

The Service You Promise

By the end of this session you can say who your institution serves, where it serves them badly, what standard you hold it to, and what you will and will not commit to.

01 LISTEN FIRST

12 MIN

Andrés is describing what actually happens to a family at Meridian — not the brochure version. You will hear it twice. Everything else on this sheet comes out of it.

1.1 Capture it

Stage	What happens	Owned by — or nobody?
First contact		
Tour and offer		
Onboarding		
Day-to-day		
When it goes wrong		
Re-enrolment		

1.2 Answer

Which stage works best, and why does it work?	
What exactly goes wrong during onboarding?	
What does Andrés commit to, and by when?	

02 WHO THE CLIENT IS

8 MIN

In most businesses the person who pays is the person who uses the product. In education they are almost never the same person — and the one who complains is often a third.

stakeholder	Anyone with an interest in the institution — families, staff, the board, the regulator
end user	The person who actually receives the service. Here, the student
payer	The person who signs the invoice. Usually a parent or guardian
prospective family	Enquired or visited, not yet enrolled
internal client	A colleague who depends on your team's work to do their own
decision-maker	The person who decides whether to stay or leave next year

2.1 Four different people

For your own institution, who is each of these? They may be the same person — or four different ones.

Who pays	
Who uses the service	
Who decides to stay or leave	
Who complains	

03 TOUCHPOINTS

11 MIN

A **touchpoint** is any moment where a family deals with your institution rather than just attending it. Service is not one thing done well or badly — it is seven separate moments, each with an owner, and it fails at whichever one nobody owns.

3.1 Talking about it

The first touchpoint is	the enquiry call · the website form · usually the tour
Most of our complaints come from	the onboarding stage · day-to-day communication · the office
That's where we lose people	between the tour and the offer · in the first three weeks · at re-enrolment
We don't have a clear owner for	that stage · anything after enrolment · incoming email

3.2 Your weakest point

Which touchpoint at your own institution is weakest, and why? Two sentences — and name who owns it, or say that nobody does.

04 SERVICE STANDARDS

12 MIN

service standard	A promise about how you will respond — written down, and measurable
response time	How long before somebody replies at all
turnaround	How long before the thing is actually finished
first-contact resolution	Sorted out by the first person they spoke to
escalation path	The agreed route for passing something upward
owner	The one named person responsible. Not a department
close the loop	Go back and confirm it was resolved — the step everyone skips

4.1 Talking about it

Our standard is	a reply within twenty-four hours · same-day acknowledgement · resolution within five working days
We aim to	respond within one working day · resolve it at first contact
If it can't be resolved	it's escalated to the campus head · it comes to me · it goes on the weekly list
We close the loop by	calling them back · confirming in writing · checking again a week later
We're not meeting	that standard at Hillcrest · our own response times · it consistently

4.2 Write three of your own

A real standard names the thing, the promise and the time. "We answer emails quickly" is not a standard.

1.

2.

3.

05 COMMITTING AND DECLINING

12 MIN

The two things you will say most often to a colleague, a campus head or a board member — and the two most likely to damage you if you get them wrong.

Committing

I'll get back to you by Thursday. · You'll have an answer before the end of the week. · Let me check and confirm in writing. · You'll hear from me either way.

Hedging a commitment

I should be able to... · I can't promise Friday, but... · Realistically, that's next week. · Let me come back to you with a date.

Declining well

Unfortunately I can't do that, but what I can do is... · That's not something we can offer this term. · I'd rather say no now than let it drift.

Closing it off

Just to close this off... · As promised, here's... · Coming back to you on the question of...

→ "You'll hear from me either way" is the line Andrés used, and the most valuable one here. It commits you to contact rather than to an outcome — which is the difference between a colleague who waits and one who chases you.

5.1 What would you say?

One sentence each. A different phrase every time.

A campus head asks for a decision you cannot make until next week.

The board asks for a figure you will have on Thursday.

A colleague asks for something you are not going to do.

You promised an answer on Monday and it is now Wednesday.

You are not sure you can meet the deadline you are being offered.

06 HOMEWORK

Voice memo, 90 seconds. Do what Andrés did in section 01: walk through your own institution's journey, name the stage that has no owner, and finish with one commitment — with all three of its parts.