

CONCRETE DELIVERY PROFESSIONAL (CDP) STUDY GUIDE

MODULE III - CUSTOMER & COMPANY RELATIONS



Introduction

The Concrete Delivery Professional is the ready mixed concrete producer's main contact with customers on a daily basis. The success of the producer can directly depend on the customer service skills of the CDP. Customers will often choose to do business with producers whose employees have excellent customer service skills, over other producers who may have cheaper prices. Good customer service goes beyond dealing with those who actually purchase the concrete. Owners, testing agencies and other parties in the construction process should also be considered as customers and must be treated by the CDP with the same skills.

The study guide will also suggest some ways that the CDP can deal with specific job situations, such as problems with product and safety issues on the job, while maintaining good customer relations.

Good relationships with other employees are just as important as relationships with customers. The ideas of teamwork and cooperation are often talked about, but not always given high priority. Being a successful concrete producer takes much more than competitive pricing and shiny trucks. It requires all employees of the producer to work together on a consistent basis, providing excellent customer service that encourages repeat business.

The objectives of this module include:

- ◆ Creating a better understanding for the CDP and how their individual and company actions can affect success;
- ◆ Providing suggestions for dealing with specific types of common issues faced daily by the CDP;
- ◆ Demonstrating how important it is for the CDP to work with others in his or her company, and how to make that happen.

To learn more about the information presented in this module, please see the list of references and recommended readings in the appendix. A glossary of terms can be found in the appendix of at the end of this module.

Chapter 1 - Basics of Customer Service

Chapter Objectives:

After studying this chapter, the CDP candidate should be able to:

- ◆ Understand the benefits of maintaining a satisfied customer, and the costs of having dissatisfied customers
- ◆ Describe appropriate Concrete Delivery Professional personal appearance
- ◆ Understand importance of a good company public image, and how the CDP can affect it
- ◆ Identify the different requirements of various customer types (homeowner, residential contractor, commercial contractor)
- ◆ Recognize how to deal with other stakeholders involved in the construction process, such as owners and testing agencies.

The best way to define a customer and their importance is through these popular sayings:

A customer is the most important person ever in this business.

*A customer is not dependent on us;
we are dependent on them.*

*A customer is not an interruption of our work;
they are the purpose of it.*

*We are not doing a customer a favor by serving them;
they are doing us a favor by giving us the opportunity to do so.*

The CDP should always keep these sayings in mind when dealing with a customer. If he or she does, the CDP will almost always provide excellent customer service.

What is Customer Service?

Every CDP is a representative for the ready mixed concrete producer. The CDP provides both a product and a service to the producer's customers through the manufacture of the product in the truck mixer, and the act of delivering that product. Customer service means providing the customer with the right amount of product or service to satisfy their requirements.

It is easy for the CDP to understand customer service, because the CDP is also a customer of other companies or individuals from whom they purchase goods or services. Everyone can share stories about times where they may have received either good or bad customer service. The CDP should remember these experiences as an example of how to conduct themselves accordingly with customers.

When in doubt as to what good customer service looks like, remember the Golden Rule:

Treat others, as you would want to be treated. In most situations, doing so will satisfy the customer's needs.



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Why is Good Customer Service Important?

According to government research, a dissatisfied customer who has a legitimate complaint will tell 9 to 10 other people about their problem with a company. 13% of these individuals will tell over 20 others! For every complaint that a company hears about, the average business has 26 other customers with problems. Six of these customer's problems are usually very serious. Of the customers who complain, 54-70% will do business again with the company if that company resolves the customer's complaint. This percentage goes up to 82-90% if the problem is resolved quickly. It is very clear that anyone having a bad customer service experience can do a lot of damage to a company's reputation, but if that problem is dealt with quickly the damage can be minimized.

Companies tend not to look for customer problems, and usually wait until a problem arises. The last thing that the CDP really wants to hear on the job is a customer complaint. No one likes to hear about customer problems or deal with an unhappy customer. Successful companies have a variety of ways they make sure the customer is satisfied, and the CDP can play an important role in keeping customers happy, satisfied, and continuing to buy products from their company. Sometimes that means making it easy for customers to complain (See Figure 3-1). If a customer does complain, it usually means that they are loyal and want to keep doing business. If not, they would just do business with someone else.



*Figure 3 – 1
CDP notes a
customer's objections
and will relay them to
his supervisor.*

Any company that wants to create and maintain loyal, happy customers should have several methods to hear about customer complaints, get that information to the person or department who can fix the problem, and deal with complaints quickly. The CDP can be an important part of that process by dealing with specific issues, or by passing on customer complaints to dispatch, salespeople, or management staff.

What is Good Customer Service?

Good customer service is what the customer says it is! The belief or perception of the customer is the key to success. Again, different customers will have different needs and requirements. In many cases, there is no specific definition of what good service looks like. If the customer believes they are getting poor service, then they are! Excellent customer service can be accomplished when all employees look at their actions through the customer's eyes.

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Relationships in the Ready Mixed Concrete Industry

The ready mixed concrete industry is very much based on relationships. Customers are doing business with a producer on a daily basis, so it is important to build and maintain good relationships with the customer. A ready mixed concrete producer is dependent on loyal and repeat customers more than most other businesses. Our customer base is limited and new customers cannot easily be found to replace ones that have left because they are unhappy with the producer.

Costs of maintaining customers are much less than getting new ones. If a customer threatens to leave because of poor service or any other problem, it costs the producer time and money to keep that customer. In this competitive world, it is hard to get new customers and usually takes lower prices and other concessions, which take away from profits. You can see why it is so important to keep existing customers satisfied, loyal and continuing to buy from the CDP's company.

Creating good relationships also means building the customer's trust in the CDP and the concrete producer. The CDP can create trust and enhance the company's relationship with the customer by giving prompt and courteous service, saying please and thank you, and following through on customer requests. The CDP can also build trust by taking an active role in the customer's activity and going the extra mile to help the customer. Do not take the attitude that the CDP's job is just to unload concrete!

Other benefits of having loyal, happy customers include:

- ◆ Increased business over time from loyal customers as they grow
- ◆ Frees salespeople to concentrate on new business instead of resolving complaints
- ◆ Satisfied customers refer other customers and provide sources of new business

Company Image

How other people view the CDP or the CDP's employer is called "image". It is an individual belief and it can be good or bad, positive or negative. If enough people have a negative image of a person or an industry, this bad image can be accepted as the truth (even though it might not be true!) It is human nature to notice the bad before the good, and this has an effect on how people create images of individuals or companies.

It is hard to get a positive image, and companies must constantly be working on sending a positive message through what they do, and what their employees do (See Figure 3-2). It is very easy for a producer to get a negative image in another person's eyes. All it takes is one rude CDP, one dirty truck, and one blast on the air horn or gesture to a car that cuts off a truck mixer. Even worse, many people will transfer this negative image to the entire concrete industry, not just that producer!



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Company Image (continued)

If maintaining a good image sounds hard for a company to do, it is! The CDP should always keep in mind that their actions in the public eye will have an effect on their own image, the image of the concrete producer, and how people view the concrete industry in general.



Figure 3-2: Here is an excellent example of a positive image, with this award winning truck mixer (courtesy of Lafarge Corp.)

Personal Appearance



Figure 3-3: A good personal appearance reflects a positive company image.

The CDP's appearance can have a great effect on the image the CDP projects, as well as the image of the producer the CDP works for. People will generally associate a clean personal appearance with a positive image, and a negative image can be reinforced by poor personal appearance. Personal appearance can have an effect on how the CDP feels about himself or herself in the same way. Many producers provide uniforms to be worn by the CDP for these reasons (See Figure 3-3).

There are some guidelines for the CDP to follow that can help maintain a positive personal appearance. Personal clothing should not have wording, messages or advertising on them that may be considered offensive by others.

Whenever possible, wear items that may have the company logo or name on them to promote a positive company image. Items worn for personal safety, such as hard hats and safety glasses, will be covered in Chapter 4.

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Different Customers Have Different Needs

Customers come in all shapes, sizes, and needs (See Figure 3-4). Some have many years experience in working with concrete, some are working with concrete for the first time. So, in order for the CDP to deliver maximum customer service, the way these customers are dealt with on the job will vary according to their needs and experience. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to customer service. The CDP must try to meet the customer's needs without jeopardizing himself or herself, the customer, or the concrete producer.

No matter how different they are, all customers must be treated by the CDP with courtesy, respect, and a desire to help in any way possible. Certain types of customers will vary in their needs and wants, based on the type of work they do and their experience.

Figure 3-4: This successful placement of more than 1529.11 cubic meters in less than 10 hours required excellent coordination between the CDPs and the customer.

(Courtesy of Thomas Concrete, Atlanta)



Figure 3-5: Impromptu meeting on the job with contractors and concrete producer.

As Important as Customers

There are many other people besides contractors who are involved with the construction process, and the CDP will come into contact with them on a regular basis. Owners, architects, engineers, testing laboratories, and other sub-contractors all come and go on the job site during concrete placement. They have a stake in the successful completion of the job, so they are called "stakeholders". These people all have their jobs to do, but sometimes it may seem to the CDP like they are creating unnecessary problems on the job site. Employees of testing laboratories and other inspectors can hold up the job progress because of testing activity, or rejection of a load (See Figure 3-5). Sub-contractors may have equipment in the way of backing the truck mixer into place for unloading. Owners or engineers may appear and question the CDP about their load, or a problem on the site. It might be easy to brush off these people as a nuisance, but it is very important for the CDP to treat these stakeholders just like they would treat their direct customer. Treating these other stakeholders like customers will enhance the CDP's image and the image of his or her producer. Sometimes the CDP will not know who these people are on the job site, so **when in doubt treat everyone like a customer!**



If the CDP treats a stakeholder poorly, the concrete producer's reputation will suffer and the producer could even be fired from the job! This would obviously not be a good thing! It cannot be said too many times when talking about good customer service - treat everyone as you would like to be treated.

Chapter 2 - Dealing with Specific Customer Issues

Chapter Objectives

After studying this chapter, the CDP candidate should be able to:

- ◆ Recognize how to deal with product problems, such as shortages, wrong mix, load too wet, and problems with acceptance testing.
- ◆ Recognize how to deal with jobsite problems, such as language difficulties, customer requirements for maneuvering truck on job site, property line issues, and getting stuck.
- ◆ Recognize how to deal with customer and delivery problems, such as delays due to driver getting lost, and other scheduling issues beyond the CDP's control.
- ◆ Recognize how to deal with safety problems, such as communicating safety information to customer (cement burn) and dealing with unsafe customer behaviour during unloading.

Problems are a Test of Customer Skills

It is relatively easy to provide good customer service when everything is going fine, but good customer service really gets tested when there are problems; keeping a professional and courteous manner while handling problems is one of the most challenging jobs of the CDP. There are many customer service problems the CDP may have to deal with on the job and no two problems can be solved the same way, because customers and situations will vary. This chapter is designed to give the CDP some suggested ways to handle problems that may arise on the job in different categories. Problems that happen on the job must also be handled according to company policy and procedures.

The CDP should always be aware of any complaints or problems the customer may have. They will often let the CDP know whether they are angry or dissatisfied, even though the problem may be ongoing or has happened some time ago. It is a signal that there is a strain in the relationship between the customer and the producer. If not resolved, that customer may take their business elsewhere.

Sometimes it is hard to know whether these complaints are just a way of blowing off steam, or whether the customer is genuinely upset. Many CDP's get to know customers because they deliver to them on a regular basis. Do not assume that the customer is just blowing smoke. Use this knowledge and any instincts you have to determine if the customer has a real problem, then report this to dispatch or a company sales representative. Acknowledge the customer's complaints by telling them that you value their business, and that you will relay them to the proper source.

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Problems are a Test of Customer Skills *(continued)*

In general, the CDP should never argue with the customer, no matter what problem may occur. It is easy to get into an argument, but winning that argument may lose you that customer's business. Everyone has heard the saying that "The customer is always right". That may not always be true, but in the heat of the moment when emotions are high the CDP will not deliver good customer service by getting into a shouting match! If a customer becomes angry or defensive, respond with kindness and show a sincere desire to help the customer solve the problem. It is very easy to take a customer's anger personally, especially when the customer becomes very emotional and directs their anger at the CDP. The customer's anger may be coming from any number of sources, which may have nothing to do with the CDP or their company. Being angry, frustrated, rude or uncooperative toward a customer who is angry is a natural reaction, but it takes only one incident of being short or rude with a customer to lose their business. The CDP must always remember that they cannot control the customer, but they **can** control how they react to them.

Listen to the customer, and try to get as much information about the problem as possible. The CDP should try whenever possible to take responsibility for fixing the situation. Tell the customer what you can do, not what you cannot do. Apologize to the customer for the problem, but **do not** say anything that means accepting responsibility or acknowledging fault for anything that occurs.

Apologizing does not mean you accept responsibility - only that you are sorry the customer is having difficulty. In these difficult moments, the CDP will create the best possible customer service environment by apologizing and demonstrating an attitude that the CDP cares about the customer's problems. Be positive - a positive attitude can be contagious! It is very hard to a customer to be angry with a positive CDP who is listening to a customer's problems and trying to help.

If the CDP cannot resolve the problem, information should immediately be relayed by the CDP to the dispatcher or producer representative. Remember to **Document, Document, and Document**. Write down in detail what happened, what conversations took place, what steps the CDP took to try and resolve the situation, and whom the problem was reported to.

Resolving customer complaints is often a way to strengthen the relationship between customer and producer. Be aware of these complaints and act on them promptly, before the customer is lost.

The job you save may be your own!

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Product Problems

SHORTAGES

Customers may be short for a variety of reasons including waste or spillage, over-excavation, bulging forms, loss of entrained air, or errors in calculation. None of these causes are the responsibility of the ready mixed concrete producer. A fresh density measurement is the only way to determine whether the mix had the proper yield, as was shown in Module I (See Figure 3-6).

The CDP should note any of these causes if they are seen and pass the information on. If possible, the CDP should visually check the grade or formwork before the placement begins, since this will not be visible afterward. If the customer complains of shortages, promptly notify dispatch and give priority to getting the customer enough concrete to finish the job rather than the shortage itself (See Figure 3-7).



Figure 3-6: The density test is the primary test that should be used to solve yield problems.

Figure 3-7: Spillage should always be taken into account when investigating a shortage complaint.



WRONG MIX

Errors in delivering the proper mix are usually due to a communication problem between the customer and dispatch. The customer may not realize there is a problem until after the delivery is finished, and the mix description on the ticket does not match what the customer ordered. When this occurs, the CDP should notify dispatch immediately.

The CDP may arrive on the job and find that the customer claims the mix is too bony or too sandy. When this occurs, the CDP should make sure the load is properly and thoroughly mixed before the customer decides that the proportions are wrong. The load may also not have all the proper ingredients, such as fibres or colour. In most cases, these products can be added to the load by notifying dispatch and a producer representative can quickly deliver them to the job site. Some producers carry fibres in each truck in case the customer wants to add them after the order is placed. This may cause delays in unloading, but is usually faster and easier for everyone than replacing the load.

On some occasions the mix design description on the ticket may not be clear and lead the customer to believe the mix is wrong. Verify what ingredients should be in the mix, such as stone or cement content, and contact dispatch to check the mix description. If the mix is clearly wrong for the customer's job, give priority to getting the customer's problem immediately resolved, then contact dispatch for instructions on what to do with your load. There may also be occasions where the customer tried to cancel the load after it is batched or cannot use it for some reason, and claims the mix is wrong as a way to reject the load. Again, do not argue with the customer and get instructions from dispatch. In many cases the customer will accept the load but request the CDP document that they are doing so under protest and that the customer is not happy with the load. This should be noted on the ticket where the customer can observe it, assure the customer that the complaint will be passed on, and the specifics of the problem relayed to dispatch or the customer's salesperson.

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LOAD OUTSIDE SPECIFICATIONS

If the load arrives on the job and the customer claims it is too wet, make sure the load is thoroughly and completely mixed with at least 70 revolutions. If time is not critical, the customer may agree to have the load sit on the job without the drum turning. This may result in the load tightening up to where the customer can use it. Unloading should then be done as quickly as possible, since the hydration process has now started to speed up and there is less time to work with the material.

If the load is tested and found outside specifications for slump or air, there are chemicals on the market that are packaged to be carried in truck mixers and can be added to correct the problem. Many producers have "concrete first-aid" kits in their trucks or cabs that contain these admixtures or chemicals for the CDP to use, providing their use is allowed by the customer.

IMPROPER TESTING

The CDP is often the eyes and ears of the concrete producer on the job site. In many cases, loads may be rejected because the testing was done incorrectly. The CDP should always be aware of the correct testing procedures shown in Module I, and observe the testing whenever possible.

Never argue with the testing laboratory representative or inspector. If there is a question about proper testing procedure, ask for the test to be repeated if possible. Notify the producer's representative on the jobsite if one is available, or the job superintendent. Inform them about the incorrect procedure and let them deal directly with the inspector. Document any testing problems in detail on the delivery ticket.

Jobsite Problems

LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES

Sometimes the CDP will arrive on the jobsite and find that the customer's employees do not speak the CDP's language well enough to be understood. The CDP should first try to find someone on the jobsite who speaks both languages (bilingual) and can help with communications. If no one is available, the CDP should proceed cautiously using sign language to start placement. If a problem arises that cannot be resolved on the job site because of language difficulties, notify dispatch to contact the customer's office if possible. An employee of the concrete producer may also be able to help if they are bilingual.

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MANEUVERING ON SITE



*Figure 3-8:
Exercise care
when driving
off-road into a
construction site.*

Many job sites are roughly graded, hilly, or full of obstacles (See Figure 3-8). The CDP may also be asked by the customer to maneuver close to excavations. Since the CDP is responsible for the safe operation of the truck mixer on the site no matter what the customer requests, the CDP may sometimes have to refuse a customer request. It is up to the CDP to judge whether or not maneuvering on the site is safe enough.

If the CDP is faced with this problem, the goal is to get the load where the customer wants it without jeopardizing the CDP, the truck mixer, the customer's employees or jobsite property. The CDP should look over the situation, politely inform the customer that he or she cannot maneuver the truck as the customer requests, tell the customer why, and then suggest an alternative. The CDP should not take the approach of letting the customer sign a waiver, then assuming they are responsible for damage or problems. If they work together, the CDP and the customer can usually find a solution.

Should the customer insist on maneuvering the truck mixer in a dangerous area, the CDP should immediately contact dispatch and inform them of the situation. A producer representative may then come to the site, or contact the customer directly.

PROPERTY LINE ISSUES

On some occasions the CDP may be requested by the customer to back onto adjacent properties, which are not part of the construction site. An example may be backing the mixer onto a neighbour's property in order to place concrete for a patio. It is not the responsibility of the CDP to make sure that the neighbour has agreed to let the mixer onto their property. Most concrete producers have "curbside releases" as part of their delivery ticket, or as a separate document. Whenever the CDP maneuvers the truck mixer off the roadway, the customer should sign a curbside waiver before the truck leaves the highway. The exception would be a clearly marked construction site entrance.

If the CDP is required to maneuver the truck onto a neighbouring area, this should be clearly documented on the delivery ticket. Get the name of the contractor's representative that made the request. This information may be needed to defend the concrete producer from legal action should the contractor not have permission to use the property.

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PROPERTY DAMAGE

The CDP should always inspect the job site before maneuvering in for safety hazards, but also to check for areas that could be damaged by the truck mixer. Some examples are existing paved driveways, trees, catch basins or septic tanks. The CDP should also note any areas that are already damaged, since dishonest property owners or customers may try to blame the damage on the CDP's company.

GETTING STUCK

If the truck mixer damages any property, dispatch should be notified. A company representative should be sent out before the truck leaves the site if possible to assess the damage, and resolve any problems with the customer.

Most times, getting stuck can be avoided by good CDP communication with the customer. There may be times where the CDP has no choice but to maneuver in a soft area where safety is not a factor, but that there is a good chance of getting the mixer stuck. The customer should be informed by the CDP that there is a chance of getting stuck, and work out a solution before moving into the area. Company policies regarding towing of truck mixers should always be taken into consideration. For example, having a bulldozer on standby to tow the truck if that violates company policy is not an option for the CDP to accept.

If there is a chance of getting stuck in an area that prevents other mixers from unloading or otherwise stop the job, the CDP must clearly communicate this to the customer before proceeding.



Figure 3-9: CDP double-checks route to the job site after getting directions from the dispatcher.

GETTING LOST

This is a problem that is usually preventable by the CDP, who should make sure that the directions to the job are clear and that the CDP knows how to get there before leaving the plant. It is up to the dispatcher to get clear directions from the customer that will prevent the CDP from driving up and down streets looking for the job (See Figure 3-9).

On occasion, the customer will not be able to give the dispatcher clear directions and will ask the CDP to meet them at a specific location or landmark. If the CDP gets lost or cannot locate the customer, do not drive around aimlessly and waste time. Contact dispatch, tell them the truck's current location, and ask them to contact the customer. The customer may give better directions or meet the truck at an agreed location.

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ARRIVING LATE

On many occasions, the CDP will arrive on the job later than the time requested by the customer. This may be caused by delays on previous jobs tying up trucks, breakdowns, or other scheduling problems. While this is not the responsibility of the CDP, the CDP often gets the brunt of the customer's anger because they are "late"!

At this point, the CDP should quickly and efficiently get ready to unload. They should also apologize for the delay but not discuss the problem further. Concentrate on getting the customer's load off and getting back quickly for another trip. The CDP should not take the customer's anger personally, since it is not their fault the load is late if the CDP has done their job properly. If the customer seems really agitated and upset, be sure to contact dispatch immediately and notify a customer service representative.

The CDP can also cut down on delays that will cause the load to arrive late by making sure their truck mixer is always ready for loading when called upon, that proper maintenance has been done, and that the loading and mixing process is done efficiently. The CDP should notify their dispatcher if any problems arise that might keep them from being available to load when called.

Safety Problems

CEMENT BURN SAFETY INFORMATION

Many customers, especially homeowners, are not familiar with the potential for concrete to cause cement burns (See Figure 3-10). The CDP should make these customers aware of the hazards of working with concrete or cement products before unloading starts. Many producers have specific warnings printed on their delivery tickets, and the CDP should point these warnings out to the customer. This information can also be found on (M)SDS sheets that the producer should have for any cement-based products they sell.



Figure 3-10: CDP and supervisor review cement burn poster.

If the CDP sees that customers on any type of jobsite, including commercial ones, are handling the concrete without adequate protection, they should politely advise the customer of the dangers and document the situation. More information on cement burns can be found in Module 4.

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UNSAFE CUSTOMER BEHAVIOUR

In the frenzy and hurry to unload concrete, customers can sometimes try to take shortcuts that are unsafe. They may try to unlock or move chutes, walk behind the moving truck where the CDP cannot see them, or other unsafe behaviour. The CDP is not directly responsible for the customer's behaviour, but should politely tell the customer they are acting in an unsafe manner. It is often helpful to tell the customer that the CDP is responsible for the truck, and that they are responsible if anything happens. Customers will usually respect that, and stop what they are doing when it is brought to their attention.

If a customer's employee continues to act in an unsafe manner, the CDP should make their manager or dispatcher aware of the problem.

INJURY TO CUSTOMER'S EMPLOYEE

If a customer's employee becomes injured or ill, contact dispatch immediately for emergency medical personnel to be sent to the job site. Give any first aid that you are qualified and trained to give. Do not move the person unless they are in immediate danger. If the CDP, the truck mixer or the concrete product is involved, let dispatch know immediately so that a producer's representative can be sent to assist you. Document any and all actions of the person injured and the circumstances of the accident for future reference, and for possible defense against legal actions.

Chapter 3 - Dealing with Your Company & Fellow Employees

Chapter objectives

After studying this chapter, the CDP candidate should be able to:

- ◆ Recognize the value of teamwork and the role other employees play in company success.
- ◆ Understand the importance of good dispatcher/CDP relationships, and proper radio etiquette. Recognize the importance of proper recording and documenting on batch tickets and other required paperwork.
- ◆ Understand the value of a positive attitude and good work ethic, and how a negative attitude can affect the customer, the company and other employees.
- ◆ Describe methods of coping with conflict and stress on the job.

There is no “I” in team...

The CDP is very important to the success of the ready mixed concrete producer, but so is everyone else in the company. Concrete will not get delivered if there are no mechanics to repair trucks, nor if there are no plant operators to load them. There will be no paychecks unless salespeople are out getting work, unless the billing staff sends customers their invoices, and no money to pay employees unless the credit staff makes sure the producer gets paid.

No one in a ready mixed concrete company works alone. Everyone has an important job to do, and if that job does not get done the company cannot succeed. The CDP can help the company succeed by doing their job to the best of their abilities, but also helping others do their job as well. Things like assisting a mechanic working on a truck, helping the quality control staff on the job, or just grabbing a broom and helping clean up the plant area will make the total workload easier.

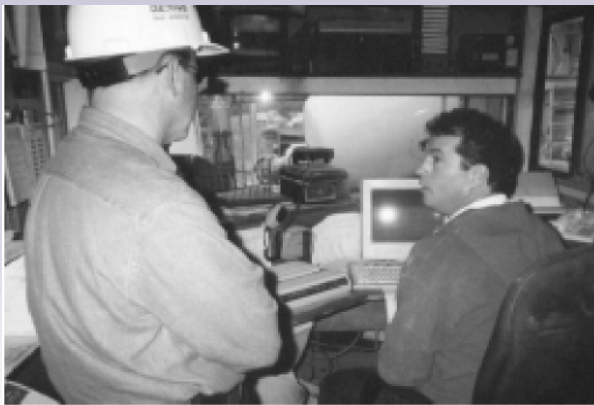
You will never hear people in successful companies saying things like “That isn’t my job.” These people realize that it does not matter who does the job - just that it gets done. That attitude shows up in how happy they are in their jobs, and how much better their standard of living is. The CDP’s job is not just driving a truck and delivering concrete - it is also taking the responsibility and initiative to get done whatever needs doing!

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The Dispatcher/CDP Relationship

There is no closer working relationship in the ready mixed concrete industry than the dispatcher and the CDP. Successful ready mixed concrete companies are ones whose dispatchers and CDPs work hand in hand, helping one another and working as a team. The relationship must be built on mutual respect for each other's job responsibilities, trusting each other to act in the customer's and company's best interest, and a high degree of communication. If the CDP and the dispatcher know the issues and problems that each other face on a daily basis, the relationship also works better. In many companies, dispatchers are often former CDPs. Other companies encourage their CDPs to spend time in the dispatch office so that they better understand the dispatcher's job.



Since the dispatcher is often the one giving direction to the CDP on what hours to work, to which customers they will deliver, and in general controlling a large percentage of the CDP's time; it is easy for friction to build up between the dispatcher and the CDP. If this friction builds to the point where it makes communicating with each other and trusting each other difficult, then the entire company is affected. Customer service suffers, cooperation disappears, and in extreme cases customers can be lost.

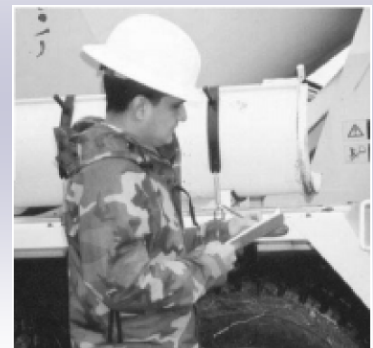
Figure 3-11: Good communication between the CDP and dispatcher is extremely important.

If the CDP finds that he or she has difficulties working with their dispatch office, this situation should be resolved as quickly as possible. The CDP should try to work out the issue with the dispatcher directly if possible, or work through an operations or management staff member. Leaving a bad situation alone between dispatch and the CDP will only cause more problems. (See Figure 3-11).

What About Paperwork?

Nobody likes to do paperwork. It is boring, tedious, and seems like a waste of time to most people. The CDP has a lot of paperwork to do—from DOT truck reports to maintenance write-ups to delivery tickets.

The old saying of "The job isn't done until the paperwork is complete" certainly applies to being a CDP. In this day and age of lawsuits and litigation, getting the paperwork done correctly is extremely important. Besides using this information to bill customers and fix trucks, any documents the CDP fills out may be needed to protect the company and the CDP if there is ever an accident, job complaint, quality issue, or payment problem (See Figure 3-12). Paperwork is an important method of communication in the concrete producer's company. It affects customer relations, safety, product quality, payroll, and many other areas. The CDP must understand the paperwork requirements of their job, and complete those responsibilities in an accurate and timely manner.



CONCRETE DELIVERY PROFESSIONAL (CDP) STUDY GUIDE

MODULE III - CUSTOMER & COMPANY RELATIONS

The Value of a Positive Attitude

Most everyone realizes that having a positive attitude affects how happy and satisfied a person is, and that having a positive attitude increases the quality of a person's life. Working as a CDP can be a rewarding and successful career, with many positive benefits. The job of the CDP is a vital one in the world of construction, and it offers the chance to be a part of building things that last. It can be very rewarding for the CDP to drive by a tall building or over a bridge, and know that they helped to build it. It is sometimes easy to lose sight of these benefits with all the daily problems and issues that come up. Dealing with the problems and issues as a CDP, like in most every other career, can be much easier if the CDP looks at their job as a rewarding and successful way of earning a living.

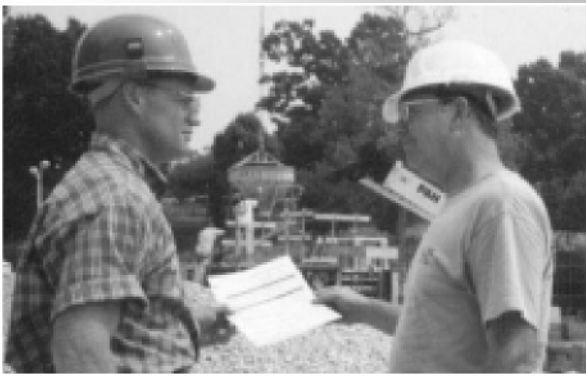


Figure 3-13: Problems are solved through good communication between the CDP and the contractor.

Dealing with conflict

People working together will disagree from time to time on how things should be done. This disagreement can produce conflict. Conflict and disagreement are a natural part of people dealing with one another. In many situations, conflict is a healthy part of people working together to solve common issues. It is not that they disagree; it is how the disagreement is worked out that is important. Conflict can have positive effects, such as generating creativity to solve a problem, or motivating people to solve problems instead of letting them continue. If not handled properly, conflict can force people apart and

damage relationships (See Figure 3-13). There can also be conflict between the company and the CDP. To the CDP, sometimes company policies and procedures may seem to be a waste of time. The CDP may have a disagreement with their supervisor or company on how things should be done. In some cases, the CDP may be tempted to vent their frustrations to customers or other people outside the company. Remember that there is no one perfect company to work for. No matter how bad things may seem, talking to customers or people outside the company about them will not make them any better and will probably make them worse. Discussing problems with other employees in a negative or derogatory fashion is also not the best way to deal with conflict.

In order to deal with conflict in a positive way, the CDP should focus on the problem and not any particular person, customer or company. Just as the CDP has control over how he or she reacts to a customer, the CDP also has control over how he or she reacts to any other conflict. Blaming others for problems just creates more conflict. Try to clearly identify the problem then work with other people in the company to find a solution. In many cases the solution involves better communication about all sides of the problem.

CONCRETE DELIVERY PROFESSIONAL (CDP) STUDY GUIDE

MODULE III - CUSTOMER & COMPANY RELATIONS

Coping With Stress

Stress is a mental and physical condition that is caused by a person's reaction to a change in their environment. People are faced with changes all the time and the greater the change, the greater the stress that is felt. The job of a CDP can be extremely stressful, but stress is not always a negative thing. Stress can make people more alert, more creative, and more focused. Under the right conditions stress can have a positive effect, but the negative effects of stress affect many people.

Sudden changes or events in a company, such as changes in policies or procedures, change in the pace of work, or conflict that is not handled properly can cause the CDP to feel the negative effects of stress. If the negative stress is not dealt with, it can build up over time and greatly affect a person's ability to focus on their job, their family and could even affect their health.

Here are a few tips on dealing with negative stress:

- ◆ Determine the source of the stress and try to deal with it directly. If it is a person, try to talk to them about what is causing the stress directly using the methods described above to deal with conflict. If it is caused by company problems, try to discuss the problem with the appropriate management or human resource person.
- ◆ Every action has a reaction. If a situation is creating stress, the CDP should look at how they are responding to that stress and ask if that reaction will solve the problem and make it more productive. If not, the CDP should look for other ways to react.
- ◆ Stress that is created in a person's life away from work can affect their ability to do their work. Marital problems, financial worries, or other issues can cause personal stress. It is important that the CDP remain focused and not let these personal issues affect their job performance. Many companies have an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) that employees can use to help relieve stress, whether it is caused at work or at home. These programs offer a confidential and safe environment for employees to deal with issues that are creating problems in their life.
- ◆ Change the way that things are viewed. Try to remember the "big picture". Many issues that cause stress when looked at in the whole picture of life will turn out to be relatively minor.
- ◆ Maintain a healthy lifestyle. The CDP works long hours, and getting enough rest along with a good diet and some program of exercise will help offset the physical effects of stress.



CONCRETE DELIVERY PROFESSIONAL (CDP) STUDY GUIDE

MODULE III - CUSTOMER & COMPANY RELATIONS

Module III - Chapter 1: Basics of Customer Service

SECTION TITLE	QUESTION
Company Image	1. It is very easy for a company to get a _____ image, and this may also be transferred to the entire industry.
Personal Appearance	2. A good personal appearance reflects a _____ image for both the CDP and the company.
Different Customers Have Different Needs	3. There is no one-size-fits-all to good _____, and the CDP must tailor their service to the customer's needs.
As Important as Customers	4. It is very important to treat any other _____ on the construction job just like a customer.

Module III - Chapter 2: Dealing with Specific Customer Issues

SECTION TITLE	QUESTION
Load Outside Specifications	1. If the customer claims the load is too wet, the CDP should make sure there are at least _____ revolutions on the load.
Improper Testing	2. The CDP should never argue with an _____ over product testing procedures.
Maneuvering on Site	3. If a customer insists the CDP deliver in an unsafe place, the CDP should explain the unsafe condition and _____ refuse to drive there.

CONCRETE DELIVERY PROFESSIONAL (CDP) STUDY GUIDE

MODULE III - CUSTOMER & COMPANY RELATIONS

Module III - Chapter 2: Dealing with Specific Customer Issues *continued*

SECTION TITLE	QUESTION
Getting Lost	4. It is up to the _____ to make sure that the CDP does not get lost on the way to the jobsite.
Arriving Late	5. If the truck is late arriving on the job, the CDP should concentrate on _____ and getting back for another trip.
Cement Burn Safety Information	6. Many customers, especially _____ may not be familiar with the potential for concrete to cause cement burns.

Module III - Chapter 3: Dealing with Your Company and Fellow Employees

SECTION TITLE	QUESTION
There is No "I" in Team	1. You will never hear people in successful companies say things like _____.
The Dispatcher/CDP Relationship	2. Successful ready mix concrete companies are ones whose _____ and _____ work as a team.
What About Paperwork?	3. Paperwork is an important method of _____ in the concrete producer's company.
Stress	4. Stress can create a _____ effect under the right conditions.

Review Workbook Answers

Chapter 1

1. negative
2. positive
3. customer service
4. stakeholder

Chapter 2

1. 70
2. inspector
3. politely
4. CDP
5. getting the load off
6. homeowners

Chapter 3

1. That's not my job
2. CDPs, dispatchers
3. communication
4. positive