

MKT 405
Services Marketing - Course Assignments
Bowling Green State University
Fall 2006



As you are well aware, exams are the most common method instructors use to evaluate the degree to which students have learned course material. Rather than rely solely on exams over the course of the semester to evaluate students' understanding of the material, in this course additional evaluation of the material will be done via written assignments. This document provides specific details as to the requirements of these assignments.

As you write these assignments, the intent is for you to demonstrate your understanding of course concepts. Thus, when appropriate, students should *use services marketing concepts* in their discussion to provide evidence of their knowledge and understanding of these concepts, as this is the primary purpose of these assignments. Another part of the evaluation of each assignment will be based on the degree of *professionalism* it demonstrates. Although it is not possible to list everything that might convey professionalism (or the lack thereof), here are some examples:

- the instructions provided for the assignment are followed
- the assignment is word-processed and double-spaced, in 11- or 12-point type
- the assignment appropriately uses **headings**, page numbers, footnotes, references, etc.
- the assignment is stapled, or otherwise bound together (*not* paper-clipped)
- the assignment includes *all* required pieces of information
- the assignment clearly specifies the student's name and class section (i.e., days, time, section number)
- the assignment uses concise, clear writing, as well as proper spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc.
(*you may find the book, The Elements of Style, helpful in improving your writing skills*)
- paragraphs are appropriately formed, each with a topic sentence, and have an appropriate length (e.g., are *not* a full page or more)
- the assignment appropriately identifies the student, the specific class, the student's team number, and other students on the team (if appropriate)
- the assignment is completely and easily readable (e.g., no light print/missing words due to a poor printer)
- the author should be in attendance for the *entire duration* of class on the day the assignment is due
- the assignment should be completed at the beginning of class on the assigned due date

Assignment **Required of All Students:**

- Co-production (Class Participation) Paper (*50 points*) due **December 5** (*pp. 2-3*)

Assignment **Required by Each Team** of Students:

- Service Blueprint and Paper (*100 points*) due **November 30** (*pp. 4-5*)

Assignment **Selected by Each Student Striving for Either an "A" or a "B" in the Course** (*Pick one*):

- Company Complaint Letter Response Analysis (*100 points*) due **November 21*** (*pp. 6-7*)
- or*
- Service Encounter Paper (*100 points*) due **December 7*** (*pp. 8-10*)

Details of these assignments are provided in the pages that follow. If you have any questions about any assignment, please come see me. It is *your responsibility* to seek clarification on any assignment you do not understand.

(Note: An asterisk* indicates the assignment is optional.)

Co-production (Class Participation) Paper

Since I consider the student (i.e., customer) to be a co-producing partner in the delivery of this service, I provide the opportunity for students to evaluate their own contributions to the course and to *assign themselves a co-production (class participation) score*. At the end of the semester students will submit a one-page paper as justification for the grade they believe they deserve for their co-production efforts. In this paper students are asked to **explicitly state their suggested percentage** (from 100% to 0%) at the beginning of the paper and then proceed to provide support for that score. The **due** date for this paper is **December 5**. If I do not receive a paper, I will assign a score of zero and assume that adequately reflects your opinion about your co-production.

Co-production in this service setting (education) can mean many things. At a minimum, it would seem to entail the following student behaviors:

(1) Preparation

- reads assigned materials prior to class
- thoughtfully considers discussion questions (from book and course web site)

(2) Promptness

- is on time, or even early, to class all of the time

(3) Professionalism (*as defined by students in past semesters*)

- frequently (and regularly) attends class
- asks questions about material, assignments
- is attentive (does not read newspaper during class)
- listens to instructor, fellow students
- begins assignments well before the due date
- turns all work in on time (or early!)
- does not create class interruptions (cell phone ringing, coming into class late, leaving class early)
- is present mentally as well as physically
- takes pride in the quality of work submitted
- has a positive attitude and a willingness to learn
- email and/or telephone communication is appropriate (student appropriately identifies him/herself, the specific class he/she is in, etc., in all communication)

(4) Participation

- regularly (and frequently) engages in class discussion
- contributes personal experiences to class discussions to illustrate course concepts
- speaks up in class when the topic is not understood
- is present for every class (except for emergencies)
- actively contributes to group discussions/assignments
- pulls his/her own weight in group activities

There are probably several other co-production behaviors that could be listed. Thus, the paper should lay out what would be appropriate criteria for evaluating each student's co-production.

In an attempt to provide some sort of guidance for this paper, the scheme listed on the next page provides a guideline that I would use if I were assigning *just a class participation score*. In reality, although class participation is certainly a key component of your co-production, it is not the only component. Students may use the criteria provided on this page and in the table on the next page for the class participation portion of their co-production, or develop (and explicitly state) their own criteria for their co-production efforts.

(Continued on next page.)

Co-production (Class Participation) Paper
(continued)

Typical Class Participation Rubric from Past Courses

<u>Scale</u>	<u>Description</u>
100%	<i>An incredible leader in class discussion.</i> Is completely prepared for every class discussion and is able to answer every question posed by the instructor. Student frequently initiates stimulating dialogue by asking thought-provoking questions and regularly brings in outside material to class to illustrate application of course concepts. Student is a <i>role model</i> for others in the class and always exhibits <i>all</i> of the qualities of a good customer (student) as discussed the first week of class.
90%	<i>An outstanding leader in class discussions.</i> Always prepared for discussion of chapter topics and assigned readings. A frequent initiator of class discussion. Excels in interacting with classmates in a professional manner. Comments are focused, integrative, demonstrate preparation, and indicate active listening. Student constantly exhibits the qualities of a good customer (student) as discussed the first week of class.
80%	<i>A consistent leader in class discussions.</i> Almost always prepared to discuss assigned topic in class. A regular initiator of class discussion. Interacts with classmates in a professional manner. Comments demonstrate preparation and indicate active listening. Consistently exhibits the qualities of a good customer (student) as discussed the first week of class.
70%	<i>Quality participation based on sound preparation.</i> Regularly responds to instructor's comments and questions. Also responds to comments of classmates. Occasionally takes the lead in class discussion. Often volunteers illustrations about the subjects being discussed. Regularly exhibits the qualities of a good customer (student) as discussed the first week of class.
60%	<i>Occasional contributions to class based on solid preparation.</i> Occasionally responds to the remarks of the instructor and/or classmates. Rarely volunteers to begin a discussion. Generally exhibits the qualities of a good customer (student) as discussed the first week of class.
50%	<i>Seldom answers questions posed by the instructor.</i> Responds to other students in active learning assignments when required to do so. Occasionally exhibits the qualities of a good customer (student).
40%	<i>Answers questions from the instructor if explicitly asked.</i> Otherwise, does not take part in class discussions. Rarely exhibits the qualities of a good customer (student) as discussed the first week of class.
30%	<i>Shows up regularly to class but takes no part in classroom discussion.</i> Seldom exhibits any of the qualities of a good customer (student) as discussed the first week of class.
0%	<i>Completely avoids any attempt to contribute to classroom discussion.</i> (Seriously...would anyone who falls into this category actually take the time to write a paper stating this?)

In your co-production paper students should **explicitly state their suggested percentage** (from 100% to 0%) at the beginning of the paper and then proceed to provide support for that score. Students may find it beneficial to keep track of days/topics when they take an especially active leadership role in class discussion and times when they conducted themselves in a professional manner. At several points during this semester students will be asked to coproduce the service and add value to the class, so those times may be included in the discussion. (*The instructor reserves the right to adjust the final co-production grade if deemed necessary.*)

Service Blueprint (Team) Assignment

Objective

To develop a thorough understanding of service blueprinting by analyzing the service process for a given service company and graphically capturing the process on paper.

Directions

Each team's assignment is to seek out a local service provider (or, alternately, a "goods" business that has a significant service component) and develop a service blueprint. The project should focus on a *specific company* and not just a typical firm in the industry. Students may need to read (*and study!*) Chapter 9 of the text book *in advance of the due date* in order to complete this assignment. The intent of the project is to construct a thorough, detailed service blueprint for the chosen service provider. In order to ensure we do not have teams blueprinting firms from the same industry, and in order to receive full credit for this assignment, someone from the team **must send the instructor a brief email note by November 2 that identifies the provider whose services the team would like to blueprint.** (Approvals will be made on a first-come, first-serve basis.)

Requirements

Graphical Portion of Service Blueprint. This assignment is expected to allow a team of students to demonstrate (a) an understanding of the blueprint concepts from class and (b) an ability to apply them in looking at a specific service provider. Each blueprint should include the components listed in Chapter 9 and discussed in class. Blueprints should have all lines clearly labeled, and arrows should be included in your blueprint to indicate the order of activities. The blueprint should include at least four "boxes" of support processes. Potential bottlenecks or failpoints in the service delivery process should also be identified. Students may be asked to share their blueprinting expertise with the class so that fellow classmates may benefit from the insight they have gained.

Visual/Pictorial Portion of the Service Blueprint. To compliment the graphical portion of the service blueprint, each team is expected to visit the business chosen and to (visually) capture various aspects of the service process and physical evidence. Perhaps the easiest way to do this is to take pictures with a digital camera. (*Digital cameras are generally available to students to borrow through the BGSU [Student Technology Center](#) in 200 Saddlemire. However, equipment should be reserved in advance of the date it is needed..*) Students should secure permission to take pictures of the service process from management of this service provider prior to constructing the blueprint. Ideally, hyperlinks should be included in the graphical portion of the service blueprint to each digital image. There is no fixed number of images required, but a minimum of 10 images (in *jpeg* format) would seem reasonable for most service blueprints; a larger number of images would certainly be encouraged. Although not a requirement, a short video clip (many digital cameras can capture/create a short video) might also help to illustrate the service delivery process.

Written Assignment. In addition to the actual blueprint, each team is to write a short paper (3-4 pages, double-spaced) that addresses the following issues:

- (1) describe why this organization was selected to blueprint;
- (2) describe three key elements of physical evidence revealed in the blueprint (photos/images of these elements should be included in the visual portion of the blueprint) and discuss how they influence the customer's experience;
- (3) identify, number, and describe three potential failpoints (points in the process where problems may occur) and/or bottlenecks (points in the process where backups or slow delivery may occur);
- (4) suggest possible solutions/alternatives to address these (potential) problem areas;
- (5) discuss how a service blueprint might be used in each of the following areas in *this* organization: marketing, human resource management, and operations;
- (6) discuss what was learned in doing this assignment and how it could be applied in the business world.

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Electronic Submission of Assignment. Both the blueprint and the paper should be submitted in electronic format by an e-mail attachment. *(For large files, a CD or DVD may be required and may be used with permission from the instructor.)* Blueprints can be (and have been) created using a variety of software products. The most commonly used tools include PowerPoint, Microsoft Word, and Microsoft Excel. (The final version of any files submitted must be in IBM format only; no Mac files will be accepted, as the instructor has no easy way to open and read such files).

Due Date

This assignment is due at the beginning of class on Thursday, **November 30**. An **electronic version** of the entire set of blueprint materials, as well as a **hard copy** of everything, should be turned by this date.

Company Complaint Letter Response Analysis

Objective

To provide students with the opportunity to provide feedback to a service firm, as well as help them understand and evaluate the customer service and “recovery” strategies of a specific firm.

Directions

In order to complete this assignment, students will be expected to write a complaint letter to any company from whom the student has, in his/her opinion, received bad or at least less-than-satisfactory service during the first few weeks of the semester. It does not have to be an extremely upsetting situation; it may be simply that the firm did not provide service that met expectations. The name and address of the appropriate person to whom to complain should be obtained (this may take some research!) and a formal letter of complaint written. All pertinent information (dates of service, names, account numbers, credit card numbers, etc.) should be included in the letter, as well as a description of the poor experience and, if appropriate, a suggested course of action the company could take to appropriately “recover” in this situation. That is, the resolution being sought from the company should be clear. (*Do not state in the letter that you are doing this as a class project.*) The letter should request a response from the organization and provide appropriate contact information for the student, including a mailing address, e-mail address, phone number (if appropriate), and any other relevant information. In order to give the company a chance to respond by the end of the semester, the letter should be mailed to the company and a copy turned in to the instructor no later than **September 21**.

Near the end of the semester, after the firm has had sufficient time to respond to the complaint, students are to write a short (5-7 pages, double-spaced) paper that analyzes the firm’s response to the situation.

Requirements

The analysis paper should include all of the following elements (and associated **Headings**):

(1) *Introduction*

- a. A (brief) description of what led to the complaint.
- b. The resolution being sought (what you *wanted* the firm to do in response to the complaint).
- c. What the firm was *expected* to do in response to the complaint and how quickly the firm was expected to respond.

(2) *Firm Response*

If the firm did respond, the student should (a) describe what the response was, (b) discuss the adequacy of the firm’s response (in your opinion as a consumer), (c) and provide three reasons why you believe they responded in the manner they did. (d) What could the firm have done *better* to *delight* you?

Or

If the firm did not respond, the student should (a) discuss at least three realistic reasons why you think you did not receive a response (reasons like “the letter may have gotten lost in the mail” are not acceptable), (b) write a letter to yourself (on behalf of the company), on a separate sheet of paper and included as an appendix, that addresses what you believe the firm *should* have done, and (c) discuss why this letter would be an adequate response. (Note: What they *should* have done may not be exactly what you expected or wanted them to do.)

(Continued on next page.)

Company Complaint Letter Response Analysis

(Continued)

(3) Discussion

- a. Discuss the effect that registering the complaint online might have had on influencing the firm's response. (That is, if you did register a complaint online, do you think it made any difference in the response. If you did not register the complaint online, what difference do you think it would have made?)
- b. Address how you now feel toward the organization.
- c. Conclude the paper with some final thoughts, including a discussion of:
 1. your perspective on the statement "The customer who complains is the firm's friend,"
 2. what you learned from this experience, and
 3. how you will apply what you learned as you enter the business world.

(4) Appendix

As an Appendix to the paper, students should also include:

- a. the *original copy of your letter* to the firm you submitted to the firm (that is, the copy given to the instructor) earlier in the semester,
- b. a *copy of the response letter* from the firm and any *other correspondence* (e.g., gift certificate, post card, or e-mail message) if there is any, and
- c. a brief description of any other response from the firm related to your letter (response by telephone, E-mail, or any other form). If there is no response, just include your letter and a note that there was no response of any kind.

Students are expected to use services marketing concepts throughout your discussion to demonstrate an understanding of these concepts, as this is the primary purpose of this assignment.

The grading criteria used for evaluating your paper include your ability to relate material from readings and lectures to your paper, your ability to diagnose probable causes of problems and match them with appropriate solutions, *depth and substance* of your observations, persuasiveness of your discussion, and quality of writing. Concise, clear writing in both your letter and your paper is expected. As such, you will not receive extra credit for proper spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc., but will receive a poor evaluation of the assignment if these areas are found to be lacking.

Due Date

The original complaint letter should be sent out (and a copy of it given to the instructor) by the beginning of class on **September 21**. Your analysis of the company's response to your complaint, which should include the copy of the letter originally submitted to the instructor as an Appendix, is due at the beginning of class on **November 21**.

Service Encounter Paper

Objective

To evaluate critical aspects of two distinct service encounters from your own perspective as a customer and as a services marketing scholar.

Directions

After creating a journal of service encounter entries (*described on the following page*), the purpose of the service encounter *paper* is to analyze two service encounters in detail. This paper (6-7 pages, double-spaced) will consist of two parts: First, you will write about the organization that provided you with the *worst* service of any organization you encountered this semester and, second, you will write about an organization that is doing an excellent overall job of services marketing.

Requirements

Journal entries. Students are to write up “journal” entries of ten separate service encounter experiences on the form provided at the end of this handout (and available on the course web site). One of the journal entries should be identified as your best service encounter of the semester, and another should be identified as the worst service encounter of the semester. (*See discussion on next page for more information about the journal entries.*)

Discussion of worst service. In the first part of the paper, the student is to write about the organization that provided you with the *worst* service of any organization encountered this semester. Based on your reading of the textbook and issues we have discussed in class, diagnose what went wrong in the encounter. That is, from a services marketing perspective, what is the real *cause* of the problem? Then, recommend the *three* most important actions management should take to improve service. Be specific in your recommendations (e.g., suggesting that employees “need more training” is not a particularly enlightening or useful recommendation). To demonstrate your understanding of course concepts, *use concepts and strategies from the class to support your discussion and suggestions.* Be selective and focus on the most important issues, as this part of the paper should be about three pages in length. A good paper will describe the problem(s) and present a specific, logical plan for improvement.

Discussion of best service. In the second part of the paper, write about an organization that, based on the service encounter you had with them this semester, is doing an excellent overall job of services marketing. The discussion should include *three* most important actions management appears to have taken in order to have delivered such good service. That is, based on your reading of the textbook and issues we have discussed in class, diagnose what this firm is doing well. Again, in your analysis you should *demonstrate your knowledge of services marketing concepts* by discussing, using concepts covered in class discussion and the textbook, what this organization does that makes it successful. This part of the paper is also expected to be about three pages in length.

Discussion of lessons learned. Finally, you should conclude your paper with 1-2 paragraphs discussing what you learned from this experience and how you will apply it as you enter the business world.

The grading criteria used for evaluating your paper include your ability to relate material from readings and lectures to your paper, your ability to diagnose probable causes of problems and match them with appropriate solutions, *depth and substance* of your observations, persuasiveness of your observations, and the quality of writing. **You should use services marketing concepts throughout your discussion to demonstrate your understanding of these concepts, as this is the primary purpose of this assignment.**

Due Date

Your service encounter journal paper is due by **December 7**. You should turn in both the paper and the ten journal entries completed earlier in the semester. (Your journal entries should be included as an appendix to your paper.)

Service Encounter Journal

Objective

To become more aware of critical aspects of the service encounter from a customer's perspective.

Directions

We all have a number of such encounters each week, including (but not limited to) restaurants, banks, airlines, dry cleaners, doctors, dentists, libraries, photographers, tutors, travel agencies, theaters, pest control agencies, phone companies, automotive mechanics, insurance companies, attorneys, accountants, and copy centers. Students selecting this assignment are to keep a "journal" of their service encounter experiences. The purpose of the journal is to make students more aware of sources of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction with services.

Requirements

The student is asked to complete ten journal entry forms describing *recent* service encounters you have experienced (i.e., those occurring during this semester). (*Service encounters occurring more than three weeks before the start of the semester may NOT be used without prior instructor approval.*) One blank copy of a journal entry form is attached to the back of this handout; an electronic version of this form can also be found on the course web site. Each entry will correspond to one service encounter that you have during the semester. Your journal may be written (if you have neat, clear, legible handwriting) or typed. (If you desire, you can use your favorite word processor to set up a file with the questions from the entry form. You can then enter descriptions of the service encounters as you experience them.) Be sure to *completely* answer the questions on the journal entry form. If you make copies of the form and need more room to answer the questions, you may write on the back of the entry form or attach a page to the form. Your inclusion of the important details of the service encounter will help you in writing your service encounter paper.

Try to record an assortment of types of encounters from a variety of service industries (i.e., do not do all restaurants) as well as some that you find particularly **satisfying** and some that are very **dissatisfying**. The best way to complete your journal is to fill a form out *immediately* following a particular incident. If you try to do your entries from memory, or do too many at one time, the quality of the entries will suffer.

Due Date

You should have completed at least half of your journal entries by the time we discuss Chapter 5 (approximately the fourth week of class). You may be asked to bring your journal entries to class for the discussion of Chapter 5, although they will not be collected at that time. The entire set of ten journal entries is due on **October 17**. (*The ten journal entries should also be included as an appendix to the service encounter paper; see previous page.*)

