

Reference Tool: Exceptional Customer Service

Exceptional Customer Services is...

...effectively using sources of influence to create mutually beneficial outcomes; recognizing value differences and seeking understanding; deliberately choosing to build partnerships and focusing on that effort even through the most difficult encounters.

Exceptional Customer Service is NOT...

... aggressiveness. Aggressiveness involves expressing thoughts, feelings, and beliefs in a way that manipulates interactions so that someone is disadvantaged. Exceptional customer service does NOT violate the rights of others. It is NOT disrespectful, dismissive, or demeaning. Individuals who are not skilled in customer service, even if only on occasion, attempt to get their way by not allowing others a choice, by not seeking understanding, by personalizing the encounter and operating only from those emotions.

To offer exceptional customer service...

1. Know your sources of influence.

Tap into your sources of influence to seek mutual benefit and positively influence outcomes.

Sources of Influence	When to use this source	When to NOT use this source
<input type="checkbox"/> Expertise		
<input type="checkbox"/> Charisma		
<input type="checkbox"/> Position		
<input type="checkbox"/> Task		
<input type="checkbox"/> Centrality		
<input type="checkbox"/> Networking		
<input type="checkbox"/> Presence (being in the moment)		

2. Recognize the role your values play in decision making: Choose to Collaborate

Choose the value of collaboration and focus your emotions, your thinking, and your behaviors into collaborating with others. To enhance your abilities in making collaboration an operating value for you, answer the following questions...

- What does collaboration mean to me?
- What can I do when faced with a difficult customer, what will I do to make this a true collaborating experience?

3. Manage difficult behaviors

We cannot determine the attitudes driving difficult behaviors, but we can manage behaviors by watching for patterns, asking questions, sharing perspectives (owned statements), and then opening discussion about a possible solution to the problem.

“Own Your” Message... A Solution-Based Approach

Behavior + Effect + Solution + Feedback

- a) State the **behavior**
- b) Share its **effect** on your ability to help that individual
- c) Propose a **solution**
- d) Ask for **feedback**

Additional Notes to “Own Your Message”

- Use facial expressions that help you, not hurt you, always maintaining good eye contact
- Keep your voice firm, but pleasant.
- Consider what message your posture and gestures communicate to the other person
- Listen and let people know you have heard what they said.
- Ask questions for clarification
- Collaborate, participate fully, and perception check throughout the communication
- Express thoughts, feelings, and opinions that reflect ownership

Compare the following:

He makes me so angry. (Denies ownership of feelings)

He makes me so angry, but it doesn't really matter. (Passive/Non-assertive)

I get angry when he breaks his promises. (Defines the emotional trigger, yet still denies personal responsibility for feelings)

How can I control my reaction of anger if he breaks his promises? (Specifically identifies trigger for emotions; owns personal responsibility for the emotion being manageable)

Check-up

When faced with a difficult customer situation, use the following questions to move from frustration to collaboration...

- ☐ Am I personalizing this interaction?
- ☐ What am I afraid of?
- ☐ What do I realistically need to do to calm my emotions?
- ☐ What do I need to understand?
- ☐ What sources of influence should I use to move toward collaboration with this individual/group?
- ☐ What behaviors will let the other person/group members know I want to collaborate?

Final Tips

Dealing with Irrational customers

Many times we can feel overwhelmed with customer expectations and wonder why they are being difficult, but sometimes we are dealing with customers whose critical thinking abilities are impaired through...

- Chemical dependency; use of mind altering drugs
- Intoxication
- Extreme emotional stress

In these instances the individual is not able to think rationally about what they are doing, for whatever the reason, and the best we can do is to work to calm their emotions and help them feel heard by...

- Listening lots, letting them get their story out

- Validating that you recognize how strongly they feel; this does not imply agreeing with them, but instead, lets them know you hear their angst