TrainingConcepts

CASE STUDY · CUSTOMISED TRAINING DESIGN

Service excellence for a *life-saving force*

A two-day, scenario-based programme designed with the Singapore Civil Defence Force to equip front-line officers and management with engagement and disengagement strategies for every public contact.

2 days
of facilitated workshop

4
key services covered

6+
live role-play scenarios

QSI
service targets throughout

CLIENT
Singapore Civil Defence Force

PARTNER
Service Quality Centre

ROLE
Design and delivery



01 The brief

SCDF officers meet the public at the worst moment of their lives — at a fire, at a medical emergency, at the door of a home that has just burned. They also meet them as an enforcement authority, refusing a permit or insisting on an alteration that costs money.

Both are service. The Force wanted its officers to hold the two together: competent and caring at the incident, firm and fair at the counter, and professional on a telephone line where the caller is frightened, angry or both. A more educated and better-connected public expects explanations, and trust has to be earned in each contact.

Training Concepts' lead trainer worked with SCDF and partner organisation Service Quality Centre to design and deliver a two-day workshop for front-line officers and management, built on the Force's own service philosophy, its service lapse casebook and its Rules of Service Engagement.

> **Our actions at the front line make the difference between life and death for those in distress, every day. For this, we have to be always ready and vigilant.**
>
> COMMISSIONER, SCDF · PUBLIC SERVICE WEEK OBSERVANCE CEREMONY

THE DESIGN CHALLENGE

- Officers are rescuers and regulators, often in the same week
- Emergency contacts are made under distress, with no room to rehearse
- Enforcement decisions have to be explained, not simply issued
- Complaints arrive across agency lines, and some are not SCDF's at all
- Service targets are public commitments, so expectations are already set



02 How it was designed

A contextualised design: the public service standard on service quality, expressed entirely in SCDF's language, targets and casebook.

Co-designed with SCDF

Built jointly with SCDF and Service Quality Centre, from a detailed customisation brief covering the Force's vision, values, service philosophy and cases.

Anchored in PRIDE and CARE

Framed around the Force's mission to protect and save, its pledge, and its core values: pride in saving lives and property, care for our people and those we serve.

Built on the service philosophy

The Strategic Service Intent — competent, caring, leaving a professional impression — and the Quality Service Indicators that make it measurable.

Grounded in the ROSE handbook

The Rules of Service Engagement, the Force's own service behaviours, applied across each of the four key services.

Real lapses, real recovery

Service lapse case studies from the Force's own records, used to practise recovery rather than to assign blame.

Front line and management together

Officers who take the calls and the managers who own the policies, systems and escalation routes, in the same room.

AT A GLANCE

PROGRAMME	Service excellence for SCDF officers
DURATION	Two days, facilitated
AUDIENCE	Front-line officers, supervisors and management
ANCHORS	PRIDE & CARE · Strategic Service Intent · QSIs · ROSE handbook
ALSO COVERED	No Wrong Door · data protection · use of ICT and social media

WHAT OFFICERS SET OUT TO ACHIEVE

Know the customer

Who SCDF serves across emergency rescue, fire safety, civil protection and community engagement — and what each group expects.

Set service in context

What service means for a uniformed, life-saving force that is also an enforcement authority.

Internalise the service intent

Competent and caring interactions that leave a professional impression, guided by Quality Service Indicator targets.

Act whole-of-government

Handle cases that belong to other agencies under the No Wrong Door policy, without dropping the customer.

Apply the service mindset

Attitude, Behaviour and Competence as a working routine, not a poster.

Handle the difficult contact

Engage challenging customers, and know when and how to disengage.

03 Service that is measured in seconds

SCDF publishes what it will do and by when. That makes every contact a promise the public can check, and it changes how an officer has to explain a delay.

THE SERVICE PLEDGE, AS PUBLISHED

Answer all 995 calls within 10 seconds	At least 95% of the time
Respond to fire and rescue calls within 8 minutes	At least 90% of the time
Respond to ambulance calls within 11 minutes	At least 80% of the time

The programme worked through the four key services — emergency rescue, fire safety, civil protection and community engagement — and the different expectations each customer group brings: victims and next-of-kin, patients, applicants and building owners, offenders, residents, students and workers.

WHEN SERVICE FALLS SHORT: FIVE CATEGORIES OF LAPSE

Service delivery
A delayed response, however good the reason

Policy
A rule the public did not expect and does not accept

SOP
An operating procedure not followed on the day

Infrastructure and equipment
A vehicle, siren or system that failed

People
Behaviour that was rude or unprofessional

THE MANAGEMENT OF MISTAKES

When a mistake is made, the focus is service recovery first: the member of the public is told what the investigation found and what will follow. Internally the matter goes to the unit for follow-up, and disciplinary action is taken only where the mistake warrants it.





04 Engagement and disengagement, rehearsed

Officers first named the contacts they find hardest, then rehearsed them with role cards and a trainer feeding in new information mid-scene.

Persistent and demanding

Callers who will not disengage, who write and telephone repeatedly on a settled issue, and who sometimes refuse to be identified or to meet.

Abusive and threatening

Customers who raise their voices at officers, or use indecent, insulting or threatening language.

Non-compliant

Applicants and owners who want the outcome without meeting the requirement.

Beyond our means

People who ask for something SCDF cannot give, however sympathetic the case.

ROLE PLAY

The persistent caller

A complainant calls repeatedly about a fire hazard caused by a neighbour storing flattened cardboard, and will not accept the explanations already given.

ROLE PLAY

The permit that cannot wait

An applicant wants a fire safety permit for a restaurant opening tomorrow, has not submitted the revised drawings, and insists the permit be issued anyway.

PSYCHODRAMA

At the counter

An owner is told to alter classrooms, add a door and install people-load monitoring devices, and wants to know why SCDF is making things difficult.

ROLE PLAY

No wrong door

A complainant demands SCDF put out a neighbour's burning of paper offerings during the seventh month, and will not be passed to another agency.

TELEPHONE DRILL

The call that turns

Scripted responses for the caller who will not listen, who cannot be heard, or who becomes abusive — including how to end a call properly.

CASE REVIEW

Use of ICT

An officer blogs about his work and his customers; another forwards graphic photographs on a Force email account. Teams review both critically.

KNOWING WHEN TO STOP

Disengagement is a decision, not a reflex. A unit may cease correspondence with a challenging customer where it can no longer engage meaningfully — on the criteria below, with senior management approval, and with the customer told there will be no further reply unless new information emerges.

- The issue raised is an existing one that has been dealt with and is not new
- Due diligence has been exercised to address the issue
- Preliminary enquiries show the allegations are unsubstantiated
- There is no response from the complainant when reasonable attempts have been made to clarify
- Expectations and demands are excessive and directly contradict core values and standard procedures







05 The toolkit officers took back

Each session ended with something usable on the next shift: a routine, a form of words, a rule of thumb.

The service mindset: ABC

Attitude — care for people and a desire to assist, patience, the customer's shoes. Behaviour — smart, confident, friendly, eye contact. Competence — know your role, offer solutions, give real information.

STARE before you act

Study the situation, Think of the approach, Act and adjust, Review and take corrective action, Evaluate afterwards and share what you learnt.

Counter do's and don'ts

From greeting and note-taking to excusing yourself properly — and never saying "not under SCDF purview, I can't help you".

Telephone scripts

Agreed wording for the delayed ambulance, the caller who will not listen, the poor line, and the caller whose language crosses the line.

Empathy in practice

Focus on the person and their feelings before the task: ask after the patient, acknowledge the fear, then explain the finding.

Records and confidentiality

Which system records which contact, and the duty of confidentiality that attaches to everything an officer learns on the job.

DATA, ICT AND THE OFFICER'S OWN CONDUCT

A full unit covered the handling of customer records: confidentiality, integrity and availability, physical, technological and organisational safeguards, and the obligations that attach to official information. Two case reviews examined an officer's blog and a Force email account, and what each risked.

HOW THE FORCE LISTENS

- Feedback forms for ambulance, fire operations, community programmes and counter service
- A public perception survey conducted once every three years
- Hotlines, written correspondence and online consultation channels
- Focus groups with professional bodies, and dialogue sessions chaired by senior management

06 Why management was in the room

Two real cases anchored the second day. In the first, an ambulance took longer than the caller expected because every nearer vehicle was committed, and the patient died on the way to hospital. In the second, a patient with a head injury was not conveyed, and no refusal form was signed.

Neither case is solved by telling an officer to be friendlier. One is about how a delay is explained and followed up; the other is about a procedure and whether it was understood. Putting front-line officers and management through the same programme meant that when a role play exposed a gap, the people who could close it were present.

Front-line officers	Supervisors	Management
Carry the contact, and the Force's reputation, in every interaction.	Step in when a contact escalates, and coach afterwards.	Own the policies, systems, targets and escalation routes officers work within.

THE WORKING ASSUMPTION

Trust in a life-saving force is built in the ordinary contact, and tested in the difficult one.

Recovery, explanation and follow-up matter as much as response time — and every one of them is a skill that can be designed, taught and practised.



07 The lead trainer

Shareef Jaffar

International management and training consultant

Shareef led the design and delivery of the programme, working with SCDF and Service Quality Centre. He has designed service excellence programmes for several Singapore uniformed and public agencies, and his own service as a Superintendent of Police gives the design a working grasp of what front-line officers face.

He holds three master's degrees, in education, strategic planning and law, along with certifications in curriculum design, instructional design and competency-based assessment.

PUBLIC-SECTOR PROGRAMMES

- Service excellence for SCDF front-line officers and management
- Front-line service programmes for the Singapore Police Force, rolled out across all land divisions
- Service excellence for PUB directors, managers, supervisors and officers
- Training needs analysis and curriculum design for InWEnt's IT@Coop project in Thailand

DESIGN CREDENTIALS

- Advanced Certificate in Learning and Performance (ACLP), Singapore WSQ
- Certificate in Effective E-Learning Design, University of Oxford
- MA Education (Merit), University of Nottingham
- Certifications in facilitation and competency-based assessment

ALSO AVAILABLE

Crisis Prevention & Management · Building Relationships with Difficult Customers · Winning Telephone Techniques · Problem Solving Tools · Strategic Visioning. Any programme can be contextualised for your organisation in the same way.

DESIGN A PROGRAMME FOR YOUR ORGANISATION

Built on your cases, not someone else's.

Tell us who meets your public and what they face. We will design the programme around your own casebook, and put the people who own the systems in the same room as the people who work within them.

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