

## **Opening speech**

Mr Marc CAMLEY, Director Supreme Court Circuit, United Kingdom

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We all live, work, and take part in a society with quite different customer expectations to that in which the majority of us grew up in. It is a world where customers' expectations have never been higher – where everything is 24/7, where everything is taken to the “max”, and where even the language has to adapt to keep up.

In this world of photo-messaging, and 24 hour Internet access, where even our food is fast – is justice still able to meet the needs of our users? – of our customers?

I am delighted that we are having this study session. I am the Director of the Supreme Court Group of the Court Service. I manage some 1,800 staff in 75 different locations across England and Wales – including the single largest court complex in the UK, the Royal Courts of Justice, with 91 courtrooms and over 600 staff. Every day we deal with thousands of customers. I see my job to set the strategic direction and vision for my group – and this embraces my views on the need to provide quality services to our customers, who will often be the most vulnerable people in society. I will spend most of my time in my presentation on setting out formal means of collecting information from customers. However, I want to set out here some of the informal means that I have used –

- I have sat on the reception desk of the Royal Courts of Justice and heard the enquiries that people have – often very simple queries. How to find a particular court, or where to meet their barrister? You don't have to spend too long before you realise that having a simple map and list of cases will help most people coming in the front door. Coming to court is a once in a lifetime experience for most people and they are nervous and need help.
- I have also spent a day with my bailiffs – evicting people from houses, and collecting money on the doorstep. I learnt about the enforcement part of the business and how crucial that is to court users.
- I have also sat on the bench with Judges and sat on the counter with counter staff. You learn about what customers expect and what we are able to deliver. I have done this because I am passionate about what we do, and want to know how we can improve.

Up until May of 2003, I was the first Customer Service Director in the Court Service – a post I held for 2 years. I don't even know if other countries have such a role.

Even so, not that long ago, customer was a dirty word in the Court Service. A few Judges still think that it is! Even Journalists have asked me – “who are

your customers?” My response is everyone who comes in the front door or telephones us, or writes to us, or uses our on-line services, or needs the help of the court. So victims, defendants, witnesses, jurors, claimants, debtors, children, police, solicitors, barristers, the media and the general public are all our customers.

As Customer Service Director I was responsible for our complaints handling ethos. Our approach was there was no such thing as difficult customers only customer with difficulties.

Later I will wish to say more about how the Court Service has embraced customer service and the approach that we have taken to improving the service we provide. However, I knew that we had taken a great step forward when our new departmental manifesto, published in the summer of 2003 said –

“THE NEW DEPARTMENT STARTS FROM THE SIMPLE RULE THAT IT IS THERE FOR THE PUBLIC – NOT FOR THE JUDGES OR THE LAWYERS”

I am pleased that we have a selection of speakers from different countries here today as I am sure that we can learn from each other’s experiences. I hope that everyone in the room will be able to contribute and participate in the debate – either in the questions and answers session at the end of the day, or through discussions over coffee.

I would also like to say a few words about the other speakers from the UK though. First, I am delighted that Richard Woolfson is with us. Richard is a good friend of the Court Service in the UK and has undertaken a great deal of research for us. I have worked with him on a number of projects over a long number of years, and I am sure that he will provide a different perspective to the other UK speakers.

Second, my colleague John Stacey – from the Civil Business Branch in Court Service headquarters will discuss providing information to users. And, last but not least, Jillian Kay, who is working on our Unification Programme, will discuss the role of users in the management of courts.

But let me say a few words more about why I believe that this discussion topic is so important. The Court Service has been striving to embrace customer service values for a number of years now, and we have made good progress on a number of fronts. I wanted to share the approaches we have taken and the results we have achieved. I also want to tell you where things have done less well. Finally, I hope that I can learn what has worked well and what hasn’t in other countries.

I will wish to cover the difference between what customers want and what customers need - they are not always the same thing. I will also cover practical measures to determine what customers expect, and how we have looked at spreading best practice. I also intend to say something about setting standards,

and managing the expectations of customers and it is a little more than “under promise, over deliver.”

In each of our countries, our courts uphold the rule of law – they protect the innocent, and provide justice to all. They are the final recourse for disputes – ensuring that contracts are honoured, debts are paid and that the injured are compensated. We owe it to our citizens to recognise that when they need to call on us that we will treat them with respect, dignity and professionalism. In short, to treat them as customers.

I hope we will all have a productive study session