

Maj. Gen. Bruce Casella

Top priorities: making associates, customers happy



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Retailers live and breathe by numbers—sales, earnings, revenue and dividends. At the Exchange, we also take those numbers very seriously, but two more numbers mean just as much in signaling whether we're doing a good job and where we need to change.

Those two crucial numbers are the Associate Satisfaction Index and the Customer Satisfaction Index, more commonly known as ASI and CSI.

All 44,000 of our associates—from the boardroom to the stockroom—should take the ASI and CSI to heart, for both form the cornerstones of why we're here and why there's food on our tables: customer satisfaction.

The ASI measures how happy our associates are working for the Exchange. The CSI tells us how happy our customers are shopping with us. Broken down, both numbers tell us where we can improve across several associate and customer satisfaction topics.

Making ASI, CSI top priorities

Our 2010 CSI scores improved a point to 76 from the previous year, with all regions either experiencing an increase or remaining stable. Our overall ASI score remained flat at 69, while dropping a point in the continental United States and rising 4 points overseas.

A top priority of mine—and I hope of yours—is ensuring that ASI and CSI scores rise significantly this year.

Satisfied and loyal associates are highly motivated to do what's right, become more knowledgeable about the products and provide increased value through superior service.

They know that every contact with a customer, whether by email, phone, written correspondence or face-to-face meeting, leaves an impression.

In turn, happy customers make us their first shopping choice, thus providing more earnings for us to apply toward dividends for MWR programs and enhance our paychecks and training so we can get better at what we do and feel better about our job performances.

So you can see how ASI and CSI are unbreakably linked.

'I want to'

At the Exchange, our HR Directorate has launched training for associates that will hopefully change attitudes from "I have to" to "I want to" and that working at this 116-year-old military retailer is more than just a job, but a commitment to be the very best whenever we interact with our valued shoppers.

The training encompasses four foundations that I, as commander and a veteran Exchange shopper, believe are the key elements of every interaction in our stores, over the phone and via



Happy associates make for happy shoppers, which is why raising ASI and CSI scores are so vitally important.

social media. These four foundations are:

Greet. A "Hello!" goes a long way. "Hello, Sgt. Jones, how may I help you?" goes even further. Honor our military members by calling them by rank and last name because they deserve the best treatment.

Listen. Hear what products your customers want and why.

Suggest. Based on what you hear, help them find that solution—and the accessories that go along with it. A fancy digital camera won't work without batteries. If they buy new running shoes, suggest the best running socks.

The buying experience in our stores should be as easy as possible. Let's help customers find what they are shopping for, explain how products work, and do whatever we can to facilitate the sales transaction.

'Thank you' goes a long way

Thank. Let's be absolutely sure to thank all customers, whether they buy something or just browse. "Thank you" goes a long way, too, to ensuring they return.

Increasingly, store associates aren't just people who stock shelves and operate cash registers. Now, all of them are subject matter experts who can advise our shoppers on what products are right for them. In the eyes of our customers, the associates *are* the Exchange, representing the entire organization, regardless of where we greet them.

Everywhere at the Exchange, we must develop lifelong emotional connections with customers—and personal engagement by our associates is critical. To reach those goals depends upon whether our associates are happy working at the Exchange, feel comfortable about their jobs and supervisors, and really do love waiting on our valued shoppers. We're eager to hear.