Customer Care Notes

Operational Programme II – Cohesion Policy 2007-2013

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*Investing in your future*
Customer Care

Customer Service is an organization's ability to supply their customers' wants and needs.

Customers and business managers alike like to talk about what good customer service is (and isn't), but I think this definition by ACA Group sums up what excellent customer service is beautifully: "excellent customer service (is) the ability of an organization to constantly and consistently exceed the customer's expectations."

Customer service is an integral part of our job and should not be seen as an extension of it. A company’s most vital asset is its customers. Without them, we would not and could not exist in business. When you satisfy our customers, they not only help us grow by continuing to do business with you, but recommend you to friends and associates.

The practice of customer service should be as present on the show floor as it is in any other sales environment.

Identify different types of customers

In the retail industry, it seems as though we are constantly faced with the issue of trying to find new customers. Most of us are obsessed with making sure our advertising, displays, and pricing all “scream out” to attract new customers. This focus on pursuing new customers is certainly prudent and necessary, but, at the same time, it can wind up hurting us. Therefore, our focus really should be on the 20 percent of our clients who currently are our best customers.

In retail, this idea of focusing on the best current customers should be seen as an on-going opportunity. To better understand the rationale behind this theory and to face the challenge of building customer loyalty, we need to break down shoppers into five main types:

- **Loyal Customers**: They represent no more than 20 percent of our customer base, but make up more than 50 percent of our sales.
• **Discount Customers:** They shop our stores frequently, but make their decisions based on the size of our markdowns.

• **Impulse Customers:** They do not have buying a particular item at the top of their “To Do” list, but come into the store on a whim. They will purchase what seems good at the time.

• **Need-Based Customers:** They have a specific intention to buy a particular type of item.

• **Wandering Customers:** They have no specific need or desire in mind when they come into the store. Rather, they want a sense of experience and/or community.

If we are serious about growing our business, we need to focus our effort on the loyal customers, and merchandise our store to leverage the impulse shoppers. The other three types of customers do represent a segment of our business, but they can also cause us to misdirect our resources if we put too much emphasis on them.

Let me further explain the five types of customers and elaborate on what we should be doing with them.

• **Loyal Customers**

Naturally, we need to be communicating with these customers on a regular basis by telephone, mail, email, etc. These people are the ones who can and should influence our buying and merchandising decisions. Nothing will make a Loyal Customer feel better than soliciting their input and showing them how much you value it. In my mind, you can never do enough for them. Many times, the more you do for them, the more they will recommend you to others.

• **Discount Customers**

This category helps ensure your inventory is turning over and, as a result, it is a key contributor to cash flow. This same group, however, can often wind up costing you money because they are more inclined to return product.
• **Impulse Customers**

Clearly, this is the segment of our clientele that we all like to serve. There is nothing more exciting than assisting an Impulse shopper and having them respond favourably to our recommendations. We want to target our displays towards this group because they will provide us with a significant amount of customer insight and knowledge.

• **Need-Based Customers**

People in this category are driven by a specific need. When they enter the store, they will look to see if they can have that need filled quickly. If not, they will leave right away. They buy for a variety of reasons such as a specific occasion, a specific need, or an absolute price point. As difficult as it can be to satisfy these people, they can also become Loyal Customers if they are well taken care of. Salespeople may not find them to be a lot of fun to serve, but, in the end, they can often represent your greatest source of long-term growth.

It is important to remember that Need-Based Customers can easily be lost to Internet sales or a different retailer. To overcome this threat, positive personal interaction is required, usually from one of your top salespeople. If they are treated to a level of service not available from the Web or another retail location, there is a very strong chance of making them Loyal Customers. For this reason, Need-Based Customers offer the greatest long-term potential, surpassing even the Impulse segment.

• **Wandering Customers**

For many stores, this is the largest segment in terms of traffic, while, at the same time, they make up the smallest percentage of sales. There is not a whole lot you can do about this group because the number of Wanderers you have is driven more by your store location than anything else.

Keep in mind, however, that although they may not represent a large percentage of your immediate sales, they are a real voice for you in the community. Many Wanderers shop merely for the interaction and experience it provides them. Shopping is no different to them than it is for another person to go to the gym on a regular basis. Since they are merely looking for interaction, they are also very likely to communicate to others the experience...
they had in the store. Therefore, although Wandering Customers cannot be ignored, the time spent with them needs to be minimized.

Retail is an art, backed up by science. The science is the information we have from financials to research data (the "backroom stuff"). The art is in how we operate on the floor: our merchandising, our people, and, ultimately, our customers. For all of us, the competitive pressure has never been greater and it is only going to become more difficult. To be successful, it will require patience and understanding in knowing our customers and the behaviour patterns that drive their decision-making process.

Using this understanding to help turn Discount, Impulse, Need-Based, and even Wandering Customers into Loyal ones will help grow our business. At the same time, ensuring that our Loyal Customers have a positive experience each time they enter our store will only serve to increase our bottom-line profits.

- **Customer Needs**

There are three needs in customers that sales people seek when prospecting. This leads to three types of customer that need different approaches.

**Three factors**

Although prospective customers have many different needs, there are three factors that the sales person wants to know.

- **Know problem**
The customer may or may not know that they have a problem that they need to solve. The sales person needs to know so that the potential to make a sale that solve the problem is identified.

- **Motivated to solve the problem**
When the customer knows that they have a problem, they must be motivated to solve it. If they see it as unimportant or not worth spending time and money on it, then the sales person has an uphill job.
- **Know what's needed to solve the problem**

  The customer may also know what they need in order to solve the problem. This can be good news for the sales person. It can also be problematic.

**The knowing customer**

The knowing customer understands the problem, wants to solve it and knows what they need. They approach the sales person with the question 'I need an X, do you have one?'

If the sales person has what is wanted, the sale is easy and quicker than the qualification, which may be minimal (and particularly when the customer makes the first approach).

This can be problematic if the sales person does not have what is wanted. They may need to question the customer to understand the problem and might offer an alternative solution, although this requires convincing the customer that what is being sold is better than what the customer initially asked for. This is a common situation in selling.

**The solution seeker**

The solution-seeking customer knows that they have a problem and are motivated to solve it, but do not know the solution. They approach the sales person with a 'Help me' request.

In many ways this is the ideal customer as the sales person is cast as a rescuer who helps the customer solve the problem and makes a sale in the process. The trick in qualification is to quickly find out whether the products being sold actually can solve the problem.

**The clueless customer**

Finally is a customer who many sales people avoid as they often require more selling. These prospective customers do not know they have a problem or are not motivated to solve it. They thus repel initial advances by the salesperson.

The dilemma for the sales person is that there are many prospective customers in this class, which is good, but the work needed to sell to them is significant, which is bad.

This leads to two types of selling that requires quite different attitudes.
Two types of selling
The points above lead to two types of selling, rooted either in the carrot or the stick.

Problem-solving
The first type of selling seeks the easier sell. Significant prospecting is done in order to qualify out the clueless. A few early questions are used to decide this before spending more time with the customer.

The focus of this style of selling is thus on solving the agreed problem with the products the sales person has. It spends more time in creating pull for the carrot of the product.

Problem-creating
The second type of selling qualifies out far fewer and is more common when getting to prospective customers is difficult or where relatively few customers know they have a problem.

This type of selling expects to start with convincing customers that they have a problem and this is thus a 'problem-creating' sales style in that the major breakthrough happens when the customer realizes that they have a problem. Although it may use later pull, it starts more with a push as it focuses on creating the discomfort of realizing the problem.

The Ten Commandments of Customer Service

1. Know who is boss. You are in business to service customer needs, and you can only do that if you know what it is your customers want. When you truly listen to your customers, they let you know what they want and how you can provide good service. Never forget that the customer pays our salary and makes your job possible.

2. Be a good listener. Take the time to identify customer needs by asking questions and concentrating on what the customer is really saying. Listen to their words, tone of voice, body language, and most importantly, how they feel. Beware of making assumptions - thinking
you intuitively know what the customer wants. Do you know what three things are most important to your customer?

3. Effective listening and undivided attention are particularly important on the show floor where there is a great danger of preoccupation - looking around to see to whom else we could be selling to.

4. Identify and anticipate needs. Customers don't buy products or services. They buy good feelings and solutions to problems. Most customer needs are emotional rather than logical. The more you know your customers, the better you become at anticipating their needs. Communicate regularly so that you are aware of problems or upcoming needs.

5. Make customers feel important and appreciated. Treat them as individuals. Always use their name and find ways to compliment them, but be sincere. People value sincerity. It creates good feeling and trust. Think about ways to generate good feelings about doing business with you. Customers are very sensitive and know whether or not you really care about them. Thank them every time you get a chance.

6. On the show floor be sure that your body language conveys sincerity. Your words and actions should be congruent.

7. Help customers understand your systems. Your organization may have the world's best systems for getting things done, but if customers don't understand them, they can get confused, impatient and angry. Take time to explain how your systems work and how they simplify transactions. Be careful that your systems don't reduce the human element of your organization.

8. Appreciate the power of "Yes". Always look for ways to help your customers. When they have a request (as long as it is reasonable) tell them that you can do it. Figure out how afterwards. Look for ways to
make doing business with you easy. Always do what you say you are going to do.

9. Know how to apologize. When something goes wrong, apologize. It's easy and customers like it. The customer may not always be right, but the customer must always win. Deal with problems immediately and let customers know what you have done. Make it simple for customers to complain. Value their complaints. As much as we dislike it, it gives us an opportunity to improve. Even if customers are having a bad day, go out of your way to make them feel comfortable.

10. Give more than expected. Since the future of all companies lies in keeping customers happy, think of ways to elevate you above the competition. Consider the following:
   a. What can you give customers that they cannot get elsewhere?
   b. What can you do to follow-up and thank people even when they don't buy?
   c. What can you give customers that are totally unexpected?

Get regular feedback. Encourage and welcome suggestions about how you could improve. There are several ways in which you can find out what customers think and feel about your services.

- Listen carefully to what they say.
- Check back regularly to see how things are going.
- Provide a method that invites constructive criticism, comments and suggestions.

Treat employees well. Employees are your internal customers and need a regular dose of appreciation. Thank them and find ways to let them know how
important they are. Treat your employees with respect and chances are they will have a higher regard for customers. Appreciation stems from the top. Treating customers and employees well is equally important.

- **8 Rules for Good Customer Service**

Good customer service is the lifeblood of any business. You can offer promotions and slash prices to bring in as many new customers as you want, but unless you can get some of those customers to come back, your business won't be profitable for long.

Good customer service is all about bringing customers back. And about sending them away happy - happy enough to pass positive feedback about your business along to others, who may then try the product or service you offer for themselves and in their turn become repeat customers.

If you're a good salesperson, you can sell anything to anyone once. But it will be your approach to customer service that determines whether or not you’ll ever be able to sell that person anything else. The essence of good customer service is forming a relationship with customers – a relationship that that individual customer feels that he would like to pursue.

How do you go about forming such a relationship? By remembering the one true secret of good customer service and acting accordingly; "You will be judged by what you do, not what you say."

I know this verges on the kind of statement that's often seen on a sampler, but providing good customer service IS a simple thing. If you truly want to have good customer service, all you have to do is ensure that your business consistently does these things:

**1) Answer your phone.**

Get call forwarding. Or an answering service. But make sure that someone is picking up the phone when someone calls your business. (Notice I say "someone". People who call want to talk to a live person, not a fake "recorded robot".)
Phone Answering Tips to Win Business.

Phone answering skills are critical for businesses. The telephone is still most business's primary point of contact with customers. And the way you answer your company's phone will form your customer's first impression of your business. These phone answering tips will ensure that callers know they're dealing with a winning business:

1) Answer all incoming phone calls before the third ring.

2) When you answer the phone, be warm and enthusiastic. Your voice at the end of the telephone line is sometimes the only impression of your company a caller will get.

3) When answering the phone, welcome callers courteously and identify yourself and your organization. Say, for instance, "Good morning. Cypress Technologies. Susan speaking. How may I help you?" No one should ever have to ask if they've reached such and such a business.

4) Enunciate clearly, keep your voice volume moderate, and speak slowly and clearly when answering the phone, so your caller can understand you easily.

5) Control your language when answering the phone. Don't use slang or jargon. Instead of saying, "OK", or "No problem", for instance, say "Certainly", "Very well", or "All right". If you're a person who uses fillers when you speak, such as "uh huh", "um", or phrases such as "like" or "you know", train yourself carefully not to use these when you speak on the phone.

6) Train your voice and vocabulary to be positive when phone answering, even on a "down" day. For example, rather than saying, "I don't know", say, "Let me find out about that for you."

7) Take telephone messages completely and accurately. If there's something you don't understand or can't spell, such as a person's surname, ask the caller to repeat it or spell it for you. Then make sure the message gets to the intended recipient.

8) Answer all your calls within one business day. I can't emphasize this one enough. Remember the early bird? The early caller can get the contract, the
sale, the problem solved... and reinforce the favorable impression of your business that you want to circulate.

9) Always ask the caller if it's all right to put her on hold when answering the phone, and don't leave people on hold. Provide callers on hold with progress reports every 30 to 45 seconds. Offer them choices if possible, such as "That line is still busy. Will you continue to hold or should I have ________ call you back?"

10) Don't use a speaker phone unless absolutely necessary. Speaker phones give the caller the impression that you're not fully concentrating on his call, and make him think that his call isn't private. The only time to use a speaker phone is when you need more than one person to be in on the conversation at your end.

11) If you use an answering machine to answer calls when you can't, make sure that you have a professional message recorded, that does the same thing as tip # 3, and gives callers any other pertinent information before it records their messages. Update your answering machine message as needed. For instance, if your business is going to be closed for a holiday, update your recorded answering machine message to say so and to say when your business will reopen.

12) Train everyone else who answers the phone to answer the same way, including other family members if you're running a home-based business. Check on how your business's phone is being answered by calling in and seeing if the phone is being answered in a professional manner. If they don't pass the test, go over this telephone answering tips list with them.

2) Don't make promises unless you will keep them.

Not plan to keep them. Will keep them. Reliability is one of the keys to any good relationship, and good customer service is no exception. If you say, “Your new bedroom furniture will be delivered on Tuesday”, make sure it is delivered on Tuesday. Otherwise, don’t say it. The same rule applies to client appointments, deadlines, etc.. Think before you give any promise - because nothing annoys customers more than a broken one.
3) **Listen to your customers.**

Is there anything more exasperating than telling someone what you want or what your problem is and then discovering that that person hasn't been paying attention and needs to have it explained again? From a customer's point of view, I doubt it. Can the sales pitches and the product babble. Let your customer talk and show him that you are listening by making the appropriate responses, such as suggesting how to solve the problem.

4) **Deal with complaints.**

No one likes hearing complaints, and many of us have developed a reflex shrug, saying, "You can't please all the people all the time". Maybe not, but if you give the complaint your attention, you may be able to please this one person this one time - and position your business to reap the benefits of good customer service.

5) **Be helpful - even if there's no immediate profit in it.**

The other day I popped into a local watch shop because I had lost the small piece that clips the pieces of my watch band together. When I explained the problem, the proprietor said that he thought he might have one lying around. He found it, attached it to my watch band – and charged me nothing! Where do you think I'll go when I need a new watch band or even a new watch? And how many people do you think I've told this story to?

6) **Train your staff (if you have any) to be always helpful, courteous, and knowledgeable.**

Do it yourself or hire someone to train them. Talk to them about good customer service and what it is (and isn't) regularly. Most importantly, give every member of your staff enough information and power to make those small customer-pleasing decisions, so he never has to say, "I don't know, but so-and-so will be back at..."

7) **Take the extra step.**

For instance, if someone walks into your store and asks you to help them find something, don't just say, "It's in Aisle 3". Lead the customer to the item. Better yet, wait and see if he has questions about it, or further needs.
Whatever the extra step may be, if you want to provide good customer service, take it. They may not say so to you, but people notice when people make an extra effort and will tell other people.

8) Throw in something extra.

Whether it’s a coupon for a future discount, additional information on how to use the product, or a genuine smile, people love to get more than they thought they were getting. And don’t think that a gesture has to be large to be effective. The local art framer that we use attaches a package of picture hangers to every picture he frames. A small thing, but so appreciated.

If you apply these eight simple rules consistently, your business will become known for its good customer service. And the best part? The irony of good customer service is that over time it will bring in more new customers than promotions and price slashing ever did!

• Excellent Customer Care – What is it?

Ref to Book Customer Care by Frances and Roland Bee – Chapter 2

• Exercises

• Does your company have a vision or mission statement and a supporting set of values?

YES/NO/I DO NOT KNOW

If yes what are they/ What are the parts that relate to customer care?

• How did you find out about the mission/value statements?

• Do you feel that the organisation is committed to customer care? Explain reasons for you answer.
1. During the past year there will have been many occasions when you will have been a customer for either products or services. Think of:

Two examples of what you regard as excellent customer care

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

Two examples of what you regard as poor customer care

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

Complete the tables below:

- For each example identify the key factor that contributed to the experiences
- Describe your feelings and reactions at the time
- Describe your feelings and reactions now.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example 1 - Excellent Customer Care</th>
<th>Example 2 - Excellent Customer Care</th>
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<tr>
<td>Describe briefly the circumstances</td>
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<td>List the factor that contributed to this being an excellent customer care experience.</td>
<td>List the factor that contributed to this being an excellent customer care experience.</td>
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List your customers – it is helpful to try to list them in terms of frequency of contact (in order of the number of times you deal with the customer) and indicate whether they are external (E) or internal (I) customers.

Describe briefly the nature of the product/service you are providing

Indicate the quality of service you offer at present, using a scale from 1 to 6. 1 very poor while 6 excellent quality. Feel free to add other comments.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who are my customers?</th>
<th>E/I</th>
<th>What is the service/product?</th>
<th>What is the quality service?</th>
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• Dealing with customers

Most people working in travel and tourism have to deal with customers on a regular basis. Customers need to be treated in different ways depending on the situation.

• face to face (either on a one to one basis or dealing with a group)
• on the telephone (making and receiving calls)
• in writing (receiving and replying to letters and other written communication)

At the heart of any business lies the fundamental requirement to be able to communicate. A manager has to communicate effectively with all the people in his team or within his control as well as managers of other departments or teams. Similarly, subordinates who find it difficult to communicate will always be at a disadvantage within their working environment. It is difficult to quantify the time taken within an organisation that is taken up by communicating with other people whether they be customers or senior personnel but for many businesses it is the biggest proportion of their work. Therefore learning to communicate effectively has become a vital requirement of a successful business. This requirement applies particularly to the service industries, travel agents being just one example where the contact with the customer is the most important element of the service.

The Communication Process

Communicating is a two way process which requires the basic elements of speaking, listening, reading and writing. One could say that communication takes place when messages of various kinds are sent and received, so the communication process involves senders and receivers of messages. There are several mediums that can be used to send messages to the receiver - verbal, letter, fax, telephone, electronic mail etc. Although a message may be transmitted, there is no guarantee that the receiver will get the message. The receiver also needs skills such as being able to listen and concentrate. In any
working environment there can be other barriers to effective communication including noise. Other impediments to the smooth flow of communication include:

* language problems such as accent if one of the parties come from a different part of the country or abroad.

* Prejudice - the sender may have already got pre set views and is not prepared to listen.

* Cultural differences - The receiver may receive the message correctly worded but due to cultural differences take the message to have a different meaning.

* Complicated - If the message is too long or technical, it may not be properly understood.

* Concentration. If the receiver has his/her mind on other matters, the message may not be properly understood.

Every message should have a purpose. A travel brochure communicates a message to the potential consumer that it is the holiday that he or she should take, it's purpose is to persuade as well as inform. A poster advertising a concert is there to persuade people to attend. Even what is commonly known as 'chit chat' has a purpose of developing social relationship. The model below classifies some purposes of communication.

**Customer Behaviour**

Whatever the quality of customer service, there will always be some customers who are impossible to appease. These are the people who will find fault when none is there and who will by nature be as awkward as one can be. Good customer service training includes dealing with such people and possible advice can include:

* keep calm and don't take it personally

* just listen and don't get involved in an argument
Types of Communication Systems used by Travel and Tourist Organisations

The type of communication system used will depend on the volume, type and nature of information that needs to be transmitted. It will also depend on whether the communicating needs to be internal or external.

A Guide to Methods of Communication

One way communication is used when there is no immediate response to the message sent whereas a two way communication requires an interaction between receiver and sender. Many large organisations will communicate with their staff by means of a regular newsletter although some staff will respond and write to the editor, others will regard it as a one way communication and not respond. Such means of communication may help to motivate employees and improve teamwork and make staff feel part of an organisation. Hotels regularly make announcement of a general nature, maybe informing members of the special cuisine available that evening. Other one way communication systems include signs, notices, press announcements. It is basically to inform the public at large or a segment of the public where individual communication would be too costly and time consuming. An example of a one way communication is shown below although a response will be obtained from some individuals.

Two way communication generally takes place between an organisation and its customers. In a Booking agency, the initial meeting will generally be two way but subsequently it may be one way such as confirmation and tickets with no response required unless an error has occurred within the process.

Internal communication will coordinate the activities within departments or teams and may flow –

* downwards - from senior to junior levels

* upwards - in the opposite direction
It is important to realise that dealing with customers is not always about selling them something. There are many different situations where customer service is provided including –

- providing information (e.g. about products/services, directions etc.)
- giving advice (e.g. about safety, equipment, service etc)
- taking and relaying messages (e.g. in person or on the telephone)
- keeping records (e.g. of financial transactions and customer details)
- providing assistance (e.g. help with access to buildings)
- dealing with problems (e.g. stolen personal belongings, injuries etc)
- handling complaints (e.g. timetable delays, cancelled services etc)
- Everybody working in travel and tourism will, at some time, have contact with customers. This may be face to face, over the telephone or in writing. Staff will need to know how to communicate with customers and use different skills in different situations. When communicating with customers you will need to use appropriate:

I. language
II. pitch and tone of voice

III. pauses and silences

IV. body language

It is also important to be able to -

- work accurately
- listen and respond to customers
- ask appropriate question (using open and closed questions)

• Effective method of communication

Many times, when people think of the word communication, they think of an exchange of information and ideas through words. However, verbal communication is just one small part of communication. There are many different methods of communications, and determining which is right for you and your organization is an important decision.

What are the different methods of communication?

The following are some different methods of communication that are commonly used within the workplace:

• Verbal

Verbal communication is simply speaking. This can be done one-on-one,
in a group setting, over the phone, etc. Verbal communication is a personal means of communication and should be utilized more than just emails or phone calls when possible. Being able to see the person you are communicating with face to face can help you gauge their response by reading their body language and actively participating in dialogue.

When you use verbal communication, be aware of your tone of voice, speed, and inflection. Avoid sarcasm or angry tones, as they can put the people you are speaking with on the defensive. When speaking to a group or your team, make sure you speak loudly and clearly so everyone can understand you. Arrange for a microphone if you are addressing a group in a large room.

Verbal communication is best when you need to discuss something in detail, or when complimenting or reprimanding someone.

- Written
  You can't avoid written communication in the workplace; it's everywhere. Emails, memos, reports, and other written documents are all part of every day business life.

Written communication is the most appropriate when detailed instructions are required, when something needs to be documented, or when the person is too far away to easily speak with over the phone or in person.

Email is a lifesaver for many people, especially in the business world. If you rely on emails and memos to conduct your business, it's very important to portray a professional image. Don't use abbreviations unless they pertain to your field, and always use **spell check** and read over your email before you
send it to make sure it's clear and concise. Emails should be brief and to the point.

- Non-verbal

Non-verbal communication plays a large role in the way you communicate with others. Unless you're using sign language, however, you probably don't want to rely on it as your sole means of communication.

You do, however, need to be aware of it. Your gestures, eye contact and movement, and the way you stand and sit all convey a message to the person you are communicating with. Use gestures appropriately, or leave your hands at your sides. Don't fidget, which is distracting, and avoid crossing your arms, which sends off the appearance of being angry or closed off. Always look the person you are speaking to in the eye, and don't roll your eyes or stare while they talk.

- Which method is right for me?

There is not one "right" way to communicate, but you should be aware of what is appropriate and when. Your chosen method of communication is dependant on the situation. Put yourself in your employees' shoes. If you needed to have a certain message conveyed to you, think first how you would like to receive it. Use your good judgment of the situation and be considerate of your employees, and you will be an effective communicator.

- Body Language – Non-Verbal Communication
Good communication is the foundation of successful relationships, both personally and professionally. But we communicate with much more than words. In fact, research shows that the majority of our communication is nonverbal. Nonverbal communication, or *body language*, includes our facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, posture, and even the tone of our voice.

The ability to understand and use nonverbal communication is a powerful tool that will help you connect with others, express what you really mean, navigate challenging situations, and build better relationships at home and work.

**The power of nonverbal communication and body language**

Nonverbal communication, or body language, is a vital form of communication. When we interact with others, we continuously give and receive countless wordless signals. All of our nonverbal behaviors—the gestures we make, the way we sit, how fast or how loud we talk, how close we stand, how much eye contact we make—send strong messages. The way you listen, look, move, and react tell the other person whether or not you care and how well you’re listening. The nonverbal signals you send either produce a sense of interest, trust, and desire for connection—or they generate disinterest, distrust, and confusion.

**Nonverbal communication cues can play five roles:**

- **Repetition**: they can repeat the message the person is making verbally
- **Contradiction**: they can contradict a message the individual is trying to convey
- **Substitution**: they can substitute for a verbal message. For example, a person’s eyes can often convey a far more vivid message than words and often do
- **Complementing**: they may add to or complement a verbal message. A boss who pats a person on the back in addition to giving praise can increase the impact of the message
- **Accenting**: they may accent or underline a verbal message. Pounding the table, for example, can underline a message.

**Nonverbal communication and body language in relationships**
It takes more than words to create fulfilling, strong relationships. Nonverbal communication has a huge impact on the quality of our relationships. Nonverbal communication skills improve relationships by helping you:

- Accurately read other people, including the emotions they’re feeling and the unspoken messages they’re sending.
- Create trust and transparency in relationships by sending nonverbal signals that match up with your words.
- Respond with nonverbal cues that show others that you understand, notice, and care.

Unfortunately, many people send confusing or negative nonverbal signals without even knowing it. When this happens, both connection and trust are lost in our relationships.

**Types of nonverbal communication and body language**

There are many different types of nonverbal communication. Together, the following nonverbal signals and cues communicate your interest and investment in others.

**Facial expressions**

The human face is extremely expressive, able to express countless emotions without saying a word. And unlike some forms of nonverbal communication, facial expressions are universal. The facial expressions for happiness, sadness, anger, surprise, fear, and disgust are the same across cultures.

**Body movements and posture**

Consider how your perceptions of people are affected by the way they sit, walk, stand up, or hold their head. The way you move and carry yourself communicates a wealth of information to the world. This type of nonverbal communication includes your posture, bearing, stance, and subtle movements.

**Gestures**
Gestures are woven into the fabric of our daily lives. We wave, point, beckon, and use our hands when we’re arguing or speaking animatedly—expressing ourselves with gestures often without thinking. However, the meaning of gestures can be very different across cultures and regions, so it’s important to be careful to avoid misinterpretation.

**Eye contact**
Since the visual sense is dominant for most people, eye contact is an especially important type of nonverbal communication. The way you look at someone can communicate many things, including interest, affection, hostility, or attraction. Eye contact is also important in maintaining the flow of conversation and for gauging the other person’s response.

**Touch**
We communicate a great deal through touch. Think about the messages given by the following: a firm handshake, a timid tap on the shoulder, a warm bear hug, a reassuring pat on the back, a patronizing pat on the head, or a controlling grip on your arm.

**Space**
Have you ever felt uncomfortable during a conversation because the other person was standing too close and invading your space? We all have a need for physical space, although that need differs depending on the culture, the situation, and the closeness of the relationship. You can use physical space to communicate many different nonverbal messages, including signals of intimacy, aggression, dominance, or affection.

**Voice**
We communicate with our voices, even when we are not using words. Nonverbal speech sounds such as tone, pitch, volume, inflection, rhythm, and rate are important communication elements. When we speak, other people “read” our voices in addition to listening to our words. These nonverbal speech sounds provide subtle but powerful clues into our true feelings and what we really mean. Think about how tone of voice, for example, can indicate sarcasm, anger, affection, or confidence.
It’s not what you say, it’s how you say it

- **Intensity.** A reflection of the amount of energy you project is considered your intensity. Again, this has as much to do with what feels good to the other person as what you personally prefer.
- **Timing and pace.** Your ability to be a good listener and communicate interest and involvement is impacted by timing and pace.
- **Sounds that convey understanding.** Sounds such as “ahhh, ummm, ohhh,” uttered with congruent eye and facial gestures, communicate understanding and emotional connection. More than words, these sounds are the language of interest, understanding and compassion.

Using body language and nonverbal communication successfully

Nonverbal communication is a rapidly flowing back-and-forth process. Successful nonverbal communication depends on emotional self-awareness and an understanding of the cues you’re sending, along with the ability to accurately pick up on the cues others are sending you. This requires your full concentration and attention. If you are planning what you’re going to say next, daydreaming, or thinking about something else, you are almost certain to miss nonverbal cues and other subtleties in the conversation. You need to stay focused on the moment-to-moment experience in order to fully understand what’s going on.

Tips for successful nonverbal communication:

- **Take a time out if you’re feeling overwhelmed by stress.** Stress compromises your ability to communicate. When you’re stressed out, you’re more likely to misread other people, send off confusing or off-putting nonverbal signals, and lapse into unhealthy knee-jerk patterns of behavior. Take a moment to calm down before you jump back into the conversation. Once you’ve regained your emotional equilibrium, you’ll be better equipped to deal with the situation in a positive way.
- **Pay attention to inconsistencies.** Nonverbal communication should reinforce what is being said. If you get the feeling that someone isn’t being honest or that something is “off,” you may be picking up on a mismatch between verbal and nonverbal cues. Is the person is saying one thing, and their body language something else? For example, are they telling you “yes” while shaking their head no?
- **Look at nonverbal communication signals as a group.** Don’t read too much into a single gesture or nonverbal cue. Consider all of the
nonverbal signals you are sending and receiving, from eye contact to tone of voice and body language. Are your nonverbal cues consistent—or inconsistent—with what you are trying to communicate?

**Improving your nonverbal communication skills**

Before you can improve your nonverbal communication skills, you need to figure out what you’re doing right and where there is room for improvement. The most effective method is to observe yourself in action:

- **Video camera** – Videotape a conversation between you and a partner. Set the camera to record both of you at the same time, so you can observe the nonverbal back-and-forth. When you watch the recording, focus on any discrepancies between your verbal and nonverbal communication.

- **Digital camera** – Ask someone to take a series of photos of you while you’re talking to someone else. As you look through the photos, focus on you and the other person’s body language, facial expressions, and gestures.

- **Audio recorder** – Record a conversation between you and a friend or family member. As you listen to the recording afterwards, concentrate on the way things are said, rather than the words. Pay attention to tone, timing, pace, and other sounds.

As you watch or listen to the recordings, ask yourself the following questions:

**Evaluating your nonverbal communication skills**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Eye contact</strong></th>
<th>Is this source of connection missing, too intense, or just right in yourself or in the person you are looking at?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facial expression</strong></td>
<td>What is your face showing? Is it masklike and unexpressive, or emotionally present and filled with interest? What do you see as you look into the faces of others?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tone of voice</strong></td>
<td>Does your voice project warmth, confidence, and delight, or is it strained and blocked? What do you hear as you listen to other people?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evaluating your nonverbal communication skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Posture and gesture</th>
<th>Does your body look still and immobile, or relaxed? Sensing the degree of tension in your shoulders and jaw answers this question. What do you observe about the degree of tension or relaxation in the body of the person you are speaking to?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Touch</td>
<td>Remember, what feels good is relative. How do you like to be touched? Who do you like to have touching you? Is the difference between what you like and what the other person likes obvious to you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensity</td>
<td>Do you or the person you are communicating with seem flat, cool, and disinterested, or over-the-top and melodramatic? Again, this has as much to do with what feels good to the other person as it does with what you personally prefer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timing and pace</td>
<td>What happens when you or someone you care about makes an important statement? Does a response—not necessarily verbal—come too quickly or too slowly? Is there an easy flow of information back and forth?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sounds</td>
<td>Do you use sounds to indicate that you are attending to the other person? Do you pick up on sounds from others that indicate their caring or concern for you?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Negative Body Language

Our body language exhibits far more information about how we feel than it is possible to articulate verbally. All of the physical gestures we make are subconsciously interpreted by others. This can work for or against us depending on the kind of body language we use. Some gestures project a very positive message, while others do nothing but set a negative tone.
Most people are totally oblivious to their own body language, so the discipline of controlling these gestures can be quite challenging. Most of them are reflexive in nature, automatically matching up to what our minds are thinking at any given moment. Nevertheless, with the right information and a little practice, we can train ourselves to overcome most of our negative body language habits.

Practice avoiding these 25 negative gestures:

_i speak two languages, Body and English._

- _Mae West_

1. **Holding Objects in Front of Your Body** – a coffee cup, notebook, hand bag, etc. Holding objects in front of your body indicates shyness and resistance, such that you’re hiding behind the objects in an effort to separate yourself from others. Instead of carrying objects in front of you, carry them at your side whenever possible.

2. **Checking the Time or Inspecting Your Fingernails** – a strong sign of boredom. Never glance at the time when you’re speaking with someone. Likewise, completely avoid the act of inspecting your fingernails.

3. **Picking Lint Off of Your Clothes** – If you pick lint off of your clothes during a conversation, especially in conjunction with looking downwards, most people will assume that you disapprove of their ideas and/or feel uneasy about giving them an honest opinion. Leave the lint alone!

4. **Stroking Your Chin While Looking at Someone** – “I’m judging you!” People frequently stroke their chin during the decision-making process. If you look at someone while you’re stroking your chin, they may assume that you’re making a judgmental decision about them.

5. **Narrowing Your Eyes** – If you want to give someone the impression that you don’t like them (or their ideas), narrow your eyes while looking at them. It immediately places a scowling expression on your face. A slight narrowing of the eyes is an instinctual, universal expression of anger across various species in the animal kingdom (think about the angry expressions of tigers, dogs, etc.). Some people make the mistake of narrowing their eyes during a conversation as a reflex of thinking. Don’t send people the wrong message… don’t narrow your eyes.
6. **Standing Too Close** – This just makes people feel uncomfortable. Most people consider the 4 square feet of space immediately surrounding their body to be personal space. Cross this invisible boundary with good friends and intimate mates only.

7. **Looking Down While in the Presence of Others** – usually indicates disinterest. Sometimes it’s even interpreted as a casual sign of arrogance. Always look straight ahead and make eye contact when you see someone you know.

8. **Touching Your Face During a Conversation** – Face touching, especially on the nose, is commonly interpreted as an indication of deception. Also, covering up the mouth is a common gesture people make when they’re lying. Always keep your hands away from your face when you’re speaking.

9. **Faking a Smile** – another sign of deception commonly seen on the face of a fraud. A genuine smile wrinkles the corners of the eyes and changes the expression of the entire face. Fake smiles only involve the mouth and lips. It’s easy to distinguish between the two. Don’t force yourself to smile... unless it’s for the camera.

10. **Leaning Away From Someone You Like** – a sign of being bored and disinterested. Some people may also interpret it to mean: “I don’t like you.” People typically lean towards people they like and away from people they dislike. This is especially true when they are sitting around a table. If you lean away from someone you like, you’re sending them the wrong message.

11. **Resting Hands Behind the Head or on the Hips** – usually interpreted as a sign of superiority or bigheadedness. Only use these gestures when you’re in the presence of close friends.

12. **Not Directly Facing the Person You’re Speaking To** – This indicates a certain level of discomfort or a lack of interest. When we’re happily engaged in a conversation we face the person we’re speaking to with our feet and torso facing directly forward. When we’re unsure of the other person, or not completely committed to the conversation, we tend to angle our feet and torso to the side. Face directly forward during a conversation to give off the impression that you’re truly interested in what the other person is saying.

13. **Crossing Your Arms** – a sign of defensive resistance. Some people may also interpret it as a sign of egotism. Always try to keep your arms open and at your sides.
14. **Displaying a Sluggish Posture** – When you’re in an environment bustling with people your posture becomes an immediate telltale sign of your confidence and composure. Your stance literally makes a stand for you, delivering a clear message about how you should be treated. It can make a huge difference in the way strangers respond to you. Place your feet a comfortable distance apart, keep your shoulders pulled back, head up and greet people with direct eye contact and a firm handshake.

15. **Scratching at the Backside of Your Head and Neck** – a typical sign of doubt and uncertainty. It can also be interpreted as an indication of lying. Try to keep your hands away from your head when you’re communicating with others.

16. **Messing With the Collar of Your Shirt** – It screams: “I feel horribly uncomfortable and/or nervous!” Once again, keep track of your hands. Don’t fidget.

17. **Increasing Your Rate of Blinking** – a clear sign of anxiety. Some people start blinking their eyes really fast (in conjunction with an increased heart rate) when they get nervous. Since most people try to make eye contact, it becomes immediately obvious to others. Be cognizant of your blinking habits when you’re nervous, especially if someone is looking at you from a close proximity.

18. **Slouching Your Shoulders** – indicates low self-esteem. People associate perked-up shoulders with strong self-confidence. Always pull your shoulders back. Not only will you look more confident, you’ll feel more confident as well.

19. **Standing with Your Hands Crossed Over Your Genitals** – This casual posture almost guarantees that you’ll lose a little respect before you even have the chance to speak a single word. People feeling nervous or unsure of themselves will unconsciously take a guarded stance. Quite frequently they adopt a posture that guards one of their most vulnerable areas, their genitals. This stance pushes your shoulders forward and makes your entire body look smaller and weaker. Again, try to keep your hands at your sides and your shoulders back.

20. **Propping Up Your Head with Your Hands** – “I’m getting bored!” Never prop up your head with your elbows and hands during a conversation. Place your hands on the table in front of you and keep them at rest.

21. **Wiping Sweaty Hands onto Your Clothes** – a sign of frantic nervousness. If your hands are sweating, just let them sweat. Take a few deep breaths and try to relax.
22. **Sitting on the Edge of Your Chair** – a clear indication of being mentally and physically uncomfortable. It’s an apprehensive stance that will make others around you feel uncomfortable as well. Keep your rear end firmly planted on the surface of the seat. When you lean forward, use your back without moving your bottom.

23. **Foot and Finger Tapping** – usually indicates stress, impatience or boredom. Monitor your habits and practice keeping your limbs at rest.

24. **Using Your Hands to Fidget with Small Objects** – a pen, paper ball, etc. This is another sign of anxiety. It can also be interpreted as a lack of preparedness. It’s always best to keep your hands comfortably at rest when you’re in the presence of others.

25. **Repeatedly Shifting Body Weight from Foot to Foot** – This is another gesture that usually indicates mental and physical discomfort. People may also see this and assume that you’re ready to abandon the conversation, especially if you’re not directly facing them. Don’t shift your feet around more than once every 2 to 3 minutes.

- **Positive Body Language**

It’s no secret that the secret to success is acting like you are successful already. Having good body language is like two voices proclaiming your praises instead of one. In addition, people are always more likely to remember what they see, and a few seconds of body movement can be worth an entire interview of words. But how does one go about getting better body language? Read the following tips to get a better idea of how to sell yourself using your posture and expression:

- **Stand Straight**

Slouching gives the impression that you have something to hide. For this reason, many evil cartoon characters are given hunches and furtive, huddling walks. Keep your head up and smile as you walk. Relax, and let your arms hang at your sides. This walk will give someone the impression that you have nothing to hide, and that you are used to being listened to.
- **Show Animation**

Use your hands while you speak. Making hand motions increases the chances that people will pay attention to you. Also, being animated helps someone get excited about a project or story that you are describing to them. Excitement spreads, if there is someone to spread it.

- **Pay Attention**

One of the key aspects of good body language is paying attention to someone, and also looking like you are paying attention. Nodding the head occasionally and making positive remarks will let someone know that you are interested in what they are saying. Take notes, if that is appropriate.

- **Speak Carefully and Slowly**

When someone is nervous or unsure of themselves, they often tend to speak at a rapid pace. Speaking slowly and calmly will give someone a sense of your calm. Speaking at a moderate pace will make you look, feel and act more confident.

- **Make Eye Contact**

Looking someone in the eye is an easy way to let them know that you are confident. Because this look is traditionally challenging, it sends the message that you are not afraid to stand up for your goals. Try not to meet the eye for too long. Maintain contact for as long as you feel is necessary, and then look somewhere else.

- **Keep your Body Relaxed**

Tension spreads through people. When someone is nervous and tense, other people have that same sense of urgency. Take deep breaths and let yourself relax before an important meeting or date. Let arms hang loose and keep shoulders and head in a relaxed and straight position.

- **Break the Invisible Wall**

People often keep a sphere of personal space around themselves. Stepping into this space for a minute will help gain confidence. Touching a hand,
shoulder or shaking hands with a firm grasp are all signs of confidence and strength.

- **Use Decisive Movements**

The more you appear to be in charge, the more people will approve of you. Keep your movement brisk and to the point, and you will appear to get many things done at once.

- **Effective Communication with Customers**

  - Don’t sound anxious
  - Don’t get impatient
  - Be enthusiastic and encouraging
  - Be sincere and genuine and do sound caring
  - Be confident in your delivery
  - Try to avoid using the word ‘but’ as it may disqualify all other words used previously in a sentence
  - Use positive words, such as ‘we can, we will’.
  - Avoid using ‘red flag’ words. These are words or phrases that cause a negative reaction with customers. Ex: it’s not my job, I don’t know
  - Use words/phrases such as ‘normally we, I will find out’
  - Use the word ‘we’ and not ‘you’

Written communication is just as important as verbal or non-verbal communication. You can’t take back what you say, but you also can’t take back what you write.

A written document can make you famous — so you need to make sure it’s for the right reason.

Enron knew all about the power of the written word when they bought all those shredders.
They never underestimated the *importance of written communication* when they ordered their staff to work overtime testing those new shredders with their sensitive documents!

**Written communication can change the course of history.**

If you don’t believe that words are very powerful, think of the importance of documents such as the Bible, the Declaration of Independence or the Magna Carta. Written documents have literally shaped history.

Just imagine how much we have learned throughout history by reading the journals, letters and books written by previous generations. You can also learn about the importance of written communication right at home.

**Written communication can preserve our memories of the special people in our life.**

How many of us have spent hours reading all the carefully handwritten notes or love letters we have received over the years. Reminiscing about the wonderful romantic adventures we shared with a smile on our face...

Then again, may you decided to burn them all after a nasty breakup or divorce. Hopefully, you were able to enjoy them temporarily before the relationship went sour!

A parent may also *find comfort in reading the memoirs of their parents or grandparents* or reading stories written by their own children.

What parent doesn’t want to read their sweet daughter’s school project discussing how you refused to buy her a puppy and consequently ruined her entire life?

Oh the sweet memories of the written word...
• **Written communication can prevent misunderstandings.**

Think back to all the times you had a conversation with someone and misunderstood what they were saying. This scenario has probably happened more than once or twice in your life...

Well, you need to remember the importance of written communication to help clarify your message. You can explain concepts or ideas in greater detail and give the recipient a visual representation of your intended message.

Written documents also give the reader time to process the information at his or her convenience. Just make sure not to overdo it and write a 20 page thesis when a few lines will suffice!

This is one of the reasons that corporate companies usually keep copies of their business correspondences and sales letters, so that *when a deal falls through* they have something to go back to. That is why it is always important to proofread documents thoroughly.

• **Written communication can help you remember important details.**

How many times have you been told to arrive at a certain time or place and subsequently forgotten the exact details?

Admit it – this has probably happened to *every single person* reading this at some point in their life! Writing something down helps us to remember the information much more effectively.

Take down notes or write out practice material when you are studying for your next exam. You will be able to retain the material more easily.

Also remember to write down your grocery list the next time your wife asks you to pick up a few items. Otherwise, we all know what will happen when you show up with your case of beer, bags of potato chips and pizza claiming you forgot what she told you!

*I personally carry a pen and paper with me at all times* as I never know when I am going to have my next great idea. Similarly, you might be standing in a long line up or waiting in traffic when your next wave of inspiration hits you.
What if you come up with another great billion dollar idea like YouTube and you don’t have anything with you to write it down? You’ll have to stick with your regular 9 to 5 day job all for a lack of writing material...

- **Written communication can educate others and allow you to share your knowledge.**

Written documents can educate other people by allowing them to share your wisdom and experience. You can learn about any subject imaginable by reading books, letters or essays or educate others by writing them.

Nowadays, the importance of written communication has become even more evident with the increased popularity of the internet. Online communication is a great way to educate others who live anywhere in the world.

You can write online articles, participate in online forums, write daily or weekly blogs or create websites filled with educational material.

Have you have ever wanted to learn how the pubs make green beer for St. Patrick’s Day?

Do you have a burning desire to know how they really do get the Cadbury filling into those delicious chocolate bars?

If so, you can find information online that will educate you. Just type some keywords into one of the many available search engines and voilà! You’ll receive your answer within minutes or even seconds.

Well, maybe no one has discovered the Cadbury secret quite yet. But I’m sure some intelligent individual in the world will very soon...

The point is we can all learn from each other, and reading or writing is one of the best ways to do so.
• Written communication is a great way to deal with negative feelings.

Have you ever felt depressed, angry or upset over an incident or person and felt better after writing about it?

This isn’t a coincidence as writing has proven to be a very cathartic experience. The next time you need to express your feelings, purchase a journal or diary and write to your heart’s content.

You may be very surprised at how much better you feel afterwards. You don’t need to worry about proper grammar or spelling since you will be the only one reading the document. Well, as long as you buy a diary with a very secure look on it...

You can release negative feelings in a constructive way by writing about them. This is a much more constructive method than driving over to your ex-boyfriend’s apartment and slashing his tires or emailing that incriminating photo of your friend and his boss to all of your colleagues.

Keeping your negative feelings bottled up inside can be very dangerous emotionally and physically so learn to let them out one word at a time!

• The Importance of Telephone Communication

The use of the telephone has come a long way, and companies have a wide and varied choice as to how they use this system to communicate with their customers. In this modern day where offices are akin to technological jungles, the need for verbal skills must be fulfilled and the telephone should be seen as a personal contact instrument.

Your employees need to be efficient and highly skilled verbal communicators, and it is useful for them to be aware of the following tips:
1. Making an outgoing call

Before making an outgoing call make sure you always have:

- Clarified in your mind the reason or objectives for the call.
- The correct documents to hand.
- A message pad and pen/pencil near the telephone.
- The phone number/extension.
- The name of the person you are calling/a second contact, i.e. Secretary’s name.
- A note of the points you wish to raise.

Your first sentence is vital and can affect the entire call so decide what your first words will be - write them down if necessary.

Remember that the way in which you express yourself is as important as what you say.

As the call progresses make notes - it is often very difficult to remember afterwards exactly what has been said. Tick off your own main points as they are covered.

Afterwards, evaluate the call. Check to see if all the aims and objectives were met. What sort of image of the Company did you create? Was there anything that you feel you could improve upon in future calls?

2. Overcoming Reduced Feedback

Perhaps the most significant difference about being on the telephone is that you are cut off from your normal sources of feedback. In a face-to-face situation, you can rely on a number of visual cues to gauge the other person’s reaction to your message, but these aren’t available to you over the phone.

When you are doing business over the telephone, all you have to go on are those cues provided by the other person’s voice; for example:

- tone of voice
- speech rate
- the actual words
3. Points to remember when receiving a call

Excellent telephone communication can make the difference between winning or losing a contract. One lost contract will loose the vital word of mouth recommendations and that could lead to the loss a potential ten other clients.

Here are a few points to bear in mind when your telephone next rings:

- How long was it before the call was answered?
  
  Never leave a phone ringing for more than four rings

- How was the call answered?
  
  Make clear who you are and who the company is. Create a welcoming atmosphere straight off

- Were there any distractions?
  
  If someone is on the phone never interrupt. Leave a small message or wait. If you are the one receiving the call, avoid doing other tasks at the same time. Concentrate on the caller!!

- If the call was transferred, did you send it to the right person?
  Know your office departments and the people within them. Have a list on hand with departments, names, extension numbers and specific job titles. Never pass a client from one person to another

- Was the caller put on hold? If so, for how long?
  
  Never leave a caller on hold for long periods of time. If you are going to take time to help a caller as for their telephone number and call them back when you are able to help.
More information could be found in Chapter 3 – Communicating with Your Customers – Customer Care by Frances and Roland Bee

- Exercises

- Work in pairs role-playing a telephone conversation by sitting back to back
- The speaker reads the passage below aloud and once only
- The speaker cannot be interrupted or asked to repeat points
- The listener listens to the main points and puts these in logical order
- The listener cannot take notes.

Turn left at the roundabout, where the pub is – you know, the one that has the bouncers at the door. What’s it called now? Oh, that’s right Pub 5. Right miserable landlord. There was a big punch-up there last week and one of the bouncers got pushed through a window. But not many people rushed to help him.

‘So, go along the road and up the hill. If you go left there, that’s where the old pop star lives. You know, the one that used to wear all those glittering suits. What was his name? Oh, never mind.’

‘Carry straight on then, and at the top take the right fork, by the big tree – I think it’s an oak. Or is it an acorn tree? I don’t know – I hated nature walks at school. Stay on that road till you pass the big white house with the swimming pool. My aunt lives next door to that, in the little cottage. She works at the cinema, not, you know, and she reckons she might be able to get some free tickets . . .’

‘Anyway, past the house. Acacia Avenue is first on the right and Paul lives at number eight – or is it ten? No, it is ten, same as the Prime Minister’

Now . . .

1. The listener repeats to the speaker what he or she has understood to be the main points in logical order.
2. The speaker checks the listener’s accuracy
3. The listener lists all the difficulties he or she experienced in this activity.
• Effective listening

Tips on Effective Listening
"We were given two ears but only one mouth, because listening is twice as hard as talking."

Brief Theory of Communication
Expressing our wants, feelings, thoughts and opinions clearly and effectively is only half of the communication process needed for interpersonal effectiveness. The other half is listening and understanding what others communicate to us. When a person decides to communicate with another person, he/she does so to fulfill a need. The person wants something, feels discomfort, and/or has feelings or thoughts about something. In deciding to communicate, the person selects the method or code which he/she believes will effectively deliver the message to the other person. The code used to send the message can be either verbal or nonverbal. When the other person receives the coded message, they go through the process of decoding or interpreting it into understanding and meaning. Effective communication exists between two people when the receiver interprets and understands the sender’s message in the same way the sender intended it.

Sources of Difficulty by the Speaker
Voice volume too low to be heard.

Making the message too complex, either by including too many unnecessary details or too many issues.

Getting lost, forgetting your point or the purpose of the interaction.

Body language or nonverbal elements contradicting or interfering with the verbal message, such as smiling when anger or hurt is being expressed.

Paying too much attention to how the other person is taking the message, or how the person might react.

Using a very unique code or unconventional method for delivering the message.
Sources of Difficulty by the Listener
Being preoccupied and not listening.

Being so interested in what you have to say that you listen mainly to find an opening to get the floor.

Formulating and listening to your own rebuttal to what the speaker is saying.

Listening to your own personal beliefs about what is being said.

Evaluating and making judgments about the speaker or the message.

Not asking for clarification when you know that you do not understand.

• The Three Basic Listening Modes

1. Competitive or Combative Listening happens when we are more interested in promoting our own point of view than in understanding or exploring someone else’s view. We either listen for openings to take the floor, or for flaws or weak points we can attack. As we pretend to pay attention we are impatiently waiting for an opening, or internally formulating our rebuttal and planning our devastating comeback that will destroy their argument and make us the victory.

2. In Passive or Attentive Listening we are genuinely interested in hearing and understanding the other person’s point of view. We are attentive and passively listen. We assume that we heard and understand correctly, but stay passive and do not verify it.

3. Active or Reflective Listening is the single most useful and important listening skill. In active listening we are also genuinely interested in understanding what the other person is thinking, feeling, wanting or what the message means, and we are active in checking out our understanding before we respond with our own new message. We restate or paraphrase our understanding of their message and reflect it back to the sender for verification. This verification or feedback process is what distinguishes active listening and makes it effective.
Levels of Communication

Listening effectively is difficult because people vary in their communication skills and in how clearly they express themselves, and often have different needs, wants and purposes for interacting. The different types of interaction or levels of communication also adds to the difficulty. The four different types or levels are.

1. Clichés.
2. Facts.
3. Thoughts and beliefs.
4. Feelings and emotions.

As a listener we attend to the level that we think is most important. Failing to recognize the level most relevant and important to the speaker can lead to a kind of crossed wires where the two people are not on the same wavelength. The purpose of the contact and the nature of our relationship with the person will usually determine what level or levels are appropriate and important for the particular interaction. Note the different requirements in the following situations:

You’re lost, and you ask a stranger for directions.

Your child comes to you crying.

You are in trouble and someone offers to help.

Your spouse is being affectionate and playful.

Opposing council is cross-examining you in court.

If we don’t address the appropriate elements we will not be very effective, and can actually make the situation worse. For example: If your wife is telling you about her hurt feelings and you focus on the facts of the situation and don’t acknowledge her feelings, she will likely become even more upset.

There is a real distinction between merely hearing the words and really listening for the message. When we listen effectively we understand what the person is thinking and/or feeling from the other person’s own perspective. It is as if we were standing in the other person’s shoes, seeing through his/her eyes and listening through the person's ears. Our own viewpoint may be different and we may not necessarily agree with the person, but as we listen, we understand from the other's perspective. To listen effectively, we must be
actively involved in the communication process, and not just listening passively.

We all act and respond on the basis of our understanding, and too often there is a misunderstanding that neither of us is aware of. With active listening, if a misunderstanding has occurred, it will be known immediately, and the communication can be clarified before any further misunderstanding occurs.

Several other possible benefits occur with active listening:

Sometimes a person just needs to be heard and acknowledged before the person is willing to consider an alternative or soften his/her position.

It is often easier for a person to listen to and consider the other’s position when that person knows the other is listening and considering his/her position.

It helps people to spot the flaws in their reasoning when they hear it played back without criticism.

It also helps identify areas of agreement so the areas of disagreement are put in perspective and are diminished rather than magnified.

Reflecting back what we hear each other say helps give each a chance to become aware of the different levels that are going on below the surface. This helps to bring things into the open where they can be more readily resolved.

If we accurately understand the other person’s view, we can be more effective in helping the person see the flaws in his/her position.

If we listen so we can accurately understand the other’s view, we can also be more effective in discovering the flaws in our own position.

• Listening Tips
Usually it is important to paraphrase and use your own words in verbalizing your understanding of the message. Parroting back the words verbatim is annoying and does not ensure accurate understanding of the message.

Depending on the purpose of the interaction and your understanding of what is relevant, you could reflect back the other persons:

1. **Account of the facts.**
2. **Thoughts and beliefs.**
3. **Feelings and emotions.**
4. **Wants, needs or motivation.**
5. **Hopes and expectations.**

Don’t respond to just the meaning of the words, look for the feelings or intent beyond the words. The dictionary or surface meaning of the words or code used by the sender is not the message.

Inhibit your impulse to immediately answer questions. The code may be in the form of a question. Sometimes people ask questions when they really want to express themselves and are not open to hearing an answer.

Know when to quit using active listening. Once you accurately understand the sender’s message, it may be appropriate to respond with your own message. Don’t use active listening to hide and avoid revealing your own position.

If you are confused and know you do not understand, either tell the person you don’t understand and ask him/her to say it another way, or use your best guess. If you are incorrect, the person will realize it and will likely attempt to correct your misunderstanding.

Active listening is a very effective first response when the other person is angry, hurt or expressing difficult feelings toward you, especially in relationships that are important to you.

Use eye contact and *listening* body language. Avoid looking at your watch or at other people or activities around the room. Face and lean toward the speaker and nod your head, as it is appropriate. Be careful about crossing your arms.
and appearing closed or critical.

Be empathic and nonjudgmental. You can be accepting and respectful of the person and their feelings and beliefs without invalidating or giving up your own position, or without agreeing with the accuracy and validity of their view.

- Ten steps for Effective Listening
WHAT ARE YOUR CUSTOMERS EXPECTATIONS?

"6 Tips To Building Customer Loyalty"

By Tracey Lawrence

As your customer base grows it's imperative that you maintain the same level of service that you provided when you first earned your customer's business. You have to anticipate their needs before they announce them, and put those actions in place. Meeting these expectations will cement your relationships, increase their satisfaction, and retain their business. Here are six customer expectations that are the cornerstone of outstanding service and increased sales:

1. Customers Expect Solid Information.

Providing your customers with tangible information lets them know that you value them and respect their ability to make sound decisions. When they feel that they're respected, they're more open and willing to do more business with your company. One way to ensure they receive beneficial information is to ask probing questions during your conversations to uncover needs they may not have voiced. For instance, ask about the objectives they've set for their company, and the problems associated with attaining them.

2. Customers Expect Options.

Customers don't want to be told that there's only one way or one solution. They'll respond positively when they're given options. Options are essential because they create dialogue and discussion. Open dialogue can lead to more sales.
3. **Customers Expect Single Source Service.**

Customers don’t want to be transferred to every unit of your business to have their problems solved. They want to be able to do business with you with the slightest amount of discomfort. You must be easy to do business with. This means taking ownership of your customers requests, problem, etc., and ensuring that their needs are met to their satisfaction.

4. **Customers Expect Superior Communication.**

They may not be the best communicators, but they expect communication excellence from you. So, if you tell them that you will call them back at a certain time, make sure that you do. Your responsiveness will create a bond of trust, and a communication comfort level.

5. **Customers Expect Consulting.**

As the expert on your business’ products and services, you are your customer only contact to determining how to use your product and/or service to get the best RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI). You must take the time to ask pertinent questions aimed at finding how your customer is using your product and/or service. This will demonstrate your ability and knowledge as well as your intent to spend the necessary time with them to meet their specific needs.

6. **Customers Expect A Seamless Relationship.**

The best businesses are those that believe in going the extra mile for their customers. They know that they have to reinforce why it’s in the customers best interest to continue doing business with them. Building a relationship with your customers built on mutual trust and respect takes time and effort, but remember retention is the best method of building profit. Stay in touch with your customers by keeping them informed of new events,
product updates, passing on information that may be of interest, calling to say hello, etc.

Generally speaking, Customers want to be treated fairly and courteously. Here are some other essential qualities that they look for in a service experience.

- **Courtesyp**

This sounds basic, but many customers have been lost due to rude service people. As an individual involved in customer contact, it's important for you to leave your problems and your bad moods at the door, bringing them to work only creates more problems. When a customer walks into your business environment or calls you on the telephone, he wants to feel welcome; this involves greeting him enthusiastically, making him feel important and being helpful

- **Prompt attention**

Nobody likes to wait or feel as though they are being ignored. If a customer is left "cooling his heels" while the customer service employee chats with co-workers or attends to other non-customer related details, the customer feels unimportant. If you are busy when a customer walks up simply look up, smile and say, "I will be with you in just a minute"

- **Reliability**

Customers want their shopping experience to be as hassle-free as possible. They want to know that when they walk into your company, they will find what they want or get an answer to their question. They also expect that, if you make a promise, you will keep it. And, if you are unable to, you will let them know ahead of time so they won't be inconvenienced.

- **Personal attention**

No one likes to feel like a number. And, with today's technology, that can sometimes be a problem. We all like personal attention, it makes us feel important and that makes us feel good. As a customer service employee, you can show a customer personal attention by addressing him by his name and by discussing with him at length what he needs.
• **Responsiveness**

Customers like to feel as though their business is appreciated. And that's exactly what a customer service employee tells customers when he responds to their needs enthusiastically. If a customer is ignored, he feels as though his business is not appreciated, and he will take it elsewhere.

• **Knowledgeable Staff**

Customer's expects the service employees to be knowledgeable about the products they are selling. In today's high technology and deregulated industries, customers must rely on service employees to help them make their choices.

• **Empathy**

Customers want to be understood. This is practically true when there's a problem. If the customer service employee acts as though he could care less, the customer will leave feeling that the company doesn't care about its customers. When a customer explains a problem he is having, respond by saying, "I understand why you might feel that way..."

**Be Calculating**

If you're a service provider, customer expectations can pose a major challenge. That's because expectations are wondrous creatures: They grow, they shrink, they change shape, they change direction. They shift constantly, and they shift easily. And how satisfied (or dissatisfied) your customers are is determined by these expectations and your performance in meeting them.

If expressed as a calculation, customer satisfaction might look something like this:

\[
\text{Customer Satisfaction} = \frac{\text{Your Performance}}{\text{Customer Expectations}}
\]

Of course, customer satisfaction is influenced by a complex interplay of factors; it's hardly as simple as plugging numbers into a formula and calculating the result. Nevertheless, this calculation serves as a reminder that your customers' level of satisfaction can be affected by changes in either their expectations or your performance. That means you have to pay attention to both.
And that's where things can get tricky, because how you perceive your performance may differ from how your customers perceive it. In fact, discrepancies between your perceptions and theirs would not be at all unusual; I routinely encounter such discrepancies when I interview a company's service staff as well as its customers. So, even if you're working yourself to the proverbial bone, if customers view you as unresponsive, then you are unresponsive — in their eyes.

The reverse is also true: If you really are unresponsive, but customers perceive that you deliver superior service, then you do (in their eyes), and you gain little by trying to convince them otherwise. I'm not advocating bumbleheaded service, of course, but merely emphasizing that customer satisfaction is driven by their perceptions, not yours. Their perceptions are their reality, and any overlap between their view of the world and your own may be simply one of those delightful coincidences.

**Watch for changes**

If your customers' satisfaction level is changing, find out if something has happened, either at their end or yours, to affect their expectations or perceptions. Whether that changes in satisfaction level is skyward or in the direction of the bottomless pit, analyze what's happening. If satisfaction is rising, find out what you're doing right, so you can keep doing it; if satisfaction is slithering downward, figure out how to reverse the situation before it falls off the chart.

Make sure you don't get so wrapped up in delivering services that you lose sight of your customers' expectations and how well they think you're meeting them. Be conscientious in observing what's going on in your customers' environment and your own that could affect their satisfaction level.

**What Do Customers Want, Anyway?**

Have you ever had customers who want the universe, gift-wrapped and delivered yesterday? Was that a resounding YES I heard?

Fortunately, most customers don't demand the impossible. In fact, what they want is exceedingly reasonable. And what's that? Well, switch for a moment from your service provider hat to your customer hat. When you're a customer,
what matters to you? What matters when you're at the car dealer, the doctor's office, or the airport? What matters to you when you're on the phone ordering flowers, or awaiting technical support, or ordering a million-calorie pizza and a zero-calorie beverage?

Over the years, I've asked many hundreds of participants in my customer service seminars what matters to them when they're the customer. Their responses are overwhelmingly similar, demonstrating that most of us want the same things when we are customers: We want to be treated with respect. We want to be listened to. We don't want to be bounced around or ignored or treated like dummies.

**Product and process**

Now, switch back to your service provider hat and think about it: Both the product and the process are important to customers. The product refers to the solution, system, response, resolution, deliverable or result. Whatever form the product takes, customers want it to work properly, to meet their needs, and to have that elusive quality of, well, quality. This is the *technical element* of service, and you're not likely to have happy customers without it.

But excelling in the technical element alone may not keep customers coming back unless you also attend to the process. In fact, for many customers, the process is more important than the product. The process concerns how customers feel they've been treated. This is the *human element* of service. And touchy-feely though it may appear, the human element is exceedingly important in achieving a high level of customer satisfaction.

The following list presents the some of the responses I've received from participants in my seminars. Notice that the majority of the items pertain to the human element.
When I'm a Customer, I Want . . .

1. To be taken seriously
2. Competent, efficient service
3. Anticipation of my needs
4. Explanations in my terms
5. Basic courtesies
6. To be informed of the options
7. Not to be passed around
8. To be listened to (and heard)
9. Dedicated attention
10. Knowledgeable help
11. Friendliness
12. To be kept informed
13. Follow-through
14. Honesty
15. Feedback
16. Professional service
17. Empathy
18. Respect

Sloppy service with a smile

Does that mean that it's OK to give customers incorrect information as long as you're empathetic, friendly, and respectful in doing so? Obviously not. But providing correct information may not be nearly as effective as correct information accompanied by empathy, friendliness, and respect. Focusing on the process is a way to invest in a relationship. In the customer interviews I conduct in my consulting work, I continually find that customers who appreciate the way they've been treated uncomplainingly accept occasional delays and glitches. In other words, an emphasis on the human element can give you some leeway in delivering the technical element.
It may be that customers who demand the universe gift-wrapped and delivered yesterday just need a strong dose of respect, attentiveness, and courtesy. Before you start searching for universe-size wrapping paper, give it a try.

**When?**
People always seem to want to know "when." When will my new furniture be delivered? When will my printer be fixed? When will my call for software support be answered? If you provide customer support, service standards provide a formal way to communicate this information.

Service standards are expectations-managing statements used to minimize uncertainty about when some specified event will occur. The "when" may be a specific date or time, or more often, a time frame within which the event will take place. Consider these sample service standards:

- For acknowledging customers' voicemail messages: "We will acknowledge messages to the support line within one hour of the call."

- For responding to service requests: "We will provide written feedback on the action we will take within three days of receipt of a service request."

- For describing variations in service level: "We will aim to resolve problems with products on the A list within eight hours and products on the B list within one week of receiving a request for assistance.

Your own time frames may differ. The issue is not the specific time frames, but whether you have established service standards and communicated them. When customers complain about poor service, it's often because of an absence of service standards that let them know what they can reasonably expect.
A wait state
The preceding three standards, like most service standards, are intended to handle routine or recurring situations. But what about situations in which you don't know what the time frame will be? For example, think about the last time (1) a malfunction occurred that had business impact, (2) you didn't know what caused the problem, yet (3) customers immediately began demanding to know when service would be restored. In such a situation, what's a non-psychic to do?

An airline demonstrated an excellent service standard for this type of situation on a flight I once took, or rather waited to take, since departure time had passed and we were not yet upward bound. Onto the intercom came the Person in Charge of Giving Passengers Bad News. He told us that they were experiencing a mechanical problem and didn't know how long it would take to resolve. But he said he'd give us the status every 15 minutes, and would do so even if he had nothing new to tell us.

Too often in situations like this one, customers are told nothing at all. Yet in times of intense uncertainty, people have a stronger-than-usual need for information. Happily, the flight attendants knew that giving us some information was better than letting us sit there, fuming, grousing, complaining, and (not incidentally) driving them crazy. Since they couldn't tell us when the delay would end, they did the next best thing: they told us when they'd tell us whatever they did know.

A service standard for waiting at the gate

Note the form this service standard took. Airline personnel told us:

- We will keep you informed of the status of the problem.
- We have a timetable for keeping you informed.
- We'll follow that timetable even if we have nothing new to tell you.

In service standard format, this standard might go like this:
During delays, outages and malfunctioning whose duration is unknown, we will give customers a status update on a specified schedule. We will inform
customers about this schedule, and we will adhere to it even if there is no change in status.

Unlike service standards for routine service, it may be wise to keep this kind of standard in reserve till it's needed, so as not to worry customers about events that may never happen. Still, it pays to be ready. That's one of the nice things about service standards: the situation they're intended to address may be plagued by uncertainty, but there's no uncertainty about what to tell customers.

**Better late than ... ?**

Is a status announcement every 15 minutes better than departing on time? Not at all. And would it have been acceptable if every 15 minutes for the next six hours, we were told, "Sit tight. We still don't have a clue." Of course not. Clearly, this type of service standard has a practical limit. But when uncertainty-creating situations occur, most customers would rather have a little information than none at all.

What is the status of your service standards? If they're incomplete (or nonexistent), *when* are you going to take action?

**The Best Mislaid Plans**

If you want people to meet your expectations, you have to communicate what you expect. Otherwise, you could fall victim to a miscommunication. As author of the book, *Managing Expectations*, I’m my own best case study.

Here’s an example.

A faraway friend named Jack and I wanted to discuss some ideas while at a conference we were attending. (Jack’s not his real name; I want to spare him the ignominy of being the butt of my miscommunication.)
As the conference got underway, he said, "Let’s do a meal together." Good idea.

A while later, as I passed Jack during a break, I said, "Dinner?" He said fine.

It was customary at this conference for dinner-mates to meet in a first floor lounge and leave between 5:30 and 6:00 in order to be back in time for the evening events. At 5:30, I went to the lounge to wait for Jack. I wasn’t in any rush. I had a book to read, and I knew he’d show up by 6:00. Except that he didn’t.

Shortly after 6:00, a colleague invited me to join a group just leaving for dinner. I declined, explaining that I had dinner plans. At 6:15, I checked to see if Jack had left a phone message in my room. He hadn’t. At 6:30, a friend returned from an off-site session. I asked if Jack had been at that session. "Yes," he told me, "and they all went to dinner afterwards."

What? Had I been stood up? Forgotten? Abandoned? While I dined on munchies that I’d stashed in my room, I created a mental list of acceptable explanations for Jack’s unacceptable behaviour.

I missed one explanation, though. When I saw Jack again two mornings later, he said, "I don’t know if we’re going to make it to dinner together. Something else has come up everyday so far." And he recited the meetings and appointments that had occupied his dinner hours each day. That’s when I realized . . .

When I had said "Dinner?" I understood us to be making plans for dinner that evening. That was obvious — but I now saw that it was obvious only to me. He, meanwhile, thought I was suggesting the specific meal we’d have together, not the day. From his perspective, we hadn’t yet selected the day. We each had an understanding, but our understandings didn’t match.
Here’s the lesson: When something goes away between two parties, it’s a common reaction for each to hold the other responsible. Each sees the other as having done something, or having failed to do something, that led to the unsatisfactory result. It’s also not unusual, as I proved in this situation, for one party to find fault with the other, when the other doesn’t even realize there’s a problem.

More often than not, the problem is due to a minor miscommunication, something that’s easy to avoid. In particular, when you reach an apparent understanding with someone, do what I should have done and confirm that both of you have the same understanding. Clarifying what you have agreed to helps to ensure you’re in sync. If I had simply asked for confirmation of our dinner plans, I would have learned that we had no such plans!

How can you apply these ideas in your work? Never assume that you and the other party have the same understanding of what you’ve discussed. Ask questions. Check and double-check. State your understanding and ask if you’ve got it right. Conclude with a restatement of what you’ve each agreed to.

Jack and I finally got a brief chance to talk the final morning of the conference. I haven’t told him about this miscommunication, so he doesn’t know that I have forgiven him for (my misguided belief that he was) standing me up.
• Having Self Confidence at Work

No matter what your job, whether you're a teacher or an accountant, self-confidence is imperative to success.

**How can you tell if you're experiencing a lack of self-confidence at work?**

While clear feelings of self-doubt may occur, it's not always so obvious. You may find yourself passing on assignments that you're afraid are beyond your reach, while creating unrelated excuses for why you can't complete them. You may procrastinate until you run out of time to complete a project. You may sabotage yourself by not putting the necessary effort into a task because you figure that you're not going to succeed anyway.

This isn't to say that every work problem is caused by or a sign of low self-confidence, but it can often be the underlying cause of larger problems.

If you lack self-confidence, then those feelings of low self-esteem can be apparent to others. If you don't believe in yourself, why should your boss or co-workers believe in you? If you're not sure about how your self-confidence is viewed by your co-workers, have a talk with a trusted friend. He or she may be able to help you put your image in perspective.

When others at work notice your lack of self-confidence, it can create a vicious cycle. You don't feel confident, and your boss senses these feelings or sees the results of procrastination and other symptoms. He or she begins to give you less important assignments and puts less trust in you. You notice this lack of trust and it sends your own self-confidence plummeting even more.

However, it doesn't have to end this way. Once you've admitted that you're having some self-confidence problems at work, where do you go from there?

One of the best ways to feel confident on the job is to be prepared - it's not just a motto for Boy Scouts. Whether it's a daily interoffice memo or the big year-end presentation, being well prepared will result in more confidence. This extra confidence comes both from putting yourself in a more stress-free position and from pride in a job well done.

**Procrastination** is a tricky beast. Procrastination is the antithesis of being prepared. There is no way that you can be completely and absolutely prepared if you put off doing something until the last minute. If you feel rushed and
frazzled when you're completing a project, your confidence in that project, and by extension your own abilities, will be low.

At the same time, while procrastination can cause a lack of confidence, it can often be a symptom of low self-confidence. If you don't feel secure in your ability to accomplish a task, you're going to keep putting it off. If you don't feel capable of completing a report, you'll constantly tell yourself that you'll write it as soon as you finish checking your e-mail, then as soon as you return a few phone calls, then as soon as you eat lunch, and the excuses go on and on.

Oddly enough, one of the best ways to build your self-confidence is to admit that you're having trouble with something. If you don't admit your problems, you'll never learn and grow. As you gain new skills, you also gain confidence.

If your confidence is low, you can build it up by starting small. Focus on one thing that you think you can do particularly well. This isn't the time to single-handedly take on the firm's biggest client. Instead, if you're artistic, create a great new business card, or if you're skilled with words, write a thought-provoking article for the company newsletter. It doesn't matter exactly what task you choose. The important thing is to build your confidence by doing things you're good at. From there, you can slowly build your way up to difficult tasks that you previously dreaded.

Self-confidence is such an integral part of your success at work that it pays to be aware of your confidence levels and to take steps to improve them whenever necessary.

- Building self-confidence

Self-confidence is definitely a trait worth cultivating at work. Self-confidence helps you to project an aura of confidence that makes others trust in your abilities to complete a job successfully.

However, many people are not fully secure about their abilities around their job. Here's a secret - the self-confident people often aren't either! The difference is that they pretend that they can do something, even if they are not sure how when they start out, knowing that 9 times out of 10 they will figure things out along the way.
If you're looking for increased self-confidence in performing at work, dealing with co-workers, and handling tough situations, you're not alone. So what can you do to feel more self-assured about your job?

1. It's OK To Make Mistakes

Firstly, remember that you are not your job. So if you make a mistake at work, this does not mean that you are stupid, worthless, or that you're in the wrong job. It's easy to take mistakes personally, seeing them as a reflection of your true person rather than for what it is: - just a mistake.

Even the super self-confident people and 'stars' make mistakes from time to time. They know that this is inevitable and just deal with it and move on. An often unrecognised benefit of mistakes is that they give us great learning opportunities.

If you make a mistake, the best way to deal with it is to own up to it right away and present a solution. This shows that you are trustworthy, and by presenting ways to fix the problem, you demonstrate your creativity and your boss can have confidence in your ability to deal with the issue.

Acting honestly and straightforwardly is always the best policy. You will be pleasantly surprised how willing most people are to help. Engaging with other people and accepting their help will build better working relationships and you'll feel better about yourself. Its also going to create the best outcome for the company, which again will help you feel better.

2. Getting On With Co-workers

Another common self-confidence issue is feeling insecure when it comes to co-workers. Many people feel that they do not fit in, are unsure how to handle conflict, or have an overbearing co-worker or boss that they don't know how to communicate with. Any of these feelings can wear at your self-esteem.

If your self-confidence is low, you may feel you have nothing to offer your work colleagues, socially or on projects. This might mean that in order to avoid conflict, you allow others to step on you.

If socialization is difficult for you, it does require you to step out of your comfort zone a bit. This does not mean you need to jump straight into being a
social star, rather just make a point of opening conversations with one or two co-workers at social gatherings. Chances are you'll find you have something in common to talk about. Asking questions about the other person is always a great way to go. Ask "open" questions that invite the other person to talk. These questions often begin with a phrase like "What do you think about . . . " or "How did you . . ." instead of questions that invite simple yes or no answers.

3. Conflict Resolution

It is not pleasant having to deal with conflict and with difficult people, but communication skills certainly make the task easier. There are proven communication techniques you can learn to help with this. If you are in a supervisory or managerial position, it is worthwhile attending a course specifically on conflict resolution and dealing with difficult people.

In general, remember that an overbearing person probably has a lot of insecurities as well, and hides behind their overbearing exterior. In the midst of conflict, do your best to avoid being pulled into argumentative situations. Don't reward the other person's behavior by getting upset or immediately backing down. If necessary, say you'll continue the conversation when everyone has had a chance to cool down. Dealing with negative co-workers is never fun. Try and remember that your self worth is not dependent on your co-worker's approval, even if that person is your boss.

4. Upgrade Your Skills

Learning is a lifelong process and my advice is if in doubt, the solution is probably to learn more. If you're feeling unsure about your skills, it's probably time to go back to class.

Many companies offer continuing education options and will gladly pay for schooling, or offer professional development in house, because they know it makes you more valuable and productive for them.

Whatever your employer offers in the way of education and training, take advantage of it. If your company does not offer training, educate yourself by reading good books on the subject. Ask your colleagues for suggestions, or if you're a member of any type of professional group, seek advice there as well. Many of your peers will have good suggestions on what's worth looking into.

5. Take On New Challenges
Finally, regularly give yourself new challenges. One great way to build your self confidence at work is to take on a special project. Especially if you are able to choose something you feel passionate about or something in your specialty area, you will be able to demonstrate to yourself and your colleagues that you are able to produce results.

- **Making a Great First Impression!**

It takes just a quick glance, maybe three seconds, for someone to evaluate you when you meet for the first time. In this short time, the other person forms an opinion about you based on your appearance, your body language, your demeanour, your mannerisms, and how you are dressed.

With every new encounter, you are evaluated and yet another person’s impression of you is formed. These first impression can be nearly impossible to reverse or undo, making these first encounters extremely important, for they set the tone for the all the relationships that follows.

So, whether they are in your career or social life, it’s important to know how to create a good first impression. This article provides some useful tips to help you do this.

**Be on Time**

Someone you are meeting for the first time is not interested in your “good excuse” for running late. Plan to arrive a few minutes early. And allow flexibility for possible delays in traffic or taking a wrong turn. Arriving early is much better that arriving late, hands down, and is the first step in creating a great first impression.

**Be Yourself, Be at Ease**

If you are feeling uncomfortable and on edge, this can make the other person ill at ease and that’s a sure way to create the wrong impression. If you are calm and confident, so the other person will feel more at ease, and so have a solid foundation for making that first impression a good one. See our section on relaxation techniques to find out how to calm that adrenaline!

**Present Yourself Appropriately**
Of course physical appearance matters. The person you are meeting for the first time does not know you and your appearance is usually the first clue he or she has to go on.

But it certainly does not mean you need to look like a model to create a strong and positive first impression. (Unless you are interviewing with your local model agency, of course!)

No. The key to a good impression is to present yourself appropriately.

They say a picture is worth a thousand words, and so the “picture” you first present says much about you to the person you are meeting. Is your appearance saying the right things to help create the right first impression?

Start with the way you dress. What is the appropriate dress for the meeting or occasion? In a business setting, what is the appropriate business attire? Suit, blazer, casual? And ask yourself what the person you'll be meeting is likely to wear - if your contact is in advertising or the music industry, a pinstripe business suit may not strike the right note!

For business and social meetings, appropriate dress also varies between countries and cultures, so it’s something that you should pay particular attention to when in an unfamiliar setting or country. Make sure you know the traditions and norms.

And what about your personal grooming? Clean and tidy appearance is appropriate for most business and social occasions. A good haircut or shave. Clean and tidy clothes. Neat and tidy make up. Make sure your grooming is appropriate and helps make you feel “the part”.

Appropriate dressing and grooming help make a good first impression and also help you feel “the part”, and so feel more calm and confident. Add all of this up and you are well on your way to creating a good first impression.

A Word about Individuality

The good news is you can usually create a good impression without total conformity or losing your individuality. Yes, to make a good first impression you do need to “fit in” to some degree. But it all goes back to being appropriate for the situation. If in a business setting, wear appropriate business attire. If at a formal evening social event, wear appropriate evening attire. And express your individuality appropriately within that context.
A Winning Smile!
“Smile and the world smiles too.”* So there’s nothing like a smile to create a good first impression. A warm and confident smile will put both you and the other person at ease. So smiling is a winner when it comes to great first impressions. But don't go overboard with this - people who take this too far can seem insincere and smarmy, or can be seen to be "lightweights".

Be Open and Confident

When it comes to making the first impression, body language as well as appearance speaks much louder than words.

Use your body language to project appropriate confidence and self-assurance. Stand tall, smile (of course), make eye contact, greet with a firm handshake. All of this will help you project confidence and encourage both you and the other person to feel better at ease.

Almost everyone gets a little nervous when meeting someone for the first time, which can lead to nervous habits or sweaty palms. By being aware of your nervous habits, you can try to keep them in check. And controlling a nervous jitter or a nervous laugh will give you confidence and help the other person feel at ease.

Small Talk Goes a Long Way...

Conversations are based on verbal give and take. It may help you to prepare questions you have for the person you are meeting for the first time beforehand. Or, take a few minutes to learn something about the person you meet for the first time before you get together. For instance, does he play golf? Does she work with a local charitable foundation?

Is there anything that you know of that you have in common with the person you are meeting? If so, this can be a great way to open the conversation and to keep it flowing.

Be Positive

Your attitude shows through in everything you do. Project a positive attitude, even in the face of criticism or in the case of nervousness. Strive to learn from your meeting and to contribute appropriately, maintaining an upbeat manner and a smile.
**Be Courteous And Attentive**

It goes without saying that good manners and polite, attentive and courteous behaviour help make a good first impression. In fact, anything less can ruin the one chance you have at making that first impression. So be on your best behaviour!

One modern manner worth mentioning is “turn off your mobile phone”. What first impression will you create if you are already speaking to someone other than the person you are meeting for the first time? Your new acquaintance deserves 100% of your attention. Anything less and you’ll create a less than good first impression.

**Key Points**

You have just a few seconds to make a good first impression and it’s almost impossible ever to change it. So it’s worth giving each new encounter your best shot. Much of what you need to do to make a good impression is common sense. But with a little extra thought and preparation, you can hone your intuitive style and make every first impression not just good but great.

- **First impression - Preparing for the Interview**

Do your research. Learn about the company history, its employees and the specific job that you want. Review the job ad for the description, qualifications and requirements of the position.

Clarify your objectives. Before you can say that you want the job you need to be clear on your own interests and career goals. During the interview you should be prepared to explain why you want the job and why you think that you would be a good fit.

Read interviewing tips books on to find common interview questions. Plan out your answers to some standard questions.

Get a good night’s sleep the night before the interview. Be sure to eat a good meal before you head to the interview.
Dress professionally. You will want to dress appropriately for the industry. You should blend in but also be sure the outfit is your style so that you will feel comfortable.

Bring supplies. Have a pen, paper and multiple copies of your resume with you.

**During the Interview**

Arrive early. If you are unfamiliar with the location of the company you should figure out the route before heading to the interview. You may want to drive the route the day before to make sure you know exactly where you are going.

Arrive ready. Your interview starts as soon as you arrive at the company. You never know who you will meet during the time that you are at the company. Just because you aren't in an actual interview with someone doesn't mean that their impression of you might affect the hiring decision.

Actively participate in the conversation. Listen actively, make eye contact and shake hands.

Come prepared to discuss and, if necessary, defend your resume and any weaknesses in your job history.

Ask questions. Have questions prepared in advance. Ask questions about the job duties, expectations and management or communication styles.

Be yourself. Answer questions honestly, but remain positive. If you are asked about an unpleasant previous job or your weakest characteristic, answer honestly but leave your interviewer with a positive impression. Let your personality shine through and don't let your nervousness block your true self.
Thank everyone immediately. Thank your interviewers individually before leaving the interview.

**After the Interview**

Write thank you notes. As soon as you can, you should write a thank you note to each person who interviewed you.

Recap any major assets that you would like to remind them of and correct any issues that you feel might have been misunderstood. Keep the letter short and tell them why you are still interested in the job.

Explain why you are still interested in the job in a clear, convincing manner.

Keep the letter brief and positive.

- **Customer Service – Telephone Conversations**

**Answering the phone professionally**

The rules for answering a telephone are simple but they need to be continually reviewed and practised. Following are the most basic ones, which should always be employed.

1. **Use the four answering courtesies:**
   - Greet the caller
   - State your organisation (or department)
   - Introduce yourself
   - Offer your help

   “Good afternoon, Accounts, Andrew Batt speaking. How may I help?”

2. **Show enthusiasm when you answer. Help make the caller feel welcome**
A tired voice lacking in enthusiasm is very unappealing and reflects on the professionalism of your organisation.

3. **Use friendly phrases as part of your greeting.**
   - “Thanks for calling.”
   - “May I help you?”

4. **Remember to smile as you pick up the receiver.**
   It may help if you have a mirror on your desk, this way you will be able to see how you sound on the telephone. Also, as a reminder, tape the word ‘Smile’ on your phone.

**Closing the conversation**
When you finish your telephone conversation there are some appropriate and courteous statements that should always be made. You should:

1. Thank the caller.
2. Let the caller know you appreciate his/her business.
3. Provide assurance that any promises will be fulfilled.
4. Leave the caller with a positive feeling

Some courteous closing statement examples:

"Thank you for calling. We appreciate your business "
"Thanks for your order."
"Feel free to call us anytime."
"I'm glad we were able to help."
"Goodbye and thanks for calling."
"I enjoyed talking with you."
"If you have any additional questions please call me."

**Tip: Let the caller hang up first**
This is simple courtesy, plus it gives the caller a final chance to add something.

**And always remember:**

*Smile as you dial!*
What to do when you have to put customers on hold:
1. Ask them if you can put them on hold.
2. Tell them how long they will be on hold.
3. Assure them that you will be working for them while they are on hold (tell them what you will be doing away from the phone).
4. Wait for their response.
5. When you get back to them, thank them for holding.

How to transfer customers on the telephone
1. Tell customers what you can do for them. Avoid saying, "I can’t help you", "That is not my responsibility" or "This department does not handle that". By giving the name of the correct person or department, you are helping the customer, so state your sentence positively. For example, "Mrs. Jones in our service area can help you with that."
2. Own the contact (or complaint!). Give the customer your name, department and phone number. This is especially necessary for telephone transfers. In case the customer gets cut off or transferred to the wrong area, he/she will have the necessary information to contact the appropriate person. Also, to save yourself from repeating information, ask if he/she has a pencil ready to copy down the information.
3. Inform the next employee. Fill him/her in on the details of your conversations with this customer. Also tell the next employee what the customer said as well as what his/her attitudes and feelings were.

How to make a problem call
Anytime you have to make a difficult call there are important steps to follow. Even though you may not be calling to sell a product, the basic steps of a successful telemarketing call still apply.

- Before you make your call, develop an action plan.
- Greet the customer in a friendly way
- Introduce yourself and your company
- State the purpose of the call
• Deliver your message in friendly, clear and business like way, leaving room for questions
• State customer benefits/options/alternatives, if appropriate
• Ask for agreement

Cynthia mistakenly overbooked a training course. She needed to call Mrs. Haig to explain why the course she had booked had to be changed. Cynthia developed the following action plan.

**Her objective:** arrange a new course date.

**The approach:** briefly explain the need for the change and offer two alternative dates.

**Customer benefits:** the course will be less crowded and Mrs. Haig will receive more individual training support from the course leader.

"Good morning, Mrs. Haig. This is Cynthia Rogers from TST. How are you today? The reason for my call is to discuss your course booking. The date I booked for your group is overbooked. What I can do is offer an alternative date with fewer delegates. This means you will be able to ask more questions and receive more attention from the course leader. I have the 16th or 20th available. Do you have a preference?"

In the situation above, Cynthia did a good job because she turned a potential negative situation into a positive for the customer by planning ahead.

• **How to respond to a complaining customer**

  1. Listen with understanding. Identify with the customer and "own" the complaint. This defuses anger and demonstrates your concern. Tell the customer something such as, “I am sorry you have been inconvenienced.” Tell me what happened so that I can help you." It is vital to show a sincere interest and willingness to help. The customer's first impression of you is all important in gaining co-operation.

  2. No matter what caused the problem, do not blame others or make excuses. Instead, take the responsibility and initiative to do whatever you can to solve the problem as quickly as possible.

  3. Paraphrase and record what the customer tells you. Whenever you hear an important point, say, "Let me make sure I understand: you were promised delivery on the 15th and you did not receive the product until the first of the following month. Is that correct?"
4. Find out what the customer wants. Does he or she want a refund, credit, discount or replacement? The customer is complaining because he or she has a problem and wants it solved as quickly as possible. Find out what his or her

- Exercises

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caller:</th>
<th>Called:</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Caller:</strong> Your friend just borrowed your car to go to a business trip as his car had broken down. You are calling him on his mobile phone to ask if he can bring back the car to you an hour earlier than planned so that you can pick up your children from school.</td>
<td><strong>Called:</strong> You have borrowed your friend’s car because your own car had broken down and you needed a car to go to a business trip. Your business trip was cancelled since the client you wanted to see was off-sick. However, 15 minutes ago, on your way back you just drove into a traffic cone, lost control and ran the car into a side wall. You are still in shock, but you are not hurt. The car is damaged. At this point your mobile phone rings.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Caller:</th>
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<td><strong>Caller:</strong> You need to reserve a table for 8 people at a local restaurant. Call the restaurant to book a table for 7:00pm this coming Friday.</td>
<td><strong>Called:</strong> You work at a restaurant. Recently, you are having many customers after a positive review of your restaurant was published in a major national newspaper. Your restaurant is completely booked for Friday and Saturday, this week and next week. Your phone rings.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Caller:</th>
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<td><strong>Caller:</strong> You live in an old rented flat. There are usually many issues with your flat. You just discovered that your window no longer closes completely. It is the end of October and the weather is starting</td>
<td><strong>Called:</strong> You are the owner of a nice building located in a prime location in the city. Unfortunately you have a tenant who seems to complain a lot, unlike the tenants you had before. You feel that</td>
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</table>
to get cold. Call your landlord and ask him to fix it as soon as possible.

he is taking advantage of you, considering how much he pays for rent. His demands seem to be unusual. Your phone rings.

**Caller:**
You were not able to finish the report and you need to call your partner to explain that you will be late tonight.

**Called:**
Your partner seems to come home late these days and you are suspecting that he/she might be having an affair. You are thinking that perhaps you need to probe further tonight by asking calculated questions, just to make sure. The phone rings.

**Caller:**
You have not been able to prepare the marketing report for delivery to the customer which is supposed to be delivered by Friday, which is in two days time. Call your client who expects to receive the report and ask if you can deliver it by the end of next week instead.

**Called:**
You are expecting a marketing report from another company who specialised in this area. It was expensive, but you thought it was important to do it. You need this report by Friday this week. This allows you to prepare for your meeting on Monday to present it along with your department’s strategy for the next financial period to the top management. The phone rings.

**PART 1:**

- Ask two volunteers to come forward.
- Place to chair back to back and ask them to sit on it. This helps them not to see each other, simulating a phone conversation. Others can see them as they go through a role play.
- Ask them to nominate one as caller and the other as called.
- Explain that you are about to give scenario cards to them. After reading it, the caller should call the other person and based on the scenario
engage in a conversation. The person who is called should respond based on his or her scenario.

- The caller should always explain who he is and what he is calling about so the role play can be simulated correctly.
- Explain that this setup encourages an impromptu role play, which forces the participants to think on the spot. After the conversation, the group can provide feedback on best strategies to deal with the scenario. You can provide your own feedback in line with the course content.
- Next, ask the volunteers to go through the phone call one more time, but this time deliver a better performance based on what was discussed.
- Ask for two other volunteers and repeat the process by giving them a new scenario.
- Repeat this for 3 rounds.
- Once these public role plays are finished, move to Part 2.

**PART 2:**

- Divide the delegates to pairs. If you have an odd number of delegates use a group of 3.
- As before, they should sit with their backs to each other so they can use body language while communicating.
- Ask each pair to nominate a *caller* and a *called* person.
- Distribute a scenario to each group by giving the appropriate card to each person. Make sure you use a new scenario other than those that were used in Part 1. Naturally, delegates should not see each other’s scenarios before engaging in a simulated phone conversation.
- Ask pairs to simulate the phone calls. Once everyone has finished, they should discuss how well they performed within each group and think of better strategies.
- Ask them to swap roles and repeat again.
- Bring back everyone together and ask each pair to comment on their experience and what they learned in this exercise.

**Discussion**

What was the most important technique you learned in this exercise? What was the most challenging scenario and why? Is it easy to be talk diplomatically? What can you say to show your sincerity? What can you say to establish report?
• Fast Decision Making

Effective decision-making means that you can "make things happen," instead of just "letting things happen." Decision-making is required in every activity. It is involved in a variety of situations and problems, from the very simple to the very complex. Making decisions which direct and guide events and actions into a planned course, rather than letting events fall to chance, is one of the marks of a good manager.

Developing the Art of Decision-Making

Everyone, young or old, can learn to improve their decision-making skills. Making a decision is not something you do from habit — it requires conscious thought. Life consists of a series of decisions. Every decision we make is different from all others because we have had one more experience. Most decisions are made in a series — you do something and then do something else. Often, making one decision does not settle anything. Instead, it gets you into the position to make another.

Family decisions give each person an opportunity to voice opinions on matters that affect work and family living. If the older children are a part of the decision-making team, they will be more understanding of family goals and problems. Through this experience, they will learn and be able to help the family make better decisions.
Making a decision involves making a choice and selecting from among alternatives. All decisions carry with them some dissatisfactions and conflicts. The bad must be accepted along with the good. Successful decision-making means making a choice that has enough of the important satisfactions in it to outweigh the less important dissatisfactions.

**The Decision-Making Process**

The steps in making and implementing decisions as they apply to family and individual resource management decisions are:

1. **Recognize the problem.**

   The decision-making process starts by recognizing that a problem exists: something has to be changed in the situation and there are possibilities for improvement. Big problems must often be broken down into smaller, easier to deal with, components.

2. **Analyze the problem.**

   Once the problem is identified, study it carefully to find exactly what is causing it. Again, be as specific as possible.

3. **Consider your goals.**

   Consider the goal or goals you want to reach. The goals you choose are influenced by the values you have — what is important to you. Becoming more aware of your values and the priorities you place on them will help you see more clearly what is desired.

4. **Look for alternatives.**
Think and look for as many practical alternatives as possible. In most situations it is not feasible to explore all the possibilities because of time and expense. However, try to look for more possibilities than the obvious or habitual ones. If the decision is very important — in either human or financial terms — it will be worthwhile to spend more time and effort in looking for a solution or making a choice.

Analyze the resources each alternative course of action will require. How does the time, money, skill, energy, or other resource needed compare with the resources you presently have? Does one alternative require fewer of your scarce resources? You must also compare the expected benefits from your selection. It doesn't always make sense to choose the cheapest product or the lowest cost activity, if the results will also be lower in quality.

5. Select the best alternative.

After looking carefully at each alternative, select the best one. Keep in mind the values that are important to you, the goals you are working toward, and the resources you have to work with. It is possible that none of the seemingly available alternatives will be acceptable. If there is no one best alternative, or none at all which seems satisfactory, perhaps a new alternative can be created by compromise, or by combining some of the possible ideas you have. Occasionally, you must make a decision to postpone action in order to seek more information, but don't put off making any decision just because you don't have a perfect answer.

6. Put your decision into action.
Making a decision doesn't end with choosing the best alternative. You must put your decision into action. Usually people carry out their own decisions. Sometimes, however, group action by members of the family, or other groups, must be generated. If everyone involved has had a share in making the decision, they will usually be more willing to help implement it.

Many, perhaps most, decisions do not directly solve a problem. They simply put you in a position to make additional decisions, which move you closer to your goal. One central decision (such as moving to a new town) involves a large number of additional decisions, such as choosing among housing alternatives, transportation methods, religious and community affiliations.

Another decision-making pattern is the chain-linkage pattern, more commonly known as "one thing leads to another." Each decision is directly dependent on a previous choice in this model.

7. Accept the responsibility.

After you make a decision, you need to accept the responsibility and consequences for making it. You need to be willing to live with it, or else take the lead in making another decision for changing directions. Most decisions are made without having all the information you'd like and all the resources you really need. Don't be afraid to make a decision just because you may have to revise it...that's part of the process.

8. Evaluate your results.

The outcome, or result of your decisions, should be evaluated regularly to determine its effectiveness.
Use habits to reduce time in decision-making. For instance, you don't need to spend a great deal of time deciding which toothpaste to buy. Lots of purchasing decisions, and some management decisions, can be made on a routine basis until your situation changes.

**Improve Your Decision-Making**

You can improve your ability as a decision maker if you:

- Become aware of your own and your family's values, the conditions which support these values, and the choices which are available. Study situations carefully, so you can recognize more clearly the cause and effect of actions. Decisions which create conflicts are hard to carry out.
- Develop sensitivity to the individual responses of persons affected by the decision. Personalities differ, and a good manager is aware of the kind and amount of impact on individual persons as a consequence of a decision.
- Be objective in viewing the problem that demands decisions. Try to avoid making decisions when you are upset, tired, or under great stress. Be objective and specific. Focus on solving the problem, not on your emotions.

Follow these guidelines.

- If a decision is reversible, make up your mind quickly. Practice making quick decisions when the outcome involves only small changes.
- If a decision is not reversible, allow time to thoroughly consider all alternatives. "Sleep on it."

**Decisions About Resources**

Decision-making in resource management focuses on two general areas of concern — resource development and resource allocation. Where the kinds of
resources available to the individual or family are inadequate to assure goal achievement, decisions about how additional resources can be achieved are necessary. Where many goals are being pursued, and the resources for achieving them are limited in amount, quality, or kind, decisions about how to allocate or distribute the available resources among the goals are required. These decisions can be:

- **Social decisions.** Social decisions are the selection and ordering of goals by priority, decisions about which of the available resources are relevant for the given family situation, and the general roles to be played by family members. Social decisions involve conflicts among goals, values, or standards which require mediation and integration if the family is to be able to work together as a group.

- **Allocative decisions.** A search for the most productive ways to distribute relevant resources among their alternative uses involves allocative decisions. This is where the basic concepts of economics come into play in the making of decisions. When goals have been established and resources are limited, the decisions which have to do with allocating the existing resources among these goals are economic decisions.

- **Technical decisions.** This is the answering of the what, when, who, how and why questions in relation to getting a given task, or a whole cluster of tasks, done harmoniously and efficiently. Once resources have been committed to the achievement of a specific goal, deciding on the best way to use those resources is a technical decision.

- **Coordination-interaction decisions.** These are decisions such as:
  - What are the best means of communicating within the family?
  - What information is necessary for making family decisions and how will new information be obtained?
  - What are the criteria by which evaluation takes place?
• What are the responsibilities of family members in the process of making family decisions? and
• What are the ways of motivating family members to play their respective roles?

These categories of decisions show how interrelated and interdependent decisions can be made. Consider the mother who has a job outside her home. She has certain standards she wants to maintain in the smoothness of operation and appearance of the home. She also believes that her children should learn some of the basic home management skills, although they are not highly motivated in doing so at this particular time.

If this mother is to reach a satisfactory level of management, she and her family will be involved in many managerial decisions. They will need to decide such things as what makes a smooth-running household, what limitations are placed on the traditional home manager role when she works outside the home, and what adjustments must be made. They also need to decide the timing of routine household work and meal preparation, what responsibility each family member assumes, who supervises the children, and what to do in emergencies.

Each stage of the family life cycle has its own particular problems which require managerial decisions.
Decision-Making in Action

1. Identify the problem which needs to be solved.
2. Decide on the goal you want to achieve.
3. How will you determine when your task is completed to your satisfaction? In other words, what is your standard for this goal?
4. What resources will you need to reach this goal?
5. What alternatives do you have to reach your goal?
6. Which alternative offers you the best course of action? Why?
7. In what order would it be best to organize your actions?
8. Do you need to make any revisions? If so, explain.
9. Carry out your plan. Keep a record of the decisions needed to keep your plans moving toward a goal.

- Exercise

Purpose
This is a fun activity which encourages delegates to become creative with their ideas and share them with others. They will learn the value of quick thinking and quick judgement since sometimes you may need to rely on gut instincts to cut your search space and save time looking for solutions. If the delegates know each other or are from the same organisation, a common problem can be chosen as the main topic which helps them to use this exercise to brainstorming the problem.

Objective
Delegates to come up with creative ideas in a short amount of time, share them and vote for best solutions.
What You Need

- Whiteboard
- A4 or A5 sheets

Setup

- Ask the delegates to form a circle.
- Write down a question on the flipchart or whiteboard. This question could be something about how to increase productivity within the organisation or how to solve a specific problem in the business.
- Explain that delegates have 3 minutes to come up with two creative answers to the questions. Each answer should be written on a separate paper. Ask them to put their initials on each paper as well so they can be traced.
- Once the time is over, ask the delegates to pass one paper to the left and one paper to the right.
- Ask them to read the two suggested solutions they receive from others and write their vote on them. Their vote should be a number between 1 and 5, 1 being low and 5 being high.
- Ask them to pass the paper they received from right to the left and the one from left to the right.
- Read solutions and vote again.
- Continue this cycle until delegates receive their own solutions back.
- Ask them to sum up the total votes for each solution.
- Collect the three highest voted solutions and bring them to the attention of the delegates. You can stick these on the flipchart next to the question and hang the flipchart on the wall for reference.
- Follow with a discussion.

Discussion

How did you find this exercise? Was this activity effective in generating more ideas and solutions? How do you feel about sharing your ideas with others? How effective was the limited time? Was the voting effective to bring out ideas that everyone liked without anyone being able to use political dominance to dictate the solution? Do you think it is important not to have the initials on papers so the voting can be completely anonymous?
• **Handling customers Queries, Problems and Complains**

**Provide Exceptional Customer Satisfaction**

Customer service is the face of every business organization. Irrespective of the type of business you are running, you can win over your customers with exceptional customer service in place. People tend to share experiences, they have encountered with a particular business or service. To make sure that good words are spread about your business, you need to have an exceptional customer service facility.

Remarkable service is always appreciated by customers. It enables your business to pave way for new customers, and successfully retain the existing customers as well. Not to forget the competition your business will be able to surpass with exceptional customer service. Let’s examine the steps on how to provide exceptional customer service.

**Instructions**

• Always treat customers the way you would like to be treated yourself. Treat them in a way you would treat one of your close family members. If you have been doing business with this attitude, then there is no way to fail with your customer support system.

• Have extensive knowledge about the product you are selling. Customers would appreciate this fact, and will confidently make a deal on most occasions, if you were able to enforce your trust on the product. Keep oneself updated with the benefits and features of the product, so that you sound convincing while communicating with the customers.

• Be active to whatever your customers communicate, to make sure that they don’t have to repeat their statements. Active listening means half the job done. Provide them with individual attention, and make them feel that they are the most important person in your life at that point of time.
- Maintain a positive tone and attitude while communicating with your customers. Do not take anything negative personally. Customers will be happy to deal with a person with such an attitude, and you will receive an equally positive response in most occasions.

- Take ownership of the problems or questions your customers entrust on you. This will make the customers feel more comfortable. They will feel that they are talking to a reliable person, who will be able to help them with their queries. Show empathy to your customers, whenever the need arises. Do not sound robotic, know the fact that you are dealing with live persons, and respond to them in a similar fashion, trying your best to meet their expectations. Follow up with the customers upon commitment, or whenever there is a need for follow up.

- Deliver more than their expectations. This is one amongst the most important factor to be considered, if your aim is exceptional customer service. Exceeding the customer's expectations will inevitably surprise them, and result into a positive deal. You will most likely gain more customers each time you exceed the expectations of your existing customers.

- Customers are valuable for all forms of business. Without them one can't dream of a successful business. The fact that more than 50% of the businesses fail within the first year of its operation can all the more influence the need for exceptional customer service in an organization.

**Dealing with Customers Complain**

Dealing with customer service complaints is fairly common, especially for large companies that have thousands of new clients every day. Knowing how to respond to complaints will not only help you keep your existing customers, but it will also most likely create positive buzz for your company and good word-of-mouth advertising. It also makes good sense from a business standpoint, as you will avoid bigger problems.
Instructions

- Listen to what the customer has to say and ask for as many details as possible. Establish whether the problem has to do with service or problems with the product offered. Make sure you reassure the client that you will do everything in your power to solve the situation and then try to find a solution while the customer is still on the line rather than promising to call back.

- Be ready to offer a solution long before the client requests one. This will put the company in the winning position, as it will confer the image of being proactive and ready to please the customer. In most cases, offering a solution will please the customer, even if the offer is less than what was originally expected.

- Have a policy in place. Make sure you understand how far you are willing to go to resolve customer service complaints. In some cases, an apology and an offer of help will suffice, while other problems will require a refund, a replacement product or some other kind of practical help.

- Establish a special department to resolve customer complaints. Whether this is done via phone (with operators standing by), email or letters, the best way to deal with customer complaints effectively is to have experts in place to take care of the cause of the distress and to be able to deal with consumers directly.

- Always be polite. If a customer walks in to present a complaint, set time aside to listen. On the phone, make sure you connect the caller to the right department. A customer who calls with a complaint will usually be upset and impatient, so you need to set the tone of the call in order to be able to resolve the problem effectively.
Writing a Complain Letter

Do you know how to write a complaint letter? If you have ever dealt with poor customer service or you bought a faulty product that a store will not let your return, you understand how important it is to know how to write an effective complaint letter. Effective complaint letters are concise, to the point, and persuasive. Follow these steps to write an effective complaint letter that will resolve your issue or complaint.

Instructions

First, begin your grievance letter by using proper letter formatting. You can find a resource for letter formatting in the resource section below this article. You want to use appropriate formatting so that your letter appears professional and easy to read. Type your letter so that the recipient of your letter doesn't have to decipher your handwriting and make sure you use spell check. Find out who is in charge so that you can address your letter with a name. "To Whom it may concern", is not as effective as "Mr. Simmons". Take a look at samples of complaint letters by doing a search on complaint letter writing or business complaint letters. Looking at examples will help you to write an effective complaint letter.

Begin your letter with the issue you want to address. Companies are busy and they prefer that you get to the point rather than beat around the bush. State your issue just like you would use a topic sentence to begin an essay. Be clear about why you want to make a complaint and what you hope to accomplish.

Next, relay the positives. For example, if you are complaining to a restaurant corporation let them know you have been going to their restaurant for years. If you are complaining to a credit card company let them know that you have been on time on all your payments. If you are complaining about customer service let the manager know that you have been a regular customer, if that is the case. Let the company know that you are a valued customer and that they do not want to lose your business. Let them know that if your issue is not resolved you will have to take your business elsewhere (if the issue is serious enough to you).
Provide documentation relating to your complaint and mention in the body of your letter that you have provided documentation. Indicate what the recipient can do to address your complaint.

In the last paragraph write a short summary in bullet form to explain what you want to recipient of your letter to do in response to your complaint and why this is important to keep you as a valued customer. Provide your contact phone numbers and email. Request that your complaint be dealt with in a specific amount of time. If you do not hear back within a week then follow-up with a phone call or write another letter to someone higher up the chain of command.

**Writing an effective business complaint letter** does not have to be difficult. Most problems are resolved easily and pleasantly by the business you contact. When you write a factual, not furious, business complain letter you will get the best results.

Most businesses consider a complaint letter to be an important part of doing business. It gives them information that could help with future employee training or product packaging. Giving feedback is essential to business operations.

If you are dissatisfied with service you have received or the quality of a product, it is very important to have all of your facts prepared prior to writing the letter. Keep receipts and note names of people who were helpful as well as those who were not.

**Instructions**

- If you are not sure who to write to, most companies have websites on the Internet. Search the site to find a "contact us" or customer service address. Writing an email is just as effective as a hand written letter. Keep a copy of your letter for future reference.

- Often times there is not a specific person to contact, so addressing a letter "To Whom It May Concern" is fine. If your complaint is to a
restaurant or local store, inquire as to the name of the manager or owner so that you can address your letter appropriately.

- It is important that you do not start your letter out with a complaint. The person reading your letter will sympathize with you if you do not have an accusatory tone. Keep in mind, the problem you are writing about is typically not the fault of the person you are writing to.

- Start your letter with a mention of the time and date the problem occurred (or when you tried the product you are writing about). You may want to mention that you have visited the place of business before or tried the product previously with no problems. This engages the reader and makes them want to help you and resolve the issue.

- If you have specific complaints such as an employee who was disrespectful or a product that was of poor quality, state the facts as specifically as you can. Do not use profanity in your letter. You want to remain as factual as possible so the complaint can be rectified.

- If the complaint is about a product, list the place you purchased it. In addition, give any information you have from a receipt or a UPC code from the package. Save all receipts and packaging in case the company needs this.

- Complaints about service at a retail store or restaurant are best approached by giving as much detailed information as possible. If you do not know the names of the people who were involved, provide as much description as possible. Receipts, time of day, location you were sitting and all pertinent information that will help are necessary. It is not enough to say "the woman who took our order was rude". Details are important.

- Close your letter with information about yourself including your full name, address and telephone number. Providing an email address will often get you a speedier response. If you would like a refund or replacement for a faulty product, mention this in your letter.
• Ask for a response to your situation. Expect to get one within thirty days, but do not be surprised if you receive one sooner. Customer service is an important part of all businesses so the sooner they reply to you, the more likely you will be to do business with them again.

**Tips & Warnings**

• Send your letter via email directly to the company if there is an email contact address on the business website. This ensures the quickest response.
• Do not attack the person you are writing to. Be fair and accurate with your complaint.

**How to Write a Product Complain Letter**

From time to time, you will find that you are dissatisfied with a product that you have purchased. If the product is faulty, you want to let the company know about the problem. One way to express your dissatisfaction is to write a product complaint letter.

**Instructions**

• Include your name and contact information at the top of the letter. You want to include not only your address, but also your phone number and email address.

• Find out a contact name for the company. Address the letter to the specific head of the customer service department. If you do not have a name, simply address it to the customer service manager.

• Start the body of the letter by giving the specifics of your purchase. Include the date of the purchase, price and the name of the store where you bought the product.
• Continue the letter by explaining the problem with the product. Give details about how the product did not perform the way that it should have.

• Suggest a way that the company can solve the problem. Possible suggestions include requesting a refund or replacement, or asking the company to cover the cost of repair.

• Close the letter by thanking the company for their time. Also, suggest that they contact you in a timely fashion in order to avoid you seeking help from a consumer advocacy group.

Tips & Warnings

• Always remember to include any relevant enclosures with your product complaint letter. This can include a copy of the receipt or bill of sale.

• Be sure to keep a copy of any receipts and complaint letters that you send to the company.

• Do not attack the company in the letter. Let them know that you hope the problem can be solved in order for you to continue making purchases from them.

Monitor Customer Complaints

Focusing on customer dissatisfaction issues is one of the most important things businesses can do if they are to resolve customer complaints. A customer complaints program allows for the tracking, organizing, and eventual resolution of service or company issues. Monitoring a customer complaints program on a regular basis is crucial to developing successful long-term customer relationships.

Instructions

• Create an electronic spreadsheet or other document where data from customer complaints programs can be recorded. Name this computer file "Customer Complaints" or a similar title and save it to a safe place on your computer. An example of spreadsheet software that can be used is Microsoft Excel, which allows for filtering and sorting of entered data.
Keep track of important issues that relate to your customer complaints program by gathering the data from the program and entering it in your spreadsheet. Examples of issues that need to be updated and monitored on a regular basis include the causes of customer complaints, which customers file the most complaints, how often they're filed as well as how quickly and if issues are resolved.

Sort the customer complaints program data in your spreadsheet so that it can be seen in a clear and organized manner. Categorize the different complaint types to see what issues need to be addressed the most. Sort the dollar value of any monetary transactions that resulted in a customer complaint.

Develop policies that address unresolved customer complaints and decide what customer retention techniques you'll use. Offering special customer discounts, free items, or other one-time-offers to save a customer relationship are all examples of ways unresolved complaints can be handled.

Seek customer feedback from customer complaints programs from both satisfied and unsatisfied customers. This should be done by a member of management since unresolved issues will often be involved. Getting customer feedback on your program, however, is a good step to take to improve your customer complaints program.

Integrate a customer complaints software program that will allow you to track and organize as well as resolve complaints. These tools allow give company representatives the tools they need to handle complaint issues. Examples include Everest Customer Complaints Management by Lynk Software and Master Control's Customer Complaints Software.

Who is responsible for Customer Complaints?

The foremost reason for complaints by customers is that expectations of a product or service were not met. Complaints can drastically alter a customer's
perception of a company. In one way or another, each level of the organization is responsible for resolving customers' complaints.

**President/CEO**

1. The president or chief executive officer of a company is responsible for customer service complaints because the top employee sets the standard for how employees are to treat customers. The president is the role model for how the company, as a whole, treats customers, clients and fellow employees.

**Directors**

2. Directors of departments also are responsible for customer complaints because they make decisions regarding the allocation of resources such as manpower and funding. These allocations should benefit the customer as well as the company.

**Managers**

3. Managers implement employee recognition programs that reward quality front-line customer service representatives. Managers must also remove representatives who do not adhere to customer service guidelines.

**Analysts**

4. Customer service analysts analyze recurring processes that often reveal ongoing sources of customer dissatisfaction. The analysts must provide recommendations and devise projects to increase customer satisfaction.

**Representatives**

5. Representatives must provide proper customer service each day with each customer contact. They are responsible for following up when promised, treating the customer courteously and leaving the customer with a positive impression of the company.
Customer Complaint Form

1. Customer details
   Title (Mr, Mrs, etc)  Family name (surname)  Given names
   Street address  Suburb  Postcode
   Home telephone number  Business telephone number  Mobile telephone number
   Email address (if applicable)

2. Details of other person or supplier involved in this complaint
   Name
   Street address  Suburb  Postcode
   Home telephone number  Business telephone number  Mobile telephone number
   Email address (if applicable)

3. Details of goods or services supplied to the customer
   Date of purchase or service
   / / 
   Description of the goods or service including make, model, type of service, purchase method, etc.

4. Details of what the customer complaint is

Office use only
Complaint received by
Date received
Action taken or required
Date action completed  Signature
Common Customers Complains

In a Hotel

- Bed bugs
- Dirty hotel
- No booking on arrival
- Unhelpful staff
- Next to a lift shaft
- Noisy room
- Poor room service

In a Restaurant/Cafe

- Bad ingredients
- Delay in getting food
- Food poising
- Dirty cutlery/crockery
- Waiter takes long to take order
- Unhelpful staff
- Poor service
In an Office

- Not enough conference rooms
- Not enough storage/filling space in workstation
- Poor indoor air quality
- No privacy in workstation/office

General

- Faulty goods
- Incorrect stock
- Failure to return calls
- Failure to meet deadlines
- Poor attitude of staff
- Long queues and waiting

Notes to Remember

Handling Customer Complaints

Most professionals take pride in the work they do. Dealing with complaints is often challenging and upsetting. It is very natural to try to explain or justify what was done. The suggestions I have made in this list are not easy to do in the heat of a situation. So when you hear a complaint about you or your business/practice perhaps the best strategy is to count to ten and then do some of the following:
1. **Listen**

Resist the temptation to argue with the client. Instead ask questions to get to the bottom of the situation. What is the client really upset about? Show the client that you really understand the situation from the client's perspective.

2. **Don't be defensive**

This will get in the way of your listening to the client. Allow the client the time and space to be heard. If you get defensive you'll build a wall between you and the client. Try to find ways to build a bridge so that you are aligned with the client.

3. **If you agree that it was a mistake, fix it immediately or do what you can to satisfy the client and apologize**

We all make mistakes at times. Check to see if there is anything in your office procedure that can help you to avoid a similar mistake again.

4. **For a more complex issue research the problem before you make any decisions**

Find out what actually happened. Is a system in your office not working correctly? Does it need to be fixed? Has the client misunderstood something? Give yourself time to figure out a fair resolution.

5. **Look for lessons in the situation**

If the situation was caused by something you or your staff control, find a way to fix it for the future. This means assessing the systems you have in place and your methods and procedures. It also may mean retraining an employee or employees.

6. **Reeducate the client when necessary**

How did you set client's expectations? Were you clear about what he/she could expect? Help the client to understand the process now to guard against future misunderstandings.
7. Know that if one client complained there are others feeling the same way.

What do you need to do to address the problem with the others? Who else might have been affected in the same way?

8. Give the client choice of possible resolutions

How can you make this right with the client? Negotiate a way that works for both of you. Sometimes just fixing the problem is sufficient. At other times the client is looking for something else. Look for an equitable resolution.

9. Thank the client for helping you with your business

As painful as they can be complaints from clients often let you know exactly where you need to work to improve your practice/business.

10. Follow up with those who complained to be sure they are fully satisfied

If you have altered a system or changed a way of doing business and the client is affected by that change, follow up to be sure that the client noted the change.

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**Handling Customer Complaints**

**Establishing a Customer Complaint Resolution Process**

**By Tom Reeher, Office of Policy & Planning**

Management finds out about customer dissatisfaction through two mechanisms: Voice and Exit.

“Voice” represents complaints ... the voice of the customer. “Exit” occurs when the customer stops buying or using the services. All of us have exited at one time or another, for example, if you’ve changed your doctor, telephone carrier, or plumber due to poor service.
Service providers employ all sorts of strategies to avoid customer turnover. Smart organizations know that it is not enough to have the lowest price or the best technology – there always seems to be a competitor who can do it better or cheaper. There are no guarantees, but one of the best customer retention strategies is to provide superior customer service. And that means listening to your customers.

How well do you listen and respond to complaints from your customers? We all **aim** to be customer focused ... we **claim** to be customer focused ... but we need to become **MORE CUSTOMERFOCUSED**.

Although listening and responding is necessary, it’s not good enough. Too often, a response is reactionary and you can easily find yourself reacting over and over again to the same complaint (sometimes this is called “firefighting”). We need to listen and **PROACT**. That means listening to the voice of the customer and making process improvements based on that feedback so that the same complaints don’t recur.

A complaint is any measure of dissatisfaction with your product or service, even if it’s unfair, untrue, or painful to hear! Complaints may be about:

To increase the visibility of complaints, you should:

**Listen to the Customer** - Complaints don’t always identify themselves. Someone who is requesting the same information for the 5th time isn’t asking for information anymore ... it’s a complaint!

**Solicit Complaints** - Everyone in the organization should collect and report complaints. All this input should funnel to one place where your objective is to build a valid database of complaints. Most of us are accustomed to environments in which receiving customer complaints is considered negative – an interruption to doing business. But in the Customer Complaint Resolution Process,

- Response Time
- Documentation
- Billing
• Follow Up

• Service Content, Delivery or Quality

• Personnel

• Requests

• Communication

the more complaints you log, the better! This is one of the biggest cultural issues for organizations to overcome.

Record Complaints - Create complaint categories that make sense for your organization. For example, data that tells you that you had 123 complaints about adoptions last month tells you nothing. The 123 complaints need to be broken down into categories so that you can get to a root cause analysis. If you only respond to complaints without correcting the root cause, you’re spinning your wheels and you’ll find yourself fighting fires instead of putting them out for good. You can identify root cause if you collect, categorize, and analyze complaints. As a result, process improvements will be complaint-driven and thus should be high-priority.

This is a customer complaint resolution process that anyone can implement:

Focus on the Customer

If you can’t immediately solve the problem, respond to the customer and identify an “owner” who will be responsible for final resolution. Complete the communications loop with customer. If you’ve referred the complaint to others, make sure there’s closure. If you’ve left the customer hanging without a response, you’ve become part of the problem.

Focus on the Complaint

Collect all complaints from all external customers and categorize them in a way that allows you to analyze data to see trends, patterns, concentrations, tendencies, etc.
Focus on Process Improvement

Use the database of complaints to define processes that are important from the customer’s perspective and to improve the most critical ones. Based on analysis of the database, make appropriate investments to prevent issues that result in customer complaints. Look for permanent improvements to response time, cycle time, internal processes related to the complaints, and complaint frequency.

If you can think of complaints as useful data for making process improvements in your organization, you will go a long way towards making changes that will differentiate you and make your work life easier, more fun, and more responsive to customer needs.

- **Remember always to give the best customer care practice these 5 points**

  **Tangibles:** - These are the physical aspects of the service and include staff and the way in which they are presented; the appearance of the companies premises; the quality of the products and certification to provide clients to prove their capability.

  **Reliability:** - Whatever service has been promised to the customer through the company’s mission statement should be delivered consistently and precisely. Recruitment of trustworthy staff that are discrete is important. A well staffed reception desk for large companies or a helpdesk for out of hour's information service. A website for information and feedback would also be a good idea.

  **Responsiveness:** - The promptness of service and the willingness of the staff to be of assistance are paramount to good customer service. The confidence a customer has in the knowledge, courtesy and professionalism of the service will build their trust and encourage loyalty and the retention of their business. Training of staff should be ongoing and further encouragement through pay initiatives, hiring the right staff and man management will encourage the staff to work well, gaining experience and continuously striving to provide a higher level of satisfaction.

  **Assurance:** - Is the knowledge, courtesy and professionalism that build a customer's trust. Ensuring staff are knowledgeable about the company's policies and procedures required that the company invest in effective training
initiatives. Other incentives such as paying appropriately, coaching effectively, measuring accurately and rewarding often are critical success factors for developing knowledgeable employees who can resolve most issues on the spot.

**Empathy:** - A caring, personal service where employees are polite and courteous makes a customer feel special and valued and is, therefore, more likely to retain their business. Keep records of their activities with the company, log all praise and criticism and work on feedback they provide. Through these records you will be able to develop a more personalised service, without prompting, thus exceeding their expectations.

Staff should be able to deal with complaints if no supervisor is available.

Most cleaning work is undertaken out of office hours, ensure that staff abides by this and do not interfere with clients' business.
General Exercises

1. The PC Verso desk has not been selling in black. You have been asked to draft the working for an in-store notice to try to sell the remaining stock at half price. Use the space below to draft a notice outlining its features and don’t forget to include the offer price.

| PC Verso desk with pullout keyboard shelf. On castors: available in black or pine effect. €60.000 |  
|---|---|
2. A Customer has approached you for advice on buying a computer desk and is unsure how to select from the range available. List three questions to ask in order to help him decide which desk to buy.

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

3. A customer has approached you for advice to book for a computer course and is unsure how to select the suitable course from the range available. List three questions to ask in order to help him decide which course to book.

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

4. A Customer has approached you for advice on buying an elegant dress and is unsure how to select from the range available. List three questions to ask in order to help her decide which dress to buy.

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
5. A supplier is on a 30-day credit terms to receive payment. Unfortunately the invoices are not yet processed and you have to write an email to inform this supplier that the payment will exceed the agreement by 2 days.
6. You have been employed in an organisation that sells mobile phone. As yet, no structural complaint exists. Your first duty is to create a structural Customer Complaints Procedure. Write down the steps and actions that you want to be included.