Customer Service Training Implementation

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Beginning in 2011, the Americus-Sumter County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors realized a significant need for customer service training. After learning more, the Archway Executive Committee also gave voice to this priority in Sumter County. The Archway Partnership reached out to local businesses to gather information about their willingness and ability to support customer service training efforts. It was determined that customer service was an integral part of any business and becomes the cornerstone of customer satisfaction, customer retention, and business success. However, the responses were varied. There was no all-inclusive resource currently available to address the needs identified.

In July 2013, the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) located in Albany, shared that they had created curriculum for a new course targeted at middle management and customer service. The program, called Maximum Service, is an interactive program to develop and implement an outstanding customer service program. Attendees learn fresh ideas to differentiate their business, add value, and create profitable relationships with customers. By focusing the training on middle management, this opportunity provides managers with the tools needed to train and empower front-line staff in providing better customer service. The Chamber of Commerce and the Archway Partnership decided to further explore this opportunity to see if it would address the unanswered needs identified in the 2011 community survey. The overwhelming response was positive.

The five-week class began in late January 2013 and was piloted in Americus. Participants from the sixteen counties in Region 8 were invited to participate at no charge through a sponsorship by the Archway Partnership. There were over 30 participants including representatives from local government, small businesses, and national retail and restaurant chains.

"In 2013 we learned of the new Maximum Service courses being developed by the SBDC, and they perfectly fit the need in the community," says Ivy Oliver, Chamber Program Assistant. “This is a great example of how the Archway Partnership connected our community-identified need, customer service training, with resources of the University of Georgia via the SBDC programs and services. We anticipate a positive impact in Sumter County, and invite all businesses to take advantage of this opportunity."

Advancing Community Priorities

Addressing the self-identified need for customer service to help businesses prosper and grow fit perfectly within Sumter County’s community priorities, which include community-wide economic development. Sumter County is a regional hub for commerce. Recruiting and retaining a larger portion of the dollars spent for goods and services in the area will continue to support the local tax base.