



**The Customer Service Training Institute**

**<http://www.customerservicetraininginstitute.com>**

# 7 Days to Better Customer Service!

You can increase your Customer Service Performance in just 7 days! The key is to tackle on item each day and build a foundation of skills that you can add to in the future. Before starting this program, it is important that you have a solid understanding of the fundamentals of Customer Service and it's associated skills. You cannot expect to gain much from this program if you don't learn about the skills before trying implement them. Each skill will be discussed briefly with directions on how to properly implement it. Do not alter the sequence. This sequence has been carefully chosen for maximum efficiency and performance.

To gain the maximum benefit from this program, please start preparing yourself the night before. For example, Sunday night read the content for Monday and think about what you need to do to prepare yourself for that days topic. This way, your mind will be ready to tackle that day's objective from the start.

## **The 7 - Day Plan!**

### **Sunday**

Use Sunday as a kind of "self-evaluation" time. Find a quiet place where you can be undisturbed for about an hour or so. Make sure you have a pencil and some paper with you. Do not allow for any interruptions. You will need to think clearly and interruptions will break your chain of thought.

Start by looking at your job and its Customer Service responsibilities. Write down what you think you are good at and what gives you trouble. Think about situations that routinely go fine and others that usually go wrong. Write down what skills are involved in each.

Ask yourself what it is you hope to accomplish through your Customer Service skill improvement. Perhaps you are preparing for a new job or increasing your performance. Whatever it is you're looking for, write it down.

Ask yourself what comments other people have made about your performance. What is it that they like about you? What is it they don't like? Write down everything you can think of.

Take a look at the notes you have written. On these notes will be a list of things you are good at and also a list of things you need improvement on. Take this information and create an understanding of what it is you should be focusing on. Target the areas you need improvement on. Evaluate everything you have written. This information will give you a picture of your current skill level. It is important to know what you need work on so that you can approach your skill improvement with a specific action plan and set of goals.

Now look at what you hope to accomplish. The things you wrote down will now become your goal list. A set of goals is important because we tend to work harder, and remain focused longer, when we have a specific goal we want to achieve. In addition, when we have clearly identified goals, we can approach our training with those goals in mind and make a more concentrated effort on reaching those goals.

## **Monday**

Today we are going to work on our greeting skills. How we greet our customers is often the most important time of our conversations with other people. It is during our initial greeting that perceptions are made, evaluations are formed, and overall impressions are made.

In the morning, make a concerted effort to smile whenever you approach a customer. Even if it is over the phone, smile. Smiles tend to alter your mood to a more positive one and this will come across even during a phone conversation. By working on establishing a positive appearance, we will tend to change any negative feelings towards the positive side.

The rest of the day make an effort to greet each and every customer that you see that day. Don't go overboard, however. If you know someone has been greeted already, don't greet him or her again but if you see someone walk through the door, make a conscious effort to greet them.

Your greeting should be short, friendly, and offer assistance of some kind. Something like: "Hello, welcome to XYZ Stores. My name is Dave. How can I help you today?" will make the customer feel at ease in your store. Phone greetings like this are also good practice. Never answer the phone with just a "hello?" This could be interpreted by the customer as a negative.

Avoid the use of long and drawn out greetings. These tend to get a customer to lose focus and attention. Keep it short and sweet for the best results. Once you have greeted the customer, give the customer some space. If the customer does not want or need your assistance, back off and let the customer shop. It is a good idea to glance over to that customer from time to time just to check to see if the customer now needs any help.

## **Tuesday**

Tuesday is the day we are going to start listening to what our customers are saying to us! Spend the day focused on what your customer is saying to you. Try and remember everything that is being said to you. If you don't have a customer, try and listen to conversations going on around you and try to evaluate what is being said and the emotions behind the words.

Make an effort to "read" the emotional state of the people you are talking with. Are they angry, happy, sad, or frustrated? Take notice of the tone and volume of their voice. Is it loud or soft? Is the tone combative or docile? By getting a feel for the Customer's State of mind, you can listen more effectively and obtain more accurate information.

Concentrate on hearing what the customer is saying to you. Let the customer talk about their problem at length. Try and pick out the important information and look for words and statements that are repeated often. These are the important points in the mind of the customer. Make a mental note of these points and make sure you address each and every one in your response.

If you find yourself missing parts of the conversation in your memory, try and determine where your lapse of memory occurs. Very often, once we determine in our minds what the problem is, we tend to "shut down" our minds to additional information. This is a very dangerous practice and we should make every effort to keep the lines of communication open all the time. If you find that you are "zoning out" in the middle of the conversation, try and ask a question or two to establish a break in the customer's monologue.

## Wednesday

On Wednesday, we are going to practice asking questions. Asking questions is an extremely important part of Customer Service. In the vast amount of situations, you are going to know more about the product, service, or situation than the customer does. Because of this, you will want to know specific information that the customer may not give without the proper questions. Therefore, we must learn to ask questions in order to get the info we need.

Think of the questioning process as detective work. We have a problem with many potential causes and solutions. We must narrow down our options until we have a very good idea of how to proceed. Each question should be designed to narrow down our options. The object is to keep asking questions until we have only one or two choices left. At that point, we make an intelligent decision. Here's an example:

- 1) **When did you purchase this product?** (This question either confirms or eliminates warranty or replacement situations.)
  
- 2) **Does this problem happen all the time or only under certain circumstances?** (This question establishes the criteria for the problem. This will eliminate or confirm certain causes.)
  
- 3) **How long have you had the problem?** (This question will confirm if the product ever functioned in the intended way at any point in time. Maybe the customer is expecting the product to do something that it is not intended to do. Perhaps something else other than the product is causing the problem.)

These are just examples of questions and how they help us determine what course of action to take. You cannot always get down to one final option. Very often you will only be able to evaluate things down to a certain point and then you make an informed decision. The more information you have, the more accurate your decision will be.

Spend today being very aware of the questions you ask and the reasons behind them. If you have a co-worker that is good with

customers, listen to the questions he asks and try to figure out why he asked them. It is also important to listen to the answers that your customers give to the questions you ask.

Even though you are thought to be the expert in the eyes of the customer, you can only be expected to make decisions based on the information provided to you. If the customer gives you answers that contradict previous answers, you must continue to ask the questions until you get to the point that you feel comfortable in making the decision.

Sometimes customers will get annoyed when you start to ask questions. They may say that they don't have the time to answer questions and that they want to get out of the store as quickly as possible. To counter this, I suggest you precede your questions by saying something like this: "I have few questions to ask you, sir. This may take a few minutes but I want to make sure that we resolve this problem correctly so that you do not have to spend any more time in the future." This kind of phrase lets the customer know that it is in their best interest to cooperate now!

Always ask your questions in a non-accusatory manner. Be diplomatic when asking questions that are designed to determine whether the customer caused the problem or not. Remember that we do not want to "win" a battle here. We want to satisfy the customer. If that means giving the customer a way out of escaping blame, by all means, do it! For example: Instead of saying: "This isn't working because you didn't assemble it correctly", say something like: "I see the problem. This part here should be connected like this. I've seen this before and it should work just fine now."

By talking to the customer in this manner, we have shown them the problem and gave them a resolution without actually saying that they are to blame. The customer will not get defensive and you have resolved the problem.

## **Thursday**

Today we will work on verbal skills. There are three main focal points relating to verbal skills. They are: never use highly technical language, never talk "down" to a customer, and always talk from the positive point of view.

### **Never Use Highly Technical Language.**

If you want to lose a customer quickly, use language that he or she can't understand. Always use easy to understand words and sentences. If you talk at a level that your customers can't understand, you run the risk of being misunderstood or having your customer become frustrated and angry.

Unless you are talking to someone else in the same industry, or if the particular problem is a very technical one, you should avoid using highly technical language. Instead of saying, "Your main power distribution regulator has exceeded its designed power threshold and has therefore triggered its safety device", just say "The fuse is blown." The first phrase accomplishes nothing while the second phrase can be understood by almost anyone.

### **Never "Talk Down" to a Customer**

Using long and fancy words may also tend to create a situation where your customer feels that you are talking down to them. This means that they feel you consider yourself to be superior and are just putting up with their problems. Either way, you should make every effort to avoid this problem.

People have different levels of comprehension. Talk at too high a level and people will not understand what it is you are saying. Talk at too low a level and people may feel you are patronizing them. The idea here is to fall somewhere in the middle of those two extremes.

Think of how you talk to customers and co-workers. If you find yourself using big words or technical language, try and come up with substitute words that mean the same thing. Try to condition yourself



to talk in such a way that an average high school student could understand. If you can accomplish this, you should be able to handle verbal skills nicely.

Always Talk From the Positive Point of View!

Negative words have no place in customer service! Try and approach all statements and phrases from the positive point of view. Instead of "I can't do that", say, "Here's what I can do for you." It sounds more like you want to help the customer. Eliminate the following words from your customer service vocabulary:

Cant'      Won't      Shouldn't      no      not

And any other words that have a negative connotation.

Also, people don't care about internal rules, regulations, and warranties. Try not to say things like, "That's against company policy." Instead, try and come up with alternate suggestions or ideas that you can do. The bottom line is that you want to help each and every customer and make them feel like you honestly care.

Go over in your mind how you would like to handle your most common problems each day. Practice those responses and see how your customers react. Continually refine your wording until you are comfortable with the results.

## **Friday**

Today we are going to work on our problem solving skills. Customer Service is part communication skills and part problem solving skills. While we have worked on our communication skills so far, we must learn to use problem-solving skills to complete our Customer Service Skills package.

When you are presented with a problem, you must not make the mistake of trying to come up with a solution. Instead, get in the mindset of trying to come up with MULTIPLE SOLUTIONS. By coming up with several different solutions to a problem, you greatly increase your chances of success.

Multiple solutions allow you to do two things. First, if one solution does not please the customer, you will have one or two more options available to you. Second, by having multiple options available, you can let the customer take part in choosing which way you are going to proceed.

Making the customer a part of the decision making process greatly increases the chances of the customer being satisfied with the outcome. If a person is made part of the decision, they tend to be more agreeable to the solution. In cases like these, you are not telling the customer what they are going to get; you are asking them what they would prefer. If you practice this technique, your customer satisfaction levels will soar!

Keep in mind that any potential solution must be in line with the value of the customer. For example, if a customer buys one \$5.00 product from you every 15 years, it does not make sense to offer him a solution that costs your company \$1,000.00. Always consult with your manager or company management for guidelines regarding customer offers or settlements.

When evaluating a potential resolution, keep in mind the cost associated with it. Present to least costly option first and then

proceed to the next option until the customer accepts the proposal. If you start with the most expensive option, you will have nothing better to offer if the customer refuses. Always leave your best offer off the table until the last moment. Always try to keep something in reserve.

Always remember that we are not looking to win any disagreement with a customer. We should always be looking for ways to achieve a win-win solution. A win-win is where the customer is satisfied and the company has made a resolution that it is happy with. Any solution that makes only one party happy is not going to stand the test of time. In these cases, either the company or the customer will suffer. Always strive for win-win solutions.

## **Saturday**

Congratulations! You completed the week! Now it's time to look back and see what you have accomplished and how you've accomplished it. What were you successful at? What did you do poorly? Where should you focus your efforts next week?

Customer Service skills are skills that are never mastered. As the business world changes, so do the skills required to compete. Today's skills will not measure up five years from now. Make the effort to continually upgrade your skills. Read a publication, take a class, and interact with those that know how to make customer happy. Pick up the best thing you can from each person you come in contact with.

## **Conclusion**

Good Customer Service skills will also help you reduce the level of stress in your job. It makes sense that if you can keep your customers from getting angry you will reduce your level of stress. This is a win-win situation. Your skills will help you save your company money and help turn angry customers into disciples for the company.

Customer Service can be a very rewarding career for those suited for it. Never take anything personally. People you deal with are angry with your company or the product, not you. (Unless you have done something to make them angry at you!) Proceed with an honest desire to make things right with your customers and you will have a great deal of success. Thinking of Customer Service as a job or chore will almost guarantee failure. It's all in your mindset. Keep a positive attitude, express yourself in a positive manner, and you will be on your way to success in Customer Service!

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