

Excellence in Customer Service

A Guideline

A compilation of data and information to empower each recreation facility team members when dealing with the public.



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What is Excellence in Customer Service?

Ask yourself – what is excellence in customer service?

Have you ever dealt with a company that continues to get your business because of the way you are treated as soon as you enter?

How does that make you feel?

Or have you visited a place only once but the experience was so positive you still talk about it?

How does that experience make you feel?

When was the last time you had bad customer service?

What was lacking in the delivery of service? How did it make you feel?

- **To each of us excellence in customer service may mean something different but in general we all experience that our presence in the care of someone else is top priority and as the customer we feel an important part of that company or business while being served.**

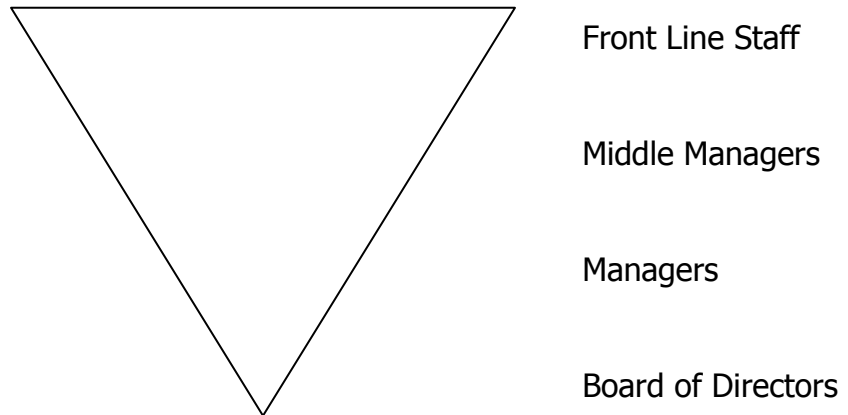
Exercise

Make a list of what you think helps make excellence in customer service:

<u>(i.e.) a welcoming greeting</u>	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

- **Everyone in an organization MUST work together to provide the best customer service.**

Inverted organizational structure



- **Since the customer deals primarily with front line staff, that contact becomes the most important contact of all. Therefore, YOU make the difference!**
- The instant a customer comes into contact with the people or systems that deliver the service for an organization it becomes the “moment of truth”.
- Remember, every organization’s greatest assets are its customers - because without customers – there is no organization.

What Is A Customer?

A customer is...

- the most important person to enter into this facility, whether it happens in person, over the telephone, by email, mail or fax.
 - not an interruption of our work, rather the purpose of it. We are not doing the customer a favour by serving him/her; rather he/she is doing us a favour by giving us the opportunity to do so.
 - not an outsider to our facility – rather integral part of it.
 - not dependent on us – we are dependent on him/her.
 - not a statistic, he or she is a human-being with feelings and emotions like our own – and with biases and prejudices.
 - not someone to argue or match wits with – nobody ever won an argument with a customer.
 - is someone who brings us his or her wants – it is our job to handle them profitably to him or her and to ourselves.
- **Knowing what a customer is will aid in the delivery and success of your facility programs and services.**

Studies of Customer Complaint Behaviour

A research company conducted customer complaint studies. Among their key findings...

- The average business never hears from 96% of its unhappy customers. For every complaint received, the average company actually has 26 customers with problems, 6 of which are serious problems.
- Complainers are more likely than non-complainers to do business again with the company that upset them, even if the problem isn't satisfactorily resolved.
- Of the customers who register a complaint, between 54 and 70 percent will do business again with the organization if their complaint is resolved. That figure goes up to a staggering 95 percent if the customer feels that complaint was resolved quickly.
- The average customer who has a problem with an organization tells 9 to 10 people about it. Thirteen percent of people who have a problem with an organization recount the incident to more than 20 people.
- Customers who have complained to an organization and had their complaints satisfactorily resolved tell an average of 5 people about the treatment they receive.

Another study indicates that...

- Dissatisfied customers tell 8-20 others their complaints – and anyone else who will listen.
- It takes 12 positive service incidents to overcome 1 negative one.
- A typical business only hears from 4% of its dissatisfied customers, 96% just go away, 91% never come back.

Dissatisfied Customers

Claim...

- 40% don't understand how things work
- 40% the structures and policies inhibit the service
- 20% don't like the ATTITUDE of the service providers

It has been documented that organizations/companies/businesses lose their customers for various reasons;

- 68% of customers stop dealing with companies because the salespeople and others giving the service are indifferent and show little interest in them or their problems
- 9% of customers change because they found somewhere cheaper
- 8% of customers are chronic "beefers" and buy according to their whims
- 7% of customers change from one company to another on recommendation of their friends
- 4% of customers float from one company to another
- 3% of customers move away
- 1% of customers die

➤ **Losing just one customer is a huge expense to any business or organization.**

Customers You Never Hear From Again...

We know this customer and maybe we have even been this type of customer – the one who never complains, no matter what kind of service is received.

The rationale behind this type of customer may include the philosophy that life is too short for indulging in unpleasant little scimmages. Never nag – never criticize and above all else never ever make “a scene” in public places. To display confrontation is inappropriate and this type of person considers himself or herself a “nice” customer.

But this type of customer will make the statement that because of the dissatisfaction in customer service they received their way of revenge is to *never* come back.

This action may not relieve hard feelings towards the business/organization at the start but in the long run it’s a deadly revenge.

How could this be considered a deadly revenge? Because you take that one customer who has taken this action of “I’m not going back” and multiply it by others who take the same action and this force can ruin a business/organization. And there are a lot of “nice” customers like this in every walk of life.

When a “nice” customer gets pushed far enough – he or she will go somewhere else for that service. They will stay at places where the employees at these other places appreciate and value their customers.

Frantically spending money on advertising and “gimmicks” trying to get back their business isn’t going to work, when all that “nice” customer wanted in the first place was a few kind words and a smile!

Exercise

Imagine yourself in a situation where customer service was unsatisfactory and you made up your mind that “I’m never going back”! What else may you do to inadvertently seek revenge?

Attitudes – We All Have Them

The Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary’s definition;

Attitude – the arrangement of the parts of a body or figure: posture; a mental position with regards to a fact or state; a feeling or emotion toward a fact or state; a position assumed for a specific purpose.

*It’s your attitude, not your aptitude
that determines your altitude.*

➤ **The key factor to excellence in customer service is *your* attitude!**

What each team member should remember about attitude;

- ✓ Your attitude towards customers influences your behavior - you cannot always camouflage how you feel – **55% of communication is non-verbal.**
- ✓ Your attitude helps determine the level of your job satisfaction.
- ✓ Your attitude affects everyone who comes into contact with you – whether it is in person or over the telephone.
- ✓ Your attitude is not only reflected in the tone of your voice but in the way you stand or sit, your facial expressions and in other non-verbal ways.
- ✓ Your attitude is not fixed – hence the attitude you chose to display is up to you!

When dealing with customers, the choice is yours and despite how your day is going you can reflect a positive, friendly attitude – so relax and smile 😊

Exercise

Go back to the exercise on page 1 regarding excellence in customer service, how many of the items on the list are a reflection of attitude?

First Impressions

- **As a team member at your facility, you are constantly in the public eye.**
- **Our customer's first impression of each and every one of us and our working environment will heavily influence his or her expectations of the service he or she is about to receive.**

*Perception is reality...
But it's not always the truth.
Tom Peters*

Imagine...

- A waitress with a running nose and wiping it with her hand.
- A pizza cook with long dirty fingernails.
- A doctor with bad body odor and oily uncombed hair.
- A lawyer with an organized desktop and a messy office.

Exercise

Have you ever run across scenarios like these? If not imagine and as the customer how do you react?

What do you perceive to be our customer's first impression of our facility?

How can we improve this impression?

Tips to Make Our First Impression a Positive One

- ✓ Make sure that you are well groomed each day.
- ✓ Check your appearance frequently during the day.
- ✓ Don't smoke or chew gum on the job.
- ✓ Make a habit of greeting guests as soon as they enter into the facility – if you are busy, give a smile and nod to indicate that you know they are there.
- ✓ Check the lobby and viewing areas for garbage on the ground and pick it up.
- ✓ Check windows for marks and smudges – give a quick wipe if needed.
- ✓ Keep the reception area tidy and well organized.
- ✓ Carry yourself with pride.
- ✓ Greet each and every customer courteously.
- ✓ Treat each and every team member as you would want him or her to treat you – with respect – gossiping leads to negativity amongst the team, which leads to separation among team members. We all play and work for the same team!

Exercise

What other tips can you think of that we could do to improve first impressions at your facility - as a team and individually?

Each time a customer comes into your facility he or she is mentally casting judgments about the service that he or she expects to receive. So make their first impression a lasting impression...in a positive way!

Lasting Impressions

Think of your work as if you and everyone you are working with are on stage – we are “cast” to “entertain” our customers. This means we need to relax, smile and enjoy making our customers happy with the service they receive by each team member. That with each performance we are up for an Oscar nomination!

There will be days when we really don't feel like smiling for whatever reasons – it happens to each and every one of us but the fact is we must continue to perform.

<p><i>The show must go on...</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Queen</i></p>

Striving for excellence in customer service especially during our facility's busiest times is essential. This is our chance to prove to our customers that we can manage whatever comes our way. It is our opportunity to shine!

Each one of us understands that our performance depends on each one of us, from the team member greeting the customer as he or she enters the facility to the team member who informs him or her about the safety regulations while using the slide. A performance well done means a performance worth repeating.

Exercise

Lasting impressions for the customer should mean a number of things – make a list of what positive lasting impressions could include;

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Good Customer Service Pays...Literally!

Communications

Dealing with people requires the communication of ideas and this is a two way process.

The Sender and The Receiver

Communication starts with an idea from the sender's mind – the sender translates that idea into words and this becomes the message. The receiver translates the message back into an idea. When the receiver's idea is the same as the sender's idea, effective communication has taken place.

Blah, blah, blah...

Vocal communication – what is it?

- Intonation
- Speed
- Volume
- Voice projection
- 38% of communication is vocal during the delivery of one idea

Verbal communication – what is it?

- Words
- Content of message
- Using the right words
- 7% of communication is verbal during the delivery of one idea

Non-verbal communication – what is it?

- Eye contact
- Gestures
- Body language
- Posture
- Facial expression
- Smile/frown
- 55% of communication is non-verbal during the delivery of one idea

Tips for improving communication;

- Choose the right time and place
- Ask questions to determine knowledge level
- Watch for non-verbal clues
- Use simple words
- Share your understanding of what has been said
- Use pictures or diagrams where appropriate
- Use gestures to assist you
- Use eye contact
- Use a friendly, smiling voice

Did You Hear What I Said? – Listening

Listening we all do it but some of us do this task better than others – it is hard work, it requires concentration but it is a skill that can be developed when practiced – think of listening well as an investment.

Tips to effective listening;

- ✓ Use eye contact - this helps to control visual distractions
- ✓ Listen with more than your ears – people give out non-verbal cues, many of which take place in the facial area
- ✓ By observation of body language, you may learn how the speaker “feels” about what is being said rather than relying on words alone
- ✓ Learn to use your thinking time wisely – train your mind to scan for key ideas
- ✓ Try to identify the theme of the sender’s message and check your grasp of facts through use of questions
- ✓ Control your mouth – become an observer
- ✓ Avoid the trap of becoming “one who listens to him/herself speak”
- ✓ Listen with an open mind – everyone’s range of interest has its limits, so we have a tendency to resist ideas that are of no personal interest to us
- ✓ Be aware of any prejudices you might have – guard against the tendency to exercise emotional censorship, to blank out or skip over ideas which we would rather not hear

*I know you believe you understand what you think I said,
but I'm not sure you realize that what you hear is not what I
meant!*

Active Listening

In some situations basic listening skills are not sufficient – additional listening skills are required. This group of skills encompasses what’s known as “active listening”.

The following steps will assist you in active listening;

- ✓ **Non-verbal contact** – eye contact, nods, posture and smiling
- ✓ **Verbal attends/attempts** – nods uh-uh, grunting
- ✓ **Door openers** – open ended questions – “what happened?” etc
- ✓ **Restating** – which includes;
 - *Mirroring* – reflecting back feelings – in other words, say what you think the other person feels
 - *Paraphrasing* – reflecting back content, in other words, say what you think the other person said
 - *Summarizing* – reflecting back content and feelings of several statements – in other words, sum up what you think the other person felt and said in total about a situation

<u>Example</u>	<u>Active Listening Skill</u>
1. A little boy came in crying. His knee is skinned and bleeding. His mother says, “I bet that really hurts! What happened?”	She is <i>mirroring</i> his feelings.
2. He tells her what happened. His mother says, “So Ethan ran into you when you were running and you fell.”	She is <i>paraphrasing</i> his account of what happened.
3. The mother asks, “What happened next? He explained to her. She then said, “Ethan ran into you; you fell skinning your knee. You were so mad you punched him. Now your knee hurts but you also feel bad about losing your temper.”	She is <i>summarizing</i> including his <i>feelings</i> about the situation and the <i>content</i> of what had happened.

Continuing With Active Listening

Effective listening is as important as effective speaking. The sensitive listener listens with an understanding attitude. He or she takes into account the problems of listening and realizes that to large extent one listens with his or her experience.

To achieve effective listening the receiver needs to keep the following in mind;

- Listen to understand what is meant – not ready yourself to reply, contradict or refute.
- Know that what is meant involves more than the dictionary meaning of the words that are used – it involves the tone of voice, the facial expression, the over-all behaviour of the sender.
- As you observe all of this be careful not to interpret too quickly – look for clues to what the other person is trying to say, putting your self in the sender's shoes, looking at the world as the sender sees it, accepting the sender's feelings that have to be taken into account, whether the receiver shares them or not.
- Put aside your own views and opinions for the time being – realize that you cannot listen to yourself inwardly at the same time you listen outwardly to the sender.
- Do not prepare your answer while you listen – you want to get the whole message before deciding what you will say.
- Be interested and alert and show it – this stimulates the sender and improves his or her communicating ability.
- Do not interrupt – ask questions to secure more information and find areas of agreement rather than to trap the sender.
- Expect the sender's language to differ from the way you would say the same thing yourself – do not quibble about words or style, but try to get at what is meant.
- Provide feedback, summing up what you understand the sender to be saying – if there is any misunderstanding, it can be rectified immediately.
- Avoid negative feedback, put-downs, solution giving, etc, that blocks further communication.

Exercise

In pairs have one to draw and the other to describe the drawing. The person describing the drawing stands opposite the drawer so that neither can see each other.

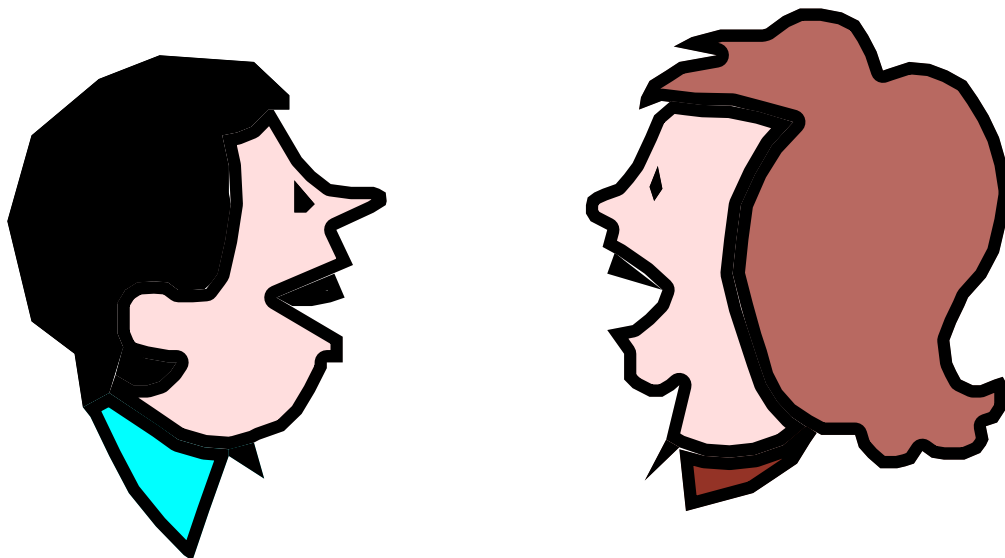
Have the drawer draw exactly what he or she sees.

The drawer cannot ask any questions, he can only listen.

Now draw the same drawing, this time they face each other and the drawer can ask questions.

Compare results.

Remember - communication is a two way street!



The Total Service

Total service at your facility includes three levels of products;

1. **Generic Products** = basic products being offered
i.e. Swimming or Skating Lessons
2. **Expected Products** = basic expected products
i.e. clean, hygienic facility, knowledgeable and caring staff
3. **Augmented (value added) Products** = extra unexpected products
i.e. the additional products that exceeds the customer expectations; the extra mile product; being unique, distinctive better, faster, more responsive, different from the customer's point of view; in time, this level of product becomes the expected product – this is the time you need to move to another level of augmented service.

Exercise

What does augmented/extra mile service mean to you?

Think of examples where you gave or where you received "extra mile service" – what did that include?

Excellence in customer service – means going that extra mile for each customer.

How To Make It All Work – Providing Excellence in Customer Service

As a team member strive to provide “shockingly” high levels of responsiveness!

Let’s go that extra mile!

Excellence in customer service depends on each one of us – our skills and knowledge needs to be shared in order to ensure constancy in customer service and to keep each team member ahead of the customer.

We aim to please!

How can we do this? List ways the staff at can “aim to please” our customers?

Everyone is accountable!

Each team member is responsible for quality and excellence in customer service.

There are times when rules must be replaced with good judgment when dealing with the public.

Everyone is responsible for problem solving – front line staff need to be empowered to be able to make changes and resolve minor issues or concerns.

Know your stuff!

As a customer service representative, you are the one who represents our facility and it is very important to be aware of everything that is going on in the facility. Your knowledge of programs and procedures must be kept up to date as “you can’t sell what you can’t defend.”

Changes time and time again...

Constant change is necessary to better the system. Changing with the times for the times, means introducing new ideas, facing new challenges and improving yourself continually. Staying with a “safe” system will soon become static and out-dated.

Success comes in CANS and failures come in CAN'Ts!

Celebrate failure!

Failures may occur when changes are introduced and if we give ourselves permission to fail by way of lack of communication.

Excellence is a journey - not a destination!



Hospitality

The Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary's definition;

Hospitality – hospitable treatment, reception, or disposition.

Your compliments make us bloom, but your complaints make us grow, so please give us your complaints/comments.

Tips on how to handle complaints

Dealing with feelings

- **Do not take complaints personally.** Look favourably on the complaining customer's motives. The unhappiest employee is the one who goes through life suspicious of every customer's motives.
- **Remain calm and in control.** When one person is furious and the other cool, onlookers are very likely to suppose that the person who keeps their temper is right, even though they may not be.
- **Do not argue or deny feelings – listen all the way through.** Your objective is to be concerned with "what is right" rather "who is right".

Dealing with the problem

- **Find out what the person wants.** Don't second-guess the customer. Let them tell you exactly what they want.
- **Share information.** If you don't have the authority to deal effectively with the complaint, refer upward to someone who does.
- **Suggest alternatives.** Be familiar with the facility's policies and procedures. Be aware of the limitations of your position. Never suggest alternatives you cannot deliver.
- **Agree on a solution.** Remember, you may not be able to completely satisfy each and every complaint situation.
- **Follow-up.** Check that the course of action is carried out as soon as possible.

Be proud if...

- You've even attempted to handle a complaint.
- You've been approachable.
- You've listened with an open mind.
- You've tried to the best of your ability.
- You've learned how to handle it better next time.

Always remember...

There will be understanding, non-understanding and misunderstanding in any situation.

No matter how well the Olds Aquatic Centre operates – there will be an inconvenienced or upset customer.

Exercise

Have you ever been in a situation that made you upset and the business or organization in exchange dealt with the situation in a very professional manner? What did they do or say that made the situation better?

How to Deal with Line-Ups

Long line-ups may be experienced during registration times and/or peak times. How can staff minimize long line-ups and delays?

Exercise

If you see a line-up or if you are expecting a busy period, what action should you take?

List 5 ways to minimize waiting time?

List ways of how to enhance the customer's perception of our service when there is a long line-up, or when you are on the telephone, or completing a long transaction? (i.e. acknowledge the customer in the line-up, react immediately – with nod, eye contact, etc).

Telephone Answering

➤ **Minimize the number of rings.**

Telephone skills and techniques

- The telephone is an extremely vital business tool and to use this tool effectively requires training and practice. While it is a fact that anyone can answer the phone, it takes a skilled professional to answer it correctly – to ensure that callers will want to continue doing business with our facility.
- Remember the team member to whom answers the phone is the “voice” for the facility. And your technique creates an impression – in the mind of the caller – of how our facility operates.
- Your voice alone must convey to the caller your enthusiasm, your understanding and your willingness to assist him or her.
- When communicating face-to-face up to 70% of the message is visual (facial expressions, gestures, etc). On the phone you are limited to voice alone and this makes the way you present yourself, your “telephone personality” extremely important.
- Answering the telephone is part of our jobs and if you feel you are being interrupted every time the phone rings, chance are that this feeling will be conveyed to the caller by the abrupt way you answer the telephone.
- The moment you speak into the phone you set the mood for the entire conversation and you must convince the caller by what you say and by how you say it that you are willing to help him or her.
- Always put yourself in the other person’s place and give him or her the kind of telephone reception you would like to receive yourself.
- One discourteous or abrupt call can cancel the good relations built up by any number of courteous, sympathetic contacts.

Good telephone habits

- ✓ When you are going to be away from the phone leave word with someone.
- ✓ Treat every message as an important call.
- ✓ Always identify the facility by name and state your first name in your greeting or when you place a call.
- ✓ Personalize your conversation at every opportunity by using the caller’s name.

Good Telephone Techniques

- ✓ When handling calls for others;
 - Always be informative, courteous and interested
 - Always offer the caller help or assistance
 - Avoid asking, "Who's calling?"
 - Be tactful if you must screen calls.
 - When taking messages for another person, make complete notes.
 - Transfer calls only when necessary.
 - Explain when you have a caller on hold and return to the line promptly.
 - Project a good phone image.
 - As the conversation ends, thank the caller and say "Goodbye".

- ✓ Taking a good message
 - Be sure to get as much information as is necessary for the messaged party to be able to understand the message.
 - Write or print clearly, spell names correctly, read back the numbers to be sure they are correct, read back message to be sure you have understood, screen calls in terms of urgency and importance so the messaged party can prioritize effectively.
 - Gathering all of the information above is a safe guideline to be sure the call has been handled correctly.