if I evaluate the need of some of the expenses and make changes.

Where a portion of this was class wasn’t immediately applied to my position, I was able to use it in my personal life and it was just as valuable. I best thing about the courses of SDI is the ability to use the information in all aspects of your life. The finance and budget section of the class gave me the jump start needed to reach my personal goal. Where I am still waiting to see the full benefit from completing my budget, the gratification I have by having it complete is just as awarding.

**Safety & Risk Management Facilitators: Mel Jenkins, Jr.**

**Class Content:**

* Define Safety
* Identify the difference between an Accident and an Incident
* What is a Near Miss
* Define Risk Management
* Southern’s Safety Program
* Southern’s Environmental Program

Safety is defined as the condition of being protected against consequences that result from damage, error, accidents, harm or other undesirable events. I found a definition of safety that really captured what I consider safety to be. On the website, ask.com, they define safety as: The first preventive measure or step taken before an accident or an incident happens. The key word in the definition is preventive. When preventive measures are in place, incidents can be avoided. Incidents can be avoided because they are controllable, unlike an accident. An accident is uncontrollable, like an “Act of God”. It is difficult to prevent something that is uncontrollable, however proper planning for the uncontrollable can help to reduce the number of hazards resulting from an accident.

A near miss is similar to an incident, as it is preventable and controllable; however, there are no injuries, illnesses or property damage. Near misses can serve as a great learning opportunity because you can plan and prevent any future incidents from occurring based on what was learned from the near miss.

Risk Management is the identification and assessment of risk. Once the risks are assessed, they must be prioritized so the impact of loss is minimized. Risk are identified through periodic inspections and maintaining accurate documentation from the inspection. It is important to be current with changes in health, environmental and safety laws. Equally important, are establishing safety programs and keeping documentation of safety records. SMC ensures that their team members are informed of all risk through the Safety and Environmental Programs.

This class happened at the right time. No sooner that one week after class, I was informed that the lobby renovation in my building was starting. Before you can renovate, you must demolish. My first thought was all the potential incidents that could occur, but then I quickly realized that I can be incident free if I plan properly. Basic precautionary measures were taken; residents were notified and caution tape was used.

Once the tile floor was removed, we placed several pieces of scrap carpet on the floor so residents did not track the dust into their apartments. No sooner than the carpet was down, we had our first near miss. Someone slipped on the carpet and not too long after a resident nearly slipped on the carpet. We taped the pieces of carpet together to prevent anyone else from slipping. As I was walking in the lobby, I tripped over the section of the carpet that we taped, another near miss. This was the 3rd near miss in a 2 day period, too may for my liking. I had the carpet pieces removed and the mound of tape removed from the edges which we causing a trip hazard. We taped the pieces of carpet together before placing them on the floor to avoid the necessity for so much tape. The carpet pieces were placed back on the floor allowing for clear and safe path through the construction.

This week’s class also made me more aware of all the PPE (personal protection equipment) my team should be using for their positions. When checking for PPE, I normally have only looked for proper uniform and shoes while having our morning discussion. Since the class, I have been more aware of the use of PPE. When my team is working, I am more observant of their use of gloves and masks and other equipment to ensure their safety.

**Customer Service and Customer Relations Facilitators: Lynn Phillips and Rhonda Molleur**

**Class Content:**

* Define Customer Service
* Define Customer Relations
* “Fish Philosophy”
* Ways to boost customer service
* SMC Strategic Foundation

Customer Service starts with you. While there are several definitions of “customer service”, one definition that I really relate to is, “Customer Service is a proactive attitude that can be summed up as: I care and I can do.” One reason I feel that I relate best to this definition is because I genuinely care for my residents and I do all that I can to deliver the service that they deserve and expect. When good customer service is delivered, it creates a positive experience and relationship with the customer. Customer relations is defined as the relationship between the customer and the business and the way that the customer is treated throughout the duration of the relationship. In our business, most relationships last for at least 1 year. We have an entire year to build a strong and trusting relationship with our customers, the residents.

One way to foster a last relationship is to adopt the “Fish” Philosophy. The four components of the “Fish” philosophy are: Play, Make their Day, Be there and Choose your attitude. Otherwise, have energy, have passion and have fun. More importantly, show your residents (the customer) that you are happy and energetic to be there for them. When they see that you are having “fun”, they are more inclined to “have fun” too.

During class we discussed methods to help boost customer services. Some of the methods discussed were:

* Depersonalize and Listen to the resident
* Ask for suggestions from the customer/resident how they would like us to resolve their concern.
* Be empathetic/ Be sincere
* Offer alternatives when you must say NO. Provide explanations.
* Know your product (the lease) - Knowledge is power.
* Follow up and let them know the steps that are taken to resolve the concern
* Choose your attitude
* Maintain good eye contact

I had several opportunities to exercise these methods over the last two weeks. One particular opportunity was regarding the conversion from the heating system to the cooling system. My resident who lives on the 7th floor expressed concern regarding the lack of A/C in her apartment. Because she has been a resident for over a year, she is very familiar with SMC’s philosophy. She expressed to me that we are supposed to provide comfort and convenience, but the lack of A/C in her apartment was not comfortable and definitely not convenient for her. She experienced the same concern last summer and wanted to make sure that she would not have another uncomfortable summer. She offered suggestions on how we could improve our system and requested that we invest in the methods suggested to ensure comfortable living environment for all the residents. I had to tell the resident that her suggestions would not be honored. Although I had to say “NO”, I asked the resident if there was another way she would like me to resolve her concern. In addition, I provided her with a detailed explanation as to why we could not accommodate her suggestion. Instead of calling or emailing the resident, I went to her apartment to explain everything in person. Providing the personal touch, showed the resident that I was empathetic to her concern. Although I could not provide the solution that she requested, I was able to offer an alternative. She did not accept the alternative. With customer service, you will not always please the resident or customer but the important thing is to make sure that you let them know that their concern was heard, that alternate solutions to the concern were provided, and that you are sincere in your delivery.

**Recruiting, Interviewing and Hiring**

**Class Content:**

* **Statutory and Common Laws**
* **EEO Updates**
* **Interviewing**
* **SMC Recruitment and Hiring Process**

Statutory laws are written laws enacted by the legislature. The laws can be on a national, state or local level. Some examples of statutory laws include:

* The Civil Rights Act of 1964- Title VII
* The Civil Rights Act of 1991
* Immigration Reform & Control Act of 1986
* The Americans with Disability Act of 1993
* Drug-free Workplace Act- 1988
* Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970

Common Laws are based on custom or court decisions. Examples of common laws include:

* Employment at Will
* Negligent Hiring/ Retention

With common laws, employer have the right to hire, fire, demote, or promote anyone for any reason unless there is a law or contract to contradict the common law.

During the interview process, it is important to be organized and prepared. Interview questions should be based on the requirements of the position. Behavioral based interviewing is a good interview style to use because it allows the interviewer to ask questions based on past performance to predict future job performance. While interviewing, the interviewer should seek contrary evidence to support if the applicant is qualified, questions should be asked to clarify or prove there is a contradiction.

When preparing for an interview, there are steps that should be followed to ensure a successful interview. Those steps are:

1. Set an agenda
2. Ask open ended questions and ask for specifics
3. Establish a rapport
4. Take notes
5. Allow for Silence
6. Seek contrary evidence
7. Maintain control
8. Evaluate

After the class, I was concerned with how I would apply this knowledge to my current position. As resident manager, I do not conduct interviews. I spoke to my PM about how to apply the knowledge and was given a great opportunity to conduct 2nd interviews for the custodial technician position currently available at the community. I prepared my questions in advanced. Some were open-ended and required the applicant to provide detailed examples. Others were not so detailed, but I did not realize that until I started the interview. I found myself having to ask follow up questions to seek contrary evidence. During the interviews, I established rapport with both applicants. We discussed their past weekend events. During the discussion, I noticed that it made the applicants more relaxed.

All the questions were typed and there was amble space to take notes. There were a couple questions asked where the applicants could not provide an example or an answer. I remember during the video presented in class, it was said to “**Allow for Silence**”. This step is really important to me because I have a tendency to finish a statement to avoid “awkward silences”. When this happened during the interviews, I allowed for the silence to happen. I gave the applicants the opportunity to think about a situation that was applicable to the question. I assured them that they had plenty of time to think and that they should not feel rushed to provide an immediate answer. I maintain control of the interview, allowed the applicants to ask questions and ended by evaluating each interview with another resident manager.

As stated in the video presented in class, interviewing takes practice. Although I had performed numerous interviews prior to coming to SMC, the interviews were not structured. It helped me understand why I was hiring candidates that seemed to be qualified but really were not. Prior to the class, my interview skills were very similar to the gentlemen in the video. I asked a few questions and went on my “gut” feeling. By being prepared, asking for specifics, establishing rapport, allowing for silence and seeking contrary evidence, I was able to determine if each applicant was qualified for the position. I know that my assessment of each applicant was based on valid reasons and examples and not on my “gut”.