

# THE VALUE OF CUSTOMER- FOCUSED COMMUNICATIONS

MISSOURI  
**S&T**

**Andrew Careaga & Michelle Amos**  
2020 Brand Symposium  
Sept. 29, 2020

# Why customer service matters

- 65% of customers who have a fantastic service experience say friendly representatives who are able to solve their concerns are the most influential
- 56% of customers admit to having lost their temper with a customer service professional
- 8 out of 10 customers are more likely to become loyal if their problem is solved on the spot

“The true test of a business’s customer service fitness is not when things are going right – but rather what is done when things go wrong.”

*Steve Ferrante*

**NOW OPEN  
FOR  
TAKEOUT**  
[www.sandiegoluce.com](http://www.sandiegoluce.com)



**FACE MASKS  
REQUIRED**



**BEYOND  
THIS POINT**

**WE ARE CLOSED**  
  
UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE FOR  
THE SAFETY OF OUR  
EMPLOYEES AND CLIENTS  
  
FEDEX / UPS – WE ARE NOT TAKING  
ANY SHIPMENTS AT THIS TIME. YOU  
CAN SEND BACK TO SHIPPER.  
  
THANK YOU  
PLEASE BE HEALTHY AND SAFE!





# How has COVID-19 flipped the way we live, learn and do business?

From this...	... to this
Dining out	Dining in
Environmental sustainability	One-time use plasticware
Learning/teaching/working on campus	Learning/teaching/working remotely
In-person events	Online events
Drop-in counseling	Virtual counseling
Phone-based customer service	Online customer service

# Trust in the COVID-19 era

Students don't fully trust their institutions or fellow students to keep them safe.

Returning students have a lower trust level than incoming freshmen.

% Agreement: I trust my college/university to take the necessary precautions to keep students safe



# Trust in the COVID-19 era

Returning students' perceptions of their institutions' COVID responses and communications have declined since spring.

How do you feel your college/university is handling the COVID-19 outbreak?

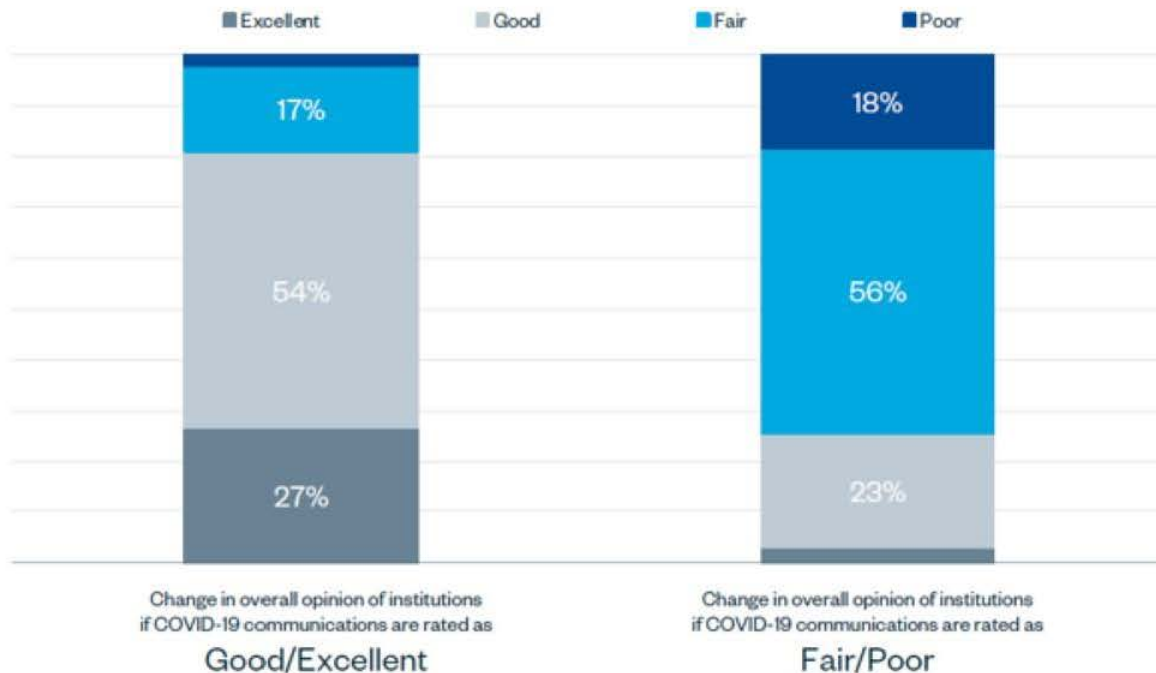


How would you rate your college/university's communication with you about COVID-19?



Returning students are more likely to have a positive overall opinion of their institution when COVID communications are rated as good or excellent.

How do you feel your college/university is handling the COVID-19 outbreak?  
(by COVID communications rating)





# How should we respond?

- Is our email auto-response voice as friendly as your telephone voice?
  - Avoid the “canned” reply
  - We are not robots 🤖
- Are we hiding behind the virtual to avoid personal interaction?
  - Pick up the phone
- Are we hiding behind “policy” or “protocol”?
- Are we empathizing with our customers and stakeholders?
  - Thank them – sincerely and up front
  - Express concern and understanding
  - Put yourself in their shoes

Chancellor Dehghani,

I am a parent of a second year student at S&T. I am not typically a parent who speaks out, however I wanted to mention a few things that have been weighing on me recently.

First, I would like to say that I appreciate the regular communication from the university since March. I understand that the spring was a confusing time for all, and there were a lot of uncertainties. The frequent updates are appreciated.

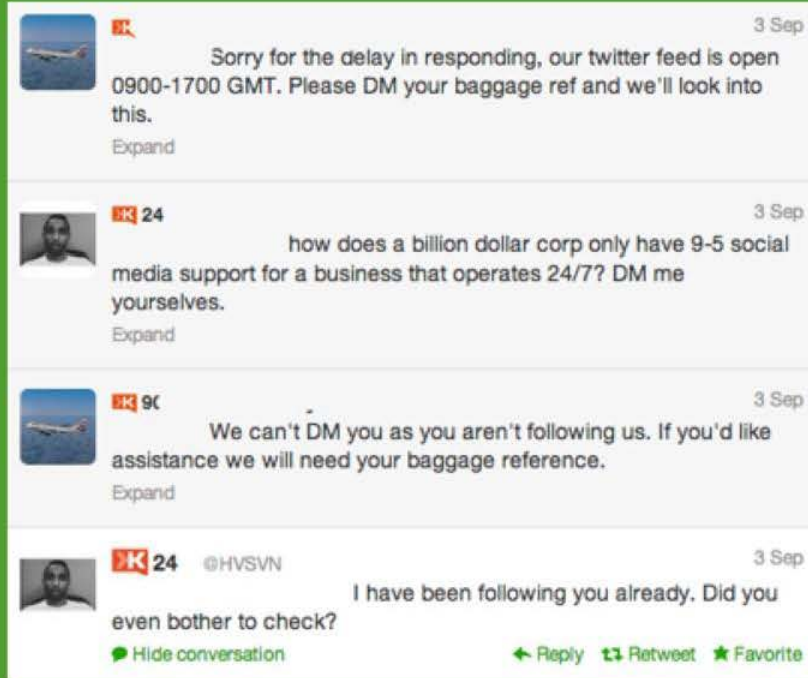
Unfortunately, with each subsequent communication, I see my son more and more discouraged. ...

Dear Ms. [REDACTED],

Thank you for your note, and for expressing your views on the changing dynamics of our communications since COVID-19 disrupted our spring semester. Thank you also for sharing your appreciation for our attempts to keep you updated on what has been happening on campus as we prepare for the fall semester. Even though we have not had all of the answers, and have been required to adjust course somewhat over the past several weeks, we believe that staying in touch with you and your fellow parents is crucial – even more so now, as we all deal with an unfamiliar environment.

As I read your note, I could feel the anguish your son must be going through. It pains me that we are not able to offer fully in-person courses this fall due to the pandemic, and the last thing we want is for our students to return to campus discouraged or, worse yet, to hit “pause” on their education because of the mix of courses. ...

# Social media: the voice of the customer



Frustrated with poor customer service



Buys ad (promoted Tweet) to amplify voice



# Missouri S&T Class of 2024 Admitted Parent Group



Created April 10  
676 group members





# Parent Challenges

- > Not able to visit college campuses
- > Isolation due to COVID
- > Feeling of loss for child's senior year/activities
- > Sudden switch to virtual learning for students
- > Fear of the unknown

# How We Met Those Challenges

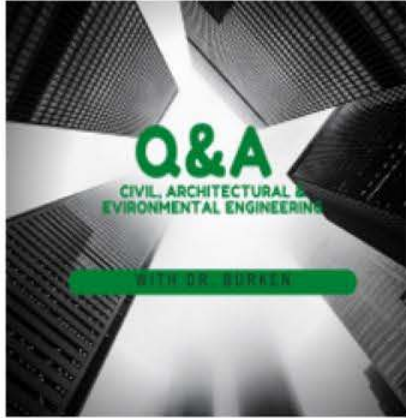
- > Provided virtual tours, visits, events, Facebook Live  
Dr. Goodman, Faculty, ResLife, New Student Programs, Current Students, and more
- > Provided a platform for parent to connect with each other
- > Provided a platform for parents to share their child's accomplishments
- > Provided open communication to parents
- > Provided an outlet for parents to be heard

# Things I Learned

- > Communication is the responsibility of the communicator
- > Do not take negative comments or posts personally
- > People need to *feel* heard
- > People want to be communicated with even if there is no new updates

April 10

Thank you for this group!  
My daughter ... is a Senior  
at Oakville High School in  
St. Louis. She attended the  
first PRO day and is  
registered for classes. She  
will be a chemical  
engineering major and is  
anxiously awaiting  
housing and roommate  
placement!



June 26

Anyone with a  
student from  
Blue Springs  
South that is  
going to be a  
freshman?



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# Customer communication do's and don'ts

## Do these things

... put in the hard work of communicating

... communicate frequently  
(SimpsonScarborough: 69% of returning students want *more* communication)

... make it personal

... think about secondary audiences. Who else is hearing your communication?

... look for opportunities to help (navigate the bureaucracy)

## Don't do these things

... try to sell

... over-communicate (it's a fine line)

... rely too heavily on technology

... try to be funny

... ignore the problem – or pass them along to the next point in the bureaucracy



# Thanks!

Contact:

Andy – [acareaga@mst.edu](mailto:acareaga@mst.edu)

Michelle – [amosm@mst.edu](mailto:amosm@mst.edu)