

# Pleasing the Customer

# Workshop 3

Jesse, a waiter at Marie's Gourmet Restaurant, prides himself on getting big tips. He's one of the best-liked wait staff, and many customers ask to sit at his tables.

Early in his career, Jesse learned how to please his customers. In his best moments, he can convince a non-seafood lover to try the tuna and a health-conscious diner to order the "Chocolate Madness" dessert.



Jesse doesn't have any big secrets. He simply believes he has to build a relationship with his customers. He pays special attention to them, filling their glasses before they're empty, bringing their food while it's hot, stopping often to see if more bread is needed.

Tonight, Jesse sees the hostess seat two of his regular customers. Like many of his customers, Jane and Herb have become more than simply diners at Marie's. They are his friends. He makes eye contact with them and smiles.

As he passes Jane and Herb's table, Jesse asks if they would like their usual appetizer, then places an order for two Shrimp Cocktails. He writes "Jane and Herb" on the order,

knowing that the kitchen staff will pay extra attention to their order.

When Jesse brings the appetizers and bread to Jane and Herb's table, he takes the time to chat for a few minutes.

During the evening, he keeps a watchful eye on all his tables,

anticipating and responding to his diners' needs. Through his attention, positive attitude, and friendly conversation,

he makes sure his customers' dining experience is pleasant.

As Jesse counts his tips later that night, he's pleased. Another good night financially. Just as important, he thinks, "I really enjoy my work."

## What's Inside

*Here, you will learn to*

- ◆ build relationships with customers
- ◆ meet customers' unspoken needs
- ◆ stay in touch with customers

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## Building Relationships

One of the keys to developing repeat buyers is to build strong business relationships. In this workshop you will learn some simple psychology strategies that will make your customers' buying experiences more pleasant, while increasing sales and revenue. These strategies are:

- ◆ Welcoming the customer
- ◆ Giving undivided attention
- ◆ Listening attentively
- ◆ Showing sensitivity
- ◆ Speaking so customers understand



### Welcoming Customers

Each time you serve a customer, make eye contact, smile encouragingly, and show that you are approachable. If you're talking on the telephone when a customer arrives, acknowledge the customer and finish the call as soon as possible.

While you want to be approachable to your customers, remember to respect their personal space. Don't stay in a customer's intimate zone for longer than a moment or two—the intimate zone extends about two feet on all sides for North Americans. Your customers will be more comfortable if you stand about four feet away.

## Giving Your Undivided Attention

Customers need to feel important, heard, and understood. During every customer contact, block out all distractions. From the first moment to the last, focus on the customer. A sure way to annoy customers—and lose their business—is to let your mind wander during a transaction.

To keep your attention on your customers, try these tips:

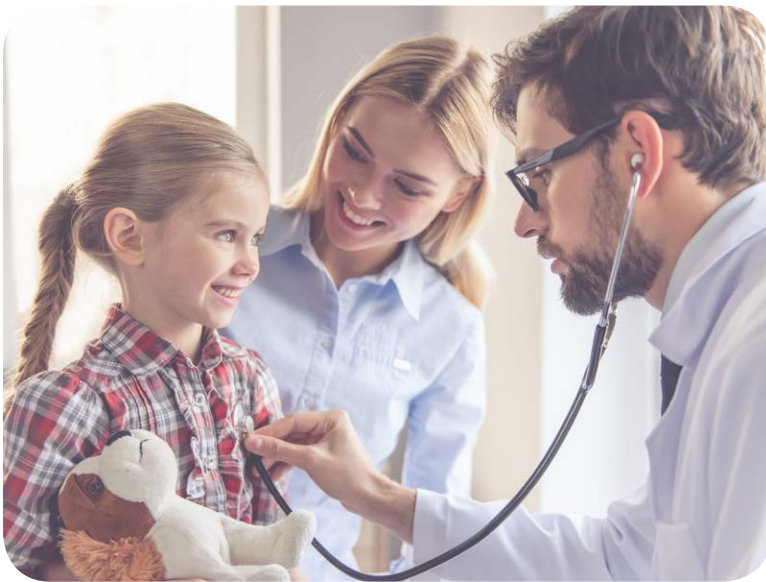
- ◆ Challenge yourself to see each customer as an individual with a problem or desire that is different from anyone else's.
- ◆ Make it your mission to understand and fulfill each customer's unique need.
- ◆ Try to learn something new from every customer. Everyone has something to offer.
- ◆ Attempt to make each customer's day better. Your day will also be better because of your efforts.
- ◆ If your work area is busy or noisy, take your customer to a conference room, close your office door, or find some other quiet area to talk.
- ◆ Be sure you get enough rest and eat well. If your mind begins to wander, get a drink of water before your next transaction. The water will revitalize your body much more than caffeine.

Remember that your customers are the reason your job exists.

## Active Listening—Not Hearing

“Active” listening is a strategy developed by Carl Rogers in the 1940s and 1950s as a way to show clients they were being heard and understood. It involves not just hearing, but also restating and clarifying what is said to reach a full understanding of the client’s thoughts and feelings.

To understand what your customers are trying to convey when they speak, practice the following steps for active listening:



1. Face your customer.
2. Make eye contact.
3. Nod and smile.
4. Listen to what your customer says.
5. Use body language to acknowledge that you’re hearing.
6. Pause before you reply.
7. Restate what the customer has said Phrases such as “What I hear you saying is...” are effective.

8. If you don’t fully understand, ask questions.
9. Summarize what the customer wants, and check whether your understanding is accurate.
10. Don’t judge or analyze your customer. Just show that you understand.

When you listen actively, you learn more than what the customer’s words reveal. You also learn what the customer is not saying and, more importantly, what he or she means to communicate.

Doctors and nurses use active listening with their patients. For example, if a patient tells a doctor he’s been getting splitting headaches, the doctor asks about other symptoms that can lead to a diagnosis. Only by asking probing questions and conducting diagnostic tests can the doctor find the real cause of the problem and treat it appropriately.

“  
Act as if what you do  
makes a difference. It does.

— **WILLIAM JAMES**

*American philosopher*  
”

When working with customers, you can apply the same principle. To determine the real problem and solve it, you need to be curious about what the customer wants, patient enough to allow your customer time to talk without interruptions, open-minded enough so that you can see things from the customer's point of view, and inquisitive enough to ask clarifying questions. By actively

listening to your customers, you'll gain the information you need to serve them well.

Most people are not good listeners. Instead of listening, they wait for their next chance to talk or to plan their response. It's been said that you can talk yourself out of a customer but you can never listen yourself out of a customer.



## What is a Customer?

- ✓ A customer is the most important person in any business.
- ✓ A customer is not dependent on us. We are dependent on the customer.
- ✓ A customer is not an interruption of our work. The customer is the purpose of our work.
- ✓ A customer does us a favor by calling. We are not doing the customer a favor by waiting on him or her.
- ✓ A customer is part of our business—not an outsider.
- ✓ A customer is a person who comes to us with needs and wants. It is our job to fill those needs and wants.
- ✓ A customer pays our salary. Without him we would have to close the door.

Source: TimePlex

## ACTIVITY 3.1

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

### How Well Do You Listen?

Mark Y for “yes” and N for “no” in response to the following statements. If you don’t work with customers, substitute coworkers or classmates for the word “customer.”

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 1. I often interrupt a customer to interject what I need to say.                                      | Y | N |
| 2. I anticipate what a customer is about to say and finish the statement.                             | Y | N |
| 3. During a conversation, I am easily distracted by what is happening around me.                      | Y | N |
| 4. During a conversation, I feel uncomfortable when I look at a customer for more than a few seconds. | Y | N |
| 5. I “tune out” customers I don’t agree with.   | Y | N |
| 6. I often focus on a customer’s clothes and hair instead of what the customer is saying.             | Y | N |
| 7. I am turned off by a customer who uses words I don’t understand.                                   | Y | N |
| 8. Sometimes I daydream while customers are talking to me.  | Y | N |
| 9. Instead of listening to a customer, I find myself planning what I want to say.                     | Y | N |
| 10. I often pretend to be interested in what a customer is saying even when I’m not.                  | Y | N |

If you answered “no” to each statement, you are an outstanding listener! If you answered “yes” to more than three statements, you need to work hard on developing better listening skills. You can practice active listening by using the strategy outlined earlier in this section. No one is born knowing how to listen actively. Becoming a good listener takes practice.

“  
Never underestimate the  
value of listening to the customer.  
It’s one of the most valuable  
skills you can learn.

— **MICHAEL LEBOEUF**

*Author, “How to Win Customers  
and Keep Them for Life”*

”

## Showing Sensitivity

Like most people, customers can be moody. Are they angry, curious, excited, frustrated, tense, uncomfortable? If customers are angry, calm them. If they're excited, share their enthusiasm. If they are curious, provide details.

Further, first-time customers may need to be helped through the buying process. Technology-limited computer buyers, for instance, can be overwhelmed with all their options. Your sensitivity to their confusion and insecurity can increase their comfort level.

## Speaking So Customers Understand

In any conversation with a customer, remember that you're trying to understand how the person wants to be helped. If you follow the conversation guidelines below, you will provide the most effective help.

- ◆ Spend more time listening than talking. You'll learn more.
- ◆ Adjust your voice level, body motions, and vocabulary to match your customer's manner of speaking. People tend to be most comfortable with others who are like them.
- ◆ Satisfy your customer's subconscious needs.
- ◆ Be specific in your descriptions so your customers will remember them. For example, say "glossy silver finish" to describe the color of a computer instead of "shiny" or "sophisticated."

- ◆ Use language your customers understand; stay away from technical terms.
- ◆ Watch your customer's body language for cues about what he or she is thinking. Also watch your own body language; be sure you're conveying alertness and interest. Never look at your watch, shuffle papers, or yawn; your customer will take these to be signs of disinterest, which they are!
- ◆ Create good will by complimenting your customer. Everyone enjoys authentic—but not superficial—praise.
- ◆ Move around. By shaking your customer's hand, turning to face a new product, or walking toward a display, you will engage the customer and maintain their interest.

## Tips for Satisfying Customers' Subconscious Needs



- ✓ Acceptance: Greet the customer with an encouraging smile.
- ✓ Approval: Say, "You've come to the right place. We have just what you need."
- ✓ Appreciation: Genuinely thank the customer for his or her business. Show the customer that he or she is valued.
- ✓ Admiration: Compliment the customer about his or her knowledge in a particular area.
- ✓ Agreement: Nod your head; say, "I agree" or "I understand."

If you don't understand what a customer is asking, probe for more information. The best questions you can ask begin with Who, What, When, Where, Why, or How. These are called open-ended questions because they require more than a "yes" or "no" answer. They are questions that get your customer talking.

Imagine that you're a mechanic and a woman brings her car to your shop. She tells you that the car makes a funny noise when she turns the steering wheel. You can diagnose the problem by asking open-ended questions, such as "When did the problem begin?" "What does the noise sound like?" "How often does the noise occur?" and "Is it just when you turn left or right?"

Open-ended questions give you the feedback you need to provide a knowledgeable answer. The more you get your customer to talk to you, the more you learn.

Closed questions can be answered with one word, usually "yes" or "no." They are used to confirm facts. An example is, "Would you like to try that suit on?" or "Do you have time on Friday afternoon to meet with me?"

Generally, open-ended questions hold customers' interest more than closed questions.



## Meeting Customers' Unspoken Needs

In Workshop 2, you learned how to identify and satisfy a customer's conscious needs. But customers also have subconscious needs that must be satisfied. The most common subconscious needs are to feel acceptance, approval, appreciation, admiration, and agreement. You'll go a long way toward building a relationship with your customers if you satisfy their subconscious needs. See the box on the previous page for some suggestions.

“  
Do right. Do your best.  
Treat others as you want  
to be treated.

— **LOU HOLTZ**  
*Former football coach*

## ACTIVITY 3.2

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

### Asking Open-Ended Questions

For each closed question in Column 1, record an open-ended question in Column 2. Be sure your questions reflect a sincere, helpful attitude.

#### Closed Question

#### Open-Ended Question

- |  |     |
|--|-----|
| 1. Were you satisfied with the service you received?         | 1.  |
| 2. May I help you with anything else today?                  | 2.  |
| 3. Would you like to subscribe to the <i>New York Post</i> ? | 3.  |
| 4. Do you receive the error message often?                   | 4.  |
| 5. Would you like dessert today?                             | 5.  |
| 6. Is the copier working better?                             | 6.  |
| 7. Would you like to have a quote on our cleaning service?   | 7.  |
| 8. Is our lawn work satisfactory?                            | 8.  |
| 9. Do you like your steak?                                   | 9.  |
| 10. Does your arm still hurt?                                | 10. |



## Staying in Touch

How many times would you have missed your six-month dental checkup if your dental office hadn't sent a reminder? Do you, like many people, rely on your veterinarian's postcards to know when your dog or cat is due for its rabies shot? People in many different occupations strengthen their relationship with their customers by sending reminder notices.

Staying in touch with customers is essential for developing repeat buyers. You can use reminder notices, calls or letters, birthday cards, or invitations to events. After a profitable transaction, make a follow-up call to ensure that your customer is satisfied. If action is needed, see that it's handled promptly.

### ACTIVITY 3.3

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

#### Points to Ponder

Mark T for "true" or F for "false" for each of the following statements. After completing the exercise, discuss your answers with your classmates or coworkers.

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 1. You've just read an article about a product being developed that seems to be exactly what a customer has requested but which your company does not sell. You should send the article to your customer. | T | F |
| 2. Follow-up is important only when a customer has complained.  | T | F |
| 3. When a customer complains, respond with a letter instead of a phone call.  | T | F |
| 4. Most customers expect a response to their email request within 24 hours.   | T | F |
| 5. If you're planning a trip to an important customer's city, set up an appointment to visit even if you don't have anything new to say.  | T | F |

1 T 2 F 3 F 4 T 5 T



## GETTING CONNECTED

To measure your effectiveness at communicating, visit the following Website and take one of the tests related to communication. Click “No, Thanks” when asked for an email address and password.

**<https://myqss.link/Tests>**

Answer all the questions, then click on “Score” to see how you did.

## WORKSHOP WRAP-UP

- Welcome customers and express a willingness to help; never let customers feel like they are an unwanted interruption.
- Don't let your attention wander when working with a customer.
- Active listening means hearing what your customers mean, instead of only what they say.
- If you are sensitive to your customers' emotions, you can increase their comfort level and make them feel at ease.
- Ask open-ended questions to clarify what customers want and need.
- Show your customers you care by satisfying their need for acceptance, approval, appreciation, admiration, and agreement.
- Stay in touch with your customer before, during, and after a transaction.