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1. INTRODUCTION

HOW TO USE THESE MATERIALS

This workbook relates to providing customer service and is appropriate to people employed in a range of workplaces in the rural, regional and remote sectors of Australia. Skills and knowledge developed will ensure your work meets customer service acceptable work practices for your industry sector. Resources and activities provided are designed to develop your skills and provide formative assessments to monitor progress.

Completion of appropriate summative assessments provided by your Registered Training Organisation (RTO) will enable you to achieve competency in the unit applicable to your sector.

These student materials apply to the following industry sectors and units of competence.

Sector	Unit code	Unit name
Retail/Agribusiness services	BSBCUS301A	Deliver and Monitor a Service to Customers
Business Services	BSBCUS301A	Deliver and Monitor a Service to Customers
Community and Health services	CHCCS412D	Deliver and Develop Client Services
Local Government, Civil and Construction	LGACORE103B	Provide Service to Local Government Customers

2. LEARNING MATERIALS

WHAT ARE THEY ABOUT?

The learning materials discuss issues related to the provision of Customer Service including:

- Identify customer needs
- Use interpersonal skills to identify and clarify customer needs and expectations
- Establish client service procedures and develop products and services
- Establish a rapport with customers
- Use professional ethics
- Communicate effectively with the customer
- Deliver a service to clients that meets their rights and upholds statutory and legislative requirements
- Promote client services and the business
- Manage difficult customer situation

2.1 EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

The learning materials provide opportunities to develop and apply employability skills that are learnt throughout work and life to your job.

The statements below indicate how these processes are applied in the workplace related to customer service. In completing your daily work tasks, activities and summative assessments you must be able to demonstrate competent “employability skills” in the workplace.

Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communicating verbally with others in negotiation, training and questioning • writing a range of simple documentation and communications • listening to and understanding work instructions, directions and feedback
Teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working as an individual and a team member • Identifying and utilising the strengths of other team members
Problem Solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using manuals and other documentation to overcome problems with information technology or other office equipment • resolving client concerns relative to workplace responsibilities
Initiative and Enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrating individual responsibility for completing tasks • suggesting improvements to support the development of improved work practices and team effectiveness
Planning and Organising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gathering, organising and applying workplace information for the organisation's work processes and information systems
Self-Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying development needs and seeking training to fill needs • balancing own ideas, values and vision with workplace values and requirements • taking responsibility at the appropriate level
Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of products and services
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using information communication technology to communicate with team members or clients

3. IDENTIFY

CUSTOMER NEEDS

Customers have an expectation of effective and efficient customer service. The competitive nature of business says that good customer service is a minimum standard. Excellent customer service will help provide a competitive “edge” to the business.

Your customers have an expectation that you will correct problems quickly, provide appropriate solutions and advice and be knowledgeable about the products and services you provide.

The most successful businesses, small or large, make customers feel as though they are part of the team. The customer feels included in decisions, important to the business and a valued voice in providing feedback and suggestions for improvement.

→ ACTIVITY 1

What are the processes related to customer service in your workplace NOW. Think about your workplace and answer the following questions:

What processes does the business have in place for dealing with customer queries?

How does your business keep in touch with what the customer wants?

When you started your job or were interviewed, what were you told about:

How to communicate with customers

How to answer the phone

How to respond to a customer who is asking questions that you cannot answer

How to respond to a customer who is angry or upset

3.1 USE INTERPERSONAL SKILLS TO IDENTIFY AND CLARIFY CUSTOMER NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS

For a business to thrive, it must keep pace with its customer's changing needs. It must accurately identify needs and implement changes to meet those needs. You have already thought about what you were told regarding customer service when you first started at your workplace, use that information to assist with activity 2.

→ ACTIVITY 2

A number of suggestions are provided below regarding improving customer service. After each suggestion you are required to provide an example regarding how the suggestion can be specifically implemented for your business.

1. EXCEED CUSTOMERS' EXPECTATIONS

Most businesses can satisfy the basic expectations of a customer. What about delighting your customers and always exceeding their expectations in some small way. If the business aims to exceed customers' expectations on every interaction and are consistently able to do this they have a good chance of keeping customers for life.

What is your suggestion for exceeding customer expectations in your workplace

2. PROVIDE PERSONAL ATTENTION TO CUSTOMERS

Providing personal attention to customers who are going to reciprocate by being consistently good purchasers of your products or services, is good business. Make sure the business holds personal information about customers (with their permission) so that they can be personally contacted with special deals or information. The more your customers feel as though you are treating them individually, the more likely they are to continue their relationship with you.

What is your suggestion for providing personal attention to customers

3. REWARD LOYAL CUSTOMERS

Reward your customers for being loyal. It provides a vital link between your business and your customers, improving customer satisfaction and sales. Rewards can be designed to suit your business and may include product discounts, free gifts, special personal assistance.

What is your suggestion for rewarding loyal customers

4. ALWAYS KEEP IN TOUCH

Customers keep using your business if you have a strong relationship and they trust you and your products or services. Your “keep in touch” strategy should consider the best method (e-mail, telephone, newsletter); the frequency (weekly, monthly, quarterly, event-based) and, what to talk about (your company’s business activity, industry information, tips and hints, useful resources).

What is your suggestion for keeping in touch

5. GAIN NEW CUSTOMERS FROM EXISTING ONES

Always ask customers if they know of any other people that would be interested in your products or services. Existing customers are your major source of referrals and new businesses. Through them, you get access to new customers who already know about you and have a positive opinion of what you do.

What is your suggestion for gaining new customers from existing ones

6. APPRECIATE YOUR CUSTOMERS

Thank customers for referrals, feedback and suggestions they make. It makes them feel recognised and reinforces a positive behaviour so that they like helping you and referring your business. Remember that the last thing they want is for a friend to come back to them unhappy about a referral they have made, so don’t let them down. A thank you can be as simple as an email, a hand-written card, a phone call, or a personal thanks next time they are in the workplace.

What is your suggestion to improve customer appreciation



4. ESTABLISH

A RAPPORT WITH CUSTOMERS

There are a number of basic rules that apply when you are establishing rapport or a relationship with customers.

Show a genuine interest in the customer:

Customers prefer to do business with people they like. You can gain this approval by establishing rapport, or a positive connection, with a customer.

Rapport can be established by:

- asking questions
- making eye contact
- offering to help
- recognising mutual interests
- simple gestures such as calling a customer by their name

You will usually find that the customer responds to this type of behaviour by identifying you as being keen to assist them to understand their needs and find a solution to their problem. The time you take to establish a relationship with the customer will enhance their commitment and trust in the organisation.

Refer the customer to another appropriate organisation if you are unable to help:

If you cannot help, or refer to another person in the business, honestly tell the customer. It would be even better if you could spend a few minutes talking to them to gather more information and then accurately refer them to the correct organisation.

Provide translations or bilingual support to non English speaking customers

Most businesses operating in a situation with non English speaking clients will have set procedures and systems to appropriately service these clients. It is important that you treat these customers with the same respect and courtesy as every other client, even though they may have difficulty communicating.

Present a positive, can do, will help, attitude at all times

A positive, "will help" attitude is important at all times but absolutely critical when the customer is giving you negative feedback or complaining about the service they have received.

Empathic phrases are a simple and easy way of conveying that you understand your customer's situation. You may try using the following phrases:

- I can see how difficult this must be for you.
- I understand what you mean.
- I understand how inconvenienced you must feel.
- I am very sorry that this has happened to you.

Use a genuinely warm and caring tone, to enhance the meaning and effectiveness of empathic phrases.

Saying "I'm sorry" to a customer does not imply that you or your organisation did anything wrong; it simply conveys that you are genuinely sorry that the customer has had a bad experience.

Check with your workplace policies or procedures or your supervisor or team leader regarding your organisation's preferred method of dealing with angry or dissatisfied customers.

When a customer is upset, they want to express their feelings, and they want their problem solved.

Be patient and allow time for the customer to express their feelings. The customer will be more prepared to listen to you once they have 'got their feelings off their chest'. You can then begin to participate more actively in the process of solving their problem. Let the customer know that you understand why they are upset and that you are ready to help them.

4.1 USE PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

In your personal life, ethics guide you in deciding what is right or wrong. We all have an ethical framework that we operate within. Organisations also develop an ethical framework in which the business operates. This ethical framework is influenced by a number of factors, such as laws, codes of practice and socially acceptable standards of behaviour.

In some cases, organisations are controlled by laws that state how employees are to behave in certain circumstances. Organisations in the health, real estate and finance industries, for example, may have legislation and regulations that state that employees must maintain customer privacy or declare full fees or costs or any fee they receive for selling a product.

You may be required to sign a contract of employment that includes a commitment to ensure that your workplace practice and behaviour consistently complies with the Code of Ethics.

Behaving in an ethical way not only protects your employer's interests but contributes to building a good relationship with customers.

Your workplace policy and procedures may contain information promoting a workplace culture that demonstrates respect for customers, colleagues and other parties who interact with the organisation.

You may also develop your own personal code to follow, that enhances the attitude that you demonstrate to others in your workplace.



→ ACTIVITY 5

Complete the table below. Against each item provide an example that demonstrates how you behave ethically in the workplace. Some examples may relate to your own “personal ethics”. Others may relate to a specific workplace policy or procedure.

Workplace action	Example related to your personal ethics	Example with a formal workplace policy/procedure
You are honest and ethical		
You give customers information in a way they can understand		
You listen to customers and respect their views		
You maintain and develop your professional knowledge and skills		
Making the needs of the customer your primary concern		
You recognise the limits of your role and don't attempt to advise a customer outside your capability		
You respect and protect confidential information		
You respect customers' dignity and privacy		
You treat every customer politely and considerately		
You work with colleagues in ways that best serve customers' interests		
You help customers correctly with regard to warranties, legal rights		

5. COMMUNICATE

EFFECTIVELY WITH THE CUSTOMER

5.1 WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?

Communication is the sharing of information between two or more individuals or groups to reach a common understanding. The most important part of communication is the expectation that information provided is understood. Communication cannot assume that agreement is reached. A person can participate successfully in a communication process but can still disagree.

There are two types of communication, verbal and nonverbal. Participating in communication using words either written or spoken, is verbal communication. Nonverbal communication includes all messages without using written or spoken language and includes facial expressions, body language, style of dress and physical elements such as buildings, office furniture and signs.

Whilst the following You Tube video is not business or work related it certainly provides some footage where “nonverbal” communication is actively being used.



Click here view video “nonverbal communication ”

OR if you are using the printed resource, enter the address below into your web browser.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=VfDWQG47pAQ

5.2 BARRIERS TO GOOD COMMUNICATION

There are many issues that can impact on good communication. Bear these in mind when listening to another person and think about how these may be affecting your own communication:

- closed-minded attitude
- making judgements
- boredom
- limited time
- own needs
- physical discomfort
- lack of concentration
- I know better attitude
- disgust
- prejudice
- feeling threatened

Think about how it feels when you know someone is not listening to you. You may feel neglected and angry. In contrast when you know someone is really listening, you feel that your opinion counts and what you say matters to the other person, whether they agree with you or not.

5.3 WHEN SHOULD I USE ONE-TO-ONE (FACE-TO-FACE) COMMUNICATION?

Face-to-face is the best communication method when you require immediate feedback. This is because face to face provides the greatest number of feedback sources including voice, eye contact, posture, blush, and body language. Remember that “face to face” can also include the use of technologies such as Skype. It is the appropriate medium for delegating tasks, coaching, disciplining, instructing, sharing information, answering questions, checking progress toward objectives, and developing and maintaining interpersonal relations.

5.4 WHEN SHOULD I USE WRITTEN COMMUNICATION?

Written communication can be misinterpreted depending on the “style” of writing and how the reader understands or perceives the message. However where documentation or a “history” of a conversation (ie email) is required, written communication is essential.

5.5 WHEN SHOULD I USE THE TELEPHONE?

Telephone or spoken electronic communication provides only the cue of voice inflection, not the visual cues available from face-to-face interaction. The telephone is the appropriate medium for quick exchanges of information and for monitoring progress or providing updates of progress. It is especially useful for saving travel time.

5.6 COMMUNICATION IS AGE AND CULTURE APPROPRIATE

The great thing about customer service is you will come across people from all walks of life. Not everyone we deal with will have English as their first language.

You may also have hearing or visually impaired customers or customers in a very different age bracket. It is important to treat all customers with respect and understanding when there is a possible communication barrier.

- use drawings, dramatic gestures, actions, emotions, voice, mime, chalkboard sketches, photographs and visual materials to provide clues to meaning
- simplify your message as much as possible breaking them into smaller, manageable parts
- make sure the customers attention is focused
- don't insist on eye contact when you are speaking to them. This is considered rude in many cultures
- modify your speech and talk at a slow-to-normal pace, in short sentences
- use simple sentence structure (subject-verb-object) and high-frequency words
- ask simple yes/no questions
- accept one-word answers or gestures
- be an active listener and give full attention to your customer and their attempts to communicate
- talk in a calm, quiet manner. Raising your voice does not help comprehension
- demonstrate your patience through your facial expressions and body language
- give your customer extra time to respond
- don't jump in immediately to supply the words for the customer

5.7 SUMMARY

The topic of effective communication can be very complex. However, you are only concerned with your communication skills in the workplace. From your perspective providing excellent customer service is an essential and basic practical skill. The list below summarises the essential points to achieve when you are communicating with customers.

- **Clear and accurate** – speak at a rate your customer can understand you. Have product knowledge in what you sell. Give correct information.
- **Open, not judging** – have an open posture, do not judge the way your customer is dressed or presents himself or herself (you do not know how much they have in their wallet).
- **Mind customers feelings** – be professional at all times, be aware of the words you use.
- **Mention their name** – use the customers name as this makes them feel special and valued.
- **Unlearn your own bad habits** – be aware of your own behaviour, always be self-assessing.
- **Non-verbal messages matter** – make sure you are displaying positive body language, smile, make eye contact, good posture.
- **Interest in people** – take a genuine interest in the customers needs. This will build rapport and trust.
- **Calm if they are angry** – stay calm and professional if the customer is upset. Do not take it personally. Find out the facts and resolve the problem. Thank the customer for bringing the problem to your attention.
- **Ask questions, get feedback** – ask your customer open questions to find out what they are looking for. Ask reflective questions to confirm their needs and that you are showing them the correct product.
- **Tell about products and services** – give your customers information on new products and services you may be offering.
- **Enjoy working with all types of customers** – if you do not genuinely enjoy dealing with customers, get out of the service industry and let someone who does.

The hyperlink to the slide show from Volunteering SA is also a useful summary to help reinforce good customer service skills. www.ofv.sa.gov.au/pdfs/mods_Introductioneffective%20communication.pps



6. DELIVER A SERVICE

TO CLIENTS THAT MEETS THEIR RIGHTS AND UPHOLDS STATUTORY AND LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

As a person employed to provide a service to customers, you must ensure that all services are consistent with customer needs and rights and meets relevant statutory and legislative requirements.

6.1 WHAT ARE THE MAIN ORGANISATIONS / LAWS THAT ARE IN PLACE TO MANAGE CONSUMER RIGHTS.

The following links and information are provided as a general resource for your information. You are not expected to use these resources as a part of this work book, however they are useful to have if you need more detailed information. In your workplace you are expected to meet the regulatory and legislated requirements as instructed by your supervisor/employer. If you are at all unsure or a customer asks difficult questions please make sure you do not "make up" an answer. Your best action is to take the customer to your supervisor, clearly summarise the situation and allow the more experienced person to provide the customer with appropriate service.

Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC)

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission is an independent Australian Government statutory authority and administers the Trade Practices Act 1974 and the Prices Surveillance Act 1983. The ACCC promotes competition and fair trade in the market place to benefit consumers, business and the community. Its primary responsibility is to ensure that individuals and businesses comply with the Commonwealth competition, fair trading and consumer protection laws.

www.accc.gov.au/

Fair trading

In Australia federal and state laws protect business and customers from unfair trading practices. The hyperlink provides information about fair trading laws; complying with the Trade Practices Act; Codes of Practice; customer service; dispute resolution; product safety and standards; product recalls; labelling; retail leasing and warranties and refunds.

<http://business.gov.au/BusinessTopics/fairtrading/pages/default.aspx>

Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs

This hyperlink provides details on how to find out what the law says about how businesses should deal with consumers.

www.consumer.gov.au/html/for_business.htm

6.2 ACCURATE AND UP TO DATE INFORMATION IS PROVIDED AND APPROPRIATE DOCUMENTATION RELATED TO CLIENT SERVICE DELIVERY IS COMPLETED AND MAINTAINED

Every business place must ensure that they keep and update customer records regularly. The biggest issue is deciding what customer records are appropriate to keep. If the workplace requires too many records or if the records are not appropriate then they wont be useful in providing feed back or opportunities for improvement to the business. Records can be used to help make decisions related to buying trends, seasonal issues, best selling items or services, poor performance etc. The records are invaluable in sales, marketing, customer service, financial forecasting, and will keep your business customer-focused.

A typical business may have several forms that you are required to keep and could include:

- layby records
- merchandise/product return
- stock Order form
- tax Invoice
- customer feedback
- purchase order
- telephone order record
- request for quote

Some typical forms have been included below and you can see that they are quite simple and easy to complete.

Client query data					
Date	Client	Company	Comment	Follow up	Sale potential
1/10/10	Fred Blake	XYZ Irrigation	Enquired if we stocked underground soaker hose	Advised we would enquire if we could get it in for him	Good- suggest we get the product in stock. This is just 1 customer who is working with orchardists to change irrigation systems to be more water efficient.

Customer Service report	
Date	1/10/10
Customer name	Fred Blake
Phone	0431-655433
Address	1 Smith Road, Maitland
Complaint	A roll of soaker hose did not provide even soil wetting after installation
Action requested by customer	Replace roll of soaker hose and provide feedback to manufacturer
Person responsible for action	Manager
Recommended action	Replace roll of soaker hose Provide feedback to manufacturer Contact Fred Blake to enquire re performance of replacement hose in 2 weeks
Other Comment	

As you can see your relationship with the customer is “everything”! If you can keep good records, deal with issues competently and quickly and offer a friendly service as a result, you’ll see a significant amount of repeat business.

It is also useful to remember that your customer is always busy and while collecting the “must have” information it may also be useful to ask some simple survey questions at the same time. Survey questions can be face to face, written as a questionnaire or asked by phone contact. Simple surveys can include questions such as :

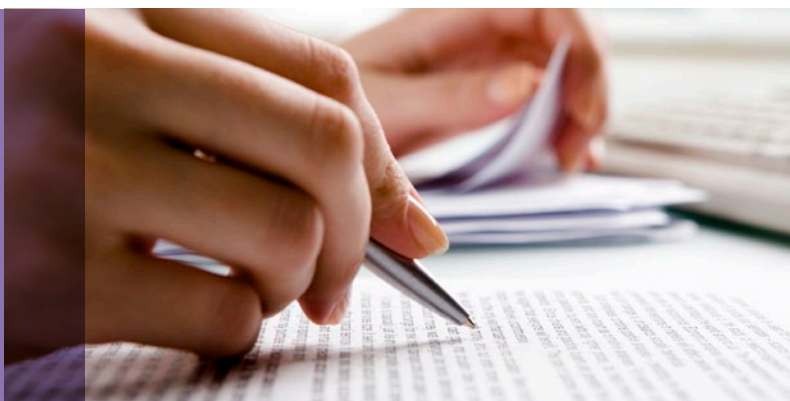
- How do we rate in the areas of first contact, the sale, delivery, service, and after-sales service?
- What can we do to improve our customer service?
- What additional products/services should we provide?
- Do you have any areas of complaint?
- Do we keep you well enough informed about staff changes, new products, price changes, delivery issues, warranties etc?

6.3 REVIEW CLIENT SERVICES REGULARLY TO IMPROVE SERVICE

Regular review of client services means that your workplace develops a customer service culture.

There are a number of ways that a business can strengthen their customer service culture.

- Make sure the people involved in customer service in your workplace LIKE people and will serve customers well. Workers who are enthusiastic, friendly and outgoing will generally be nice to customers even in the most difficult situations.
- Attend ongoing training that focuses on customer service. Participate enthusiastically in role play that puts you in simulated situations that may occur in real life. For example, in the future, it's possible that a customer may swear at you and call you bad names. Role play the scenario with your work mates and make sure you all know how to handle these worst-case scenarios.
- Do greet customers when they walk in to your workplace, and do it with a smile. People like their presence being acknowledged, and they will feel more appreciated when they enter.
- Nothing hurts customer service more than an un-empowered employee. Request your supervisor allow you to make quick decisions to help a customer when you feel confident that you can.
- Ask customers how you are doing. Customers are usually thrilled to have the opportunity to tell you what you are doing right and where there's room for improvement.
- Provide feedback/comment cards and encourage customers to fill them in if they have the time. This is especially useful where the customer contact has been over a longer period of time and thus called for more customer interaction. Constructive criticism allows you to make the necessary changes that will improve customer service in future. But don't forget to act on what you hear – you don't want to get a reputation for listening to customers but never acting on their feedback.
- Answer the phone efficiently, politely and quickly. Definitely answer the phone within 4 rings. This means that there must be enough trained staff to handle the volume of phone calls expected. It is frustrating for customers to wait for a long time or be put on hold, especially if they are paying for the call or get cut off.
- Keep yourself well informed about the ways the larger corporations provide customer service. Look at their websites and advertising for ideas. However don't assume that just because they are bigger than you that they are automatically getting it right. How often have you heard consumer complaints about well known successful companies' customer services departments being shoddily handled? How frustrating is it to be answered by an off shore call centre where you cannot make yourself understood. Make it your aim to learn from these mistakes instead of making your own. The following You Tube video is an advertisement for Commonwealth Bank. It is one of a number of advertisements currently being aired by major banks that concentrate on telling customers that they are improving their customer service.
- Saying "thank you" is incredibly important. Include a message of thanks on your invoices, on your website, as the sign off of your business email. Say thank you wherever it's possible to do so. It's vital to show your customers you appreciate their business.





Click here view video “Starbucks Customer Service ”

OR if you are using the printed resource, enter the address below into your web browser.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6M0TgEUBRbc>

While there are many ways that a business can strengthen their customer service culture, there are equally as many ways to frustrate and turn away customers.

- Many companies fail to provide adequate after-sales service. For instance, they may take a long time to respond to queries and other requests. After-sales service is important because the customer experience does not stop once the purchase or order is made. Customers continue to have expectations of the attention that they deserve, and this may affect return sales.
- For a busy customer, there’s nothing more frustrating than being kept waiting. Delays of any kind can impede decision-making, hold up production, and cost your customers both time and money.
- If you don’t respond to voice and text messages or emails within an appropriate time it gives the image that you don’t care. Reality may be that you are very busy but the customer does not think that. They just feel ignored. Even if you don’t have an immediate answer for your client, a courtesy call/text/email back to acknowledge that you received your customer’s query and that you’re working on an answer or a solution can go a long way toward making the customer feel that you are being attentive to their needs.
- Don’t promise to do something that is outside your capability just to “get the business”. It is always better to make sure the customer gets what they require even if that means you don’t make a sale. Your reputation as a caring customer oriented firm will be enhanced if you display this kind of professional generosity.
- A surprising number of business websites don’t feature an actual email address or contact phone number. It is fine for the “contact us” page to provide an enquiry form onsite. However if this is the only way to make contact, it is very frustrating to the customer who wants personal responses.
- Automated phone services are all well and good but a lot of people aren’t keen on them. Offer the ‘would you like to talk to a real person?’ option in your auto menu as quickly as possible after the call is picked up.
- Being sent from one person to another only to be directed back to the person you first contacted is incredibly frustrating. Make sure your customers never get the “run around”.
- Customers who are promised next day delivery, or anything that does not happen creates major frustrations. Particularly in the country it is important to be honest about delivery times because you are often at the mercy of postal services and couriers that may not operate with the same efficiency as you do.

→ ACTIVITY 6

Read the following bad customer service examples. The first story is provided as an example.

The problem: A passenger on a flight with a major airline was getting dripped on by moisture leaking from overhead vents. He reported the incident to the stewardess who pointed out that all the vents in the last 2 rows had the same problem. The passenger asked the stewardess if she would report the incident, and she said it wasn't necessary as the airline already knew about it and that the same condensation problem existed with the entire fleet. She told the passenger that putting in another report wouldn't make any difference or get the problem fixed any more quickly.

The customer's reaction: The customer was annoyed by this response and also concerned about the mechanical quality and safety of every plane in the airline, especially the one he was in.

What was inappropriate about the way the stewardess responded:

The stewardess response was inappropriate because it implied that the airline:

- ignored the needs of their customers
- refused to confront problems, even when they were reported by their own staff
- may not have a good maintenance system for the airline thus questioning safety issues

How should the stewardess have responded:

- acknowledge there was a problem and agree to submit a report with the airline's main office as soon as possible
- offer to move the passenger to another seat if possible or temporarily stop the dripping

You are now given another example related to a faulty mobile phone. In the space provided list what actions should have been taken to provide good customer service .

The problem: A customer purchased a new mobile phone from a reputable cell phone provider. Several months later, the phone started to malfunction and the customer sent the phone back to the company for service. The company stated that they would not replace the phone because it showed signs of corrosion on the battery.

The customer reaction: The customer said that the phone had not been exposed to water, and subsequent calls to customer service were met with the ridiculous excuse that the corrosion was the result of normal exposure to air and that the company still would not replace it or fix the problem free of charge.

What was inappropriate about the way the phone company responded:

How should the phone company have responded:

The answer here is obvious. Customer satisfaction requires a willingness to stop making excuses and to fix the problem. The company should assume responsibility for the cost of fixing the phone.

The following You Tube video gives two examples of poor customer service followed by ideas to provide a better service. Watch the video and the look at the examples below about exceeding customer expectations.



Click here view video “exceeding customer expectations”

OR if you are using the printed resource, enter the address below into your web browser.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=t5KibZuz6Kk

Studies show that customers who are given exceptional customer service are better customers than those who are given just good customer service. They buy more and they stay on longer as customers. Every so often, surprise and delight your customers by doing something truly extraordinary.

An extraordinary experience is provided by exceeding customer expectations.

Let’s examine this with an example:

You go to a shop to buy a suit and it needs alterations

You are told at the counter that you can pick the suit up in 2 hours.

At the time you are asked to provide your contact details.

So – what can happen?

- You go back in 2 hours and the suit alterations are not yet done. Obviously you are a disappointed customer who has had a “bad” customer experience. You are unlikely to come back and will also let your friends know to be cautious about this business. The business has “over promised” and “under delivered”
- You go back in 2 hours and you get the suit. The business has delivered a “good” customer experience. You have been given what you expected. You may return for business in the future but you may also go somewhere else. The business has “ kept their promise”
- You receive a call from the business while you are shopping to say the suit is ready. You look at your watch and realise that it has only taken an hour. This makes you happy because you will now have time to have a coffee with your friend after collecting the suit because you are early for your next appointment. You are a customer who has received “extraordinary customer service”. You are now a loyal customer who would come back and bring his friends along too. The business has “under promised” and “over delivered”

An extraordinary customer experience is when the customer receives the unexpected. “Under-promise” and “over-deliver”. That’s the mantra.

→ ACTIVITY 7

Describe below a situation where you have:

Received extraordinary customer service

Received bad customer service

6.4 IDENTIFY LIMITATIONS IN PROVIDING SERVICE TO CUSTOMERS

So how does a business make sure they are very clear in understanding the internal and external limitations in providing customer service? By internal we mean anything that is within the control of the company. By external we mean anything that is outside the control of the company ie delivery of a parcel by a courier.

It should be the aim of the business and workplace to monitor and review the services provided to improve efficiency and customer satisfaction as well as understand legitimate limitations in customer service. To achieve accurate feedback and information the business needs to maintain a robust system for the management and measurement of performance against specific tasks and indicators.

Monitoring/Measurement Mechanisms

A number of performance monitoring/measurement mechanisms could be used. The intention of any system should be the collating of accurate and useful information to enable performance measurement for all areas of the business. Below are examples of some of the ways the business can monitor and measure customer service.

- issue consistent customer satisfaction/complaint questionnaires and act upon feedback
- produce ad hoc and regular service reports on performance against jobs
- monitor the number of compliments and complaints received
- make comparisons with similar organisations /businesses

7. PROMOTE

CLIENT SERVICES AND THE BUSINESS

As you have progressed through this workbook you have looked at communication, customer service and records to keep. Now look at what opportunities you may have to promote the business.

Every business needs to actively seek to identify and use available opportunities to promote and enhance services and products to customers. Good business performance must always include a detailed customer service strategy. .. BUT...only use strategies that you are able to fulfil. Ideas for a customer service strategy could include:

- A friendly place to be: The company should always be friendly and courteous to customers no matter if they can solve their problems or not. Respect is the key point to any customer's service issues. Nothing is worse than to have a problem after purchasing a product, and being received in a rude and discourteous manner by the customer service representative.
- Never say no: Sometime customers make requests that cannot feasibly be granted. However, you can say "no" in a way that is not blunt, rude and belittling. It is far better to give a possible alternative than to say no.
- Advertise and promote truthfully: We are all aware of sensationalism in advertising. However, once the customer buys a product or service that does not live up to expectations, they aren't likely to be repeat customers.
- Communicate frequently: How often do you reach out to customers? Do the bulk of your communications focus on product offers and sales? For better results vary the types of messages you send. Instead of a constant barrage of promotions, sprinkle in helpful newsletters. Combine e-mail, direct mail, phone contact and face-to-face communications to increase customer contact.
- Be known as "listeners": When it comes to customer relations, "listening" can be every bit as important as "telling." Use every tool and opportunity to create interaction. Customers who know they are "heard" instantly feel a rapport and a relationship with your company.
- Respond quickly: Do you have a dedicated staff or channel for resolving customer problems/queries quickly and effectively? One of the best ways to add value and stand out from the competition is to have extraordinary customer response services.

The following examples are stories of "extraordinary" customer focus. Read the stories. Don't they make you visualise a great place to shop.

Shoppers at Ireland's Superquinn supermarkets experience the "wow" factor at every turn. When they first arrive, they encounter a supervised play area for young children. In the aisles, they'll find a multitude of signs encouraging them to report "goofs," such as fruit that's over-ripe, in return for which they're given free lottery cards. They'll discover bags of free vegetables they can bring home for their pets ("Make Your Hoppy Happy"). And at checkout, the store offers umbrellas to keep shoppers dry while they watch attendants transfer their grocery bags from cart to car.

Many supermarket invests in metal barricades to prevent the theft of its shopping carts. A customer-focused competitor instead chooses to invest in carts that are even more appealing. Mothers with infants can use carts outfitted with a baby seat. Shoppers with older children can use a cart designed like a toy car so the kids can pretend they're driving while the parent proceeds along the aisles. There are even self-powered sit-down carts for the elderly and the disabled.

The most successful businesses abandon the one-size-fits-all mentality and look for ways to provide something special for each major customer category.

Your workplace can create these "wow" factors, too. Have a brainstorming session in which you and your workmates and supervisor break a typical customer transaction down into its individual steps. Focus on each step, one at a time, and see if there is a way to add a "wow" element in each step. You will probably come up with more ideas than you can implement, so choose the best ideas to implement and save some for later. The ideas that emerge often cost nothing to implement (like smiling more or addressing customers by name). Yet these are the little things that can make such a big difference from the customers' point of view.

8. MANAGE

DIFFICULT CUSTOMER SITUATIONS

8.1 COMPLAINTS ARE DEALT WITH APPROPRIATELY

Complaints provide opportunities to learn what customers really think. Welcome complaints as a chance to impress your customers and encourage their loyalty, while looking for ways to prevent similar problems occurring again. A well-handled complaint is an opportunity to strengthen customer relationships. One complaint will often reveal others that customers have kept to themselves.

You must listen carefully to what the customer has to say, and let them finish. Don't get defensive. The customer is not attacking you personally; he or she has a problem and is upset. You must be empathetic and show that you care.

Repeat back what you are hearing to show that you have listened and to make sure you understand the complaint correctly. Do not offer advice to solve the complaint if it is not in your capacity to do so. Although research indicates that customers prefer the person they are speaking with to instantly solve their problem it may not be possible all of the time. If it is not possible, then recognise that passing a complaint on can add to the customer's frustration. Honestly explain to them why you are referring their complaint or problem to another person/department but still take their details and follow through to ensure they have had a positive outcome.

Remember that you are the person they have spoken to initially. You are the person who has seen how upset they are. A person more removed from the customer may not attach the same importance to providing a solution, so your personal follow up is crucial.

The following You Tube links show two different scenarios. The first has Polly from Faulty Towers dealing appropriately with a difficult customer. The second shows how NOT to deal with customer complaints.



Click here view video "Fawly Towers"

OR if you are using the printed resource, enter the address below into your web browser.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gxprj19Yu3s&feature=related



Click here view video "Bad Service"

OR if you are using the printed resource, enter the address below into your web browser.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vC58URpEqn4&feature=related>

8.2 THE CUSTOMER IS ALWAYS RIGHT.

As a person working in a business your goal is to solve the problem, not argue. The customer needs to feel like you are on his or her side and that you empathise with the situation. Apologise without blaming.

When a customer senses that you are sincerely sorry, it usually diffuses the situation. Don't blame another person or department. Just say, "I'm sorry about that." Ask the customer, "What would be an acceptable solution to you?" Allow the customer to suggest a solution if that is what they want to do. Even if the solution is not practical you at least have them thinking positively.

Look at the You Tube below. It is a very good short illustration of workers providing excellent service to angry customers and diffusing a situation.



Click here view video "providing excellent service"

OR if you are using the printed resource, enter the address below into your web browser.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q3w10pkVbzY

So once you get to the situation where the customer is listening then you can offer suggestions that you can implement. Become a partner with the customer in solving the problem. The main aim is to solve the problem, or find someone who can solve it— quickly!

And as a reminder.....once again 'Barbara from a Bank' shows us how it should not be done!



Click here view video "Bad Service"

OR if you are using the printed resource, enter the address below into your web browser.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vC58URpEqn4&feature=related>

9. BEING CONFIDENT

ABOUT YOUR SKILL LEVELS IN THE WORKPLACE

After finishing all of the activities in this workbook you should be able to competently complete final summative assessments. Do you feel that you are confident about your skill levels in the workplace related to customer service?

Use the table below to help you check your skills. Before commencing your final assessments it is important to review any sections in which you feel unsure.

Remember: it is always OK to ask your supervisor or your assessor questions.

In the table below, read the list of skills and knowledge you should have after completing this workbook

1. Put a tick in the column if you can do this now and a brief comment re why you believe you have this skill
2. Put a tick in the next column if you feel you need more practice and a brief comment as to why
3. If you require further training, complete the third column listing what training is needed. Show this list to your supervisor or assessor and ask for more time or training before completing the summative assessments

Skills/knowledge you should have	Yes	Need practice	Comment on why	What additional training do I need
Do you have effective conflict resolution skills				
Do you know how to follow work procedures that deal with customer complaints				
Do you have acceptable listening, questioning and communication skills				
Do you know how to ask questions to clarify work instructions and procedures				
Do you know how to collect feedback on customer service performance and trends				
Are you familiar with regulations and legislation applicable to customer service and customer rights				
Are you able to work effectively with different ages, genders and races				
Do you know how use appropriate software, technology, forms and procedures to keep accurate customer records				