

Top tips: How Institute membership can help your organisation during the COVID-19 crisis

Organisations are being tested as never before. Many are striving to maintain essential services with limited resources, often to vulnerable or anxious customers. Employees are required to be flexible, adapt to new responsibilities and deal with challenging situations. Some organisations face difficult decisions to ensure short term survival whilst also considering longer term impact and implications.

During this challenging period, it's crucial to understand what your customers need and how organisations inside and outside your sector are responding. Your membership of The Institute of Customer Service is a valuable resource to help you deal with current challenges and prepare for the future. We've set out some practical ways your Institute membership can offer immediate support.



1) Maximise your relationship with your Client Relationship Director

Your Client Relationship Director (CRD) is your personal contact and guide to making the most of your membership. They can help you understand which aspects of The Institute's products, services and research/insight are most relevant to you, connect you with other members and provide a valuable external, independent perspective.

Your CRD can offer practical help and support in the following ways:

- Helping you embed products and services that are part of your membership through an appropriate engagement plan
- Guiding you through the short term adjustments we have made to our products and services to respond to the complex environment you are working in
- Providing up to date knowledge about best practice inside and outside your sector
- Helping you interpret, summarise and bring to life our highly relevant top tips guides - which we have developed especially for you at this time
- Enabling you to continue to network with other organisations to share best practice and ideas during this critical time
- Giving an independent, external perspective in your planning, strategy or operational meetings
- Helping you use our research to support long and short term planning
- If you are new to membership, your CRD will help you get started by understanding your key priorities and objectives, giving you a personalised overview of our research, products and services
- Updating you on our work with regulators and the All-Party Parliamentary Group on customer service and the work we do to raise the profile and impact of Customer Service
- Showing you how you can get behind our Inspiring a Service Nation campaign

2) Improve your capability through customer service professional qualifications

The Institute's professional qualifications in customer service are a structured programme, that is managed in-house, and can be accessed and run virtually, to help bring improvements to your service capabilities.

Participants are encouraged to apply their learning to real on the job situations and demonstrate a tangible, positive impact on customer service outcomes.

We will support you through a structured programme, content and expert guidance from our specialist team, which you can access virtually, backed by our independent standards. Our online professional qualifications can be accessed anywhere, at any time, providing a great opportunity to support and develop employees who are on furlough – developing practical skills and behaviours in readiness for their return to work. We've put in place some alternative ways of gathering relevant evidence and can work with you to manage existing programmes or launch new programmes in this way. You will also be provided with virtual support from our expert facilitators.

Our management qualification is a virtual course with a practical emphasis, supported by an Institute course tutor. In a period when time and resources are under severe pressure, the combination of learning and practical assignments will help improve and focus your ability to manage in a hugely challenging environment.

3) Access research about best practice and essential enablers of service excellence

Your Institute membership gives you access to a wealth of independent, expert research focusing on the vital issues affecting customer

service and customer experience, and highlighting the key ingredients and enablers of service excellence.

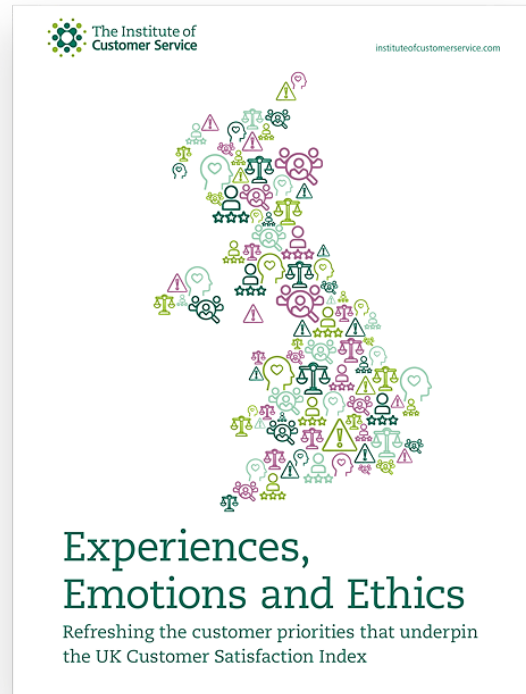
You can access the research through our website or ask your CRD to present it to key people in your organisation.



Research that is especially relevant for the current crisis situation:

- The [UK Customer Satisfaction Index](#): state of customer satisfaction in the UK highlights the key characteristics of service organisations over the last decade as well as the latest trends in customer satisfaction.
- [Leading by Example](#) gives unique insights into what leaders need to do to be personally effective as well as embed a service culture in their organisation and identifies seven essential attributes for leaders in a service context
- [The Customer Knows](#) examines best practice in engaging employees in a service context and gives a practical framework to build engagement
- [Productivity UK](#) defines productivity in a service context and examines how to improve productivity, customer satisfaction and business performance

- [Experiences, Emotions and Ethics](#) defines the attributes of customer experiences that are rated as most important by customers. It highlights five dimensions that organisations need to address to deliver excellent transactional service and build sustainable customer relationships



4) Access top tip guides and guidance about maintaining service at this critical time

We have published a [series of top tip guides](#) with practical advice to help you address current challenges, drawing on our research, knowledge and the perspective of some of our members.

Topics include enabling remote working; managing the needs of vulnerable customers; keeping employees safe; leadership and management; driving innovation; and preparing for both short and long term challenges.

5) Get involved in CEO Breakfasts

The Institute's CEO, Jo Causon, hosts a nationwide programme of events for senior leaders in member organisations.

Our CEO Breakfasts for CEOs and Executives will focus on the issues that are important to you at this time, drawing on insights from our research and best practice and knowledge. The events enable leaders to share perspectives and network with peers across a range of organisations and sectors. CEO Breakfasts are by invitation only.

If you would like to be involved, contact your CRD or email Kelsey Pienaar, EA to the CEO at: Kelsey.Pienaar@icsmail.co.uk

6) Improve your knowledge through our virtual events programme

Our events programme is regularly communicated through our monthly newsletter. You can also view the calendar of events and sign up through the [events page](#) on our website.

7) Measure the quality and effectiveness of your service from your customers and employees' perspectives

Two of the key membership benefits you can access are:

- [Business Benchmarking](#), an independent customer satisfaction benchmarking survey based on the questions in the UKCSI; and
- [ServCheck](#), which measures your employees' perspectives on your organisation's service capabilities.

Amidst the current uncertainty, at some point you may need to assess how effectively you are engaging with your customers and meeting their needs. We can help by designing and delivering surveys and communications that are sensitive and appropriate to the current circumstances and give you vital actionable insights. We can also pilot surveys with a small sample of customers so you can gauge the response rate before launching to larger customer sample.



We can also add additional questions to your business benchmarking survey, either relating to the current context, or other issues that are important to your customers, whilst retaining the ability to benchmark with the UKCSI.

Engaging your employees is especially challenging and critical during the COVID-19 crisis. ServCheck provides valuable insight about how employees feel about your service, the challenges they face and what they believe needs to be improved. ServCheck gives you the ability to benchmark with the perspectives of employees in other organisations and to assess results by different job roles or locations.

You also have the option of adding a small number of questions to gauge employees' views on how effectively your organisation is responding to the current crisis situation. This can provide valuable feedback about how you can improve your service response, as well as demonstrating your commitment to engaging with and supporting your employees.

Even if you do not want to run a full customer or employee survey at this time, you can make preparations to ensure you are ready for future surveys, for example by identifying target segments, getting data prepared and formatted.

8) Achieve independent accreditation of your service

ServiceMark is an independent accreditation of your organisation's commitment to customer service which involves evidence from your customers, employees and an independent assessment. Your CRD will help you develop a plan for your accreditation, identifying the key people you need to involve, how you will communicate to customers and employees, how you will deal with data protection and management of surveys.



ServiceMark can be a catalyst that highlights the importance of service across your organisation and develops your customer satisfaction, business performance and employee engagement. In the longer term, ServiceMark will embed a service culture in your organisation and enhance your reputation with customers, suppliers, employees, regulators.

9) Your opportunity to influence and input to the development of The Institute

- **Help test and give feedback about The Institute's website**

We are currently redeveloping our website to improve its functionality, make it easier to use and position it as a vital knowledge source for members. Your participation and feedback will help us ensure we continually improve to meet members' evolving needs. If you would like to be involved, please contact Fiona.Kurreembukus@icsmail.co.uk

- **Participate in our breakthrough research**

We are seeking senior executives in either customer experience or procurement roles to interview for our next piece of breakthrough research: Procurement for Excellent Service. The purpose of the research is to identify best practice in procurement of services and capabilities that deliver sustainable service excellence and business performance. The research will include the perspectives of senior executives from customer experience and procurement roles.

There is an opportunity to access the latest thinking and help shape The Institute's research as a sponsor of our breakthrough research. Upcoming topics include Trust and the Customer Experience and The Green Agenda and The Customer.

If you would like to know more, contact your CRD or contact us at enquiries@icsmail.co.uk