

# Exercise: Effective Customer Care and Communication for Call Center Agents

## Introduction and Learning Objective:

In this exercise participants will practice communication and customer services skills required for call center agents. By the end of the activity, participants will be able to:

1. Share prior experiences and knowledge regarding customer service
2. Identify ways to meet customer needs
3. Practice the skills necessary to meet customer needs
4. Communicate effectively with customers by telephone

## Links to Curricula:

- IT Essentials, Chapter 10
- Work readiness lessons on communication and customer service, particularly telephone communication

## Definition of Terms:

- Customer Service - Customer service is how we meet the needs of the people who use our services.

## Example of Application:

Recommended prerequisites for a call center operator include good communication and customer service skills. This exercise can be used during work readiness training lessons on communication and customer service.

## Facilitating the Activity:

1. With a partner, ask participants to discuss the definition of customer and share examples of when they have been customers and when they have served customers. Have them share experiences of good and bad customer service. What made it good or bad?
2. Ask a few pairs to share some of their examples. Emphasize that any time we buy something at a store, in a market, in a restaurant, etc. we are customers. Those who provided the services are providing customer service or care.
3. Ask the whole group to share why it is extremely important for call center agents to always provide excellent customer service.
4. Distribute the handout **What is Customer Care and Why is it so Important** and review the information together.
5. Ask participants: What is important to you when you call a business with a problem? What determines "exceptional service"?
6. Distribute the handout **Giving Exceptional Customer Service as Call Center Agents** and review the information together.
7. Ask participants to form groups of three people. One person should play the role of the customer, one should play the call center operator and the third person should observe. They will first role play that shows poor customer service. After the first role play, allow time for a quick debrief and ask

the observers to share what they witnessed. Switch roles. This time, the call center operator will provide exceptional customer service, using the suggestions in the handout on how to meet customer needs. Switch roles so everyone plays each part. The observer will take note of what the call center operator is doing to meet the needs of the customer.

# Handout: Giving Exceptional Customer Service as Call Center Agents

## A. Exceptional Customer Service

- ✓ Anticipates the customer's needs,
- ✓ Tries to understand what the customer is thinking, and
- ✓ Meets and exceeds the customer's highest expectations

## B. Basic Customer Needs – A customer needs to feel:

1. Welcome
2. Understood
3. Important
4. Comfortable

## C. Telephone Tips

- ✓ **Be ready.** Have pencil or pen and paper ready.
- ✓ **Answer promptly.** Answer within 2 to 4 rings.
- ✓ **Be friendly.**
- ✓ **Be polite.** Use “please”, “thank you” and “you’re welcome.”
- ✓ **Identify yourself.** Say your agency's name first, and then your name.
- ✓ **Repeat the caller's name.** Saying the caller's name helps her/him pay attention to what you say.
- ✓ **Listen carefully.** Make sure you understand what the caller is saying.
- ✓ **Give the caller your full attention.** If you need to deal with something during a phone call ask the caller if s/he can wait.
- ✓ **Don't guess at answers.** If you are not certain about information tell the caller you will find out and call back.

## D. Meeting Basic Customer Needs – To make a customer feel:

### Welcome:

- Be friendly
- Greet customer
- Introduce yourself
- Use a positive tone of voice
- Smile / lighten up

### Understood:

- Listen carefully
- Repeat or rephrase to make things clearer

### Important:

- Refer to customer by name
- Show interest in clients need
- Ask open-ended questions to understand customer's needs
- Thank customer for calling

### Comfortable:

- Show concern

# Handout: What is Customer Service and Why is it Important?

**Definition of Customer Service** - Customer service is how we meet the needs of the people who use our services.

**Levels of Customer Service** - There are different levels of customer service:

- a) **Poor service:** those giving service do not seem to care, do not make effort to please customers (example: the call center agent answering the phone sounds annoyed that someone is calling them).
- b) **Mediocre service:** service provided is okay. Those providing service care about customers but might not be able to provide customer with his needs. (example: the call center agent does not know the answers to many of the customer's questions).
- c) **Exceptional service:** quality of service is always excellent, customer always feels happy and well taken care of and recommends the service to people he knows. (example: the call center agent is informative and able to solve the customer's problems, all while being pleasant and helpful).

**Most customers (68%) stop doing business with a company due to rudeness or indifference.** You strive for exceptional service!

## Customer Care Principles

- The customer is boss!
- Never argue.
- Do not confront a customer.
- Always be respectful and listen to the needs of the customer.

## Why Is Customer Service Important?

Good customer service will have these **positive effects**:

- a) You will keep your customers and your customers will recommend you to others
- b) You will stand out from your competitors
- c) It makes the workplace more enjoyable so staff stay
- d) It shows your customers they are important
- e) Customers will enjoy visiting you and will buy more
- f) Customer service if done right will create word of mouth advertising
- g) It is the cheapest form of positive advertising.

Bad customer service will have these **negative effects**:

- a) Bad reputation
- b) Loss of confidence and trust
- c) Ends relationships
- d) Bad reference for career
- e) Loss of a job