

## CIT'S DEPARTMENT OF ORGANISATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COLLABORATE WITH CORK CITY CENTRE FORUM ON EUROPE'S FIRST CUSTOMER SERVICE CHARTER



### BACKGROUND

Cork City Centre Forum is a collaboration between Cork Chamber, Cork Business Association, Cork City Council, An Garda Síochána, and retail, hospitality and service sectors. This is an operational group of CORE that has developed some very practical projects such as Cork Cashes Out and the Purple Flag. Enterprise Ireland is the government organisation responsible for the development and growth of Irish enterprises in world markets.

### THE NEED

According to Retail Ireland about 50% of Irish consumers shop online and this figure is rising all the time. A recent retail study by PwC said that 38% of 25-34-year-olds shop online weekly and some estimates forecast sharper increases in online shopping in the year ahead. Joan Lucey of Vibes and Scribes has said that traditional and high street businesses can compete in terms of offering a standout shopping experience. Through this the need for the Customer Service Charter arose.

The purpose of a charter is to outline and detail the standards a customer or client can expect when engaging with service providers in the City of Cork. In brief, a city service charter is a collective commitment by all of those engaged in the daily service life of the city to focus on the needs and preferences of their customers, motivated by values such as respect, integrity and excellence.

### THE SOLUTION

CIT's students made a significant contribution to the development of the charter with the supervision and support of Dr Angela Wright and facilitated by Don Crowley, Head of the Department of Organisation and Professional Development. The students on this part-time programme worked for two years, in collaboration with the Cork City Forum and Cork City Council, to conduct research with city centre businesses and develop a training programme. They were also supported by an Enterprise Ireland innovation voucher. The charter includes guidelines on customer service, cleanliness and accessibility. A mystery shopper was sent out to monitor the progress of each participating business member. Fifteen city centre businesses took part in this pilot training programme.



### BENEFITS OF THE ENGAGEMENT

Cork has become the first city in Europe to launch a customer service charter for businesses. Due to its success, a second training programme was introduced this year. The programme includes a briefing for business owners/managers, a workshop for the trainers, customer service progress monitoring, a mystery shopper, feedback and a final briefing.

*"This is where we in the bricks-and-mortar shops can compete and win. Customers now want a real connection and a very high-quality service, so we all need to look regularly at our offering. We may feel we are doing our best but we now have to compete with our customers shopping in the comfort of their homes and retail experts all agree that customer service is the key to a successful bricks-and-mortar business."*

*- Joan Lucey, Vibes and Scribes & Cork City Forum.*

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