

WORKSHOP 1 CUSTOMER CARE

GOALS

- ▶ Understand the importance of effective customer service.
- ▶ Explore the components of good customer service.
- ▶ Discover how good communication skills improve customer service.



©2001 PhotoDisc, Inc.

IT'S NOT A BUSINESS WITHOUT CUSTOMERS

The way you look, act, and talk when you meet customers can have a lasting effect on what they think about you. Essential to individual and company success, good customer service determines whether you make a sale today, whether you develop good long-term relationships with clients, and even whether you get promoted. This workshop focuses on the importance of customer service to the success of any business.

Communicating with Customers Resources

- Video (27: 21)
- CD-ROM Study Guide
- Instructor's Resource CD-ROM
- WebTutor
- ExamView Pro Testing CD-ROM

Would You Want to Shop Here?

It is doubtful that Mira would give this store a second chance. Also, this store could potentially lose the business of everyone Mira tells about this experience.

Would You Want To Shop Here?

A new bookstore opens in Mira's town, and she stops in one Saturday afternoon to get a copy of the latest sci-fi thriller. There are hundreds of books on the racks. When she can't find the one she's looking for, she walks over to the cashiers to get some information. While Mira waits at the counter, one cashier is talking on the phone. The other is putting price tags on sale merchandise. Neither worker acknowledges her.

Mira waits a couple of minutes. She clears her throat and taps her fingers on the counter, trying to get their attention. Still, they ignore her. Finally, popping her gum and looking annoyed, one of them says, "You need somethin', Ma'am?"



Do you think Mira will shop at this store again? Why?

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Never Underestimate the Importance of a First Impression

Customer service begins in the first moments of interaction between you and your client. It's your responsibility to make every minute count.

- First impressions are lasting impressions.
- One of the first things customers notice is how workers dress, act, talk, and respond to questions.
- Good employees are those who demonstrate good customer service—the first time and every time.

Good Customer Service Necessities

No one can provide customer service alone. Customer service is a business-wide endeavor that requires:

- A company policy that puts customers first
- Training for the staff
- Positive manager and employee attitudes

Five Quality Factors that Determine Good Customer Service

Good customer service does not happen by accident. It takes the efforts of every worker to serve customers in a way that will make them want to come back again and again.

- **Responsiveness.** Acknowledge every customer. If you can't be of immediate assistance, say so. Try to anticipate a client's needs, offer to help, and respond courteously to questions. If you don't know an answer, find someone who does.
- **Reliability.** Follow through on what the company promises. Deliver goods and services on time and in good condition.
- **Assurance.** Build a feeling of trust and confidence in customers. Call or e-mail customers to make sure they are satisfied.
- **Empathy.** Try to understand the customer's side of the story. Be polite and considerate of people's feelings. Accommodate special needs, such as physical disabilities, and hearing or vision impairments.
- **Appearance.** Make the environment inviting to the customer. Dress appropriately, and keep your work area neat.

Key Ideas

- ★ **customer service**—work performed by an employee for the benefit of customers or clients
- ★ **quality**—degree of excellence; superior in kind

Tools of the Trade

This workshop introduces the key elements of good customer service. Review with learners the Key Ideas and definitions and the basic points in Tools of the Trade.

Encourage learners to share memorable examples of customer service (both excellent and frustrating) from their own experiences.

Introduction to Communicating with Customers

View and discuss Segment 1: *Introduction to Communicating with Customers*. Running time: approx. 3:30.



INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNICATING WITH CUSTOMERS

Segment 1

Shopping is usually fun—unless you have to deal with sales associates who don't know their merchandise or who can't help you find the item you're looking for. The video you are about to watch follows customers through good and bad customer service experiences. As you watch the video, try to identify all of the components of quality customer service you observe in action.



This customer is pleased by the sales associate's thorough knowledge of the product.

Post-Viewing Questions

1. Answers will vary. Customers want problems to be resolved in a fair and just manner by an interested representative.
2. Consequences include frustrated workers and customers, and lost business.
3. Letting customers know you understand their frustration; having high product knowledge and answering customers' questions fully and honestly; taking customers directly to the products they're looking for.

Post-Viewing Questions

1. As a customer with a problem, what kind of service would you expect?

2. What are some consequences (to workers, businesses, and customers) of poor customer service?

3. How did workers in the video demonstrate empathy, assurance, reliability, and responsiveness to their customers?

If Life Gives You Lemons, Make Lemonade

At an outdoor café in Naples, Florida, Carlos greets a pair of exhausted shoppers. His broad grin and bright smiling eyes welcome them warmly. “It sure is hot today,” Carlos says. “Can I get you a nice, cool lemonade while you look over the menu? We use only the freshest Florida lemons in every glass. I think you’ll really enjoy it.”

Carlos has made a great first impression. His cheerful greeting diverted the customers’ attention from the afternoon’s heat and humidity, offering some comfort and relief.

As the diners examine their menus, Carlos is back in a minute with two frosty glasses, each topped with a fresh lemon slice and a bright red cherry. “Take your time checking out our delicious entrees, but save room for dessert,” he says. “The pasta dishes are especially good, and our double-chocolate cheesecake is absolutely fantastic. I’ll be right over there if you need me to explain any of today’s specials.”

The restaurant manager, standing near the front desk, notices how Carlos treats the customers. She appreciates his friendly manner and knowledge of the menu items. She knows that there are many other restaurants in town that serve good food, and customer service is a key reason why many diners return to her restaurant time after time. Servers such as Carlos have helped the café become one of the most successful restaurants in this trendy resort community.



How did Carlos exhibit the following quality factors of customer service?

Responsiveness: _____

Reliability: _____

Assurance: _____

Empathy: _____

Remember, people will judge you by your actions, not your intentions. You may have a heart of gold—but so does a hard-boiled egg.

—Anonymous

On the Job

If Life Gives You Lemons, Make Lemonade

Responsiveness—Carlos greets customers immediately and tries to anticipate their needs.

Reliability—He offers certain menu items and delivers them as promised.

Assurance—He makes customers feel comfortable and confident by knowing the menu so well.

Empathy—He realizes the customers are warm and tired and offers them refreshments.

Literature Connection

Dolores Dante

by Studs Terkel

The following passage from Studs Terkel's *Working* is one of several excerpts from interviews the author elicited from workers in various industries.

Dolores Dante

Lead a discussion about Dolores' unique approach to serving customers. Discuss the things that make her service unique. Compare Dolores' service style with the customer service guidelines presented in this workshop. Answers to questions that follow the story will vary and should be explorative in nature.

Dolores values service and is proud of her job. She is cheerful and strives to make her customers think and laugh. She goes out of her way to keep her job interesting and enjoyable, and this comes across in the ways she communicates with her customers.

sotto voce—under your breath; quietly

Carmen—the title character of the famous opera; a gypsy girl who is a stunning and manipulative

I have to be a waitress. How else can I learn about people? How else does the world come to me? I can't go to everyone. So they have to come to me. Everyone wants to eat, everyone has hunger. And I serve them. If they've had a bad day, I nurse them, cajole them. Maybe with coffee I give them a little philosophy. They have cocktails, I give them political science. I'll say things that bug me. If they manufacture soap, I say what I think about pollution. If it's automobiles, I say what I think about them. If I pour water I'll say, "Would you like your quota of mercury today?" If I serve cream, I say, "Here is your substitute, I think you're drinking plastic." I just can't keep quiet. I have an opinion on every single subject there is. In the beginning it was theology, and my bosses didn't like it. Now I am political and my bosses don't like it. I speak *sotto voce*. But if I get heated, then I don't give a damn. I speak like an Italian speaks. I can't be servile. I give service. There is a difference. I'm called by my first name. I like my name. I hate to be called Miss. Even when I serve a lady, a strange woman, I will not say madam. I hate ma'am. I always say milady. In the American language there is no word to address a woman, to indicate whether she's married or unmarried. So I say milady. And sometimes I playfully say to the man milord.

It would be very tiring if I had to say, "Would you like a cocktail?" and say that

over and over. So I come out different for my own enjoyment. I would say, "What's exciting at the bar that I can offer?" I can't say, "Do you want coffee?" Maybe I'll say, "Are you in the mood for coffee?" or, "The coffee sounds exciting." Just rephrase it enough to make it interesting for me. That would make them take an interest. It becomes theatrical and I feel like Mata Hari and it intoxicates me.

People imagine a waitress couldn't possibly think or have any kind of aspiration other than to serve food. When somebody says to me, "You're great, how come you're *just* a waitress?" "*Just* a waitress," I'd say, "Why, don't you think you deserve to be served by me?" It's implying that he's not worthy, and that I'm not worthy. It makes me irate. I don't feel lowly at all. I myself feel sure. I don't want to change the job. I love it.

Tips? I feel like Carmen. It's like a gypsy holding out a tambourine and they throw the coin. (*Laughs.*) If you like people, you're not thinking of the tips. I never count my money at night. I always wait till morning. If I thought about my tips I'd be uptight. I never look at a tip. You pick it up fast. I would do my book-keeping in the morning. It would be very dull for me to know I was making so much and no more. I do like challenge. And it isn't demeaning, not for me.

How does Dolores provide unique customer service to her customers? Do you think her customers appreciate her service?

Dolores Dante, from *Working* by Studs Terkel. Reprinted by permission of Donadio & Olson, Inc. Copyright © 1972, 1974 Studs Terkel.

PRACTICE

1. With a partner, design two role-playing situations that demonstrate an example of (1) good customer service, and (2) poor customer service for:
 - Returning a defective appliance
 - Asking a sales associate for help finding a specific pair of shoes
 - Ordering a meal at a fast food restaurant
 - Waiting in line at a concert
2. Use an Internet search engine (Google, Yahoo, Excite, etc.) to find suggestions for good telephone etiquette. After reading the information on several Web sites, suggest some ways to serve customers by phone. Be sure to include ideas for dealing with customers both when *initiating* and when *receiving* a client's phone call.
3. Check the Web sites of several prominent companies in your community. Review them based on the customer service features they have (e.g., product information, phone numbers). Suggest ways in which the Web sites could serve customers better.



Practice

1. Each skit will have unique features, but examples of good customer service should include the concepts presented in this workshop: a good first impression, appearance, reliability, empathy, assurance, and responsiveness.
2. Answers will vary, but should include listening carefully, giving the customer undivided attention, using the "hold" feature sparingly, and being prepared with a pen and notepad at all times. When initiating a call, speak and state the message clearly. Be sure to give a return phone number. When receiving a call, listen carefully and write down all important information, including the caller's name, phone number, and time of the call.
3. Web site reviews will vary, but learners should evaluate them based on customer service factors such as quality of information, ease of navigating, and links to other sites.



On the Net

The following Web sites profile professionals who improve their businesses through effective customer service.

www.customerserviceawards.com

www.icsa.com/public/activities/

SUMMARY

- Making a good impression is the first step toward good customer service.
- Quality customer service is the responsibility of every employee.
- Serving customers involves attitude, appearance, and action.
- The five quality factors of good customer service are: responsiveness, reliability, assurance, empathy, and appearance.

REVIEW QUESTIONS



Review Questions

1. First impressions are important because they provide a client's initial contact with a company. A good first impression will encourage customers to return. Bad impressions can discourage customers from patronizing the business again.
2. Answers will vary. Refer learners to the "Carlos" example on page 5.
3. Answers will vary. Customers should always be treated as though they are right, even when they are not. Never quarrel or try to "win" with a customer.
4. Answers will vary. The customer who complains to you is providing you with valuable information about how to improve your service and your company's image.

1. Why is a first impression so important to a business?

2. Give an example of each of the five quality factors of good customer service.

3. What do you think is meant by the saying, "The customer is always right"?

4. Some say, "The customer that complains to you is your friend." What do you think this means?

How can I be useful, of what service can I be? There is something inside me, what can it be?

—Vincent Van Gogh

PROJECTS

1. Visit three or four similar shops in your community or in a nearby mall (e.g., shoe stores, sporting goods shops, jewelers). Observe the appearance of the store and the attitudes of its workers. Write a short narrative explaining why you would shop at one store rather than the others based upon your first impressions.
2. For a week, observe the actions of sales associates in stores, servers in restaurants, receptionists in business offices, and workers in government buildings (e.g., post office, driver's license bureau, or library). Record your observations in a journal, dividing the journal into two columns labeled "Good Service" and "Poor Service." At the end of the week, discuss all of your experiences, suggesting ways that poor service could have been made better.
3. Obtain the toll-free phone numbers of several credit card companies. Phone their customer service departments and ask for information about interest rates, fees, incentives, and other credit-related issues. Based on your experiences, make a chart that compares each company's customer service effectiveness.
4. Interview (in person, by phone, or by e-mail) a human resources manager at a local company to find out how employees are trained to provide quality customer service. Report your findings through a multimedia presentation.

Projects

Have students complete one or more of the suggested projects as a homework or out-of-class assignment. Encourage them to work in pairs or small groups.

Projects should reflect students' understanding of the necessity for good customer service and the importance of first impressions.

Require students to address at least three of the five quality factors in their projects.

DID YOU KNOW?

Good Customer Service Is Good Business

- ◇ 65% of a company's business comes from repeat customers.
- ◇ Customers refer friends, who then become customers.
- ◇ Unhappy customers tell 8–16 people about their bad experiences.
- ◇ Through Internet chat rooms, an unhappy customer can now tell thousands of people!
- ◇ 91% of dissatisfied customers won't shop at the same store again.
- ◇ A company can increase profits from 25% to 100% by simply reducing the number of unhappy customers.
- ◇ Customer loyalty can lead to increased sales.
- ◇ If a problem is handled quickly and to a customer's complete satisfaction, 80% will do business with the company again.