

Customer Service Excellence

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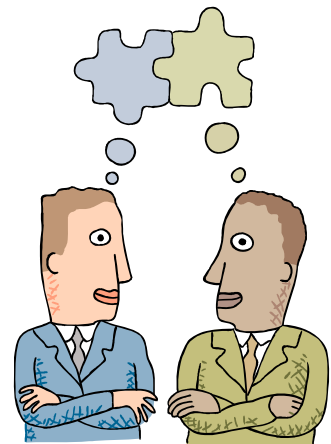
Communication Activity

1.

2.

“Behavior is a mirror in which everyone shows his image.”

GOETHE



What Do Customers Want and Need?

Customers want and need a lot of things. However, research has shown that there are some basics that all customers say they want. As a group, come up with your top 6.

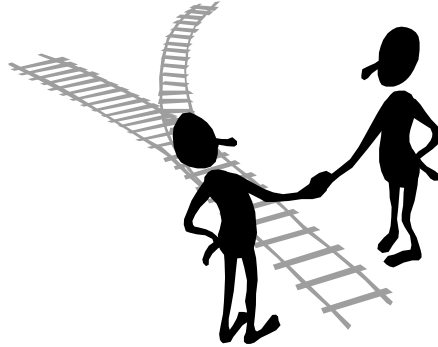
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Service in the Government Sector

In the private sector, customers don't usually complain about poor service. They just take their business elsewhere. Most of our customers don't have other choices. In government, we don't usually think of the people we serve in the same light as merchants who are attempting to make sales and retain customers. Our transactions usually don't center on purchases, although with new fees at every turn, "free" services may become a thing of the past. But are these services really free? Tax dollars really do pay for our desks, equipment, and facilities – even our salaries. A significant portion of earning and purchases from individuals, small business, and corporations pay these taxes. If only indirectly, the public does pay for our salaries and our services. Therefore, we are all in the customer service business.

Customer Service Challenges

ESTABLISHING RAPPORT



THE FIRST FIFTEEN TO TWENTY SECONDS SET THE TONE FOR THE CUSTOMER INTERACTION.

1. Give a sincere smile.
2. Maintain eye contact.
3. Say the customer's name.
4. Act interested, but relaxed.
5. Take your cue from the customer.

HOW DO YOU DEVELOP RAPPORT AND PERSONALIZE SERVICE?

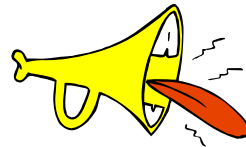
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PERCEPTIONS ARE REALITY

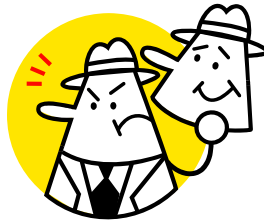
Point to remember: *People don't know what we're trying to say or want to say; they don't know our best intentions. People judge on what they see and hear or what they THINK they see and hear.*

The three major ways we communicate are through:

Tone of Voice



Body language



Choice of Words



Rate the above in order of power and immediate effect.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Body Language, tone and Words

Don'ts

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Do's

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Tone of Voice

1. "May I help you?" (in a sincere tone)
"May I help you?" (in a "you're bothering me" tone)
2. "I would be glad to do that." (in a sincere tone)
"I would be glad to do that." (in a "don't want to" tone)
3. "Is there anything else I can do for you?" (sincere tone)
"Is there anything else I can do for you?" (sarcastic tone)
- 4.



Dead-End Phrases Response



Better

I can't help you with that.

It's against the law.

Did you read the manual?

You'll have to call someone else.

I don't know.

TOP TEN CUSTOMER SERVICE MISTAKES



1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

PROFESSIONAL TELEPHONE SKILLS

Communicating on the Telephone

One of the most common things we do on a day to day basis is communicate with other people. Good communication can lead to a better understanding of people and perhaps more importantly, allow others to understand us. This is especially important in business.

Communication means have changed dramatically over the years, with telecommunications such as faxes, and e-mail, but still the most widely used communication tool is the telephone. When a potential client phones a company, their first impression of that company is created by the person who answers the phone.

Voice Quality

Using the voice correctly involves paying attention to three areas. These are:

A. Speed

B. Clarity

C. Tone

A. Speed

A normal rate is 125 words a minutes. How do you know if your rate of speech is within the optimum range?

B. Clarity

Speak clearly. Don't slur words, mumble or allow words to run together. Pronounce words correctly.

C. Tone

Speed and clarity may be fine, but this means nothing without a positive tone. One way to sound friendly is to _____.

What is pitch? _____

Telephone Etiquette

YOU represent the company or organization. In fact, you **ARE** the company to the caller. So, how you handle the call determines the view the customer has of the organization.

- Answer before the third ring.
- Answer using your name and the department's name.
- Smile just before speaking.
- Speak slowly and clearly.
- Use the caller's name at least twice.
- Sound pleasant and agreeable.
- Listen carefully.
- If the customer has to be put on hold, ask permission and use the hold button.
- Don't lay the phone down on your desk.
- Don't make them hold for longer than one minute. When returning, thank them for holding.
- Don't use jargon (shop talk).
- If transferring a call, first ask permission and state the benefit.
- Express appreciation for the call.

Other Telephone Tips

Effective Listening

Customers want us to listen to them!

If the customer is NOT ANGRY, *active* or *reflective* listening is a way of understanding what has been said.

Examples:

“I’ll be happy to help you. You say you need for me to check your payments for the last two months?”

“Let’s see if we can get to the bottom of this. I’ll need to get some more information from you...”

If the customer is ANGRY, treating the problem as routine and doing only *active* listening will probably make him/her angrier.

First use *empathetic* listening to demonstrate you care about the problem. This will help to defuse and calm the customer; then, use *active* or *reflective* listening:

Examples:

“Mrs. Jones, I apologize for the delay. I can understand why you are upset. Which months do you want me to check?”

“Mr. Brown, I know this has been inconvenient for you.”

Other examples of empathetic listening statements:

- _____
- _____
- _____

FACT: Most people speak anywhere between 100 and 175 words per minute. We are capable of listening, however, to nearly 300 words per minute. That is one of the main reasons why it is easy to allow our minds to drift and thus tune out what the speaker is attempting to communicate to us.

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE LISTENING

Ask questions for understanding

Repeat/check for understanding
“Do you mean. . . . ?”
“If I understand you correctly, you’re saying. . . .”

Repeat numbers to avoid mistakes

Clarify numbers, spelling of names, street addresses

Avoid jargon

Acronyms to avoid:

Make suggestions

Say the customer’s name,
“May I suggest. . . .”

Encourage the customer to continue

Nod, take notes, lean forward

Get agreement

Is that correct?
Is this information correct?
Is there anything else I can do for you today?

Notes:

The Challenges of an Emotional Situation

Dealing with an angry or upset customer is difficult because you have to handle three things simultaneously:

- **The basic content of the situation – the business issue, problem, or concern**
- **The customer’s emotional behavior – anger, frustration, aggression, tears**
- **Your response – how you react to the customer’s behavior**

Let's Start With Your Response

As humans, we have two natural instincts when confronted with emotional or angry behavior -- fight or flight. At the most basic level, our natural tendency is to either “duke it out” or run away. How we **choose** to act on our natural tendencies can vary greatly.

- Do your best not to take the customers’ behavior personally.
- Be careful not to mirror the customer’s emotions.
- Never argue with the customer.

An emotional reaction on your part may make the customer become more defensive and even more difficult. It is important to be aware of your thoughts and feelings and to plan ways to control your emotions so that you can remain calm in the tough situations.



DEALING WITH ANGRY PEOPLE...AND HANDLING COMPLAINTS

When dealing with people you are always going to have some that get angry and upset. There are some basic skills that help.



- ✓ **Keep your cool.**
- ✓ **Listen to story with understanding.**
- ✓ **Communicate the steps taken. Explain to the customer, step-by-step, what has been done and what steps still need to be taken.**
- ✓ **Pause. A moment of silence can often calm down a situation that has gotten out of control and can give you the time to consider the best way to proceed.**
- ✓ **Agree. Sometimes simply agreeing with the customer's criticism will calm things down.**
- ✓ **Apologize. Let the customer know that you are sorry for what has occurred. This doesn't mean you are personally at fault. You can simply say sorry for the customer's perceived ordeal.**
- ✓ **Empathize.**
- ✓ **End the conversation. Tell the customer that you cannot continue talking. This should be used if all else fails and continuing to talk would only fuel a further escalation of the problem.**
- ✓ **Set limits. Tell the customer what is and isn't allowed.**

REMEMBER! Anger is only one letter short of danger.



COMPOSURE STRATEGIES

As a group, write down what your group feels are the top 10 ways to stay composed.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____



CUSTOMER QUESTIONS ACTIVITY

RECEIVING CRITICISM WITHOUT TAKING IT PERSONALLY

“Fogging” is a technique developed by Dr. Manuel Smith as a way to deal with criticism. Even if the criticism is well intended, most of us have a tendency to take it personally, especially if we do not agree with the criticism. Then we become defensive and thin-skinned. Fogging is a way to focus on something we both can agree on, and that helps us focus on the situation instead of feelings.

Someone criticizes our suggestion in a meeting. We do not agree with their criticism and rather than take it personally, we “fog.”

- “Fogging”- Even if we don’t agree with the criticism, we can agree with the **principle** of the criticism. This means we train our mind to focus on the situation and try to find anything at all we can agree with as a starting point.
- Negative Inquiry- This is a technique used to get facts and to get an issue out in the open so it can be dealt with.

EXAMPLE: You are in a team meeting when a co-worker says to you:
“Sam, your proposal will just make more work for some of us and I don’t like it.”

“Fogging”: “Jane, none of us wants to create more work.

Negative inquiry: “What is it about my proposal that you feel will cause more work?”

TIPS FOR GIVING GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE

- ✓
- ✓
- ✓
- ✓
- ✓
- ✓
- ✓