

Telephone Skills And Customer Care: Contents

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QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Quality customer service is provided by a person like you. A quality customer service provider is a person who:

1. Accepts responsibility for providing timely customer service in a courteous manner.
2. Understands that the success of an organisation depends on good customer service.
3. Learns and practices customer service skills in a positive manner.

Often employees are so busy there is little time to think about their jobs or how they relate to the overall success of the company. Sometimes, those who spend much of their day on the telephone talking with outsiders don't consider their jobs to be very important. The fact is, anyone regularly involved with customer contact has one of the most important jobs in that organisation. Here are some points to consider:

- The success of a company depends on customers. These customers will not return unless they are treated professionally and courteously.
- Many customers consider the whole organisation's customer service from interactions they have with just one individual.
- 'You' are the company when you speak to your customers.
- Customers don't care about your problems - they care about their problems.
- You don't have to be the world's best customer service organisation - you just need to be better than all your competition.
- Anyone working directly with customers occupies a position of trust.
- Companies with reputations for outstanding service were built over time by people like you.

Customer Service Is Everyone's Responsibility

When we think about customer service, it is common to think that certain individuals or departments are the only ones responsible for providing that service. However, in most organisations customer service departments represent only a portion of the overall service responsibility. Everyone, from the MD to the cleaning staff provides customer service and contributes to a company's reputation for service and courtesy. If **all** employees learned to provide a better service, your company's reputation with customers would be considered excellent.

In this course you will learn about telephone techniques to help you become more professional when you are dealing with customers and clients. Learning good techniques and skills is essential but not as important as applying what has been learned on a daily basis.

Think for a moment about the role of the telephone where you work. Chances are it would be difficult to conduct business without it. Although there are salespeople and other representatives who meet face to face with customers

to generate business, the telephone is probably responsible for most customer contacts.

On an average day, do you know what percentage of your customers receive service over the telephone compared to contact in person by a representative of your company? Although companies differ, it is not unusual to have more than 80 percent of customer contact provided by the telephone.

EXERCISE - YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF CUSTOMER SERVICE

Split into groups and discuss the following. Elect a spokesperson who will read out your groups findings. The discussion should not last more than 15 minutes.

1. What do we consider to be the 5 most important factors of good customer service?
2. What are your service expectations when *you* are the customer dealing with organisations face-to-face; on the telephone, via the internet etc?
3. **Great Service** - give an example of when you have received excellent customer service from an organisation (this can be from any organisation; large, small, via the internet, over the phone etc). Pick the best example for your spokesperson to read out.
4. **Terrible Service** - give another example of when you have received really bad customer service. Pick the best example for your spokesperson to read out.
5. Discuss and guess how much on average in the UK does an individual spend on these items during their lifetime?
 - a. Total lifetime expenditure
 - b. Insurance
 - c. Evening meals
 - d. Music - records, cds, downloads etc
 - e. Electricity and gas

MANAGING YOUR CUSTOMER'S EXPECTATIONS

Great customer service is about exceeding customer expectations. When a customer uses your organisation they know the product or service they need, but they will also consider your customer service as one of the key factors that determine whether they decide to buy from you, or whether they return. Great organisations always keep an eye on the whole customer experience from 'product to purchase to after sales activity'. They know how to exceed customer's expectations.

Typical customer expectations:

- They are friendly and want to help us.
- They are courteous.
- They offer assistance and advice.
- They ask permission before placing me on hold.
- They are concerned. They want to help.
- They offer additional help.
- They appreciate my business.

EXERCISE

Split into groups and discuss the following. Elect a spokesperson who will read out your groups findings. The discussion should not last more than 15 minutes.

This activity is designed to give you a chance to focus on your own organisation/department, and to consider the needs of your customers.

1. Identify four groups of people who are your customers:
2. What do they expect of your organisation/your department?
3. What are their expectations of your product or service?
4. How well are you meeting or exceeding your customer's expectations? Do you have any measures/standards that allow you to gauge accurately your service levels?

Session 2

Customer Service Essentials

Purpose		
For delegates to understand the key factors for great customer service.		
No	Purpose	Directions
1	Explain to delegates that they will be exploring Customer Service essentials. Refer to ' <i>Quality Customer Service</i> ', MANUAL pg. 2.	MANUAL pg. 2
2	EXERCISE 2: Delegates to split into small groups (2 – 3) and complete ' <i>Exploring Customer Service</i> ', MANUAL pg.3. Allow 15 minutes; Record answers on FLIP (Trainer's Answer sheet for questions 5 and 6 can be found in Course Instructions, pg. 17).	MANUAL pg. 3 / FLIP / Course Instructions pg. 17
3	Explain to delegates that Customer Service is managing and exceeding the customer's expectations.	
4	EXERCISE 3: Remaining in their groups, delegates to complete ' <i>Managing Your Customer's Expectations</i> ', MANUAL pg.4. Allow 15-20 minutes; Discuss the findings of the group; trainer to focus on no. 4 ' <i>measures/ standards</i> '; if the group are unaware of any measurable standards that currently exist, explain that this will be examined in the next exercise (if standards do exist - ask how they are monitored?).	MANUAL pg. 4 / SLIDE 5-6
5	Read ' <i>Standards of Customer Service</i> ', MANUAL pg.5. Outline current organisational standards, or question group what presently exists for 'Service Standards' within their organisation. Explain that one of the best ways to discover how well your organisation is doing is to ' <i>ask your customers</i> '.	MANUAL pg.5
6	EXERCISE 4: Circulate ' <i>Customer Service questionnaire</i> ' and explain each section. Delegates to complete this form with a customer within a month of returning to their workplace, to see what improvements have been made.	HO
7	Discuss Customer Service Standards with the group – explain that when they are agreed and in place, it gives customers peace of mind and allows staff to accurately measure their own Service Levels. Read ' <i>Setting Standards</i> ', MANUAL pg.6 - there are two examples of service standards for different organisations, i.e. ' <i>Housing Association</i> ' and ' <i>Library</i> '. Allow delegates to relate the given examples to their organisation, and discuss how practical they are AND how they could improve customer service.	MANUAL pg. 6 / SLIDE 7
8	EXERCISE 5: Delegates to remain in groups and complete ' <i>Setting Customer Service Standards</i> ', MANUAL pg. 7. Allow 15-20 minutes for discussion. Record answers on FLIP and discuss whether these should be implemented within their organisation.	MANUAL pg. 7 / SLIDE 8 / FLIP
<i>Timings 45 minutes</i>		

Session 2

cont...

Special instructions

In Exercise 2, discuss the *'Terrible service'* examples given by the group - ask delegates if there are circumstances which may excuse the organisations mentioned from delivering good service e.g. being let down by their suppliers, staff sickness etc. Most delegates will answer that they *'don't care'* about the organisation's problems, as they were the customer. Stress to delegates that they are correct in their beliefs, as there is no excuse for poor service. Should the group make excuses about their own organisation's problems, they can be similarly reminded that their *'customers (also) don't care!!!!'*

For Exercise 5, you could record the answers from each group onto FLIP as a 'Charter for excellent service': this can be added to as the day progresses. You could refer back to *'Setting Customer Service Standards'*, MANUAL pg.7.

Preparation and materials

MANUAL: pg. 2 - 7
FLIP
SLIDE: 5 - 7
HO: questionnaire, all pages 1-3