

Building a Partnership with Customers

It's a hot, sticky day in Philadelphia, and Sherry's bus is held up in traffic, again! It's been one traffic jam after another on congested streets. Sherry looks at her watch for the third time in just five minutes.



"My doctor's appointment is at 10:00," she thinks. "I'll never make it in time."

When the bus finally reaches Sherry's stop at 10:10 a.m., she rushes to the medical center and arrives breathless at the receptionist's desk. Before she can apologize for being late, the receptionist says, "Sherry, I tried to call you; but you'd left your office already. Dr. Smith has been called to the hospital for an emergency, so all our appointments are running late. I'm really sorry about the delay."

Sherry looks around the busy waiting room and asks, "How long

do you think the wait will be?" The receptionist answers, "It shouldn't be more than a half hour. If you'd like, we can reschedule your checkup. Or, you can get some iced coffee from our lounge and have a seat. We'll be with you just as soon as possible."

Sherry decides to wait it out rather than make the trip on another day. As she makes her way to one of the few open chairs in the waiting room, the receptionist approaches her. "Sherry, if you would like some iced

coffee, I'll show you our coffee room."

"I really like this medical staff," Sherry thinks. "Things usually run smoothly; but when they don't, the staff lets you know what's going on. They sure try to make a bad situation better."

What's Inside

Here, you will learn to

- ◆ build rapport with customers
- ◆ create win-win solutions
- ◆ use the WIIFM principle

Workshop
4

Building Rapport

Sherry and the other patients waiting in the doctor's office could have been angry and frustrated. But they weren't because the receptionist knew the importance of being honest and caring and making the patients feel valued.

A great way to form a partnership with your customers, whether they are patients, shoppers, or clients, is to build rapport with them—that is, to develop a relationship that is based on trust and good feelings. Here are some suggestions for building rapport:

- ◆ Show customers that you're interested in them.
- ◆ Tell the truth.
- ◆ Adjust your comments to match the customer's personality style.
- ◆ Welcome complaints.

Show Your Interest

Since customers are the most important people in your company, always show them that you care about them. Start by smiling warmly and making eye contact. Using the customer's name during conversations also helps.



If it's appropriate in the situation, encourage your customers to talk about themselves and their needs. Listen to what customers say, and make a mental note of personal information you can refer to in the future, such as their likes and dislikes, their children's names, their birth date, and where and when they are going on vacation. Later, jot these things down and put them in a file. Your customer will be flattered if you ask, the next time you meet, how Johnnie and Angela are doing in school or how the family enjoyed their trip to Maine. You'll also gain customer-rapport points if you send your customers a birthday card or a special recognition card when you learn of their promotion, wedding in the family, or some other notable event.

What Every Customer Wants

- ◆ To be recognized
- ◆ To be served, but not pressured
- ◆ To gain your undivided attention
- ◆ To be given information, without judgment
- ◆ To be treated as an individual
- ◆ To buy without being frustrated by rules
- ◆ To be appreciated
- ◆ To be satisfied

Source: Bureau of Better Business

Just the Truth, Please!

In customer relations, honesty is the best policy. When speaking with a customer, be truthful. Customers want to do business with companies they trust. If they sense that you are being less than honest, they will lose trust in you—and your company—and, chances are, they'll take their business elsewhere.

If customers come to you with a problem, tell them what you can do to fix it. Don't over-promise—if your customer wants a delivery on Tuesday and you know it can't be delivered until Friday, say so. With correct information, your customers can adjust their thinking to fit the delivery schedule.

Think about how you feel when you are a customer. Suppose, for example, you meet a friend for breakfast at a cafe and the host tells you service is slower than usual because one of the chefs is out sick. He asks if you'd like to be seated and offers you complimentary coffee or tea while you wait. Doesn't his honesty make you feel better about the wait and the cafe?



Understanding the Customer's Style

How good are you at observing human nature? If you carefully watch and listen to your customers, you'll spot important clues that will tell you the best way to relate to them. According to one psychological theory, we all fall into one of four

personality types: amiable, analytical, expressive, or driver. The following chart describes each of these personality types and offers suggestions for relating to people of each type.

You've got to start with the customer and work backwards toward the technology, not the other way around.

— **STEVE JOBS**

Apple Computer founder

Look at the chart and think about different customers you encounter. Suppose a customer says he needs information on the features of your various cell phones. He's likely an Analytical Personality, a no-nonsense type of individual. When speaking with him, stick to the facts, and avoid small talk!

After you identify a customer's style, accommodate his or her preferences by adjusting how you talk. If

you realize a customer is an Expressive Personality (she talks about color, shapes, or designs), show pictures and other visuals! If a customer is a Driver Personality, rely on concise verbal descriptions. If a customer is an Amiable Personality, take time to chat.

Personality Types

Amiable Personality

Characteristics: Friendly, agreeable; wants to develop a relationship; likes the personal touch more than facts and details.

How to relate: Be friendly; don't rush quickly into business; don't be bossy! Emphasize why your product or service will solve the customer's problem.

Expressive Personality

Characteristics: Creative and entertaining; spontaneous and impulsive; fond of socializing; an idea person.

How to relate: Draw on customer's enthusiasm and creativity; support his or her dreams; use bold colors, pictures, positive images; take time to socialize. Emphasize who has used your product or service to solve problems.

Analytical Personality

Characteristics: Wants all the facts so he or she can make informed decisions; logical, organized. Needs time to think about facts.

How to relate: Give facts and reasoning. Approach customer in direct, organized way. Emphasize how your product or service will solve customer's problem.

Driver Personality

Characteristics: Focused, action and goal oriented; wants solution now; usually thinks he or she is right.

How to relate: Be concise and professional; discuss benefits and results. Emphasize what your product or service can do to solve customer's problem.

Sources: grokdotcom; Diana Sibbersson, Di-Namics Management Consulting and Training.

ACTIVITY 4.1

NAME _____

What's Their Personality?

You know that people exhibit many different personalities. Think about people you work with or know and try to analyze their personality types. Then answer the following questions:

1. Write the name of someone you know who has an **amiable** personality. _____

What clues point to this person's **amiable** personality type?

2. Write the name of someone you know who has an **analytical** personality. _____

What clues point to this person's **analytical** personality type?

3. Write the name of someone you know who has an **expressive** personality. _____

What clues point to this person's **expressive** personality type?

4. Write the name of someone you know who has a **driver** personality. _____

What clues point to this person's **driver** personality type?

My Personality Type:

The Buck Stops Here

Another way to build relationships with customers is to welcome complaints. Complaints and problems are a part of every business. If you handle them with an “I can fix this” attitude and show you’re eager to help, customers tend to be forgiving. Basically, they want to know that you will listen to their complaints and set things right.

When a customer complains, the best thing you can do is take ownership of the problem, even if you didn’t cause it. Customers don’t care who is responsible or why a problem occurred, they just want it corrected. If you’re taking responsibility for fixing a problem that you didn’t cause, your customer will appreciate your help even more.

Creating Win-Win Solutions

Win-win solutions are ones in which everyone is pleased at the end. Here’s an example.

Nina and Jacques, the caterer Nina has chosen for her wedding, are discussing the food to be served. Nina has already mentioned six hors d’oeuvres, a shrimp or salmon appetizer, and a choice of filet mignon or lobster for the main course. Jacques writes down her requests as they speak. Then he asks her price range. As frequently happens, what Nina wants will cost far more than what she can spend.

Fortunately, Jacques has had a lot of practice in this area. He suggests different ways for Nina to cut costs while still serving an excellent meal. Why not serve four hors d’oeuvres instead of six? And



why not serve Pears with Gorgonzola instead of shrimp and salmon? By the time they finish talking, Nina feels they’ve come up with a mouth-watering menu, and Jacques is pleased to have helped. He’s created a win-win solution. He wins because he has a happy, satisfied client;

Nina wins because her needs are met.

Situations like this occur in every type of business. They can end happily or unhappily, depending on your ability to create a win-win solution.

The steps below will help you create win-win solutions. Follow them to please your customers.

- Step 1.** Identify your customer’s wants and needs.
- Step 2.** See things from the customer’s point of view.
- Step 3.** Keep an open mind, and encourage your customer to do the same.
- Step 4.** Explore alternatives.
- Step 5.** Offer several options.
- Step 6.** Reach agreement.

“
Goodwill is the one and only asset that competition cannot undersell or destroy.

— **MARSHALL FIELD**
Department store owner

Seeing challenges and problems as win-win opportunities leads to cooperation, instead of frustration. Make a commitment to explore all options until a mutually satisfactory conclusion is reached for you and your customer. If you do, you'll ensure that everyone walks away happy.

Creating win-win solutions is also important outside of work. It's great for improving family and personal relationships.



Whatever you do, with whomever you are talking, try to develop win-win outcomes.

At times, you and a customer won't come up with a mutually satisfactory solution, no matter

how hard you try. Those are times when you should recommend a competitor, one who can satisfy your customer's needs. Your customer will be grateful, and probably will return to you for future business.

ACTIVITY 4.2

NAME _____

What Do You Suggest?

The Crescentville road crew has received a complaint about trees blocking the view at a busy intersection. However, the trees are on the private land of an owner who has been uncooperative in the past, and the crew needs to get the owner's permission to cut them down. The road crew chief prepares to talk to the property owner with the goal of finding a win-win solution to the problem. What should the chief say? Complete the script that's been started for you below.

Chief: *Hello, Mr. DeAngelo, I'm Julius Carter, and I work for the Crescentville road crew. A person had a car accident at the corner of Maple and Vine where trees block the view . . .*

Using the WIIFM Principle

The question that every customer wants answered is “What’s in it for me?”—or WIIFM. If you demonstrate WIIFM in every customer transaction, you can turn prospects into satisfied customers and satisfied customers into loyal ones.

WIIFM in Personal Contacts

No matter what customers ask you about your products or services, what they really want to know is, “What’s in it for me? Why should I buy from you?” To answer those questions, you need to describe how your goods will make them feel happier, be more productive, impress their friends or serve some other need. If a customer asks for a vitamin to give her more energy, you need to explain the energy benefits of the vitamin you recommend.

WIIFM Benefits

When you write or speak to customers, communicate WIIFM—that is, what your customers will gain from the piece of information.

Come up with a detailed list of benefits. Think about what the product or service does, why it’s better than the competition, why it’s worth more than it costs.

If you’re writing a customer an email, picture a real person—friend or relative—in your mind, and then write as if you are sending the email to that person. It will make your writing friendlier and more genuine. Use the word “you” often, and write in conversational style.

Here are some additional tips for capturing and keeping a customer’s attention:

- ◆ Use descriptive words. An example is “Free!” When you see or hear that word, don’t you want to learn more?
- ◆ Use action verbs, like “create,” “build,” and “gain.” These words stimulate customers to listen.
- ◆ Grab the customer’s attention with your first comments and follow up with enthusiasm.
- ◆ Tell customers exactly what you want them to do. (“Fill out the attached order form and mail it back today!”)
- ◆ Share some “inside” information—perhaps a special sale that will be announced soon.
- ◆ When writing to customers, end your correspondence with a P.S. Research shows that nearly everyone reads postscripts; in fact, they are often the first thing people read.

Words That Capture a Customer’s Attention

Ultimate	Love	Discover
Uncovered	Free	Money
Breakthrough	Hidden	Master
New	Secret	Profits
Power	Scientific	Private
Inside	Discovery	Proven
Cash	You	Easy
Results	Shocked	Guaranteed
Incredible	Revealed	

Source: John Michael, Internet Business Center

ACTIVITY 4.3

NAME _____

Write Eye-Catching Headlines

Change the following words about products or services into powerful advertising headlines that will capture customers' attention. Use words from the previous box called "Words that capture a customer's attention," as well as other power words you come up with.

1. Active Life Multivitamin Will Give You Energy! Two for the Price of One!
2. Learn to Write Better With the Lessons in this Software
3. Training Session to Provide Strategies for Effective Speaking
4. Internet Service That Provides Fast Speed





GETTING CONNECTED

How good are you at winning with customers?
Log on to the Internet and locate the Website:

<https://myqss.link/Customer-Experience>

To build rapport with your customers, check out this Website:

<https://myqss.link/Build-Rapport>

WORKSHOP WRAP-UP

- Develop a partnership with customers by building rapport.
- You can build rapport by showing customers you're interested in them.
- Tell customers the truth.
- Adapt your communication style to the customer's personality style.
- Create win-win solutions by looking at situations from the customer's point of view.
- Every customer wants you to answer the question, "What's in it for me?"