Essential Skills for Customer Service

Orientation Seminar

Retail Essential Skills to Rural Employees – R.E.S.T.O.R.E
A partnership project of Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) and Canadian Chamber of Commerce (CCC)

Funded By Human Resources Skills Development Canada (HRSDC)
THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION IN THE RETAIL SECTOR
"I’m the Nice Customer Who Never Comes Back"

You know me. I’m the nice customer. I never complain no matter what kind of service I get. I’ve found people are always disagreeable to me. Life is too short for indulging in these unpleasant little scrimmages. I never kick. I never nag. I never criticize. I wouldn’t dream of making a scene as I’ve seen people doing in public places. I think that’s awful!! I’m the nice customer.

I’ll tell you what else I am. I’m the customer who never comes back. That’s my revenge for getting pushed around. In fact, a nice customer like me, multiplied by others of my kind can just about ruin a business.

There are a lot of nice people just like me. When we get pushed far enough, we go down the street to another store. We shop in places where employees are smart enough to hire help who appreciate good customers. Together, we do them out of millions every year.

It’s terrible when I see businesses frantically spending their money on advertising to get me back when they could have held my business in the first place with a few nice words and a smile.
EFFECTIVE LISTENING
AND SPEAKING SKILLS
WHY IS LISTENING SO IMPORTANT?

“You just listen to the customer, and then you act on what they tell you”

Listening effectively helps us to determine the needs of our customers. These needs may include whatever the customer wants or expects us to provide. A skilled listener will pick up on different cues and ask questions or probe to determine the real issue or need.

Most people take the listening skill for granted. People think that anyone can listen effectively. **BUT** this is not true. How many times have you gone to a restaurant and your order was wrong???? This happens all of the time.

**ACTIVITY**

How well do **YOU** really listen? Please complete the following Self-Assessment. Let’s be very honest when doing this. It can only help you!!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A= always</th>
<th>O= occasionally</th>
<th>N=never</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I focus all my attention on the same speaker when conversing.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I consciously look for issues or action during conversations.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>I actively listen to avoid appearing uninterested.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I take notes as I listen.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>I listen for new ideas and not just details or facts.</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>I think about how someone might respond to what I might say.</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>I observe and evaluate the speaker’s physical posture and gestures.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I avoid daydreaming as I listen.</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>I avoid letting my emotions get in the way of my listening.</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>I make eye contact with people as they speak.</td>
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If you did not rate **YOURSELF** as “ALWAYS” in each instance, focus on the strategies to improve as we go through this seminar.
WHAT IS LISTENING

Listening is the primary means of gathering information. Listening is an active process, whereas hearing is a physical action of gathering sound waves through the ear canal. When you actively listen, you go through a process of hearing, attending, comprehending, and responding. We will now go talk of each of these components.

**Hearing**

- Hearing

**Attending**

- Attending

**Comprehending**

- Comprehending

**Responding**

- Responding

**HEARING**: Your ears pick up sound waves, they are gathering information that your brain will analyze. During this procedure, external noise and internal distractions may distort the customer’s message. You as a retailer must change your ability to listen more effectively and after completing this module, I am sure you will have no problems.

**ATTENDING**: Once your ears have gathered the sounds, your brain goes to work trying to sort out everything that is being heard. Here is where you decide what’s important so you can focus your attention on the proper sound. This can become extremely difficult when you are receiving multiple messages or sounds. You must try to eliminate as many distractions as possible.

**COMPREHENDING**: Once you decided which message or customer to listen to, your brain begins a process of assigning meaning to what you heard. Just like a computer, your brain has files of information- sounds, sights, shapes, visions, experiences, knowledge on various topics- it sorts through. As it compares what was heard to what is sorted, it tries to match the pieces. This is called *memory and recognition*.

**RESPONDING**: Selecting an appropriate response is crucial to the success of your customer interactions. The words you select, the way you deliver them and the non-verbal signals you send all have meaning. You must take care when selecting the right response and method of delivery when dealing with customers.
BARRIERS OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

In groups of 3, how many ideas can you possibly think of that are barriers to the communication process.

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CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD LISTENER

To help you in your efforts to becoming a better listener, listed below are some examples you may want to consider.

**EMPATHY:**
Put yourself in the customer’s place. Try to relate to their wants, needs and issues.

**UNDERSTANDING:**
Listen to the customer and make sure that you are understanding what the customer actually wants.

**PATIENCE:**
Slow down and do not rush the customer. Make the customer feel important and let them know that you are there to help them.

**ATTENTIVENESS:**
Focus your attention on the customer. Attentiveness is often displayed through non-verbal cues (i.e. nodding of the head). The customer will know if they have your full attention.

**OBJECTIVITY:**
Avoid subjects that are controversial (i.e. politics, religion, opinions etc.). Do not have preconceived notions about customers. Have you ever judged a customer because of what they were wearing? You do not want to lose a sale so treat all customers alike no matter how they look or dress etc.
ACTIVITY

Take a few minutes to think about all of the people you have ever known to be good listeners. List the names of 5 below along with the characteristics that you feel made their listening effective. We will discuss this with the rest of the class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>CHARACTERISTIC</th>
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<td>1.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
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Now that you’ve identified the characteristics of a good listener, ask yourself, do I have any of those characteristics?
PROJECTING A POSITIVE IMAGE

Knowing what to say and when to say it can often determine the outcome of a customer encounter. As a retail professional, you should always attempt to make a positive impression by focussing on the customer and his/her needs.

Here are a few tips for projecting a positive image and communicating professionally. More on communication will be discussed in great detail in the telephone section.

1. **Be Prepared:** Know as much as you possibly can about the company you work for and its products and services. Always have the tools that are needed to perform your job.

2. **Think First, Then Speak:** Plan your messages. Know what you want and need to say, avoid unnecessary details or discussions, and be prepared to answer questions about the company, products and services.

3. **Greet Customers Warmly:** Always smile and render a sincere welcome. Tell the customer your name and ask how you may assist them.

4. **Communicate Clearly and Concisely:** Don’t use vague or weak terminology. Avoid words like, “I’m not sure....” instead say “Let me get that answer for you.”

5. **Be Positive:** Customers do not want to hear what you cannot do; they want to hear how you will satisfy their needs.
COMMUNICATING POSITIVELY

You can win over customers with your word choice. The following techniques might help.

1. **Use the customer’s name**: Most people like to recognize. If you know the person’s name, use it. Nothing is as sweet as hearing your own name.

2. **Use positive “I” or “we” messages**: Focus on what you the retailer can do for the customer. Use “I” or “We”.

3. **Be Honest**: If you cannot do something or don’t have a product or service, admit it and be prepared to offer an alternative.

4. **Accept Responsibility**: Take responsibility for what you do and say. Seek to make amends or resolve issues. If you don’t have the authority needed, get someone who does rather than referring the customer to someone else.

5. **Use Simple Language**: Use terms and explanations that the customer can understand. Do not try to empower the conversation by using big technical words that will only frustrate the customer.

6. **Thank the Customer**: Always let the customer know you appreciate their time, effort, patience, trust and **BUSINESS**!
THE IMPORTANCE OF
NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION
“SILENCE CAN BE A SPEECH”

WHAT IS NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION?

We constantly send non-verbal messages to others. Non-verbal cues tell a lot about your personality and attitude and your willingness and ability to assist customers.

The following are the different categories of non-verbal cues. We will discuss each of these in detail.

1. Body Language  
2. Appearance / Grooming  
3. Voice Cues  
4. Spatial Cues  
5. Environmental Cues  
6. Miscellaneous Cues

1. Body Language
   Reading body language is to realize that your interpretations should be used only as an indicator of the customer’s true meaning. Everyone may not use non-verbal cues in the same manner as you do. Below are a few typical forms of body language. Please give an example for one.

   a. Eye Contact: __________________________________________________________
      __________________________________________________________
      __________________________________________________________

   b. Posture: __________________________________________________________
      __________________________________________________________
      __________________________________________________________

   c. Smiling: __________________________________________________________
      __________________________________________________________
      __________________________________________________________

   d. Gestures: __________________________________________________________
      __________________________________________________________
      __________________________________________________________
2. Appearance and Grooming

Through your appearance, you project an image of yourself and the company you work for. Good personal hygiene habits and attention to your appearance are crucial in a customer environment.

**Hygiene:** Personal care and cleanliness are the basics to successful customer service. Avoid excessive use of make-up, cologne, and perfume.

*Can you recall a time when you went to a store and worker lacked cleanliness? How did it make you feel? Have you gone back to that store since?*

**Clothing and Appearance:** While certain types of clothing and accessories are acceptable in the work environment, others are distracting and inappropriate. If the company that you work for does not have a policy outlining acceptable standards, just ask your supervisor if it is OK to wear something that is not the norm.

**ACTIVITY**

What does professional appearance mean to you in your place of employment?

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How can you improve upon your professional appearance?

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3. Voice Cues

Voice qualities such as volume, rate, quality and articulation and other verbal communication attributes can send non-verbal messages to customers.

**FOR EXAMPLE:**

**Volume:** How loud are your vocal messages sent? Depending on the surrounding noise, you may have to raise or lower your volume.

**Rate of Speech:** The average rate of speech is 125-150 words per minute. Speech that is either too fast or too slow can be distracting and cause messages to lose their effectiveness.

**Articulation:** Do not use slur words such as “gotta run” or “Wass-up?” Articulation refers to the clarity of your word usage.

**Pauses:** Do not use “uh, er, um, eh-huh”. Think before you answer or speak.

**Silence:** A good way to show respect or show that you are listening to the customer is to remain silent as they speak. **Have you ever been interrupted while you were speaking? How did you feel?**

**Semantics:** If you use a lot of jargon (technical/ industry-related terms) or complex words that customers may not understand because of their background, education, culture, or experience, you run the risk of irritating, frustrating, or dissatisfying them.
4. Spatial Cues

“**You are in my space.**” When you violate this distance for others, their discomfort level is likely to rise and they may back away and become defensive or offended. Spatial distance between speakers is a key aspect of non-verbal communication.

**COMFORT ZONES**

**Intimate distance:**
*0 to 18 inches.
*Usually for family or intimate relations.

**Personal distance:**
*18 inches to 4 feet.
*Usually for your close friends and business colleagues.

**Social / Work distance:**
*4 to 12 feet.
*Usually for business events.

**Public distance:**
*12 feet or more.
*Usually at large gatherings, activities or presentations.

**ACTIVITY**

Can you recall a time when someone invaded your space? What do you think should have been the appropriate distance and why? How did this make you feel? Please share your experience with the rest of the group.

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5. Environmental Cues

If your workplace appears disorganized with pencils, materials, forms scattered everywhere, or if stacks of boxes, papers stapled to the walls and garbage bags in view, customers may perceive that you and the company you work for has a bad work attitude and may not want to do business with you. Customers question your ability and commitment to serve.

Activity

What are some environmental cues that you should be aware of in your place of employment?
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6. Miscellaneous Cues

A. Personal habits:
   Chewing gum while serving customers, smoking outside the entrance of the store, endless talking, talking about personal problems.

B. Follow-through:
   If you tell a customer that you are going to do something, please do it. For example if you tell a customer that the make-up she ordered will be here on Friday, do your best to see that it is there on Friday.

C. Proper etiquette / manners:
   Respect your customer. Use “please “and “thank you.” Treat a customer in the same manner as to how you would like to be treated when you go out to make a purchase!
PROFESSIONAL TELEPHONE TECHNIQUES
PROFESSIONAL TELEPHONE TECHNIQUES

The telephone is the most powerful and critical tool in customer communication that requires *SKILL* and *PROFESSIONALISM*.

First of all, **WHAT IS A CUSTOMER?**
Basically, a customer is someone seeking a service or product. We, as retailers are responsible for selling that service or product, but more importantly, selling **OUR ORGANIZATION AND OURSELVES!!!!!**

It is important to establish rapport with out telephone customers.

**RAPPORT:** is the ability to put yourself on the same wave length as your customer. It is a sense of sameness; an ability to identify with him or her.
Essential Skills For Customer Service

**There are 3 kinds of Customers:**
1. Those seeking information
2. Those seeking action
3. Angry and irate callers

**There are 3 types of Customers:**
1. Satisfied
2. Dissatisfied
3. Potential customers

Listed below is a breakdown of customers a company loses annually:

1% die 
3% move away
5% form other business relationships
9% leave for our competition
14% are dissatisfied

**32% TOTAL**

**BUT!!!!!!!**

68% leave because of an attitude of indifference on the part of 1 employee.

**YOU** can make your organization look great or you can make your organization look terrible in the way **YOU** answer the telephone and the image that you project!!

**REMEMBER!!**

A customer that receives good service tells, on average, 3 other people; 
A customer that receives poor service tells, on average, 11 other people.
7 C’s OF CUSTOMER SERVICE

1. Caring:
   - for your organization
   - for your customer
   - for yourself

2. Confident:
   - in giving answers to technical questions (i.e. Product knowledge)
   - in handling people

3. Considerate:
   - handling customer emotions as best you can.

4. Committed:
   - going that extra step for the customer

5. Creative:
   - giving new answers to old questions.

6. Controlled:
   - be in control of yourself always, no matter how upset the customer may be.

7. Contagious:
   - what you project over the telephone is often what you will receive from the other party.
“CUSTOMERS ARE NOT AN INTERRUPTION OF YOUR JOB, THE ARE A MAJOR PART OF IT”

TELEPHONE ATTITUDE

- be aware of your attitude.

- be aware of what you are saying to yourself.

- be aware of the magic in the first 10 seconds:
  (i) to like you or not
  (ii) to trust you or not
  (iii) to continue to talk to you or seek someone else

- recognize and appreciate your caller.

- use the caller’s name.

- convey loyalty to your organization to every customer AND NEVER place blame on co-workers.

- be enthusiastic with every call.

- the customer’s perception of YOU is what’s important, not your perception of yourself.

ACTIVITY

Recall a time when you could have chosen a different attitude on the phone which may have had a different outcome. This can be positive or negative. We will share these with the class.
PERSONAL TOOLS OF INFLUENCE

1. Posture: Headset if at all possible.
2. Smile: Before you dial.
4. Speaking Rate: Adjust your speaking rate to your caller’s, unless he/she is upset.
   - **Average rate:** 130-150 words per minute
   - **Fast rate:** 180-190 words per minute
   - **Slow rate:** 100-120 words per minute
5. Voice volume: How loud you should raise your voice.
6. Clear enunciation: Pronounce each word correctly and clearly.
7. Energy level: 30% of the energy in your voice is lost over the telephone line.
8. Avoid Voice Turn-offs: Apathetic tone; no interest; irritated, hesitant.

ACTIVITY
In groups of two, please practice answering the telephone using the Personal Tools of Influence. We will not be presenting before the class - Please have fun with this activity.
Words of Wisdom

When you feel stressed out, before answering the next call.............

* think of something pleasant.

* practise deep abdominal breathing.

* do stretching exercises.

* take a short break.

* use the buddy system - talk about your disturbing call.

* take a mini-mental break (60 seconds).
YOUR LANGUAGE AND WORD CHOICE ARE IMPORTANT

Choose assertive language:
Include “I” messages and non-imitating language.

DO NOT choose AGGRESSIVE language:
Include “YOU” messages and intimidating language.

EXAMPLES:

AVOID: “You have to......”
MAYBE: “Will you” or “Will you please”

AVOID: “I’m sorry”
MAYBE: “I regret” or “I apologize”

AVOID: “Your problem”
MAYBE: “Your situation” or “Your concern”

AVOID: “I’ll try”
MAYBE: “I will” or “I’m going to”

ACTIVITY

In groups of 2, please role-play different scenarios using both assertive language and aggressive language. If you were the customer, which style would you prefer and why?

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8 STEPS FOR DEALING WITH ANGRY, IRATE CALLERS

1. Deal with the anger professionally, not personally.

2. Listen carefully, BUT don’t be totally silent - look for understanding, not agreement.

3. Show empathy. Acknowledge how the person is feeling, BUT don’t say “I know exactly how you feel.”

4. Identify the customer’s needs and wants by asking questions and probing.

5. Offer options: tell the caller what you can do, NOT what you can’t do.

6. Move to a positive solution. Avoid “You have to...”

7. Thank the person for calling us with his/her complaint.

8. Follow through on any and all commitments made.

“WELCOME COMPLAINTS. People who complain are giving us a second chance to do business with them”
THINKING ON YOUR FEET

“WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE MADE A MISTAKE”

1. Call the customer before he/she calls you.
2. Admit guilt and move on.
3. Convey your concern and your regret.
4. Move to the resolution of the problem.
5. Accept responsibility for the entire operation and be prepared to apologize, no matter who is responsible.

ACTIVITY

In the past, have you ever made a mistake at work? Please share in how you handled the situation. How did the customer respond?

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TREATING PEOPLE IN A SPECIAL AND IMPORTANT WAY

1. Give them your undivided attention.

2. Listen carefully.

3. Use “please” and “thank you”.

4. Be the customer’s representative.

5. Take notes and tell the customer that you are doing so.

6. Use the customer’s name. Nothing is as sweet as hearing your own name.

ACTIVITY

Recall a time that you treated a customer “extra special”. How did it make you feel?
Recall a time when you were treated extra special as a customer. How did it make you feel?

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THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF A RETAIL SALESPERSON
Sales are the exchange of products or services for **MONEY**!

Sales are the driving force for the global economy and a vital part of every human interaction.

Companies exist for the sole purpose of meeting the needs of their customers through products or services. Without sales they would go bankrupt. Without customers the company you work for would close its doors.

**How would this affect the economy around you?**

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**How do you meet the needs of your customers? What products and or services do you supply to customers?**

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**How does your role as a Retail Salesperson affect the company you work for?**

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______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
SALES APTITUDE QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer each question to the best of your ability.

1. I like dealing with many people on a daily basis.
   
   \[
   \begin{array}{ccc}
   \text{NO!} & \text{Neutral} & \text{YES!} \\
   1 & 2 & 3 \\
   \end{array}
   \]

2. I enjoy handling challenges.
   
   \[
   \begin{array}{ccc}
   \text{NO!} & \text{Neutral} & \text{YES!} \\
   1 & 2 & 3 \\
   \end{array}
   \]

3. I work well under pressure.
   
   \[
   \begin{array}{ccc}
   \text{NO!} & \text{Neutral} & \text{YES!} \\
   1 & 2 & 3 \\
   \end{array}
   \]

4. I have a high stress tolerance.
   
   \[
   \begin{array}{ccc}
   \text{NO!} & \text{Neutral} & \text{YES!} \\
   1 & 2 & 3 \\
   \end{array}
   \]

5. I am self-motivated and able to maintain enthusiasm.
   
   \[
   \begin{array}{ccc}
   \text{NO!} & \text{Neutral} & \text{YES!} \\
   1 & 2 & 3 \\
   \end{array}
   \]

6. I can handle it when people disagree with me.
   
   \[
   \begin{array}{ccc}
   \text{NO!} & \text{Neutral} & \text{YES!} \\
   1 & 2 & 3 \\
   \end{array}
   \]

7. I want a lot of involvement with others.
   
   \[
   \begin{array}{ccc}
   \text{NO!} & \text{Neutral} & \text{YES!} \\
   1 & 2 & 3 \\
   \end{array}
   \]

8. I like to be on the front line.
   
   \[
   \begin{array}{ccc}
   \text{NO!} & \text{Neutral} & \text{YES!} \\
   1 & 2 & 3 \\
   \end{array}
   \]

9. I get satisfaction from helping people solve their needs.
   
   \[
   \begin{array}{ccc}
   \text{NO!} & \text{Neutral} & \text{YES!} \\
   1 & 2 & 3 \\
   \end{array}
   \]

10. I can keep my moods in check and concentrate on getting the job done.
    
    \[
    \begin{array}{ccc}
    \text{NO!} & \text{Neutral} & \text{YES!} \\
    1 & 2 & 3 \\
    \end{array}
    \]
THE SELLING PROCESS

The concept of selling a product or a service involves many steps. Below you will find a chart to go by. Each step will be discussed and examples will be given.

STEP 1
Product and Customer Knowledge

STEP 2
Define Customers Needs

STEP 3
Presentation and Demonstration

STEP 4
Handling Objections

STEP 5
Closing the Sale

STEP 6
Follow-up
#1. PRODUCT AND CUSTOMER KNOWLEDGE

You must know all the details that accompany your product or service. You also have to believe in your product. You cannot expect someone to purchase from you if you yourself are not using or wearing or purchasing the product you represent.

You also have to know you customer. When possible, find out who your customers are, anticipate their needs and develop options to meet their needs.

**How might you learn about your product?**
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______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

#2. DEFINE CUSTOMER’S NEEDS

It is easy to help customers who know exactly what they want. But it takes a little skill and patience to figure out what a customer needs. We have to determine the customers’ needs and wants and then make recommendations to them.

What questions would you ask to determine your customers’ needs?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

#3. PRESENTATION AND DEMONSTRATION

Successful retail salespeople present options to match the customer’s needs. This may sometimes involve demonstrating the use of the product or service. You have the knowledge!!!! In this step, how you present the information to your customer makes a big difference.

How would you present your suggestions?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
#4. HANDLING OBJECTIONS
Welcome objections and see them as valuable concerns. Dealing with objections allows you to find out more about the customer’s likes and dislikes. Salespeople who effectively address concerns build better customer relationships.

As a retail salesperson, what are some objections you may encounter?
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___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

#5. CLOSING THE SALE
This step should come naturally if the other sales process has been followed. The decision to buy should be left with the customer, ALWAYS!!! This decision should be easy if you asked the right questions, knew your product and or service and handled objections well.

How would you go about closing the sale? How would you know when the customer was ready?
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___________________________________________________________________

#6. FOLLOW‐UP
In the final stages, the follow-up with your customer is to make them feel valued and appreciated. When personal contact is made, the customer is left with the sense that the salesperson really does care.

How can you provide follow-up to your customers? Who benefits from this?
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___________________________________________________________________
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___________________________________________________________________

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CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS
AND
SERVICE RECOVERY
“WORKING WITH PEOPLE IS DIFFICULT BUT IT IS NOT IMPOSSIBLE”

Most customers have a specific type of product or service in mind. They are willing to let you help them if you do so in a positive, pleasant, and professional manner. Then there are others who, because of their own outlook on life, attitude, personal habits, or background, may cause you frustration and require additional effort. The key is to accept that you will have to deal with people like this and try your best to service them. You should remain calm and professional at all times.

The following are a few categories of customers you may encounter and some strategies for dealing with them.

#1. DISSATISFIED CUSTOMERS

Every now and then, you run into customers who are not happy when you meet them. They may have received bad service in the past and even though it was not you who personally served them they remain unhappy at first. Your job is to make that customer happy. I would encourage the following:

a. Listen- When most people are upset all they really want is for somebody to listen to them.

b. Remain Positive- These people drain your energy. Do not add fuel to their fire by adding your own negative comments. Smile and add positive comments into the conversation.

c. Be Compassionate- Remain warm hearted and show you care about their feelings. Serve them quickly and properly.

d. Take Appropriate Action- After you have gathered all information, analyze it and make a decision. Work with the customer to satisfy his or her needs.
ACTIVITY

In groups of 2, examine the company that you work for. Look for items, issues, or factors that might contribute to customer dissatisfaction. Make a list of these items and come up with strategies for eliminating or reducing them all together. You will have approximately 25-30 minutes to complete this activity.
#2. INDECISIVE CUSTOMERS

You will meet people who for one reason or another cannot make a decision. They spend hours trying to make that “RIGHT” choice. Indecisive customers can deter you from doing your job effectively or to assist other customers. Below are some strategies to help you when dealing with indecisive customers:

a. Be Patient- Keep in mind that while they can be frustrating, they are customers.

b. Ask Open-ended Questions- Try to get as much information as possible.

c. Listen- Focus on verbal and non-verbal messages for clues to determine concerns and interest.

d. Suggest Other Options- Offer alternatives,”... if your husband doesn’t like it, you have 14 days to return it for a complete refund.”

e. Guide Decision Making- Offer suggestions or ideas to the customer. Be assertive not aggressive.

ACTIVITY

Think about some times when you have been decisive about something. What helped you make a decision? What was creating your indecisiveness? How can you help satisfy an indecisive customer?

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#3. ANGRY CUSTOMERS

Dealing with angry people requires lots of patience and understanding. You as a retailer, must move beyond the emotions and try to understand why that person is angry. Below are some possible strategies for you to follow that could help you in dealing with an angry customer.

a. Acknowledge angry customers’ feelings - Do not deny they’re angry, this could lead to confrontation. Avoid saying, “You really don’t have to be upset,” instead try saying, “I can see that you are upset and I want to help resolve this issue. Could you please give me some details?”

b. Remain Objective - If the customer raises his or her voice or uses profanity, remain CALM! Angry customers are mad at the company or product, not you personally. When dealing with an angry customer in this situation, try to move to a secluded area away from other customers.

c. Listen - When people are angry, they need to “get it off of their chest.” Let them vent and then speak. Do not interrupt them as they speak.

d. Reduce Frustrations - Do not add further frustrations by doing the following:
   (1) Transferring a caller to another extension AGAIN.
   (2) Do not leave them to serve another customer.
   (3) Avoid putting them on hold repeatedly.

e. Be Positive - Tell the customer what you can do, not what you cannot do.
ACTIVITY

In groups of 2, identify situations in which you had to deal with an angry person. Think about what made that person angry and what seemed to calm him or her. What strategies did you use? Please share this information with the class.

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#4. DEMANDING OR DOMINEERING CUSTOMERS

People can be demanding for a number of reasons. It may be a part of their personality or it could be a reaction to past customer service encounters. A demanding customer feels a need to be in control and most of the time they are insecure. Strategies for handling demanding customers could include:

a. Be Professional:
   Do not raise your voice or verbally retaliate.

b. Handle them with Respect- Be firm and fair. You do not have to give into their every command. Tell them what you can do for them not what you can’t do.
#5.RUDE OR INCONSIDERATE CUSTOMERS

Some people go out of their way to offend others just to get attention. They think that they are being funny but we know what they really are......!!!! Usually people who are like this are often insecure and prey on others. Below are some strategies for dealing with rude customers.

a. Remain Objective & Fair- Be pleasant. Don’t try to let them know who’s in control. This will make them angrier. Do not embarrass them in front of other customers.

b. Remain calm & Professional- You will probably keep them as a customer if you remain calm and professional.

**ACTIVITY**

In groups of 2, make a list of possible rude comments that a customer might make to you. When they are done I would like for you to come up with possible responses for these rude comments. We will discuss and share these with the rest of the class.

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#6. TALKATIVE CUSTOMERS

Have you ever approached a customer and ended up in a conversation that never seemed like it was going to end? It happens all of the time. We want to help the customer and be friendly; however, when they start discussing personal experiences, family problems, school, work etc. and it goes on and on and on and on....... What do you do?

Here a few tips for you to go by:

a. Remain friendly and warm-hearted but focussed.

b. Ask open ended questions to determine needs. Once the needs are determined ask close-ended questions to better control and shorten conversation with the customer.

**REMEMBER:**

While you are with a talkative customer another customer is being neglected.
8 STEPS TO FOLLOW IN HANDLING COMPLAINTS

When customers have a complaint or an issue to be solved, they want solutions, not excuses. To ensure that you address their needs effectively, you need to know some key tips in problem solving......................

) Assess Severity- Gather all information and see how serious the problem is.

) Apologize- You represent the company. You are sorry for their inconvenience.

) Avoid Blaming- Don’t point fingers at another employee. Take responsibility; you do work for the company.

) Partner for Solutions- Work with the customer not against. Tell them what you can do for them.

) Listen to Understand- ACTIVE LISTENING. You have to understand what you are dealing with.

) Remain objective - If you are just brought into the situation, you can provide an objective opinion. Offer suggestions or opinions that the customer may have overlooked.

) Say “thank-you” - Let customers know that you appreciate knowing their concerns and issues. After all you cannot fix something if you don’t know it is broken.

) Ask Questions- Ask questions to gather as much information as you possibly can to help fix the problem at hand.
SERVICE RECOVERY
WHAT IS A SERVICE BREAKDOWN?

Service breakdowns occur daily in many organizations. They happen whenever the product or service fails to meet customer expectations. In some cases the product or service may be just the way it is supposed to be; however, if the customer perceives that it should work another way, a breakdown occurs. An example of this would be, a ferry does not leave or arrive as scheduled.

Please list other examples of possible service breakdowns.

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COMPLAINT RESEARCH SHOWS........

) only 4% of unhappy customers complain (they simply don’t return)

) For every complaint received, 26 customers have problems (6 of which are serious.)

) On average, each customer with a problem tells 9 or 10 other people about it.

) A customer who has a complaint satisfactorily resolved or a positive experience will tell 3 to 5 people.

) It takes 3 to 4 positive customer encounters to compensate for 1 negative.


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EMPLOYEE CAUSES OF SERVICE BREAKDOWN

These elements relate to your own abilities, competencies, knowledge levels, and expertise in dealing with others.

**Communication Skills:** your verbal, non-verbal, written communication, and listening skills often determine whether you’ll have to initiate a service recovery strategy. For example, if you effectively communicate directions for a piece of equipment you sell, a customer may not have difficulties once he or she gets home. This avoids customer frustration and complaints.

What would the impact be?

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**Knowledge:** In order to serve your customers effectively, you need to have ample knowledge of products, services, the organization, procedures and policies and their goals and mission statement.

By knowing this information, what would the impact be?

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**Attitude:** The way you perceive your company, self, job and customers determines much about the quality of service you provide.

What do you think the impact would be?

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**Technical Skills:** You need to safely and effectively use equipment and systems at the workplace. For example, computer, debit machines, telephone, fax machines etc.

What is the impact of knowing how to operate the equipment?

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STRATEGIES FOR PREVENTION OF SERVICE BREAKDOWN

THINK LIKE THE CUSTOMER!
PAMPER CUSTOMERS!
RESPECT CUSTOMERS!
FOCUS ON THE CUSTOMER!
EXCEED EXPECTATIONS!

STEPS TO FOLLOW IN IMPLEMENTING A SERVICE RECOVERY STRATEGY

1. Apologize: Show sincere remorse.
2. Take Immediate Action: As soon as a problem arises fix it right away!
3. Show Compassion: Do not disregard the customers concerns.
4. Provide Compensation: Prove to the customer that they are valuable and you are trying to make up for their inconvenience.
5. Conduct Follow-Up: Check and see if the customer is truly satisfied.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are numerous resources available both in text books and on the World Wide Web. This manual incorporates many of the ideas and concepts of these resources. To ensure the original creators are given due credit, the following list acknowledges those sources whose content directly influenced the development of these Retail Modules.


Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador, St. John’s Newfoundland. (1992)

Job Enhancement and Essential Skills, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). (2009)


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