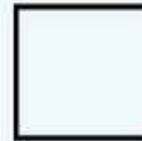


CUSTOMER SERVICE

Excellent



Good



Average



Poor



Customer Service Skills
Ebook - SAMPLE PAGES



Who is this ebook for?

The answer is anyone! The tips, tactics and techniques covered apply to a wide range of staff - in hospitals, shops, contact centres, vets, warehouses, dental surgeries, offices, hotels and factories. Staff may belong to big or small organisations; commercial; public or charity sectors. All the customer service skills are generic across all industries and backgrounds.



Customer service



It can be useful to spend some time getting into ‘the shoes of’ the customers and clients you help in your job:

- What does our level of service look like from their perspective?
- What do they think?
- How do they feel about it if they were being really honest?
- What are their expectations from us?
- What are they measuring our service against?



To facilitate this, it might be useful to work through the following exercise.

Customer service exercise

Think about examples of customer service *you yourself* have experienced in the past. For example, as a customer:

- in a supermarket, pub or restaurant
- on the phone to a Contact Centre



Think of the really good examples - you were ‘wowed’ by the service (you said to yourself: “*That’s really good - you wouldn’t get that anywhere else*”) and the really poor examples - where you were unhappy and disenchanted by what you received.

Capture your thoughts on the following pages.

“It is the customer who pays the wages.”
HENRY FORD

Bet you didn't know that exercise

Complete the gaps by inserting the correct number. This data represents general customer service research across a wide cross-section of industries?



1. It costs _____ times as much to attract a **new** customer as it does to keep an **established** one.

(Lee Resource Inc)

2. Xerox the photocopier company measured its customer satisfaction regularly. They felt very pleased that 90% of their customers said they were satisfied with the service they were receiving. Yet Xerox's market share was dropping. They discovered that it was not enough to merely satisfy customers, delighted customers were _____ **times more likely** to stay with them.

(Xerox)

3. If a customer is dissatisfied with the level of service from us, up to _____ other people, on average, will find out about it. Other consequences include loss of reputation for the brands, lower sales, poor staff morale and staff leave. (why should someone with high standards tolerate poor standards of others?)

"You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get people interested in you."

DALE CARNEGIE

Customer service statements: fact or fiction

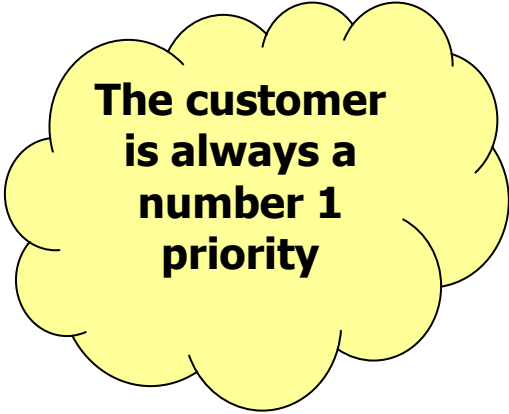
Review these statements and write down your thoughts overleaf as to whether the statements are right or wrong, stating your reasons.



Customer service is all about being friendly and helpful



The customer is always right



The customer is always a number 1 priority



Complaints are the worst thing that can happen for a business



Your views on the customer service statements

The customer is always right

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Customer service is all about being friendly and helpful

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The customer is always a number 1 priority

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Complaints are the worst thing that can happen for a business

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Superior service provider questionnaire - Page 2

Using the scale 1-6, rate your skills by circling the number that applies.

		1= NEVER do		6 = ALWAYS do			
1.	Under promises and over delivers (i.e. customer thinks 'thanks - I wasn't expecting that')	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.	Thinks ahead by anticipating problems and managing customer expectations (e.g. doesn't promise without confidence we can deliver; keeps customer informed of progress)	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.	Actions things for customers in a calm and controlled manner (e.g. keeps own worries to themselves, doesn't 'alarm' customer)	1	2	3	4	5	6
4.	Looks for improvements and ways of becoming even better at their job	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.	Asks customers for feedback on quality of department service, and own service, offered	1	2	3	4	5	6
6.	Cheerful goodbye to Customers at end of visit / phone call	1	2	3	4	5	6
7.	Demonstrates team working (e.g. offers help to colleagues under pressure; flexible with boss and colleagues; readily covers for team members)	1	2	3	4	5	6
8.	Has a positive mental attitude (e.g. balances 'moans' with solutions; is a tonic to work with)	1	2	3	4	5	6
9.	Is consistent in demonstrating behaviours/qualities above	1	2	3	4	5	6

Practical examples of superior customer service

Here are a few examples of superior customer service from different industries. All of them take little effort and time but create that ‘magic touch’ which customers remember most.

A hotel

A guest fed back.....

“The little touches by every member of the team. Walking through the hotel, everyone smiles and says hello. In the Spa, there were regular (but not intrusive) checks to see if I was okay and offers of drinks. In the restaurant my waiter took time to engage me in conversation about my day. I was very, very impressed and it underlined even more strongly to me that magic service moments aren’t just about extravagant gestures. It’s about consistent small touches that make you feel that you’re important”



Car insurance company

A female customer was very shaken and upset after a car accident. The advisor who took the claim details was comforting, patient (even though the call was extending into her lunch break) and not rushing the lady. After the call, the advisor had a quick chat with her manager and organised a bouquet of flowers to be sent to the distressed customer.

Restaurant waitress

The waitress knew everything about the menu, including what the products tasted like; recommendations on wine; names of ingredients and country of origin of ingredients. She gathered most of this information ‘off her own back’ by asking questions and researching on the internet.

In a department store

A restaurant assistant organised a replacement outfit for a customer who had spilt coffee down herself. She also arranged for her outfit to be dry cleaned and returned to her 48 hours later.

Misinterpretations in communication

- **Wrong method.**

Written communication is.....

- Good for **information** and **confirmation**
- Not good for **discussion** and **emotion**

Written communication (e.g. email; memo; notice board item) is good for conveying facts, figures, procedures and instructions. It is also good when you want to confirm agreement of a previous conversation. For example, you may write stating: *“Thanks for the meeting yesterday. Just to confirm, we agreed the following actions with timescales.....”*

Written communication is *not* good for situations where we need to convince, persuade, empathise or deliver news that won't be welcome. All of these require a degree of emotion in the way we use our voice and body language. These are two things that are absent from written communication. Words on a page are flat and virtually bereft of emotion.

The golden rule is never to send bad news via email if it can be avoided. It might avoid a difficult situation however it leaves the Receiver feeling cold, not respected and uncared for. It was once described as ‘a coward's way out’.

Written communication is also not good when we need to discuss a problem and gain agreement. Using email for example, prolongs the process and wastes time as we have to wade through reams of forwarded messages with other people's opinions, reactions and potential solutions.

- **No preparation.** Have you ever been in a situation where, at the end of a conversation, you say to yourself *“I wished I hadn't said that”* or *“I wish it hadn't come out that way”* or *“I didn't mean it quite like that”*? Perhaps a few seconds thought beforehand about what you were going to say, how you were going to say it and thinking about the sort of reaction you would get, might have helped



“Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal; nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude.”

THOMAS JEFFERSON

Best practice emailing

When sending:

- Avoid writing in capital letters (this can be the equivalent of shouting, and makes it more difficult to read)
- All dates and currencies should be written out in full, to avoid misunderstandings
- Line space your email into blocks e.g. a gap between the salutation and the start of the message; between the message and an appropriate closure
- Beware of humour and sarcasm - unless you know the recipient very well
- Re-read the message before sending, putting yourself in the shoes of the recipient - what is the tone like? What unintended messages could the recipient see in your e-mail? Am I being succinct enough?
- Double check addressees before sending. Sending a message to the wrong recipient can be both damaging and embarrassing
- Never e-mail in anger. Calm down first, or consider an alternative method - e-mail isn't good with emotion. Face to face can be a much more effective way of getting how you feel across to an individual
- If you classify all your e-mails as urgent, people may gradually stop treating them as such
- Consider posting written material on the intranet/shared drives/internet rather than email as an attachment. These can slow down systems- typically anything more than 1Mb. Perhaps consider taking out pictures to reduce the size
- Give attachments meaningful names to the Customer. If sending more than one attachment, make sure the recipient is aware of what the files are and, if appropriate, what order they should be read in
- Signature block for external emails should, as a minimum, state
 - your full name
 - company name
 - company registration number
 - telephone number
 - fax number
 - website address



Body language on the telephone

It is said that because body language is non-verbal, then it's impossible to read the other person's body language over the telephone - you can't see them! However surprisingly there are a number of body language indicators that could be detected. These include:

- **Smiling on the phone.** It lifts the tone of the voice and makes it a more pleasant, cheerful sound to listen to
- **Posture.** The energy in the voice can be stifled if you sit hunched, with shoulders forward, talking down your chest into the microphone. Before you pick up an incoming call, try taking a deep breath, put shoulders back, head up and put that smile on, as you announce your opening salutation
- **Fidgeting.** The caller can hear any sounds of impatience such as clicking biro pens or a rhythmic tapping of fingers on the desk
- **Distractions.** The tap-tap of keys on the key board when you are checking your emails as well as (allegedly) paying attention to the caller



"People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are. I don't believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and, if they can't find them, make them."

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

Message taking

Bad message taking can lead to confusion, misunderstanding and wasting time.

Try the 6 W s of message taking:

- **WHO** - is calling (with company/ department name if appropriate)
- **WHOM** - is the message for
- **WHEN** - date and time of call
- **WHY** - the reason for the call, what is it regarding?
- **WHAT** - action required
- **WHERE** - can they be reached i.e. their telephone number if the caller requires a call back?



"Every day, in every way, I'm getting better and better."

FRANK SPENCER

Assertion, aggression and passivity



Lots of people confuse assertiveness and aggression. Someone who is strident with their opinions and actions are often described as 'assertive'. However, inadvertently, this person may have been *aggressive* in their behaviour.

Of course, the stereo-typed views of aggressive behaviour as shouting and swearing are instantly recognisable. However many people at work who are mild mannered - they don't raise their voice or use swear words - still come across with an element of aggression.

This section will cover off the differences between the behaviour styles and introduce a 3 step technique to being assertive that can help with saying no, disagreeing or calm someone down who is upset/irate.



"When people talk, listen completely. Most people never listen."

ERNEST HEMINGWAY

Dealing with irate people

People Get Angry Because...



- Procedures not being completely implemented
 - Lost paperwork
 - Paperwork not being completed or completed incorrectly
 - Miscommunication or unnecessary communication
- Missed deadlines
 - People being stressed - either customers being ratty or miserable; staff and managers under pressure to get things done
 - Inflexibility in procedures (or people)

And frequently

- Vote with their feet
- Don't confront the situation
- Tell other people of their experience

Why are they angry?

People rarely get angry for any reason at all, it's when dissatisfaction is poorly managed they become angry.

Is the anger directed at you?

Although an angry person will attack you, remember that you are listening to someone who is in an 'attacking mode'.

"On two occasions you should learn to keep your mouth shut – when swimming and when angry."

ANON

Personal pledges

Answer the simple questions. In your service provider role:

- What will you **START** doing?
- What will you **STOP** doing?
- What will you **CONTINUE** doing more of?



Start

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Stop

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Continue

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“Training that brings about no change is as effective as a parachute that opens on the first bounce.”
ANON