



FRANCES X. FREI

Letter Writing Exercise - The Service Disruption

The purpose of this exercise is to analyze how organizations manage customer service encounters. In particular, we are interested in assessing how organizations respond to the variability customers introduce into service experiences. A key objective of the exercise is to analyze the effect that the nature of organization's responses can have on customers, and to use this analysis to model how organizations and managers should respond to customer service encounters.

We thus will be writing letters to organizations in which *we have introduced a service disruption*. **Everyone is to write a letter to a company by October 4.**

A service disruption is a purposeful attempt to interact with a company in non-standard ways. That is, violating the explicit or implicit rules of engagement. For example, most department stores do not permit negotiating of price. A service disruption would be an attempt to negotiate price anyway. Ordering off menu items at a restaurant would similarly be a service disruption.

The goal of the exercise is to test the service encounter. It is neither necessary nor preferred for you to aggressively try to persuade the service provider to accommodate your request. Collectively, we are analyzing how organizations choose to respond to service disruptions.

Letters should include as many details as possible about encounters including, for example, the date, time, and place, who (specifically by name) the encounters involved, a detailed description of what happened and why you were ultimately satisfied or dissatisfied. Where appropriate, letters might offer suggestions for improvement.

Logistics

- You can send your letter by either email or postal mail.
- Your outgoing letter should be sent to a company by October 4.
- When you receive a response, submit a copy of the original letter and the response in hardcopy form. **No electronic submissions are accepted.** If you have not received a response by November 7, then submit your outgoing letter and a sheet indicating no response was received. If you receive a response by phone, please summarize the phone call as the company response.

Professor Frances X. Frei prepared this exercise for use with the EC course Managing Service Operations.

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- We want to see the entire letter, but we need it to be on a single page. If either letter is longer than one page, please use the shrink function on a copier or scanner to arrange it to fit on one page. *You will be handing in two sheets of paper, single sided, portrait view.*
- Please do not combine the outgoing and incoming letters on a single sheet.
- We will be sharing these letters with each other, so *please black out any personal information you do not want shared prior to submitting the letters.*
 - The pairs of outgoing letters and company responses will be made available to students in hard-copy form.
- Fill out the Service Disruption Poll by November 7.
 - This survey asks questions about the service encounter, the company's response, and your analysis and level of satisfaction with the experience.
- After all students have completed the survey, we will make the data available to students for analysis. We will discuss the exercise and analysis in class on November 13.