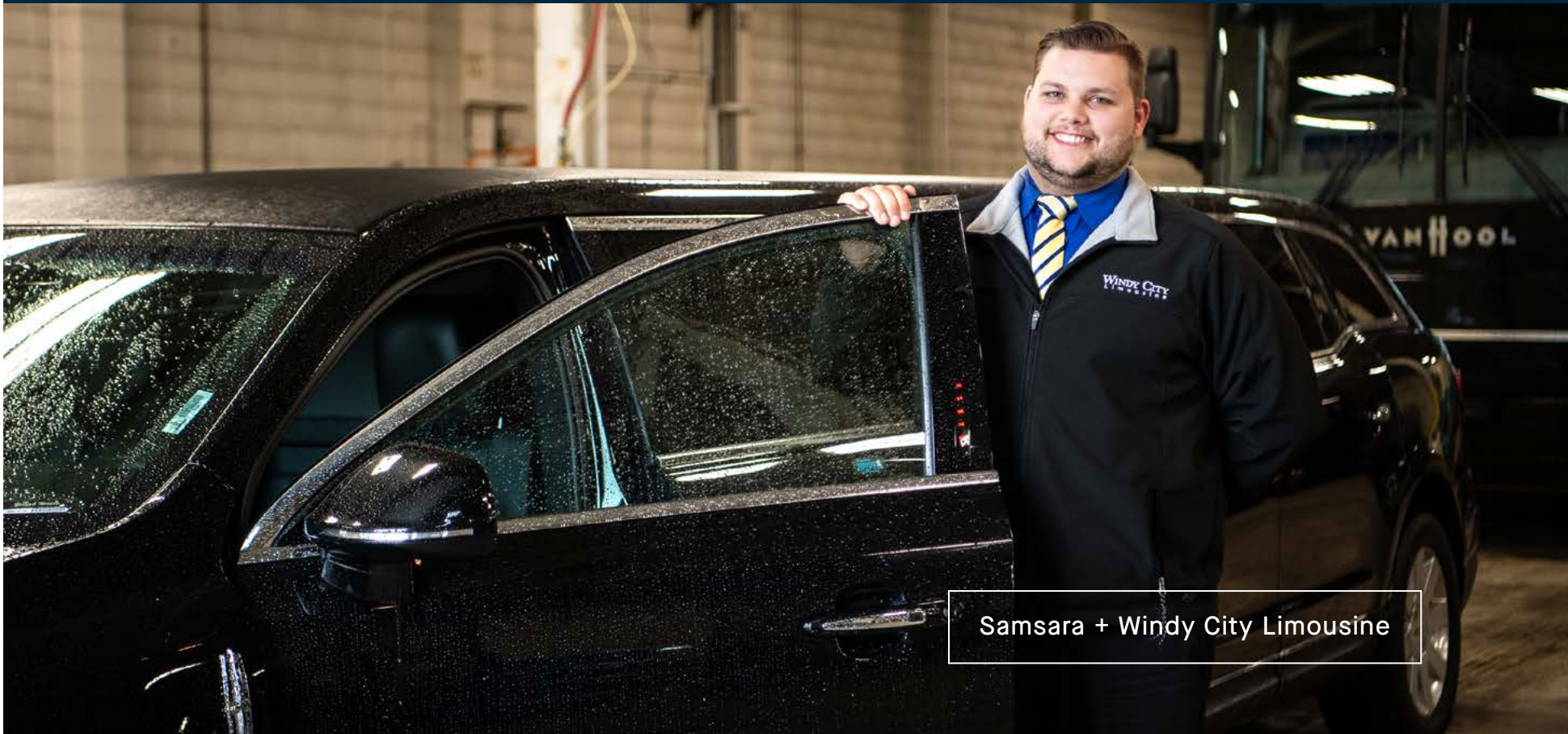


# 8 Keys to Excellence in Customer Service

FOR PASSENGER TRANSIT FLEETS



Samsara + Windy City Limousine





# Introduction

Great customer service is an essential component of any successful business, but it's particularly important for fleets working in passenger transit.

With the rise of online ridesharing apps, today's passengers expect faster pickups, better service, and newer technology in return for their loyalty. A recent study published in Transport Policy showed that shorter wait times and travel times were important factors in passengers choosing rideshare over other forms of transportation, highlighting the importance of efficiency in today's competitive landscape.<sup>1</sup> But what makes the difference between good customer service and excellent customer service? It's more than just efficiency—the best fleets have a variety of behind-the-scenes components working together to create a world-class customer experience from pickup to dropoff.

In this guide, learn how to make your fleet's customer service shine, with proven best practices from Windy City Limousine & Bus, winner of the 2019 Samsara Top Fleet Award for Excellence in Service.

1. [Transport Policy, January 2016](#)





# Best Practices from an Award-Winning Fleet

“We decided that we really wanted to have a company with great customer service, and that everything else came second. Customer service is so important to us.”

**GEORGE JACOBS**

*CEO, Windy City Limousine*

**VOTED THE BEST  
TRANSPORTATION PROVIDER**

10 times in the last 11 years

*Illinois Meetings + Events magazine*

**NAMED ONE OF THE FASTEST  
GROWING COMPANIES**

for the past 5 years in a row

*INC.*

**AWARDED MOTORCOACH  
OPERATOR OF THE YEAR**


as part of the 2019 LCT Awards

*Luxury Coach & Transportation*

**NAMED TOP FLEET FOR  
EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE**

as part of the 2019 Top Fleet Awards

*Samsara*



Named the Best Transportation Provider by Illinois Meetings + Events magazine 10 times in the last 11 years, Windy City Limousine knows what sets world-class customer service apart.

With more than 300 vehicles on the road—from SUVs to limousines and motorcoaches—Windy City Limousine is the largest ground transportation provider in Chicago and one of the fastest growing ground transportation companies in the country. Whether their chauffeurs are transporting hundreds of people to an event or entire sports teams to a stadium, one thing is always top of mind: customer service.

The tips in this guide are sourced directly from Windy City Limousine's tried-and-true best practices, learned over 13 years of transporting and delighting customers and more than 100 years of combined experience across their leadership team.



# How to Achieve Excellence in Customer Service

01 — Create a Rigorous Chauffeur  
Training Program

02 — Monitor Critical Safety Measures

03 — Communicate Proactively  
with Customers

04 — Anticipate Passenger Needs

05 — Stick to a Preventative  
Maintenance Schedule

06 — Establish a Game Plan for  
Responding to Issues

07 — Invest in Employee  
Engagement and Wellbeing

08 — Embrace New Technology



# 01

## Create a Rigorous Chauffeur Training Program

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“A driver is responsible for showing up with a vehicle on-time and getting you from point A to point B. A chauffeur is concerned with the customers’ overall experience.”

**JEROLD BEAN**

*VP of Meetings & Group Events*





**AFTER YOU HIRE A NEW CHAUFFEUR**, it can be tempting to get them on the road as soon as possible—but it's important to keep in mind that your chauffeurs will be interacting face-to-face with your customers more than any other employee. In fact, customer service starts with your chauffeurs.

Although the initial investment of time and resources can be significant, a rigorous chauffeur training program will pay off in the long term in the form of customer satisfaction and loyalty.

“Before anyone is even allowed to drive our vehicles, they go through a complete training process,” said Jerold Bean, VP of Meetings & Group Events at Windy City Limousine. “They aren't just vetted and background checked.”

When creating or updating your chauffeur training program, think beyond the standard safety and compliance training. Set aside time—Windy City Limousine designates 2 weeks—to educate new chauffeurs about your company's core values, familiarize them with your ELD system or other enhancements within your vehicles, and have them complete a few ride-alongs with senior chauffeurs. Also make sure to coach your chauffeurs about the difference between a driver and a chauffeur—for example, how and why they should exit the vehicle to greet customers.



✓ **WINDY CITY'S RECOMMENDED TRAINING CHECKLIST FOR NEW CHAUFFEURS**

**Pre-employment verification**

Make sure to do a background check and drug screening for every new chauffeur you hire.

**Company education**

Educate new chauffeurs about your company's history and core values. This will help create a sense of community and ensure they reflect a good representation of your brand.

**Road test**

Ensure new chauffeurs know how to operate the vehicles they'll be driving by conducting a short road test with a senior chauffeur or member of your management team.

**Vehicle training**

Familiarize new chauffeurs with your in-vehicle systems, including your GPS provider and ELD system (if your chauffeurs are subject to ELD rules).

**Customer service training**

Educate new chauffeurs about any customer service standards you maintain, like exiting the vehicle to open doors, greet customers, and introduce themselves.

**Ride-alongs with senior chauffeurs**

Have every new chauffeur do 2-3 ride-alongs with more senior chauffeurs, so they can learn best practices by example.

**Ongoing spot checks**

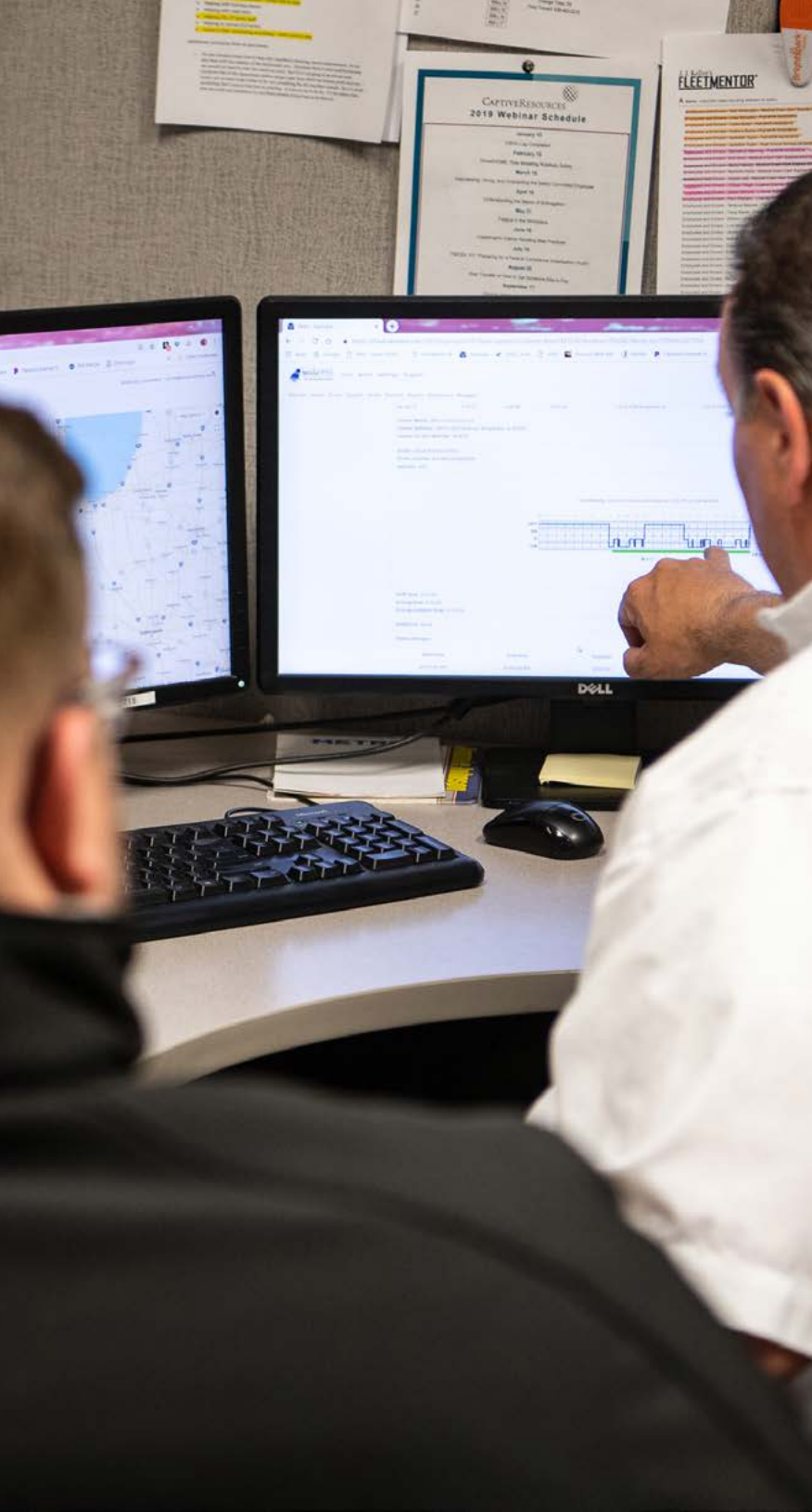
For the next 60-90 days, check in with chauffeurs periodically to ensure they are fully onboarded.

**PRO TIP**

Is part or all of your fleet subject to ELD rules? Make it easy for your chauffeurs to log hours with the Samsara Driver App, which also makes DVIRs a breeze.

**Learn more at [samsara.com](https://www.samsara.com)**





# 02

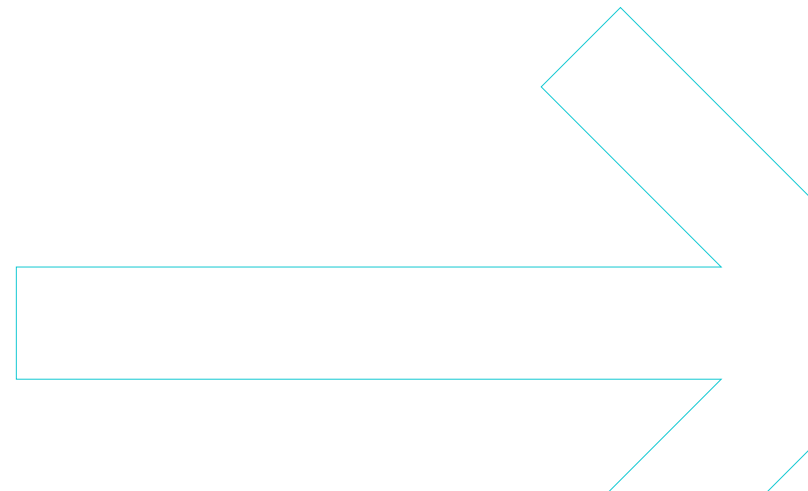
## Monitor Critical Safety Measures

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“The ultimate goal is to provide safe transportation. If somebody doesn't feel safe, they're not going to travel with your vehicles or your company. They're certainly not going to come back for a second trip.”

**JAMIE SMITH**

*Fleet & Compliance Manager*



**NEW CHAUFFEUR TRAINING IS THE FIRST STEP** to fostering a strong sense of customer service among your fleet, but ongoing monitoring and coaching is crucial for maintaining a high level of service over time—especially when it comes to safety.

A recent study showed that even when consumers love a company or service, 59% will walk away after several bad experiences—and 17% will walk away after just one bad experience.<sup>2</sup> One accident could shatter the confidence your customers have in your company or even cause them to leave a bad review online, so it's important to prioritize and proactively monitor the safety of your fleet.

One of the best ways to minimize risk is to monitor your vehicles and chauffeurs using real-time GPS tracking and connected dash cams. Dash cam videos can be useful data points for coaching sessions, allowing you to target and fix specific behaviors like harsh acceleration or harsh turning before they cause a reputation-damaging accident. You can also leverage this data to create a safety rewards program. For example, at the end of each year, Windy City Limousine rewards drivers with cash bonuses if they had no preventable accidents and received at least one compliment from a customer.

2. [2018 PWC Future of Customer Experience Report](#)

## HOW TO ENCOURAGE SAFE DRIVING

- Install dash cams that can automatically flag harsh events
- Monitor and gamify safety scores to encourage friendly competition
- Create a rewards program with monetary incentives, like gift cards or bonuses
- Track improvements in your CSA score over time

### PRO TIP

Wish you had more visibility into chauffeur safety? Get real-time alerts for harsh braking, acceleration, rolling through stops, and more with Samsara.

**Learn more at [samsara.com](https://www.samsara.com)**



# 03

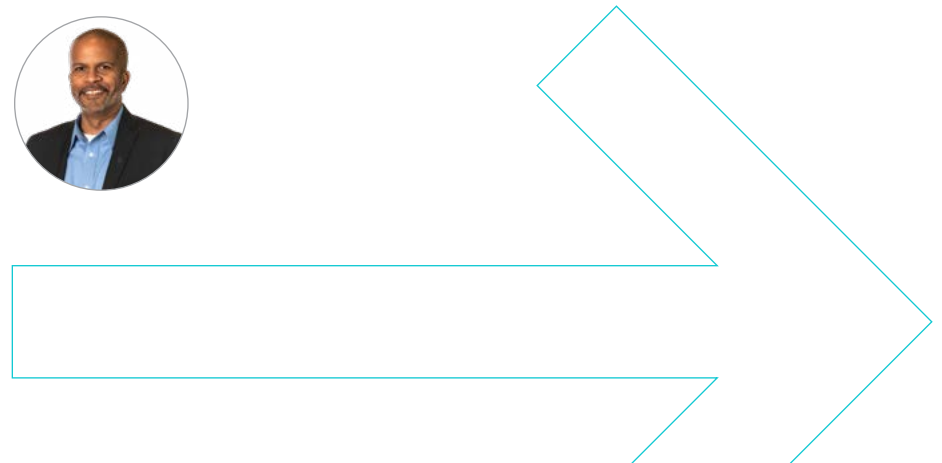
## Communicate Proactively with Customers

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“The tolerance for waiting has changed. We have to invest in tools that will give instant information to our customers.”

**JEROLD BEAN**

*VP of Meetings & Group Events*





**WITH RIDESHARING APPS OFFERING NEWER, EASIER WAYS TO REQUEST A RIDE ON THE SPOT**, today's passengers are less tolerant of calling into a reservations department and being put on hold. Moreover, if your dispatchers have to call your chauffeurs to find out where they are, your chauffeurs have to pull over to take the call—which causes even longer wait times for your customers.

To meet your customers' expectations in today's faster paced world, it's important to minimize calls to and from dispatch as much as possible. Real-time GPS tracking is an excellent way to give your dispatchers the visibility they need to route nearby chauffeurs to customers in a few seconds rather than minutes.

Real-time GPS tracking also makes it easier to relay accurate location and arrival information to your customers. In the case of unforeseen circumstances like bad weather or traffic, your dispatchers can proactively update your customers on arrival time or even send a backup vehicle. For example, Windy City Limousine uses real-time GPS tracking to empower their dispatch team with live-to-the-second data and share location information with some of their largest customers. By leveraging real-time GPS, they ultimately saw shorter customer wait times and a 30% reduction in calls to dispatch.

3. [2017 Arise Study](#) 4. [2017 Arise Study](#)

66%

of Americans are only willing to wait 2 minutes or less on the phone before hanging up. <sup>3</sup>

13%

of Americans do not think that any hold time on the phone is acceptable. <sup>4</sup>

**PRO TIP**

Reduce calls to dispatch and minimize wait times with Samsara. See the real-time location of every vehicle and route chauffeurs to nearby passengers more efficiently.

**Learn more at [samsara.com](https://samsara.com)**



# 04

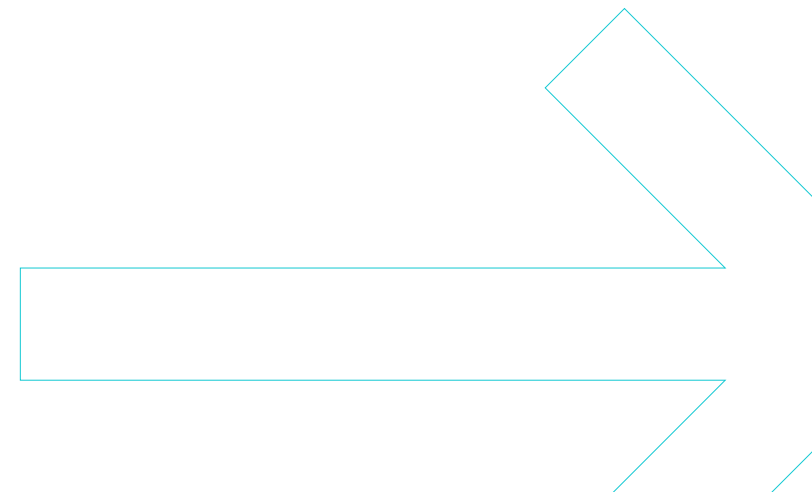
## Anticipate Passenger Needs

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“Customer service is about being proactive. It’s understanding the needs of your customer even before they understand their needs.”

**TRACY HODGE-RAIMER**

*Executive Vice President*



**FROM PICKUP TO DROPOFF**, you want your customers to have what Windy City Limousine EVP Tracy Hodge-Raimer calls a “wow experience.”

So what makes a “wow experience?” It’s all about attention to detail. What matters to your customers will vary depending on where you operate and who you serve, but a few things are universal: comfort and convenience.

Windy City Limousine has a few tricks up their sleeve to make sure their customers are always comfortable. First and foremost, they heat or cool their vehicles before pickups and instruct their chauffeurs to check with passengers about their preferred temperature. They also swap out their vehicles for new ones frequently—every 2–3 years for SUVs and limousines or 4–5 years for motorcoaches.

“We want to make sure that our passengers are comfortable, and it doesn’t take that long for a vehicle to show its age,” said Bean. “Plus, every two to three years, carmakers come out with new technology. An SUV that’s six years old isn’t going to have the same number of charging ports, for example, as a brand new one.”





When it comes to convenience, you can get even more creative. For example, Windy City Limousine puts their logo on top of their vehicles so that their passengers can easily identify their car while waiting in downtown Chicago's skyscrapers. They even customize the exterior of their vehicles for large, contracted customers, including a purple-branded motorcoach for Northwestern University.

Windy City Limousine also leverages Samsara's Live Sharing links to let customers track route progress and receive alerts automatically—a feature that's particularly valuable to their corporate customers. "For groups and events, timing is critical," said Bean. "Live Sharing links let them look and see that the buses have left the hotel and are 10 minutes away, so they can warm up the buffets or whatever it might be. Any time you can make it really easy for them to get their own information and avoid that phone call, it's a lot better for your customers."

**PRO TIP**

Go above and beyond by proactively sharing real-time vehicle locations and ETAs with your customers using Samsara's Live Sharing links.

**Learn more at [samsara.com](https://samsara.com)**



**DETAILS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE**

- Send your passengers a notification when their pickup is 10 minutes away
- Make sure your company logo is placed prominently on all your vehicles so they are easy to recognize
- Monitor the temperature within your vehicles and fully heat or cool them before heading to a pickup
- Provide water in every single vehicle, including buses
- Swap out your vehicles for new ones every 2-3 years
- Offer child car seats upon request

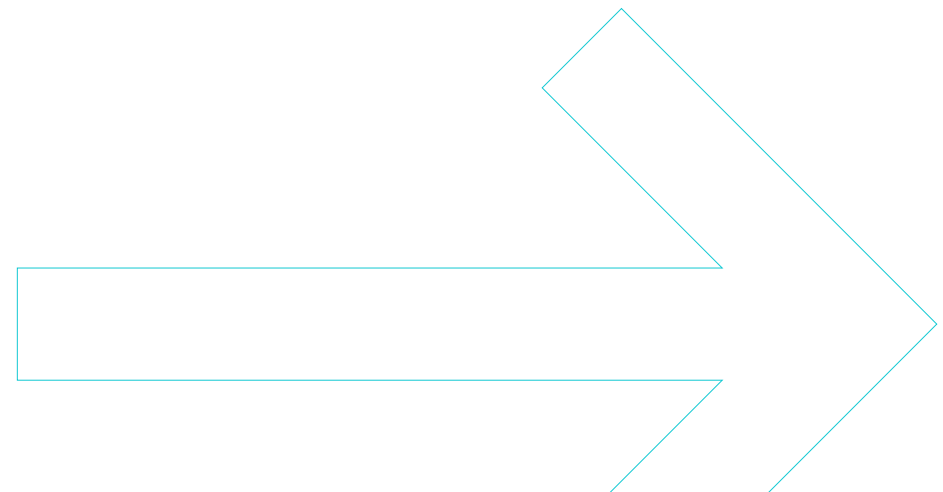
# 05

## Stick to a Preventative Maintenance Schedule

“The biggest deal here is to be proactive. We never want to be reactive... You don’t want the vehicle to break down because of something that could have been prevented and have customers stuck or stranded on the side of the road.”

**RYAN KACZMARSKI**

*Director of IT*



## PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE IS KEY TO CUSTOMER SERVICE

**FOR ONE VERY IMPORTANT REASON:** you never want a vehicle to break down while you're transporting passengers—especially if it could have been avoided. Beyond the damage to your brand, emergency repairs can be 3 times more expensive than preventative maintenance, due to more severe fixes, the labor associated with traveling to a remote location to perform a fix, and the opportunity cost of having a vehicle out of service.<sup>6</sup>

Avoid unnecessary breakdowns by making preventative maintenance more than just a nice-to-have. Create a preventative maintenance schedule for every vehicle based on mileage, time since last service check, previous breakdown history, or all of the above—and ensure that your maintenance team sticks to it by sending out alerts 1–2 days before a vehicle is due for a visit to the shop.

Prioritizing preventative maintenance has other added benefits. Using the real-time engine diagnostics data they receive from their Samsara Vehicle Gateways, Windy City Limousine has reduced the amount of time it takes to diagnose an issue from 20–25 minutes to about 1 minute. Plus, keeping their vehicles in good shape means they can resell them at a higher value, allowing them to replace their vehicles with new ones more frequently. That way, their passengers always ride in comfort.

5. [FreightWaves](#) 6. [FreightWaves](#)



Emergency repairs can be  
3x more expensive than  
preventative maintenance.<sup>5</sup>

### PRO TIP

Get real-time alerts for critical fault codes, schedule alerts for preventative maintenance, and reduce downtime with Samsara.

**Learn more at [samsara.com](https://samsara.com)**





# 06

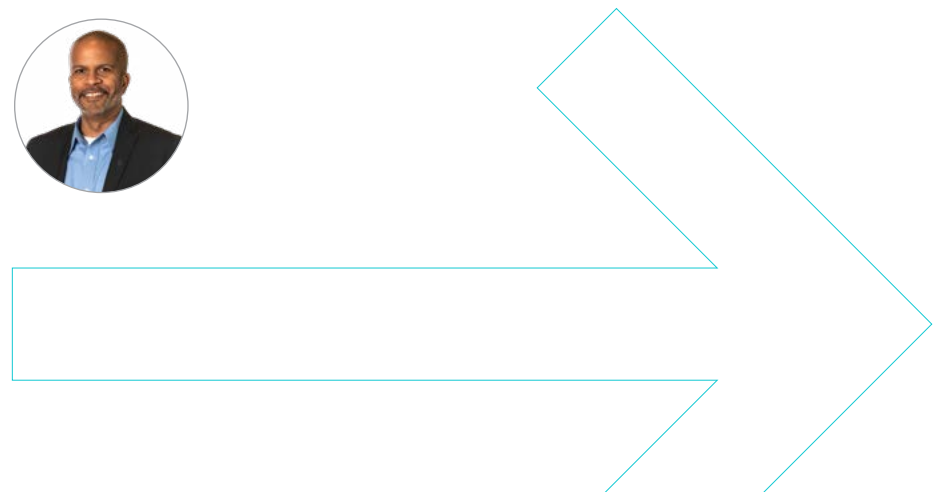
## Establish a Game Plan for Resolving Issues

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“We try to empower everyone to make decisions that can positively impact the customer. When they call, it may be after hours and a manager isn’t here, but they still know that whoever they get on the phone has their best interests in mind.”

**JEROLD BEAN**

*VP of Meetings & Group Events*



**NO MATTER HOW HARD YOU TRY TO PREVENT PROBLEMS FROM HAPPENING, THERE'S NO GETTING AROUND IT—**

at some point, something will go wrong. Whether it's a vehicle breakdown, a late arrival, or just an unsatisfactory experience, your customers will expect a response from you.

What sets world-class customer service apart is how you respond. Studies show that 89% of consumers have switched to doing business with a competitor following a poor customer experience—but if you can turn a negative experience into a positive one, they may actually become a more loyal customer.<sup>9</sup> This is known as the service recovery paradox (SRP), a studied phenomenon where customers think more highly of a company if they have a bad experience that gets “turned around” than if they had never had the bad experience in the first place. In other words, failure is an opportunity to create a loyal customer—as long as you have a game plan in place to respond in a way that exceeds their expectations.

So what are the secret ingredients of excellent issue remediation? 80% of American consumers point to speed, convenience, knowledgeable help, and friendly service as the most important elements.<sup>10</sup> At Windy City Limousine, they have developed a game plan for responding to issues that includes five key components, outlined on the next page.

7. [2011 Customer Experience Impact Report](#) 8. [2018 PWC Future of Customer Experience Report](#)  
9. [2011 Customer Experience Impact Report](#) 10. [2018 PWC Future of Customer Experience Report](#)

89%

of consumers have switched to doing business with a competitor following a poor customer experience.<sup>7</sup>

80%

of American consumers point to speed, convenience, knowledgeable help, and friendly service as the most important elements of positive customer experience.<sup>8</sup>

**PRO TIP**

Identify and resolve issues faster with Samsara's Trip History report, which gives you visibility into actual routes taken, including camera stills automatically uploaded to the cloud every 2 minutes.

**Learn more at [samsara.com](https://samsara.com)**

## ✓ GAME PLAN FOR RESOLVING ISSUES

### 1. Apologize

First and foremost, make sure your customer feels heard by acknowledging their experience and communicating your commitment to making it right. Say that you're sorry this was their experience, acknowledge that you let them down this time, and promise that you will look into the issue and get back to them as soon as possible. Whenever possible, provide a timeline upfront so they know when they can expect to hear back from you.

### 2. Identify the issue as quickly as possible

Most customers will want to know exactly what happened. Every minute that passes by without an answer is a minute that your customers are left in the dark. Sensors, cameras, and onboard monitoring systems are excellent ways to automatically collect helpful information (like engine fault codes or video footage) and send it back to

headquarters in real-time. For example, Windy City Limousine uses Samsara's Trip History reports to give their back office full visibility into what happened on every trip.

### 3. Communicate what happened, transparently and without blame

Once you are confident in your understanding of the issue, the next step is to communicate exactly what happened to your customers. The key here is to be honest and transparent. If you try to displace blame or explain away the problem, you could end up alienating your customers.

### 4. Take steps to prevent the same issue from happening again

This step is critical for restoring customer confidence in your business and building long-term loyalty. Fixing

the immediate problem is not enough. Most customers will want to know that you have taken action to prevent the same issue from happening again. That way, they can feel comfortable using your services again in the future.

### 5. Give them a reason to give you a second chance

Invite the customer to reach out to you directly the next time they are in need of transportation. Assure them that their request will be handled appropriately, and offer a preferred rate or vehicle upgrade if possible. If done well, you can turn around an unfortunate situation and create one of your most loyal customers.



# 07

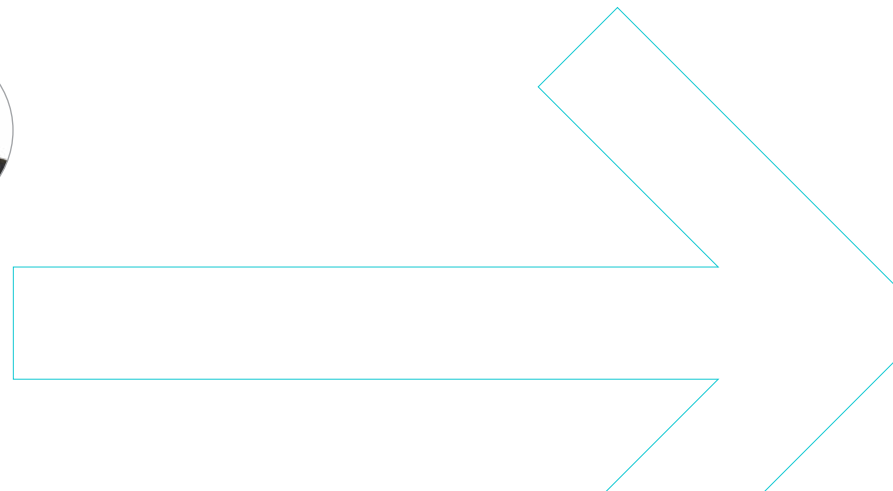
## Invest in Employee Engagement and Wellbeing

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“If you create a great place to work, it trickles down and translates into the customer experience.”

**JEROLD BEAN**

*VP of Meetings & Group Events*





**AT FIRST GLANCE**, employee engagement and wellbeing might seem unrelated to customer service. But the happiness of your workforce is critical—ultimately, your employees are a reflection of your company and your brand. If your employees are happy, your customers will feel it.

In fact, the link between employee wellbeing and customer satisfaction has been studied and proven. One study found that emotions displayed by customer-facing employees had a large influence on customer satisfaction, with happier employees leading to higher customer satisfaction.<sup>11</sup>

There are many different ways to invest in engagement and wellbeing, from compensation to culture and benefits. For example, offering benefits to all of your employees—including independent contractors—is a great way to increase company loyalty, improve retention of your best employees, and set yourself apart from competitors like ridesharing apps.

At Windy City Limousine, they have an internal recognition program where employees can nominate each other for going above and beyond. The “Employee of the Month” receives a gift certificate or sports tickets as well as a premium parking spot. They also vote for an “Employee of the Year,” who is recognized at the end-of-year holiday party, and a “Rookie of the Year,” which incentivizes new employees to stick around.



Windy City Limousine also uses a yearly drawing to award employees who never miss a scheduled work day. The winner gets a \$2,500 travel voucher—and Windy City Limousine President Kathy Kahne helps plan and book their trip, down to the airline tickets and hotel reservations. “The employee experience matters,” said Bean. “I can hand you a gift card and that feels really good, but how great is it that our company’s president helps plan your vacation?”

Creating a supportive, engaging environment not only creates happier, healthier employees—it can also help align your employees around larger company goals, like safety. Countless studies have shown that when an activity is more fun, people are more likely to do it. For example, when taking the stairs becomes a game, 66% more people choose to take the stairs rather than an escalator.<sup>12</sup>

Along these lines, Windy City Limousine has adopted gamification as a way to keep chauffeurs engaged with the company’s safety goals. When a chauffeur logs in to the Samsara Driver App, they can see how their safety score ranks against their peers, motivating them to adopt better driving behaviors and aligning them with the company’s overall mission to provide the best transportation experience possible.

## WAYS TO INVEST IN EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND WELLBEING

- Sponsor team lunches or outings
- Celebrate employee birthdays and anniversaries
- Create an internal recognition program
- Host an end-of-year holiday party
- Encourage friendly competition between chauffeurs

### PRO TIP

Keep your chauffeurs engaged and encourage friendly competition by turning on safety score gamification within the Samsara Driver App.

**Learn more at [samsara.com](https://samsara.com)**

11. [Psychology and Marketing, March 2013](#) 12. [Piano Stairs Experiment, Volkswagen](#)



# 08

## Embrace New Technology

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“Technology is a game changer. Ordering vehicles via an app and expecting them in a short amount of time is going to continue. We have to constantly invest in new technology to better connect our chauffeurs, vehicles, and customers.”

**TRACY HODGE-RAIMER**

*Executive Vice President*



**WITH THE RISE OF ONLINE RIDESHARING APPS**, customers have come to expect a highly efficient transportation experience with real-time information at their fingertips—from the time they book their reservation to when their trip is complete. In fact, 60% of consumers now prefer to use a website or mobile app for simple customer service.<sup>14</sup> In order to keep up, it's important to constantly vet and test new technology that can help your fleet become more efficient.

From booking to dispatch, maintenance, customer service, and safety, there are hundreds of tools out there that can help your fleet modernize and adapt to changing customer demands. How should you prioritize? As with everything they do, Windy City Limousine takes a customer-first approach, investing in tools that will ultimately make their customer experience better.

"Our philosophy is that we have to keep investing in ways to better connect our customers to the experience," said Bean. "That really means booking tools, the ability to view their vehicle, all of those enhanced features that they've grown accustomed to through the competition."

**PRO TIP**

Consolidate your tools with Samsara's all-in-one platform for dispatch, safety, maintenance, and more.

**Learn more at [samsara.com](https://samsara.com)**

**TOOLS TO CONSIDER**

- Online booking system
- Real-time GPS tracking for better visibility
- Shareable ETAs for better communication
- Chat-based customer service
- Flight tracking software for airport pickups

60%

of consumers prefer to use a website or mobile app for simple customer service.<sup>13</sup>

13. [2017 Customer Service Barometer](#)

14. [2017 Customer Service Barometer](#)



BEHIND THE SCENES

# How Windy City Limousine Unlocked Time to Reinvest in Customer Service

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“Gone are the days of spending hours researching vehicle locations, route deviations, and questions regarding on-time service... Less time researching means more time focused on the total customer experience.

**JEROLD BEAN**

*VP of Meetings & Group Events*



Windy City Limousine partners with Samsara to outfit their 350-vehicle fleet with real-time GPS tracking and connected dash cams, and leverages the Samsara Driver app to manage ELD, complete DVIRs, and gamify driver safety scores. By partnering with Samsara, Windy City Limousine was able to reduce their dispatch call volume by 30%—ultimately unlocking more than 100 labor hours per week to reinvest in customer service.

**With Samsara, Windy City Limousine is able to:**

- Give their customers real-time visibility into vehicle location using Live Sharing links
- Route their chauffeurs more efficiently to passenger pickups
- Coach their chauffeurs more effectively based on safety scores and dash cam videos
- Keep their fleet running smoothly with preventative maintenance alerts and live engine diagnostics

Learn more about how Samsara can help your company achieve excellence in customer service. Start your free trial today at [samsara.com](https://samsara.com).

**WINDY CITY'S RESULTS WITH SAMBARA**

30%

**REDUCTION**  
in dispatch call volume

500

**HOURS SAVED**  
per month in internal phone communication

100

**HOURS REINVESTED**  
per week in dedicated customer service





**samsara**

[samsara.com/free-trial](https://samsara.com/free-trial)