

Customer Service

This induction video will be about customer service. How to work with others and handle situations you might encounter.

Who is a customer? A customer can be anyone you provide a service to or come into contact with whilst volunteering. Remember that you, yourself are a customer almost every day.

What is customer service? Customer service provides a kind, courteous and professional face for the organisation you are volunteering with. When you are volunteering, you are a representative for that organisation and your conduct needs to reflect this.

Customer service applies to all interactions, whether it in be in person, by phone or in written form, such as a letter or email.

Good customer service needs to follow these essentials, which can easily be remembered if you think C.A.R.E.

- **C**reating the right impression
- **A**ctive listening
- **R**apport Building
- **E**mpathy

Creating the first impression - According to research it can take as little as 7 seconds to make a first impression. It is estimated that a person will tell 9 other people about a positive experience but will tell 20 others about a negative one. How do you make a good first impression? Smiling is important, maintaining good eye contact, speaking clearly and being mindful of your posture and body language. Sit or stand upright and place your hands by your sides (avoid putting your hands on your hips), be relaxed but do not slouch. Maintain good eye contact, this will show you are sincere and engaged and avoid touching your face, fiddling with your hair etc as this can be seen as a sign of dishonesty.

What is meant by Active listening? It means focussing your attention on the customer. Use verbal prompts such as "I see" and "I understand" rather than "ok". Being patient and not interrupt. Ask open questions (when, where, how etc.) and summarise your understanding of the situation back to them when they have finished talking.

Rapport Building is about creating a situation where there is a common understanding. This does not require you to be overly friendly but to demonstrate courtesy and respect. Smiling and eye contact are essential rapport builders. Be natural, sincere and say something more than the bare minimum. Be mindful of your posture.

What is empathy? It means being able to see and understand another's point of view. It is not to be confused with sympathy, feeling sorry for someone, or pretending to feel sorry for them. It is a good way of building rapport. Empathy is also conveyed in our tone of voice and body language. Not every situation will require you to use empathy, but it is a vital tool to reduce tension. How empathy is delivered is just as important as the actual words used, some examples are "If I'm understanding you correctly...", "You might find X helpful", "I think you'll find it's much easier if you do X" and "Give me just a moment while I figure this out for you"

The language you use is key whenever and wherever you are communicating with people. Kind words are worth much and cost little. Think about how you would like to be spoken to. It is important for your language to be both polite and positive. Polite language means showing respect for others through your manners, speech, and behaviour. Refrain from the use of bad language and making disparaging or derogatory comments.

Positive language involves telling people what they or you can do and not what cannot be done, focus on the solution not the problem. Nobody likes to be told "No". Statements including "you can't do that", "that's not my job", "I'm not allowed to do that" or "I have no idea" will cause a negative interaction on both sides. Using responses such as "I can help you find the person that deals with that", "you can park on the other side of the building" or "I don't know the answer but I can find that out for you" will lead to a much more positive encounter. Saying "No" in the right way can reduce escalation and customer dissatisfaction.

In addition to your words, think about your body language and facial expressions. There is a concept which states that only 7% of meaning is communicated through spoken word. 38% is through the tone of your voice and the remaining 55% is through your body language.

Should you encounter someone who is complaining, it is important not to be dismissive of their issue. You need to stay calm and consistent, both in the tone of your voice and in your response. Take control of the situation and acknowledge their dilemma. Re-focus the conversation and provide a positive resolution to the issue.

If someone is talking to you in a negative way, it is important to remember that they are not angry with you. The cause of their anger or irritation will be an issue or situation they have found themselves in. An example could be having a long, hot car journey to a location and they arrive to find no car parking spaces available. They may use personal language and insults to vent this and you may be on the receiving end. The key is not to respond with personal insults and unpleasantries. You need to remain calm and professional, do not turn a customer's attitude into a personal affront but influence them with your optimism.

Should a situation become confrontational, we suggest that you

- Speak politely
- Do not engage in an argument
- Do not join the bandwagon and support their complaint
- Show empathy but do not take ownership of the problem / situation
- Do not over apologise

Do not speak negatively about the organisation you represent.

Should someone become rude or abusive, we recommend that you walk away, particularly if the situation continues, escalates or makes you uncomfortable. You should report the details of this encounter to your point of contact.

You need to be aware of which things you can deal with easily, which things are not your job but you could deal with, which things you are not able to do but can help a little with and what you do not have the authority to resolve but know how or who needs to deal with it. For example, if someone is unhappy about the cost of car parking, you need to direct them to the relevant council or landowner responsible for the parking to raise their concerns.

Every encounter should be positive for you, the customer and the organisation you are volunteering with. Remember, every 'customer' wants to be listened to, to be understood and to be cared for. Think smile, eye contact and comment. We all want to be heard and understood.

Thank you for listening to the customer service section of your induction. Please ensure to watch all the other videos and do get in contact should you have any questions.