

Decision Making

Customer Care Development System

Sample

Welcome to the Training

Congratulations! You have taken the first step to improving yourself! Now that you have completed the Workforce Readiness Skills Assessment and have had a chance to review your score, you have quite an advantage over others who may not be as aware of their Customer Care strengths and areas that need improvement. The next step is to work on the skills that need improving. By working on these soft skills, you will be better prepared to obtain and/or maintain employment.

The nature of soft skills is that they touch every aspect of your life. The need to grow in different soft skill areas will vary for each individual. This training is for YOU, it's about YOU, and YOU are the only person that can decide how valuable it is to YOU. You must decide how it can apply to your daily behavior and all aspects of your life – education, employment, friends and family, and how to balance the priorities of your life.

Your role in this training is to be a full and active participant in the discussion and exercises included in the material. If you are able to change or modify your actions and reactions based on this training, how might it make a positive difference to you and to those around you?

The concept of the Customer Care Development System (CCDS) is to focus training on three soft skill areas (or competencies). They are:

- **Customer Relations** – Interacting with others, Dealing with Angry Customers, and Satisfying Customer Needs.
- **Decision-Making** – Dealing with Customer Problems, Prioritizing Customer Needs, Referring to Others, Following Company Guidelines, and Developing Alternative Solutions.
- **Commitment to Quality** – Increasing Customer Loyalty, Improving Customer Relations, and Improving Quality of Operations.

Every individual has soft skill areas in which they need to grow. It's not "if", it's "what areas, how to grow, and when you will apply this training." For you, this CCDS training can be your time and place. Take full advantage of this opportunity. Take the discussions and exercises seriously. Learn from other participants and your trainer. Soft skills alone will not ensure a better future – but growth in soft skills can give you improved opportunities for a better future.

Welcome to CCDS and to your growth opportunity!

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In this module, we will examine the decision-making process. We will learn how to prioritize customer needs, when to handle things on our own, when to refer to others, and how to problem-solve.

2.1 Dealing with Customer Problems

Identifying Customer Problems Activity

Dealing with customer issues/problems quickly and professionally is part of providing a high-quality customer-service experience. Everyone has his or her own customer-service nightmare story. So it's easy to understand how a customer might perceive things from their side of the counter when they confront you looking for solutions. Let's think about a customer-service situation you were in in which there was a problem.

Form small groups. Describe a problem you each had as a customer, how the problem was resolved, whether it had a satisfactory solution, and why.

One of you capture the solutions on the flipchart. Report to the large group and share one solution that has not already been described.

Dealing with Customer Problems

We will examine the steps to take the next time you encounter a customer problem either on the phone or in person.

Step 1: Remain Calm Yourself:

When a customer begins to vent their frustration, it is important to remain calm yourself. Do not take things personally and assume that the customer's frustration is directed at you. Becoming defensive will only frustrate the customer more.

Step 2: Allow the Customer to Vent:

Do this without interrupting. If you would like to defuse the customer's anger, try apologizing. Usually when you apologize, the customer's anger dissipates. Keep in mind that you are apologizing on behalf of the company, not yourself.

Step 3: Identify and Re-phrase the Problem:

Attempt to understand what the real problem is. Sometimes the true problem will be difficult to identify because of other variables that are more recognizable but do not pinpoint the problem that requires solving. In order to make sure you understand the problem, in your own words paraphrase what the customer is saying and feeling. Re-phrasing what the customer says is not an easy skill to develop, but it can be learned. It takes practice and self-discipline not to respond defensively. It is important to remember that when a customer-service rep becomes defensive, a "battle" follows in which each person must defend his or her own side. Responding with empathy and following with problem-solving are far more effective in keeping the relationship with the customer.

Step 4: Identify Possible Solutions:

Consider all possible solutions. They should reflect a number of alternatives.

Step 5: Select the Best Solution:

Selecting the best solution may be the most challenging step. Positive and negative results must be considered from both the company's and the customer's perspectives. Company guidelines must be followed, and you must be very clear about what you are empowered to do on your own and what needs to be referred to your supervisor.

Expressing Empathy Activity

Form groups of three. Refer to the Empathy Role-Plays below. Take a turn playing the customer, customer-service rep, and observer. After each role-play discuss possible right and wrong ways to deal with these customers.

Empathy Role-Plays

Role-Play One:

You are the desk clerk at the YMCA. A customer comes with his three children to swim, but the pool is not open for another two hours. There are families in the pool area taking swimming lessons. The pool policy clearly states that there is no open swimming during lessons. The customer clearly did not read the swim schedule correctly.

The father says, "I paid a lot of money to join the Y, and I drove a long way to bring my kids, and I am going swimming!"

Role-Play Two:

You are a waiter/waitress in a local restaurant. A customer is upset because he wants something that is not on the menu. You are not sure about what he wants. He keeps saying he wants the Tuesday Special, but it is Wednesday and you didn't serve what he wanted on Tuesday, either.

Role-Play Three:

You are a teller at a bank. An irate customer comes in complaining of extra charges on his last statement, charges he feels he did not incur and wants taken off immediately. He threatens to take his business elsewhere.

Role-Play Four:

You are a sales clerk at a large retail chain. You are not punched in but have your name badge on and are on the sales floor. A customer asks you to help her find an item. She is quite upset and states, "I have been all over this store looking for this item. Can't you people get things straight?"

Role-Play Five:

You are working at the Customer Service Desk. A customer has been standing in line a long time and seems quite upset. When she finally gets to the front of the line, she doesn't have the product with her to exchange. She says, "Can't you people do a better job of manning this area? I am on my lunch break and have more errands to run but won't get them done because I had to wait in line so long."

Role-Play Six:

You are a call-center representative. You receive a phone call from a customer who sounds very frustrated. He ordered a gift card for his grandson's birthday, and it has not arrived yet. The party is in two days, and it is the only gift he will receive from his grandfather.

Journal Activity

Jot down your learnings and areas you need to work on in the space below. If you are meeting with a coach, share this information with him or her.

Sample

2.2 Prioritizing Customer Needs

Let's examine just who our customers are. We have both internal and external customers. Our external customers are those who are not part of our organization but are impacted by our products and services. Our internal customers are members of our organization and are impacted by our processes, products, and services. To truly meet the needs of our external customers, we must also meet the needs of our internal customers. Let's examine how this works.

Internal and External Customers Activity

Form small groups. Pick an organization that you are all familiar with.

1. List the internal and external customers.
2. Next, list the products and services available to both customer types.
3. Identify potential problems that could affect both the internal and external customer.
4. Finally, list ways the organization could get feedback to improve processes, products, and services for the customer.

Working with Internal Customers (Coworkers) Discussion

Relationships with your internal customers are also important. Getting along with others is key to your success at work. After all, you see peers and coworkers regularly. Because of your job, office politics, and protocol, your interactions with them are ongoing and important. We must extend all the same courtesies to internal customers that you do to external customers, in some cases more so. Let's examine ways to maintain or improve your interactions with internal customers.

Maintaining or Improving Interactions with Internal Customers

Stay Connected:

- Since relationships within the organization are so important, go out of your way to make contact with internal customers.
- Drop by their work area to say hi, send an email, or leave a voice-mail message.
- Keep the door to communication open so that if service does break down or you need their help, you will have a better chance of solving a problem.

Keep Commitments:

- Don't forget that if you depend on internal suppliers for materials, products, or information, these people can negatively affect your ability to serve external customers by delaying or withholding items you need.
- To prevent, or at least reduce, the possibility of such breakdowns, honor all commitments you make to internal customers.
- If you promise to do something, say so when your internal customer asks. If something comes up that prevents you from fulfilling your commitment, let your internal customer know of the change. It is better to exceed customer expectations than not meet them.

Share How You Feel:

- Some people hold on to anger, frustration, and other negative emotions rather than get their feelings out into the open and deal with them. This can destroy working relationships.
- Whenever something goes wrong or you are troubled by something, go to the person, talk about the situation, and work it out in a professional manner.