

IATEFL Conference 2009
Workshop: Can we help you?
Promoting good practice in Customer Care

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Worksheet
(All tasks are in italics)

A. Customer service quiz

For each question circle the one answer you think is correct.

1. What is the biggest single reason why businesses lose customers?

- a) word of mouth b) new competition c) indifference of one employee
d) dissatisfaction with the product

2. Which percentage of dissatisfied customers do not complain about discourteous or indifferent customer service?

- a) 48% b) 65% c) 78% d) 96%

3. For the average business, which percentage of annual sales comes from existing satisfied customers?

- a) 30% b) 10% c) 65% d) 50%

4. How much more money does it take to find a new customer instead of getting more business from an existing one?

- a) twice as much b) three times as much c) four times as much d) over five times as much

5. A dissatisfied customer will tell how many people, outside of the company, about poor service received?

- a) two or three people b) four to six people c) seven to eight people d) over nine people, and even as many as twenty

*Adapted from *Exceeding Customer Expectations*, S. and D. Nash (Pathways, 2005)*

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B. Sharing personal experiences of customer service

What we'd like you to do for the next few minutes is to share with the person sitting next to you your experiences of good and bad customer service, for example, in shops, restaurants, hotels, travel, telephone companies, etc. Try to identify those factors which made for good or bad experiences.

Positive Factors

Negative Factors

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We'll ask you to feed these back after the discussion.

- *How have your experiences affected your subsequent dealings with the company involved? Will you go back? Did you tell anyone else about the experience?*
- *Name three companies that have a good reputation.*
- *What factors are these reputations based on?*

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C. Material and personal services

Material service describes the tangible aspects of a service, i.e. the content. Personal service describes the intangible parts - the subjective, interpersonal aspects of providing the service.

Try to separate the following factors into the two categories, material or personal:

the product, the shop, body language, the plane, the booking system, verbal communication, baggage handling at the airport, the check-in experience, respect for customers, hotel bedrooms, paying attention to customer needs, hotel bathrooms, restaurant food, friendly staff

Material service

Personal service

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To give excellent customer service, organisations need to get both the material and the personal aspects of service right, i.e. the product, which for a shop, an airline or a hotel includes the physical environment, and also the way they treat customers. In the workshop today, we are focusing on personal customer service, the intangible aspects that take place at the moment of interaction and which are much harder to measure, control and manage.

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D. Measuring the gap between customer expectations and experience

The Institute of Customer Service (ICS) SERVQUAL measurement measures the gap between customer expectations and experience. It suggests that five factors are important.

Which of these six factors could be the odd one out?

- Tangibles
- Reliability
- Responsiveness
- Assurance
- Empathy
- Speed

Match up each of the five paragraphs below with the most appropriate word to find out.

Para 1: Are you confident your staff know what they are doing and why?
Are your staff knowledgeable enough to answer customers' questions?
Are you assured that your staff are competent?

Para 2: Do your staff have the customer's best interests at heart? Do they try to understand the customer's specific needs and try to see things from the customer's perspective?

Para 3: Is the physical environment modern, aesthetically appealing, neat and clean? Does all equipment work properly?

Para 4: Are things done right first time? Are promises kept? Is the level of service consistent? Is there a personal touch?

Para 5: Are your staff prompt in responding to requests? What is their attitude like? Do they seem too busy? Are they easily distracted? Are they doing things grudgingly?

Adapted from: *CustomerFirst* Vol 8 No 6 p11

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E. Customer Priorities

From *Customer Priorities: What Customers Really Want*, Institute of Customer Service (ICS), 29th September 2006

The research document highlights two definitions of customer satisfaction:

1. *If the product matches expectations, the consumer is satisfied; if it exceeds them, the consumer is highly satisfied; if it falls short, the consumer is dissatisfied.*
Philip Kotler
2. *Customer satisfaction, or dissatisfaction, is the extent to which a customer feels their experience with an organisation has met their needs.* ICS

This research explores the reasons why customer satisfaction matters and hence why it should be measured. It improves understanding of customers' priorities across the UK and Ireland and sets the scene for developing a National Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI). It was based on over 100 surveys across relevant market sectors (Automotive, central and local government, financial, leisure, retail, private sector services such as plumbing and hairdressing, telecommunications, transport, utilities) and more than 200,000 customer interviews.

Which factors, material or personal, feature more prominently in customers' top 10 priorities?

Below are the 21 key factors that matter most to customers, according to the ICS research.

1. *Tick the ten you think are the most important.*
2. *Try to put them in order of priority.*

Factors

speed of service / the website / competence of staff / reputation of the organisation / handling enquiries / the tangibles of the organisation (e.g. premises, vehicles) / helpfulness of staff / ease of doing business / handling problems and complaints / staff appearance / telephone service / overall quality of product or service / on time delivery - solution / information - advice / continuity of staff / being treated as a valued customer / price - cost / range of products or services / the statements or billing / being kept informed / friendliness of staff

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F. Developing customer service standards

Try to match these standards to customers' ten top priorities from ICS research.

Sweet Dreams Bed Company: Customer Service Standards

- a. Our staff will be knowledgeable about all our products and able to deal with all your enquiries.
- b. You can track the progress of your order on our website. (www.sweetdreamsbeds.com) or by telephoning our enquiry office (0734 123456) between 8.00am and 8.00pm Monday to Friday and between 8.00am and 4.00pm Saturday and Sunday.
- c. Our staff will adopt a friendly and helpful attitude to customers at all times.
- d. Our enquiry lines (0734 123456) will be open from 8.00am to 8.00 pm Monday to Friday and from 8.00am to 4.00 pm Saturdays and Sundays.
- e. Our showrooms will be open seven days a week, from 8.00am to 8.00pm Monday to Friday and from 8.00am to 4.00pm Saturday and Sunday, except Christmas Day and New Year's Day.
- f. You can order from us over the internet, by telephone, in person or by fax or letter.
- g. If none of our top quality products suits your requirements, we can design products to your individual specifications.
- h. We will allocate you a dedicated member of staff to deal with your order and all subsequent enquiries.
- i. We aim to acknowledge your order by return and to deliver your goods within five days of receiving your order.
- j. We accept electronic payments, payments by cheque or bank transfer.
- k. We have a fast track response service dedicated to dealing with any problems and complaints you have with your order (0734 54321).
- l. Customers spending over £2,000 with us are automatically entitled to a 10% discount on all subsequent orders.

Possible task

Use the standards and commitments above to write an overall mission statement for the Sweet Dreams Bed Company.

Possible structures to use:

The purpose of the Sweet Dreams Bed Company is to....

The mission of the Sweet Dreams Bed Company is to

At the Sweet Dreams Bed Company we are committed to providing our customers with.....

Sweet Dreams Bed Company believes in providing.....

At Sweet Dreams Bed Company, we aim to.....

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G. Understanding the importance of 'Moments of Truth'

1. Identify typical 'Moments of Truth' (MOTs) for your organisation.

Has your organisation thought about these, and does it have a strategy for ensuring that they are positive for the customer?

2. How successfully are these MOTs normally handled?

Has there been any situation where a moment of truth has been badly handled and escalated into a real problem for the organisation? If so, describe it.

3. Match the correct role to each type of call.

Roles that customer service assistants need to be prepared to play.

	Nature of call		Role that the customer service assistant must play
1	I'd like.... I need.....	a	Supporter
2	What should I do about.....?	b	Provider
3	I've got a problem with your (service)	c	Rescuer
4	I'm in a personally difficult position here	d	Advisor
		e	Facilitator

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H. Speaking with customers

'Accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative'

Match up what you should say against what you shouldn't say, according to the commentary given in the third column.

	Don't say		Say	Because...
1	I don't know	A	This is who can help you	You should take ownership to research and check
2	That's not my fault	B	I can understand your frustration	You should avoid a defensive attitude, so helping you solve the problem quicker
3	That's not my job	C	I'm sorry	You should redirect the customer to the person who can best deal with his issue

4	No	D	Thank you for holding	You should show customers that you are taking a constructive approach to their situation
5	You're right, this is a real mess	E	Let's see what we can do about this	You should express empathy for the customer's feelings, so showing care and concern
6	You want it by when?	F	I'll be with you in just a moment	You should try to accommodate customer requests, but only make promises that you know you can fulfill
7	Calm down!	G	I <i>can</i> help you with this	You can and should apologise to the customer and this does not mean that you are admitting fault
8	You need to talk to my manager	H	The department opens at nine tomorrow morning, so I'll contact them first thing and come straight back to you	You should focus on what you can do to help them, by offering a possible solution
9	I'm busy right now	I	I'll find out for you	You should use a pleasant tone of voice, and let the customer know that he is important to you and will shortly get your full attention
10	The department is closed now, so I won't be able to do anything until tomorrow morning	J	I'll try my best	You should always put a positive slant on the situation
11	Sorry to keep you waiting	K	What I <i>can</i> do is....	You should emphasise gratitude for the customer's patience

Adapted from *Customer Service for Dummies*, Ch. 25

I. Customer service on the telephone

Personal questionnaire: How customer friendly is your telephone behaviour?

In pairs, question and answer, with the listener reporting back to the whole class.

1. Do you always try to answer within three rings?
2. Do you give your name and job title when answering?
3. Do you answer in a positive 'smiling' voice
4. Do you ask 'How can I help you?'
5. Do you quickly establish the caller's name?
6. Do you remember and use the caller's name during the call?
7. Do you listen attentively?
6. Do you show understanding and empathy?
7. Do you make the caller feel that their call is important to you?
8. Do you take ownership of the call?
9. Do you take notes or use a checklist/ message form to hold key information?
10. Do you act immediately after receiving the call?
11. Do you remain calm and polite, even when responding to a difficult customer?
12. Do you repeat details back to the customer to ensure accuracy?
13. Do you communicate what steps you will take in response to the customer's request?
14. Do you make a follow-up call, if necessary?
15. Do you exceed customer expectations?
16. Do you treat your caller as you would like to be treated yourself?
17. Do you return calls promptly?
18. Do you take care to pass on accurate messages?
19. Do you successfully redirect calls?
20. If you use voicemail, do you update your message daily?

As a follow-up activity, choose a number of these questions and focus on How often you do this? (always/ often/ sometimes/ rarely/ never)

In answering these questions, try to allocate them to one category of the SMILE formula for successful telephone behaviour

S	M	I	L	E
Show Interest	Make Notes	Inform	Listen	be Enthusiastic

Tip: A useful technique for improving your phone tone is to record yourself during a phone conversation with a customer, play the tape back and offer yourself (and get from others) constructive feedback on your performance.

Information transfer activity

Convert the ideas in each of these 20 questions into a series of do's and don'ts

Answers / Key responses

A. Customer Service Quiz

1 c 2 d 3 c 4 d 5 d

B. Sharing personal experiences of customer service

Positive experience

Ownership of a problem
Apology for a mistake
Exceeding expectations
Personalised service
Speed of response
Positive attitude
No blaming of systems

Negative experience

No ownership of problem
No apology for mistake
Blaming mistake on so./sth. else
No resolution of the problem
Couldn't care less attitude

C. Material and personal services

Material

the product
the shop
the plane
the booking system
baggage handling at the airport
hotel bedrooms
hotel bathrooms
restaurant food

Personal

body language
verbal communication
respect for customers
paying attention to customer needs
friendly staff
the check-in experience

D. Measuring the gap between customer expectations and experience

Speed

E. Customer priorities: top 10

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Overall quality of product or service | 6. Handling enquiries |
| 2. Friendliness of staff | 7. Being treated as a valued customer |
| 3. Handling problems and complaints | 8. Competence of staff |
| 4. Speed of service | 9. Ease of doing business |
| 5. Helpfulness of staff | 10. Being kept informed. |

By comparison, research carried out by the UK Government drawing on international experience reduced the key drivers of customer satisfaction to five factors:
Delivery (1), Timeliness (4), Staff professionalism (8), Staff attitude (2 & 5),
Information and access (9 & 10)

G. Understanding the importance of 'Moments of Truth'

3. 1b 2d 3a 4c

H. Speaking with customers

1 I 2 E 3 A 4 K 5 B 6 J 7 C 8 G 9 F 10 H 11 D