

Professional Communication Skills

Customer Service

Customer Service

- What is it?
 - People we come to when we need help fixing a problem or when we have questions about a purchase
 - Making sure customers are satisfied and will continue to buy products or services of a company
 - Everyone who has any contact with the customer

The customer

- External customer
 - Consumers who purchase goods and services from a business
- Internal customer
 - People who work for that business or who do business with that company
- School
 - Who is the external customer? Internal customer?

Customer Service Representatives

- Provide technical assistance
- Protect customers' privacy
- Provide customers with products and/or services which meet their needs
- Ensure that customers feel they are getting good value for their money

Why is it important?

- Have you been unhappy with the service you received?
- Too many negative experiences are going to cause a serious loss of customers and revenue for a business

Characteristics for satisfaction

- Good product and industry knowledge
- Friendliness
- Knowledge of our needs
- Problem-solving skills

Discuss

- A recent customer service experience
 - 4 characteristics
- Reports have shown that customer service satisfaction has dropped significantly in recent years. Based on your own customer service experience, what do you think is the reason(s)?

Scenario

- You're working with a new employee at a clothing boutique. A customer comes in with a complaint about the shirt she purchased the day before. When she asks the new employee to assist her, the employee replies, "I'm sorry. That's not my job." Was the employee's reaction acceptable? What do you need to tell her about handling similar situations in the future? How could this situation have been prevented in the first place?

Customer Service Skills Every Employee Needs

1. Patience
2. Attentiveness
3. Clear Communication Skills
4. Knowledge of the Product
5. Ability to use “Positive Language”
6. Acting Skills
7. Time management skills
8. Ability to “Read” Customers
9. A calming presence
10. Goal oriented focus
11. Ability to handle surprises
12. Persuasion skills
13. Tenacity
14. Closing ability
15. Willingness to learn

Difficult Personalities

- Learn to understand the personalities of your customers in order to deal with them appropriately and to resolve problems efficiently

Personality Types

- Amiable
 - Friendly and outgoing
 - Talkative and eager to share thoughts and feelings
 - Highly social
 - Value the opinions of others
- Expressive
 - Center of attention
 - Self-focused
 - Social
 - Full of creativity and excitement

- Analytical
 - Know the facts
 - Aren't interested in what other people thinks
 - Their opinion is the only one that matters
 - Somewhat reserved
 - Don't always speak up about their own concerns or feelings
- Driver
 - Want fast results
 - Time conscious
 - introverted

Which one are you?

How to approach

- Amiable
 - Chat with a customer that has this personality
 - Discuss positive opinions about the product or services
- Expressive
 - Use a creative presentation that will keep their interest, avoid time on details
- Analytical
 - Stay focused on business, present facts, give him or her time
- Driver
 - Talk about results and benefits, don't try to be social and don't keep them waiting

Who are the difficult customers?

- Mr./Mrs. Nice Guy
 - Don't know how to say no, but back out of the deal or return their purchase
- Quiet Types
 - Don't feel comfortable asking questions or sharing opinions
- School Yard Bullies
 - Quick to anger, highly critical, impatient, and sometimes verbally abusive
- Wait and See Types
 - Don't want to make a decision
- Mr./Mrs. Know-it-all
 - Know everything about everything
 - Attitude is often rude
- Nothing's Ever Good Enough Types
 - Find something negative to say about everything
 - Want to complain constantly

How to handle

- Mr./Mrs. Nice Guy and the Quiet types
 - Work on forming a relationship
 - Ask conversational questions
 - Use open-ended questions to get them talking more
- Wait and See types
 - Similar strategies, but you'll need to question them about why they are hesitating and figure out ways to help them overcome those reservations.

- Mr./Mrs. Know-it-all and Nothing's Ever Good Enough Types
 - Be proactive
 - Focus on the facts
 - Bring up potential negatives before they have a chance
 - Ask them specifically how they want the situation corrected so you don't give them an opportunity to complain more

- Bullies
 - Can be the most difficult
 - Never argue or fight
 - Force yourself to remain calm and rational
 - Call for support from a supervisor
 - In extreme cases the customer may have to be asked to leave the store

Scenario

- Employee (showing travel brochures): *We've talked about several of these great vacation packages which would be perfect for your family's budget. Is there any one that you are more interested in?*
- Customer (staring at the brochures): *I'm not sure, really. They all seem so wonderful, but maybe I should wait before making a decision.*

Scenario Continued

- Employee: *Well, the Early Bird rates I gave you are only good until the end of the week so I can't guarantee those prices much longer. Last time, you said you were going to speak with your husband about the choice. Did he have a favorite?*
- Customer: *He said the decision is up to me, but I just can't make up my mind. Maybe I should wait until my son comes home from college. He might be able to help me decide.*

Scenario Continued

- Which type of difficult customer is being depicted?
- What can the employee do to deal with the customer effectively?

Problems with Customer Service

- 80% of shoppers believe store employees don't care about their business
- 60% of those surveyed take their business elsewhere when that occurs

Good Customer Service

- Good customer service should be considered everyone's responsibility and should be viewed as a major element of everyone's job position.
- Customer service begins immediately
 - Example: Host/hostess in a restaurant

Customer Service Problems

- Unprofessional behavior
- Lack of attention to customers

Correcting Problems

- Mandatory training for all employees
- Setting clear guidelines
- Adding customer service to all job descriptions
- Employees must realize that their jobs depend on those customers' loyalty and by treating them accordingly

Discuss

- Many customers of low-priced discount chains have complained about poor customer service, yet these companies are more profitable than ever. Do you believe some customers are willing to sacrifice good customer service for a lower price? Why or Why not?

Discuss

- One suggestion to increase customer satisfaction is to greet customers right away and to ask if you can help them. Most customers react positively to this approach, but a few just don't want to be bothered at all. What steps can you take with the latter group of customers to make sure they have satisfying shopping experiences as well?

Dealing with Customer Complaints

- Proactive approach
 - Requires you to anticipate potential problems and take steps to minimize or prevent complaints
 - Example
- Reactive approach
 - Deal with problems when they come up
 - Hope that problems are not discovered
 - Example

Proactive vs. Reactive

- Proactive stance boosts a company's reputation by demonstrating that they do care about the safety and welfare of their customers
- Proactive approach minimizes losses by correcting or remedying the problem before customers have to take matters into their own hands
- If you learn of a problem, you can still be proactive to deal with the situation before other customers have a chance to complain

Scenario 1

- A theme park management team is preparing to open for the summer season. They are expecting higher than average attendance records, and one of the team members points out that the lines for their attractions was a major concern last season and might cause customer complains this year. The team decides to brainstorm some ideas to solve the problem now so they can be implemented before the season gets too busy.

Scenario 2

- A restaurant owner served 35 customers meatballs which had been made with old ground beef. The problem was brought to his attention by one of the cooks, but by then the restaurant was near closing time. The cook suggested contacting the customers—many of whom were regular patrons—but the owner decided to deal with complaints as he received them.

Dealing with complaints

1. Get your emotions under control

- Don't get defensive
- Take a deep breath
- Focus on the situation in a positive manner

2. Calm down the customer

- All them to vent
- Really listen to them
- Empathize with them and show them that you understand

Dealing with complaints

3. Apologize

- “I’m sorry you weren’t satisfied”
- Don’t blame others

4. Follow the problem-solving steps

- Try to achieve a win-win solution

Dealing with complaints

- Handle all complaints quickly and resolve them to the customer's satisfaction

Scenario

- You work in a pharmacy. A first-time customer rushes in angrily because the pharmacist gave her the incorrect medication. When you examine the bottle, you find that one of the assistant's placed the wrong bottle in the woman's sack. The customer is furious over the mistake and is ranting so loudly that everyone else in the store is staring at her. What do you do?