

*DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT*

*COURSE TITLE: CUSTOMER CARE*

## COURSE OUTLINE

**Contact Hours: 42**

**Purpose:** To impart knowledge and professional skills to learners to enable them retain customers for organizations

### **Expected Learning Outcomes of the Course**

By the end of the course unit the learners should be able to:-

- i) How to ensure the right perception of customer care.
- ii) How to handle difficult situations.
- iii) Key skills of questioning and how to apply them.
- iv) How to use Transactional Analysis to ensure a productive outcome.
- v) How difficult situations can be valuable.
- vi) , complaints, difficult customers, difficult customers are good news, problem ownership, the “S.A.S. Follow-through
- vii) Enabling behaviors; key factors in preventing problems, personal style in handling difficult situations , building the right habits, behaviors to avoid
- viii) Selective behaviors; Key tactics, behavior and actions that have value in specific situations,.
- ix) Transactional analysis; ego states, transaction types, crossed/complimentary transaction

## **COURSE CONTENT**

### **Week 1**

#### **INTRODUCTION TO CUSTOMER CARE**

Overview of Customer Care Services Industry,  
The delivery and importance of effective customer service.

### **Week 2**

#### **IDENTIFYING CUSTOMERS" NEED; WHAT CUSTOMERS WANT;**

Explain the importance of understanding customer needs and how to determine these needs.

#### **Overcoming Customer Barriers**

Identify barriers to effective customer service and learn how to overcome them.

Ensuring customers feel important and  
understood, customer perceptions,  
controlling the perception of the best service,  
common pitfalls,  
business role in competition,  
internal and external customers

### **Week 3**

#### **HANDLING DIFFICULT SITUATIONS;**

Difficult situations can be good news,  
Common errors ,  
The method of handling difficult  
situations, Problem ownership

### **Week 4**

#### **COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

Overview of communications skills, acquire verbal and non-verbal skills to enhance customer service, learn cultural differences in communication. Fine tune listening skills to uncover needs, deliver ideas, solicit information, and deliver solutions

#### **Questions skills;**

the role of questioning skills in handling difficult people and other professional situations,  
structure of a good question,  
question types and their use,  
Using questions to obtain information, common errors.

#### **Week 5**

##### **TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS;**

how transactional analysis can help in difficult situations,  
states of mind, how we interact with others,  
using questions to change a person's state of mind ,  
'rules' to ensure a productive outcome,  
building relationships.

#### **Week 6**

##### **PROBLEM SOLVING & HANDLING CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS**

Explain why customers complain. Discuss the importance of solving customers' problems. Use the problem solving techniques to provide customer service and to strengthen relationships with customers.

##### **Gaining from difficult customers;**

why difficult customers are 'good news',  
the effect on the organization and ourselves.

## **WEEK 7 CAT 1**

#### **Week 8**

##### **SEQUENCE FOR HANDLING DIFFICULT SITUATIONS;**

the first part of a call/meeting,  
how to show concern without necessarily admitting liability,  
how to ascertain the key facts, obtaining real agreement,  
how to avoid the 'fait accompli' or resentment.

## **Week 9**

### **DEALING WITH DIFFICULT CUSTOMERS**

Identify difficult customers, what factors create difficult customers and how to deal with them effectively. Convert difficult customers into loyal customers

#### **Managing & Exceeding Customer Expectations**

Differentiate between customer expectation and perception, explain ways used to manage and exceed customers' expectations.

#### **The follow-up;**

key elements in following-up any difficult situation, ownership of problems, internal communication.

## **Week 10**

### **CUSTOMER RETENTION AND EARNING LOYALTY**

Explain why customer retention is critical to an organization's long term success.

Describe methods used to retain customers and earn their loyalty.

#### **Questioning structure;**

the structure of a question,  
the role and value of questions in difficult situations,  
how to avoid the pitfall of a poor question aggravating a situation, questioning style.

## **Week 11**

### **BEHAVIOR VERSATILITY;**

Non-verbal communication; pitfalls and considerations,  
N.V.C. components,  
N.V.C. patterns (Deceit, Honesty, Boredom, etc.), How to control your N.V.C.

#### **Listening skills;**

barriers to effective listening, the difference between 'Active' and 'Passive' listening,  
how to use 'Active' listening to demonstrate interest and obtain information,  
how to use 'Active' listening to steer a conversation.

**Problems with telephone skills;**

differences between telephone and face-to-face communication,  
overcoming the disadvantages of the telephone,  
developing an effective personal style

**Week 12**

**AUTOMATED CUSTOMER SERVICE & BEST PRACTICES**

Service and explain how technology can be used as a differentiating factor. List activities and  
„best practices“ that leading-edge service providers use to create industry trends

**Week 13**

**HANDLING OPPORTUNITIES;**

recognizing opportunities to increase the reputation of the department/organization,  
recognizing opportunities for additional revenue,  
how to handle 'opportunities' in a professional non-manipulative manner,  
the use of questions to explore/understand opportunities,  
passing-on 'opportunities'

**Teaching / Learning Methodologies:** Lectures and tutorials; group discussion; demonstration;  
Individual assignment; Case studies

**Instructional Materials and Equipment:** Projector; test books; design catalogues; computer  
laboratory; design software; simulators

**Course Assessment**

Examination - 70%; Continuous Assessment Test (CATS) - 20%; Assignments - 10%; Total -  
100%

**Recommended Text Books:**

- i) Frances Bee,(2005), *Customer Care*, Institute of Personnel and Development
- ii) Donald Bowersox (2004); *Customer Care Management*; Tata Mgraw Hill

**Text Books for further Reading:**

- i) Philip Kotler, Gary Armstrong (2008), *Principles of Marketing 12e*, Dorling Kindersley (india) Pvt Ltd

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO CUSTOMER CARE



### *Learning objectives*

- a) Understand the aspects of customer care*
- b) Overview of Customer Care Services Industry,*
- c) The delivery and importance of effective customer service.*

### **WHAT IS CUSTOMER CARE?**

Customer care involves putting systems in place to maximize your customers' satisfaction with your business. It should be a prime consideration for every business - your sales and profitability depends on keeping your customers happy.

Customer care is more directly important in some roles than others. For receptionists, sales staff and other employees in customer-facing roles, customer care should be a core element of their job description and training, and a core criterion when you're recruiting.

But don't neglect the importance of customer care in other areas of your business. For instance, your warehousing and dispatch departments may have minimal contact with your customers - but their performance when fulfilling orders has a major impact on customers' satisfaction with your business.

A huge range of factors can contribute to customer satisfaction, but your customers - both consumers and other businesses - are likely to take into account:

how well your product or service matches customer needs

the value for money you offer

your efficiency and reliability in fulfilling orders

the professionalism, friendliness and expertise of your employees

how well you keep your customers informed

the after-sales service you provide

Customer service, especially in the shape of a call-centre - is to customers one of the most visible and significant aspects of organizational performance.

To many organizations however customer service is one of the most challenging and neglected areas of management, including those with modern call-centres.

For customers the quality of customer service determines whether to buy, and particularly whether to remain a customer.

Think for a moment how you yourself behave as a customer. You can perhaps think of an occasion when poor customer service or an unhappy exchange with a call-centre has driven you to leave a supplier, even if the quality and value of the product or service itself is broadly satisfactory.

The significance of customer service eludes many senior executives, let alone the methods of establishing and managing customer service standards and quality. Our own experiences as customers demonstrate all the time that many large organizations fail particularly to empower customer-facing and call-centre staff, and also fail to design policies and systems to empower customer-facing staff and enable effective customer service. Often these are defensive strategies because staff are not trusted, and because competition is feared, or because simply the policy-makers and systems-designers are too far removed from customers and their customer service expectations.

Pricing strategy also plays a part on customer service - especially strategies which effectively discriminate against existing customers in favour of new customers, which in certain situations borders on the unethical, never mind being stupid in a customer service context.

This is strange since by any reasonable measure or criteria - in any market or industry - it costs far more to gain new customers than to retain existing customers. Neglecting, constraining or failing to optimise customer services capabilities is waste of great opportunities.

Instead many organizations and their leaders are habitually fixated on sales, marketing, advertising and promotion - desperately striving to attract new customers - while paying scant regard to the many customers that are leaving, just for the want of some simple effective customer service and care. We see this particularly in highly competitive and profitable sectors

such as communications and financial services, where new customers are commonly extended better terms and attention than existing customers. No wonder customer turnover ('churn') in these industries can reach levels exceeding 25%. Leaders and spokespeople will blame the competitive market, and the fickleness of customers, but ultimately when a customer leaves a supplier it's because they are unhappy about the service they are receiving - otherwise why leave?

### **Benefits of effective customer service**

The central aim of effective customer service and call-centres is retaining customers, but when an organization gets this right the acquisition of new customers - and so many other things - automatically becomes much easier too.

Retaining customers - enabled by excellent customer service - produces many positive benefits for the organization aside from the obvious revenue and profit results:

Retaining customers through effective customer service enables easier growth, indirectly and directly, for example by sustaining healthier volumes and margins, and by business expansion from word-of-mouth referrals.

High levels of customer retention via effective customer service also improves staff morale and motivation. No-one enjoys working for an organization that feels like a sinking ship, or where stressful arguments or pressures prevail. When customers are happy, all the staff are happier too - and more productive.

Improved staff morale and motivation resulting from reducing customer attrition also positively benefits staff retention and turnover, recruitment quality and costs, stress, grievance, discipline and counselling pressures.

Reduced customer attrition and upset naturally reduces litigation and legal problems, from customers or fair trading laws.

Retaining customers also enables the whole organization - especially middle-managers - to focus more on proactive opportunities (growth, innovation, development, etc) rather than reactive fire-fighting, crisis management, failure analysis, and the negative high pressures to win replacement business.

Having a culture of delighting and retaining customers fuels positive publicity and reputation in the media, and increasingly on the web in blogs and forums, etc. The converse

applies of course, when nowadays just one disgruntled customer and a reasonable network of web friends can easily cause a significant public relations headache.

For these and other reasons the cost difference and relative impacts on organizations between gaining and retaining customers can be staggering.

A useful analogy is that only a fool tries to fill a bucket of water when the bucket has lots of holes.

Better to fix the holes and stop the leaks before you try to fill the bucket.

Especially consider the actual cost of retaining customers when all that many customers require is not to be upset.

While the trend is apparently for more people to complain (mobile phones and the internet make it easier to do so, and people are less tolerant than they used to be) this does not necessarily mean that customers are more likely to migrate to competitors.

In fact these days time pressures and the 'hassle factor' combine to create huge inertia in people's decision-making, which means although they might complain more, they have less inclination to actually change suppliers because of the time and inconvenience of doing so. There are arguably some exceptions in fast-changing sectors, but largely inertia tends to make it more likely for customers to stay than go.

People behave like organizations, when the true costs of change in time and hassle are recognized often to be greater than the savings that the change will achieve.

Consequently most people prefer not to change suppliers - they have better things to do with their time - which means that retaining customers should actually be easy - if only organizations would attend to the basic customer service principles and keep customers happy. In short, customers largely don't usually leave unless they are upset enough to do so.

Contrast the cost of achieving happy customers - virtually zero aside from normal customer service and operating overheads required to run a business - with the costs of marketing, advertising, selling, sales training, sales management, credit-control and account set-up, that necessarily arise in the acquisition of new customers.

Consider also that the main factor in keeping a customer - even if the situation appears irretrievable - often comes down to a simple apology or update - just by keeping someone informed and avoiding upset - and compare this with the huge costs of acquiring a new customer. It is then easy to see that the costs of gaining a customer can be five, ten, a hundred or a thousand times greater than retaining a customer.

And yet from the customers' view many organizations seem unaware or dismissive of the need to prioritize great customer service above many other perhaps more exciting or fashionable initiatives - typically related to sales, marketing, advertising, technology, the web, etc.

These high-profile customer acquisition activities, plus systems, policies, procedures, training, etc., all play a major role in running a high-quality organization, but the glue which holds it all together for the customer - and often the only thing that really matters to the customer, is the quality of customer service that the customer feels and experiences.

Within customer service there are many elements which must be organised to make effective customer service happen properly - pricing strategy is important of course - but the crucial constant factor is the human element - how people are treated and communicated with - because simply, customers are people, and people tend to behave like people and respond to people - they do not behave like computers, and they do not respond like machines.

Policies, systems, technology all enable customer service, but none of these actually determines effective customer service. Only people - your employees - can do this, particularly when serious problems arise which by their nature must be escalated to a 'real person'.

People - your employees - also (if encouraged and enabled) perform another critical customer service function - that of giving feedback and suggestions to improve customer service systems, policies, processes, technology, etc. Often policies and technology are dreamt up by managers or

consultants working away from the actual day-to-day customer-facing activity. Feedback and recommendations from customer service staff - and customers too - are vital in refining and improving the systems and policies within which the function is operating. So again, people - your employees - are the most crucial in shaping effective customer services capabilities.

Ignorance and avoidance of these factors is a problem, but also a big opportunity.

Where customer service is neglected and ignored the function is powerful lever waiting to be pulled.

Improving customer service - especially empowering and listening to customer service staff - offers many organizations a bigger return on investment than any other initiative.

Customer service is generally the critical factor in determining whether a customer buys and is retained, which is ultimately what the organization exists to do - to serve and retain customers.

### **Understand Your Customers**

In business-to-business trading, providing a high level of customer care often requires you to find out what your customers want. Once you have identified your most valuable customers or best potential customers, you can target your highest levels of customer care towards them.

Another approach, particularly in the consumer market, is the obligation to treat all consumers to the highest standard.

### **Collect Information About Your Customers**

Information about your customers and what they want is available from many sources, including:  
their order history

records of their contacts with your business - phone calls, meetings and so on

direct feedback - if you ask them, customers will usually tell you what they want

changes in individual customers' order patterns

changes in the overall success of specific products or services

feedback about your existing range - what it does and doesn't do

enquiries about possible new products or services

feedback from your customers about things they buy from other businesses

changes in the goods and services your competitors are selling

feedback and referrals from other, non-competitive suppliers



### Review Questions

- i. *What do you understand by customer care?*
- ii. *What is the importance of understanding your customer?*
- iii. *Explain the steps you would follow in collecting customer information?*

### References

- i. Turban, Efraim (2002). *Electronic Commerce: A Managerial Perspective*. Prentice Hall. ISBN 0131854615.
- ii. Solomon, Micah (4 March 2010). "Seven Keys to Building Customer Loyalty--and Company Profits". *Fast Company*
- iii. Peppers, Don and Martha Rogers, Ph.D. (2008). *Rules to Break and Laws to Follow*. Wiley. pp. 24, 164. ISBN 978-0470227541.
- iv. Paul H. Selden (December 1998). "Sales Process Engineering: An Emerging Quality Application". *Quality Progress*: 59–63.
- v. Dall, Michael; Bailine, Adam (2004). *Service this: Winning the war against customer disservice* (1st ed.). Last Chapter First. ISBN 0975371908.
- vi. "Lunch Lesson Four - Customer service". BBC News. October 3, 2003. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/working\\_lunch/3161800.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/working_lunch/3161800.stm). Retrieved October 27, 2008.

## CHAPTER TWO: IDENTIFYING CUSTOMERS NEED; WHAT CUSTOMERS WANT;



### *Learning objectives*

- a) Explain the importance of understanding customer needs and how to determine these needs.*
- b) Identify barriers to effective customer service and learn how to overcome them.*
- c) Ensuring customers feel important and understood,*
- d) customer perceptions,*
- e) controlling the perception of the best service,*
- f) common pitfalls,*
- g) business role in competition,*

However good your product or service is, the simple truth is that no-one will buy it if they don't want it or believe they don't need it. And you won't persuade anyone that they want or need to buy what you're offering unless you clearly understand what it is your customers really want.

Knowing and understanding customer needs is at the centre of every successful business, whether it sells directly to individuals or other businesses. Once you have this knowledge, you can use it to persuade potential and existing customers that buying from you is in their best interests.

### **Why Do Your Customers Need You?**

Every business needs a reason for their customers to buy from them and not their competitors. This is called a Unique Sales Proposition (USP). Your USP can be identified by completing the phrase 'Customers will buy from me because my business is the only

Your USP can change as your business or your market changes, and you can have different USPs for different types of customer or product.



For example:

a stationery shop could offer a free same-day delivery service for its business customers within a local area - an effective USP for businesses that need fast delivery

the same stationery shop could offer a 5 per cent discount to businesses that spend more than kshs 500 a month - this would be a USP for cost-conscious customers

the stationery shop could also make sure it offers the most comprehensive stock of artists' materials in the area - a USP for local professional or amateur artists

All of these USPs can be effective because they are driven by what the customer looks for when making a buying decision.

It's a good idea to review your USPs regularly. Can you tailor your products or services to better match your customers' needs? Consider asking your customers why they buy from you. This will tell you what they think your USP is - this may differ from what you think your USP is.

It's also useful to check constantly what your competition is doing. Remember - if your competitors are doing the same, your USP isn't unique any more.

### **What Do You Know About Your Customers?**

The more you know about your customers, the more effective your sales and marketing efforts will be. It's well worth making the effort to find out:

who they are

what they buy

why they buy it

how they use your product

If you're selling to other businesses, you'll need to know which individuals are responsible for the decision to buy your product or service. For information on targeting decision-makers, see our guide on how to target the right people in an organisation.

You can learn a great deal about your customer's by talking to them. Asking them why they're buying or not buying, what they may want to buy in the future and asking what other needs they have can give a valuable picture of what's important to them.

Understanding customers' needs and desires can help you tailor your product or service to better suit their needs. It may also highlight valuable developments you can make to your current offering, or indicate gaps in the market that you can fill with new products or services. See our guides on spotting market opportunities and how to develop new products and services.

Strong sales are driven by emphasizing the benefits that your product or service brings to your customers. If you know the challenges that face them, it's much easier to offer them solutions. See our guide on the sales appointment.

It's also well worth keeping an eye on future developments in your customers' markets and lives. Knowing the trends that are going to influence your customers helps you to anticipate what they are going to need - and offer it to them as soon as they need it.

You can conduct your own market research and there are many existing reports that can help you build a picture of where your customers' markets - and your business - may be going. For information on market research, see our guide to market research and market reports.

### **Ten things you need to know about your customers**

#### **1. Who they are**

If you sell directly to individuals, find out your customers' gender, age and occupation. If you sell to other businesses, find out what industry they are in, their size and the kind of business they are. For example, are they a small private company or a big multinational? Knowing this can help you identify similar businesses that you could target.

#### **2. What they do**

If you sell directly to individuals, it's worth knowing their occupations and interests. If you sell to other businesses, it helps to have an understanding of what their business is trying to achieve.

**3. Why they buy**

If you know why customers buy a product or service, it's easier to match their needs to the benefits your business can offer.

**4. When they buy**

If you approach a customer just at the time they want to buy, you will massively increase your chances of success.

**5. How they buy**

For example, some people prefer to buy from a website, while others prefer a face-to-face meeting.

**6. How much money they have**

You'll be more successful if you can match what you're offering to what you know your customer can afford. Premium, higher priced products are unlikely to be successful if most of your customers are on a limited budget - unless you can identify new customers with the spending power to match.

**7. What makes them feel good about buying**

If you know what makes them tick, you can serve them in the way they prefer.

**8. What they expect of you**

For example, if your customers expect reliable delivery and you don't disappoint them, you stand to gain repeat business.

**9. What they think about you**

If your customers enjoy dealing with you, they're likely to buy more. And you can only tackle problems that customers have if you know what they are.

**10. What they think about your competitors**

If you know how your customers view your competition, you stand a much better chance of staying ahead of your rivals.

**Obtaining Information On Your Customers**

Once you have identified what you need to know about your customers you can start gathering the information together.

There is a huge amount of market information available that you can tap into. Much of that information is available free of charge and is readily available. For example, your customer

records will tell you which customers have purchased from you, what they purchased, when they placed their orders and how much and how often they buy.

If your current data doesn't provide you with the information you need, it is often worth asking customers directly. You can do this in face-to-face or telephone interviews, online surveys or in group discussions.

Other sources of free customer information include:

business contacts

local business reference libraries

your local authority, Business Link or Chamber of Commerce

the internet

UK Trade & Industry for information on export markets

If you can't find the information you require from these free sources, you might decide to buy the information you require. There is a huge amount of commercially published information that you can purchase direct from market information publishers. Alternatively, you might decide to employ a market research agency or freelance researcher to get the information you need. It can be more cost-effective to use the services of a professional, although you will need to ensure you draw up a clear brief and budget.



#### ***Review Questions***

- i. What are customers' needs and wants?***
- ii. What keys aspects do you look for in identifying customer needs?***
- iii. What are internal and external customers***
- iv. Discuss the importance of customer perceptions***

## References

- i. Anderson C., (2006) "The Long Tail", Hyperion
- ii. Chak A., (2003) "Submit now", New Riders Press
- iii. Eisenberg B. and Eisenberg J., (2006) "Waiting for Your Cat to Bark?", Thomas Nelson, Nashville
- iv. Locke et al. (2001) "The Cluetrain Manifesto", Perseus Books Group
- v. The earliest reference to customer engagement is The Constant Customer., Mar 26, 2008
- vi. Webinar Notes: "Web 2.0 How to Measure Social Engagement: Blogs Podcasts and RIAs"
- vii. New Media Frets Over 'Engagement' and Audience Measurement: Sounds A Lot Like Old Media
- viii. Like Nailing Down A Shadow: The Problem with Social Media Measurement

## CHAPTER THREE: HANDLING DIFFICULT SITUATIONS;



### ***Learning objectives;***

- a) Understand that difficult situations can be good news,***
- b) Common errors in customer care,***
- c) The different methods of handling difficult situations,***
- d) Problem ownership***
- e) Deal with conflict situations promptly with minimal disruption to the essential tasks at hand.***
- f) Approach people problems with increased confidence and an enhanced understanding of the reasons behind colleagues' behaviour.***
- g) Forge positive working relationships with individuals who might previously have been viewed as difficult or un-co-operative.***
- h) Develop an enhanced understanding of the factors that motivate and demotivate your colleagues.***
- i) Overcome negative or aggressive behaviour.***
- j) Adopt a confident, professional and appropriate behaviour style when faced with difficult people or situations.***

Handling difficult people and situations is one of the most stressful aspects of the modern working environment.

This handling difficult people and situations training course provides a practical guide on how to handle difficult people and situations effectively and ensure successful outcomes. Delegates will examine aspects of human behaviour and review their options when faced with difficult, aggressive or un-co-operative people. This course provides delegates with an opportunity to discuss their own experiences as well as those of others in a safe and supportive environment.

Dealing with customers frustration quickly and professionally are all part of providing a high quality customer service level. Everyone has his or her own personal customer service nightmare story. So it's easy to understand how a customer may perceive things from their side of the counter when they confront you looking for satisfaction.

The next time you encounter a difficult customer relation situation either on the phone or in person consider the following steps:

### **Step 1: Remain Calm Yourself**

When a customer begins to vent their frustration it is important to remain calm yourself. Staff may take things personally and assume that the customer's anger is directed at them and so then it is natural to become defensive.

\*Realize that in most situations the customer is likely angry at the situation and not you.

### **Step 2: Allow the Customer to Vent Their Frustration:**

Do this without interrupting. If you would like to defuse the customer's anger, try apologizing. You could use such phrases as,

- "I'm sorry you had to go through this."
- "I can understand why that would be so upsetting."

Usually when you apologize, the customer's anger is immediately dissipated. You may feel uncomfortable for apologizing for something that you are not responsible for.

\*However, keep in mind that you are apologizing on behalf of the facility not yourself.

### **Step 3: Paraphrase The Problem**

In your own words, paraphrase what the customer is saying and feeling.

\*Show you are truly sympathetic with the customer's problem.

### **Step 4: Resolve The Problem**

Once you have gained the customers confidence, you are in a position to resolve the problem.

It's a common mistake to try to solve the problem while the customer is still angry. The customer is often looking for an apology first, then a resolution to the problem. Record and report the

incident to your supervisor. This can assist them in determining if the problem is a common issue for customers that needs possible changes to the operation to avoid future situation and /or if follow up is required with the customer.

\*In some circumstance you may not be able to resolve the customers concern. Record the details and forward them to your supervisor for follow-up. This will assure that all that can be done will be done

Here are some further techniques for dealing with an upset customer:

### **Technique 1: Keep It Impersonal and Professional**

It is important not to antagonize the customer by the way you speak to them.

For example, if you have to inform them that they did not interpret the swim schedule correctly. Never say, "You didn't read it correctly." Instead say, "There are a few areas on the schedule that could be improved upon."

\*Can you see the difference in the way the message could be sent and received?

It's as if the customer was not at fault.

### **Technique 2: "I Versus You"**

Imagine an upset customer trying to explain something to an employee that does not understand. The employee says, "You are confusing me." This statement makes the customer feel more frustrated. Instead of saying, "Excuse me but I am confused" or "Let me see if I have this straight."

\*Using " I" instead of "you" avoids angering the customer further, and will help, as opposed to hinder, the communications process.

### **Technique 3: Avoid Saying, "But It's \_\_\_\_\_ Policy"**

Nothing frustrates a customer more than to hear the phrase "It's our policy" To the customer this suggests that the organization comes first and the customer comes second.

Think how some banks treat customers these days and you will visualize the frustration that your customers will experience with a statement like that.

\*Instead take the time to explain why such a decision has been made.



#### **Technique 4: Take Responsibility**

How many times have you experienced an employee say, “It’s not my job”, When you ask them a question, or you ask the clerk where a certain item is located in a store, and you are told where you can find it, instead of being escorted to it.

\*Always take the steps to ensure the customer’s needs.

#### **Technique 5: Keep The Customer Informed**

Sometimes when a problem arises that cannot be resolved immediately, you can tell them that you or your supervisor will get back to them by a certain time. Even if you don’t have that problem solved by that time, call the customer back to advise them that you are working on it.

\*The customer will respect you and the facility for keeping in touch.

#### **Technique 6: “You Have To...”**

A customer doesn’t have to do anything. The customer is doing us a favor, not the other way around. Instead of saying, “You have to do this“ say, “Would you mind doing this so we may resolve the problem quickly”.

\*The customer will see that you recognize the importance of resolving the issue quickly and will likely support your request of them. In the height of busy times, it is sometimes difficult to follow these steps and techniques, but if you have had a bad experience, review these suggestions and see how you may have handled things differently. A few words to consider...

#### **Our Customers**

Customers are the most important people ...in person on the phone or by mail.

Customers are not dependent on us ... we are dependent on them.

Customers are not an interruption of our work... they are the purpose of it.

We are not doing them a favor by serving them... they are doing us a favor by giving us an opportunity to do so.

Customers are not someone to argue or match wits with. Nobody ever won an argument with a customer.

Customers are people who bring us their wants. It is our job to handle them profitably, to them and to ourselves.

**Dealing with Difficult Customers** If you're in a public contact position, chances are you'll encounter angry customers. If customers are not handled effectively, they may remain angry, refusing to do further business with your organization. They will also make you angry and upset as well!

Resolving a customer's anger helps you feel better about yourself, increases your job satisfaction, makes you look good to your supervisor, and enables your organization to keep customers satisfied and coming back.

Here are the suggested steps to deal effectively with an angry or difficult customer:

**1. Identify the angry customer. Learn to read verbal and non-verbal language.**

**There are two types of anger:**

**a) Aggressive** – person expresses feelings immediately. Anger and hostility are obvious. There is often use of sarcasm describing the merchandise or situation, rapid or abrupt speech, or raised voice.

**b) Passive** – person keeps his/her anger inside, but their body language gives them away. They plan never to return or do business with your organization again.

**2. Diffuse the customer's anger. Deal with the customer's feelings. Do it in the following way:**

**a) Empathize** – enter into the feeling and spirit of the person. Put yourself in their "shoes." You need to try to understand what they're saying, from their point of view. To do this you must be a good listener who blocks out distractions. Show them that you're really listening by maintaining eye contact, nodding and saying, "I see", or "I understand how you must feel." As they talk, the anger will dissipate and you'll get more information about the problem or situation.

If the customer is aggressively angry, let their tirade flow uninterrupted until it's exhausted.

If the customer is passively angry, it's better to confront their anger and bring it out into the open by saying something like "I'm sorry you're upset about this. Let's see what we can do about solving the problem."

**b) Ask questions** – learn as much as you can about the situation before you attempt a solution.

**c) Give feedback** – restate, in your own words, the feelings you detect behind what the person is saying. For example, you might say, "It sounds like you are in a hurry. Let's take care of this right away." Feedback should be neither judgmental nor critical but should be positive and supportive. Sound sincere because you don't want your customers to feel that you're patronizing them.

**d) Summarize the problem** – describe in your own words, what you understand the problem to be. Restating the problem lets the customer know you've listened and lets you know that you understood the situation correctly.

### **3. Deal with the person's problem in the following way:**

- a) Find out what the person wants
- b) Suggest alternatives
- c) Share information
- d) Agree on a solution
- e) Follow up as necessary.

**4. Dealing with angry customers on the telephone-** Recognizing angry customers on the phone is more difficult than in person because there are no non-verbal clues to catch. The only ones you might be aware of are the aggressively angry ones. The anger of passive angry customer is revealed through verbal clues – changes in the tone, speed or pitch of their voices. Once you have identified the caller as being upset, follow the steps listed above.

**5. Dealing with provoked customers-** Sometimes YOU mishandle a situation. You create an angry customer, or make an already angry customer even angrier. You have been extremely busy, under a lot of pressure, or do or say the wrong thing. When that happens, you have two choices:

- a) first, you can admit your mistake and apologize
- b) if you think the situation is serious enough, you can refer it upward to your supervisor.

Whatever you do, don't ignore it!

### **Abuse**

You are there to serve, not be abused! There are some things you are never obligated to take from your customers, the most obvious being profanity or physical abuse! There is only one way to deal with these situations — directly:

**1. Don't react.** The customer who resorts to these behaviours is usually looking to provoke a reaction from you. They will use your reaction to justify their behaviour. Maintaining your cool is your best defense. It's hard for the customer to play this game if you refuse to play.

**2. Draw the line.** Don't bother quoting the rules — they don't care about the rules. Simply make a clear and direct statement of the consequence should they choose to continue their behaviour. For example, "I can't help you as long as you continue to use that kind of language. If you continue, I will hang up!"

**3. Follow through.** If the response is positive, continue the interaction. If they do not respond, follow through with the consequence. Then seek out support, perhaps from your supervisor. Be prepared to explain what happened.

Be sure your business has a contingency plan for any serious customer problems such as pulling a gun or physical violence. It happens! Ensure all supervisors and staff know what to do.



### Review questions

- i. Discuss the steps to follow when handling a difficult situation
- ii. What is the importance of confidence when dealing with difficult customers
- iii. There are two types of anger, discuss

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## CHAPTER FOUR: COMMUNICATION SKILLS



### *Learning objectives*

*Overview of communications skills,*

*acquire verbal and non-verbal skills to enhance customer service, Learn cultural differences in communication.*

*Fine tune listening skills to uncover needs, deliver ideas, solicit information, and deliver solutions*

*the role of questioning skills in handling difficult people and other professional situations,*

*structure of a good question,*

*question types and their use,*

*Using questions to obtain information, common errors.*

For communication to occur effectively, the ability and skills are required:

must be able to communicate effectively with all levels of managements .

Must have substantial experiences, training in oral and written communication and demonstrate good writing skills.

Be able to prepare special analysis, research reports, and proposals.

Must have ability to communicate and sell ideas, firm, and products.

Need ability to compare effective correspondence.

Must be able to cultivate and maintain good customer relationship.

Need skills in gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data and in writing analytical reports.

### **ENCODING :**

Encoding is dressing your thoughts with the meaningful language. Then the use of this language, oral, written or nonverbal, becomes a message . The wording of he message should observe the art of empathy so that it reaches the receiver correctly and understandably. Encoding includes writing, speaking, and other communication means.

## **DECOODING:**

Decoding is done by the receiver. His decoding of the message depends upon his past background, perception, knowledge of the language, understanding ,viewpoint and relations with the sender. Decoding is reading , listening and understanding .

## **Developing Effective Communication Skills**

### **Speaking and Listening Skills, Verbal and Nonverbal Communication**

Consequently, developing good listening and effective speaking skills should be an integral part of everyone's personal development.

Information cannot be effectively received, transferred or exchanged without using good communication skills.

### **Verbal and Nonverbal Communication Skills**

Individuals' communication skills are a basis for an effective dialogue, and involve both verbal and nonverbal communication skills.

While verbal communication helps to express oneself, nonverbal enhances spoken ideas by means of bodily, voice, and eye behavior, facial expression, etc. It reinforces the effect of spoken words. In addition, nonverbal communication can be viewed as a reliable indicator of real feelings of an interlocutor. Observed and paid attention to, it can help a person to understand another one better.

### **Effective Listening**

Listening is probably the most used skill in everyday communication. It involves hearing and paying attention to the speaker. However, hearing and effective listening are completely different abilities.

Hearing thousands of sounds every day is a normal thing for an individual. Effective listening, on contrast, involves not only hearing, but also comprehending and understanding the message. Sounds simple. However, not everybody is a good listener - some people prefer to talk. But to be a good communicator, what is important for an individual in both the personal sphere and at the workplace is to be an effective listener.



Pay attention to the speaker, first of all, in order to show you are involved in communication.

Respond both verbally and nonverbally, showing that the message is being comprehended and followed. Eye contact, gestures, facial expression, short responses or brief expressions of attitude, such as nodding, help the speaker to understand whether a listener follows the conversation.

Do not interrupt the speaker in the middle of a speech. Wait till the idea is explained completely, think the information over to understand the meaning, and only then provide suggestions, comments, or ask questions.

Ask questions and confirm your understanding of the message. A brief summary of what the speaker said might be the best idea. It shows that the speaker was listened and paid attention to.

### **Effective Speaking**

As a mean of communication, effective speaking plays a vital role in people's lives. Though everybody speaks everyday and is able to express ideas, thoughts, or requests, not everybody can do it well. Some people are difficult to follow, some explain their thoughts in a complicated manner, and some are simply boring to listen to. Avoid these mistakes.

Use plain and simple words unless the audience is specialized in the subject area.

Use complete simple sentences for the message to be easier to comprehend.

Do not speak too fast. It is difficult to comprehend information if much of it is presented in a short period of time.

Make pauses. Pauses between sentences and ideas will give a listener some space to think the words over, to understand the message.

Structure and connect ideas. Major points should be presented in a logical manner.

Otherwise it is difficult to follow the speaker. So, make sure that each next thought expressed expands on the subject and on the previous point.

Support ideas not only with words, but with intonation and nonverbal means of communication as well. Proper intonation can stress certain ideas you want to draw attention to. Nonverbal means of communication, such as gestures and facial expression,

establish a closer connection with the audience, and enhance the message being communicated.

## **Benefits of Good Communication in the Workplace**

### **Communication Skills Improve Workplace Efficiency**

Good communication in the workplace is essential and helps to improve morale, increase efficiency and create healthy working relationships.

In any form of employment, good communication skills are a real asset and particularly in today's difficult financial climate, it is more important than ever to be able to communicate effectively whether this be with colleagues, employers, employees or customers. For those who have been made redundant and are now facing job interviews or are having problems with others within the workplace, effective communication skills will be an extremely useful resource.

### **Understanding Good Communication Skills**

When most people think about communication it is usually speaking that first springs to mind, however, being able to listen well is a large part of effective communication. It is also about being able to listen to what the other person is not actually saying but is communicating through non-verbal behaviours. Examples of non-verbal communication include using gestures, facial expressions, body language as well as using various props.

### **Good Workplace Communication Improves Morale**

A major benefit of good communication within the workplace is that it may very likely lead to an improvement in office morale. For example if employees never or rarely receive any kind of positive feedback or idea as to how the company is performing then it is often quite difficult to stay motivated. When very little is communicated back to employees this may also trigger a sense of distrust leading to increased tension and conflict.

## Questions skills;

### Effective Questioning Skills

How important is it to ask good questions? It's very important. It's important you use questioning skills to help you completely understand the caller's situation. Otherwise, you could be responding to what you guess the caller means, which may or may not be correct.

Questioning goes beyond listening.

Effective questioning is a real compliment to your skills. It shows that you have the ability to understand the caller's real needs. It shows that you are looking for meaning that's deeper than the spoken message. Effective questioning is a powerful, learned skill. It says to the caller, "I'm interested in determining your needs."

Questioning can be put into two divisions: Open-Ended Questions and Closed-Ended Questions. **Open-Ended Questions:** Open-ended questions are questions without a fixed limit. They encourage continued conversation, and help you get more information. Plus, they often provide opportunities to gain insight into the other person's feelings. Open-ended questions draw out more information. If you want the caller to open up, use open-ended questions that start with who, what, where, why, when, and how. A few examples are:

"What are some of the things you look for in a hotel?"

"How do you feel government could be more responsive to your needs?"

"What are your concerns about this new program?" **Closed-Ended Questions:** Closed-ended questions have a fixed limit. They're often answered with a yes or no, or with a simple statement of fact. Closed-ended questions are used to direct the conversation. They usually get specific information or confirm facts. Here are some examples.

"Do you have health insurance?"

"Do you want the new brochure?"

"Would you be interested in that?"

We use the open-ended questions to get more information and the closed-ended questions to focus in on one area.

Additionally, there are several other type of questioning techniques this are;

**Probing Questions:** Sometimes you ask an open-ended question to get more information and you only get part of what you need. Now it's time for a probing question. A probing question is another open-ended question, but it's a follow-up. It's narrower. It asks about one area. Here's an example:

"What topic areas are you interested in?" This question would be better than reading off 50 topics to the caller. It's a probing question.

A few other examples are:

"Are you able to tell me more about the form you received?"

"What did you like best about Paris?"

Probing questions are valuable in getting to the heart of the matter.

**The Echo Question:** Here's a good technique for getting more information. You can use this like a probing question. The idea is to use the last part of a phrase the caller said. Slightly raise the tone of your voice at the end of the phrase to convert it to a question. Then pause and use silence - like this:

"...The bill you received?"

An echo question repeats part of the phrase that the caller used, using voice inflection to convert it to a question. Some people call it mirroring or reflecting. Others call it parroting. We call it echoing. Whatever you call it, it's a valuable technique to use.

**Leading Questions:** Many things can be good or bad. Take fire for example. Fire warms our home, cooks our food, and does many other useful things. Uncontrolled, it can burn down our houses.

The reason we use that example is because leading questions can also be good or bad. Leading questions, if used improperly, can be manipulative because you're leading the person to give the answer you want. When they are used properly, you're helping that person. Some examples of proper leading questions are:

"You understand what I'm saying, don't you?"

"You'll want to know about our same day delivery service, right?"

"You'll want to go ahead with this, won't you?"

Leading questions often end with suggestive nudges toward the desired answer. Some ending phrases would be, "Don't you?", "Shouldn't you?", "Won't you?", "Haven't you?", and "Right?" So where are leading questions useful? Well, they're useful in helping someone who's undecided make the right decision, a decision that will benefit them. You use a leading question ethically when you help someone do the right thing. Some folks call this technique the "tie down" technique because you're actually trying to tie down the caller's needs. The bottom line is to practice using a variety of questioning techniques. It will help you help your callers more effectively. After all, you want to provide the very best customer service, don't you?

### **Why are closed questions useful?**

Closed questions are also useful in their own place. They are necessary at the end of a piece of communication to ensure clarity. They are also good if you are unclear about the information you are receiving. If somebody has a tendency to waffle or ramble, you may need closed questions to get clear on the key points of the message.

Some of the particular situations where closed questions will help you are ;

- To get specific information
- To get commitment
- To seek clarification or reassurance
- To gain confirmation/affirmation It can speed the process up
- To round off a conversation
- To narrow down options

### **The Importance of Questioning**

A learner is by nature a questioner. If there is a drive in an individual to increase knowledge, skills or understanding it is driven by doubt, curiosity, wonderment, incomprehension, puzzlement, uncertainty, recognition of a need, or curiosity. This drive is then focused through questions that the learner formulates and actively seeks to find answers to. They may be simple

questions that seek clear facts, or complex questions that probe deep into concepts, beliefs and understandings. The question may provide an answer that solves the learning need or may lead to further questions as knowledge and understanding grows. It is obvious though, that no ever simple or complex an issue is, a good clear relevant question will be of far greater use to the learner than a question that is vague, poorly defined or irrelevant.

***“All our knowledge results from questions, which is another way of saying that questioning is our most important intellectual tool.” (Neil Postman)***

Thinking is central to all learning and there is no learning without thinking, but central to thinking is questioning. It is our questions that fuel and drive our thinking

If schools hold a vision or goal that goes beyond the delivery of curriculum content, and if schools want to equip pupils with the skills of learning, then it becomes obvious that a primary skill for any independent learner is the ability to ask clear, well defined and relevant questions.

### **Questioning and Reading**

The National Reading Panel (2000) analysed a large collection of over two hundred studies examining the approaches used for targeting the development of reading comprehension and found seven strategies that positively improve comprehension. Of these seven strategies (P18) there are three that have questioning skills at their core.

- Question answering, where readers answer questions posed by the teacher and receive immediate feedback;
- Question generation, where readers ask themselves questions about various aspects of the story;

Story structure, where students are taught to use the structure of the story as a means of helping them recall story content in order to answer questions about what they have read.

Asking the right questions is one of the vital factors in closing sales and is a key part to any good sales training course.

Salespeople usually focus on securing an order; so closing is their main concern.

However, emphasis on the end of the sales process often leads to the preceding steps being neglected or, in some cases, completely overlooked. The fact remains that it is questions which ultimately unlock the sale - so it is vital that they are designed carefully and used in the right sequence.

Successful salespeople, have ability of asking open-ended questions. These questions - usually starting with interrogative words such as who, what, why, and so on - provide us with more information than closed questions. Closed questions, inviting a shorter answer such as yes or no can also be used to gain specific yes or no answers. Both types of questions can be used in tandem with each other, to great effect. The key point to understand here is not the volume of information that each type of question leads to, but the quality of that information.

One of the greatest sounds that any sales representative can hear is that their prospect has a problems with their current supplier. It may be a difficulty with delivery, payment, service, fee or a host of other factors. This knowledge will be imparted in two ways.

Firstly, the facts of the circumstances will be revealed - for example a grievance about recurring delayed delivery. Secondly, the impact on the individual concerned will be divulged. This could be: "It's giving me a real headache." This knowledge is exceptionally valuable as it indicates that the prospect has become emotionally involved.

This opinion should be explored even further, if allowed by the client. Looking back to the report about late delivery being an issue, a sales representative could then make use of a closed question to add even more weight to the issue. Following on with something like: "So you would like to be free from this complication, then?" makes the prospect ponder what life would be like if the position were resolved. Closed questions like this also furnish the sales representative greater authority over the meeting as they can be used to keep answers brief if so desired.

One of the greatest areas for improvement for new salespeople in use of questions is identifying the correct sequence in which they should be used and is therefore forms a fundamental element of sales training. This is symptomatic of the fact that, instead of listening to the prospect and using the information that they are given, they are often too busy thinking about what they're

going to say next. The sequence in which questions should be asked is a simple one, however, and is logical in its format.

### **Step 1**

The initial section for a sales representative to investigate is the prospects current circumstances. power flows from the individual who knows, so they ought to find out as much as possible at this juncture. Who is at present supplying? What merchandise or utility? What amount are they paying? Who decides on its use and purchase? What is the volume per annum? All these questions build a picture of what is at present happening. They do, nevertheless, also perform another aim. The sales expert should be familiar with the competition inside out, and if told that commodity X is being supplied by supplier Y, should be accomplished to spot potential weaknesses.

### **Step 2**

The next step concentrates on problems, issues or weaknesses of the customers existing circumstances. By getting them to recognize any problems, they will be more disposed toward changing their supplier in order to alleviate the difficulties of the predicament.

Instead of selling an appealing, ostentatious concept, we are selling a rescue service. nonetheless, this sounds easier to do than it actually is, for two primary reasons. Firstly, customers are frequently unwilling to admit to problem suppliers because they may have chosen the supplier in the first place. Secondly, if done insensitively, prospects will consider this approach as a shock strategy and discharge it as the difficult sales approach.

The explanation lies in two different techniques: looking for areas for enhancement and prefacing.

Instead of asking prospects to identify problems or issues, the sales representative asks them to deliberate over any areas where their current supplier could develop. This face-saving exercise allows the prospect to give vent to their opinion without having to accept that they actually do have some problems, which they themselves may have helped produce in the first place by choosing that supplier.



Each question can be prefaced by a declaration that softly introduces the question that follows. Examples include: "It would assist if you could provide me an intimation of your priorities. Tell me..." or "numerous y customers tell me that they had the selfsame trouble. What if..." etc. once in a while, with the bombastic sort, it may be fitting to preface each question with a phrase like: "Would you mind if I asked..?" This will appeal to their need for esteem and they are more probable to respond.

### **Step 3**

The last step is to ask them to identify the consequence of having any problems solved. This may be articulated as a safer workplace, higher margins, greater industrial relations, or even a more motivated workforce. Whatever the benefits are, the vital thing is to get the prospect actually talking about them. This will reinforce their own desire to at least endeavour to put right the condition, which will with any luck be achieved by accepting your recommendation.

The last question to ask, therefore, is the pre-closing one: "If we could find a system of slaying those problems, while still maintaining an exceptional service, would you be predisposed?"

Implementing these techniques will have a positive effect on sales performance. These skills can be developed by attending a good sales training course.



#### ***Review questions***

- i. Differentiate between verbal and non-verbal communication, give examples of each?*
- ii. What is effective speaking and listening*
- iii. List some of the benefits of good communication skills*
- iv. Discuss the importance of good questioning skills*

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## CHAPTER FIVE: TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS;



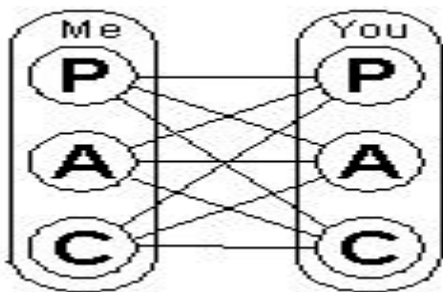
### *Learning objectives*

- i. how transactional analysis can help in difficult situations,*
- ii. states of mind, how we interact with others,*
- iii. using questions to change a person's state of mind ,*
- iv. 'rules' to ensure a productive outcome,*
- v. Building relationships*

Transactional Analysis (or TA as it is often called) is a model of people and relationships that was developed during the 1960s by Dr. Eric Berne. It is based on two notions: first that we have three parts or 'ego-states' to our 'personality. The other assumption is that these converse with one another in 'transactions' (hence the name). TA is a very common model used in therapy and there is a great deal written about it.

### **Communications (Transactions)**

When two people communicate, each exchange is a transaction. Many of our problems come from transactions which are unsuccessful.



Parents naturally speak to Children, as this is their role as a parent. They can talk with other Parents and Adults, although the subject still may be about the children.

The Nurturing Parent naturally talks to the Natural Child and the Controlling Parent to the Adaptive Child. In fact these parts of our personality are *evoked* by the opposite. Thus if I act as an Adaptive Child, I will most likely evoke the Controlling Parent in the other person.

We also play many games between these positions, and there are rituals from greetings to whole conversations (such as the weather) where we take different positions for different events. These are often 'pre-recorded' as *scripts* we just play out. They give us a sense of control and identity and reassure us that all is still well in the world. Other games can be negative and destructive and we play them more out of sense of habit and addiction than constructive pleasure.

### **Conflict**

Complementary transactions occur when both people are at the same level. Thus Parent talking to Parent, etc. Here, both are often thinking in the same way and communication is easy. Problems usually occur in Crossed transactions, where the other person is at a different level.

The parent is either nurturing or controlling, and often speaks to the child, who is either adaptive or 'natural' in their response. When both people talk as a Parent to the other's Child, their wires get crossed and conflict results.

The ideal line of communication is the mature and rational Adult-Adult relationship.

### **So what?**

Being a Controlling Parent can get the other person into a Child state where they may conform with your demands. There is also a risk that they will be an Adaptive 'naughty child' and rebel. They may also take opposing Parent or Adult states.

Be a Nurturing Parent or talk at the same level as the other person to create trust.

Watch out for crossed wires. This is where conflict arises. When it happens, first go to the state that the other person is in to talk at the same level.

For rational conversation, move yourself and the other person to the Adult level.

## **Transactional Analysis and Communication**

Transactional analysis or TA is a branch of psychotherapy developed by Eric Berne. His definition of it is “*a theory of personality and a systematic psychotherapy for personal growth and change*”.

Knowing about TA can be very useful for improving our communication skills. TA is about how people are structured psychologically and is both a theory of communication and a theory of child development.

Berne’s model is a three part ego-state model. An ego state is

*“A consistent pattern of feeling and experience directly related to a corresponding consistent pattern of behaviour”.*

Parent,

Adult,

Child.

Ego states are irrespective of age and are capitalized to differentiate from the normal use of the words parent, adult and child.

The Parent and Child ego states are echoes of the past. The Adult ego state is a response to the here and now when a person is grown up and using grown up responses.

Ego states are ‘things’ not names. They are a set and related; thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

Communication between people can be from one ego state to a different one or from one ego state to the same ego state.

Normally communication will be from one ego state either to the same ego state or a different one. The person who first communicates will expect a reply to be from a certain ego state. If

communication is from a different ego state to the expected one, then the communication may be ineffective and the message may be lost, not received or disregarded by the person receiving it.

If communication is from Adult to Adult then it is likely to be the most effective communication for most of our communications.

## The '3 Rules of Communication' in TA

### 1st Rule of Communication

So long as transactions remain complementary, communication can continue indefinitely.

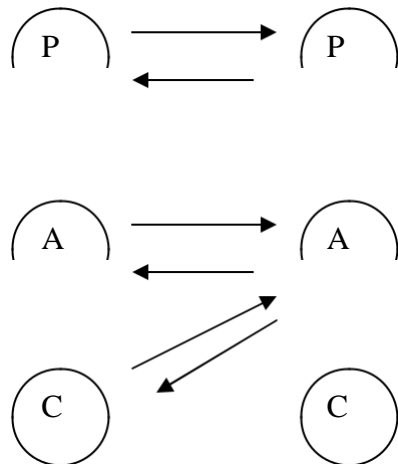
### 2<sup>nd</sup> Rule of Communication

When a transaction is crossed, a break in communication results, and one or both individuals will need to shift ego states in order for the communication to be re-established

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Rule of Communication

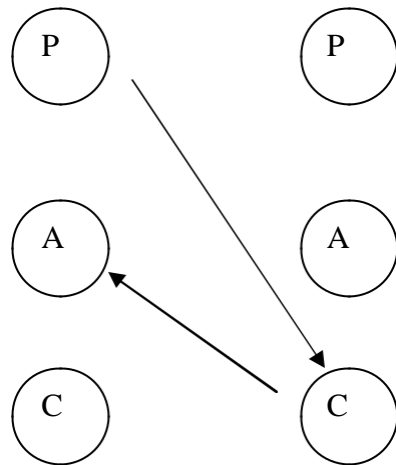
The behavioural outcome of an ulterior transaction (one where two messages are sent at the same time; one overt social and one covert psychological) is determined at the psychological level and not at the social level.

### Example of Complementary Communication



## Example of non complementary communication

Diagram shows Parent ego state – expected reply would have been something like *“I’m sorry it won’t happen again”* from Adapted Child



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*“You took your time to reply to my call”*                      *“So what, I was busy”*

### **The ego states are sub-divided.**

#### **Parent ego state is divided into:**

Parent into Critical Parent CP – which is negative, unsupportive, critical.

Nurturing Parent NP – which is supportive, helpful, nurturing, comforting.

#### **Child ego state is divided into:**

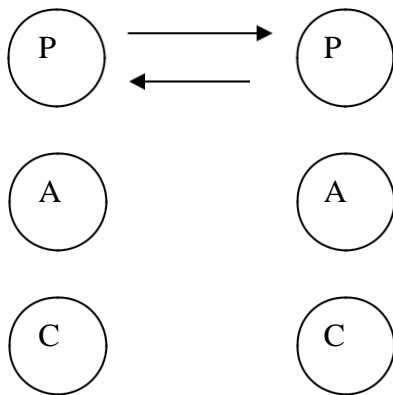
Free Child FC (sometimes referred to as Natural Child NC) which is spontaneous, free-wheeling, playful, self-indulgent, curious, rebellious.

Adapted Child AC – which is toned down behaviour that has been learnt in response to the reactions from other people to us and our behaviour. The learned or adapted responses are more likely to generate a given result from the receiver.

The 3 ego states can be used as a way of analysing transactions (communications) between people. A transaction is a communication from A to B and the response from B to A.

### Examples of Complementary Transactions

Where the message is sent from one ego state and the reply is from the expected ego state. The transaction is complementary.

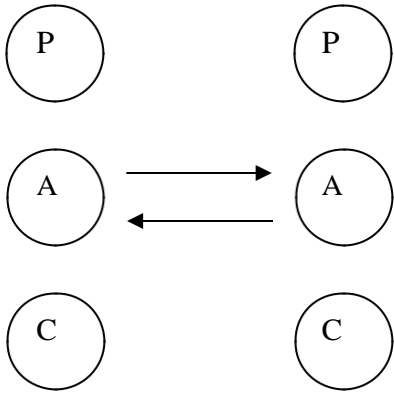


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*“The government is making us all criminals by putting speed cameras everywhere”*                      *“They are it’s really annoying”*

Above is example of Critical Parent to Critical Parent.

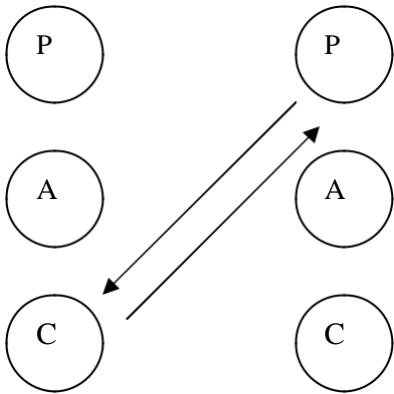





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*“what time is the train due?”*      *“It’s due at one fifteen”*

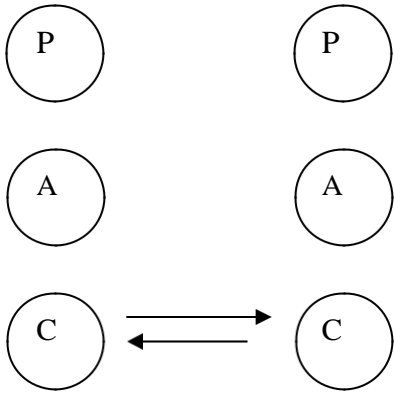
Above is example of Adult to Adult.




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*“Oh, I’m really struggling with all this painting”*      *“Don’t worry, I’ll give you a hand right now”*

Above is example of Adapted Child to Nurturing Parent.



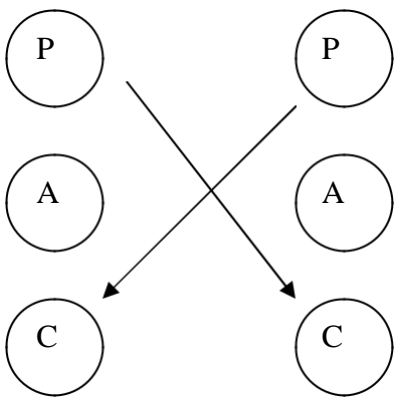

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<i>“Oh what the hell, let’s have another drink and pudding”</i>	<i>“yeah, great idea make that 2 drinks a pudding, and some gateaux”</i>
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Above is example of Free Child to Free Child.

### Examples of Crossed Transactions

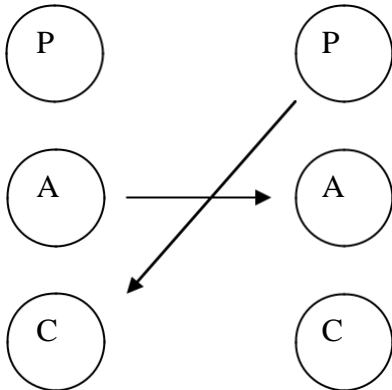
When a message is sent from one ego state and the sender expects it to be sent back from the expected ego state: but it’s sent back from a different one. The transaction is crossed; communication is non effective.



*“You messed that up, it’s full of errors and typos”*

*“Rubbish, it’s your fault. It’s you that can’t understand or use correct English”*

Above is example of Critical Parent expecting reply from Adapted Child but receiving reply from Critical Parent.

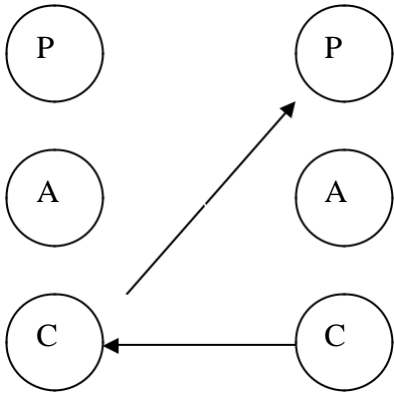


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*“The deadline is tomorrow. We’ll need to stay on a final half hour to give it another check”*

*“What do you mean ‘we’. If you didn’t always leave things to the last minute”*

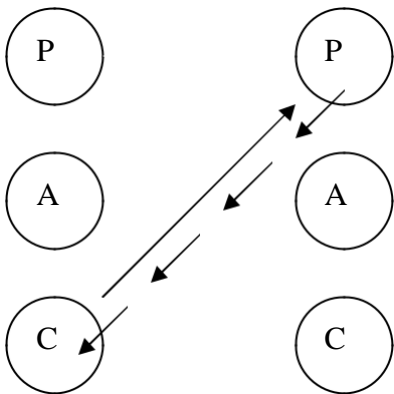
Above is example of Adult expecting reply from Adult but receiving reply from Critical Parent.



*“Oh, I’m really  
Struggling with  
all this painting”*

*“Oh, I know what  
you mean, it’s really  
difficult isn’t it”*

Above is example of Adapted Child expecting reply from Nurturing Parent but receiving reply from Adapted Child.



*“ Oh, I’m really  
struggling with  
this painting”*

*“So bl\*\*\*y what.  
I’ve got enough to  
do without you  
moaning all the time”*

Above is example of Adapted Child expecting reply from Nurturing Parent but receiving reply from Critical Parent

A crossed transaction could lead to argument and loss of effective communication. The message is 'lost'.

### **Using TA For Effective Communication**

For effective communication you need to keep the transaction complementary i.e. focus on sender to receiver and receiver to sender where the message is sent to the ego state from which you expect a reply. Using ego states we can look at how others communicate and how we communicate with others. It's possible to identify which ego state we are in and which ego state we are expecting a reply from.

We can also use TA to help us plan transactions. For example we can identify which ego state would be most valuable for us to send the message from and which ego state it would be better for it to be received by. If we receive a reply from the wrong (non expected) ego state then we can either try to shift the other person's ego state; or if we cannot do this it may be better to stop the communication and try again another time when the person may be in a different ego state.

We can listen to people's communication to identify if they are habitually in one ego state and then decide if communication to that ego state would be appropriate or not.

TA therefore can be used to elicit the reactions you want from other people (and this will happen consciously or unconsciously).

We can help communication if we need to by trying to shift the other person's ego state by inviting people to move into a different ego state (they may not always move into it though, particularly if someone is habitually in one ego state). Do this by acknowledging their current ego state (by the appropriate message or response) and then invite them into another ego state by the words (and body language) which you use.

**Invite them to move into Adult by:**

Asking a question

Stating a few facts

Asking for their opinion

Asking for their preference

Asking for their view

**Invite them to move into Nurturing Parent by:**

Asking for their help

Asking for their advice

Asking for their expert opinion

Communicating your fears/worries

**Invite them to move into Natural Child (Free Child) by:**

Being one yourself

Showing the funny side of the situation

Going to nurturing parent

Being enthusiastic

Showing an unconventional way of looking at things.

TA implies that you can have considerable impact on modifying unsatisfactory behaviour by the way you communicate with others. You use your Adult ego state to think about what behaviour is appropriate. The Adult ego state has the capacity to control the other two ego states.

**Playing Games**

In 'Games People Play' Berne identified that people habitually adopt certain ego states (not necessarily consciously) and "play games" in the way they communicate with others. E.g. a person might say "I'm fat" or "Nobody Loves Me", they are in Adapted child. They expect a nurturing parent response of "no you are not" or "yes they do". If they received a response of "I know you are" or "You're right, everybody hates you" then they have received a reply that they

didn't want. Some people go through life playing a game and people can be in a relationship where one person is the Adapted child and the other the Nurturing parent.

**Some people habitually play games and go through life playing games such as:**

'Isn't life unfair',

'Everyone is against me'

'I am poorly',

'I am always right and you are always wrong'

'It is your fault that I ...'

**Games typically:**

Are repetitive

Are played without Adult awareness

Always end up with players experiencing racket feeling.

Games entail an exchange of ulterior transactions between the players

Games always include an element of surprise or confusion.

**Racket feeling** – a familiar emotion, learned and encouraged in childhood, experienced in many different stress situations, and useless as a means of problem solving but frequently carried out  
E.g. my computer screen freezes, I get stressed and hit it.

Common games include: "*oh how I suffer*" "*Isn't it awful*" "*victim, persecutor, rescuer*" and "*If it weren't for you*"

**Strokes - units of recognition**

Can be:           verbal or non-verbal

                      Positive or negative

                      Conditional or unconditional

A stroke is a unit of recognition. E.g. you walk down the street and see your neighbour. As you pass you smile and say "hello". They smile and say "*yes, great day?*" That's a positive stroke you've given and received.

If your neighbour ignored you then you felt left out or deprived or wonder what you have done to offend them.

Any transaction is an exchange of strokes. This may be entirely non-verbal.

Positive strokes – the receiver experiences it as being pleasant.

Negative strokes – the receiver experiences it as being painful.

For example if your neighbour replied “*It was a nice day until I saw you!*” then that’s an example of a negative stroke. But any kind of stroke is better than no stroke at all.

Stewart and Jones identify that this is supported by work on rats where one group were given electric shocks and the other group were not. The rats given the shocks developed better – as they were receiving some stimulation.

**Conditional** strokes relate to what you do.

**Unconditional** strokes relate to what you are.

**E.g. Conditional:**     *“That was a good piece of work”*  
                              *“That painting you’ve done is a real mess”*

**Unconditional:**     *“Your humour always brightens things up”*  
                              *“I hate you and all which you represent”*

As infants we test out behaviours to find out which give us the strokes we need. If we receive strokes from a certain behaviour then we are likely to repeat it (and that can be where many of our learnt behaviours come from – albeit unconsciously learnt)





### Review Questions

- i. *What do you understand by transactional analysis?*
- ii. *Discuss complementary and non-complementary communication?*
- iii. *Discuss of the ways that transactional analysis can be used for effective communication?*

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## CHAPTER SIX: PROBLEM SOLVING & HANDLING CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS



### *Learning objectives*

*By the end of this chapter students should be able to;*

- a) Explain why customers complain.*
- b) Discuss the importance of solving customers' problems.*
- c) Use problem solving techniques to provide customer service and to strengthen relationships with customers.*

Customers are becoming more demanding and in some cases—rude. Complaints are an opportunity to improve existing service and begin delivering quality service. Identifies basic problem solving skills, complex problem and irate customer handling skills.

Introduces the concepts of self-talk and class acts. Key Points Covered: Learn why complaints should be considered “opportunities.” Learn why the average business hears from only 4% of its dissatisfied customers. Visualize what the other 96% do. Learn to know the easiest type of complaint to resolve. Learn to understand the four basic steps you should take when handling a specific problem. The more complex problems require expanding these four basic steps. Learn two additional skills needed to diffuse difficult situations. Irate customers can be upsetting.

### **How To Deal With Customer Complaints**

Every business has to deal with situations in which things go wrong from a customer's point of view.

However you respond if this happens, don't be dismissive of your customer's problem - even if you're convinced you're not at fault. Although it might seem contradictory, a customer with a complaint represents a genuine opportunity for your business:

if you handle the complaint successfully, your customer is likely to prove more loyal than if nothing had gone wrong

people willing to complain are rare - your complaining customer may be alerting you to a problem experienced by many others who silently took their custom elsewhere

Complaints should be handled courteously, sympathetically and - above all - swiftly. Make sure that your business has an established procedure for dealing with customer complaints and that it is known to all your employees. At the very least it should involve:

listening sympathetically to establish the details of the complaint

recording the details together with relevant material, such as a sales receipt or damaged goods

offering rectification - whether by repair, replacement or refund

appropriate follow-up action, such as a letter of apology or a phone call to make sure that the problem has been made good

If you're proud of the way you rectify problems - by offering no-questions refunds, for example - make sure your customers know about it. Your method of dealing with customer problems is one more way to stay ahead of your competitors

## **ESSENTIAL TIPS IN HANDLING CUSTOMER**

### **COMPLAINTS The hardest complainant type first:**

If a customer is abusive you must to make you first goal is to calm the customer's temper and take control of the situation. You need remain open and friendly, stay calm and keep your voice low and controlled. Tell the customer you are interested in his/her complaint and say 'in order to help you I need to fully understand your problem'. Then ask 'can you tell me what is wrong in a calm voice to ensure I focus on the problem (rather than the emotion) so I am better able to find a solution'. Let customer 'vent his or her frustration' and don't interrupt. Telling you their complete story, and describing how upset they are, allows customers to release pent-up frustrations. It is wise to take notes as you go as it helps you with your response and shows the customer you are seriously interested in their problem.

### **BLAMING OTHERS IN YOUR ORGANIZATION**

The worst tactic I have come across is a customer service officer trying to blame me, the customer, for the problem. Never play the blame game! Blaming the customer for the problem will dramatically worsen the situation. Also particularly never use the phrase 'sir our system requires...' or even worse 'sir you don't understand our system' (a common phrase with many service providers in Asia, especially bank staff).

Never blame others in your organization. Both the 'system excuse' and blaming others will be seen as evasive (or even worse cowardly) and destroy your credibility with the customer. No customer cares about your 'problems', they just want their problem solved. Accept responsibility as a representative of your company and place your efforts into solving the problem.

**'FRUSTRATION: HAVING TO RESIST THE TEMPTATION TO CHOKER THE LIVING S OUT OF SOMEONE WHO REALLY DESERVES IT!' This is a funny**

saying however it has no place in customer complaint handling, in spite of the bad attitude of many customer service's staff I have met (and trained) over the years.

**GET THE ENTIRE STORY:**

When the customer has told you the whole story regarding a complaint tell the customer what you will do to solve the problem. Do not tell the customer what he or she must do to solve the problem. Use phrases such as... 'I will contact the xyz department'... 'I will find the document'... 'I will gather the necessary information' etc. If you use 'I' in place of 'you,' you will help to minimise tension as it assures the customer that you are taking responsibility for the resolution of the issue. If you need to refer the matter to a third party always check back with the customer to ensure the other party has made contact and that the problem has been solved. Sure it's wise to check with the third party to ensure a solution has been found first, however contacting the customer after the event will reinforce both your own and your company's image. Important point never use the word 'no', either recommend a solution or suggest a compromise.

**PROBLEM SOLVING AS A CHANCE TO LEARN AND IMPROVE**

If you view problem solving as a chance to find out how to improve your company's operation (or image) and as an opportunity to learn something, rather than a nasty experience, you can approach these difficult situations with a more positive frame of mind. In most complaint situations there are only win-win or lose-lose results. Everyone will win with satisfied customers as you can gain a positive company image and an advocate for you and your products/services (plus hopefully some personal satisfaction) or everyone can lose with upset customers and the gradual destruction of your company's place in the market plus... personal emotional upset. Every time you allow someone else to change your emotional state YOU LOSE. Turn complaints into opportunities! In reality when you win, so does the customer and if you lose, so does the customer.

**IT'S BETTER TO RECEIVE A COMPLAINT THAN HAVE AN EX-CUSTOMER THAT NEVER TELLS YOU WHY THEY LEFT! FOLLOW-UP:**

1. After you've resolved a customer's complaint, it's essential you place a record on file to ensure the next person handling the customer is aware of the problems encountered so they do not inadvertently 'walk into a minefield'.
2. Best practice in customer service demands that we place a file note to give a little extra attention to the customer to reinforce the fact that the previous problem was a 'one off'. This may well cement good future relations.
3. You must also ensure that the problem's causes are analysed and counter measures are employed to make sure the same situation does not recur. If you learn a 'better' way you do business make the learning worthwhile and find a way for your company to make the changes required. Also the last thing you want is for any customer to have a similar problem let alone the same customer have two bad experiences in a row. If they do, chances are you've lost them (and all those they can influence) forever.

**ONE UNANSWERED COMPLAINT CAN LEAD TO THE LOSS OF LARGE NUMBERS OF POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS**

Effective or 'good' customer service needs to be a company wide philosophy not just a procedure. Effective complaint handling is a key element to retaining customers. All job descriptions should contain a responsibility statement for all functions and levels of staff, regardless of their perceived requirement for direct customer contact (or not). In hiring interviews, orientation programmes and training sessions, emphasize that everyone is in the customer service business. Make sure that all employees understand how they directly or indirectly 'effect' the customer. Include customer service in all performance evaluations and set up a complaint recording system with a section to report outcomes and responsible personnel. Even if you don't have a formal 'Total Quality Management' function ask employees to submit a list of the specific things they've done to help provide superior customer service. If 'to serve a customer is the only reason for a business to exist' (and it is) you need to be passionate about updating or modifying your staff's attitudes and company procedures to eliminate as many complaints as you can.

## **LEARN TO LOVE COMPLAINTS, THEY ARE GUIDEPOSTS TO IMPROVED PERFORMANCE!**

If you can view problem solving as a chance to find out how to improve your company's operation (or image) and as an opportunity to learn something, rather than a nasty experience, you can approach these difficult situations with a more positive frame of mind. In most complaint situations there is only win-win or lose-lose results. Win with satisfied customers and a positive company image (plus personal satisfaction) or upset customers and the gradual destruction of your company's hard fought place in the market and personal emotional upset. Every time you allow someone else to change your emotional state YOU LOSE. Turn complaints into opportunities! Remember when you win, so does the customer and if you lose, so does the customer.

Under the heading of "focus on the people who focus on the customers", a manager's customer service guide I once read (source unknown) stated:

"Make customer service a part of all written or verbal job descriptions—no matter the function or level. In hiring interviews, orientation, and on-the-job training, emphasize that everyone is in the customer service business. And make sure that all employees understand how they directly or indirectly 'touch' the customer."

"Remember that people do what's expected when it's inspected! Include customer service in all performance evaluations. Prior to conducting evaluations, ask employees to submit a list of the specific things they've done to help provide superior customer service."

"Go on a paralysing policy hunt! Ask employees to identify policies and procedures that get in the way of providing good service. Then do your best to update, modify, or eliminate as many as you can."

### **Research indicates that:**

1. Seven out of ten complaining customers will do business with you again if you resolve the complaint in their favour and if it is resolved on the spot, 95% will do business with you again.
2. A typical business hears from only 4% of its dissatisfied customers; the other 96% just go silently away and 91% of them will never come back.
3. A typical dissatisfied customer personally tells more than eight people about his or her problem. With today's communication options and social media usage a dissatisfied customer may now publicize his or her dissatisfaction to thousands.

Talking of dissatisfaction... dissatisfied with your job? Take a look at the free blank resume form and update your resume perhaps!



### **Review Questions**

- i. Discuss the steps to follow when dealing with difficult situations?*
- ii. Why are difficult customers are 'good news'?*
- iii. What is the effect on the organization and ourselves in dealing with difficult situations?.*

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## **WEEK 7 CAT 1**

## CHAPTER SEVEN: SEQUENCE FOR HANDLING DIFFICULT SITUATIONS;



### *Learning objectives*

- a) the first part of a call/meeting,*
- b) how to show concern without necessarily admitting liability,*
- c) how to ascertain the key facts, obtaining real agreement,*
- d) How to avoid the 'fait accompli' or resentment.*

### **Eight Strategies to Deal With Difficult Situations**

In any business our customers are one of our most important assets. Unfortunately there are days when not all customers want to be friendly or pleasant. On days like this, try these effective tips to help you handle those difficult customers.

**Don't take it personally** - remember when a customer complains they are unhappy with the product or your company - not you.

**Remember you are good at your job** - remind yourself of the skills you have and why you are working there. Don't allow customers to make you feel inadequate.

**Write down their complaint or concern** - show the customer you are listening by recording their problem and if you are on the phone, tell the customer you are writing down all the details.

**Ask a supervisor to join you and be part of the transaction** - if the customer is becoming more difficult, invite a supervisor to join you and the customer will notice you are treating them as important by seeking additional help.

**Debrief the situation with someone else when the customer leaves** - sometimes you may need to talk to someone about your difficult customer to debrief and get rid of any negative thoughts and emotions you may have - this is a very important step.

**Learn stress management techniques** - this may help you stay calm if a customer raises their voice or becomes emotional. By learning to breath deeply, focus on the positives and also ensure your body doesn't carry stress you will be able to handle these difficult customers easily.



**Recognise and accept you will work with customers who have bad days** - understand when you are working with the public some people take their bad days out on you - it is not personal.

**Consider what you could do differently next time** - if the customer is complaining about a company system or process, take some time to review this and determine if this might need to be changed. Think about the way you handled the customer and note anything you would do differently next time.

### **Dealing with Difficult Customers**

It is easy to work with people you like, and it is even easier to work with people who like you. But that's not always the case. Sooner or later, you'll have to deal with a difficult customer.

Difficult customers come in a wide variety. There are those whose personality rubs you the wrong way. They may not be difficult for someone else, but they are for you. And then there are those who are difficult for everyone: Picky people, know-it-alls, egocentrics, fault-finders, constant complainers, etc. Every salesperson can list a number of the types.

But perhaps the most difficult for everyone is the angry customer. This is someone who feels that he or she has been wronged, and is upset and emotional about it. These customers complain, and they are angry about something you or your company did.

There are some sound business reasons to become adept in handling an angry customer. Research indicates that customers who complain are likely to continue doing business with your company if they feel that they were treated properly. It's estimated that as many as 90% of customers who perceive themselves as having been wronged never complain, they just take their business elsewhere. So, angry, complaining customers care enough to talk to you, and have not yet decided to take their business to the competition. They are customers worth saving.

Not only are there benefits to your company, but you personally gain as well. Become adept at handling angry customers, and you'll feel much more confident in your own abilities. If you can handle this, you can handle anything. While any one can work with the easy people, it takes a

real professional to be successful with the difficult customers. Your confidence will grow, your poise will increase, and your self-esteem will intensify.

On the other hand, if you mishandle it, and you'll watch the situation dissolve into lost business and upset people. You may find yourself upset for days.

So, how do you handle an angry, complaining customer? Let's begin with a couple tools you can use in these situations.

**1. RESPECT.** It can be difficult to respect a person who may be yelling, swearing or behaving like a two-year-old. I'm not suggesting you respect the behavior, only that you respect the person. Keep in mind that 99 times out of 100 you are not the object of the customer's anger. You are like a small tree in the path of a swirling tornado. But unlike the small tree, you have the power to withstand the wind.

What is the source of your power? Unlike the customer, you are not angry, you are in control, and your only problem at the moment is helping him with his problem. If you step out of this positioning, and start reacting to the customer in an emotional way, you'll lose control, you'll lose your power, and the situation will be likely to escalate into a lose-lose for everyone. So, begin with a mindset that says, "*No matter what, I will respect the customer.*"

**2. EMPATHY.** Put yourself in the customer's shoes, and try to see the situation from his/her perspective. Don't try and cut him off, don't urge him to calm down. Instead, listen carefully. If someone is angry or upset, it is because that person feels injured in some way. Your job is to let the customer vent and to listen attentively in order to understand the source of that frustration. When you do that, you send a powerful unspoken message that you care about him and his situation.

Often, as the customer comes to realize that you really do care and that you are going to attempt to help him resolve the problem, the customer will calm down on his own, and begin to interact with you in a positive way.

Here's how you can use these two tools in an easily-remembered process for dealing with angry customers.

## **CRACK THE EGG**

Imagine that you have a hard-boiled egg. The rich yellow yolk at the center of the egg represents the solution to the customer's problem, the hardened white which surrounds the yolk represents the details of the customer's situation, and the hard shell represents his/her anger.

In order to get to the yolk, and resolve the situation, you must first crack the shell. In other words, you have got to penetrate the customer's anger. Then you've got to cut through the congealed egg white. That means that you understand the details of the customer's situation. Finally, you're at the heart of the situation, where you can offer a solution to the customer's problem.

So, handling an angry customer is like cutting through a hard-boiled egg. Here's a four-step process to help you do so.

### **1. LISTEN.**

Let's say you stop to see one of your regular customers. He doesn't even give you time to finish your greeting before he launches into a tirade.

At this point, about all you can do is **LISTEN**. And that's what you do. You don't try and cut him off, you don't urge him to calm down. Not just yet. Instead, you listen carefully. And as you listen, you begin to piece together his story. He ordered a piece of equipment three weeks ago. You quoted him X price and delivery by last Friday for a project that's starting this week. Not only is the equipment not there, but he received an invoice for it at a different price than was quoted.

*"What kind of shoddy operation is this?"* he wants to know. Do you understand how important his project is? Do you know how much time and money is at stake? If he doesn't get his equipment and something happens to this project, you're going to pay for it. He knew, he just

knew he should have ordered the equipment from your competitor. What are you going to do about it?

Now you have the basic story. Hopefully, after this gush of frustration, there will be a pause while he comes up for air.

More often than not, once the customer has had an initial chance to vent his rage, it's going to die down a little, and that's your opportunity to take step in.

Even if he has started calming down on his own, there comes a moment - and I can almost guarantee you'll sense it - to help calm him down. Try something along the lines of: *"It sounds like something has gone wrong, and I can understand your frustration. I'm sorry you're experiencing this problem. Let's take a look at the next step."*

Try to calm yourself first, and then to acknowledge his feelings. Say, "I can tell you're upset..." or, "It sounds like you're angry..." then connect to the customer by apologizing, or empathizing. When you say something like "I'm sorry that happened. If I were you, I'd be frustrated, too." It's amazing how much of a calming effect that can have.

Remember, anger is a natural, self-defensive reaction to a perceived wrong. If there is a problem with your company's product or service, some frustration and disappointment is justified.

This is so important, let me repeat it. First you listen carefully and completely to the customer. Then you empathize with what the customer is feeling, and let him or her know that you understand. This will almost always calm the customer down. You've cracked the shell of the egg. Now, you can proceed to deal with the problem.

## **2. IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM.**

Sometimes while the angry customer is venting, you'll be able to latch right on to the problem because it's clear-cut. Something is broken. Or late. Or he thinks a promise has been broken.

But sometimes in the middle of all that rage, it's tough to comprehend the bottom-line issue. This is a good place for some specific questions. Ask the customer to give you some details. *"What day did he order it, when exactly was it promised. What is his situation at the moment?"* These kind of questions force the customer to think about facts instead of his/her feelings about those facts. So, you interject a more rational kind of conversation. Think of this step of the process as cutting through the white of the egg to get to the yolk at the center.

It's important, when you think you understand the details, to restate the problem. You can say, *"Let me see if I have this right. You were promised delivery last Friday, because you need it for an important project this coming week. But you haven't received our product yet. Is that correct?"*

He will probably acknowledge that you've sized up the situation correctly. Or, he may say, *"No, that's not right"* and then proceed to explain further. In either case the outcome is good, because you will eventually understand his situation correctly, and have him tell you that *"Yes, that's right."*

And at that point you can apologize. Some people believe that an apology is an acknowledgment of wrongdoing. But you can appreciate and apologize for the customer's inconvenience without pointing fingers. Just say, *"Mr. Brady, I'm sorry this has happened."* Or *"Mr. Brady. I understand this must be very frustrating. Let's just see what we can do fix it, OK?"*

### **3. AVOID BLAME.**

You don't want to blame the customer by saying something like *"Are you sure you understood the price and delivery date correctly?"* This will just ignite his anger all over again because you are questioning his credibility and truth-telling.

And you don't want to blame your company or your suppliers Never say, *"I'm not surprised your invoice was wrong. It's been happening a lot."* Or, *"Yes, our backorders are way behind."*

In general, you **AVOID BLAME**. Which is different than acknowledging responsibility. For

example, if you know, for a fact, a mistake has been made, you can acknowledge it and apologize for it. *"Mr. Brady, clearly there's a problem here with our performance. I can't change that, but let me see what I can do to help you out because I understand how important your project is."*

#### **4. RESOLVE THE PROBLEM.**

Now you're at the heart of the egg. You won't always be able to fix the problem perfectly. And you may need more time than a single phone call. But it's critical to leave the irate customer with the understanding that your goal is to resolve the problem. You may need to say, *"I'm going to need to make some phone calls."* If you do, give the customer an idea of when you'll get back to him: *"Later this afternoon."* Or *"First thing in the morning."*

Then do it. Make the phone calls. Get the information. Find out what you can do for this customer and do it. Then follow up with the customer when you said you would. Even if you don't have all the information you need, call when you said you would and at least let him know what you've done, what you're working on and what your next step will be. Let the customer know that he and his business are important to you, that you understand his frustration, and that you're working hard to get things fixed.

#### **Managing & Exceeding Customer Expectations**

**Difficult people do exist at work.** Difficult people come in every variety and no workplace is without them. How difficult a person is for you to deal with depends on your self-esteem, your self-confidence and your professional courage. Dealing with difficult people is easier when the person is just generally obnoxious or when the behavior affects more than one person. Dealing with difficult people is much tougher when they are attacking you or undermining your professional contribution.

**Difficult people come in every conceivable variety.** Some talk constantly and never listen. Others must always have the last word. Some coworkers fail to keep commitments. Others criticize anything that they did not create. Difficult coworkers compete with you for power,

privilege and the spotlight; some go way too far in courting the boss's positive opinion – to your detriment.

Some coworkers attempt to undermine you and you constantly feel as if you need to watch your back. Your boss plays favorites and the favored party lords it over you; people form cliques and leave you out. Difficult people and situations exist in every work place. They all have one thing in common. You must address them. No matter the type of difficult situation in which you find yourself, dealing with difficult people or situations is a must.

### **Why You Must Deal With Difficult People**

Your situation won't get better; left unaddressed, it usually gets worse. Unaddressed and necessary conflict simmers just below – and often erupts counterproductively above – the surface at work.

Initially, people go into shock when they are treated unprofessionally, so if you take some time to understand exactly what is happening to you, you are not alone. Once you are fully aware of what is happening, deciding to live with the situation long term is not an option. You become so angry and feel so much pain that your efforts to address the situation become irrational. It's far better to address the difficult person while you can maintain some objectivity and emotional control.

Constant complaining about the coworker or situation can quickly earn you the title of whiner or complainer. Managers wonder why you are unable to solve your own problems – even if the manager's tolerance or encouragement of the situation is part of the problem.

### **Worse Case Scenario If You Fail to Deal With Difficult People**

Most importantly, if you are embroiled in a constant conflict at work, you may not only get blamed for being “unable to handle the situation like a mature professional,” you may be labeled as a “difficult” person, too. This label is hard to escape and can have devastating consequences for your career.

Finally, if the situation continues to deteriorate over time, the organization and your boss may tire of you. The boss may decide you are a “high maintenance” employee, easily replaced with a more professional or cooperative person, and you could lose your job.



### **Review Questions**

- i. What tools are used to handle difficult customers and situations?*
- ii. Discuss the strategies employed to deal with difficult customers?*
- iii. What are the advantages of managing and exceeding customer expectations*

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## CHAPTER EIGHT: CUSTOMER RETENTION AND EARNING LOYALTY



### *Learning objectives*

- i. Explain why customer retention is critical to an organization's long term success.*
- ii. Describe methods used to retain customers and earn their loyalty.*

### **Questioning structure;**

the structure of a question,

the role and value of questions in difficult situations,

how to avoid the pitfall of a poor question aggravating a

situation, Questioning style.

### **Earning Customer Loyalty**

It is said in business that customer acquisition is an investment but profitability is built on customer retention. In other words, it typically costs you more to sell to a new customer than it does to a current one. As a result, your profits are higher when you sell to those who have already purchased from you.

Customer retention is essential to business growth.

So how do you earn customer loyalty and retain their business? Like any successful relationship, If you want customers to be loyal to you, you must be loyal to them. Your product must deliver on its promise as advertised—but that is just the beginning.

Here are some tips to help you keep your current customers coming back for more:

### **Provide Exceptional Customer Service**

Often times, customer service can be a key differentiator for companies that sell similar products.

In today's digital age it is all too common for companies to hide behind "digital walls". Often times this elusive nature can lead to lost sales not to mention decreasing customer confidence.

When customers have questions or problems they want them addressed—by a real human with real answers, not just a scripted list of FAQs or automated phone system. Two ways to

accomplish this are through posting customer service phone numbers on your site and considering Live Chat type systems.

### **Stay in Front of Your Customers**

You can't foster customer loyalty if your customers forget you exist. You must stay in contact with them on a regular basis preferably with information that ultimately benefits them in the end (remember it about the customer not you.) Two ways of staying in front of them are through email and RSS feeds. The key here is to feed them information that helps them. Promotions on products, sales etc... all work and should be a part of your communication but doesn't neglect the need to provide them with valuable content that helps better their position. This could be showing them new ways to use your product, complimentary products that may work well with the one they already have etc...

### **Develop Customer Friendly Policies**

If you want to keep customers happy you must offer flexible policies. Don't make it hard for them to return an item, get support for current, broken, or discontinued products, etc... Be flexible and understanding of their needs and above all else, make it right for them. Put these policies in place and honor them. If you don't, your customers will run to the competitors that do never to return again.

### **Consider Implementing a Rewards Program**

Loyalty or rewards programs are a great way to foster long term relationships and repeat sales. Rewards can be managed in just about anyway you can dream up from earning discounts on future purchases to earning products at various levels. Just make sure your internal systems can handle the route you adopt.

Just about anybody can sell on the internet. Selling profitably and doing it for sustained durations is what separates real businesses from short run fly-by-night operations. If given the chance, I'd rather build a sustained business that lasts many years than build a business that is here today gone the next. Profitability is a key element in this equation.

## **Truly caring about your customers is the real key to earning *customer loyalty*.**

I thought his list was pretty good for earning customer loyalty:

following-up before they can

calling to ask how things went after an event

sending a note of appreciation

telling them how much you value their business

asking for input before it's offered

predicting their next need

admitting guilt when you're guilty

delivering bad news before they even notice it



### **Review questions**

- i. *What are some of the methods used to retain customers?*
- ii. *What are the pros of having loyal customers?*
- iii. *Honesty and sincerity are important to customers, discuss?*

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## CHAPTER NINE: BEHAVIOR VERSATILITY;



### *Learning objectives*

- a) Non-verbal communication; pitfalls and considerations,*
- b) N.V.C. components,*
- c) N.V.C. patterns (Deceit, Honesty, Boredom, etc.),*
- d) How to control your N.V.C.*

### **Speaking and Listening Skills, Verbal and Nonverbal**

#### **Communication Communication Skills -**

Both nonverbal and verbal communication skills are a vital part of everyday life.

Consequently, developing good listening and effective speaking skills should be an integral part of everyone's personal development.

Information cannot be effectively received, transferred or exchanged without using good communication skills.

#### **Verbal and Nonverbal Communication Skills**

Individuals' communication skills are a basis for an effective dialogue, and involve both verbal and nonverbal communication skills.

While verbal communication helps to express oneself, nonverbal enhances spoken ideas by means of bodily, voice, and eye behavior, facial expression, etc. It reinforces the effect of spoken words. In addition, nonverbal communication can be viewed as a reliable indicator of real feelings of an interlocutor. Observed and paid attention to, it can help a person to understand another one better.

## **Effective Listening**

Listening is probably the most used skill in everyday communication. It involves hearing and paying attention to the speaker. However, hearing and effective listening are completely different abilities.

Hearing thousands of sounds every day is a normal thing for an individual. Effective listening, on contrast, involves not only hearing, but also comprehending and understanding the message. Sounds simple. However, not everybody is a good listener - some people prefer to talk. But to be a good communicator, what is important for an individual in both the personal sphere and at the workplace is to be an effective listener.

Pay attention to the speaker, first of all, in order to show you are involved in communication.

Respond both verbally and nonverbally, showing that the message is being comprehended and followed. Eye contact, gestures, facial expression, short responses or brief expressions of attitude, such as nodding, help the speaker to understand whether a listener follows the conversation.

Do not interrupt the speaker in the middle of a speech. Wait till the idea is explained completely, think the information over to understand the meaning, and only then provide suggestions, comments, or ask questions.

Ask questions and confirm your understanding of the message. A brief summary of what the speaker said might be the best idea. It shows that the speaker was listened and paid attention to.

## **Effective Speaking**

As a mean of communication, effective speaking plays a vital role in people's lives. Though everybody speaks everyday and is able to express ideas, thoughts, or requests, not everybody can do it well. Some people are difficult to follow, some explain their thoughts in a complicated manner, and some are simply boring to listen to. Avoid these mistakes.

Use plain and simple words unless the audience is specialized in the subject area.

Use complete simple sentences for the message to be easier to comprehend.

Do not speak too fast. It is difficult to comprehend information if much of it is presented in a short period of time.

Make pauses. Pauses between sentences and ideas will give a listener some space to think the words over, to understand the message.

Structure and connect ideas. Major points should be presented in a logical manner.

Otherwise it is difficult to follow the speaker. So, make sure that each next thought expressed expands on the subject and on the previous point.

Support ideas not only with words, but with intonation and nonverbal means of communication as well. Proper intonation can stress certain ideas you want to draw attention to. Nonverbal means of communication, such as gestures and facial expression, establish a closer connection with the audience, and enhance the message being communicated.

## **PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNICATION**

### **Introduction**

Interpersonal communication is the foundation of human interaction. Its importance for innovation and change can hardly be overemphasized. In this section, communication from different viewpoints including listening and speaking is ex.

### **Objectives**

- To introduce communication and to demonstrate the importance of communication in a variety of contexts including that of the manager of innovation and change.
- To evaluate and discuss the characteristics of good communication and how to improve our communication.

Communication is a two-way process of giving and receiving information through any number of channels. Whether one is speaking informally to a colleague, addressing a conference or meeting, writing a newsletter article or formal report, the following basic principles apply:

- Know your audience.
- Know your purpose.
- Know your topic.

- Anticipate objections.
- Present a rounded picture.
  - Achieve credibility with your audience. ·
 Follow through on what you say.
- Communicate a little at a time.
- Present information in several ways.
  - Develop a practical, useful way to get feedback. ·
 Use multiple communication techniques.

Communication is complex. When listening to or reading someone else's message, we often filter what's being said through a screen of our own opinions. One of the major barriers to communication are our own ideas and opinions.

There's an old communications game, telegraph, that's played in a circle. A message is whispered around from person to person. What the exercise usually proves is how profoundly the message changes as it passes through the distortion of each person's inner "filter."

### **Environmental factors**

Communication can be influenced by environmental factors that have nothing to do with the content of the message. Some of these factors are:

- the nature of the room, how warm it is, smoke, comfort of the chair, etc
- outside distractions, what is going on in the area.
- the reputation/credibility of the speaker/writer.
- the appearance, style or authority of the speaker.
- listener's education, knowledge of the topic, etc.
- the language, page layout, design of the message.

### **People remember:**

- of what they read
- of what they hear
- of what they see



- of what they hear and see

### **Communication with Decision Makers**

Innovation and change often depends upon persuading potential users of the benefits of an innovation.

To deal persuasively with decision makers, it is necessary to know and understand their interests and opinions. The following questions are helpful in organizing technology transfer efforts:

- Who are the key people to persuade?
- Who will make the decisions about innovation and change?
- What are these decision makers' past experiences with innovation and change?
- What are the decision makers' current attitudes toward innovation and change? Are they neutral, friendly, hostile or apathetic?
- What is the most appropriate way to approach the decision maker?
- What are the work styles of the decision makers? Are they highly formal people who want everything in writing and all appointments scheduled in advance? Or are they more flexible, responding favorably to personal telephone calls and informal meetings?
- What networks or groups is the decision maker a part of?
- What programs or services will the new innovation improve?
- What programs or services will the new innovation cause problems with?
- How will the innovation or change benefit the decision maker?

### **Principles of Effective Persuasion**

Whether making a formal presentation at a meeting or writing a report or fact sheet, the following principles hold.

- Do not oversell or overstate your case. Make effective use of understatement.
- Outline the topic you are trying to cover into two parts. The first part should give broad background information, while the second part provides a detailed summary.
- Persuasion depends on clarity and simplicity. Avoid the use of jargon and buzz words.

- Be prepared to back up claims or facts immediately.
- Incorporate major anticipated objections into your program or presentation.
- Address all relevant aspects of a topic, especially those that may affect the functioning of an organization.
- Use graphics and audiovisuals appropriately.
- Consider ways to get meaningful input from people. Find out what they think about the innovation or change.

### **Selling New Ideas**

#### **Creating Isn't Selling**

Often the creators of an innovation feel that convincing others of the idea's value is somehow superfluous to their activities. To them, conceiving the idea is enough. This combines with their inner conviction that their idea will "sell itself." Change agents provide a link between creators of new techniques and users.

#### **Ideas Need Selling**

Someone must recognize when an idea is good. It is important that when an idea is good it is sold to those who can act on it--those who have the power to evaluate and adopt it. Understanding users is an important activity for any change agent. People must be convinced that a particular idea or innovation has enough merit to warrant adoption.

#### **Selling Ideas Takes Effort**

Selling innovations requires preparation, initiative, patience, and resourcefulness. It may take more effort than originating the idea. In an age of technical complexity and information overload, new ideas seldom stand out. Information on new ideas must be targeted to the appropriate users and relate to their needs and motivations.

#### **Once is Not Enough**

A new idea has to be suggested many times before it will "catch on." Initial failures at promoting a new idea are to be expected, so don't get discouraged if you don't get the results you want the first time. Some ideas take years to catch on. However, first exposures are crucial to future prospects. Do it right the first time

## **Feedback (Listening)**

Getting and giving feedback is one of the most crucial parts of good communication.

Like any other activity, there are specific skills that can enhance feedback. Listening is a key part of getting feedback:

**Listen to the Complete Message.** Be patient. This is especially important when listening to a topic that provokes strong opinions or radically different points-of-view. In these situations, it's important not to prejudge the incoming message. Learn not to get too excited about a communication until you are certain of the message.

**Work at Listening Skills.** Listening is hard work. Good listeners demonstrate interest and alertness. They indicate through their eye contact, posture and facial expression that the occasion and the speaker's efforts are a matter of concern to them. Most good listeners provide speakers with clear and unambiguous feedback.

**Judge the Content, Not the Form of the Message.** Such things as the speaker's mode of dress, quality of voice, delivery mannerisms and physical characteristics are often used as excuses for not listening. Direct your attention to the message--what is being said-- and away from the distracting elements.

**Weigh Emotionally Charged Language.** Emotionally charged language often stands in the way of effective listening. Filter out "red flag" words (like "liberal" and "conservative," for instance) and the emotions they call up. Specific suggestions for dealing with emotionally charged words include

- Take time to identify those words that affect you emotionally.
- Attempt to analyze why the words affect you the way they do.
- Work at trying to reduce the impact of these words on you.

**Eliminate Distractions.** Physical distractions and complications seriously impair listening. These distractions may take many forms: loud noises, stuffy rooms, overcrowded conditions,

uncomfortable temperature, bad lighting, etc. Good listeners speak up if the room is too warm, too noisy, or too dark. There are also internal distractions: worries about deadlines or problems of any type may make listening difficult. If you're distracted, make an effort to clear your head. If you can't manage it, arrange to communicate at some other time.

**Think Efficiently and Critically.** On the average, we speak at a rate of 80 words per minute. However, we think at a much faster rate, anywhere from 100 to 150 words per minute. What do we do with this excess thinking time while listening to someone speak? One technique is to apply this spare time to analyzing what is being said. They critically review the material by asking the following kinds of questions:

- What is being said to support the speaker's point of view? (Evidence)
- What assumptions are being made by the speaker and the listener? (Assumptions)
- How does this information affect me? (Effect)
- Can this material be organized more efficiently? (Structure)
- Are there examples that would better illustrate what is being said? (Example)
- What are the main points of the message? (Summary)

### **Sending Messages**

Messages should be clear and accurate, and sent in a way that encourages retention, not rejection.

**Use Verbal Feedback Even If Nonverbal Is Positive And Frequent.** Everyone needs reassurance that they are reading nonverbal communication correctly, whether a smile means "You're doing great," "You're doing better than most beginners," or "You'll catch on eventually."

**Focus Feedback On Behavior Rather Than On Personality.** It's better to comment on specific behavior than to characterize a pattern of behavior. For example, instead of calling a colleague inefficient, specify your complaint: "You don't return phone calls; this causes problems both in and outside your office."

**Focus Feedback On Description Rather Than Judgment.** Description tells what happened. Judgment evaluates what happened. For example, in evaluating a report doesn't say, "This is a

lousy report!!" Instead, try: "The report doesn't focus on the information that I think needs emphasis," or "This report seems to have a lot of grammatical and spelling mistakes."

**Make Feedback Specific Rather Than General.** If feedback is specific, the receiver knows what activity to continue or change. When feedback is general, the receiver doesn't know what to do differently. For example, in an office situation, instead of saying "These folders are not arranged correctly," its better feedback to say, "These should be arranged chronologically instead of alphabetically."

**In Giving Feedback, Consider the Needs and Abilities of the Receiver.** Give the amount of information the receiver can use and focus feedback on activities the receiver has control over. It's fruitless to criticize the level of activity, if the decision to grant the necessary monies for materials, personnel or technology is made at a different level.

**Check to See if the Receiver Heard What You Meant to Say.**

If the information is important enough to send, make sure the person understands it.

One way of doing this is to say, "I'm wondering if I said that clearly enough.

What did you understand me to say?" or "This is what I hear you saying. Is that right?"

**Selecting the Best Communication Method**

In communicating with decision makers, use the most appropriate communications method.

One way to do this is to ask yourself the following questions.

- What is the purpose of your message? Do you plan to tell them something new? Inform? Do you plan to change their view? Persuade?
- What facts must be presented to achieve your desired effect? ·  
What action, if any, do you expect decision makers to take?
- What general ideas, opinions and conclusions must be stressed?
- Are you thoroughly familiar with all the important information on the innovation?
  - What resources and constraints affect adoption of the innovation? How much time is available? How much money is available

- Which method, or combination of methods, will work most effectively for this situation? Personal contact--requires scheduling, time and interpersonal skills.
- Telephone contact--requires good verbal skills and an awareness of voice tones as Nonverbal communication.
- Letter--requires writing skills. E-mail—informal, needs to be short and to the point, but not get lost in clutter. News release--requires writing skills and cooperation of the media and time.

## **ORAL COMMUNICATION**

### **Speaking to Communicate**

Spoken communication occurs in many different settings during the course of successful innovation and change. These may be divided into three main types:

- The formal and informal networks in which peers exchange information, such as professional associations, work units, work teams, etc.
- The activities of change agents, opinion leaders, etc.
- The contacts established at team meetings, conferences, training courses, etc.

Whether to use oral communication is a decision we all make frequently in the course of a workday. The change agent must be able to identify those situations in which oral communication is the most appropriate one to use. Don Kirkpatrick suggests the following guidelines for making such decisions.

### **Use Oral Communication When:**

The receiver is not particularly interested in receiving the message. Oral

Communication provides more opportunity for getting and keeping interest and attention.

It is important to get feedback. It's easier to get feedback by observing facial

Expressions (and other nonverbal behavior) and asking questions.

Emotions are high. Oral communication provides more opportunity for both the sender and the receiver to let off steam, cool down, and create a suitable climate for understanding.

The receiver is too busy or preoccupied to read. Oral communication provides

more opportunity to get attention.

The sender wants to persuade or convince. Oral communication provides more flexibility, opportunity for emphasis, chance to listen, and opportunity to remove resistance and change attitudes.

· When discussion is needed. A complicated subject frequently requires discussion to be sure of understanding.

When criticism of the receiver is involved. Oral communication provides more opportunity to accomplish this without arousing resentment. Also, oral communication is less threatening because it isn't formalized in writing.

When the receiver prefers one-to-one contact.

### **Presentation Styles**

There are different styles of making a presentation and different people will use the approach that suits them.

**Good Old Boy:** This is usually an experienced person who is the peer of most of the audience. Generally, there is a lot of good information but it may be poorly organized or poorly delivered.

**The Entertainer:** This person relies on jokes and stories to get their point across. Good visual aids could be an important feature of the presentation. Sometimes there is too much emphasis on satisfying the audience that little information is actually transferred.

**The Academic:** This person tends to be very precise and deliberate in presenting information. There is considerable content and it usually is well organized. Unfortunately, it can also be boring and irrelevant and not relate well to the audience. **The Reader:** This person decides to read his material word for word. The material is often not especially prepared for an oral presentation and can be overly technical, boring and hard to understand. All topics are covered and what is said is precise and accurate.

**The Snail:** This person is nervous about the presentation and goes into a shell. Like a snail, this person also moves slowly and the presentation seems to last forever. What is best? You have to have a style you are comfortable with. Ideally, you have the rapport of the good old boy, the organization and content of the academic, the ability to get and maintain interest of the

entertainer, and the precision of the reader. If you do this you will avoid the slow pace of the snail and effectively present information to your listeners.

**The Gadgeteer:** This person uses every gimmick and technique in his or her presentation and visual aids. It can be overdone with the message getting lost among the bells and whistles.

### **Components of an Effective Oral Report**

**Introduction** Capture the attention of the group right from the start.

- Give the necessary explanation of the background from which the problem derived.
- Clearly state and explain the problem.
- Clearly state your objectives.
- Indicate the method(s) used to solve the problem.
- Suggest the order in which you will provide information.

### **Organization**

- Provide sufficient introductory information.
- Use transitions from one main part to the next and between points of the speech.
- Use summary statements and restatements.
- Make the main ideas of the report clearly distinguishable from one another.

### **Content**

- Have adequate supporting data to substantiate what you say.
- Avoid using extraneous material.
- Present supporting data clearly--in terms of the ideas or concepts you are trying to communicate.
- Were the methods of the investigation clearly presented?
- Visual Aid Supports
- Use clear drawings, charts, diagrams or other aids to make explanations vivid and understandable.
- Make visual aids fit naturally into the presentation.
- Be completely familiar with each visual used.
- Don't clutter your report with too many visual aids.



## **Conclusion**

Conclude your report with finality in terms of one or more of the following:

- the conclusions reached
- the problem solved
- the results obtained
- the value of such findings to the county
- recommendations offered

## **Question Period**

- Give evidence of intelligent listening in interpreting the questions.
- Organize answers in terms of a summary statement, explanation, and supporting example.
- Show flexibility in adapting or improvising visual aids in answering questions.

## **Delivery**

- Be natural, "communicative" in your delivery.
- Use frequent eye contact to maintain rapport with the audience.
- Vary your delivery with appropriate movements and gestures.
- Speak distinctly.
- Display confidence and authority.
- Express enthusiasm for your ideas.

## **VISUAL COMMUNICATION**

There's an old saying that "a picture is worth a thousand words." Life would indeed be difficult without paintings, photographs, diagrams, charts, drawings, and graphic symbols. These are some of the reasons why **SHOWING** is such an important form of communication.

- Most people understand things better when they have seen how they work.
- Involved, complex ideas can be presented clearly and quickly using visual aids.
- People retain information longer when it is presented to them visually.
- Visuals can be used to communicate to a wide range of people with differing backgrounds.
- Visuals are useful when trying to condense information into a short time period.

Visual aids--used imaginatively and appropriately--will help your audience remember more.

Consider the following:

- People think in terms of images, not words, so visuals help them retain and recall technical information.
- Visuals attract and hold the attention of observers.
- Visuals simplify technical information.
- Visuals may be useful in presenting technical information to a nontechnical audience.

### **Questions to Ask about Visual Aids:**

- Is my objective clear?
- What are my key points? Do they deserve the emphasis that a visual aid gives?
- What visual aid or aids have I planned to use?
- Will the visual aid clarify my spoken words? Will it support my spoken words rather than replace them?
- Is each visual aid simple, orderly and consistent? Is it free from incompatible and complicating ideas, symbols, art techniques and typefaces? Can my audience quickly and easily grasp what they see or must it be read to them? Avoid making it a reading session.
- Is it symbolic or pictorial? Which treatment is best for my subject? Which treatment is best from the standpoint of my audience?
- Is my visual direct and to the point? Is the art functional or ornate? Is it really one visual aid or several? If my subject is complex, will it be presented in easily comprehensible units? (Drop-ons or overlays) Was my artwork designed just for this presentation?
- Is my visual aid realistic? Does it give all the pertinent facts? Have the facts been distorted?
- Is my visual aid as effective as it can be made? Have I used all the available techniques to make it so?
- Did I put enough effort into the planning of the visual aid? Have I sought criticism from others?
- Will it achieve my objectives? Will my audience understand, appreciate and believe it? If my presentation calls for some action by the audience, will it stimulate them to do so willingly?
- Have I overlooked anything in the use of the visual aid? Have I tested the visual aid? Have I planned one or more rehearsals; if not, why? Will my visual aid material is visible to the entire audience?

## **Visual Aid Checklist**

### **Slides**

Does the projector work properly? Bulb, lenses, change mechanism, fan.

Does each slide present a simple, clear message?

Are the slides arranged and numbered consistently and consecutively? Are the slides clean and mounted properly?

Will the audience be able to see slide details in the location I plan to use?

Does the slide tray have a title slide at the beginning and a blind slide at the end to avoid blinding the audience with light?

### **Power Point or Transparencies**

Is the lettering large enough to be seen by the audience?

Is the projector placed so that the audience has an unobstructed view?

Is the projector and slide color scheme adequate for the lighting of the room being used?

Does the projected image fit the screen?

Are my slides in proper order?

Does each present a clear message?

Is the projector compatible with the computer being used?

### **Video Tape**

Do you have the correct machine for the tape you plan to show (Beta or VHS)? Is the equipment in proper working order?

Is the tape set to start at the proper place and does it "track" properly?

Will the WHOLE audience be able to see the presentation?

Is the sound level on the monitor(s) set at the proper level?

### **The Location**

Does the room match the size of the audience?

Is the location accessible to the physically disabled?

Can the lighting be controlled for showing slides and transparencies? If so, is a reading light available?

Is the location equipped with a projector cart or table?

Are electrical outlets conveniently located--do I need extension cords?

Is the room equipped with an adequate screen?

If using video equipment, can monitors be set up at appropriate locations? Does the room have a speakers table or podium?

Will the location be available prior to your meeting so you can set up and test your equipment?

Is the room equipped with a newsprint easel or chalkboard?

Does the room have chairs and tables or desks? Can they be rearranged if needed?

Is the main entrance separated from the speaker area so that late arrivals will not disrupt your presentation?

**Always check out the room and equipment in advance to see that it works properly!**

**Never assume that it will work without trying it first. As a general rule, the more complicated the technology for an oral presentation, the more likely it will fail**

### **Checklist for Tables and Charts**

Be ruthless with numbers: use the fewest possible that will still convey the point of the visual. Do not exceed twenty numbers or a single slide.

Combine numbers into larger sums wherever possible; eliminate any number that does not contribute significantly to your message.

Consider using a chart (pie, bar, etc.) for presenting some information, especially if you want to draw comparisons between two or more items.

When preparing charts use colors or patterns with a lot of contrast.

Split information into two or three smaller tables rather than using one huge table.

Use no more than three or four columns per table.

Have a short, yet descriptive, title that states the point of the visual. Put it at the top.

### **Include a date at the bottom.**

Label columns clearly and at the top. Show the units (dollars or tons, for example). On the left, label the statistics being compared.

Avoid footnotes and symbols that may not be generally understood by your audience.

Use light horizontal lines if they improve readability.

Be consistent. Do not mix pounds and tons, years and months, gross and net.

Avoid decimal points whenever possible. Use round numbers for tables and graphs.

Highlight the most important numbers with boxes, underlining, or color.

If arithmetic operations are not obvious, state them: (less), or "Less Depreciation

### **Expense."**

Eliminate zeros by expressing numbers in thousands or millions, if possible.

Show negative numbers in parentheses, not with minus signs.

## **WRITTEN COMMUNICATION**

Written materials often bear the greatest burden for the communication of new ideas and procedures. Effective writing is the product of long hours of preparation, revision and organization. One book that follows its own rules is Strunk and White's Elements of Style, a short book which argues persuasively for clarity, accuracy, and brevity in the use of English. Its entire philosophy is contained in one paragraph:

“Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reasons that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts. This requires not that the writer make all his sentences short, or that he avoid all detail and treat his subjects only in outline, but that EVERY WORD TELL.”

Clear, vigorous writing is a product of clear, vigorous thinking. Clarity is born of discipline and imagination. Kirkpatrick gives the following guidelines for using written communication:

### **Use Written Communication When:**

The sender wants a record for future references.

The receiver will be referring to it later.

The message is complex and requires study by the receiver.

The message includes a step by step procedure.

Oral communication is not possible because people are not in the same place at the same time.

There are many receivers. Caution: the receivers must be interested in the Subject and will put forth the time and effort to read and understand.

- It is cheaper. Caution: the same as above.
- A copy of the message should go to another person.
- The receiver prefers written.

### **Advantages of Written Materials**

Highly technical topics can be presented using words and diagrams.

Written material provides a permanent record that can be referred to from time to time or passed on to others.

Written material can be duplicated in large quantities or distributed on the Internet relatively inexpensively.

- It is fairly easy to distribute written material to many people, but this practice is getting increasingly expensive and its effectiveness questionable.
- Written material is preferred when it is desirable to get the same information to a group of people.
- Written records and reports are sometimes useful in legal matters.
- Written material may be useful for documenting the success or progress of some project or activity.

### **Disadvantages of Written Material**

- People seldom take the time and effort to read technical materials.

The preparation of written documents is time-consuming.

- Once prepared in large quantities, printed documents are difficult to change.
- Written material provides little feedback for the sender.
- Technical documents are often too long and complex for the majority of readers.
- A portion of the population may not be able to read written material.
- Too much reliance on written material as a communication method may obscure the true needs of potential users.



### Review Questions

- i. *What is non-verbal communication? Advantages and disadvantages?*
- ii. *Discuss the different aspects of communication?*
- iii. *Active and passive listening are important communication skills. Discuss?*

Ref  
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## **CHAPTER TEN: AUTOMATED CUSTOMER SERVICE & BEST PRACTICES**





### *Learning objectives*

- a) Service and explain how technology can be used as a differentiating factor.*
- b) List activities and „best practices“ that leading-edge service providers use to create industry trends*

## **Customer care automation**

Our customer care automation solution allows you to improve customer service, reduce churn and cut operational costs. It maximizes the efficiency of customer care processes.

### **How can customer care automation help?**

As product and service lines grow it can become more expensive to maintain the same level of customer service in call centers and stores. Our customer care automation solution can:

- give front line staff the information they need to solve customer problems at the first point of contact
- give immediately relevant information in the local language and in an easily-absorbed manner
- provide real-time customer data about subscription, service quality, service failures and usage, billing, balance, handset, device, the problem in question and any related advice
- allow efficient sharing of data across your customer care and operations organizations
- automate device management functions and provide self-care and proactive care options to reduce call center workload

### **Customer service benefits of customer care automation**

- faults can be identified and corrected even before a customer calls
- improved first call fix ratio
- fewer calls need to be escalated to second-tier customer care and operations
- agents can start using the solution immediately thanks to an easy-to-use GUI and advice in plain language with multilingual support

shorter ticket handling time in customer care technical support and operations  
self-care options help to decrease the volume of calls received by call center

### **Operational benefits of customer care automation**

dramatic reduction in time spent solving complaints forwarded from call centers  
fewer tickets forwarded from call centers  
operations can focus on their core activity – operating the network

### **Marketing benefits of customer care automation**

higher customer satisfaction, leading to reduced churn  
quick, efficient support for new services

### **Management benefits of customer care automation**

reduced churn  
increased customer focus  
greater efficiency

### **Best practices**

Nokia Siemens Networks' combination of the right expertise, capabilities and experience ensures real business success.

multivendor, multi-technology solutions

end-to-end support from business consultation to integration and deployment services  
proven telecommunication and systems integration expertise in both mobile and fixed networks

“The customer care support solution has been adopted very quickly on the front line (call center). From day one, it has worked without any problems.

The customer care support solution has been adopted very quickly on the front line (call center and shops). From day one, it has worked without any problems. No specific in-depth technical knowledge is required on the front line and communication with each customer is consistent and accurate. Nokia Siemens Networks' project team was flexible with our requirements and delivered precisely the solution that was needed.” Quotes from a Western European operator

specific in-depth technical knowledge is required on the front line and communication with each customer is consistent and accurate. Nokia Siemens Networks' project team was flexible with our requirements and delivered precisely the solution that was needed." Quotes from an Western European operator



### **Review Questions**

- i. *What is the use of technology in customer care?*
- ii. *List the advantages of having an automated customer server to the company?*
- iii. *What is the aim purpose automating the customer service desk?*

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*Learning objectives*

- a) *recognizing opportunities to increase the reputation of the department/organization,*
- b) *recognizing opportunities for additional revenue,*
- c) *how to handle 'opportunities' in a professional non-manipulative manner,*
- d) *the use of questions to explore/understand opportunities,*
- e) *passing-on 'opportunities'*

The fact is if you are running a business, you'll have customers who complain. Here are some ways you can pacify angry customers and turn the situation in your favor.

Surely you have heard the old expression, "You can't please everyone all of the time". Even though you may have a great product, exemplary customer service and positive feedback, there will always be someone lurking around the corner who you just can't please; no matter how hard you try. And it only takes one unhappy customer sharing a bad experience with your business to their friends or colleagues, or worse yet, on an internet forum board, to seriously hamper your reputation.

But all is not lost. Try to head off precarious situations before they start. Sometimes, the biggest complainers can turn out to become your most staunch ally. But you need to know how to placate an angry customer or resolve an issue before you can even attempt to win them over.

How do you do that? For starters:

**1) Listen.** Give the disgruntled customer a chance to tell you what is bothering them. Try not to get defensive or insulted right off the bat. Keep your hackles down until you know what the problem is. It may be easy to fix. Maintain eye contact with your customer, that way they know you are listening. Be patient as they try to define their complaint. Try to separate *what* is being said from *how* it is being said. Most complaints tend to come off strong, but only because they figure they won't get any resolution to their problem. Change their mind. And just as important is really paying attention to what the customer is saying. Don't let distractions pull your attention

from your customer, because he or she will immediately sense that you're only giving them 'half an ear', which will do nothing to help your efforts to resolve the situation.

**2) Don't Give Up.** Whatever the complaint, doesn't just say, 'Sorry' and let your customer walk out the door. Try to resolve the issue so it doesn't come up again, either for that customer or another one. Be respectful, no matter how rude the customer may be and always maintain a professional demeanor. Make sure your employees are always polite and helpful when dealing with customer complaints. Losing your temper or having an employee respond rudely to a customer does more damage than you'd think possible.

**3) Do What's Best for the Customer, Not You.** Remember the maxim, 'The customer is always right'? Many people today consider such thinking old-fashioned, but it's actually a timeless piece of advice. Many businesses have standard policies regarding complaints. These can range from a free item to a discount, or to a letter of apology. But many times, these resolutions don't fix the original problem. Don't tolerate rude employees. Even if you offer a free item or discount to make up for the trouble, assure the customer that you will do your best to make certain the issue does not recur. Better yet, ask them what they think and follow their suggestion if it's within reason. Show your customer that their business and their satisfaction are important to you.

**4) Keep your Cool.** It's easy to grow defensive when criticized. But when such criticism does arise, try to remain calm and remember the following points.

**a.) Don't take complaints personally.** Customers just want what they paid for. Just like you. They know nothing about you; they don't know that you just had an argument with your spouse, or that your mother is sick in the hospital. They aren't yelling at *you*. They just know they aren't happy, for whatever reason, with either a service or a product. It's your job to make sure they walk away, if not happy, at least placated whenever possible. Try to remember that word-of-mouth still goes a long way, even in today's technology-driven society.

**b.) Don't dwell on the past.** After an incident with an unhappy customer passes, don't dwell on what could have been. Focus instead on the future and preventing the incident from happening

again. Try to repair problems in communication, customer support and head off potential problems *before* they occur.

**c.) Do your best to fix the problem.** After you have listened to the customer and offered a resolution, your customer may still be unhappy. Accept the fact that some people are just downright difficult and nothing you do will please them. If you've done your best to fix the situation, then you need to be able to just let it go.

**d.) Strive to always improve.** We all learn from our mistakes. Or we should. Appreciate your 'good' customers, but learn from your 'bad' ones. Don't let a complaint ruin your day, but don't ignore it, either. Constantly look for ways to improve customer relations and your experiences with 'bad' customers should dwindle.

Remember, you will have customers who complain. It goes with the territory. But if you take the time to try and resolve their complaints with courtesy, honesty and integrity, you'll go a long way in smoothing ruffled feathers. Your business wouldn't be anywhere if it wasn't for customers, so remember that a smile and an effort to change a situation always win out over a scowl and a bad attitude. You'll feel better, and so will your customers.



### *Review Questions*

- i. What is the importance of recognizing opportunities in any given business?*
- ii. Additional revenue can be generated from opportunities, discuss?*
- iii. State and explain how the use of questions can be use to explore/understand opportunities?*

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**SAMPLE PAPERS**



**UNIVERSITY EXAMINATIONS 2011 SCHOOL OF APPLIED SOCIAL SCIENCES  
DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED SOCIAL SCIENCES BACHELOR OF BUSINESS  
MANAGEMENT**

**UNIT CODE: MKT 313      UNIT TITLE: CUSTOMER CARE MANAGEMENT**

**Date; JANUARY 2011**

**TIME: 2 HOURS**

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*Instructions*

*Answer ALL questions in Section A and any 2 in Section B*

---

**SECTION A**

1. (a) Is it true that the client is always right? (3 marks)  
(b) If the client is always right, does it mean the service provider is always wrong, even if they have been trained and well prepared for the job? (5marks)  
(c) Since the customer must always be put first, why is it that most organisation charts put the CEO/Chairman/MD on top? (5marks)
2. Does good customer care cost money? (5 marks)
3. How should management go about deciding what part of its budget it should allocate to ensure good customer care/relations? (10 marks)
4. What bearing does training have on caring for one's customers? (8 marks)

**SECTION B**

1. Are customers the same all over the world or do culture and size of a country make a difference? ( 20 marks)



2. Owner/managers are often more concerned with making money than making improvements they don't deem absolutely necessary (i.e. training). Staff can be more concerned with earning their pay than how the company performs. Is there a solution to such situations? ( 20 marks)
  
3. What are the three most important ingredients that make a great business and why? ( 20 marks)
  
4. You are asked to push a particular viewpoint with a client. The request makes perfect business sense but you happen to not believe in the particular notion you are to advocate. How do you deal with the situation? ( 20 marks)



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---

*Instructions*

*Answer ALL questions in Section A and any 2 in Section B*

---

**SECTION A**

1. State and explain how to deal with a customer who takes forever to get to the point? (10 marks)
2. Discuss the process of resolving conflicts or dealing with difficult situation? (10 marks)
3. When having a disagreement with a customer, what do you do in any given situation? (10 marks)

**SECTION B**

4. A customer has come into your office and submitted an application. When you give her some more forms to complete, she complains about all the bureaucratic red tape that is slowing down approval of her application. Discuss how you should you respond to the customer? (20 marks)
5. You're helping a computer illiterate friend setup his Internet connection over the phone. He is just not getting what you are trying to explain. How much time do you spend explaining it to him? (20 marks)

6. A person approaches you and tells you of many complaints he has about your department. What are the steps to follow? (20 marks)

7. Discuss the importance of NVC and its aspects in customer care management? (20 marks)