



CUSTOMER SERVICE TRAINING PACKAGE

*PSO in collaboration with the Academy of Training
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The following training package is a combination of information that has been knowledgeably, carefully and thoroughly prepared by the Academy of Training and PSO. The said information was integrated by PSPSM from the National Conditions of Service and that in the Academy of Training customer service skills workshop which was delivered by Bill Butler, Principal Consultant and Director of Academy of training. Through such collaboration a tool has been established to ensure that the public service has the skills needed to handle both themselves and their customers efficiently and effectively.

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WHO IS A CUSTOMER?

A customer is well defined by Mahatma Gandhi “A customer is the most important visitor on our premises. He is not dependent on us. We are dependent on him. He is not an interruption in our work. He is the purpose of it. He is not an outsider in our business. He is part of it. We are not doing him a favor by serving him. He is doing us a favor by giving us the opportunity to do so.” Taking from this quote a customer is a person seeking our assistance and service and is the sole reason we have a job to go to every morning from Monday to Friday, 8 o’clock till 4:15 in the afternoon.

TYPES OF CUSTOMERS

Internal customer: those seeking our assistance and service from within our Ministry. for instance, fellow colleagues and HOD’s

External customer: those seeking our assistance and service from outside our Ministry. For instance, staff from other Ministries and

GOAL FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE

Supplying whatever is necessary to satisfy your Customers’ need. As a civil servant it is our job to discover the needs of our customers whether it is an application, advice, prompt service or etcetera.

KEY BEHAVIOURS FOR EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE

1. BEING PROACTIVE

Taking the initiative in a disciplined way to influence the outcomes. Making sure that we we do what we know should be done. In order to do so we must keep in mind that **everything we do or do not has an effect**. However, it is up to us to influence those outcomes in a positive manner.

	Initiative	Outcome
Helping customers	Be courteous, attentive, patient	Customer is happy and satisfied with service provided [positive].
	Being discourteous, disrespectful and impatient	Customer leaves unsatisfied with the service provided and is bound to never seek assistance from that staff again [negative].

2. KEEPING THE END IN MIND

Being focused on what we want to achieve once we have successfully accomplished a task. When it comes to customer service the end in mind is usually the achievement of the customer service goal which is customer satisfaction. Public servants must be aware of what is taking them away or towards the achievement of said goals.

3. FIRST THINGS FIRST

The need to always focus on what is important and prioritize in order of significance. Make preparations and plan so that you can achieve your goal.

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4. THINKING WIN-WIN

Looking for an outcome which is best for all parties-an outcome that achieves balance. When looking for the balance we must keep in mind that compromises will have to be made and that we may not always be able to give the customer what they want but the way we treat them is going to be very important.

5. SEEKING FIRST TO UNDERSTAND THAN BE UNDERSTOOD

Whenever we are serving customers it is our job as civil servants to ensure that we are able to help our customers. In order to do so we have to be able to have the skills to discover the needs of our customers, instead of drawing conclusions based on personal opinion. Therefore, it is important that we listen, are empathetic, patient, respectful, aware of different personalities, knowledgeable, polite, communicate effectively in order to fully understand our customers need so that we can help them effectively and efficiently.

6. SYNERGIZE

Aiming to make the most of our team and their different strengths and abilities to achieve maximum results.

7. SHARPEN THE SAW

Always remembering to take care of your skills, health and knowledge base. It is important to always update, refresh and renew.

ROAD BLOCKS TO COMMUNICATION

COMMON FACTORS THAT CREATE ROADBLOCKS

There are a number of factors which can create roadblocks in communication. They include:

- Assumptions
- Misunderstandings
- Different agenda's
- Language
- Distance
- Noise
- Distraction
- Other people
- Lack of interest
- Discomfort with the topic

However, the one of the greatest roadblocks to co-operation, input and buy-ins is where we or the other person feels criticized, faulted or judged negatively. The main cause of this roadblock is destructive criticism.

DESTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

At an early age we are being compared to others and told what to do and not to do. The effect can lead to us to feel that **we are not quite good enough**. This results in fear barriers, when trying to break these fear barriers we try to be perfect or avoid such situations that can lead to us being criticized.

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DEFENSIVE REACTIONS

Becoming defensive is a common reaction when feeling criticized or judged. Defensiveness may take the form of:

- Attacking back: it is not my fault it has to be the other persons fault
- Withdrawing support or further input: I cannot cooperate because I feel criticized
- Wanting to get even, to “plot revenge”
- Capitulating or backing down
- Justifying and trying to convince the other person.

We need to be able to avoid reacting in this way ourselves and avoid not knowingly bringing out these reactions in others. Emotional maturity is a technique that can be used to achieve this.

EMOTIONAL MATURITY

Emotional maturity is becoming more aware of our own behaviors and reactions and becoming faster at changing these to behaviors and actions that can enhance our level of service.

The key to this is to increase our self-awareness, identifying our strengths and weaknesses.

EXAMPLE: If we need to listen more, we catch ourselves interrupting customers and get better at keeping quite while they are talking.

CHANGE MODEL

We can change our behavior by understanding the process of change. There are four main steps to changing our behavior.

STEP ONE: UNCONSCIOUS “INCOMPETENCE”

Not really aware of our actions. We do not know we do it. For example, we do not know we interrupt our customers when they are trying to tell us their needs.

STEP TWO: CONSCIOUS “INCOMPETENCE”

Through feedback and greater self-awareness, we now become aware of what we do, but we are still unable to change it. For instance, we have been told that we interrupt our customers however we still do it.

STEP THREE: CONSCIOUS “COMPETENCE”

We know what we do, are aware of it and have careful strategies in place to act in the way we prefer. For example, we know that we interrupt customers when they are explaining their issue and we try to catch ourselves before we interrupt them and try hard to listen, and only make sure to talk when having a question.

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STEP FOUR: UNCONSCIOUS “COMPETENCE”

We become skilled that we carry out the preferred behavior without thought, it has become completely natural. For instance, instead of trying not to interrupt customers we have become skilled at listening and knowing when it is appropriate to ask questions.

TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS

This approach can be very helpful in building self-awareness and changing our own behavior. There are three types of behavior, as follows:

1: PARENTAL

Someone who is directive, controlling of others or “rescuing” of others.

#2: CHILD-LIKE

Someone who always plays the victim and is bound to say “poor me”

#3 ADULT

Someone who is more mature and sensible. The behavior to which we most want to aspire to.

SOCIAL STYLES OF BEHAVIOR

An understanding of the different social styles and personalities and how best work with them can be beneficial in gaining support for our recommendations and in dealing with the challenges that we may face.

DRIVER OR EAGLE

Someone who is perceived as **business-like** in relating to others, **aggressive, taking initiative** and **result-oriented**. He/she is perceived as a person seen as **liking to challenge new ideas**, who **responds quickly** and **does not hesitate to correct, amend, modify or confront others**. They like to **make things happen, take risks** and **see problems or tasks as a challenge**.

ANALYTICAL OR OWL

Someone who is perceived as **deliberate, constrained** and **logical**. The analytical is viewed as a **listener** who is seen as **maximizing the use of procedures, often weighing all alternatives** and **remaining steadfast in purpose**. They are often seen as **disciplined people, letting others take the social initiative, remaining independent of others** and **non-aggressive**.

AMIABLE OR DOVE

Someone who is perceived as **quiet, unassuming** and **supportive**; a **warm friendly listener** who is **easy to get along with, enjoys personal contact and shared responsibility**. He/she **likes time to build relationships** and **seeks support and feedback from others on decision**. They are seen as **cooperative** in their interactions with others.

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EXPRESSIVE OR PEACOCK

Someone who is perceived as **assertive, inspiring** and **emotional**. An expressive is often viewed as a **friendly person** who feels **comfortable taking the social initiative, spending time engaging in friendly small-talk before moving on the task at hand**. They are viewed as a person seen as **relying on feelings to help make decisions; excitable** and **ready to share insights and dreams**.

GETTING OUR MESSAGE ACROSS EFFECTIVELY

The usage of the following mnemonic "LISTEN" will ensure that the message gets across effectively to our customers and vice versa.

- L: Look and sound interested
- I: Inquire with questions
- S: Stay on target
- T: Test for understanding
- E: Evaluate the message
- N: Neutralize your own feeling

During communication with customers try avoiding the usage of the "you" as it may result in customers feeling criticized and judged. Additionally use normal/simple words, words that are understandable and not too technical.

QUESTIONS USED WHEN INQUIRING

1. OPEN QUESTIONS

Questions to get the bigger picture: how, why, tell me about it... etc.

2. CLOSED QUESTIONS

Questions to clarify information: who, where, when, did you?

3. PROBING QUESTIONS

Questions to get more information: when you said.....? what did you mean?

4. LEADING QUESTIONS

Questions to confirm: so what you are saying is....., is that correct?

TELEPHONE COMMUNICATION

Things to keep in mind when it comes to telephone communication:

- The phone must not ring for more than 3 rings
- Greeting [Verbal Handshake]:
"Good morning, [Ministry's name], this is [Your name], how may I help you"
- Always add on 30% to your voice when speaking on the phone so that your voice is clear and understandable.

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- Keep a neutral pace
- Add energy to your response not only in the morning but for that whole day, because it may be your 100th call but it may be your customers first time calling.
- First impressions are vitally important. Smiling on the phone affects tone and ensures that customers who see you face to face are confident that when offering your service whether face to face or on the phone you are giving them the best service you can provide.

DEALING WITH OPPOSITION

Perhaps the most important step in handling objections effectively is to acknowledge the objection. We should always, always “agree” with the objection. It is not that we agree to what they are saying, however, we are acknowledging that there is an existence of an objection.

Described below are some approaches which may assist in handling objections;

Ask for specifics: when you say that they did not serve you well, why is that so?

Narrow objections down: from your point of view what was done to make their service unsatisfactory?

One thing technique: when being assisted by a civil servant what is one thing that would help assist you best?

Non-negotiable technique: since I am not able to do what you have asked, is there any other area that I could help you with?

NEGOTIATING ALTERNATIVES [SAYING NO WITHOUT BEING UNHELPFUL]

Instead of saying no here are some alternatives that will ensure that your customer is satisfied with the service provided:

- If then approach: if we are to do this then this will happen
- Yes, However approach: Yes, we are able to do that, however, this may happen
- SCRAP technique: S: Situation
C: Complication
R: Resolution
A : Action
P: Politeness
- 95% decline: it is very unlikely that there is something I can do but I will check and get back to you.
- Normally technique: Normally I would be able to help. However, right now....
- Up until now: up until now, I have been able to..... however, things have changed.

DEALING WITH CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS

When dealing with customers complaints it is always good to:

- Always remember that you are the face of the government/company
- Listen do not interrupt \
- Apologize sincerely even if it is not your fault and even if the customer is right or wrong.

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- Empathize by showing that you understand
- Identify key issues causing the complaint quickly and agree with the customer on what needs to be done.
- State your proposed action and agree with the customer and remember to avoid negative words
- Thank the customer
- Make it happen. If you promise the customer that the service, he/she needs on a specific date make sure you do. However, if there are going to be delays make sure you explain thoroughly to the customer.

CODE OF CONDUCT

The government of the day expects to comply with the following code of conduct, “NICE HEART”, on a daily basis:

- Neat: Always be neat and tidy with work environment and dress standard
- Impartial: Always behave in an impartial manner by providing advice that is frank, honest, timely and based on merit and the best available evidence.
- Confidentiality: Do not disclose any information obtained in the course of employment for personal interest or others’ interest other than those in appropriate authority
- Ethical: Be ethical in all actions and decisions made and always seek to promote and uphold the good image of the public service
- Honest: Acting honestly, being truthful and abiding by the laws of Kiribati
- Efficient and Effective: Must be efficient and effective in providing services, advice and when using funds
- Accountability: Being able to explain the reason for actions taken, and taking responsibility for those actions
- Respect: Treat people/customers, the Government and colleagues with courtesy and respect
- Transparent: Ensure that there’s always transparency in the course of work and in decisions made.

OFFICE SETTING

The office should be set in way that is both employee and customer friendly. The waiting area should be clean, tidy, equipped with chairs, and should provide shade to customers. Additionally, the waiting area should have notices and guidelines to inform customers of their services.

As for employees they should work in an environment that is safe, clean, tidy and one that provides an environment of productivity.

DRESSING

Except where prevented by nature of work, employees must dress in a clean and tidy manner at all times [NCS D.5]. Civil servants must wear ID cards during working hours and

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when executing official duties. This will be beneficial as it will be easier for customers to get the assistance needed [as the officer that will best assist them is easily identifiable]. Additionally, it will boost employee performance as they are now more accountable for their actions as they are identifiable by customers.

CORE VALUES OF CUSTOMER SERVICE

In order to enhance customer service delivery, the following core values should be instilled into the public service:

1. Cultural Values of love, kindness, respect, prioritization of the old, disabled and pregnant and etcetera should be practiced
2. Business values of cost effectiveness, wise and honest integration with customers and on time customer service delivery should be practiced
3. Religious thinking of love, equality, sympathy, and giving special attention to the needy and the sick should be practiced among other values.

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