

SERVICE MINDSET SUCCESS

ABB Empowers a Global, Technical Workforce to Be Number One in Customer Service Through Customized Training

Continuing a history of innovation spanning more than 130 years, ABB today is writing the future of industrial digitalization with two clear value propositions: bringing electricity from any power plant to any plug and automating industries from natural resources to finished products. As title partner in ABB Formula E, the fully electric international FIA motorsport class, ABB is pushing the boundaries of e-mobility to contribute to a sustainable future. Because ABB's products and services are designed to endure, they need top-of-the-line customer service to support them. In fact, "ABB seriously cares about its people and its customers, which is why being recognized as number one in customer service is one of our key priorities," says Sudhakar Kuchibhotla, Global Head of Capability, Power Grids Service. To make this priority a reality, ABB decided to complement their engineering and technical excellence with customer service training for employees working directly with customers on a daily basis. "But," says Kuchibhotla, "finding the right education partner would be a challenge."

Scaling a Dream to a Global Footprint with Local Instruction

ABB operates in more than 100 countries with approximately 147,000 employees. In an industry that undergoes continual transformation, ABB needed not only strong content, but speed in execution and implementation, a customized program for ABB's needs, the capability to deliver globally in the local language, and the aptitude to handle logistics and administration for each of the programs.

"We needed a global company with a local face," says project sponsor Jesus Rivera, Global Business Controller, Power Grids Service. "We needed to make sure the program would be successful, and we wanted to present in the local languages, with local trainers and examples that were easily relatable for the local audience." It was important that the instructors have local industry experience and the ability to make the training resonate.

The other key factor was speed. "We were in transformation mode," says Rivera. "We had no time to waste. We couldn't wait to make this happen in 2020. We needed to get it done, and we needed to get it done right and quickly. We had a dream," says Rivera, "and I had just the right partner in mind."

Quality of Instruction

"Earlier in my career as a first-time manager, I failed," says Rivera, "and that was a wake-up call. I was looking for places to go to improve my management skills, and I found AMA. I love AMA. Once I was there, I was hooked. I took 28 seminars in one year, and all of them were high quality, with excellent coaches, excellent material and an excellent pace. It was an amazing experience for me, and it helped me to become a better manager, to be more assertive."

(continued)

8 SKILLS TO DEVELOP A SERVICE MINDSET

ABB recognizes that just one interaction can affect a customer's loyalty and commitment to maintaining a lasting relationship with ABB. Therefore, all customer-facing sales and service employees need effective communication, relationship-development, problem-solving and customer service skills. Employees have the ability to prevent and successfully manage conflict by using techniques and approaches to defuse a difficult situation and achieve a positive outcome. Equally as important, they can help customers leverage the full range and value of ABB's products—including solutions in other divisions.

After program participation, ABB representatives:

- 1 Seek feedback from customers and achieve a mindset of continuous improvement
- 2 Employ listening skills to understand customer needs and problems
- 3 Defuse challenging situations by seeking to understand, listen and ask questions
- 4 Effectively handle conflict to achieve a win-win resolution for customers, themselves and ABB
- 5 Enhance their customer-facing role as a trusted advisor
- 6 Use knowledge of personality styles to help understand their own style and others' styles, and to communicate more effectively with customers
- 7 Apply effective use of communication skills to resolve problems
- 8 Understand the ABB prospect generation process and proactively create new prospects through enhanced customer relationships

These core competencies help employees build relationships that will have a significant impact on customer retention, satisfaction, business growth and ultimately revenue generation. In this program, employees learn best practices for communicating, establishing a customer-focused mindset, and managing conflict to gain customers' trust in them as advisors. This lets them facilitate deeper relationships, provide exceptional value and deliver best-in-class customer service to represent ABB at the highest level.

ABB and AMA Case Study

When Kuchibhotla shared his plan to make the Power Grids Service a customer-focused organization, Rivera suggested partnering with AMA. "We needed to make an investment in service excellence. We contacted AMA and told them we have a dream, and this is what we want to do."

ABB's learning objectives included providing customer-facing employees with the ability to consistently:

- **Describe** the connection between service excellence and high performance
- **Listen** actively to understand customer needs
- **Apply** communication skills to build rapport and manage conflict
- **Seek** customer feedback with a mindset of continuous improvement
- **Articulate** how customer-facing professionals can help customers achieve business goals

Consistent Delivery Designed for a Global Workforce

AMA's solution was to provide 13 instructors, trained in AMA's experiential learning method, to deploy the program in 43 sessions across 16 countries, including Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Finland, Germany, India, Italy, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and the United States. In just 9 weeks, AMA's instructors were able to scale ABB's program to provide consistent instruction, translated into Chinese, Finnish, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish and Swedish.

"AMA proved to have fantastic linguistic capabilities, and they were able to match our footprint," says Rivera. "Not many companies can do that."

Flexibility was also a key factor. "AMA has a robust process [for employee development] but is ready to partner with customers to match their needs," says Kuchibhotla. AMA was "very collaborative in terms of designing the course to reflect our requests."

In addition, AMA offered a centralized, dedicated customer support team to ensure everything ran smoothly. "Just imagine," says Kuchibhotla, "we were deploying it in so many languages, in so many countries, and in a very short time. Top class facilitation was going to be critical."

"Overall, this was a very challenging task, in terms of timeframe, footprint, and content," says Kuchibhotla. "Yet, the implementation was amazing. It was impressive. It required a lot of interaction and coordination, and the team has done an excellent job of it."

New Skills, New Opportunities

Superior customer service is not just about customer retention, it's finding out what the customers really need. "That has shown a good value creation in terms of additional opportunities," says Kuchibhotla. When ABB representatives have more meaningful conversations with customers, they uncover additional needs that ABB products and services can support. "It creates more prospects and more opportunities. We've seen millions of dollars of opportunities created, and this [initiative] definitely contributed towards that."

Based on the success of the program, ABB scheduled an additional 13 sessions, in 11 countries translated into 5 additional languages which were completed in Q4 of 2018.

Exceptional Response from Participants Inspires Better Customer Service

Instructor Rating:



Program Rating:



“The training program was aptly designed for [the] service business, with excellent examples and role-plays. Giving detailed insight about the kind of customers one may generally encounter, the program helped in fine-tuning communication skills and better understanding of the customers.”

—ABB participant, India

“Very well done. Good pace, good interaction and teamwork. Allowed other, less-experienced individuals to learn from the more experienced in the organization.”

—ABB participant, United States

“The content of Service Mindset training was very interesting, helpful and also useful. [The instructor] did an awesome job.”

—ABB participant, Germany

“Investing in people's soft skills will bring several business benefits for enterprises like ABB, its customers, and employees, but more important, it helps to create a better world, because such skills are transferable to their day-to-day jobs, their lives, and future movement in their careers.”

— Jesus Rivera, Global Business Controller, Power Grids Service

