

Welcome to Insight into Customer Care

Thank you for choosing the “Insight into Customer Care” course.

Course aims

This course has been written to help you understand how Customer Care works, and breaks down the steps you need to take for profitable customer relationships. It provides you with a logical structure, guidelines, tips and practical exercises to help you develop and refresh your skills.

If you're new to the subject and want to find out how to become a professional in this industry, you'll find the contents of great value. For those already experienced in customer care, this course will provide a valuable reminder and highlight techniques that you may not have used for a while.

Learning method

We recommend that you first look at the contents, and browse through each section, to give you an overview of the material. While it's tempting to jump ahead, we recommend that you proceed step by step through the sequence of each unit.

Assessments: This course comprises of six units, each with a simple self-assessment activity. You can use these activities to test your own understanding of each section. If you're not sure, go back and look at the unit again. At the end of Unit 2 you are asked to describe the products/services of the company you are working for. At this stage, you should involve your supervisor, manager or colleagues in the evaluation of your progress.

At the end of the course, there is a final exercise to help you summarize your learning, and develop your own action plan.

Learning Log: It's also worth keeping a Learning Log, [like a diary] to reflect on your own development, summarise what you have learned, highlight areas which you found interesting or challenging, and make notes about further actions planned, reading and research. In this Learning Log you can also make a note of your own personal objectives, so that you can check these as you go through the course to make sure that your objectives are being met.



Exercises: The exercises in this course are designed to help you:

- Understand and apply the information you have just read
- Reinforce the reading matter
- Summarise what you have learned in your own words

Course content

In the sequence of six units you will cover the following topics:

- How to make customers feel appreciated
- How to turn customer complaints into customer satisfaction
- Why you need to present a consistent image
- How to see yourselves (and your company) as others see you
- Why listening is a lost art, and how to re-discover it
- How to sound enthusiastic, all day long
- Three ways to calm down difficult customers
- What to do when the customer is wrong, but believes he is right
- Ways to recognise and handle internal and external customers
- When it's OK to say 'no'
- What you need to know to solve customers problems

When you have worked through the units, you will be better able to:

- know why Customer Care helps to keep customers
- understand how your organisation works, and where to find out information you need to help your customers
- apply proven communications techniques
- know more about ourselves, and how we can change the way we relate to other people
- handle customer complaints and deal with them confidently
- prepare and follow action plans for continuous improvement



Course structure and breakdown of topics

- Unit 1 What is Customer Care?**
Why does it matter?
Identifying customer needs and expectations
Internal and external customers
Impressions and perceptions
Setting and maintaining standards that matter
- Unit 2 Organisation**
Understanding your own organisation
Information sources
Know the scope of your authority
- Unit 3 Communication**
Dealing with the barriers to communication
Listening and questioning
First impressions
Non verbal communications
Positive language and NLP
- Unit 4 Interpersonal Skills**
How we judge and react to others
Understanding communication styles
Recognising and dealing with different customer behaviour
Putting yourself in the customer's shoes
Turning negatives into positives
Controlling your emotions
- Unit 5 Managing Difficult Customers**
Understanding difficult customer
Generating a helpful attitude
Welcoming customer complaints
Problem solving
- Unit 6 Assertiveness techniques to keep you sane**
Measure your own assertiveness
What is assertiveness?
What is the difference between Aggression, Passivity and Assertion?
Taking risks and making mistakes
My confidence charter

Personal Action Plan



Time guidelines

Experience has shown that the course will take about 12-15 hours to complete, depending on your existing knowledge. Your main objective should be to understand the methods explained, and think how you would apply the course in your working life. I suggest that you do not spend more than 2 hours a day studying.

Time guidelines of each Unit:

Unit 1	Two hours 10 min
Unit 2	One hour 45 min
Unit 3	Two hours 25 min
Unit 4	One hour 15 min
Unit 5	One hour 25 min
Unit 6	Two hours 15 min



Unit 1 What is Customer Care?

Customer Care Checklist

Time guide: 10 min.

Please answer the following questions, to the best of your ability, and as honestly as you can. There are no right or wrong answers - we need to know what you think to measure your progress at the end of this course.

1. How many external customers do you have some kind of contact with in an average week?

2. How many internal customers do you have contact with in an average week?

3. Write down what product/service they are buying from the company/department

4. What customer service standards do you know about? Please list them here, and then rate the company (in your opinion) out of 10 in meeting these standards.



<u>Standard</u>	<u>Score</u>
a	
b	
c	
d	
e	

5. If we asked some of your customers, what do you think would be the first thing they would say about the company?

6. If we asked these customers to rate us out of 10, what score do you think we would get?

7. How many customers do you think we have won in the last 12 months?

8. How many customers do you think we have lost during the last 12 months?

9. Score your company's ability to keep its promises (out of 10).

10. Score your administration processes from a customer's point of view (out of 10).

11. Score your company's handling of customer complaints (out of 10).



-
12. Now describe a typical customer situation, which you have found difficult to deal with during the last 12 months.

We will come back to these questions at the end of the course. Please keep your notes on this section carefully.

Now let's look at what you think Customer Care really means:

Question 1

Time guide: 2 min.

In your own words, write down what you think Customer Care means.



Typical definitions of Customer Care include:

- giving value for money
- exceeding people's expectations
- meeting their perceived needs
- delighting the customer
- going above and beyond the norm
- making a good first impression

Question 2

Time guide: 5 min.

Why does Customer Care matter in your organisation?

If you answered, it costs less to keep the customers you have than to find new ones, Customer Care is often the only difference between competing products or services, a bad reputation spreads fast, happy customers buy more, and tell their friends, or people buy from people they trust- you were right.

Here are some other reasons:

“It costs you five times as much to get a single new customer as it does to keep one you already have.”

“No matter what your business is, you're probably overspending on customer acquisition and understanding on customer retention.”

“Most businesses lose about 25% of their customers annually... cut just 5% of that customer loss... add 100% to your bottom line.”

From **‘The One-to-One Future’** by **Don Peppers/Martha Rogers**



By building customer goodwill and trust, they not only come back to you for repeat business, but they tell their friends.

Examples

Banks generally get a poor press, but one bank that opened an account made a series of phone calls, following the opening of the account, just to see that the service being provided was as expected. This is in sharp contrast to another bank whose only follow-up was to attempt to sell inappropriate products.

A printing company was supplying a marketing organisation with literature. The literature was due to be delivered to a third party, who called to say that it had not arrived. On investigation by the marketing company the printer said he had had problems and probably wouldn't be able to deliver it for another three days. If he had communicated his problems sooner, and managed both the client and the third party's expectations, he would have demonstrated a positive service incident, and not lost valuable further business.

Feargal Quinn is the managing director of Ireland's Superquinn supermarket chain, described in his book 'Crowning the Customer' the 'boomerang' principle; i.e. getting the customer back. He demonstrated that if he looks after getting the repeat business, the profit would largely look after itself.

Customer service is a competitive battleground for today's business. As goods and services become more sophisticated, Customer Care becomes the area in which businesses can differentiate themselves from their competition.

Identifying customers

Customers are not necessarily people from outside the business. Many other departments with whom you work need to be treated like customers too. Companies often forget this, and treat fellow employees as just part of the family who have to put up with bad service, misinformation, lack of information.

Forward thinking organisations very often have photographs of their key contacts, both internal and external, at their desks so that they actually understand and feel that they are talking to real people, rather than simply names and problems.

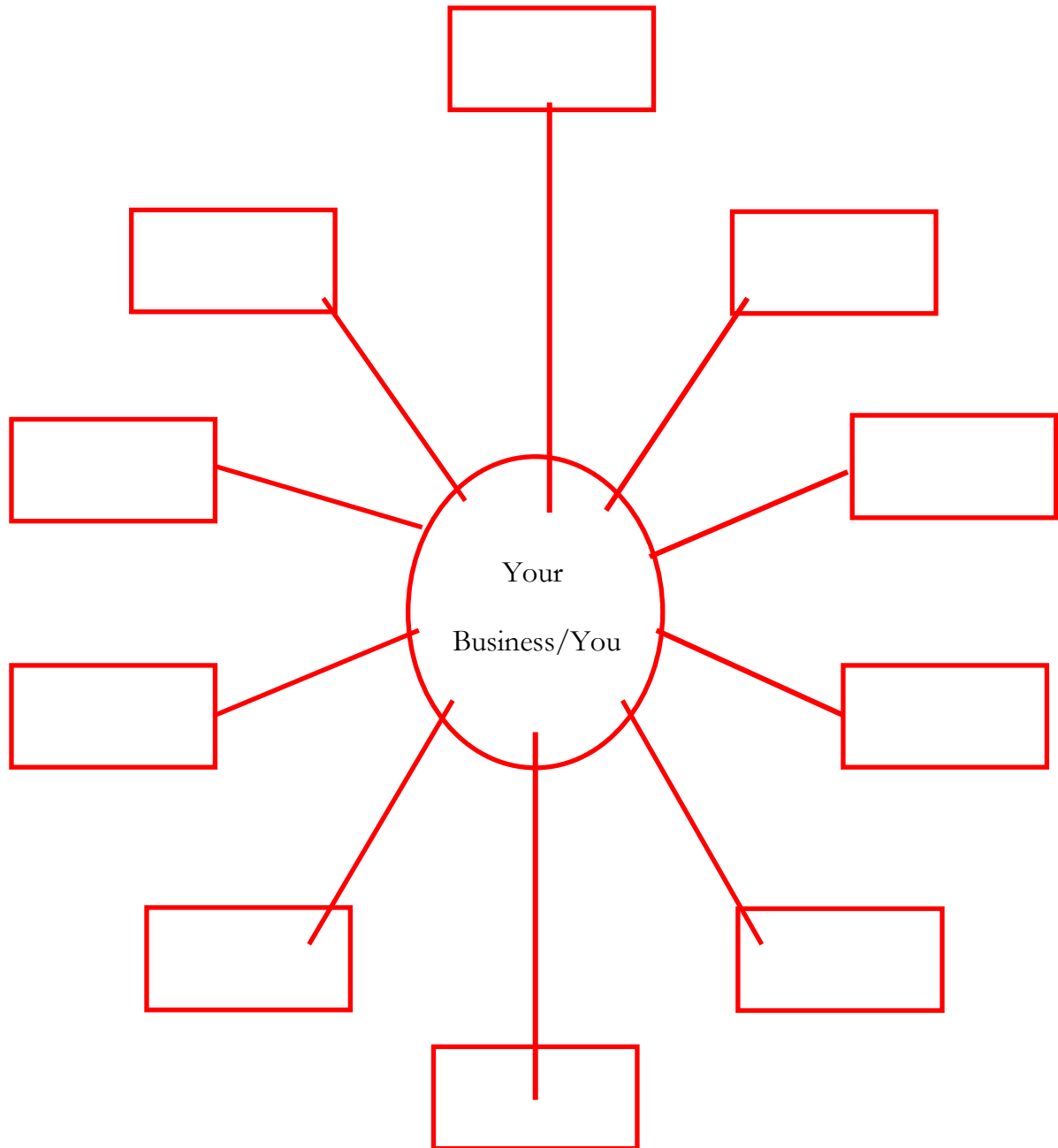


Exercise A

Time guide: 5 min.

Fill in the gaps to show who your customers are, inside and outside the organisation.

Complete the blanks



Did you write in different types of customers? For example, if you work in a shop, did you include regulars, casuals, people who phone/e-mail their orders, the factory down the road whose staff visit at lunchtime, the school-children who pop in on their way home, their parents, staff from other shops? Did you include amongst internal customers the head office, accounts department, delivery staff? All of these are your customers.

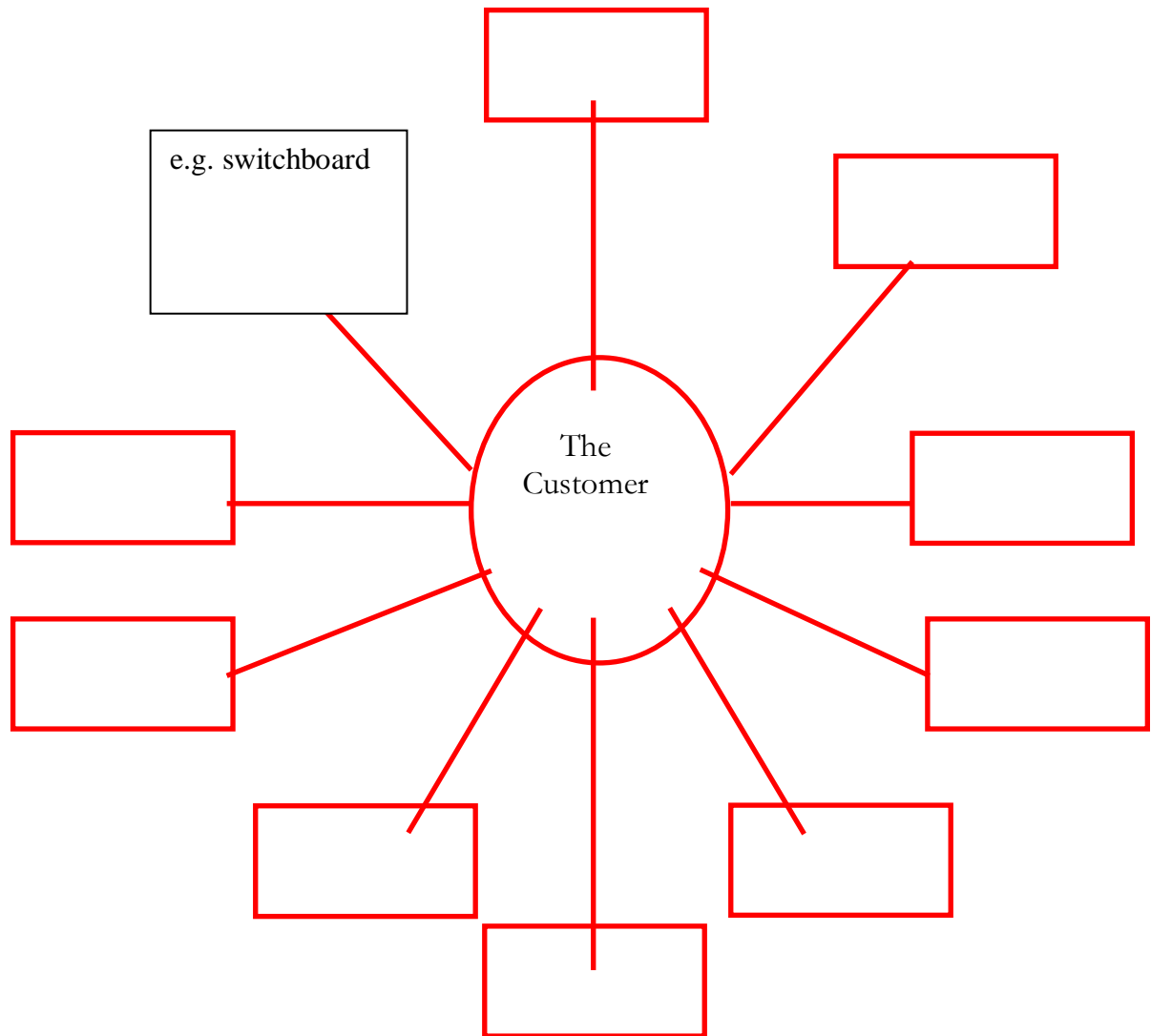


Exercise B

Time guide: 5 min.

- b) Now think about whom a typical customer might come into contact with in your organisation. (Hint: think about the flow of information and contact as the customer's needs are met.)

Complete the blanks



Many people think Customer Services is someone else's job. It affects everyone in the organisation. For example, in this exercise it could be telephonist, receptionist, sales department, IT department, account, despatch, and stores.

Identifying customer needs

This can be tackled in a number of ways.

Market research. This is done by listening to the customer, and by listening to people who might be customers, thinking about why they might be customers; then asking them what they want from us.

Understanding perceptions

It is important to check, not just your impression of what their needs are, but what they themselves perceive their needs to be. This requires deeper investigation and research, but once the method has been established, it is the key to continuing to understand the customer. Customer Satisfaction Surveys can help to measure the perceptions your customers have.

Here is a typical example of a Customer Survey for Alpha Designs, an imaginary interior decorating company.

Interior Decorating Division

Company: Contact Name:
.....

Good morning/afternoon, Mr., my name is from
.....,

and I'm doing some research into interior decorating. Can I confirm, are you the person responsible for commissioning interior decorating?
(If NO, ask who is and go to top of page.)

Can you spare me a few minutes to help me with some questions?

If NO, when would be a good time to call, Mr? (Re-arrange to call then)

If YES, proceed to Q1.

Q1 There are several interior decorating specialists, can you name some? (Unprompted)

Q2 This research is actually about Alpha Designs. They are keen to improve their service, and have asked us to find out what customers like yourself want.



Starting at the switchboard, can you score them out of 10, for?

Speed of answering _____

Friendliness _____

Efficiency _____

Q3 Can you remember, how long did it take to get a visit from a designer?

Q4 When the designer came, can you score him/her out of 10 for?

Technical knowledge _____

Understanding of your application _____

Awareness of safety implications _____

Personal presentation _____

Q5 Moving on to the Estimate stage, how soon after the visit did you receive an estimate?

Q5a Was that quickly enough? YES/NO

If NO, how quickly would you have liked it? _____

Q6 Can you please score the Estimate out of 10 on:

Presentation _____

Easy to understand _____

Q7 Do you find it easy to place an order? YES/NO

Q7a If NO - how could this be improved?

Q8 Do you feel you are kept adequately informed about the progress of your order?
YES/NO

If NO, what would you like to happen?



Q9 Can you score (out of 10) Alpha's ability to overcome problems which may arise during the job? _____

Q10 Regarding the work team:

Did they arrive on time YES/NO

Do they have the right attitude YES/NO

Are they technically competent YES/NO

Are they well equipped YES/NO

Do they look presentable YES/NO

Do they follow your site procedures YES/NO

Do they keep you informed YES/NO

Overall, can you score how happy you are with the standard of site work and they way they leave the job? _____

Q11 Regarding the last job, can you score it out of 10 for:

Design _____

Manufacture _____

Fitting _____

Overall _____

Q12 Please comment on Alpha for value for money on:-

a) Design, manufacture and supply of interior decorating

b) Workmanship on site

Q13 If you were asked to describe Alpha in one word or phrase, what would you say?

Q14 Would you use them again? YES/NO

Q15 Would you recommend them to other colleagues? YES/NO

Thank you for your time Mr/s I do appreciate your help. Goodbye.



Exercise C

Time guide: 25 min.

Now prepare a similar questionnaire for your customers/a car showroom/other example.

If you work for a company, you could ask them if you could use it on real customers.

The Mystery Shopper/mystery caller

Many companies use these as a means of verifying how customers are treated. They can be briefed to behave in a vague/distracted/or even difficult manner. This technique is much more sophisticated than getting a friend to ring the company, and should be planned and managed accordingly.

Suggestion schemes

More and more companies now work with a 'doughnut' shaped organisation chart, with the outer circle being the people in closest contact with the customer. By feeding back customer comments, whether formally through questionnaires, or informally through comments (e.g. tasting panels in supermarkets), businesses can determine customer needs and the way they change, according to the way society changes.

Exercise D

Time guide: 15 min.

Make a list of all your customers in your current job, both internal and external, and what they need from you. Use more paper if you need it.

Customers

What they need

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Setting and maintaining standards

The key to outstanding customer service is a commitment to agreed standards throughout the organisation. Ideally, a company's mission statement should incorporate a company-



wide commitment to customer service.

It is essential to make sure that all staff, not just sales staff, are ready to help and talk to customers - **it is not just a sales function.**

How can we set good standards?

- Be clear about your expectations, and make sure that everyone in the company understands the part that they play. There is no point in a superb service from sales and marketing and production, if the accounts department treat all calls as a nuisance/waste of time, and deal with clients in an abrupt manner.
- A customer service component should be built in to performance evaluations. These should be constantly measured and updated.
- Demonstrate and publish your standards, so that existing and potential customers know what to expect.

Example

The department store David Morgan in Cardiff actually displayed their mission statement and their commitment on the counter in numerous departments. This told customers that it was part of what they were trained to do on their weekly training sessions.

- Train all staff regularly on Customer Care techniques. It is important to keep bringing the company's standards to the attention of all staff.
- By working towards agreed standards, the process becomes part of a way of business life.

Question 3

Time guide: 5 min.

What sort of standards do you think can be set?



Typical standards include: setting time limits for staff to respond to customers. For example:

1. Editors must respond to editorial enquiries from subscribers within 24 hours.
2. Refund cheques will be issued within 7 days.
3. Enquiries of other departments from Customer Services must be responded to within 24 hours.
4. Orders will be processed within 2 hours.
5. Delivery will be made within a fixed period.
6. Not more than 2 people should be in any queue.
7. All calls will be answered within 3 rings.

Exercise E

Time guide: 7 min.

List 5 customer service standards for your company which you think your customers could expect (e.g. deadlines, feedback, customer names, returns policy).

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



Well done – you deserve a break now!



Assessment to Unit 1

In this Unit, you have looked at:

- What Customer Care is:

Please write your own definition here, based on what you have learned.

- Why Customer Care matters:

Give 3 reasons, from your own knowledge and experience, why Customer Care matters.

1.

2.

3.

- Who your customers are:

List your 3 most important customers.

1.

2.

3.

- What standards can your customers expect? Please give 3 examples:

1.

2.

3.



Unit 2 Organisation

Understanding your own organisation

Having the politest, happiest people in your company is going to count for very little, if they do not have the organisation, systems, and back-up to enable them to deliver the products or answers to customers.

In order to provide Insight into Customer Care, you must be sure that you know your facts. Think about what you know, and where you can find out more.

Exercise A - Organisation Quiz

Time Guide: 14 min.

1. Who does your company belong to? (i.e. part of a larger organisation, a family owned business).
2. List as many departments of your company as you can.
3. Describe what your company does for customers, in 17 words or less.
4. List the products/services of your company.
5. How many people work for your company?
6. Do you have offices/outlets in other places/countries? If so, which ones?
7. Who are your main competitors?
8. What is your company's mission/vision?
9. Do you have any nationally recognised Awards, e.g. Investors in People, ISO 9000? What do they mean?
10. Why do you think people buy from your company? Are they buying more, less or differently than before?

How did you get on? Were there some questions you found difficult to answer? Don't worry, it is normal. Think for a minute how confident you will be when you do have all those answers- feels good, doesn't it?

So, let's look at how you set about gathering information about your company.



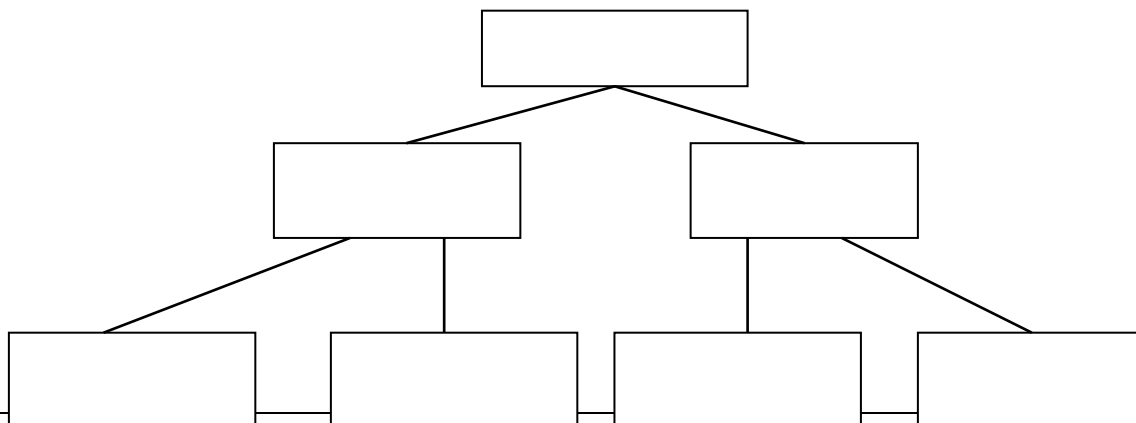
Information sources

1. Think about who can help you- your supervisor, your colleagues, the personnel department, the sales department, somebody from operations.
2. Think about what information you can find out for yourself- are there company brochures, a Web site, company reports, information in your induction pack, videos, a resource centre? Does the Public Relations department keep a file of press cuttings about the company?
3. Check with your colleagues about answers to the most Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).
4. Think about other people you could ask, or other sources of information there might be.
5. Draw an organisation chart, with names and titles

Exercise B

Time guide: 15 min.

Draw an organisation chart, with names and titles.



Exercise C

Time guide: 10 min.

List here the actions you will take to find out the answers about your organisation.



Know the scope of your authority

Part of Customer Care may be technical, or require authorisation from a more senior member of staff. Check what the company policy is regarding transferring calls, and who “owns” a customer enquiry at each stage. Be prepared to give your name to customers, as this gives them a feeling of being cared for.

Exercise D

Time guide: 5 min.

Write here your company’s policy regarding:

a) Transferring calls

b) Process of owning customers

If they don’t have one, offer to prepare a policy for discussion.

Use the technology

It is now common for the technology to help in providing better Customer Care. For example, the telephone can display the number of the person calling, which can be linked to the computer file to bring their details on to the screen, so that the communication can be carried out with the maximum information available. Make sure you know how it works- if in doubt, ask, or refer to your notes.



Well done – you

deserve a break now!

Assessment to Unit 2

In Unit 2 you have looked at the importance of knowing your organisation.

Please write here what you have found out about your organisation.

It is useful to keep this handy for use when you are talking to customers. You can use the Quiz in Unit 2 to give you a structure, and add in any additional information you have found out.



Unit 3 Communication

Exercise A

Time guide: 10 min.

Read the following passage, and then write in your own words, what went wrong, and how the misunderstanding could have been avoided.

An Example of Communication

Two battleships assigned to the training squadron had been at sea on manoeuvres in heavy weather for several days. The visibility was poor with patchy fog, so the captain remained on the bridge keeping an eye on all activities.

Shortly after dark, the lookout on the wing of the bridge reported, "Light, bearing on the starboard bow."

"It is steady or moving astern?" the captain called out.

Lookout replied, "Steady, captain," which meant we were on a dangerous collision course with that ship.

The captain then called to the signalman, "Signal that ship: We are on a collision course, advise you change course 20 degrees."

Back came a signal, "Advisable for you to change course 20 degrees."

The captain said, "Send, I'm a captain, change course 20 degrees."

"I'm a seaman second class," came the reply. "You had better change course 20 degrees."

By that time the captain was furious. He spat out, "Send, I'm a battleship. Change course 20 degrees".

Back came the flashing light, "I'm a lighthouse."

The battleship changed course.

What did you think went wrong?

How could it have been communicated better?



In business, communications is like the blood flowing round the body, without it, everything grinds to a halt. Words may look or sound precise, but they are not. As we have learnt, all sorts of barriers exist between the communicator and the receiver.

What are these barriers?

1. Hearing what we want to hear. What we hear or understand when someone speaks to us is largely based on our own experience and background. Instead of hearing what people have told us, we hear what our minds tell us they have said. We have pre-conceptions about what people are going to say, and if that does not fit into our own personal point of view, we simply adjust it.
2. Ignoring conflicting information. We tend to ignore or screen out communication that conflicts with our own beliefs. If they are not rejected, some way is found of twisting and shaping their meaning to fit our own pre-conceptions.
3. Perceptions about the communicator. It is difficult to separate what we hear from our feelings about the person who is saying it. Hidden motives may be ascribed to the communicator which are, in fact, non-existent. If we like someone we are much more likely to accept what they say.
4. Influence of the group. The group we belong to influences our attitudes and feelings. Workers are more likely to listen to their colleagues who share their experiences, than to outsiders such as managers or union officials.
5. Words mean different things to different people. Language is a method of using symbols to represent facts and feelings. We cannot convey meaning, all we can do is to convey words. Do not assume that because something has a certain meaning for you, it will have the same meaning for another person.
6. Non verbal communication. When we try to understand the meaning of what people say, we listen to the words but use many other clues which convey the meaning. This is known as body language. However, particularly when dealing with people from other cultures, there is enormous scope for misinterpretation.
7. Emotions. Our emotions colour our ability to convey or to receive the true message. When we are insecure or worried, what we hear seems much more threatening than when we are secure and at peace with the world. When we are angry or depressed, we tend to reject what might otherwise seem like a good idea.
8. Noise. Any interference to communications is known as 'noise'. It can be literal noise, e.g. the digger outside the office window, a bad line on the telephone; or figurative, in the shape of distracting or confusing information which distorts or obscures the meaning.



9. The size of an organisation. The larger and more complex the organisation, the greater the problems of communication.

How can we deal with these barriers?

1. Adjust to the world of the receiver. Tailor your message to fit their vocabulary/interests, and their values. Use direct, simple language, avoiding long words and elaborate sentences.
2. Using a person's name never fails to establish personal rapport. This is because the act itself carries its own guarantee of sincerity. If a person uses my name, it means they have taken a certain amount of trouble to do so. I don't have to believe that they really care about me, or that they will remember my name tomorrow, but I do know that they took the trouble to find out who I was today.
3. Use feedback. Ensure that you get a message back from the receiver, which tells you how much has been understood.
4. Use face-to-face communication. Wherever possible talk to people rather than write to them. You can deliver any communication in a more human and understanding way.

Where possible, an important step towards seeing your customers as people is to actually look at them. It is harder to pretend that a person does not exist if you are looking them in the eye. The eyes are where we make person-to-person contact.

I can talk to you without looking at you, for example, on the phone, and that is one-way communication. But as soon as our eyes lock, we have begun our relationship, where the eyes are in contact, we are relating to each other as people. Actually seeing people is much more effective, which is why all the mobile phone and computer companies are working to provide better quality video links.

5. Use reinforcement. You may have to present your message in a number of different ways to get it across. Re-emphasise the important points and follow up.
6. Use different channels. Some communications have to be in writing to get the message across promptly, and without any variations. Wherever possible, supplement written communications with the spoken word, and vice versa (e.g. when making an appointment by phone, confirm in writing).



Exercise B

Time guide: 15 min.

In your job, what do you think are the 5 main barriers to communicate with your customers?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Now suggest how you will overcome these barriers (you can use/adapt some of the ideas shown above)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Questions and answers

- By asking the right questions, you can avoid misunderstandings, gather relevant information, and demonstrate to your customers that you are interested in their problem/enquiry, and want to help them.
- There are two kinds of questions, OPEN and CLOSED.

Use 'open' questions when you want to involve him/her in dialogue.

Open questions require a more detailed response.

Closed questions require a yes/no answer.



For example:

Open

“When do you expect to renew your computer servicing contract Mr Smith?”

“How do you currently plan your training budget Mr Smith?”

“In your opinion Mr Smith, which of your branches is the most profitable?”

Open questions usually start with- who, what, when, why, where, how.

If you are like a rhyme as a way of remembering, here is one which you may find useful:

“I have six honest serving men
They taught me all I know,
Their names are What and Why and When
And How and Where and Who”

Rudyard Kipling

Closed

Closed questions start with- are, do, were, can, etc.

For example:

“Do you have a service contract for your computer hardware, Mr Smith?”

“Do you want to save 40% of your computer servicing costs, Mr Smith?”

When asking closed questions, try and word them so that the customer is replying positively, i.e. saying YES. This has been proved to make people feel better, even if they are complaining. So, for example, you might summarise what they are saying, and ask them to confirm that your understanding is correct.

Take advantage of the information available to you, whether on a credit card (in a retail situation), at a restaurant booking, a computer screen, or a switchboard operator who asks for your name before trying to connect you. Remember also that using a customer's name is particularly effective when you have to say 'no'. For example, say: 'Mr Smith, I am sorry we are not going to be able to help' and then go on with the explanation. This reduces the intensity of the disappointment.



Exercise C

Time guide 20 min.

Prepare 6 OPEN questions, which you might ask your customers, using the “who, what, where, why, when, how” technique.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

Then prepare 6 closed questions which you might ask your customers, worded so that the answer will be “YES”.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____



Learn to 'LISTEN'

If you can develop your listening skills you will find your meetings go better, you will interrupt less and you will earn the rewards of finding out more about the other party for future reference. So use the 'LISTEN' formula to keep your customer contacts, whether by phone or in person, under control:

L Look Interested. Look at the other party. Have a pad and pen ready to take notes where you need to. Make encouraging noises and give pertinent answers. Watch the other person carefully but don't worry them by staring - this often makes people uncomfortable.

I Inquire. Ask questions - preferably open questions that need more of an answer than a simple 'yes' or 'no'. The more you ask, the more information you can get about your client's needs. So ask exactly what they have in mind and what they would be prepared to accept.

S Stay on target. Keep to the topic. You may find you get off the subject with your questions. Look for an opening to get back on track as soon as possible. A discussion about the weather is going to do you no good at all!

T Test understanding. People hear what they want to hear - so clarify as often as you can. Ask if you are right in your own understanding of the situation by paraphrasing what has been said. And check the other person has understood you by going over the main facts again.

E Evaluate the message. Watch the other person carefully and judge whether they are saying what they really feel. If they say 'no' do they mean maybe? Try repeating their words back to them in the form of a question. For example they say: "I couldn't agree to that"; return with "You couldn't agree to that?". They will be forced to explain their reasons and you may be able to come up with a solution.

N Neutralise your feelings. Don't over-react to what the other person says or you will stop listening and lose control of the negotiation. Let the other person have their say and remember, this is not about you, personally, it is about your product or company and the client's needs. You just need to control the situation to get the best deal possible.



Exercise D

Time guide: 12 min.

You will need the help of a friend, a movie camera, or your phone's recording function for this exercise.

If you are working with a friend, ask them to choose an article from the newspaper. It should be about 10 paragraphs long. Ask them to read it through, then to read it to you out loud. Then ask them to test you on your understanding, by asking you questions.

If you prefer to work alone, record from the TV or radio a speech programme, of about 6 minutes. Then write down as much as you can remember. Then play your recording back, and see what you recalled, and what you missed.

How did you get on? If you took notes, you will find your concentration lasts longer. Did you find it difficult to concentrate without visual reinforcements? Did you start well, and then lose interest? Did you miss key points? Did you summarise well?

Listening is different from hearing- it requires active participation and considerable effort. However, it is a skill which, with practice, you can sharpen, and which will help you provide even better Customer Care.

Check your personal listening ability here, with this simple test.

Exercise E

Time guide: 5 min.

Do you:

- Sit/stand still when a customer is talking to you.
- Look interested and look at the customer.
- Concentrate on what is being said and avoid distractions.
- Make listening noises (e.g. 'um', 'yes') and nod your head.
- Ask open questions to find out more.
- Keep cool so that you can think carefully.
- Make sure that you don't interrupt.
- Summarise what the customer has said when they have finished speaking.
- Take notes to help you recall the situation later.
- Use the person's name, politely.

If you answered "YES" to 8 or more - well done, you are a good listener.

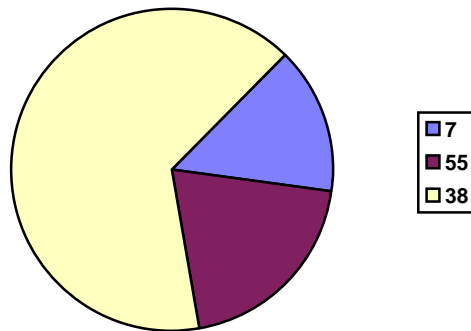
5-7 You hear most of what is said, but you also miss a lot. Think about what you are missing.

0-5 Ooops- Think about what happens, read this Unit again and try the test afterwards. You can only get better.



First Impressions Count

Whether we like it or not, people judge us on how we look.



7% What you say

55% How you look

38% How you sound

(Source - Social Trends 1998)

You only get one chance to make a good first impression. Whether on the phone, or face to face, it is important to make it work for you.

Think about your appearance- is it appropriate for the work situation? Whatever you are wearing should make you feel good, reflect the organisation, and be comfortable.

Clothes, and for women, make-up, act as tokens of authority. Be organised and look efficient, and people will listen to you more, and believe that you can help them.

There are historic rules for both men and women. Each has a number of “badges of authority”- for women, necklaces, earrings, brooches, for men ties, and for both, jackets. Men should wear socks in a neutral colour, and naturally all clothing and shoes should be clean, pressed, polished. More informal businesses can adapt these dress codes to suit their own style.

You will not be considered paying attention to the customer if you are eating, drinking, or smoking, whether on the phone, or face to face.

Exercise F

Time guide: 10 min.

1. Appearance. Rate yourself out of 10 on each of the following. Be truthful (you may like to ask a friend to help)

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 1) How efficient do I look? | _____ |
| 2) How friendly do I look? | _____ |
| 3) How well groomed do I look? | _____ |
| 4) How well do I make eye contact? | _____ |
| 5) How often do I smile? | _____ |
| 6) How often do I fidget when talking to customers? | _____ |
| 7) How clearly do I speak? | _____ |
| 8) How politely do I greet customers? | _____ |
| 9) How well do I make eye contact? | _____ |
| 10) How often do I thank the customer for the call/visit? | ===== |

Score:	70-100	You're making an excellent first impression.
	50- 69	Note the points where you scored less than 5 and work on improving them.
	Under 50	Make a detailed plan of what you will do to improve your first impression.

Using your voice

Your voice is an important tool in Customer Care. Some tips from the world of singing can help:

- Do warm-up exercises, first thing in the morning - you will sound more in control.
- Avoid the shakes, by doing 3 long deep breaths, before you start, or when you have just had a difficult call. Breathe out negativity, and breathe in energy.
- Speak more slowly - it implies control, helps people to hear you better, and gains attention (people speak more quickly if in a panic).
- Lower the pitch of your voice - deeper voices carry more authority.



Non verbal Communications

Non verbal communications can support, contradict, or neutralise what you are saying, so it is very important to be conscious of your body language.

Exercise G

Time guide: 5 min.

Here are some examples of body language. Think about how you would feel if you saw another person using them:

Example	How I would feel
A smile	_____
Eyebrows raised	_____
Good eye contact	_____
Avoiding eye contact	_____
An intense stare	_____
A friendly greeting	_____
Hand over mouth when they are talking	_____
Standing upright with arms folded	_____
Hands in pockets, leaning against a wall	_____
Leaning towards you	_____
Shrugging of the shoulders	_____

A sincere smile is a signal to the other person that you are ready to relate to them as an individual. It is an offer of friendship that is very difficult to resist.

One of the reasons we tend not to smile is because we are concentrating on what we are doing. It is worth remembering that a frown of concentration is usually seen by the outside world as a sign of unfriendliness or rejection. Also if we remember to smile, then the act of smiling at people will tend to put us in a better mood. If we smile, people are more likely to smile back, mirroring our action.

Positive language

Be enthusiastic and optimistic. Enthusiasm is contagious, while pessimism drags everything down. Use positive language, and paint word pictures. This is known as Neuro Linguistic Programming - NLP.



The following are 15 positive words which, if incorporated into daily use can help you to sound positive.

Discover Good Money Easy Free Save
Guaranteed Health Love New Proven Results
Safe Own Best

Advertisers use these words constantly to make us feel good about the products they are encouraging us to buy.

Exercise H

Time guide: 15 min.

Find a newspaper or magazine, and look at the advertisements. Count the number of times each of the above words appears.

Now plan to put these words into your everyday vocabulary, over 5 weeks. Start with 3, then build up to 6, then 9, then 12, and then 15. By using positive language you will find other people are much more agreeable to what you have to say.



Well done – you deserve a break now!



Assessment to Unit 3

1. List and explain the barriers that exist between the communicator and the receiver:

2. What do 'open' questions usually start with?

3. What do the letters 'LISTEN' stand for?

4. What helps us to relate and initiate a friendship with a customer?

a) _____

b) _____



Unit 4 Interpersonal Skills

How we judge and react to others

As human beings, we are constantly forming a wide variety of judgements about other people. We do this in a number of ways - we infer from what we see and hear an opinion about a person, or sometimes we form an intuitive opinion about a person. Because we are all different, we form opinions and judgements based on our own individual experiences.

The first key to understanding our reactions to other people is to understand ourselves. From that starting point, we can better understand other people. To give good customer service, we need to be prepared for the difficulties that will be encountered when working with a wide range of people and personalities. This is especially important on the telephone, where many of the communication aids, we discussed earlier, are missing.

There are 4 broad types of personality. By doing the next exercise, you can find out yours.

- Analytical
- Driver
- Promoter
- Supportive



Exercise A

Time guide: 20 min.

1. Mark the phrase, from each pair below, which would correctly complete the statement:
"I WOULD SAY THAT I AM....."
2. Answer each one by ticking either column A or B and pick the phrase that applies to you over 50% of the time.

A		B	
More proactive	.....	More passive	.....
More risk orientated	.....	More conservative	.....
More intensive	.....	More relaxed	.....
More talkative	.....	More quiet	.....
More challenging	.....	More listening	.....
More opinionated	.....	More accepting	.....
More direct	.....	More following	.....
More bold	.....	More subtle	.....
More confronting	.....	More retiring	.....
More expressive	.....	More supporting	.....
Total		.....

Total all the tick marks in Column A and put that score on the total line.

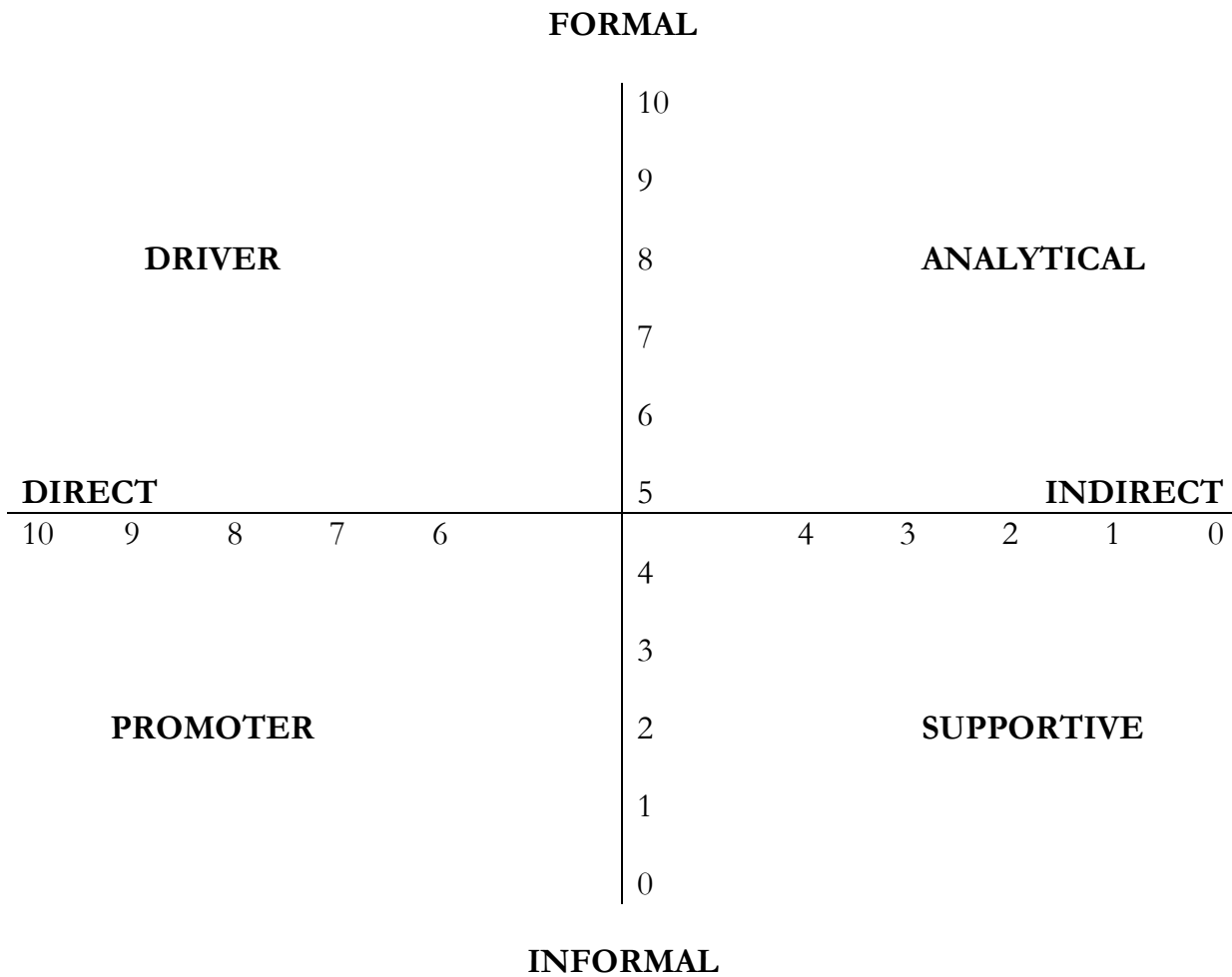
1. Mark the phrase, from each pair below, which would correctly complete the statement:
"I WOULD SAY THAT I AM....."
2. Answer each one by ticking either column C or D, and pick the phrase that applies to you over 50% of the time.

C		D	
More close	.....	More distant	.....
More flamboyant	.....	More proper	.....
More dramatic	.....	More matter of fact	.....
More impulsive	.....	More methodical	.....
More outgoing	.....	More reserved	.....
More spontaneous	.....	More disciplined	.....
More responsive	.....	More self-control	.....
More feeling	.....	More thinking	.....
More flexible	.....	More rigid	.....
More people oriented	.....	More task oriented	.....
		Total	
		

Total all the tick marks in Column D and put that score on the total line. Turn the page to record your style.....



To Record your Personality Style



Instructions:

1. For Column A's total circle that number on the horizontal line.
2. For Column D's total circle that number of the vertical line.
3. Connect the circles with a solid line. This represents your personality style.



How to communicate effectively to different styles of behaviour

- **Identifying different styles.** The key to effectively communicating with others is to recognise their primary behaviour style and then to adjust, that is, shift your presentation into the mode or style of the person you are dealing with.

DRIVER		ANALYTICAL	
<u>Characteristics</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take charge • Decisive • Efficient 		<u>Characteristics</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thorough • Rational • Organised • Detailed • Serious 	
<u>Potential Liabilities</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autocratic • Impatient • Insensitive • Over-control • Poor listener • Reactive 		<u>Potential Liabilities</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indecisive • Avoid issues • Aloof-unsociable • Too much detail • Critical 	
PROMOTER		SUPPORTIVE	
<u>Characteristics</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stimulating • Enthusiastic • Risk-taker • Goal driven • Innovative 		<u>Characteristics</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team player • Good listener • Relationship-orientated • Friendly • Conscientious 	
<u>Potential Liabilities</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aggressive • Manipulative • Poor follow-up • Ego driven • Undisciplined 		<u>Potential Liabilities</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too agreeable • Plays victim • Avoids conflict • Acquiescence • Not demanding enough 	

- **Driver:** To deal with this style, you should realise that their major concern is RESULTS, and you should try to plan to communicate in an efficient, results-orientated manner. Hints:
 1. get to the point, be specific
 2. keep the relationship business-like
 3. avoid direct disagreements or trying to tell them how it should be done
 4. don't waste time, move quickly
 5. provide options for them to choose
 6. provide overview, but have facts ready if needed
- **Promoter:** The Promoter will be communicative, warm, approachable, and competitive. You will want to communicate with them in such a way that involves feelings, emotions, ideas, and goals. Promoters consider power and politics important in the communication process and are interested in ways to enhance their



personal ideas. To deal with a Promoter, you need to provide support for their ideas and aspirations.

Hints:

1. ask questions to draw out their ideas and opinions
2. let them do most of the talking, as they will try and do it anyway
3. explore mutually exciting options
4. if you disagree, avoid arguing, instead look for alternative solutions
5. avoid asking about details, get agreement on big picture
6. make your presentations stimulating and exciting

- **Analytical:** The Analytical will be cautious during communication and will be most comfortable with facts and data, not ideas and opinions. To deal with them effectively you need to show that you will not jump to conclusions, but allow them to get into details.

Hints:

1. stick to the facts, avoid intuitive ideas or opinions
2. be willing to help them develop their ideas
3. be patient
4. offer assurance when decisions are pending
5. be organised and logical, avoid hype
6. be thorough, avoid surprises
7. don't push for a quick decision, give them some time to get comfortable with you and the problem
8. ask them to help you unearth the facts

- **Supportive:** The Supportive achieves objectives through understanding and mutual respect rather than force and authority. To deal effectively with the Supportive style, you should support their feelings and relationships with others.

Hints:

1. take the opportunity early to show your personal interest and concern in them and their feelings
2. be co-operative, not pushy
3. be patient, draw out their ideas and concerns
4. gently explore areas of disagreement
5. indicate your willingness to provide help and assurance
6. be encouraging, build their confidence in themselves
7. spend time establishing a relationship before jumping into the task
8. minimise risks, cover each step thoroughly



Putting yourself in the customer's shoes

Once you understand yourself you have a better set of tools to understand the customer's perspective. For example when you have stood in a queue for 4 minutes at a time when you are under pressure to get away, you discover just how long 4 minutes can be.

When you ring a number, and it rings for 10 double rings, you know that by now you would probably have gone somewhere else. Companies which practice good customer service insist that their managers spend time at the front end. Their presence visibly demonstrates their commitment to serving customers. In addition, managers will learn what it's really like to work there, how good the information systems and telephone technology are, and what the customers are saying and how they are saying it.

Remember that customers are individuals and not statistics. If you treat them as a nuisance, an interruption, or with condescension, they will react strongly, and probably take their business elsewhere.

Exercise B

Time guide: 15 min.

Describe a situation when you were the customer, and the service you received was poor.

What did you feel?

What should they have done to make it better for you?

Now write down how you could apply that lesson in your current job.



Turning negatives into positives

If you are strongly aware of what you are saying, and how you are saying it, you can be part of the solution, rather than part of the problem. See how these examples illustrate this point:

1. 'We don't have it in stock' (= part of the problem).
2. 'I can have one for you this afternoon - would you like it delivered' (= part of the solution).
3. 'The film has already started playing, you'll miss the opening' (= part of the problem).
4. 'The next screening is at 9 o'clock' (= part of the solution).
5. 'We close in 5 minutes' (= part of the problem).
6. 'May I help you to make your selection' (= part of the solution).

Although you may feel it is natural to express difficulties in a negative way, you can train yourself to become more positive. When you hear yourself starting to ask a conditional 'if' question, rephrase it to incorporate your positive expectation. Instead of saying "I was wondering if you..."; say: "When will you..."

Exercise C

Time guide: 5 min.

List five situations in a business environment that are usually dealt with negatively, and translate them into positive responses.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.



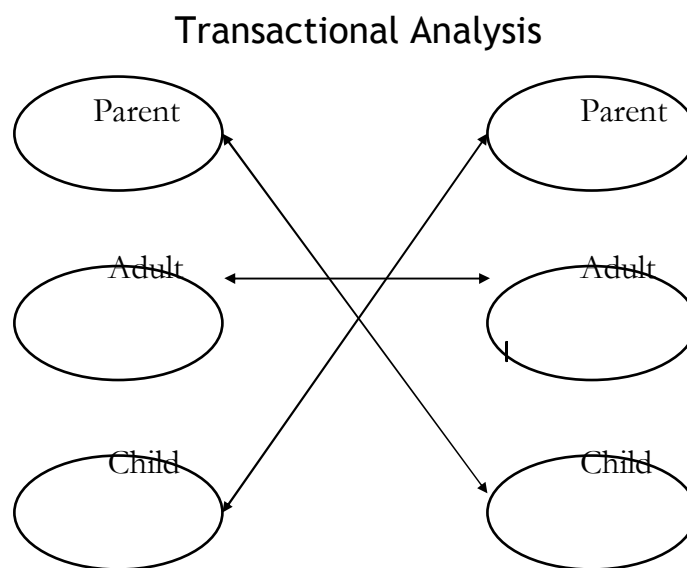
Controlling your emotions

The psychological technique known as Transactional Analysis defines three types of behaviour within each of us - Parent, Adult and Child. If somebody is getting irate, sulking, shouting, using bad language, or tearful, think of that as 'childlike', and if you respond as a 'parent', you will very often get a tantrum. "Child behaviour" is based on emotions, what it wants, and fear.

Child to child happens when people react rather than thinking.

Think what happens when a real child gets into a dispute with its parent. "Parent" behaviour is based upon rules, critical, patronising, and the power that goes with making the rules. Now think of the battles where these types of behaviour are displayed. Who "wins"?

The answer is nobody - each side goes away feeling bad. Parent to parent occurs when each is trying to dominate through rules and customs. The best way to deal with either type of behaviour is by responding as an adult, coolly and objectively, gathering data and retaining a neutral tone. Used with open questions, it is a proven technique for calming down angry customers, and moving the communication forward.



Exercise D

Time guide: 7 min.

Describe a recent incident in which Parent and Child behaviour were displayed. Then write down what would have happened if Adult/Adult had been displayed.



Well done – you deserve a break

now!

Assessment to Unit 4

1. List 3 ways we form judgements about other people:

a)

b)

c)

2. What are the four personality types you might meet:

a)

b)

c)

d)

3. What are the best ways to deal with a Driver type?

4. Complete the sentences:

“Customers are _____ and not statistics”

“ If we put ourselves in the _____ of the customer, we can understand their needs better.”

“If you treat customers _____, _____, or with _____ they will take their business elsewhere”



5. Turn these negatives into positives:

a) "I don't know the answer"

b) "It is not my job"

c) "You are too late to see the beginning"

6. "Parent" behaviour is based on _____, _____, _____.

"Child" behaviour is based on _____ and _____, and can lead to _____.

Adult behaviour is based on _____ and _____.



Unit 5 Managing difficult customers

Understanding difficult customers

“If only everyone was like me, what a pleasant place the world would be”

10% of people are difficult, and their behaviour causes 50% of stress.

Customer behaviour may be conscious or unconscious, and the result of their own stress in dealing with your organisation, the pressure they are under to keep to a timetable. They may feel threatened, especially if you talk in jargon, or unable to cope with other aspects of their lives.

Let's look at some ways an organisation can create a difficult customer.

Exercise A

Time guide: 5 min.

Describe a situation where you were the customer, and the organisation caused you to be any or all of the following:

Angry
Upset
Argumentative
Humiliated
Ignored
Blamed



Did you include the following?

Keeping a customer waiting.

Keeping a customer waiting without any indication of how long before they will be dealt with.

Not answering the phone right away.

Not turning up at the agreed time.

Not giving an agreed time.

Not delivering as promised.

Delivering the wrong goods.

Delivering faulty goods.

Fixing faulty goods and they still don't work.

Delivering incomplete work.

Being unable to deliver on time, knowing this, but not advising the customer of the expected delay.

Not checking the finished article before delivery.

Always looking for excuses as to why the customer's needs were not met.

Generating a helpful attitude

Here are some ways you can generate a helpful attitude:

Checking your competitors' products/services.

Reading about your competitors' advertising and brochures.

Reading a trade magazine about your business.

Talking to your colleagues about what customers are saying.

Listening to your customers.

Asking your customers for feedback.

Delivering ahead of time.

Saying thank you for business.

Returning people's phone calls.

Being a person, signing your own letters, telling people what your name is.



Customer Complaints

Think about the situations in which a customer complains.

- Impatient customers - they want everything now, and won't believe they can't be helped immediately.
- Con artists - the ones who complain about everything, and try to get special prices and treatment by saying 'so and so said you could do this for me', or 'your competitor does this, why don't you'.
- Pushy customers - those who try and browbeat staff in to doing things they are not able to do.
- Emotional customers who throw temper-tantrums when they cannot get what they want: they've had a bad day, an argument with the wife/husband/dog, and are taking it out on you.

Exercise B

Time guide: 30 mins.

If you can't change other people, you can change your reaction to their words and actions.

Consider the following questions, and then consider the ideal response. (Tip – think about what you would like to happen if you were the customer).

1. What is your reaction when confronted by someone who appears furious with you?

Your Answer _____

2. How do you respond to criticism?

Your Answer _____

3. How do you respond to negative people?

Your Answer _____

4. How do you respond to people who promise to do something and then don't do it?

Your Answer _____



Ideal Answer 1 _____

Ideal Answer 2 _____

Ideal Answer 3 _____

Ideal Answer 4 _____

The keys to handling difficult customers are:

Knowledge about the product, the company, the service.

Knowledge about the customer and customer's needs.

The ability to control your own emotions.

The ability to control the interchange.

Many companies now talk about the 'empowerment' of staff, in other words giving staff responsibility to make decisions which will deal with the customer and achieve customer satisfaction.

Your first technique is to listen positively to them, whether on the phone or by mail, or face-to-face. For companies who want to achieve a high quality of Customer Care, complaints are essential; complaints will always enable the company to improve the product/service which they provide.

Customers also have expectations of how they will deal with the complaint. A recent customer said 'Of course we complain to you, because we know you'll take it seriously, we wouldn't bother complaining to one of your competitors, they just give us a hard time. It's not worth the hassle'.



It is said that for every person who writes to complain about poor service, there are 6 more who have not written but feel equally aggrieved. Each of these 7 in turn tells an average of another 6 people. Hence the iceberg principle, for every complaint you see, there are 42 lurking just under the surface.

However a reduction in the number of complaints does not necessarily mean a reduction in the number of customer problems. If you reduce the number of complaints without reducing the number of problems, then in the long run what you are doing is reducing the number of customers.

Customer problems represent a failure by your company, but also a golden opportunity not just to recover the lost ground but to actually improve your relationship with the customer as well.

I think you think.....

We have a mental model of how customer's minds work. Before the problem:

customer satisfied
problem arises
customer less satisfied
complaint handled well
customer satisfied.

However, experience has shown that the real model is - before the problem:

customer satisfied
problem arises
customer less satisfied
complaint handled well
customer more satisfied than before

So the best ways to deal with complaints:

Express regret quickly. If a customer has a problem, any problem, that is a matter of genuine regret for you. As a customer service person, you are personally unhappy that somebody has experienced a problem dealing with your company or organisation. You can help the process along by expressing that regret at the very outset. You can do this without admitting any liability, important from a legal point of view - but do not use the liability issue as an excuse to avoid saying sorry that the customer has a problem in dealing with you.

Feed the complaint back to the customer, so that they understand that you know and understand what their problem was. E.g. 'So what you are saying Mrs Smith, is that you expected delivery of your sofa by Christmas, and as it is now 3 days from Christmas, you're getting very worried that it's not going to be there in time, when you have the family coming'.



Trust the customer. Good Customer Care has procedures which assume that the customer is telling the truth. While there are a small number of customers who will try it on, the majority of customers are perfectly honest, and should be treated as such.

Never, never put the customer in the wrong. The customer may not always be right but he/she is always the customer.

Don't pass the buck - accept responsibility. Very often the customer will have a problem that has been caused by someone else.

This happens a lot in retailing/distribution, where you sell other people's products, or handle problems for other departments. However by accepting that the customer's problem is our problem, we make sure we leave the customer satisfied. Nothing annoys customers more than being passed on from pillar to post. Try to ensure that the customer only has to complain once. Every time they have to tell their story their grievance is likely to grow, with the add-on "and I have already told this 3 times to your colleagues".

This is where well briefing the switchboard is very important. Sometimes a problem arises that is nobody's fault. However, if a customer has a problem, that's a good enough reason to accept responsibility for trying to solve it.

A customer of an insurance brokers needed complicated insurance arrangements to allow her father to drive her car. The insurance provider kept issuing cover notes, instead of the full insurance policy while they dealt with it. When the customer complained to the broker, the broker took responsibility, and in addition to resolving the problem, offered additional insurance at no extra cost to make up for the inconvenience caused.

Try to settle the complaint quickly. Think of a complaint as a festering wound - until it is resolved it gets worse and during that time the customer is more likely to talk about it to other people. It is worth checking how much time elapsed between the time a customer complains and the time the matter is resolved. Aim to reduce that to the minimum. Sometimes, when a customer complains you will need to do your own checking before you can respond fully, and this may take some time.

If this cannot be avoided, respond immediately with an expression of regret that the customer has the problem, and explain the procedure and likely timescale.

Make it known that you welcome complaints as a way of improving your service.

Tell customers that you have a system for handling complaints, through notices, advertising, direct mail, whatever is appropriate.

Sell the idea of handling complaints effectively as a service opportunity to your staff. This is not intended as a criticism of the staff, to which they can react negatively, but if



they understand the logic, they will help to improve the service.

Thank your customers for complaining. If you develop the right attitude to complaints, you will generally become very grateful to the customers who do complain. Express that gratitude, and explain to them why you take complaints so seriously.

Problem Solving

By thinking in terms of the customer and their problems, solutions can be reached. Sometimes lateral thinking may be required, while at other times simply taking responsibility and doing something about it is all that is required.

Dealing with bad language/tears. This can be very distressing, and it is easy to react (child behaviour). However, it is better to be objective, think “adult”, do not take any abuse personally, and gather facts, not opinions. By talking calmly, using the voice techniques discussed in Unit 3, and repeating your response in a calm tone (the “broken record” technique), you give them no reaction, and they tend to run out of steam. Alternatively, you could suggest that you phone them back in an hour, at the company’s expense (they will think they have won a point, so will be more receptive). By then they have calmed down; you have gathered more facts, prepared what you are going to say, and can deal with/solve their problem effectively.

- Have a picture of a cartoon which makes you smile, or a photograph of a child, whatever makes you laugh, in front of you near the telephone, so that you can turn to it to lift your spirits.
- Discuss with your colleagues how they dealt with difficult calls, and learn from each other.



Well done – you deserve a break now!

Assessment to Unit 5

Fill in the gaps in the following sentences:

1. 10% of people are _____, and their behaviour causes 50% of _____.
2. You can generate a helpful attitude by _____ to your customers.
3. One of the keys to handling difficult customers is the ability to _____ your emotions.
4. For every complaint you see, there are _____ lurking just under the surface.
5. You can express regret without admitting any _____.
6. Don't _____ the buck - accept responsibility.
7. Tell customers you have a _____ for handling complaints.
8. By thinking in terms of the customer and their _____ _____ can be reached.
9. You can deal with bad language by being _____ and demonstrating _____ behaviour.
10. You can learn from your _____ about different ways to deal with difficult customers.



Unit 6 Assertiveness techniques to keep you sane

Exercise A	How Assertive Are You?	YES	NO
Can you:			
Say no to unfair or unwanted demands on you?			
Change your mind without feeling unreliable?			
Admit to mistakes without feeling stupid?			
Speak up at meetings and make sure that your views are heard?			
Express your opinions openly even when you disagree with another person			
Accept constructive criticism and praise?			
Give constructive criticism and praise?			
Face difficult decisions rather than avoid them?			
Handle sarcasm and put-downs without starting a fight?			
Let other people air grievances without feeling that you are being blamed or accused?			
Tell friends/colleagues/family exactly what you want without feeling guilty?			
<p>If you answered 'yes' to most of these questions then you are able to act assertively most of the time and are able to handle other people effectively. If you answered 'no' to some or many of the questions think about whether you want to be better at standing up for yourself and coping in difficult situations. If you do want to be more assertive think about assertiveness training</p>			



What is assertiveness?

“Behaviour which helps us to communicate clearly and confidently our needs, wants and feelings to other people without abusing their human rights”.

Gael Lindenfield

Assertive behaviour starts when:

- a) We decide what we want
- b) We decide if it is fair
- c) We ask clearly for it
- d) We are not afraid of taking risks
- e) We are calm and relaxed
- f) We express our feelings openly
- g) We give and take compliments easily
- h) We give and take fair criticism

Being assertive means:

- Thinking about your personal needs and wants
- Saying ‘no’ when someone asks you to do something you would rather not do
- Asking for what you want, rather than taking the standard offer
- In business, forcing decisions to be made on personal grounds as well as rational grounds. Very often, business decisions are made on a logical basis, which does not take the personal needs of the parties into consideration
- Taking the initiative when there are decisions to be made
- Not automatically going along with suggestions which others make
- Giving yourself permission to change your mind

In summary being assertive means having respect for yourself and those around you - whether or not you agree with their opinions. Sometimes it may involve compromise or negotiation to achieve a solution where everyone wins.



What is the difference between Aggression, Passivity and Assertion?

As human beings, we are programmed for flight (passivity) or fight (aggression). However, as our caveman ancestors started to get together and form relationships in communities, they developed skills through discussion, argument and negotiation. These tools enable us to successfully communicate with others. Increasingly aggression and passive behaviour are less socially unacceptable, and can be disguised. However, if we think about what is happening, we can soon recognise the different behaviours.

The Three Behaviours

Aggressive	Passive	Assertive
Non-verbal Signals		
Shouting	Whining voice	Calm and controlled voice
Loud voice	Clenched, wringing hands	Relaxed posture
Pointing finger	Shuffling feet	Direct eye contact
Folded Arms Still posture	Downcast eyes Stoop	Upright



Key Words and Sentences

- Used with the appropriate non-verbal behaviour

You'd better	Maybe	I
... If you don't	I guess	I think
Watch out	I wonder	I feel
Come on	Would you mind very much if ..	I want
Should	Sorry ... sorry .. sorry	Let's
Bad	Excuse me, please	How can we resolve this?
Stupid!	But	What do you think?
You!	You know	What do you see?
	If	
	I hope you don't mind	

Recognising how our behaviour developed

In order to be more assertive, we have to understand what has prevented us so far from being assertive.

We learn our behaviour from those around us. New babies communicate their needs and feelings by crying, kicking, screaming and other fairly direct methods. When children become older they learn to adapt their behaviour according to the kind of response their requests receive. So for example, the 'terrible two-year old' in front of you in the supermarket who is kicking and shouting and screaming has learned that this is the way to be bought a packet of chocolate buttons.

All school children go through the same process. How many of us remember the teacher we liked, and for whom we worked harder, than the teacher who either disliked us or did not notice us? Children experiment with different approaches and responses. Behaviour we have learned as children is often carried forward into adulthood.

When we were young we may not have had a model of assertive behaviour, somebody who we could trust and respect and want to be like. Other factors included the way we were criticised, the feeling of security that we had, our position in the family, achievements in the school system, and until recently, even gender, where women have tended to be more passive while men are often more aggressive.



This unit tackles both the internal and external aspects of becoming more assertive. However, assertiveness is a process, not an instant pill that can fix everything. Only by making definite steps to change your own thinking, and making this a habit, can you become really more assertive.

Taking risks and making mistakes

“Experience is the name everyone gives to their mistakes”

Oscar Wilde

If you are assertive you will view mistakes positively and see them as an opportunity to learn and do better next time. You will also recognise that you have done your best and did not abuse the rights of others. It is important to measure your successes by your own capabilities rather than comparing yourself with other people.

Being assertive means being your own best friend. Not everyone in the world will be nice to you, not everyone in the world will like you. You won't like everyone else in the world. But being assertive means being able to recognise when you are being abused or put down and cope better with unfair criticism and exploitation.

The process of becoming more assertive is in 5 parts:

1. Understanding ourselves, our own attitudes and feelings
2. Dealing with the outside world
3. Developing the habit of positive thinking and making it a habit
4. Creating the appearance of confidence
5. Applying assertive communication techniques

All of these need to be understood and then practised on a regular basis.



Exercise B

Time guide: 15 min.

Write down 10 good points about yourself. Don't be afraid to be honest, everyone has many positive qualities, so choosing just 10 shouldn't be too difficult.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Now write 5 points about yourself that you don't like. Be frank, they are for your reference only.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

When you have made your list go through each point in turn and ask yourself is this really true, or is it just what other people have told me?

Now go through the list of negative points and cross out each word and write the exact opposite in its place. So for example if you wrote 'angry' replace it with 'calm', if you wrote 'lazy' replace it with 'hardworking'. Notice how you feel as you write.

Now take each of your positive words and use them to complete the following sentence. For example, I am 'cheerful', I am 'funny'.

I am



My Confidence Charter

This is a real confidence booster and you should think about this daily. It is essential reading for those important occasions when you need to feel good about yourself. You might like to copy it, and keep it handy for whenever you are going into a situation, which needs confidence.

Today:

- ❖ I feel good about myself.
- ❖ I believe I always do my best.
- ❖ I like myself.
- ❖ I am strong. I am positive.
- ❖ I value my own good opinion of myself above the opinion of others - they don't know me as well as I do. If others choose to under-value me, that is their loss, not mine.
- ❖ My life is a journey. I can make it interesting or boring - it is up to me.
- ❖ I am happy. I am smiling.
- ❖ I am ready to tackle another day.
- ❖ I am determined to overcome my personal obstacles each day, one by one. I feel very satisfied when each obstacle is overcome, and will reward myself.
- ❖ I recognise negative emotions, and will turn them into calmness, clarity and peace.



Well done – you deserve a break now!



Assessment to Unit 6

1. Describe what you think assertiveness is.
2. List 5 ways you can be assertive:
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
 - d)
 - e)
3. List 3 ways you can recognise assertive, passive and aggressive behaviour.
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
4. “Only by making definite steps to _____ your _____, and making this a _____, can you become more assertive.”
5. Please indicate if you think these statements are true or false:
 - a) You can learn to be assertive in a couple of hours
 - b) We can understand why we are not assertive by studying our own behaviour in childhood.
 - c) Assertive people view their mistakes positively.
 - d) It is important to measure your success by comparing yourself with other people.



- e) If you are assertive, everyone will like you.
- f) There is only one thing you can do to become more assertive.
- g) If I look confident, people will be more likely to think that I am confident.
- h) I have more good points than bad points.
- i) People who are always smiling have something to hide.

11. The 3 key points on my Action Plan to be more assertive are:

- a)
- b)
- c)

12. “Being assertive means being our own _____”



Personal Action Plan

Now go back to the very first exercise in this course. Try it again, and see if your answers were very different than when you first started. You can use the differences to make up part of your Personal Action Plan.

Identify three key issues you must face in order to demonstrate your self-confidence and become more effective:

1.

2.

3.

How will you tackle them?

What problems are you likely to face?

How will you manage them?



Further Reading

The One to One Future Don Peppers and Martha Rogers
Crowning the Customer Feargal Quinn

How to obtain your certificate

If you have completed this course, please send a copy of:

- a) Your completed Unit Assessments
- b) Your Personal Action Plan

- together with your name and address.

To: The Assessment Centre
I-Marketing Services Ltd
10 Valiant Way
Christchurch
Dorset
BH23 4TW

Our assessors will check the standard of your work and if satisfactory, an I-Marketing Services Ltd Certificate will be issued.

