

Conscientious people more likely to provide good customer service

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Conscientious people are more likely to provide good customer service, according to a new study from researchers at Rice University.

The study, "Relations Between Personality, Knowledge and Behavior in Professional Service Encounters," examines the link between [personality traits](#) and effective behavior in [customer service](#) situations. The paper, published in the *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, found that individuals who are identified through tests as highly conscientious are more likely to be aware of how good interpersonal interactions positively impact customer service and are more likely to behave this way.

Stephan Motowidlo, the Herbert S. Autrey Professor of Psychology and the study's lead author, said that while technical knowledge of a position is an important factor in successful job performance, it is only one part of the performance equation.

"Performance in a professional service capacity is not just knowing about what the product is and how it works, but how to sell and talk about it," Motowidlo said.

He noted that historically, institutions have been very good at examining the technical side of individuals' jobs through IQ tests. He said that recently there has been an interest in the nontechnical side—the "softer, interpersonal" side.

"Much like intelligence impacts knowledge acquisition – driving what

you learn and how much you know – [personality](#) traits impact how interpersonal skills are learned and used," Motowidlo said. "People who know more about what kinds of actions are successful in dealing with interpersonal service encounters – such as listening carefully, engaging warmly and countering questions effectively – handle them more effectively, and their understanding of successful customer service is shaped by underlying personality characteristics."

The research was conducted in two parts. Part one included a group of 99 participants—undergraduates enrolled in a psychology course at a small, private Southwestern university. Part two included a group of approximately 80 participants—employees at a community service volunteer agency. In both parts of the study, participants completed a questionnaire ranking 50 customer-service encounters as effective or ineffective. Both parts of the study revealed that people who were accurate in judging the effectiveness of customer-service activities behaved more effectively and displayed higher levels of conscientiousness.

Motowidlo said he hopes the study will encourage future research about how personality helps individuals acquire the knowledge they need to perform their jobs effectively.

More information: Relations between personality, knowledge, and behavior in professional service encounters, [onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10 ... /jasp.12137/abstract](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781118530161.ch12137)

Provided by Rice University

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