

Front Office Service

Level-II

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Acronym

CRM	customer relationship management
VIP	very important person
VVIP	very very important person
OTS	online travel agents
VOC	voice of the customer

Introduction to the Module

This module describes knowledge, skills and attitude required to provide quality service to customers in a range of service industry workplaces. It requires the ability to determine and address diverse customer needs and expectations, ascertain changes in customer preferences, establish rapport, deal with complaints and difficult service situations, use opportunities for promoting and up-selling, apply knowledge of protocol and ritual for particular types of industry sectors and organizations, and systematically manage a clientele through rewards systems, databases, etc.

This module covers the units:

- Developing and maintain product, service and market knowledge
- Providing a quality service to customers
- Identify complaints and deal with difficult customer
- Refer complaints

Learning Objective of the Module

- Develop and maintain product, service and market knowledge
- Provide a quality service experience to customers
- Identify complaints and deal with difficult customer
- Refer complaints

Module Instruction

For effective use this modules trainees are expected to follow the following module instruction:

1. Read the specific objectives of this Learning Guide.
2. Read the information written in the “Information Sheet”.
3. Accomplish the “Self-check ”
4. Submit your accomplished Self-check.
5. This will form part of your training portfolio.

Unit one: Product, Service and Market Knowledge

This learning guide is developed to provide you the necessary information regarding the following content coverage and topics:

- Formal and informal research
- Products, services and promotional initiatives
- Customer preferences, needs and expectations
- Market, product and service knowledge
- Suggesting idea to appropriate person for adjustment

This guide will also assist you to attain the learning outcomes stated in the cover page.

Specifically, upon completion of this learning guide, you will be able to:

- Identify formal and informal research to develop knowledge of products and services
- Use evaluate products, services and promotional initiatives
- Evaluate customer preferences, needs and expectations
- Share market, product and service knowledge
- Suggest idea to appropriate person for product and service adjustments

1.1 Formal and informal research

Research into all aspects of the operation is important in ensuring the offering to the customer is appropriate in meeting their needs. By conducting research it is easier to identify any problem areas where a product or service is not to standard and to highlight deficiencies in service delivery. By identifying both the strong and weak areas of performance, appropriate changes can be made to help improve the customer experience.

Actually did do marketing research. In this section we will cover the formal marketing research process as well as what we will call the informal processes such as marketing intelligence and secondary research. However, the use of the term formal and informal doesn't connote the importance of either, rather the degree to which the data collected can be depended on, projected to the total population under study and whether the information can be replicated. Many marketing problems and opportunities can be solved by gathering information from a company's daily operations and analyzing it. Market intelligence involves gathering information on a regular, ongoing basis to stay in touch with what's happening in the marketplace.

1.1.1 Types of research

As mentioned, marketing is all about research. As identified research should be designed to identify:

- What the customer wants – needs, wants and expectations
- What we are currently offering to the customer – products and services
- What we can improve.

Formal and informal research may include,

- Discussions with colleagues
- reading organization information
- Research of product and service information brochures
- General media
- Membership of industry associations and networks
- Attendance at conferences, trade shows and industry events distributing surveys and questionnaires

Research can be defined as a search for knowledge conducted on an informal and formal basis. This knowledge should be used as the basis for customer-focused action.

Informal research

Informal research is casual in nature and may include:

- Discussing information with colleague
- Seeking customer feedback by asking questions
- Personal observation of customers and service delivery and then self-reflection on what you have seen
- Discussing information with a wider network of contacts
- Discussing information with the public in public places
- Articles seen on TV or reading the newspaper, magazines or books.

Formal research

Formal research is more structured and deliberate in nature and involves:

- Reading printed material from your property – food menus, beverage lists, compendiums, advertising and promotional material
- Enrolling in a specific course related to the area you want to find out about
- Reading product and service information brochures
- Surfing the Internet for information about a specific topic
- Visiting the library – reading books and viewing tapes about a specific topic
- Developing, distributing and analyzing questionnaires – this is fundamental market research
- Attending conferences and seminars – to seek information and to network with others
- Attending product launches
- Attending Industry Associations functions.

1.1.2 Conducting research

When conducting research it is usual to follow the steps below:

- Specify at the outset the information that needs to be gathered to address the issue you have identified as being a problem – the issue may be falling patron numbers in the restaurant, lack of booking in the rooms
- Design and trial the data collection method to be used – see below
- Collect the data - do the research and compile the information
- Analyze the results – what does the data tell you? What do customers want? What do they dislike?
- Communicate findings, implications and recommendations to appropriate persons or departments – this includes staff and management
- Develop policies and procedures to align with identified customer need and preferences – and promote these to staff to ensure the identified service requirements of customers are met.

1.1.3 Primary and secondary data

Research can be categorized into two main types: primary data and secondary data.

Primary data Primary data is fresh, new, original information you discover, uncover, find or bring to light. Primary data collection methods include:

- In-house observation – watching people, watching what goes on (perhaps taking notes)
- Conducting interviews – with customers, staff, suppliers to find out why they do what they do, what they prefer, what they like or dislike about the venue
- Applying questionnaires – to customers as they leave the venue, after they have made a purchase, or as they visit the property. The questionnaires can seek answers to a range of topics including customer service delivery standards
- Conducting surveys – such as using focus groups to provide feedback to the venue about customer service.

Primary data is very useful as it is not only structured to finding out data that is specific to your organization, it allows you to gain a firsthand understanding and explanation of results.

1.1.4 Secondary data Secondary data

Is information which already exists somewhere in the world. It could be within the organization, or research conducted by another organization, but which you bring together to use to help shed light on the topic central to the research.

Secondary data collection techniques include:

- Reading newspapers, books, magazines, trade journals and the media
- Researching library catalogues and other sources
- Subscribing to on-line computer information systems
- Analyzing trading figures, occupancy and booking statistics, costs, profit and any other relevant internal information.

Secondary data is a great tool to use when you are limited on time, require broader industry information and that which you could not collect yourself. It provides sound evidence which is helpful in seeking to improve service.

Quantitative and qualitative data

Research data can further be separated into quantitative data (known as „hard data“) and qualitative data (known as „soft data“).

Quantitative data

Quantitative data is statistical in nature. It deals with „quantifying“ things such as:

- The number of times a person visits the premises
- The amount of money they spend
- The number of minutes they are kept waiting for service
- Their satisfaction rating in % terms with our service.

Qualitative data

Qualitative data is important in a service industry such as hospitality because it answers the „Why? “ questions such as:

- Why do they eat with us and not the opposition across the road?
- Why do they prefer healthy food?
- Why have they stopped coming to the nightclub?

1.2 Products, services and promotional initiatives

Promotional activities need to be effectively planned and scheduled if the organization's ultimate marketing and promotional objectives are to be achieved. The promotional plan provides a framework for the organizations' promotional activities. The foundation of any promotional plan is the development of objectives or goals – what will the organization's promotional efforts achieve?

Products, services and promotional initiatives May include,

- Tours and transport
- Conferences and conventions
- Entertainment
- shopping services
- Restaurant facilities
- Food and beverage add-on services and special offers or packages

1.2.1 Promotional objectives

Promotional objectives are usually outlined in the organizations' marketing plan or corporate plan. Therefore, actually determining these objectives is often not the responsibility of those who implement the marketing and promotional activities.

The obvious objectives or aims of a promotional campaign may be:

- To generate or increase sales
- To increase awareness and knowledge of the organization, or a product, service or brand
- To create or alter an image of the organization in the marketplace
- To change consumers' attitudes to a product, service or brand to increase the response to a product, service or brand from a particular demographic group
- To improve or maintain market share
- To retain existing customers
- To provide a reason to buy a product or service.

1.2.2 Determine roles and responsibilities

Make sure you are familiar with the title, role and responsibilities of those people in your organization who are involved in the planning, implementation and review of promotional activities. Take time to clarify your own responsibilities and identify those of team members, the people you need to report to for approval of plans, those responsible for budgets and time lines, and those you can approach for suggestions and support. If it is your responsibility to contribute to the development of promotional objectives, you must clearly define exactly what the promotional program is designed to achieve. Promotional objectives evolve from the organization's overall marketing plan and the identification of its target customer and audience groups. Responsibility for the promotion of products and services differs markedly between Organizations. Here is a brief overview of the variations in roles and responsibilities between large and small companies.

1.3 Customer preferences, needs and expectations

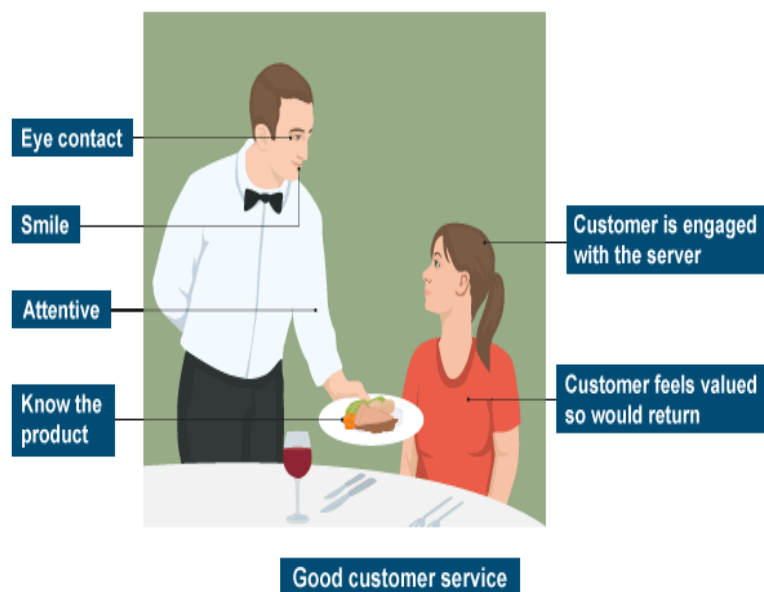
The hospitality industry is always associated with customer service. Many people see hospitality organizations, whether hotels or resorts, as a place to relax and take a break from their normal everyday stresses. As we know, there are a wide variety of customers who frequent a hospitality organization, for many reasons. They may be customers utilizing:

- Accommodation –leisure, business or resident
- Food and Beverage –restaurants, bars, functions, room service, banquets
- Leisure facilities – pools, spa, sauna and gymnasium.

Customer care is an essential part of any hospitality business. Customers provide income, and help make the business profitable.

When the needs of customers are met through high standards of customer care they return.

When their needs are not met and they experience poor service they do not return and



this means loss of business and less profit.

With a wide variety of outlets to choose from, customers are not prepared to put up with low standards.

Providing good customer care involves:

Fig 1.3.1 good customer service

- Putting the customer first
- Making them feel they are important and valued
- Ensuring the environment is comfortable and safe

The Customer is ...

You may have seen what follows on posters and postcards around the place. Sometimes it's hung up in staff rooms and sometimes it graces the walls of the manager's office. It is a pretty good description of who the customer is and sends us a fairly clear message about how we should treat them:

- “The customer is not dependent on us, we are dependent on them
- The customer is not an interruption to our work, they are the sole reason for it
- The customer does us a favor by walking in or phoning up, we don't do them a favor by serving them
- The customer is part of our business, not outside it
- The customer is not a statistic. The customer is a flesh and blood human being with feelings and emotions
- The customer is not someone to argue with or match wits with
- The customer brings us their wants and needs and it is our job to satisfy them
- The customer is deserving of the most courteous and respectful attention we can give them

- The customer is the lifeblood of our business, because without them there is no business this is what a customer is”.

1.3.1 Customer needs, wishes and expectations

Customer service revolves around us meeting or exceeding customer needs, wishes and expectations. It seems appropriate, then, to identify what these mean.

Needs

These underlie wishes and expectations and are the things customers are unable to do without. They may be in a foreign town and simply cannot do without a bed for the night, a meal or beverage.

Wishes

These refer to the way in which our customer would prefer to satisfy a specific need, but they may not have the resources to meet these wishes. They may wish to stay in the luxury suite, dine at an internationally renowned, 5-star, fine dining restaurant and drink expensive, but they haven't got the money to pay for it so they settle for something else.

Expectations

These spring from the customers' needs and wishes but are also influenced by:

The company's image or reputation in the market the customer's previous perceptions and their experience with the company The Company's advertising. Customers know they can't afford the luxury mentioned above, but as a result of our advertising and their previous experiences with us, they know they will get a clean and satisfactory room, wholesome food at value-for-money prices and a good range of drinks at fair prices to pick from, all delivered with great service - so they elect to stay and dine with us. Our big problems start when what the customer actually experiences is at odds with their expectations.

Customer expectations:

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1. Value for money:

Customers want to

feel that they get good value for the quality of the products and services they receive. Good value does not mean cheap. When a customer goes to a fine dining restaurant they will expect to pay more, but they will also expect good surroundings, well turned out and highly trained staff as well as exceptional food.

2. Accuracy and reliability: Customers will expect the quality of products and services to be consistent. Products should be as described and the quality of the food should always be the same irrespective of which chef cooked it. Items on the menu should be as described so the customer has accurate information when making a choice; if the menu describes a dish as made with breast of chicken then only breast should be used and not the leg or thigh. When a delivery service tells the customer the order will be delivered in 15 minutes, then it should be. Bills and accounts should always be accurate.

3. Information, advice and help: Staff must understand the needs of the customer. In a restaurant waiting staff may be asked about a dish and it is essential that they know what is in it and can describe the ingredients so that the customer can make an informed choice. Sometimes a customer may look unsure and if a member of staff observes this,

Help and advice should be offered. This shows good service by being aware of the customer's needs and providing information and advice before being asked – exceeding customer expectation.

4. Dealing with problems and complaints: Problems such as cold food, a room is not up to standard or a member of staff is rude can lead to complaints. These should be dealt with immediately in a pleasant and polite manner. Some form of compensation should be offered, for example a reduction of the bill, moving to another room or a complimentary drink. This makes the customer feel valued and respected and they are likely to overlook the issue. Other problems may not be caused by the business, like if a customer becomes ill, receives bad news or has lost an item. When situations like this happen, the action taken by staff to provide help and support can go well above the expectations of the customer and have a positive impact on the business's reputation.

5. Health, safety and security: All businesses have a duty of care towards their customers. This means that employers and employees have a responsibility to ensure the

premises are safe, clean, and secure for everyone. Training of staff in all health and safety legislation should be in place so that customers are not put at risk. The standard, level and how that service is delivered, that differentiates one place from another.

1.3.2 Identify customer needs, wishes and expectations

To gain a real understanding of the customer's needs, wishes and expectations, we should:

- **Involve the customers in developing new services**

Use market research tools such as questionnaires, taste testing and observation to identify their likes and dislikes, needs and wants, expectations and experiences.

- **Organize and conduct a series of focus groups**

Establish a regular meeting between the establishment and specifically chosen customers. The customers should represent a cross-section of your clientele and each focus group meeting should have a well-defined focus point. The person chairing the focus group guides discussion, debate, opinion, feedback about the topic and records the input from the focus group members. This information becomes the basis for management-staff discussion and eventual policy modification, or creation. Focus groups are an excellent way of bringing „customer focus“ to your service standards and service delivery.

- **Actively listen to the customers**

Prompt the customers to communicate with you, follow-up on non-verbal cues when they talk to you as body language often indicates a hidden desire to say something. Encourage them to expand and clarify problems and criticism.

- **Make decisions and act on the basis of the customer's motives, needs and expectations**

We must operate in a way that focuses on what the customer wants rather than on what is easier for us, simpler for our „in house“ systems or in accord with „what we've done in the past“. We absolutely must be customer-focused as opposed to being self-focused.

- **Wear customer spectacles and see with the customer's eyes**

We have to strive to find out what our establishment and our service looks like from the customers' point of view. We can become too obsessed on what the service looks like from the delivery viewpoint, when really the customer sees it from a „receive“ viewpoint. We need to identify how our service looks from the other side. We can often think the service is great when the customer thinks it is appalling.

- **Actively look for customer feedback**

We need to implement not only written response sheets and questionnaires, but also encourage staff to be proactive in soliciting verbal feedback from customers in a face-to-face setting such as at check-out, after they have finished their meal and via personal follow-ups with hosts and clients after functions.

- **Ask customers what elements or factors of service are of particular importance to them**

Determine what they value and do not value. Sometimes, what we think is important isn't. This reinforces we must be customer-focused. We do not always know what the customer wants because their needs and preferences are always changing. If we don't change with them we risk losing patronage and market share. As the saying goes “customers are the school books from which we learn”.

- **Analyze the market trends**

We need to tap into any information generated by industry bodies to help to identify what is happening industry-wide or elsewhere within the industry, be that on a national or internationally basis. All peak bodies undertake some form of research and it is essential to read what the research finds.

- **Analyze the competitors Check out the opposition.**

This can include becoming a customer there and getting firsthand knowledge about what they are doing, what they have to offer, their prices and their service levels, from making the booking right through to departure. Get hold of their advertising and analyses it. What image are they projecting? What offers are they making? How do we compare?

- **Staff feedback**

Staff must be actively encouraged to provide input to the development of quality customer service, too. After all it is staff who are delivering the service and them who are best placed to understand what the needs and wants of customers may be. Not including staff in this research process is a very dangerous thing to do. Not only do you risk missing out on vital

Information they know or have obtained from customers but you also send a message to staff their input,

Opinion is not valued or valid. Excluding staff at this stage also makes it a lot more difficult to build commitment to any service delivery changes or initiatives which need to be implemented.

1.4 Market, product and service knowledge

A marketing concept defines the strategy that companies use to market their products or services to customers. The goal of marketing is to promote the benefits of a product. For instance, a cosmetic company can use marketing to explain how its products make a person feel more attractive, confident and happier in order to influence his purchase decisions. A marketing concept also enables companies to gain a competitive advantage in the industry.

Product knowledge

In order to talk about, recommend or upsell staff need to fully understand each of the products and services available. Do they know?

- What are the high profit items
- What are the component parts of any packages
- What's not included, but may be relevant to offer to the customer

Allow staff to experience all the products and services first hand – this will not only make them more memorable, there will be more willingness to promote if they are confident to talk about it, and it will certainly be easier to evoke emotional appeal through vivid descriptions of taste, smell, feel, if they've experienced them themselves.

Tomorrow we'll look at the second of the three key things your staff need to upsell effectively.

For more articles and resources

Spot the opportunities

Let them identify all the situations that lend themselves as an opportunity to upsell – not just in their own department – but across all areas.

- Options on accommodation – room upgrades, special packages, champagne in rooms
- In the restaurant – bottled water, suggestions for starters, accompaniments, side orders, desserts, dessert wine, specialist coffees, after dinner drinks
- Bar – branded beers, snack items, pastries with their coffee

I'm sure you'll have many more specifics for your own operation

It's also about timing – for example selling desserts – ask too soon and people say they are still too full, and go straight on to coffee; ask too late and they have gone off the idea, and want to head off home.

Teach staff the mechanics of upselling behaviors

- The need for open questions to identify what the customer wants
- How to listen actively to customers' requests or preferences
- How to respond, and make suggestions, or offer alternatives that best meet the customers' needs
- How would they describe each of your products and services? Rather than a script, allow them to develop their own dialogue, one that comes naturally to them, rather than something they have to remember and run the risk of forgetting

Practice makes perfect

It's all very well knowing what to say, but you know how sometimes when you come to say something the words just don't trip off the tongue as you might hope! Let your team practice in a safe environment, based on different scenarios.

1.5 Suggesting idea to appropriate person

Hotel marketing ideas

1. **Basic Digital Marketing Tools:** Website Builders, Online Shops, Marketplace Selling, Local Optimization

2. Graphic Design and Content: Graphic Design Tools, Photography, Video Marketing, Content Strategy, Content Organization

3. Traffic Generation Tools: Social Media Management, & Keyword Planning, Pay-Per-Click Strategy, Clicks & Conversion, Lead Capture, Referral Programs

4. Customer Relationship Management Tools: CRM Software, Marketing Automation, Website Live Chat, Email Marketing, Loyalty Programs

5. Analytics & Insights Tools: Website Visitor Insights, Market Research, Audience Profiles

6. General Business Tools: Collaboration & Organization, Copy Editing, Budgeting, Offline Optimization

Every hotel business is at a different point in their digital marketing journey, so we've broken down our list of tools from the essentials (for digital marketing beginners) to advanced platforms that help more experienced marketers dive into analytics and technical tweaks. We also understand that your business can't be successful with digital marketing alone, so we've added a bonus category that consists of general business tools that can assist with overall operations. In short, this guide will help you:

- Get set up for success online with Digital Marketing Basics
- Craft your digital image with Graphic Design and Content
- Generate traffic
- Build customer loyalty and repeat business with Customer Relationship Management
- Understand customer behavior through Analytics

Streamline your daily operations with General Business Tools

These tools are not industry-specific, which means they're suitable for not only hoteliers, but any type of small business owner, from restaurateurs to retailers. If your business wants to drive website traffic, build loyalty, and increase revenue, then it's important to optimize your digital marketing strategy - whether your goal is to book more rooms, sell more items, or grow a subscriber list.

1.5.1 Match products and services to market needs

New products and services have to offer benefits that meet your customers' needs. You need to discover what these are.

Market research, using techniques such as surveys and focus groups, will help you do this.

Remember that although the end user of your product or service might be your most important customer, you may have to take the needs of other parties into account.

Not only must you meet your customers' needs, you have to do so in a way that is better than the alternatives offered by the competition.

Your new product or service needs a unique selling proposition - a feature or property that makes it stand out in the marketplace.

Before entering the market you need to determine:

- how customers' needs are currently met
- why customers would choose your product or service rather than the competition's, both now and in the future
- what risks you are prepared to take to launch your product or service into this market

Self-check -1	Written Question
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Part I Say True or False

1. An opportunity to develop product/service knowledge of hospitality is all around us.
2. Successful waiter will try to understand the target market's needs, wants, and demands.
3. Hotel employee needs to demonstrate many attributes to be less effective in their job
4. A customer is a person on the receiving end of what the business offers.
5. Customers are all individuals and come with individual needs and expectations.

PART-II Select the best answer from the given alternatives

1/ which one is the lifecycle of any product or service?

A/ Development B/ Introduction

C/ Growth D/All

2. As research what should be designed to identify?

A /what the customer wants – needs, wants and expectations

B/ What we are currently offering to the customer – products and services

C/ what we can improve. D/all

3/ which one is the data is statistical in nature.

A/ Quantitative B/ Formal research

C/ Informal research D/ B&C

PART-III: Read the following questions and give your best answer accordingly.

1. Discuss about the Customer needs, wishes and expectations?
2. What are the different between quantitative and qualitative data?
3. Explain about the primary and secondary data?
4. What are professional standard?

Unit Two: - Providing Quality Service to Customers

This learning guide is developed to provide you the necessary information regarding the following content coverage and topics:

- Communicate customer service issues, standards and expectations
- Monitor customer service
- Customer preferences, and expectations
- Offering information about products and services
- Products and services manner.
- Extras, add - ons and additional services
- Promoting proactively products and services
- Focus and selling techniques
- Identifying Problems in products and services and action taken immediately
- Liaising team members to ensure timely

This guide will also assist you to attain the learning outcomes stated in the cover page.

Specifically, upon completion of this learning guide, you will be able to:

- Communicate customer service issues, standards and expectations
- Monitor customer service
- Determine customer preferences, and expectations
- Offering information about products and services
- Provide products and services manner.
- Provide extras, add - ons and additional services
- Promoting proactively products and services
- Practicing focus and selling techniques
- Identifying Problems in products and services and action taken immediately
- Liaising team members to ensure timely

2.1 Communicate customer service issues, standards and expectations

2.1.1 Communicating Effectively with Customers

In business, no skill is more important than the ability to effectively communicate. It is especially vital in customer service, where communication can make or break customer relationships.

Communication may appear to be a simple process, but in reality, it is highly complex. Within this process, two or more people attempt to arrive at shared meaning and understanding. Communication involves at least one sender (the one trying to transmit a message) and one receiver (the one trying to understand the message). In order to achieve shared understanding, both senders and receivers in the communication process must engage in both talking and listening.



Fig 2.1.1 power of communication

One of the biggest hurdles to effective communication is that many people believe that communication only involves talking. As the saying goes, we have two ears and one mouth for a reason—we should listen twice as much as we talk. This is especially true in customer service. Your primary goal in customer service communication is to understand the customer. This requires a skill we call active listening.

2.1.2 Developing Active Listening Skills

You may think you're a good listener, but are you really? Most people with typical listening skills retain only about 10 percent of what they hear. Active listening can improve your retention rate. When you engage in active listening, you actively work to understand what the other party is trying to convey. You take responsibility for understanding the message. The following skills will help you move from being an ineffective, passive listener to being an active listener.

2.1.3 Avoiding Distractions

The first step to active listening is to focus your attention on the speaker. This may sound easy, but your environment is filled with distractions that can pull you away from the customer. You can also create your own distractions if you try to do too many things at once instead of giving the customer your full attention. Here are a few common distractions that can serve as barriers to active listening. As you read over the list, check those you have experienced in your own customer encounters.

- Carrying on a customer conversation in a noisy area.
- Taking a phone call when you are dealing with a customer.
- Allowing others to interrupt when you are dealing with a customer.
- Trying to carry on two conversations at once.
- Trying to do unrelated paperwork when dealing with a customer.
- Checking hair, makeup, or clothing while dealing with a customer.
- Thinking about something else when listening to a customer.
- Planning your response to the customer while the customer is still talking.
- Failing to paraphrase back to the customer what you are hearing.
- Hurrying the conversation or interrupting the customer.
- Making Eye Contact Maintaining eye contact lets the customer know you are listening and want to help. Lack of eye contact can create an environment of distrust. How many times have you heard people say, “I don’t trust her, she wouldn’t look me in the eye.”

Confirming statements are short comments that let customers know you are interested and understand what they are talking about. They include:

- “I see,” “Okay,” “Uh-huh.”
- “Tell me more.”
- “That must have really upset you.”

Questioning

If the customer says something you don’t understand, you are responsible for asking questions to clarify meaning. Questioning not only helps you understand what the customer is saying but also conveys your interest to the customer, which will help the customer feel Appreciated.

Reflecting statements summarize or paraphrase your understanding of what the customer is saying. Reflecting statements should also reflect the customer's emotions and feelings whenever possible. For example:

Customer:

"The room I just checked in is not well cleaned, and the water doesn't properly run through the shower head.

Your reflection: "Your room is not well cleaned, and the water doesn't properly run through the shower head. Most customer conversations of any length should have several reflecting statements. A final reflecting statement should be used at the end of a conversation. This ensures that you understand what the other person is trying to communicate. Remember, it's okay to take notes during the conversation. As important as active listening is, you will also need to develop your skills as a speaker in order to interact effectively with customers.

The following tips will help you communicate positively with your customers.

- Speaking in the Positive:
- Words and Tone of Voice When speaking to a customer,
- Your primary goal is to remain positive.
- Don't waste time telling the customer what you can't do;
- Focus on what you can do.
- Put yourself in the customer's shoes.
- Wouldn't you rather hear,
- "I'll be happy to look that up for you," than "I don't know."

The following table shows some negative phrases to avoid and some positive phrases you can use instead:

Negative Phrase Positive Phrase

- I don't know
- I'll find out
- That's not my job. I'll find someone who can help you with that.
- That's not my fault. I'll get that taken care of right away.
- I'm busy right now. I'll be with you in just a minute.
- Why don't you give me a call back in a few minutes?

- May I call you back?
- Why did you...? (implying blame) Let me see if I understand...
- We can't do that.
- We can do this.

2.1.4 Improving Your Telephone Communication

In some hotel departments and sections, such as reservations and switchboard/telephone section, customer service representatives may never see their customers face to face. Telephones fill the void when customers cannot come to our place of business. Because you are not dealing face to face with customers when you speak to them by phone, you lose an important part of the communication link body language. When you interact by phone, you must rely on other aspects of communication to make up for the lack of body language.

One way you can make up for a lack of face-to-face contact with your customers is by dealing with their calls promptly. Put yourself in the customer's shoes. What goes through your mind?

When you call an organization and the phone rings over and over without an answer, or, worse yet, you constantly get a busy signal? Many customers find such situations extremely frustrating. Someone, even an answering machine, should answer the phone by the fourth ring.

Take a Moment Close your eyes and visualize your work area. What first impressions do people get when they enter it?

Positive Impressions

Negative Impressions

When you answer the phone, try consciously smiling before you speak. Think of the caller as being right in front of you. This only takes a few seconds and will literally put you in a better frame of mind to respond to the caller. Try putting a mirror on your desk or counter and smile into it before you answer the phone. Glance at it several times during your conversation with the customer.

2.2 Monitor customer service

Monitor customer service according to organisation policies and procedures to ensure standards are met Simply because standards have been developed, reduced to writing, explained to staff and ratified by management, doesn't mean they will always be implemented. After all, people are only human, and as they say – to err is human! What is required is some monitoring of

customer service in the workplace to ensure standards are met in accordance with organisation policies and procedures.

2.2.1 Monitoring methods

The most important thing in monitoring service standard is the will to monitor them. You have to want to monitor them. The most common problem is service standards are developed and communicated but not monitored. If service delivery standards are not monitored the result can be service standards quickly drop and this impacts adversely on repeat business, profit or levels of customer satisfaction.

The common monitoring methods are:

- Workplace observation – watching what goes on at work, reading customer body language and measuring waiting times
- Talking to customers – to get their feedback of service delivery
- Talking to staff – to get their impressions, to identify obstacles to planned service delivery standards
- Reading customer complaints and feedback
- Analysing business statistics – a reduction in patronage can indicate a need for attention to be paid to customer service, and can also indicate needs in other areas such as price, product

2.2.2 Areas to monitor and evaluate

Marketing activities are a recognised way of monitoring and evaluating many things and may include the use of customer surveys as well as evaluation of any promotions conducted by the venue such as advertising. This includes the use of billboards, direct mail, radio, TV, Internet and incentive promotions.

Specific areas that may be investigated include:

Reservations

In particular:

- The reservation system, and how easy it is to use, how user friendly it is from the guests' point of view
- Our telephone manner – considering information provided, courtesy, telephone manner, speed

- Cancellation policy – how fair is it? Does this policy fall in-line with the image we may be spending thousands of dollars to create? Or is a mean-spirited cancellation policy
- undoing all the good work we’re doing elsewhere? How does it compare to the cancellation policies of other similar venues?
- Credit card acceptance – do we take enough different cards? Are the guests telling us we should be accepting others?
- Accommodation availability (value and cost considerations) – do we provide what guests want? Or are we trying to „force“ guests into sleeping configurations that suit us? Are our guests finding they have to use and pay for a suite, when they really only want a double?
- Information on hotel shuttle and public transportation – are we suitably notifying our guests of services they need, or are we advertising a service and then making it difficult for guests to take advantage of it?

Registration

In particular:

- Greetings (doorman, porters, bell staff, front desk personnel) – how are these greetings perceived or interpreted by guests? Are they genuine greetings? Is there a need for greetings to be made in a different language?
- Assistance with luggage – is this being offered promptly? How do we do it? Can we do it better? Is it offered to all guests? Is it delivered in a timely fashion? Is it seen as a valued service?
- Check-in procedure – is check-in being accomplished within a suitable length of time? Have we developed a quick and easy procedure for the guests? Is the guest’s first contact with the venue a positive experience? How can the current experience be improved
- Room accommodation – are there sufficient numbers of appropriate rooms with the required facilities? Do the facilities meet guest requirements?
- Room status and availability – do we have a system enabling front office staff to quickly and easily identify room status and room availability levels for any stated date? Is room status accurate?

- Information on hotel services – does reception have a comprehensive, accurate and up-to-date supply of brochures etc on venue services? Is there or should there be an appropriate
- concierge facility? Can the staff behind reception respond suitably to a series of guest questions about the products and services offered by the property?
- Cleanliness and interior design of lobby, elevators, rooms – are the facilities in accordance with guest expectations, and in-line with the images we present in our adverts? Or are we creating false expectations? Is the area kept clean and looking inviting, attractive, fresh etc? Operation of air conditioning, heating, television, radio, and plumbing in room – does it all work properly? Does the air conditioning, bar fridge and plumbing function quietly?
- Amenities – are the amenities we offer appropriate for the guests we attract? Are there enough of them available? Are they suitably sign-posted?

Guest stays

In particular:

- Food service department – are the menu offerings, hours of operation, prices, service levels acceptable to the guests and the expectations we have created? Are there sufficient staff with appropriate skills? Are the facilities open when the guests want them to be open?
- Gift shop – does the lobby gift shop have an appropriate selection of stock for in-house guests? Are there sufficient souvenirs at different price points? Do the items in the shop represent value-for-money, or can the items rightly be seen as a rip-off and a disincentive to use the shop?
- Lounge – are the prices charged, the entertainment provided, the opening hours, and the service levels acceptable to the patrons, or are we running this department to suit ourselves and not the customers?
- Room service – are the menu offerings sufficient, are the prices reasonable, is the delivery time appropriate and is the pick-up of trays timely? Is room service available when guests want it?
- Valet service – are the pick-ups and delivery times suitable for guest needs? Are the prices appropriate? Does the quality of the service provided meet guest needs?

- Housekeeping services – does the existing system allow housekeeping to avoid rooms where guests do not want their room serviced? Is the current service level sufficient to meet guest expectations of room service? Is the replenishment of amenities appropriate and sufficient, and do housekeeping staff ensure the cleanliness of all public areas?
- Complimentary services and products – do we provide articles seen by the guests as providing some genuine value, or are we giving away things no-one likes, no-one wants and no-one values? Is it a case we are being too mean with our complimentary items? Are the brand names used acceptable to our guests?
- Security – is there 24-hour availability of security and is appropriate to identified needs? Are there sufficient fire safety devices in place? Have staff fire drills been conducted? Are the required emergency plans in place
- Front office – are they able to handle requests for information and other assistance such as wake up calls, explanation of the telephone system, entertainment system and internet connection? Are guest folios kept up-to-date, accurate and ready for guest check-outs? Can reception respond quickly to a request for an extension of stay?

Check-out

In particular:

- Check-out time deadlines – are they reasonable and flexible? Can extensions be given to special requests without creating problems or giving an adverse impression to the guests? Should we introduce an express check-out facility?
- Luggage – is assistance with luggage readily and cheerfully given? Do guests need assistance with their luggage? Are bags easily obtainable from luggage storage areas?
- Speed of check-out – is the time spent waiting to be processed on departure appropriate? Are guests served in the order they arrived to check-out?
- Guest folio – is the bill immediately available? Is the print-out an accurate representation of the actual charges incurred? Can reception staff resolve minor discrepancies quickly and easily without having to refer to management? Is the account clear and easy to understand?

2.3 Customer preferences, and expectations

Generally, customer expectations are a set of ideas about a product, service or a brand that a customer holds in their mind. Customers want these expectations met in order for them to feel satisfied with the customer service and with their purchase. They'll also have expectations that aren't so easy to see. Let's explore how companies can deliver against these tangible and intangible expectations.

When are expectations formed? The truth is it happens at all times and across all stages of the customer journey - sometimes even before customers have bought something. Here are some of the more common ways that customers form expectations:

2.3.1 Determine and clarify customer preferences

Preferences expressed by customers can alter for a number of reasons,

These Include changes in:

- Local trends
- Overseas trends
- Individual customer needs
- Individual customer tastes
- The kind of people who are customers — sex, age, nationality, accompanied by family or not, etc.

The following are some changes in customer preferences that have been noticed in accommodation businesses over the past ten years or so:

- Trend towards serviced apartments
- All suite accommodation
- Need for more casual accommodation
- Need for function or conference facilities
- Need for additional facilities, such as restaurants, bars, gymnasiums
- Need for non-smoking suites
- Need for signs in other languages.
- Need for internet
- Need for Wi-Fi

These changes indicate the need for us to 'keep close to our guests, to find out what their needs are, what they are thinking and what they want,

It is a serious error of judgment to believe that we know what the customers want. As an industry, as a single establishment, and as an individual worker, we must all pay close attention to these ever-changing needs and respond to them. Many things have a long lead-time (the time - taken from the conception of a thought, to the final creation of the physical service or product) and this fact means that we must be alert and act quickly.

In tough economic times, there is no room in this industry for any venue that rests on its laurels: when an establishment does this it is simply inviting the competition to move in and take over from it.

The best way to encourage customers to use and buy products and services is to promote them according to a few simple guidelines

- Don't try encouraging customers to purchase something they don't want
- Encourage customer to purchase something they may want. To adhere to the above guidelines, you must be accurately informed about the product and service and have the ability to match those products and services according to the customer's needs.

2.4 Offering information about products and services

Offer accurate information an absolute essential for any service staff is knowledge about your establishment, particularly in these areas:

- What you sell
- Prices
- Specials
- Procedures
- Opening/trading times
- Room layouts and locations
- Menus and food items Beverages available - what they taste like, what they'll compliment and how much they cost
- Dietary requirements
- Services, products and facilities available

2.4.1 Offering products and services

So why do you need to define your product or service so thoroughly? It is important to have clarity in order to have a defined vision around what you do or sell. To succeed, a business needs to know exactly what they are selling to their customers. This will allow focus which helps businesses know how the product or service sells best and the location of the appropriate market. Clarifying the product offering helps to define users, which will lead to defined target markets. From here, businesses can work out how to access their target market. This leads to more sales from a far more streamlined effort, rather than trying to sell in ways that might not even reach the target market.

It is all about having clear definitions and goals so the whole team can stay on track. After defining every aspect of the product or service, businesses will be able to define other parts of

the marketing mix too such

competitors, users, unique selling point and target market. This will lead to successful marketing, focus and direction!

It helps to write out a full and detailed description of each product/service. Be sure to include the following:

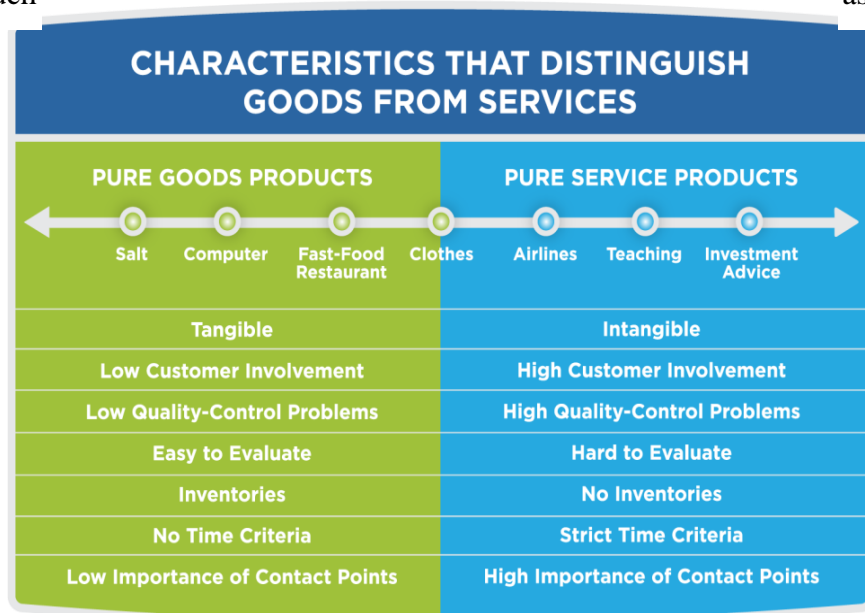


Fig 2.1 Characteristics that distinguish goods from services

- Define the core purpose: What does it need to address, what struggle does it alleviate and what job does it do?
- Define the user base: Who will be the primary users?
- Define the user needs: What does the user need, what do they want and what are their struggles?

- Define the product's functions: What should it do? Does it address a need, want or struggle and who will it service?
- Define the criteria for product success: What are the indicators of success and can you measure them? Can you afford them? Does it align with the purpose and needs?
- Define the product's foundational elements: When will the product be needed, what is the likely reach and where are the users likely to be based?

When marketing a service, it's important to remember that

(a) Service products on the right side of the continuum (i.e., those with greater intangibility) are different from goods products on the left side of the continuum, and

(b) Service products tend to require certain adjustments in their marketing strategy on account of these differences.

All products, whether they are goods, services, blankets, diapers, or plate glass, possess peculiarities that require adjustments in the marketing effort. However, “pure” goods products and “pure” service products (i.e. those on the extreme ends of the continuum) tend to reflect characteristics and responses from customers that suggest different marketing strategies. Admittedly, offering an exceptional product at the right price, through the most accessible channels, promoted extensively and accurately, should work for any type of product

2.5 Products and services manner.

There are different reasons for your ideal guests to stay at your hotel. Ultimately, it depends on the different types of services in the hotel industry that you are offering. Some people will be searching for comfortable beds, others go for delicious foods. But they all will be looking at the way you treat your guests.

2.5.1 Etiquettes and Manners for Hotel Staff / Front Office Staff

- Always greet guest and colleagues with a smile and maintain a friendly and pleasant expression.
- Stand upright, do not fold your arms in front of the guest.
- Keep your hands out of your pockets.
- Do not lean on the counter at any time and especially when dealing with the guest.
- Do not play with your hair and jewellery when you are at the front of the house area.
- Ensure a positive body language at all times.

- Always be tactful and courteous, never argue with guests.
- Be humoured and even-tempered, do not become over friendly with guests.
- Always be attentive when speaking to guest and look at a guest when addressing him/her.
- Always look and act professionally, do understand that there are other guests watching your behavior.
- Always appear confident and be positive.
- Always listen carefully to the guest when talking to him/ her.
- Try to use the guest's name at least twice once known.
- Try to ask the right questions to identify the needs of the guests.
- Talk clearly and maintain a good tone of voice at all times.
- Do not criticize one guest to another.
- Do not refer guest as "He/She to They" in their presence.
- Never weary the guest with your troubles.
- Never discuss religion or politics with guests.
- Be specific in your explanations, in-case of any doubt then consult your colleagues and promptly get back to the guest.
- Always give the guest a warm and friendly welcome, "Good morning Mr Bond, how may I help you today".
- Make the guest feel comfortable and safe.
- Refer to the guest twice by the correct title and name once known.
- Identify the guest's needs and try to provide anticipatory service.
- Always observe what is happening around you and be ready to assist the guest when needed.
- Show guests a sympathetic interest.
- Take your time for the guest and do not rush with them.
- Always recommend in-house hotels services to the guest and provide with a brochure or additional details if required.
- Appear neat and tidy but never severe or harsh or strict to the guests.
- Always try to maintain eye contact with the guests.

- Should have a good product knowledge and keep updating about new products and services offered.
- Know the different facilities and services available in the hotel and be ready to describe the details to the guest when asked.
- Know who is who in the hotel organization.
- Know about VIP, VVIP and repeating guests.
- Have a clear understanding of the layout of the hotel.
- Should know the location, timings, promotions and theme nights of the outlets.
- Know which function is taking place and where.
- Have a good knowledge of the place and surroundings where the hotel is situated, be aware of any special promotions or food festivals going on in the hotel.
- Front desk team should possess a thorough knowledge of all different rooms' types and their rack rates.

2.6 Extras, add - ons and additional services

Offering possible extras, add-ons, personalized and additional services if you are a hotel manager or in charge of sales at a hotel, you may be in a position where despite having several add-ons available to your guests, no one appears to be buying them.

Having years of experience with the hospitality business and worked with numerous different hotels over the past few years, we've gathered some useful tips and tricks to help you sell add-ons to guest's

More airport pickups. How long does it take, what's the cost and why is it easy?

Sharing a little information positions you as an expert and reinforces that it's going to be simple.

Saying 'let us pick you up from the airport

Upsell guests onto a faster Wi-Fi service. Make it relatable and get them to think ahead.

This manages expectations and persuades them to alternatively, if the majority of your guests are corporates,

In room wine or champagne. Your guests will want it, they just need to be convinced

When travelling, there is nothing more relaxing than some chilled champagne or a nice glass of wine waiting for you at the room. Sell it as a celebratory drink, a relaxing experience and something to suit everyone during their stay.

Private parking. Sell it on the safety and trustworthy nature of your option.

Drivers need to be reassured that paying for parking is worthwhile. If you can guarantee your secure parking space whilst you stay and inform of other options, you save them research.

Saying street parking is available but unpredictable. Street is medium busy and providing a Google Maps street link helps them. Show a picture of the private parking side by side the street parking as a comparison.

Extra people staying in the room. Make sure guests know why an extra bed is a good option.

Many guests have issues with extra beds, or perceive them to not be of good quality. Communicate what they are getting and why booking is important.

Always ask guests. Some want popular add-on. Some don't. Find out who!

Check with guests when they book – “Would you like to book any of our most popular add-on such as breakfast, private parking, or an airport pick up? Some of them are limited to availability”. Make sure you can market and sell add-on or extras on your website and in your booking engine easily.

Free hotel services:

The world's leading hotel reservation site, it is imperative to reinforce your hotel offer with many free mini-services available to your customers. Here are the ones they select the most when offered an expanded list:

- International adapter
- City map
- Bottle of water
- Ironing facilities
- Extra pillows in room
- Beauty kit: hair dryer, shaving kit, etc.
- Welcome tray in room / Courtesy tray
- Baby / child kit (bed, high chair, etc.)
- Concierge service (alarm clock, reservations, advice, etc.)

2.7 proactive Promotion of products and services

Shifting to a more proactive guest service philosophy changes the dynamic in every phase of a guest experience. Being proactive is different than being prepared. Being prepared means employees know what to do to when guests need something. Being proactive means employees anticipate guests' needs and take care of them before guests have to ask.

Keys to Proactive Guest Service

While you can't always anticipate every guest demand, you can train your staff to anticipate their needs. Here's how to get started:

- Focus on proactive guest service. Today's restaurant employees often have a reactive mindset. They're much more likely to wait for a problem to come to them than they are to see it before it happens. Shifting employee thinking to be more proactive takes training. Identify possible guest needs and strategies to address them before they become issues. Role play with your staff during pre-shift meetings and training sessions.
- Know your guests. On a very basic level, you and your staff already know what your guests want. They've already decided to eat out, and they've chosen your restaurant. What you need to understand is why they chose you over the competition. Is it your food, location, promotions, or atmosphere? Are they regulars or are they just giving you one-time shot? The success of a guest visit isn't one thing you do, it's how everything you do adds up to an exceptional guest experience. Train your restaurant staff to recognize and deliver what your guests want and need.
- Hire with proactive guest service in mind. Some people are better able to think proactively than others. As part of your hiring process, implement behavioral interviewing. You'll learn more about a candidate when you focus on past behaviors rather than past experience. Behaviors are formed over time through repetition. If an individual has done something in the past, they're more likely to repeat it in the future. Instead of asking yes or no questions, ask for specific examples of past behaviors that would be a good fit for your proactive guest service strategy.

2.8 selling techniques

Sales techniques are key when it comes to making sure goals are achieved. In regard to hospitality marketing, proven and useful means of increasing and stabilizing sales are essential in

making sure your property or service is one that is used time and time again. Hospitality marketing's goal is bringing in both new and repeat business to beef up the bottom line.

Take Care of Repeat Customers

Repeat clientele is one of the most dependable vehicles within the hospitality industry to generate revenue. Loyal customers are highly valuable if they are cared for properly because they will likely continue to spend money at your property. Catering to repeat customers is a significant aspect of hospitality marketing that differentiates it from marketing in other industries. You can offer loyalty programs for repeat guests in the form of discounts, loyalty cards and incentive programs to make repeat business a top priority in your marketing plan.

Some of these visual selling aids are:

- Pictures/ posters on the wall promoting various products and or activities in the venue
- Black boards are great for short quick promotions that change regularly. They are also cheap to use and anyone can write on them
- Flyers are a great tool to put around a venue to promote products and services. Customers always pick them up and read them.
- Table talkers are small displays in the center of a table or on a bar promoting various products.
- Displays For a wedding functions venue a display of one of their bridal party tables can give the customer an idea of what their day might look like and encourage them into sale.

Selling plays an important role in the duties of most hospitality employees, and it is a fact of life that selling doesn't come easy for most of use Selling requires confidence and skills, backed by accurate knowledge,

Up-selling and suggestive selling and may involve:

- serving
- helping
- advising
- building rapport with customers
- arousing interest

Other room selling techniques might include upselling, cross-selling, packages, promotions, re-marketing, and local partnerships

Six essential hotel sales strategies are:

- Group bookings,
- Direct bookings,
- Destination marketing,
- Cross promotional sales,
- Guest rewards strategies,
- Revenue management strategies.



You should be aware at all times that products and services are to be promoted to customers in accordance with current enterprise goals and current promotional targets.

Where your job involves customer/guest contact, then your job does include your being a salesperson even though this aspect may not be specifically spelled out or mentioned in the job title.

Your boss will expect you to sell what is on offer.

No manager will be pleased to have someone on the staff who is not proactive in terms of trying to make a sale or up-selling.

An order taker simply takes the order that a guest gives and that's it in fact the customer buys, rather than the staff member selling. An order maker up-sells and uses appropriate suggestive selling.

You do not have to do all the selling to the customer.

There are numerous visual displays that you can put around your establishment that would entice customers to:

- Reconsider their original choice of purchase;
- Upgrade to a more premium product;
- Spend more;
- Spend more time in the venue.

Suggestive selling

Suggestive selling occurs when the employee promotes a product or service that will enhance or complement the customer's original order.

The employee suggests an item with the hope that the customer will like it and therefore take up the offer. The following situations show examples of suggestive selling:

- When taking a meal order suggest some sides that would compliments the meal
- When giving a table the bill note to them that you also have a great functions facility
- When speaking with a customer let them know that there is a band every Friday night.

Up-selling and Cross selling

Selling to customer who comes into your establishment can be easy or hard. Sometimes the customer knows what they want and requests it immediately other times the customer is undecided which is where your communications skills and product knowledge come to the fore and the opportunity for an up-sell presents itself.

Upselling

Upselling is, quite simply, offering your customers relevant extras to make their stay or event even better. Upselling involves getting a customer to spend more on their current product consideration, such as upgrading their choice of room, while cross-selling involves selling ancillary products or services, such as a spa treatment or a local tour, on top of their room. Besides increased revenue, upselling offers a number of benefits, including:



- Increased customer satisfaction and loyalty through service personalization and added value.
- Higher profitability through increased guest spending.
- Richer guest data for future personalization.
- Greater utilization of property amenities.

You'll find that many customers are open to buying a more expensive product than they

initially planned, as long as it represents good value, is convenient, and feels like it's adding something

Relevant to their stay. So how do you start including upselling in your hotel sales cycle?

Some guidelines to use when selling products and services include:

- Always match the product and service to the customer
- Provide as many choices as possible

Don't go for the 'Hard Sell' by placing customers under pressure to purchase.

The Basic Sell

A customer comes in and asks for a beer you may well ask them which brand, heavy or light and size of the glass they would like. This is selling at its most basic. Let's say you sell the basic domestic beer.

The domestic beer sells for \$5.50 and costs \$2.00 therefore you make a profit of \$3.50. This was an easy sale. The customer wanted a beer and you gave them what they wanted. (Sale price \$5.50 Cost price \$2.00 = Profit \$3.50).

Obviously you sell more than one type of beer so this is where the opportunity for an up-sell arises. large size for an extra \$2.00. It is the same meal deal but larger and slightly more expensive.

We up-sell

Up-selling is designed to increase sales and profit but that is not the only reason to upsell:

- Providing a better customer experience. Usually up-selling is providing a better product or service so in doing so you increasing the customers level of satisfaction.
- By showing you have good product knowledge in offering a better product you are building a rapport with your customer.

Another effective way of increasing sales and profit plus giving your customers a great experience is to cross sell.

Cross selling is the sale of a complimentary product or service along with the original product. A good example cross selling is where a person orders a steak and you suggest a bowl of fries with the meal. Different product but they complement the original order

2.9 Identify Problems in products and services

Customer service is one of the most important factors when it comes to choosing a place to stay. With an increasing number of hotels adopting innovations and implementing digital services, top-notch customer service becomes more and more important every day.

To deliver products that solve your target customers' problems, you must first identify market problems. These problems may be stated directly as customer needs or implied indirectly.

Your market consists of:

- Existing customers: People who have already purchased your product
- Prospects: People who have not yet purchased your product but are considering it
- Target market users: People in your target market who are not currently looking for a solution

Traps to avoid when listening to your market

Ensure that you listen to all of the people that comprise your market to avoid falling into the following traps. Each trap is not entirely bad, but can become problematic when it becomes your only focus. The key is to balance your focus to ensure that you are really listening to your entire market at the same time.

1. Focusing only on innovation and the competition

As an entrepreneur, it is easy to focus on building innovative solutions that do not connect directly to market problems; just because you can innovate doesn't always mean that you should. It's also easy to pay too much attention to what competitors are doing and expend resources on trying to beat them to market. In many cases, the customer does not care about extra features.

Instead, ask the following questions to ensure that you are solving a problem for your target market:

- What problem does this solution solve?
- Is this a problem experienced by my target market?
- What would my target market do if I didn't solve this problem?

While it's always a good idea to keep abreast of what your competitors are doing, ensure that the market wants the problem solved.

2. Focusing only on customers

Henry Ford said, “If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses.” Customers understand problems, but they cannot help you to move your product forward. They know what you provide, and tend to stay inside that mindset.

Customers are a source of input, but not the only source of input. This is why talking to prospects and target market users (who have not purchased your products) is key to rounding out the picture. They often see things beyond your current product.

3. Focusing only on revenue

By listening only to prospects, and delivering only what the next customer wants, you will gain revenue but miss out on market opportunities. It is critical to find a balance between prospects and customers to ensure that your future revenue is protected, while still keeping existing customers happy.

2.10 Liaise team members to ensure efficient service provision

What makes a good customer service team? Quick response times, teamwork, a shared vision for the future, achieving the organization's goals and targets, and the right mix of consistency and agility. Yet, perhaps a good customer service team combines all the above. Therefore, the customer service manager's challenge lies in supporting and balancing the essentials of modern customer service.

The build and manage good customer service teams are the following:

- Care about employees
- Share the organization's vision for the future
- Communicate
- Provide training resources
- Offer feedback
- Establish clear performance expectations
- Develop a culture that retains great people

2.10.1 Characteristics of effective working groups

Groups that work effectively have the following characteristics:

- Group members share a sense of purpose or common goals that each member is willing to work toward. Members feel that they played a role in determining these goals and the methods used to achieve them. When a task is accomplished or the demands of the situation change, the group can change its focus or direction to meet the new goals.
- The group is concerned not only with the task, but also with its own processes and operating procedures. The group periodically evaluates its performance
- The group members use one another as a resource. The group willingly accepts the influence and leadership of members whose resources are relevant to the immediate task. Roles are balanced and shared to ensure that the tasks are accomplished and that group cohesion and morale are enhanced
- Communication is clear and direct. Group members continually try to listen to and clarify what is being said and show interest in what others say and feel. Differences of opinion are encouraged and freely expressed.
- The group focuses on problem solving rather than expending energy on competitive struggles or interpersonal issues. The group is willing to deal with conflict and focus on it until it is resolved or managed in a way that does not reduce the effectiveness of the group and its members. Confrontation is accepted as a challenge to examine one's behavior or ideas. It is not viewed as an uncaring personal attack.
- Mistakes are seen as sources of learning rather than reasons for punishment. This encourages creativity and risk taking.
- The group has a clear set of expectations and standards for the behaviour of group members.

Developing a climate of trust underlies all of these elements. In order to trust one another, individuals in a group must understand and get to know one another.

2.10.2 Do's and don'ts for effective hotel staff training

Training is easily one of the most important factors in being able to succeed – in every realm of life. One cannot be expected to perform at a high standard without training or preparation.

At your hotel, it's important to set high standards and demand that your staff meet them – but only after you have trained them adequately. It requires a lot of work to put an effective training structure in place at a business and there are probably just as many things you shouldn't do as there are that you should.

Here are some ideas to get your started on training your staff to be the best they can be.

Do's

- Share your vision and ideas with employees – It helps their application to training if they know they'll be working for a big picture outcome
- Ask for feedback – Feedback on training processes is important so you can make improvements if needed
- Collaborate with other hospitality businesses – By looking at how others train their employees, you can really focus on what's best practice
- Train all employees equally – Even those with prior experience in a similar role could need refreshing or will need to learn processes specific to your business
- Keep training days engaging – Give employees adequate time to take breaks or move around during training as this will help keep them fresh and process the information they're taking in
- Present training material in multiple formats – Everyone learns differently so you need to accommodate both visual and aural learners
- Check in with employees – Once employees have completed a training course it might be valuable to debrief and see what they learned, and how they can apply it to their role.

DON'Ts:

- Treat training as 'once and done' – Training should always be offered on an ongoing basis
- Let training become overwhelming – There will be a lot for new employees to take in and a lot for the onboarding team to cover so work how to manage this comfortably
- Isolate new employees – If possible, perform training in groups so new employees can learn together and spark up a team environment

- Forget physical examples – Nothing teaches someone better than performing a real-life example of what you are explaining
- Get too philosophical – It’s important to outline your mission but you should also make sure your training is grounded. If your venue is striving to be the world’s number one pet friendly hotel, show employees some of the ways you achieve this

Self-check -2	Written Question
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Part I Say True or False

1. Preferences expressed by customers can alter for a number of reasons.
2. Try encouraging customers to purchase something they don't want
3. All guests indicate definite preference for special wants in-room
4. You can listen effectively and think about something else at the same time
5. open questions are direct questions that require only a 'Yes' or 'No' answer

PART-II Select the best answer from the given alternatives

1. Who is responsible to provide quality service for customer?
A) The waiter B) receptionist C) the house keeper D) all can be answer
2. Who is internal customer?
A) Colleagues in work place B) visitor who came from other work place
C) Tourist D) B and C
3. How can you make the customer feel at his or her home?
A) By offering good service B) by ignoring him or her during communication
C) By greeting him or her warmly D) A & C are answer
4. A good waiter should always
A) Thank customers for visiting B) Use a pleasant, low tone of voice
C) Be courteous to all customers D) all of the above
5. Handle each complaint in a courteous and professional manner and to their satisfaction. This statement is
A) true B) false

PART-III: Read the following questions and give your best answer accordingly.

1. Identify customer's needs, wants and expectations.
2. Identify the characteristics of effective teams
3. Explain how you can nurture and improve team performance
4. Explain how you can monitor team performance
5. Explain how you can support, encourage and coach team members

Unit Three : Complaints and Deal with Difficult Customer

This learning guide is developed to provide you the necessary information regarding the following content coverage and topics:

- Identify possible cause and details of the complaint
- Difficult customer service situations
- Communication techniques of complaint and the situation
- Responsibility for finding a solution to the complaint
- Techniques to turn complaints into opportunities
- Provide feedback on complaints
- Reflect on and evaluate complaint and solution

This guide will also assist you to attain the learning outcomes stated in the cover page. Specifically, upon completion of this learning guide, you will be able to:

- Identify possible cause and details of the complaint
- Identify difficult customer service situations
- Assist communication techniques of complaint and the situation
- Take responsibility for finding a solution to the complaint
- Use techniques to turn complaints into opportunities
- Provide feedback on complaints
- Reflect on and evaluate complaint and solution

3.1 Identify possible cause and details of the complaint

Introduction:

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			April, 2022

Determine a variety of reasons why customers complain and identify causes and types of complaints. It will also provide you with insights on different conflict styles and their corresponding resolving mechanisms.

Types of Hotel Guest Complaints

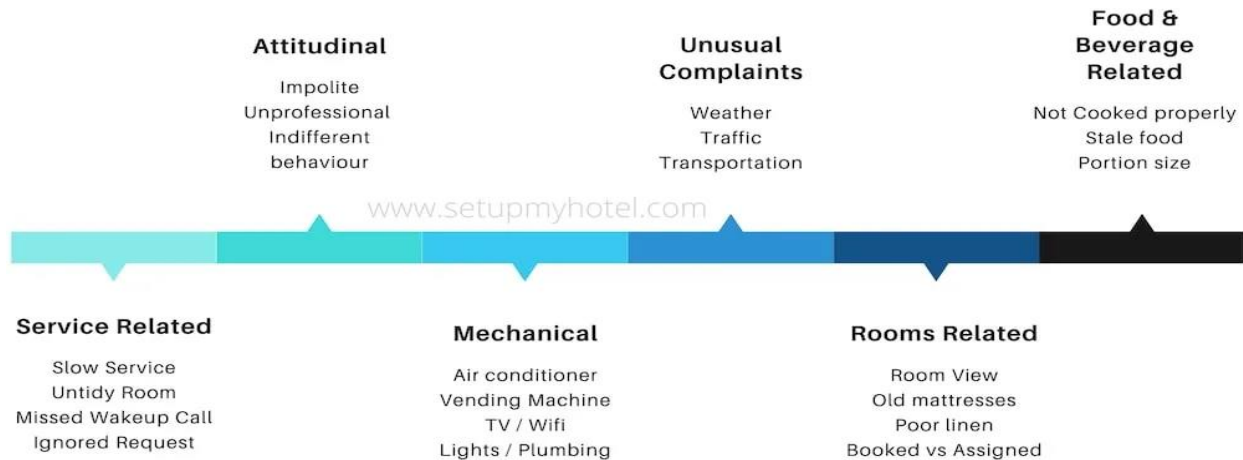


Fig 4.1 Types of Common Guest Complaints in Hotels

3.1.1 Types of Common Guest Complaints in Hotels

1. Service Related Complaints

Are usually associated with the hotel service. The guest may experience a problem with hotel services and may get dissatisfied. It can be of wide-ranging and about such things as long waiting time for service, lack of assistance with luggage, untidy room, missed wake up call, cold or ill-prepared food or ignored request for additional supplies. The front office generally receives more service-related complaints when the hotel is operating at or near full occupancy.

Examples of guest complaints due to service-related issues:

- Ignore any request made by the guest for any special amenities.

- The service is too slow!
- I've been waiting for 30 minutes to speak to someone.
- Why there is no one at the bell desk.
- Missed wakeup call request by guest.

2. Attitudinal Complaints

Attitudinal problems are often associated with the attitudes and behavior of the hotel staff. All hotel's whether it is big or small does come across instances when guest complaints about impolite, unprofessional and indifferent behavior of staff members of the hotel.

The moment an employee disagrees with the guest, his conflict with the guest begins which leads to guest complaints. Guest may express attitudinal complaint when they feel insulted by rude or tactless hotel staff members or sometimes guest overhears staff conversations or who receive complaints from hotel staff members. Managers and supervisors should listen and attend to the complaints and problems of the guest. This can be especially critical to maintain good guest relations.

Examples of guest complaints due to staff attitude:

- No one smiles around here.
- What a rude waitress.
- The front desk clerk was not very friendly.
- Staff showing a lack of skill and sensitivity in dealing with guests.
- Guests feel insulted by rude hotel staff members.

3. Mechanical Complaints

Mechanical complaints deal with equipment problems within the hotel. Most guest complaints related to hotel equipment malfunctions. It is usually concerned with problems with air conditioning, lighting, electricity, room furnishing, vending machines, ice machines, door keys, plumbing, and television and so on. Effective use of a front office log book and maintenance work orders may help to reduce the frequency of mechanical complaints.

Examples of guest complaints due to mechanical reasons:

- Air conditioner.

- The vending machine.
- The lights are not working.
- TV not working.
- Docking station for I pad, Phone etc. not working.
- Plumbing Issues.
- Hot water or cold water.
- Key not working.
- In safe not opening.
- Electric Kettle not working.
- Fan not working.
- Dryer not working.

4. Unusual Complaints

Unusual problems are those that the hotel has no control over such as the weather, traffic, or transportation. Guest sometimes expects the front office staff to resolve or at least listen such kind of complaints which are unusual and the hotel cannot do anything about them. Sometimes guests demand something that simply is unwarranted or impossible to deliver such as they may complain about the absence of a swimming pool, lack of public transportation, bad weather and so on.

Hotels generally have little or no control over the circumstances surrounding unusual complaints. Front office management should alert front desk agents that on occasion's guest may complain about things the staff can do nothing about them. Through such orientation, staff will be better prepared to handle an unusual situation with the appropriate guest relations techniques and avoid a potentially difficult encounter.

Examples of guest complaints due to unusual reasons:

- The traffic around here is crazy!
- It's so hot and humid in this area.
- The traffic in this town is ridiculous.
- The pre-paid taxi counter at the airport had a long queue.
- It's difficult to deal with the tuk-tuk drivers.

- Why it's raining all day?

5. Room Related Complaints

Any guest complaints related to the room is categorized into complaints related to rooms. This issue can occur due to room category booked vs. assigned, old mattresses, poor view, noisy room, poor linen, or even bad lighting in the room. Nowadays due to most of the bookings are generated online guest expects that the picture is shown while reservation should match with the room they have been assigned.

Due to numerous Online travel agents (OTA's) available online and the fact that these OTA's have a different type of layout for the hotel image gallery, the guest is often confused about the room they have reserved. Once the guest reaches the hotel and check-in to the room they find out that the room allocated to them is different from that they have seen online.

Also, the less sleep the hotel guests have the more issues you'll have with them the next day. Try to ensure that the mattresses are always good if you want your guests satisfied in the morning.

Examples of guest complaints related to rooms:

- Noisy room.
- View not good.
- Booked vs assigned room.
- Downgraded to a lower category due to non-availability or maintenance issue.
- Repeated maintenance issues.

6. Complaints Due to Food and Beverage

Even with very good accommodation facilities, the guest can complain about the hotel due to the reason of food and beverage not up to their exception. Even if your hotel provides an exceptional culinary experience to the guests, but despite your best efforts, there's no way to please everyone and that leads to the occasional customer complaint.

Examples of guest complaints related to food:

- Untidiness.
- Edibleness.
- Dirty cutlery and crockery.

- Stale food served.
- Quantity of the food served.

- Non-veg delivered in place of veg food items.
- Wrong item received.
- Items were missing.
- Delay in foodservice.
- Dust particles or Hair in food.

3.2 Difficult customer service situations

A career in hospitality can be highly rewarding – but sometimes you’ll need to deal with difficult customers. Here are some common problem scenarios – and how you can keep calm and composed.

However, sometimes the customer is wrong – and often this will be because they had unrealistic expectations or made a mistake.

The most successful hospitality professionals are proud of the work they do and are passionate about delivering exceptional customer service. Dealing with difficult customers can also help you improve your interpersonal and conflict resolution skills, so you can become even better at your job.

Difficult customers you’ll need to deal with in hospitality – and how to stay professional

1. The customer who complains about the most trivial matters

Anyone who has worked in hospitality long enough will know that there are some customers who will never be satisfied, no matter how much effort you put in.

Even for the most trivial problem, it’s important to stay professional and do everything you can to find a solution. This means you might need to keep giving the customer apologies for very minor issues – even something as trivial as a hotel’s pillows not being the right colour!

You may have to invite the customer to speak with someone more senior if they’re still unhappy after you’ve made repeated attempts to resolve the situation.

2. The customer who refuses to accept that they’ve made a mistake

Many people find it difficult to admit when they’ve made a mistake because this is part of our human nature – and it can all be explained by what’s known as cognitive dissonance. That is,

People become stressed when they do something that is contrary to what they thought or believed, so they try to deny that they've made a mistake by shifting the blaming onto someone else.

For example, in a hotel, a customer might deny that they booked the wrong dates or the wrong room type because they're embarrassed that they made this error. Or a customer whose card had been declined might insist there's a problem with the hotel's card reader – even though it's probably more likely that the customer's card has been blocked. As a hospitality professional, you must politely stand your ground and prove that the hotel was not responsible for these mistakes.

3. The impatient customer

Hospitality staff often have to deal with very high volumes of customers, particularly during busy periods like Christmas. That means people may have to wait in a queue – or they may need to wait a little longer than usual if a member of staff is dealing with a particularly complex enquiry. Most customers are rational enough to accept this – there's no magic solution when demand outstrips supply. However, some customers might make a big deal about this – insisting that the hotel staff have deliberately kept them waiting – even though this is extremely unlikely! In this situation, all you can do is apologies for keeping the customer waiting (again, even though this is out of your control) and thank them for their hospitality – even if they haven't shown particularly good manners. It's also important to explain why the customer has had to wait – i.e. you may be understaffed and/or the business may be unusually busy.

4. The customer who resorts to verbal abuse

A small minority of customers may fail to keep their temper under control when they've encountered a problem. However, no matter how unpleasant a customer's situation may be, you should never have to put up with abuse.

Firstly, ask the customer to calm down, tell them that you empathies with their problem, and reiterate that you'll do everything you can to resolve it. If that doesn't work, it's time to contact your manager, although if the abuse escalates then you should advise the customer that you will call security (if your hotel has this) or the police. There's a good chance that the customer will calm down before you have to make the call.

5. The customer who makes a ridiculous complaint

Whether you work in a hotel, a theme park, or another hospitality business, from time to time you may deal with complaints that will sound so bizarre that you'd question whether they were genuine.

"The beach was too sandy."

"We had to queue outside with no air conditioning."

"We booked an excursion to a water park but no-one told us we had to bring our swimming costumes and towels."

3.2.1 Handle Difficult Customers

Difficult customer are the same. But that's not always true. Sometimes difficult customers aren't angry. They are just tough and demanding. That said, the techniques I cover in both of these posts can work, with a little tweak or variation depending on the situation. So, after you read this, I urge you to go back and read the original article. This is a follow-up with another half dozen techniques to **handle difficult customers.**



manage angry and/or difficult customers **Fig 3.2**

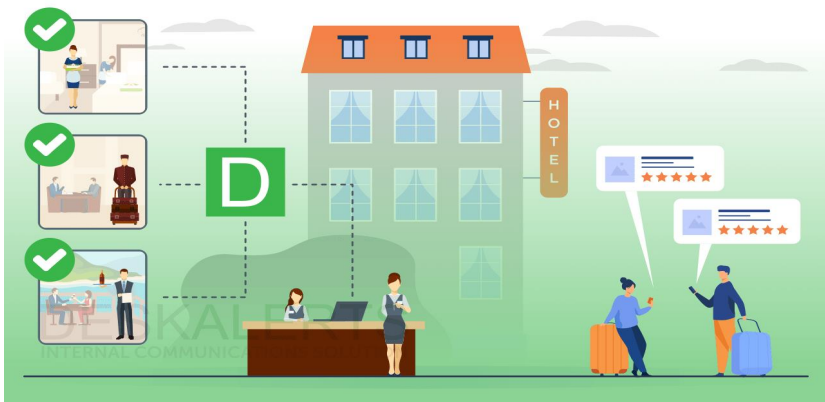
1. Avoid acting indifferent toward your customer.
2. Ask the right questions.
3. Empathize!
4. Don't tell the customer he or she is wrong.
5. Don't blame others inside your company.
6. Focus on a positive outcome.

3.3 Communication techniques of complaint and the situation

Communication is the exchange of information between people. You can imagine how hard it would be to land planes without the communication between air traffic controllers and pilots. There would be too many planes trying to land on the same runway. Similarly, it would be difficult to provide exceptional service for a customer staying at a hotel without communicating with them about their expectations. Let's take a look at communicating with customers, communicating with staff and management, and other skills needed in the hospitality industry.

Communication with Customers

The first critical part of communication in the hospitality industry is the communication with customers. The hospitality industry is also known as the service industry. In order to provide service to customers, there has to be communication. Customers have to communicate with service staff in order to make



reservations for hotels, airlines, and restaurants. The service professionals in the hospitality industry need to be able to speak to customers and provide information.

For example, when checking into a hotel, if there is not clear communication with the customer, then the customer will not know where their room is located or how to get there. This needs to be communicated to them when they check in

3.3.1 Handling Customer Complaints

It is vitally important to handle a customer complaining about your service or products empathetically. In addition, a strong communication structure is required, in order to stay in control of the conversation and to achieve a successful outcome. Crucially, a customer complaint well handled can win you a lifelong customer, who remains loyal to your organization.

However, complainants displaying difficult behavior can be as challenging for the recipient to manage as the complaint itself. As a result, we offer some tips for dealing with difficult behavior, to help appease these difficult situations.

Here are some practical tips for effectively dealing with customer complaints:

1. Actively listen and makes notes

Concentrate solely on what the customer is telling you. Make notes of the key facts and their concerns, so that you have a record of the conversation to refer to in the future.

Importantly, don't interrupt the customer, stay calm and in control. Above all, remember that you are representing your organization and they are not "having a go at you personally".

In a supportive but concerned tone of voice you can demonstrate you are actively listening and empathetic to the customer. For example, use a few small statements such as "right", "oh dear", "I'm sorry to hear that", "that must have been disappointing", as well as paraphrasing what they have told you.info

Need help? Try our customer service training.

2. Acknowledge the customer's concerns and thank them

At the appropriate time during the conversation, when there is a natural pause for example, recognize the level of distress this may have caused them. In addition, thank the customer for bringing this matter to your attention. Importantly, this will demonstrate that you are concerned and want to put the matter right or resolve the situation.

3. Apologies for the impact or the inconvenience caused

You may also need to empathize with the complainant concerning the failure to deliver the level of service expected, where appropriate. By saying 'sorry' you are again demonstrating to the customer that you are genuinely apologetic that this has happened to them and showing that you wish to put things right.

4. Ask questions and summaries your understanding

Remember to seek permission from a customer who is very angry, to ask questions. As a result, you can then collect all of the facts needed to understand what has happened and to identify how best to resolve the situation.

Ask a combination of open (“what”, “how”, “who”, “why”, “where” and “when”), as well as closed questions (for example, “did you?”, “is he?”). Importantly, this will confirm the key facts and glean the information you need.

5. Agree and explain the actions you will take as a result of their complaint

Ensure that you only commit to the steps you have the authority to take. For example, explain what you will personally undertake to resolve the complaint, including when you will get back to them.

Remember to be realistic about timescales – do not over promise. It is always better to under promise and over deliver, rather than the other way round. Take ownership of the complaint, but should you need to involve a colleague, explain to the customer who will be in contact with them, their name and job role.

6. Ask for feedback on the next steps

Check that the customer is happy with the suggested actions you have committed to. Where appropriate, ask the customer if there is anything further that they think you could do at this stage to help them.

7. Action the agreed next steps and follow up

Review actions in line with your organization’s procedures. You should then:

- Record the complaint
- Ensure that all actions have been taken and no details missed
- Send a “thank you” letter or email to the customer confirming that everything has been done as promised

- Inform your team leader or manager who may wish to offer compensation, or complimentary additional services or products, by way of an apology to the customer or...

Put measures in place to recognise the customer in a special way, next time they use your company's products or services.

8. Assess preventative measures

Finally, review procedures with your team leader or manager to ensure future mistakes are not made and you learn from each complaint to enhance your customer service experience.

To help team leaders and managers develop their problem solving skills you may find our tips on developing your creativity helpful Communication techniques May include,

- listening and active listening
 - asking questions to gain information, clarify ambiguities and adequately understand requirements
 - rephrasing and repeating questions, requests and statements to confirm that they have been correctly understood
 - empathizing with the customer's situation while upholding organization policy
 - non-verbal communication and recognition of non-verbal signs
 - using communication techniques appropriate to different social and cultural groups
- ability to speak clearly, be understood and use appropriate language, style and tone range.

3.4 Responsibility for finding a solution to the complaint

I believe, everybody knows the old saying that the customer is always right. Those, working in the customer service business might argue with this statement. However, each of us is a customer of some kind and felt that your truth is the one and only. Guests' complaints in the hospitality business are almost a daily occurrence. Some of those complaints are smaller but some of them can do a serious harm. When handling all complaints it is important to deal with them in a friendly, efficient, respectful, courteous and thorough manner. In short, we must be sensitive to the customer, their needs, the nature of the complaint and their mood.

The customer, guest or patron must be given the time to explain fully, without the employee cutting them short or placing words into their mouth. It cannot be emphasized enough how important it is for the person to say their piece.

Having listened fully to the person - asking questions as appropriate, and re-capping what has been said to verify what has been said - you should take responsibility for resolving the complaint by telling the guest that you will do everything in your power to resolve the situation, As mentioned above, you may elect to ask the customer what they want done to fix the problem. By taking this responsibility, it ensures you never ignore complaints, but instead take constructive measures to ensure they enjoy a speedy - and mutually satisfactory - resolution.

"If you are happy - tell it to others. If you are not happy - tell it to us!"

Having this in mind, we have to know, that customers (guests) must be heard. Especially if they have negative experiences. The best practice for you is to listen to the guests' complaint right there. Then a solution is still possible and conflict or unpleasant situation can be resolved without causing a further negative impact

Deal with guests' complaints

No matter how good your service is, there is always going to be someone, who will find a reason to complain. And sometimes, it has nothing to do with your service or the product. Might be that guest is having a bad day and you simply happened to be in the wrong time at the wrong place. Some advice, where should you focus when dealing with guests' complaints

- Usually, when someone is complaining, they are angry and want to be heard. So, you have to show empathy for the situation. Always listen to what a person has to say. Don't cut him off, don't start explanations while the person is still talking. Let them finish. Sometimes just expressing a frustration can already give a relief. Manage your voice tone and pick words carefully. Emotionally heated person can't cope with certain phrases or actions. Know at least a very basic tactics for anger/stress management.
- Always apologize and admit, if there was a mistake done. Even if a guest is mad about something that has nothing to do with you or even your hotel. Apologize that guest is experiencing bad emotions and ensure that something can be done in order to make them feel better. Various studies show that if the complaints are handled quickly, guests are

even highly possible to become loyal. Admitting mistakes show your honesty and can help to solve even the worst situations.

- Find a solution. It is necessary to find a way, how to solve a situation. Sometimes a simple "sorry" can do a miracle. People are not always interested to get compensation for some unpleasant situation. But if you can offer an upgrade or something extra (like breakfast, drink, SPA day...), that would also work just fine.
- Follow up with the guest. If you solved the situation, don't leave it as it is. A guest might feel that you just got rid of their problem and pushed them out of your head. Guest (customer) always should be in the center of your "business universe". So even if you solved their issue, ask if now everything is fine, maybe they need something else. E.g. you solved the issue by giving your guest a room with a better view. Next time when you see this guest in the lobby, ask if everything is fine in a new room; if they are enjoying the view; if there is something else they might need
- Exceed guest's expectations. Even if you follow up with the guest after solving the issue, go the extra mile. When guest will be leaving, offer a discount for a next stay. Or offer complimentary transfer to the airport. Might be that unpleasant incident is already forgotten so these nice little touches will create a very positive attitude towards your hospitality. You admitted your mistake, you solved it and you made right apology gestures for it. Happy good -byes will be the very last impression of your hotel, so make sure that it is pleasant and that it's not the last time when you see this guest.

To improve your services and avoid guests' complaints

In most cases, **your staff is the face of your hotel**. Meaning that receptionists will be the ones "absorbing" good and bad guest emotions and comments. You have to make sure that people,

Working at the reception, are emphatic and astute people. They have quickly come up the solution and still remain calm even in very awkward situations.

- Hold a proper training for your staff. Not only about problem-solving and interaction with the guest, but also about surrounding things. Make sure they are aware of areas around the hotel, so they can give appropriate advice for different types of your guests.

- Also, ensure that they are familiar with the systems that are being used at the hotel. Slow and insecure system handling can make guest nervous or impatient.
- Keep an eye on your website. It happens that information and offers on the website are old and not accurate any longer. This can end up in the guest disappointment, leading to the bad experience and bad review.
- Do something with those complaints that you already received. You must track them and monitor on each and every possible platform. Nowadays guests have multiple channels, where they can express their opinion about your place. Make sure you are aware of those platforms. Respond to the comments! This will show people that you are listening and you actually care. Check another blog post about making social media as your sales channel. If you notice, that more guests are pointing out one or another aspect at your hotel (uncomfortable bed, noise from the street, grumpy receptionist...), that means there is an actual problem that needs a solution

3.5 Techniques to turn complaints into opportunities

Strange as it may initially sound, when a complaint is made it provides us with an opportunity to make a further sale, to save the situation, to impress the patron with other aspects of our organization, and to apologies. If a customer were to complain about a product or service, you may be able to turn the situation into an opportunity that demonstrates a high level of customer service by displaying certain attributes such as,

- Showing concern for the individual and for the situation they find themselves in
- Acting promptly rather than treating the complaint as a thing of lesser importance
- Demonstrating a genuine desire to find a speedy resolution
- Reporting back to the customer when required on progress of the resolution
- Being understanding and apologetic

Checking to ensure that the resolution that was agreed on has in fact been supplied and that everything is now ok. Some establishments require their employees to complete specific

documentation when a customer has complained or a conflict has occurred. This may further apply when the complaint or conflict has lead to a customer or colleague being injured or threatened. The latter information may be required for medical, police, or insurance report purposes. Whatever the case may be, these complaints or conflicts must be recorded accurately and legibly within the required time constraints.

Every small business has to deal with customer complaints at some point. Successful customer engagement helps you turn those complaints into opportunities to solidify relationships with your customers and learn ways to improve your customers' experiences. These eight tips help you handle consumer complaints in a healthy, productive way that fosters long-term associations.

1. How to Handle Customer Complaints

Having a customer complaints procedure in place at your business can help you manage negative comments and reviews. It provides a process for you and your employees to follow when stressful situations arise. This procedure can help you with your business's customer relationship management solutions. Consider using the below tips to help you create a process that can turn negative customer experiences into positive ones.

2. Make it Accessible for Customers to Complain

As much as a customer complaint seems like a negative thing, they offer your business the opportunity to improve its products or services. Therefore, it's essential to make sure that customers can easily discuss their experience at your business with someone internal. Having accessible employees, an apparent complaint or suggestion box in-store, or a page on your website will allow customers to offer their opinion quickly. If you don't make it accessible on your site or in-store, customers may go to other review sites or forums and leave an even more scathing review for being unable to talk to someone internally.

3. Respond to the Customer's Emotion

Customers who complain often express deeply felt emotions. The customer may feel betrayed by promises your business has made or misled by communications with your sales staff. Take the time to let the customer express these emotions before fixing the problem. Sometimes, the real problem has nothing to do with your products or services, but how your employees made the customer feel. By hearing the customer out, you ensure customers perceive you as an ally. You also learn about potentially significant problems that need addressing in your customer-facing operations, whether by instituting new procedures or establishing further training for employees.

4. Stay Focused on Finding Solutions

A knee-jerk response to customer service complaints might be to downplay their experience or cause an emotional response within yourself. Whether these emotions are anger or annoyance, being unable to control your response could cause more harm than good. Even when dealing with demanding customers, it's important to stay level-headed and focused on finding a solution versus getting riled up at what was said. The more thought you put towards a solution and the more focused you are on the outcome, the less likely you will be to match those intense emotions of the customer. By handling the situation in this manner, you are more likely to create a positive experience for the customer, the business, and yourself.

5. Follow Up on All Complaints

You might be tempted to wash your hands of a customer after you receive a particularly painful complaint, but this serves as a vital moment in your relationship. Follow up with customers to make sure they're happy with how your business handles their complaints, and ask for feedback on how you can improve your products and customer service. Turning toward a dissatisfied customer instead of away can help salvage any negative reviews the customer might want to spread on social media, and it assists you in making needed improvements to avoid receiving the same complaint in the future.

6. Take Customer Feedback On-Board for Improvements

Don't just find a solution for your customer and call it a day. Instead, take what they said and apply it to your customer management process. All negative customer feedback can be a learning experience. As Bill Gates said, "Your most unhappy customers are your greatest source of learning." Taking steps toward turning consumer complaints into opportunities helps your business create happy customers and build brand loyalty. For that reason, after every interaction with customer service complaints, you should take note of the situation. Write down the customer's experience, how you found a solution, and what that solution was. Then, once complete, integrate that feedback into your customer service to ensure the next time it happens, you and your employees know how to remedy the situation right away.

7. Share Complaints with Team Members

Part of your customer complaints procedure should be focused on sharing the experience with your team members and employees. For that reason, inform all team members of common complaints and how they were handled after the fact to ensure customer satisfaction. The more understanding and training your employees have in dealing with stressful customer situations, the more likely they will respond appropriately and helpfully. Then, should the same problem or complaint arise again, they will know how to handle it and turn it into a positive outcome.

8. Create Proactive Workflow for Handling Customer Complaints

Take the proactive steps of listening, responding, and fixing the problem when handling customer complaints, but think about how your customer service might improve if you create workflow procedures employees must follow each time a customer complains. Start by rewarding customer-facing employees for reporting complaints, something they might otherwise have the temptation to hide or downplay. Record the protests, and make sure the people in a position to fix them maintain awareness going forward.

3.6 Provide feedback on complaints

If you want to submit a complaint or provide feedback to us about our services, you can do it through your online account or directly to us.

We value your opinion and want to hear what you think about the quality of our services. To submit a complaint, compliment or suggestion, we ask you to provide details about the payment or service your feedback relates to.

If you are a business or health professional you should send your feedback or make a complaint using the specific options available for you.

If you are making a complaint you will also need to include:

- The reason for your feedback
- The outcome you are seeking
- Your contact details, if you agree for us to contact you for further information

We don't respond to compliments and suggestions, but we do forward your feedback to the relevant team. We appreciate your feedback as it helps us improve our services.

If you are not making a complaint, or providing a compliment or suggestions about our services, you can contact us for general enquiries.

Ask for feedback

Communicating with customers and actively asking for their opinions is a great way to identify problems before they begin to escalate. Not only will customers feel as though the business cares about their wants and needs but it also represents an opportunity to identify issues that other customers may have experienced but were not forthcoming enough to raise. Customer feedback is a great tool in the battle to reduce complaints if utilized correctly.

Analyze feedback

Use customer complaints as a diving board to launch you into a pool of growth. With the right customer service software, your team can record complaints so they can be analyzed and shared with other departments across the business. You can also use surveys or community forums to collect customer feedback proactively.

Here are a few guiding questions when analyzing customer complaints:

- Has this happened to the customer before?
- Have other customers experienced this as well?
- What team does this impact and how can you be sure they see the feedback?
- What is your company's policy for resolving the complaint? For example, do you offer a full refund for a dress that ripped three months after purchase?
- How can you make sure the customer doesn't experience this again?

Consider a Voice of the Customer (VoC) program, a program that businesses use to collect and analyze customer feedback about their brand, products, or services.

Be sure to deliver on promised standards

One of the simplest ways to reduce customer complaints is to ensure that customers receive exactly what they have paid for (delivery on what the customer expects). Anything less presents valid ground for protests and objections. There are two major ways that businesses can ensure they are delivering advertised standards of service.

The first is to make sure that the product or service description is accurate and not overly exaggerated. The second is to maintain meticulous level of quality control that are overseen by all staff members.

Find the root of the problem

No matter how small or seemingly insignificant the complaint, it is essential for businesses to improve their method of handling customer grievances by tracking down the root of the problem and actively address any areas that are resulting in customer dissatisfaction. Finding out why the

customer's complained will ensure that the issue is 100% dealt with and will not snowball into something bigger and more damaging at a later stage.

Implementing these simple tips into your business operations will ensure that the level of complaints and the number of complaints received is significantly reduced across all areas.

Response to the complaint

It is interesting to note that the complaints submitted by customers are merely an expression of dissatisfaction with the performance and products of the organization, as explained earlier. The failure to respond to complaint, may cause them to reach official authorities in the country through suing the organization in court and demanding substantial compensation. So, successful management is the one that is fully aware that its success will not happen and continue without customers' satisfaction and meeting their needs, desires and expectations as well. If this does not happen, the administration must listen to customers' complaints, respond quickly to them in order to maintain their reputation and prestige, and not to give the opportunity to competitors to get a part of its market share. When the investigation of the complaint is completed, the complainant must be informed of the results obtained, even in case of some shortcomings of the complaint that remains under investigation, since the initial clarification of the point reached will be met with great satisfaction and welcome from the complainant. This report can be either verbal or written as preferred by the customer, and it gives the impression about the hotel's response to his complaint,

Develop a plan to investigate the complaint

Handling complaints requires clear and written steps that must clarify what is required to be investigated. After that, prepare a list of steps related to the investigation, determine the time needed to solve the problem, determine the required treatment to be achieved and as the customer seeks, whether the expectations are real or need to be managed, and finally write and record any other considerations related to the complainant submitter and keep this information confidential. This means that hotel management must have a set of written clear strait forward procedures, showing the complaints handling process that must be prepared in advance

3.7 Reflect on and evaluate complaint and solution

A complaint is an “expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organization, related to its products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required”¹. As a matter of guidance, complaints can be made directly to an organization by members of the public and/or customers, or through alternative pathways such as to Members of Parliament or statutory officers but otherwise about the organization.

An effective complaint handling system provides three key benefits to an organization:

- It resolves issues raised by a person who is dissatisfied in a timely and cost-effective way;
- It provides information that can lead to improvements in service delivery; and
- Where complaints are handled properly, a good system can improve the reputation of an organization and strengthen public confidence in an organizations’ administrative processes.

Complaints are acknowledged in a timely manner, addressed promptly and according to order of urgency, and the complainant is kept informed throughout the process.

- Guidance should be provided to staff on how to respond to and priorities complaints. They should be aware of internal complaint handling processes including how to assess complaints which may be resolved quickly and those which require investigation.
- Complaints should be acknowledged promptly. Complainants and, if applicable, the person who is the subject of the complaint, should be kept informed of progress and the outcome of the complaint.
- Complaints should be addressed promptly in order of urgency and staff should be aware of any target timelines for resolving complaints.
- Complaint Handling Officers should be empowered to either resolve complaints or be aware of, and have access to, the person who has the authority to do so.
- Where appropriate, special arrangements for responding to particular client groups should be put in place, for example, Indigenous Languages, children and young people, people living in regional and remote areas, people with disabilities and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Staff should be able to identify matters that may be public interest disclosures and refer them to the appropriate process, and should refer any identified misconduct and corrupt behavior.

If a complaint is upheld, the organization provides a remedy. Mechanisms should exist for enabling appropriate remedies to be provided when complaints are upheld and staff should be familiar with them. Staff should be able to give the complainant reasons for decisions relating to remedies. Staff should be empowered to provide these remedies at the appropriate level, for example some appropriate remedies may be provided by front-line staff.

There are opportunities for internal and external review and/or appeal about the organization's response to the complaint, and the complainants are informed about these avenues.

There should be an independent internal review or appeal process.

Unite Four: - Refer complaints

This learning guide is developed to provide you the necessary information regarding the following content coverage and topics:

- Complaints that require referral to other personnel
- Referring Complaints to concerned personnel for follow-up
- Documents investigation reports to appropriate personnel

This guide will also assist you to attain the learning outcomes stated in the cover page. Specifically, upon completion of this learning guide, you will be able to:

- Identify Complaints that require referral to other personnel
- Referring Complaints to concerned personnel for follow-up
- Forward All necessary documents investigation reports to appropriate personnel

4.1 Complaints that require referral to other personnel

There is no way for a law enforcement agency to avoid complaint handling. Indeed complaints of all sizes, shapes, and weights are the lifeblood of investigative units, vital to its growth and activity. Unfortunately this aspect of agency work in white-collar crime detection and prosecution is often ignored. If an agency fails to recognize their importance, complaints and referrals are handled in an unorganized manner and the full potential of their positive contributions to the mission of the unit are never realized.

Benefits of good complaint handling Complaints are an important way for the management of an organization to be accountable to the public, as well as providing valuable prompts to review organizational performance and the conduct of people that work within and for it. A complaint is an “expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organization, related to its products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required”¹. As a matter of guidance, complaints can be made directly to an organization by members of the public and/or customers, or through alternative pathways such as to Members of Parliament or statutory officers but otherwise about the organization. An effective complaint handling system provides **three** key benefits to an organization:

- It resolves issues raised by a person who is dissatisfied in a timely and cost-effective way;
- It provides information that can lead to improvements in service delivery; and
- Where complaints are handled properly, a good system can improve the reputation of an organization and strengthen public confidence in an organization’s administrative processes.

The public wants:

- A user friendly complaint handling system
- To be heard and understood
- To be respected
- An explanation
- An apology
- Action as soon as possible

The organization needs:

- A user friendly system for accepting feedback
- Clear delegations & procedures for staff to deal with complaints and provide remedies

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- A recording system to capture complaint data
- To use complaint data to identify problems and trends
- To improve service delivery in identified areas

Complaint Handling Officers Complaint handling is an important role in an organization and should be recognized as such by management. Complaint Handling Officers are the most important factor in ensuring that an organizations' complaint handling is responsive to complainants. Complaint Handling Officers should be empowered to make decisions, or have access to someone who can make decisions. An effective resolution at the earliest opportunity will enhance the complainant's view of the organization and allow prompt improvement to practices. Complaints should be handled by people who have the appropriate skills and authority to resolve or investigate complaints and, where appropriate, provide remedies and identify improved practices. Where possible, complaints are best handled by people at the point of service delivery. These people should be able to resolve complaints at first contact and should log complaint details for further analysis. More serious complaints, or complaints that cannot be resolved by front-line staff, should be referred to more senior staff or designated Complaint Handling Officers for investigation, resolution and any other appropriate action.

4.2 Referring Complaints to concerned personnel for follow-up

The Follow-Up

Maybe the essential part of all is following up with your guests. Contact the guest to assure they've been taken care of, and the problem was resolved to their satisfaction should be a minimum. Send your guests a thank-you note acknowledging their loyalty to your hotel to go the extra mile. Small gestures like this can go a long way.

Customer complaints are often a sign that there's a disconnect between what customers expected and what you delivered. Sometimes that disconnect is caused by a customer's unreasonable Expectations or incorrect assumptions. Other times, it's caused by something your company is doing wrong. A customer complaint might be the result of your marketing copy leading them to believe something incorrect about your product/service — or of your user experience setting customers up for failure. Or it could reflect a problem that's happening outside of your direct control (e.g., third-party shipping issues). The only way to find out is to give credence to

customer complaints to determine if they contain genuinely useful feedback. Process for handling customer complaints

To uncover the reason you received a complaint from a customer and solve the problem in order to retain that customer, use this five-step process for handling customer complaints.

Step 1: Dig deeper by asking the right questions

Complaints — even angry ones — can contain insights, and it's your job to seek out the point of friction. Socratic questioning can help you get to the source of the issue.

Ask your customer questions like:

What do you mean by...?

Could you provide an example?

Could you expand on that point further?

And ask yourself questions like:

What other information do I need?

What am I assuming here?

Why is this complaint important?

Often, complaints are the result of problems that need to be solved. Asking the right questions helps you get to the root of the complaint, figure out if there's a way to resolve the issue, and determine if the complaint contains genuinely useful feedback. If you determine that you aren't the right person to help with the customer's complaint and need to transfer them to someone who can, make sure to explain why. This can be as simple as saying, "I'm going to set you up with our specialist who will get that squared away for you right away."

Step 2: Identify the type of customer you're dealing with

A study from the University of Florida found that when dealing with customer complaints, you may run into one of the following types of customers, each "motivated by different beliefs, attitudes, and needs":

Customers who aren't shy about letting you know they're upset. When responding, avoid mirroring their confrontational behavior; instead, react with firm politeness. Customers who pay well and demand premium support for it. When responding, avoid excuses and just get to the solution. Consider creating a VIP folder and workflow to make it easy to identify and respond to their complaints. Customers who contact you frequently. Stay patient and avoid coming across as

frustrated when responding to these customers. When satisfied, they often become repeat customers and advocates for your company.

Step 3: Respond to the customer quickly

When it comes to unhappy customers, a speedy response goes from being a nice-to-have to a necessity. Complaints are best resolved as soon as possible. A customer leaving a feature request won't mind at all if it takes you a day to respond, but customers who are in a "pulling my hair out" situation want a resolution yesterday. Make responding to them a priority. It can be useful to set up a folder that's separate from the main support queue where you can filter less-than-ecstatic messages. Here, the team can see immediately which emails are from customers who need help right away.

Step 4: Present a solution, and verify that the problem is solved

After you've identified the root cause of the customer's complaint, found a solution, and sent that solution to the customer, it's important to verify that the solution you proposed actually solved the problem. There are a couple of ways to do this: If you can't verify that the solution is working, add this line to the end of your communication: "Please let me know if there's anything else I can do for you. I'm happy to help!"

Step 5: Log the complaint so you can track trends

If you've gotten one complaint from one customer about one specific issue over the last 10 years, that issue might not be worth addressing. But if you're getting multiple messages from multiple customers who all shared the same complaint, that's the beginning of a narrative. To identify high-volume complaints, you'll need a system for tracking them.

Analyzing Investigation Data

In order to reduce the number of incidents and investigations, companies must be continually evaluating and analyzing their risk. They can do this by aggregating and studying their investigation data to determine:

- areas where problems are occurring the most frequently
- the types of problems that are occurring in the organization
- what measures can be put in place to reduce them

4.3 Documents investigation reports to appropriate personnel

Failure to investigate misconduct that should be investigated can have dire consequences for the company. When a company receives a complaint or report of wrongdoing via its hotline, web form or through any other means, the company is obligated to take the report seriously and act on it quickly. Depending on the type of allegation, there may be regulations that govern how the complaint is handled and the timeline for the workplace investigation and resolution. So it's important to have in place a procedure for receiving and triaging reports.

The first decision to be made is whether the report warrants an investigation, and this cannot be taken lightly. Failure to investigate misconduct that should be investigated can have dire consequences for the company.

Do You Need to Take Immediate Action?

If the allegation warrants it, you may need to take immediate action, such as separating the parties to the complaint, speaking to them individually or referring them for counselling, mediation or both. Allegations of harassment, or sexual harassment in particular, require sensitive handling and possibly immediate removal of one or both parties to another location.

Assuming the decision is made to investigate the report, there should be protocols for how to conduct an investigation, including a method for choosing the investigator, assigning the case and tracking and reporting on the investigation. If you decide not to investigate, this decision needs to be documented thoroughly. State the reasons for the decision to decline to investigate and ensure they are defensible. Assume your decision will be questioned and make sure you have valid grounds.

Choosing an Investigator

You'll need to choose an impartial investigator who has the skills, knowledge, access and experience required by the case. When deciding who will investigate an allegation, you'll need to decide whether to use an in-house or outside investigator for your workplace investigation. There are many factors to consider in this decision. You may need an investigator with specific skills, experience or legal knowledge that are unavailable in-house. You may have concerns related to perceived bias or even actual bias that would pose a risk when using a company investigator.

Choosing an investigator isn't always straightforward. Learn what you need to consider in this free cheat sheet: [How to Choose an Investigator for a Workplace Investigation](#).

Depending on the type of investigation, you may need to consider the gender of the investigator (in a sexual harassment investigation, for example). If your workplace investigation covers multiple locations, cities or countries, you may need to consider using resources in another country, someone who speaks a particular language or someone who has local knowledge

Planning the Workplace Investigation

Do some digging into the backgrounds of your interview subjects to find out a bit about them so that you can build rapport easily. During the planning phase, you'll need to determine the scope of the investigation. What exactly are you investigating? Is it a code of conduct violation, a possible criminal violation? Are there privacy issues involved? Are there other incidents or issues related to the complaint or incident that need to be triaged? Creating an investigation plan helps you to avoid one of the biggest investigation mistakes: scope creep. Proper planning helps you to focus on the allegation or incident being investigated and ensures that your workplace investigation stays on course.

Gathering and Documenting Evidence

Remember that your job is simply to find out the truth, and weigh each piece of evidence against this requirement. Evidence gathering can be the most time-consuming part of the investigation and involves collecting both physical and digital evidence. Everything you find out is potential evidence and it's important to consider every piece of evidence you uncover, whether or not it fits in with your other evidence and impressions related to the case.

All physical evidence must be stored securely and logged. Digital evidence needs to be authenticated, captured, preserved and stored somewhere as well. If you're using a case management system for your investigations, you can upload your digital evidence directly into the case file, where it will be secure, organized and accessible.

WRITTEN TEST

SELF-CHECK 1

I. Say true for the correct statement and false for the wrong one

1. An opportunity to develop product/service knowledge of hospitality is all around us.
2. Successful waiter will try to understand the target market's needs, wants, and demands.
3. hotel employee needs to demonstrate many attributes to be less effective in their job
4. It's employer's perception how good the service is that counts most
5. One of the most crucial steps in the selling process is the initial contact with the customer

II. Matching the correctly from B to A column

No.	Column A		Column B
___1.	Product knowledge		A. Include the transfer of goods
___2.	Professionals skill		B. Able to present product features
___3.	Service		C. Stimulating demand for their products
___4.	SWOT		D. Help to assist strength & weakness of a firm
___5.	Aim of marketing		E. Understand the customer requirement

III. Briefly discuss the following short answers

1. Discuss briefly about shared system of customs, beliefs and values
2. Explain how people from different countries and cultures have different needs, wants and preferences about product and service preferences
3. Who should problems be referred to if problems are unresolved in workplace
4. Explain the customers expectation to staffs appropriate work ethic
5. Write down how to identified issues causing conflict or misunderstanding in the workplace

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