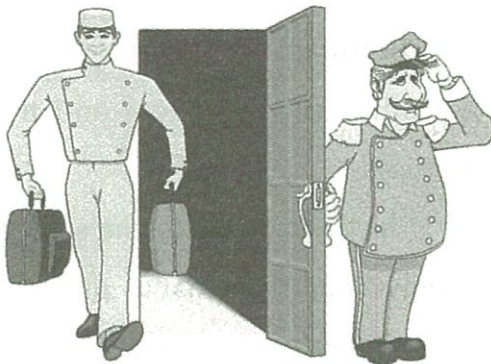


Providing Customer Service in Service Industry



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The service Industry is about what customers want. They stay in hotels, visit attractions, go to restaurants or leisure complexes because they want to. The service they get depends on service providers. Good customer service can increase income in any business, often by word of mouth. Therefore customer service is the key to the success of any business, especially in service business.

THE NATURE OF SERVICE

A service is a complicated phenomenon. According to Gronross (1990 : 27), a service is an activity or series of activities of more or less intangible nature that normally, but not necessarily, take place in interactions between the customer and service employees and/or physical resources or goods and/or systems of the service provider, which are prohibited as solutions to

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customer problems.

Most often a service does involve interactions of some sort with the service provider. However, there are situations where the customer as an individual does not interact with the service provider. For example, when a plumber using the main keys of an apartment complex goes into an apartment to fix a leakage when tenant is out, there are no immediate interactions between the plumber and the

customer. On the other hand, many situations where interactions do be involved. For instance, when a guest goes into at the reception in a hotel, a receptionist welcomes him.

There are immediate interactions between the guest and the receptionist.

The basic nature of the service product differs from that of physical goods which can be identified:

Physical goods	Service Product
-HOMOGENEOUS	HETEROGENEOUS
-PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION SEPARATED FORM CONSUMPTION	PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION AND CONSUMPTION SIMULTANEOUS
PROCESS	
-A THING	AN ACTIVITY OR PROCESS
-CORE VALUE PRODUCED IN FACTORY	CORE VALUE PRODUCED IN BUYER-
SELLER INTERACTIONS	
-CUSTOMERS DO NOT (NORMALLY) PARTICIPATE IN THE PRODUCTION PROCESS	CUSTOMERS PARTICIPATE IN PRODUCTION
-CAN BE KEPT IN STOCK	CANNOT BE KEPT IN STOCK
-TRANSFER OF OWNERSHIP	NO TRANSFER OF OWNERSHIP

KNOWING THE CUSTOMERS

We are all customers in some way. In other words, customers can come from every walk of life, be of any nationality or culture. Too often we limit our definition of a customer to some one who is outside of our company. In fact, everyone who works in a company has customers regardless of whether they work with external, paying customers or internal co-workers. Customers fall into external and internal categories.

1. The external customer - These are the people a service provider deal with, either face-to-face or over the phone, who buy products or services from a company. They are customers in the traditional sense of the word. Without them there would be no sales, no business, no pay check.

2. The internal customer - These are the people who work inside the company and rely on each other for the services, products and information

that they need to get their jobs done. They are not traditional customers, however they need the same tender, loving care to the external customers.

Sometimes we are the customer and other times we are the service provider. For example, a co-worker may come to us and ask for a printout of a report. In this case, we are the service provider because we are giving him what he needs. However, ten minutes later you may turn around and go to that same co-worker and ask for help on a project; now you are the customer.

CUSTOMER STYLE

All of us have some elements of four different styles in our personality. Here are the four styles as applied to customers.

1. D - Demanding Customer. He wants it now and doesn't care about the details.

2. I - Influential Customer. This person loves relating to others. He wants to be accepted and he likes to

talk a lot.

3. **S - Steady Customer.** Very interested in how things work. This is a reserved person who doesn't like change.

4. **C - Compliant Customer.** Interested in the quality of things. A stickler for making sure everything is in order and that the rules been followed.

The Demanding Customer - D Style

The demanding customer is no

doubt the most vocal customer. When things go according to his expectations, he will be the first one to buy something or accept and answer from someone trying to help him. Yet, if service is, in his opinion, done incorrectly, or if he feels challenged, he will be the first one to engage you in an argument. This type of customer can be perceived as being belligerent in service situations involving conflict.

Words and phrases we can use to successfully communicate with D style customers include:

- | | |
|---------------|------------------------|
| - Fast | - Benefits |
| - Immediate | - Bottom line |
| - Now | - Leaders in the field |
| - Today | - Win |
| - New | - Make it happen |
| - Let's do it | - Results |
| - Unique | |

Dos and Don'ts of Communicating with D Style Customer

Dos

- Be clear, specific, to the point
- Be prepared and organized
- Stick to business
- Present facts logically
- Ask specific (What?) questions
- Take issue with facts only
- Provide Win/Win Solution
- Provide choice of options

Don'ts

- Ramble, waste their time
- Look disorganized, lose things
- Chitchat, idle gossip
- Cloud issues, leave loopholes
- Ask rhetorical, useless questions
- Personalize issue
- Force D into losing situation
- Make decision for them

The Influential Customer - I Style

The I Style customer is the person who needs and wants to talk. He has a need for interaction with people and social recognition. Therefore he will be

optimistic, inspiring, persuasive, and trusting in his approach to you. He often speaks with enthusiasm, has a smile on his face, and is hoping for the same from you.

Words and phrases we can use to successfully communicate with I Style customers include:

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
| - Fun | - Recognition |
| - I feel | - Exciting |
| - You'll look great | - The latest thing |
| - Put you in the spotlight | - Wonderful |
| - State-of-the-art | - Awesome |
| - Everybody | - Fantastic |

Dos and Don'ts of Communicating with I Style Customers

Dos

- Allow them to discuss dreams
- Allow time for socializing/relating
- Talk about people/thir goals
- Ask for their opinion
- Provide ideas
- Put details in writing
- Be stimulating, fun, fast moving
- Provide testimonials
- Offer immediate and extra incentives for them to take risks

Don'ts

- Legislate or muffle actions
- Be curt/tight lipped
- Concentrate on facts/figures
- Be impersonal
- Waste time in "dreaming"
- Leave decisions up in the air
- Be too businesslike
- Talk down to them
- Get trapped and spend too much time

The Steady Customer - S Style

The S Style customer is an accommodating individual. This is the person who, when he is inconvenienced by your product not working will make sure he doesn't upset you with his complaint. The S Style customer is patient, relaxed, logical, and systematic. He is adverse to change, since he

doesn't want anything to upset his process. If your solution requires a great deal of change on the part of the customer, you are in trouble, especially if you don't soften the perceived impact of the requested changes. S Style needs to be secure in the fact that the solution is going to work and bring closure to the issue.

Words and phrases you should use in communicating with

S Style customer include:

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| - <i>Think about it</i> | - <i>Comfort</i> |
| - <i>Take your time</i> | - <i>Assure</i> |
| - <i>Trust</i> | - <i>You can expect</i> |
| - <i>Guarantee</i> | - <i>Conservative</i> |
| - <i>Promise</i> | - <i>Certain</i> |
| - <i>Security</i> | - <i>Here's what's going to happen</i> |
| - <i>Reliable</i> | - <i>Step-by-step explanations</i> |
| - <i>Help me to help you</i> | |

Dos and Don'ts of Communication with S Style Customers

Dos

- *Start with personal comments*
- *Show sincere interest in them*
- *Listen patiently and be responsive*
- *Present your solution logically, softly, and non-threateningly*
- *Move casually, informally*
- *Ask specific (How?) questions*
- *Provide personal assurance and guarantees*
- *Give them time to think*

Don'ts

- *Rush right into business*
- *Stick coldly to facts*
- *Force a quick response*
- *Threaten or demand*
- *Be abrupt and fast*
- *Interrupt them*
- *Mistake their acceptance of your solution for satisfaction*
- *Promise anything you can't deliver*
- *Force quick decision*

The Compliant Customer - C Style

The C Style customer is our everyday perfectionist. He wants it precise, orderly, and accurately. He is meticulous by nature and diplomatic in behavior. If we are going to satisfy a C Style customer, we better be armed with all the facts, figures, and supporting data we can get our hands on. C Style customers are sticklers for following the rules. If we deviate in any way from our policy or the law, they will let us know.

Words and phrases you can use with C Style customers include:

- Proven/proof
- Guarantees
- No risk
- Research (or data) shows
- Take your time
- Supporting data and analyze
- No obligation
- Here are the facts
- Information
- Analysis
- Think it over

Dos and Don'ts of Communicating with C Style Customers

Dos

- Be prepared
- Be straightforward and direct
- Look at all sides of an issue
- Present specifics of what you can do
- create time line and measurements
- Take your time, be persistent
- Use data and facts from respected people
- Give time to make decision
- Give them space

Don'ts

- Be disorganized or messy
- Be casual, informal, or personal
- Force quick decision
- Be vague and not follow through
- Over promise
- Be abrupt and fast
- Use emotions or feelings
- Close too hard
- Touch them

CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS

Each person or client group will have different expectations of a hospitality outlet. Customer's expectations arise from many different sources.

- * Advertising

- * Outlet's reputation

- * Previous experience of our organization or outlet with our product or service

- * What competitors offer-can they expect the same from our outlet?

As an example, a customer wanting afternoon tea in a high-class restaurant would expect a linen table cloth, a pot of tea with hot water, a cup and saucer, and served at the table. The customer does not need such style of service but expects it. The customer would be appalled if served with a polystyrene cup and plastic stirrer. On the other hand, a visitor to a bar would be surprised if served with a china cup and saucer and silver teaspoon.

Other establishments and situations encourage certain expectations, e.g. hotels with grading systems. Some people go to places just because they know to expect, and they are upset if things are different. A patient in a private hospital expects a single room with television and telephone and private bath and toilet, with meals and drinks delivered to the room.

Good quality service exceeds the expectations of customer. We need to identify with the service or product we are offering and give the customer a sense of belonging and being cared for.

Customers' expectations have risen with greater leisure, disposable income, increased travel, and, in general, greater knowledge of what the service industry can now offer. They have become more sophisticated, educated and demanding. This requires we to be:

- * Competent

- * Work quickly

- * Have a do-it-now attitude

Customers are not willing to wait around until we can find the time, they will find somewhere else to go.

- Discourteous staff

- Slow service

Great customer service can be a

Most frequent reasons for customers not returning to us

challenging profession, make the difference and set a company apart from the pack. The benefits will carry the company to greater heights and healthier profits.

- Not feeling safe or secure

- Poor performance of staff

- Uncomfortable

- Unfriendly staff



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