

NYCT Outreach Program Prefers Face-to-Face Interactions with Customers

Mobile Sales division puts emphasis on direct connection with customers.

By Reginald J. Baron

Technology has enveloped us to the point that we do not speak to each other. Do you prefer to conduct business remotely or in-person? Did you know there is a governmental customer-friendly program? **Mobile Sales** dares to keep things plain and simple with the face-to-face transaction.

Mobile Sales is an outreach program for the **Metropolitan Transportation Authority New York City Transit (MTA NYCT)** serving primarily the reduced-fare customers (senior citizen and people with disabilities) throughout **New York City, Westchester County and Long Island**. This program has been in existence since 1996 and consists of one bus, three vans, and three outreach teams.

A main part of this program is to facilitate the issuance of a pictured permanent reduced-fare **MetroCard** for people 65 years or older and people with disabilities initiated through an application process. Mobile Sales also provides interdepartmental support by providing a temporary sales location for subway stations undergoing rehabilitation, as well as external special event coverage such as the U.S. Tennis Open at Flushing Meadow Park and Harlem Week.

The Mobile Sales team has successfully toured New York City and surrounding counties providing outstanding customer service for MTA NYCT. The scheduling information available in print or online at represents the core portion of the service

coverage. Additional service coverage is provided through representative outreaches requested monthly by various community-based organizations.

Mobile Sales' main goal is to incorporate all the basic principles of good customer service in to every transaction with its



customer base. An added touch of personal service is extended through the completion of each application by a Mobile Sales representative, followed by a detailed presentation of the reduced-fare program.

Mobile Sales' motto is "We **C.A.R.E.** about our customers," translating into **Customer Assistance & Resolutions through Efficiency**. This is achieved through training and effective execution, all in a team-based environment. Sources such as the Impact Learning Systems allow information to be disseminated to staff members as to what customer service skills are the most valuable. According to Impact Learning Systems, a customer service representative must say the right things, conduct business

with efficiency, but with an air of compassion, to have a positive transaction.

At Mobile Sales it all begins with a positive greeting: “Welcome to Mobile Sales, how may I help you?” Using positive language creates a pleasant image in the customer’s mind with an emphasis on what can be done. This also applies when delivering bad news — an understanding is achieved through the use of positive language.

The Mobile Sales agent must also listen well. By demonstrating this characteristic, each customer’s issue is treated with the utmost importance and resolved through an educational transaction.

At the conclusion of the transaction, Mobile Sales agents address customers by name and confirm their understanding of the transaction. If there is a need for follow up, the customer is provided the methodology in which a resolution will be achieved; otherwise, a confirmation of satisfaction is obtained followed by a request for a referral to their friends.

At an average of 150 site visits monthly for the past 15 years, Mobile Sales has achieved an essential goal in the retail sales/service environment of establishing a core base of customers who feel comfortable, have confidence and trust the Mobile Sales agents.

In its efforts to coordinate resources, MTA uses Mobile Sales as a vital component to promote and distribute its services in the neighborhoods. For example, Mobile Sales vehicles began selling E-ZPass “On-the-Go” tags at \$30 each, which has increased the point-of-sale outlets to approximately 150 sites. Customers wishing to purchase the E-ZPass are given the opportunity to do so right in their neighborhood.

Mobile Sales embraces technology as an enhancement to its services and to also increase its efficiency. The main reason customers return month after month to the Mobile Sales vehicles is to see the friendly, smiling faces of Mobile Sales staff member.

This unique governmental program has successfully incorporated the private retail sales and customer service concepts through its mobile units by establishing community-based relationships, serving repeat customers and providing personalized service through its outreach representatives. Mobile Sales strives to maintain a high level of customer service as a standard method of operation. ■

Reginald J. Baron is Director of the Mobile Sales Division for the MTA New York City Transit.