Exceptional Customer Service
Customer Service

How would you rate the level of customer service that your office currently delivers?

Photo credit: Beta M, Wikimedia Commons
Who are your customers?

- **External customers** (Students/parents)
- **Internal customers** (Your co-workers and those in other offices, executive management)
Prepare for your customers

- Arrive to work on time (or early)
- Organize desk, emails, files, etc. (A messy desk can present a poor impression)
- Keep notes and review prior to appointment
- Know your job (and others’ responsibilities)
- Know office policies and procedures and how to explain
Greet every customer!

- Make eye contact
- Use the customer’s name
- Invite the customer to be seated
- Ask how you can provide help and give your name

Photo credit: bpsusf, flickr
Face-to-face communication

- Words: 38%
- Body Language: 55%
- Tone of Voice: 7%
Non-verbal communication

• Make immediate eye contact

• Watch body language that can send the wrong message

• Nod to indicate you are listening
Vocal qualities

- Tone of voice
- Inflection in the voice
- Rate of speech
- Intensity
Matching intensity – not always

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If the customer is...</th>
<th>Then you are...</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Natural</td>
<td>• Natural</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Angry</td>
<td>• Calm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In a panic</td>
<td>• Calm</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Friendly</td>
<td>• Friendly</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Overburdened</td>
<td>• Empathetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Frustrated</td>
<td>• Understanding</td>
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Between “Hello” and “Goodbye”…
Practice active listening

• Focus on the customer—and nothing else
• Keep an open mind
• Listen between the lines
What keeps us from listening.....

- Being pre-occupied
- Trying to multi-task
- Being interrupted
- Thinking about your response before the customer finishes talking
- Jumping to conclusions based on personal beliefs

Photo credit: y2bk, flickr
Check for understanding

- Ask as clarifying question
- Summarize your understanding
Recommend a solution if possible

• Provide a thorough explanation – more than a one-word answer
• Make sure your tone fits the message
• Speak clearly, avoid jargon
• If you don’t know the answer, say so, **BUT** find out
When you can’t fulfill the customer’s request…

• Explain the reason

• Show empathy

• Tell the customer what you CAN do; offer an alternative solution or option, but never offer what you cannot deliver
Before you say goodbye...

- Ask if the customer understands what he/she must do and/or what you will do
- Inform customer when to expect action to take place
- Ask the customer if all his/her questions have been addressed
- Look up customer’s account (make a note on record)
- Check to see if you need anything from the customer that wasn’t addressed
- Provide a phone number and best time to reach you
Difficult situations

- Assure the customer you are going to help
- Listen carefully, do not interrupt
- Re-state the issue
- Express empathy
- Do not apologize to the customer unless you are at fault
- Actively solve problem
- Mutually agree on the solution
Best practices

• You are the face of the school to your customers. Never blame the school, a co-worker, another office, your school’s policy, or your management. Passing the buck will not improve the situation.

• If you must explain a regulation or policy, explain how that regulation or policy helps or protects the customer. Again, do not apologize for policy.
Best practices

• Give regular updates and progress reports; keep student informed of progress
  o Pro-active customer service
• Communicate delays promptly
  o Let the customer know
• Take responsibility
  o Give a personal reassurance to the customer, if appropriate
• Under-promise and over-deliver
• Thank the customer for bringing the issue to your attention
It’s all about attitude – daily affirmations

Today I will…

✓ Assist my customers with a smile
✓ Be attentive
✓ Be prepared
✓ Solve a customer’s problem
✓ Maintain a positive frame of mind
✓ Compliment someone else on their delivery of customer service
## Customer service standards

<table>
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<th>SMILE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>S</strong></td>
<td>Show you care by smiling</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>M</strong></td>
<td>Solve a customer’s problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I</strong></td>
<td>Maintain eye contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>L</strong></td>
<td>Motivate a co-worker to provide better service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>E</strong></td>
<td>Improve your skills</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Inflect the appropriate tone</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Listen to the customer without interrupting them</td>
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<td>Look for ways to improve communication</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Explain what you CAN do to help the customer</td>
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<td>Educate the customer about the process</td>
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How do you improve?

• Practice asking questions
• Read
• Listen
• Accept guidance
• Make mistakes
• Ask for feedback
• Observe others providing good customer service
The pay-off for improvement…

• Improved self-esteem
• Pride
• Rewards
• Respect
• Happiness
• Stress reduction
• Less work. More time…
Over-the-phone communication

- Words: 86%
- Tone of Voice: 14%
Answering the phone

- Pick up the phone within an agreed upon number of rings (usually 3)
- Greet the caller
- Give your name
- Ask the customer how you can help
- Sound enthusiastic and ready to help
Placing a caller on-hold

- Get permission
- Explain why
- Give a time frame
- Thank customers for holding after returning to the line
Transferring a call

- Explain the reason for the transfer
- Ask permission
- Provide transfer information
- Announce the customer and the reason for the call

Photo credit: Garvid, Wikimedia Commons
Taking a message

- Explain your co-worker’s absence
- Don’t screen
- Give an estimated time of return
- Offer the customer options
- Commit the message to paper
Returning a call

• Return calls the same business day, if possible
• Greet the person you are calling
• Identify yourself and your institution
• State the reason for your call
• Ask if this is a good time to talk
Ending a call

• Repeat action steps
• Ask the caller if you can do anything else
• Thank the customer for calling
• Commit follow-up information to paper
Voicemail excellence

• Update your greeting
• Respond to messages on the same business day, if possible
• Encourage customers to leave informative messages
• Don’t hide behind your voicemail
Email excellence

• Have a standard for returning emails
• Include a subject line
• Use cc’s appropriately
• Begin with the greeting
• Convey the “right” tone
• End with a closing

Photo credit: Jonathan Narvey, flickr
Tips for composing an email…

• To email or not to email
• Make sure the message is clear
• Use bullets points
• Use correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling
Responding to an urgent email

- Empathize
- Acknowledge the writer’s point
- Explain how the problem will be solved, if a resolution is apparent. If not, proceed with next steps
Sources

• Customer Service 101: Basic Lessons to Be Your Best – Renee Evenson

• Knock your Socks off Answers (Solving Consumer Nightmares and Soothing Nightmare Customers) – Kristin Anderson and Ron Zemke

• Super Service – Val and Jeff Gee

• Best Practices in Customer Service – Ron Zemke and John A. Woods

• Exceptional Customer Service – Lisa Ford, David McNair, and Bill Perry

• Great Customer Service on the Telephone – Kristin Anderson
Questions

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