

Communicating Effectively with Customers

Definition:

What describes GOOD service and BAD service?

Good customer service is taking that extra step to help without being asked! It's all about attitude and skills.

Attitude Checklist

What attitudes assist in providing good service?

- ▶ Enjoy helping people
- ▶ Handle people well
- ▶ Care for your customers
- ▶ Give fair and equal treatment to all
- ▶ Understanding of people with special needs

Skills for Customer Service

- ▶ Know about your organization
- ▶ Learn the technical parts of the job
- ▶ Communicate well
- ▶ Be consistent
- ▶ Be organized
- ▶ Know your place in the team and be a team player

What do Customers Want?

What do our customers want?

Greeting Customers

How can we create and maintain a welcoming environment?

- ▶ Be attentive, acknowledge a person as soon as they appear, even if you are busy
- ▶ SMILE!
- ▶ Establish eye contact
- ▶ Tell them your name
- ▶ Ask how you can help
- ▶ Give the customer your full attention
- ▶ Be polite and courteous.....

Establishing Rapport

What does good rapport feel like?

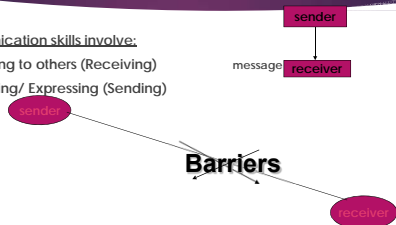
- ▶ Make the customer feel comfortable
- ▶ Make the customer feel important and valued
- ▶ Use empathy

Find out how You can Help

- ▶ How can you find out what people want?
- ▶ If you can't help, what should you do?
- ▶ Offer alternatives if possible
- ▶ If they have to wait, how would you handle it?

Communication is a 2-way Process

- Communication skills involve:
- ▶ Listening to others (Receiving)
 - ▶ Asserting/ Expressing (Sending)



The Communication Equation

What you hear

- ▶ Tone of voice
- ▶ Vocal clarity
- ▶ Verbal expressiveness

40% of the message

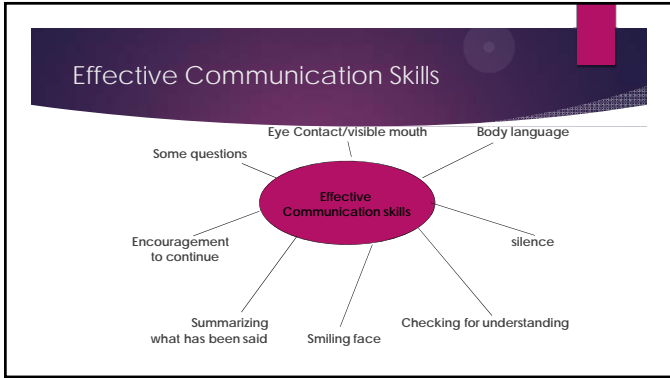
What you see or feel

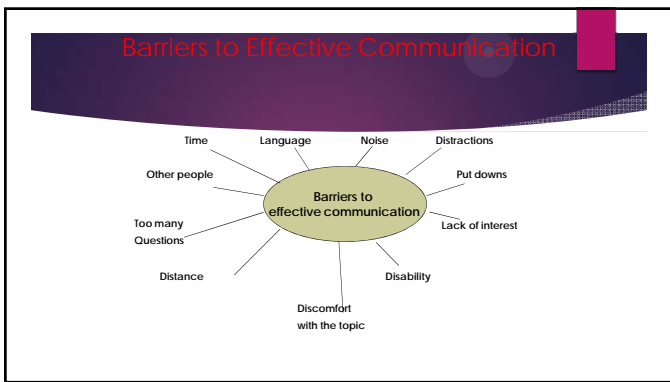
- ▶ Facial expression
- ▶ Dress and grooming
- ▶ Posture/ Body Language
- ▶ Eye contact
- ▶ Touch
- ▶ Gesture

50% of the message

WORDS

ONLY 10% of the message!





How to Listen to Customers

Active listening = Attending skills (being ready)

- > Attend to immediate needs (if you need to finish something before giving your full attention)
- > Being available
- > Eye contact
- > Attentive posture
- > Concentration


Following Skills

This opens the door to further communication

- Invitations
- Questions
- Encouragement
- Empathetic Silence

Questioning Skills

- ▶ Open Questions
- ▶ Closed Questions
- ▶ Paraphrasing
- ▶ Check for Understanding



Reflective Skills

Keeps the door open for further communication

- Paraphrasing
- Reflecting Facts
- Reflecting Feelings
- Summarizing
- Choosing your Words
- Useful Phrases

Using Your Voice

Do you

- ▶ Become loud when angry or upset
- ▶ Speak faster when nervous
- ▶ Speak slowly when tired or bored
- ▶ Have a cheerful voice
- ▶ Have a tone of voice is warm and understanding
- ▶ Find it easy to talk to people you don't know
- ▶ Control your tone in most situations
- ▶ Sound bossy, weak or unsure
- ▶ Have a clear and easy-to-hear voice
- ▶ Speak in a very formal or very trendy manner?

Think about how you might modify your voice in certain situations

Body Language for a Positive Result

What is good body language?

- Smile
- Introduce yourself (if appropriate) or wear a name badge
- Shake hands if appropriate
- Lean forward
- Be aware of cultural differences

Telephone Skills

- ▶ Know how to use the phones
- ▶ Speak clearly and slowly
- ▶ Smile (you can hear it in your voice!)
- ▶ State your name and organization
- ▶ Write down the caller's name and use it
- ▶ Don't say rude things while someone's on hold
- ▶ If they're explaining something use words to show you're listening (umm, yes...)
- ▶ Have pad and pencil ready to take notes or messages (check spelling and message content)
- ▶ Don't eat or drink while on the phone

Written Communication

- ▶ Write clearly and concisely
- ▶ Refer to their letter, date and query
- ▶ Be friendly without being too informal (*Dear Aunt* writingstyle)
- ▶ Check your spelling and grammar
- ▶ Make sure you've answered their query or request or explained why you can't
- ▶ Be timely or apologize for any delay inreplying

Guaranteeing Return Business

- ▶ Leave a positive impression, smile
- ▶ Check customers have everything they need
- ▶ If you've said you'll follow-up, do so
- ▶ Tell them something that may be useful to them later (eg new service starting soon)
- ▶ Invite them back
- ▶ Say goodbye

A Positive Organizational Image

First impressions count and will affect the interaction. People make judgements in the first 30 seconds.

Golden Rule - You only have one chance to make a first impression!

Organizational Assessment

- ▶ Take a look at your organization through the eyes of a customer.
- ▶ What are the first things you notice?
- ▶ What has the organization done to make you feel welcome?
- ▶ Does anything make you feel uncomfortable?
- ▶ How could you feel more at ease?

- ▶ How can we make people feel more comfortable?

Presentation and Manner

- Does your Organization have a policy on presentation?
- ▶ Uniforms, badges, etc
 - ▶ Personal hygiene
 - ▶ Clothing – appropriate to the situation
 - ▶ Hair – cleanliness and style
 - ▶ Accessories – jewelry, earrings, watches, tattoos,
 - ▶ Expression – facial expressions
 - ▶ Tone of voice
 - ▶ Body language
 - ▶ Surroundings (Can they see a messy desk? Dead flowers in the vase? Eating your lunch?..)

A Positive First Impression

- ▶ Be confident
- ▶ Knowledge - know your organization and the services you provide
- ▶ Confidentiality
- ▶ Follow up (don't just say you'll do something, do it)
- ▶ Strengthen the customer's commitment to your organization

What to Avoid

- ▶ Saying 'I don't know' without offering an option
- ▶ Saying you don't know where a colleague is or saying they're at lunch/ toilet/ gone for coffee etc
- ▶ Leaving people on hold for a long time
- ▶ Ignoring people if you're busy
- ▶ Treating people unequally

Factors Affecting the Quality of Service

- ▶ Reliability
- ▶ Confidence
- ▶ Responsiveness
- ▶ Efficiency
- ▶ Consistency
- ▶ Organization
- ▶ Acceptance of and adherence to policies and procedures

Customers with Special Needs

- ▶ People for whom English is not their first language
- ▶ People with disabilities
- ▶ People from other areas who may not be familiar with the way things are done here
- ▶ People with limited mobility

Planning Good Customer Service

- ▶ Recording procedures (when are your busy times)
- ▶ Observe and report customer needs
- ▶ Be proactive in improving service
- ▶ Market your office
- ▶ Have processes and procedures for dealing with difficult situations BEFORE they happen and make sure staff are trained.

Dealing with Difficult Behavior

- ▶ Label the behavior, not the customer
- ▶ Listen
- ▶ Don't get defensive
- ▶ Don't take it personally
- ▶ Find out what the customer wants
- ▶ Discuss alternatives
- ▶ Take responsibility for what you CAN do
- ▶ Agree on action

The Talkative Customer

- ▶ Ask closed questions
- ▶ Limit the time available for them to interrupt (don't have long pauses)
- ▶ Provide minimal response
- ▶ Smile and be pleasant, but don't encourage them
- ▶ Have an exit strategy
- ▶ Wind up - thank them for coming, walk them to the door but don't be rude or dismissive

The Angry Customer

- ▶ Listen carefully without interrupting so you understand the problem
- ▶ Empathize in a broad way
- ▶ Stay calm and remain polite
- ▶ Don't escalate the problem
- ▶ Don't take it personally, be defensive or blame others
- ▶ Propose an action plan and follow it
- ▶ Seek support if you are scared, if you can't agree on a solution or if the customer asks to see "whoever's in charge"

The 'know it all' Customer

- ▶ Acknowledge what they say
- ▶ Compliment them on their research
- ▶ Be generous with praise
- ▶ Don't put them in their place no matter how tempting
- ▶ Don't try to be smart - you can't win!
- ▶ Ask them questions and use them to improve your knowledge

The Indecisive Customer

- ▶ Find out what they really want
- ▶ Ask them for the options
- ▶ Reflect back to them what they've said
- ▶ Assume control gently and point out the best course of action from what they've told you they need
- ▶ Be logical
- ▶ Confirm a plan of action with them
- ▶ Maybe even put it in writing

The Suspicious Customer

- ▶ Establish your credibility
- ▶ Ensure you know your product or service
- ▶ They will try and catch you, so don't guess or tell them something you're not sure of
- ▶ Be careful what you say
- ▶ Be polite
- ▶ Don't take it personally, they don't trust anyone!

Scenarios

What are your customer service issues?
