I. CUSTOMER SERVICE

This workshop will give you an opportunity to explore your role as a Customer Service Representative. The skills and techniques, varied experiences, and related feelings about job satisfaction and the challenges that the job brings will give you a chance to re-energize and build upon where we are now. This will be an opportunity to share ideas, draw from the experiences of others, reinforce our skills and build new skills.

A. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the close of this workshop, you will be able to:

• Recognize that service delivery is an “individual response value.”

• Appreciate how your behavior impacts the behavior of others.

• Develop more confidence and skill as a problem-solver.

• Use the team approach in your customer service role.
Let’s take this opportunity to reflect on the following two questions:

What are my personal objectives?

What’s in this for me?

B. DEFINITION OF CUSTOMER SERVICE

According to BizWatch, an online newsletter, "Customer service is the process by which your organization delivers its services or products in a way that allows the customer to access them in the most efficient, fair, cost effective and humanly satisfying and pleasurable manner possible."

We have all been in situations where the customer service has not met our expectations. Achieving superior customer service means not just taking the appropriate steps to solve problems, but going above and beyond to see if such problems can be prevented in the future. Excellent customer service is not an individual effort, but a team effort. The reputation of the company rests on the service delivered to customers. Service delivered to customers is only as good as the service employees deliver to each other. If you are not directly serving a customer, you should be working for someone who is!

C. GROUP ACTIVITY

Delegate the responsibility of recorder and reporter to specific group members. Respond to the following questions:

- What do you consider excellent customer service?
- Why is it important that you deliver excellent customer service?

Be prepared to share the results of your discussion with the whole class.
## D. CUSTOMER RELATIONS POTENTIAL SCALE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I control my moods most of the time.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>I have limited control over my moods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is possible for me to be pleasant to people who are indifferent to me.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>I simply can't be pleasant if people are not nice to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like most people and enjoy meeting with others.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>I have difficulties getting along with others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy being of service to others.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>People should help themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not mind apologizing for mistakes, even if I did not make them.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Apologizing for a mistake I didn't make is wrong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I take pride in my ability to communicate verbally with others.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>I would rather interact with others in writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm good at remembering names and faces, and make efforts to improve this skill when meeting others.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Why bother remembering a name or face if you will never see that person again?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smiling comes naturally for me.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>I am more serious by nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like seeing others enjoy themselves.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>I have no motivation to please others, especially those I don’t know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I keep myself clean and well groomed.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Being clean and well groomed is not all that important.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Score**
80 or above = Excellent
50-80 = Need to learn better Customer Service skills
49 and below = Working with Customer Service is a poor career choice.

E. INTERNAL VS. EXTERNAL CUSTOMERS

Most organizations have customers that fall into either one of these categories: internal or external. Let’s take a look at both of these customers.

• **Internal**

Customers who are people, departments or agencies serviced by what we do. The only exception would be an employee working in a totally isolated situation.

• **External**

Customers who are the end users of our organization’s products or services. This meets what is typically referred to as the more traditional use of the term “customer.”

How would you respond to the following question?

What are our customers’ basic needs?

1. ____________________________________________

2. ____________________________________________

3. ____________________________________________

4. ____________________________________________

1. **Service Beliefs**

There are several beliefs we hold regarding customer service. There are some aspects of this skill that do not come naturally. Break into your groups and take five minutes to discuss three beliefs:
1. Service is a philosophy.
2. We must exceed customer expectations.
3. Service doesn’t come naturally to us.

Be prepared to tell the whole class what you believe the phrase means and how it relates to you in your role.

F. IDENTIFY THE NEEDS OF YOUR CUSTOMERS

It is important for you to know:

- What your customers want.
- What your customers need.
- What your customers think.
- What your customers feel.
- Whether your customers are satisfied.
- Whether your customers will return.

G. THE IMPORTANCE OF MEETING EXPECTATIONS

A part of the success of any organization or agency is meeting the needs of their customers. Each customer wants to be treated as though he/she were the only customer you have. Realistically, they know they are not, but they like the attention and how it makes them feel.

Customers expect that you will meet their needs in the following four ways:

- Timeliness
- Quality
- Consistency/No Surprises
- First Impressions

An attitude is a state of mind influenced by feelings, thoughts and action tendencies. The attitude you send out is usually the attitude you get back⁰. How positive is your attitude?

H. ATTITUDE

Most customer service employees that fail do so because of ATTITUDE. It is extremely important to send a positive attitude to all you encounter. The attitude you project is based upon how you feel about yourself and your job.

Check the extent you agree or disagree with each statement.

1. There is nothing demeaning about assisting or serving others.
   Agree ____   Disagree ____

2. I can be cheerful and positive to everyone regardless of age or appearance.
   Agree ____   Disagree ____

3. On bad days when nothing goes right, I can still find ways to be positive.
   Agree ____   Disagree ____

4. The higher the quality of service I provide during work, the better I feel.
   Agree ____   Disagree ____

5. I am enthusiastic about my job.
   Agree ____   Disagree ____

6. Encountering difficult “people” situations from time to time will not cause me to be negative.
   Agree ____   Disagree ____

7. The idea of being a professional at customer contact is motivating.
   Agree ____   Disagree ____

8. Performing a “people-oriented” job is both challenging and fun.
   Agree ____   Disagree ____

9. I receive great pleasure when others compliment me or my organization for superior service.
   Agree ____   Disagree ____

10. Doing well in all aspects of my job is very important to me.
    Agree ____   Disagree ____
I. **HOW GOOD ARE THE FIRST IMPRESSIONS YOU MAKE?**

There is nothing more important than the very first impression made by an employee with both internal and external customers. It speaks volumes about the company’s culture. Let’s take a minute to look at how good your first impression may be. Take a minute to respond to the worksheet below. Be prepared to discuss your responses with the whole class.

**Answer Yes or No to the following questions.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do people usually buy from someone they dislike?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do you understand the power of a smile?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do you show sincere interest in your customer and engage in preliminary small talk?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Do you grant people time alone before asking for the order?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Are you aware that a negative first impression may turn a prospect off to your product?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Do you open with a sincere compliment?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Do you promptly offer a prospect refreshments and a comfortable seating arrangement?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Do you pay attention to your attire and personal grooming?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Do you welcome buyers with a firm handshake?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Are you congenial no matter what the outcome?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
J. THE SHOCKING TRUTH ABOUT YOUR IMAGE

Whether it’s fair or not, we are often judged on first impressions. This harsh reality is nowhere better seen than in today’s ultra-fast business world where members size you up in a nanosecond based on your personal image. Since their impression of you will determine whether or not they want to do business with you, the impact on your career and on your organization’s bottom line can be staggering. There’s often little or no professional training for employees about personal image. Since it’s often awkward to confront employees on these sensitive issues, you need some ammunition to make the task easier.

Here are four image-related reasons that customers may not like you or your employees. Incidentally, customers will never tell you these reasons to your face—they’ll simply do business elsewhere.

- **You look different than expected**

  Customers prefer conducting business with individuals who meet their visual expectations. So if you want to keep customers, dress in a manner that customers expect. A plumber dressed in an Armani suit makes the client uncomfortable. An alderman in khaki shorts would shock the council members at city hall. A waitress with too much makeup, sporting tattoos and body piercings, would likely put off a patron in an upscale restaurant. On the other hand, a bartender in a conservative suit and tie may appall a customer in an alternative nightclub.

- **You’re hard to understand**

  Customers don’t want to strain themselves to understand front-line staff. If you or other employees don’t speak the local language clearly, then customers will generally go to your competitors where they won’t have to work so hard to communicate – or to spend their money. This is doubly important when speaking on the telephone, where customers don’t have the benefit of non-verbal communication to help interpret what’s being said. This concept has nothing to do with discrimination based on ethnic differences or nationality. It has to do with basic communication skills that are essential to do the job.
• **You exaggerate**

  Don’t exaggerate to tell customers what they want to hear. If a task will take 15 minutes to complete, don’t say, “It’ll only be 5 or 10 minutes.” That is called lying. Customers hate that. Organizations that stay in business over the long term adhere to the age-old adage “under promise and over deliver.”

• **You’re indiscreet**

  “Indiscreet” describes the cashier at the self-serve gas station who chatted with his friends while I entered to pay. He barely stopped his conversation with his buddies to take my money. I felt like I was crashing a private party. I never went back. A much more common example is when employees converse amongst themselves in front of the customer.

**There is hope.** Awareness of these problems is half the battle. A lot of employees simply don’t realize that they are committing these offenses.
K. COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE

1. What is Communication?

We often define communication as a two way process, one of sending and receiving. There is an additional component of this process and that is - UNDERSTANDING. How do we determine if the receiving party has clearly understood what our intended message is? There may be barriers to the flow of this information.

List below some of the barriers that interfere with the receipt of the information.

There is a difference in listening and hearing. We have to learn the skill of listening and continue to improve that skill through practice.

We should listen for names, listen with interest, try to get rid of assumptions and listen for what is not said. Remember that we need to always be clear to the customer's WIIFM (What's In It For Me?).
2. **Four Stages of Active Listening**

The four stages of active listening are non-verbal, cues and paraphrasing, clarifying, and summarizing. Some of the techniques that one might use as you engage in a conversation are:

- As people talk to you, mentally say to yourself: “Which means that …” (to be clear).
- Be clear in your own mind what you hope to achieve.
- Use the following helpers to check for understanding: Why, Where, When, Who, and How.
- Talk less than you listen.
- Try silence.

There are standards for the telephone: Remember that our customer forms their own opinion immediately:

- Answer within three rings.
- Defined salutation i.e. Good Day, ABC Centre, Security…. etc.
- Calls transferred correctly.
- Talk with a smile on your face.
- Ask permission for speakerphones.
- Take messages correctly.
- Get and give names, theirs and yours.
- Return calls promptly.
There are a number of issues that play into meeting the standards of providing excellent customer service. Not only do we want to meet customer expectations on the telephone, but the appearance of our facility and our physical appearance are also able to influence customer service.

Appearance of facility:

• Facility neat and tidy, where applicable.
• Rest areas tidy with chairs and magazines.
• Bathrooms clean, fresh smelling, with supplies.

Appearance of self:

• Good grooming.
• Professional dress, i.e. uniform.
• Personal hygiene.
• Hair clean and combed.

When we work with our customers face-to-face, there are some things that must also be remembered. We want to always appear engaged and committed to providing them the very best service that we can. A smile goes a long way in conjunction with eye contact and appropriate expressions. Listening skills need to be practiced consistently. When conversing, use the customer’s name, proper manners, talk specifically about what you can do (be specific), not what you can’t do. Refrain from talking about what is wrong.
L. LISTENING

Most of us would rate ourselves as excellent listeners. We feel that we attend to the party sharing the information and prepare to provide responses that will support the communication process. Practice the following:

- Listen for names.
- Display your interest with the use of body language and facial expressions.
- Try to rid yourself of assumptions.
- Try to read between the lines or for what is NOT said.

Seven percent of the message being delivered is paraphrased in our own words, 38% is emphasized by voice tones, and 55% is expressed through our body language. With all these signals, it seems unbelievable that we retain only 25% of what is shared.

We have mentioned the word “attending” several times in our discussion. There are skills that are necessary to do this successfully in the listening process. To be effective, one must demonstrate the following skills: (http://www.strategicfutures.com)

- Be present.
- Be attentive.
- Display authentic interest.
- Suspend judgment.
- Be patient.
Just as in any other process, there may be barriers to our attending. Sometimes we react to our speaker in the following ways:

- We dismiss what he/she has to say because we feel that we may know more than the person presenting.
- We jump to premature conclusions about what is being shared.
- Our expectations may be extremely low or high.
- We are busy rehearsing a response before we clearly understand what is being shared.
- We react to specific words.
- We respond with evaluation.

1. **Manager's Role**

When employees are listened to sensitively, they tend to listen to themselves with more care and make clear exactly what they are feeling and thinking. Team members tend to become less argumentative and more ready to incorporate other points of view. Listening reduces the threat of having one’s ideas criticized and increases the chances of having the team member feel that he/she is a valuable part of the team. His/her contributions are validated. Those in roles of supervisory responsibility may find it helpful to listen for total meaning.

There are two components of any message: *content and feeling*. Both of these components give the message *meaning*. Sometimes it is more productive to concentrate on feelings than content. There are various shadings of these components in the meaning of any message.

Not all communication is verbal. Words alone do not tell us everything. Truly sensitive listening requires that we become more aware of non-verbal cues (facial expressions and body language) as well as verbal cues. We can state that we respect someone, but it is our behavior that truly demonstrates that respect.
To ensure good communication between associates up and down the line, one must first take the responsibility for setting a pattern of listening. Just as one learns that anger is usually met with anger, argument with argument, and deception with deception, one can learn that listening can be met with listening. Every person who feels responsibility in a situation can set the tone for the interaction, and the important lesson in this is that any behavior exhibited by one person will eventually be responded to with similar behavior in the other person.

M. QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES

A large percentage of our conversation is dedicated to the acquisition of information through asking questions. Yet, we do not know the types of questions that are most beneficial for use in this process. Let’s take a look at two basic types of questions: **Open** and **Closed**.

Open questions are those that encourage people to share. They are phrased in a way that prohibits a simple “yes” or “no” answer. The responses to this type of question usually begin with a variation of the five W’s (who, what, when, where, why) or how.

Closed questions can be answered with a “yes” or “no”. There may be small amounts of information added to the response that helps with clarity. Closed questions tend to restrict our thought development and sometimes close down the conversation.

Closed questions can be over-used. They may lead to the formation of assumptions that are unfounded on fact and create barriers to communication that is clear and transparent.

The purpose of questions is listed below.

- Focus conversations.
- Solicit opinions.
- Gain consensus.
N. PROBING SKILLS

The technique used to gather information for the purpose of assisting customers is known as probing. We can only give the type of service that the customer is expecting if we have the appropriate information. When we probe, we do the following:

• Get involved and participate.
• Get important information out and available to all parties. This helps people to open up, present and clarify.
• Force yourself to listen.
• Use of probes helps both parties involved in the communication process.

1. Types of Probes

1. Open probe

   Allows the most important information to flow.

2. Pauses

   A temporary stop in action

3. Reflective statements/echoes/mirroring

   Re-stating or rephrasing what has been said. Words more comfortable for your use.

“Experienced communicators use a variety of probes. They balance open probes with fact-finding probes. They pause to let individuals consider the questions they have just asked. They periodically summarize what was heard to check understanding.”

   Velsoft Courseware, Inc.
Take a moment to create a good “open” question to ask your client as you attempt to diagnose the problem:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

O. TELEPHONE TECHNIQUES

Much of your business will be conducted by telephone. In a service role, you will find that you can use all of the exceptional service techniques discussed in this workshop while working with customers or clients by telephone.

There are, of course, a number of differences between telephone and face-to-face contacts with customers. Here are some of the unique characteristics of the telephone you should keep in mind:

**Telephone Communication**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal (words)</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal (tone)</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Language</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Customer Service - April 7, 2011 (Rev. April 30, 2012)
1. **The Initial Greeting**

Identify the organization, the department, and yourself. Be careful about verbal shorthand or internal jargon. Don't make the caller say, "Is this AIDT?" or "To whom am I speaking?" By the tone of a few words, you can convey a friendly welcome, which will imply your willingness to be helpful.

What are some of the proper ways you can answer YOUR phone?

---

**Situation:** Sometimes the person called may be out of the office, store, etc; or you don't know where he/she is. To say "Mr. Jones isn't here" may be true but it doesn't offer any further help. Instead you might say "Mr. Jones isn't in the office at the moment. May I have him call you?" Then you can get the person's name and call back number.

**Situation:** The person called is on another phone call. Don't say, "Mr. Jones is busy right now." It is better to say, "I'm sorry but Mr. Jones is on another call right now. May I take a message or have him call you when he is free?" Now you've indicated a willingness to help.

If the person asked for is out of the office, in addition to asking for a name and a call back number, ask if you or anyone else in the office might be able to help the caller.

2. **Transferring Telephone Calls**

An impression of poor service and lack of interest often results when calls are transferred improperly from telephone to telephone within an organization.
A call should only be transferred when the person transferring it (1) cannot help the caller (2) is reasonably sure the person to whom the call is transferred **WILL** be able to help the caller.

The reason for the transfer should be explained, along with the name of the person to whom the caller will be transferred. This prepares the caller for what is about to happen, and doesn't look like you are giving him/her the run-around.

"Mark Jenson in Fire Prevention handles that. I'll transfer you to him Mrs. Smith."

Then the person transferring the call should announce the call to the person receiving it. This will prepare him and eliminate the need for the caller to repeat information.

### 3. Putting Callers On Hold

If you are handling a call and you must put the caller on "hold", you should:

- Ask their permission,
- Explain WHY you are putting them on hold, and
- Give them your best estimate of how long they will be on hold.

If you think the waiting time might be more than 3 minutes, give the caller the option of holding or having you call back. Waiting time always seems longer than it actually is.

"Do you mind waiting a minute please while I locate your order?"

"Yes, Mr. Saunders is in. Will you wait a minute please and I'll tell him you are on the line."
4. **Progress Reports**

A progress report means informing the waiting person of what progress is being made on the call.

"Mr. Johnson, I'm still checking the code for that. Do you mind waiting a little longer or should I call you back."

"Mrs. Brighton? Mr. Saunders will be with you in just a minute."

5. **Proper Return to the Line**

Attract the person's attention by calling them by name or using a suitable introductory expression, so you won't have to repeat any of the information. Thank them for waiting.

**Subtle Telephone Messages**

1. **Don't** say: "He hasn't come in yet."
2. **Do** say: He's not in his office at the moment."

1. **Don't** say: "She's on her coffee break."
2. **Do** say: "She's away from her desk at the moment."

1. **Don't** say: "He left early today."
2. **Do** say: "He's out of the office until tomorrow."

1. **Don't** say: "She's sick today."
2. **Do** say: "She's not in the office today."

1. **Don't** say: "He's on vacation for the next two weeks."
2. **Do** say: "He's out of the office for the next two weeks."

**And of course, NEVER say:**

“I believe he went to the men’s room.”
“He’s taking a nap right now.” (This actually happened. The man had a heart attack his physician ordered him to rest 45 minutes after lunch each day but this information would not be known to the caller.)

“She has a doctor’s appointment this afternoon.”

“He’s at the barbershop.”

6. **Sentences That Damage Your Image or Lose Goodwill**

   1. “I can’t put your call through unless I can say who is calling.”
   2. “I don’t have anything to do with your problem.”
   3. “He’s busy – would you call him back?”
   4. “I’m working with someone right now, could you call back?”
   5. “There’s nothing I can do about it – that’s our policy.”
   6. “We might have it but I don’t know for sure.”
   7. “We’re getting ready to go home – would you call back in the morning?”
   8. “I just came in – could you call back in about 15-20 minutes?”
7. **Taking a Message**

Taking a message for your supervisor or another employee should be relatively simple. However, a great deal of business is lost each year by incomplete or forgotten messages. A courteous person returns telephone calls. Accurate messages reduce errors and eliminate unnecessary calls.

1. **Taking messages accurately and completely:**
   
   A. Keep a pad handy.
   
   B. Write while you are on the line. Take notes as you handle the call, not after you hang up the receiver.
   
   C. Request, don’t demand information. “If I may have your name, please”... not “What is your name and number?”
   
   D. Verify spelling.
   
   E. Get the first name too.
   
   F. Spell out phonetically if the name is difficult.
   
   G. Give feedback for verification.

2. **What to Record:**

   TO WHOM – Name of the person called.

   FROM WHOM – Name of the caller and his/her business connection.

   WHERE – Caller’s telephone number and Extension number.

   WHAT – Message itself.

   WHY – Action requested and the action promised.

   BY WHOM – Name of the person who recorded the message.

   WHEN – Date and hour of the call.
To assure the accuracy and completeness of a message, you might consider the following suggestions:

1. Listen attentively to the message.

2. Record the message while it is being given.

3. Check to be sure all telephone numbers are correct—Feedback for verification.

4. Verify the spelling of difficult names, using phonetic “helpers” – People are sensitive.

5. After the telephone call has been completed, make additional notes from memory.

6. Attach to the message any papers, reports, lists of information that would be helpful to the called party.

*When asking to take a message, if the caller says, “No, I’ll call back” – courteously ask ONE more time, “If I could just tell him who called, I’m sure he will be interested” ---- “You can call back if that would be more convenient.”*
8. Personalizing Service

“Remember that a man’s name is, to him, the sweetest and most important sound in any language.”

- Dale Carnegie

1. All customers are important – Together, they represent the sum total of our “reason for being.” However, each individual customer craves to have his uniqueness recognized and acknowledged in the process of being served. We can appreciate each customer’s importance by getting and using their name.

2. A Quick Formula to Practice:

   1. Prepare to hear the name – write it down, immediately – If you miss it, ask the person to repeat it.

   2. Repeat the name immediately in your next comment to the person.

   3. Use the name occasionally in the conversation. It’s an attention – getter at the beginning of the sentence.

   4. Ask “Let me be sure I’ve spelled your name right ---- Is that ----?

   5. Thank the person and use the name again as you are parting.

9. Your Telephone Voice

Speak at the right volume, not too loudly or too softly. Try to have a smile in your voice, and use a pleasant, friendly tone. Speak clearly, pronounce your words carefully. If you have an accent, customers or clients might have trouble understanding, therefore, spell things out or use more simple language to make sure they have it right. And remember not to talk too quickly.
10. **Your Listening Ear**

Never interrupt. Wait to be sure your caller is finished before you start to talk. However don’t hesitate to ask your customer to repeat anything you don’t understand. You, in turn, should repeat important information you are given such as numbers, spelling of words, important names, cities, and streets. Listen for the caller’s mood to try to determine not only what they are saying, but how they feel about it. Remember the importance of asking questions and probing until you are sure you understand the problem or have as much information as possible.

11. **Your Format for Closing**

If necessary, summarize the main ideas of your call by confirming details discussed or follow-up actions promised. As well as just saying “good bye”, try to close with a friendly, courteous greeting such as:

- “Is there anything else I can do for you?”
- “It was nice talking to you.”
- “Thank you for calling.”
- “Thanks for your help.”

Remembering and using these telephone techniques will enable you to give the same exceptional service on the telephone as you would give your customers and clients in person.
P. DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

What are some techniques universally used to handle difficult people? According to psychologist Shirley Winslow, PhD. of the University of Alberta, we have four fears: fear of failure, fear of humiliation/embarrassment, fear of losing power, and fear of rejection. If we think back to past experiences, we all have been engaged in one or more of these fears. They become barriers to our reaching the goals that we set for ourselves. These fears often cause us to act in ways that make us difficult for others to deal with. What may be especially annoying to you, may not affect the other person at all. Each of us can be difficult at one time or another.

List some of the characteristics that make others difficult to deal with? What are some of the weapons that they use against us?

1. Why Difficult People Resist New Ideas and Opinions

Difficult people display seven types of resistance:

- **Resistance to change** - People sometimes get entrenched in the ways that are most comfortable. They resist stepping outside of that comfort zone. The boundaries have been set and they operate “perfectly fine” within them.

- **Resistance because of a bad mood** - Not all of us are equipped emotionally to deal with the moods of team members at all times. None of us are free from those environmental stressors that build barriers to our showing a mood that is compatible with those around us.

- **Resistance to invasion** - Each of us has personal space that is distinctly marked by boundaries that appear invisible to others. We sometimes resist allowing others to intrude or invade that space.
• **Resistance that is irrational** - Perhaps our reasons for not readily moving toward change are not clearly knowing “why”. Our reasons are not sensible or logical.

• **Resistance due to negativism** - People will discover that if they allow negativity to enter their life, it will bleed into other all areas. This will lend itself to holding a grudge and not feeling very good about who we are. Our responses and reactions may be colored by this negativity.

• **Resistance due to fear** - We sometimes operate under fear. We are afraid that we are are unable to meet the expectations and standards established by Management. These fears sometimes get in our way of performing at our optimum.

• **Resistance due to perceived role** - Perhaps we feel that the definition of our role is different than that being expressed by supervisors. We resist having others impose change without soliciting our input.

2. **The Problem Solving Process**

There will be times when you will experience difficulty with customers in trying to address their specific needs. Earlier in this module we talked about operating under the false assumption that customers are unable to determine how you feel about a specific issue because you are speaking with them by telephone. However, that is not always the case. Sometimes our feelings can be accurately sensed via our tone and delivery.

In order to reach a resolution to the root issue, one has to develop a problem statement. One must be careful that the statement is not too vague or it will impact the probability of developing a valid solution. The same will apply if the statement reflects being too restrictive.

The most important thing is to determine the root cause of the problem. This will lead to the team brainstorming solutions in a much more expedited way. Once root causes are identified, possible solutions
will start emerging in a most expeditious manner. After brainstorming solutions, take a look at the pros and cons of the list. After carefully considering the list, create a detailed plan of action that follows the selection of the consensus choice.
3. **Problem Solving Activity**

Listed below are the seven steps reflecting situations that might contribute to the escalation of problems. Let’s explore how we might deal with these problems.

1. What would you do to prevent the challenge from escalating?

2. What happens if you do not know the answer to a customer’s question?

3. What happens if you have to say “no” to a customer’s request?

4. The customer has unreasonable expectations.

5. The customer is skeptical of the information you’re telling him.

6. Customer is angry for no reason.

7. Customer refuses to give you all the info you need.
4. Dealing With Difficult People Summary

There are three things that we want to keep in mind when dealing with a difficult person:

- Overreacting
- Complaining
- Lecturing

It is important to develop some coping strategies that will support you in your attempt to successfully deal with difficult people, internally and externally. It is well known that the old 80/20 rule applies to this situation, 80% of the problems we will experience will come from 20% of the customers.
5. **Turning Bad Apples Into Good Apples**

**Instructions:** For each situation described below, discuss what you could say, ask or do if you encountered the following “Bad Apples”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bad Apples</th>
<th>Things You Could Say</th>
<th>Things You Could Do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Brad Bored</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Carol Complainer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Gregory Gossip</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Betty Busywork</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Roger Rigid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Victoria Victim</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. William Whatever</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Lisa Lazy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Doubting Thomas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Jill Jealous</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Worry Wart</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Betty Backstabber</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Timid Tim</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q.  PERCEPTION

Perception is defined as the process of attaining awareness of understanding information based upon the five senses. “What one perceives as a result of past experiences, one’s culture and the interpretation of the perceived.” Rene Descartes describes passive perception as a sequence of events that follows in this way:

surrounding → input (senses) → processing (brain) → output (reaction).

There are many times when we believe that we have clearly understood what another party is trying to get us to see. We have observed their non-verbal cues, and listened carefully to their verbal description. When it is time to share the information, our perception of what was provided was totally inaccurate. It is often stated “Perception is Reality”.

R.  CONQUERING RESISTANCE FROM THE CUSTOMER

1.  7 Keys To Conquering Resistance From Customers

They are:

•  Be likeable.
•  Recognize.
•  Don’t aggravate.
•  Don’t force the defensive, “I” vs. “You”.
•  Don’t find fault (discuss the situation, not the person).
•  Be patient.
•  Look for win/win.
2. Dealing With Angry People

When we are dealing with angry people, we should keep the following points in mind:

- Don’t be funny.
- Don’t argue.
- Listen attentively.
- Use the person’s name.
- Slow the pace.
- Lower the volume.
- Sit down.
- Negotiate.

"Just solve the problem and skip the blame".

S. THE RECOVERY PROCESS

Once we have identified the problem facing our customer, the recovery process should immediately begin. There are six steps to be considered in addressing these problems:

1. Apologize
   Take this opportunity to avoid blame and acknowledge that problems exist and show concern.

2. Listen and empathize
   Always treat customers in a way that conveys a concern for their feelings.

3. Fix the problem quickly and fairly
   If it is perceived that the “fix” is fair, customers will feel that their expectations have been met.
4. **Offer atonement**
   If the customer is feeling injured in any way, they may respond to any gesture that would make them feel that you understand what they are going through and would like to make it up to them.

5. **Keep your promises**
   Do what you have promised that you will do. If you cannot follow through on the promise, be realistic about what you can and cannot do.

6. **Follow up**
   Always follow up with customers to make certain that the resolution has met with their satisfaction. Do not make any assumptions. Check and make sure.

T. **STEPS TO RESOLVE CONFLICT**

1. **Resolving Conflict Activity**
   Select a partner and discuss how you have responded to conflict situations in the past. Be prepared to share the results of your discussion with the whole class.

   - **Competitive:** I actively seek to get my own way.
   - **Avoidant:** I seek to avoid the conflict situation.
   - **Accommodative:** I seek to work out a mutually satisfying relationship with others.
   - **Collaborative:** I seek to work out mutually satisfying solutions with others.
   - **Compromising:** I seek to work out a solution in which we each give up a little to get some of what we want.
Which processes were used in the resolution of conflict in the situations described in your discussion?

U. PREVENTION TECHNIQUES

Empathy is not agreeing. It means you understand what the person said, but do not necessarily agree with it.

Phrases you should avoid:

- “I agree.”
- “Yes, that’s true.”

These phrases would tend to reinforce the concern. Try to rephrase the key topic of the customer’s statement. Try using these statements:

- “I hear….”
- “I understand….”
- “I think you’re saying…”
Attempting to put the concern in words that work better for you, provides you an opportunity to:

- Empathize with the concern.
- Show the person you understand the concern.
- Think of an appropriate response.

Always revisit the concern to make certain that all parties are satisfied with the resolution.

V. TOOLS FOR ELIMINATING CUSTOMER SERVICE PROBLEMS

We all need tools and techniques that will be helpful as we work to minimize or eliminate the problems that we experience with both internal and external customers. Listed below are a few tools that you might find helpful as you seek to meet that goal of minimizing your customer service issues:

1. Critical Evaluation

Take a look at the big picture. Try to group information by using the how, what, where, when, and who format. Examine what could have been done differently. Take a look at the advantages and disadvantages.

2. Informal Surveys

Ask for input from your customers. Create a snapshot of information shared to form a basis for comparison.

3. Focus Groups

Groups are usually composed of 8 – 10 participants, those considered SMEs (Subject Matter Experts) and are structured to address specific questions and address specific issues during sessions that are moderated and structured. The results are reported in report format. The facilitator should have previous experience.
4. **N.G.T. (Nominal Group Technique)**

   This process is similar to a “Round Table.” The end process is different in that the facilitator and the group prioritize the responses using the top 3-5.

5. **Fish Bone (Cause and Effect or Root Cause)**

   Participants discuss the symptoms and categorize possible reasons under the heading on the major bones of the fish.

6. **Brainstorming**

   Any and all ideas are considered. Even if these ideas are not feasible for the current discussion, they may be helpful to other members resolving other problems that might emerge.

7. **Benchmarking**

   See how others are doing what you do. Take this information and use it if there is a direct application.

**W. WHAT TO SAY AND HOW TO SAY IT**

   It does not matter who is displaying abusive behavior - your tone and remembering intent vs. impact will get anyone to change his or her mind.

   - Remember that they can’t read your mind.
   - Don’t be condescending.
   - State the facts succinctly.
   - State your concerns in a positive way.
   - Consider the other person’s self-esteem.
   - Have a clear game plan in mind.
1. **Ten Helpful Phrases**

   - I care.
   - I’d like to understand. Help me to understand.
   - How are things with you?
   - Let’s define the problem.
   - This is what I heard you say.
   - Let me put this another way.
   - How can I help you? Can I do anything to help?
   - What would you do?
   - Thank you.
   - Silence, with concern.

What additional phrases would you like to add to this list?

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
2. Ten Least Helpful Phrases

- You shouldn’t feel that way.
- Why did you do/say that?
- That’s not important.
- I know exactly how you feel.
- I know what you are going to say.
- How come you are not as good as..?
- Do you want to know what I think?  Here’s what you should do.
- I told you so.
- Any phrase that contains the words always, never, all the time, everyone or permanently.
- Silence without concern…indifference.

Do you have any additional phrases that you would like to add to the list?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
X. PROJECT POSITIVE EXPECTATIONS

Incorporate these statements into your exchanges with internal and external customers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wrong</th>
<th>Right</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I’ll have to</td>
<td>I’ll be glad to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ll try</td>
<td>I will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’d hate to</td>
<td>I want to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can’t</td>
<td>I haven’t yet, and I can</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you can</td>
<td>When will you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is a terrible problem</td>
<td>This is a challenging opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m never any good at</td>
<td>I’m improving at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ll spend time/money</td>
<td>I’ll invest time and money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That’s impossible</td>
<td>That can be done</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remember, one of the most important things we can do to change behavior is to give credit and praise when and where it is due.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wrong</th>
<th>Right</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I really just got lucky</td>
<td>I planned well and worked hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ve never done this before</td>
<td>This is an opportunity to learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m getting too old</td>
<td>I feel good. I have lots of experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He/She did a good job</td>
<td>You did a good job (Tell them)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Never let failure shape the way you perform in the future. Look at situations where your goals were not met and tasks not accomplished as learning moments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wrong</th>
<th>Right</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I failed</td>
<td>I learned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can see negative consequences</td>
<td>I can see positive consequences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m a loser</td>
<td>I’m a winner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the things we must do is be willing to accept responsibility for our actions. We are not in this situation alone and must accept responsibility for our actions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wrong</th>
<th>Right</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They make me so mad</td>
<td>I feel mad when</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t have enough time</td>
<td>I can manage my time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s the other guy’s fault</td>
<td>It’s my responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone else will do it</td>
<td>I will take care of it myself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can’t change things</td>
<td>I choose to make the best of what is</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. **How Do We Ensure Our Clients Return?**

It does not matter if the purchase is large or small, we will need to acknowledge that sale with a brief thank you. This policy will encourage customers to return and will make your business thrive. The following items help with customer retention:

1. Always be pleasant even if it is not reciprocated.
2. Welcome customer suggestions regarding improvement.
3. Genuinely receive and act on any complaints or problems.
4. Go “above and beyond” to assist the customer.
5. Smile even when you don’t feel like it.
6. Roll with the punches. Always reflect a calm demeanor.
7. Provide service that goes beyond customer expectations.
8. Provide helpful suggestions when you feel the customer needs it.
9. Thoroughly explain the features and benefits of the services you provide.
10. Follow through and make sure the customer’s expectations are met.

**REMEMBER:**

- 1% of lost customers die.
- 3% move away.
- 4% just naturally float.
- 5% change on friend’s recommendations.
• 9% can buy it cheaper somewhere else.

• 10% are chronic complainers.

• 68% go elsewhere because the people they deal with are indifferent to their needs.

Y. A PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

1. Customers can count on me to:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

2. What specific changes do I want to see within three months?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

3. How am I going to do it?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

4. This is how I will know I have done it:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
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