Who is helping you to help others?

Organizations that deal with the public typically have one or more frontline people. These people deal directly with the public, perhaps by giving directions, meeting and greeting or assisting in some way. Many times, these frontline people are also some of the least well compensated in the organization. But they are crucial in shaping how the public perceives the organization.

Have you ever walked into an office where the receptionist didn't even bother to greet you? Have you stood waiting for help at a "customer service" booth? Then you know that your interaction with people that are supposed to assist you can color how you perceive the organization that they represent. However, many organizations don't seem to grasp this simple concept and continue to deploy people in "helping" positions that are unwilling or unable to help, therefore damaging the credibility and perception of the organization.

Here's a tip: if you are hiring someone to help you to deal with the public make sure that persons LIKES helping people.

On my last trip, I had trouble checking in on the kiosk. So, a very unhelpful, surly guy came over, growled at me and told me to go wait in line. He was absolutely rude and unpleasant. Do you think that makes me feel positive toward the airline in question?

Yesterday, I was in downtown DC to meet with a client. She had her laptop with her and we needed to go somewhere with WiFi. I couldn't think where the nearest Cosi was, but DC has deployed Downtown DC people in the Gallery Place area. I went up a woman with the Downtown DC jacket and asked her if she knew where the nearest Cosi was. She did. She gave us specific,

perfect directions. She was helpful (and right). Contrast that with an exchange I had witnessed earlier inside a Metro station. A gentleman had approached the booth to ask a question, and the lady in the booth was BERATING him for tapping on her window. Does that make Metro look helpful? (BTW, I have had similar experiences with people in the booths…they just don't want to be bothered to do their jobs, that is, assisting people.)

As a marketing consultant, I can advise you to take a good look at who is dealing with public in your organization. These people are crucial because they create the first (and maybe the only) impression the public will have of your organization.