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Good Customer Service

CTAE-FS-3 Communications: Learners use various communication skills in expressing and interpreting information. Used with permission of Career Solutions Publishing

Understanding and Goals

Unit Understandings, Themes, and Concepts:

Enduring Understandings:

Students will learn why customer service is so important in the workplace and how to develop better customer service skills. Every job is a customer service job. The more you know about your customers the better able you are to meet their needs and expectations.

Primary Learning Goals:

Essential Questions:

- Why is good customer service so important in the workplace?
- How do you succeed in providing excellent customer service?

Students with disabilities:

For students with disabilities, each instructor should refer to the student's IEP to be sure that the accommodations specified in the IEP are being provided within the classroom setting. Instructors should also familiarize themselves with the provisions of Behavior Intervention Plans that may be part of a student's IEP. Frequent consultation with a student's special education instructor will be beneficial in providing appropriate differentiation within any given instructional activity or requirement.

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CSP Mini-Lesson 10, Spring 2008

Mini-Lesson Standards: (1) Perform effectively in various environments with people of different ages, genders, cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds, attitudes and abilities, (2) Share knowledge and skills with others, (3) Work to satisfy customer/client expectations, (4) Use strategies appropriate to a given situation to prevent and resolve conflicts, (5) Demonstrate understanding of the individual's role, responsibilities, and relationships in the organizational structure of a business.

Mini-Lesson Correlations: Customer service, communication, interpersonal skills

Good Customer Service

Customer service employees take phone calls, answer questions, and handle complaints. Correct? Yes, but they do much more.

Think of it this way: "Every job is a customer service job." No matter how large or small the company, all employees at every level—from the CEO to the newly hired trainee—should try to make the customer's experience a good one. Even those behind-the-scenes positions, where workers never see a customer, have an important service element.

Good Customer Service (Continued)

Consider these workers and describe how their service affects your personal life:

1. The person working the cash register in a grocery store

2. The bookkeeper who calculates the deductions for your paycheck

3. The farmer who transports fresh vegetables to you

Good Customer Service (Continued)

4. The medical assistant who prepares the insurance forms so the doctor gets paid for your medical treatment

5. The security officer who protects you at big events

6. The cell phone technician who checks out your phone problem

7. The automobile repair person who locates the noise in your car's engine

Know Your Customers

The more you know about your customers, the better you can meet their needs and gain their confidence. You can start by knowing your customers as a group. If you sell skateboards, for example, you know that your customers are probably young and athletic. You can use the following who-what-why questions to learn about your customers:

- Who are your customers?
- What products or services do they buy from you?
- Why do they choose your company rather than a competitor?

Imagine that you work for one of the big chain stores such as Wal-Mart, The Limited, Starbucks, Eastern Mountain Sports, Circuit City, Applebee's or another. Answer the who-what-why questions for the store of your choice:

Name of store

Who are the customers?

Know Your Customers (Continued)

What products or services do they buy from you?

Why do they choose your company rather than a competitor?

Giving Good Service

Customers like to spend their money where they get the best service. Here are some ways to give good customer service:

- Greet the customer in a friendly, smiling manner. "Good morning, how are you today?"
- Listen to what the customer has to say and ask questions to clarify. "What class are you writing your book report for? Maybe I can suggest an interesting book."
- Use good manners. "Thanks for waiting. I didn't intend to be gone so long."
- Be patient with long customer responses. "That was helpful information."
- Try to answer the question or correct the problem as quickly as possible, and give the customer a time frame. "This repair will take approximately three days. I'll call as soon as the alteration on the garment is finished."
- Say what you can do, not what you can't do. "We can give you an appointment at 2:00 on the 18th or 9 a.m. on the 23rd."
- Explain what you're doing. "You'll hear a drilling noise, but the cavity in your tooth is small, so there shouldn't be any pain."
- Bring someone else in when you need help in handling a situation. "Let me ask my supervisor to join us. She has more experience in this area."

Giving Good Service (Continued)

- Keep the customer informed of your progress. "Your table should be ready within 10 minutes. It's been a busy night for our restaurant."
- Follow up to see if your solution worked. "Hello, Ms. Matthews, I'm calling to see how your car is running. Have you heard the noise since we made the repair?"

Imagine yourself as an employee in each of the situations below. Give examples of how you could give good service in each situation described:

1. Computer technician: A frustrated customer brings his broken computer in for repair.

2. Nurse: A scared young patient comes in for a regularly scheduled allergy shot.

3. Attorney: A person injured in an accident wants to talk about her case.

Giving Good Service (Continued)

4. Sales clerk: An obviously rushed shopper impatiently asks where the dressing room is.

5. Waiter: A couple points out they have been waiting for their food for thirty minutes.

6. Painter: A homeowner is uncertain what color he wants to paint his rooms.

7. Policeman: A lost driver runs a stop sign and you pull him over.

8. Construction engineer: The estimate for a bridge is over the small town's budget.

Instructor's Guide

While most students aren't constantly thinking about good customer service, they know when they have received bad service. Start the lesson by asking them to remember a time when they received excellent service and a time when they received bad service. Ask them to explain the two situations and describe what each experience felt like. Did the experiences affect the student's doing business at that particular store?

Use student experiences in at-work situations to expand the lesson. Ask students to (1) describe their jobs, (2) identify ways they routinely can provide good customer service in the job, and (3) recount problems with customers that demanded special skills in customer service.

To further expand the lesson, ask groups or individual students to role play the situations in the section *Giving Good Service*, showing excellent customer service in each instance.

The following Web site tells an interesting story about one couple's customer service experience at Sears. You can develop a discussion around what went wrong and what could have been done differently:

http://weblog.infoworld.com/foster/2006/03/17_a376.html

Solutions to Activities

Good Customer Service

1. The woman working the cash register in a grocery store: If she makes an error, it may cost you money. Also, her efficiency will affect the amount of time spent waiting in line.
2. Bookkeeper who calculates the deductions for your paycheck: If calculations are incorrect, the amount of your pay may be too little or too much. Further, there could be implications for the IRS, such as your owing more money at the end of the year.
3. Farmer who transports fresh vegetables to you: If the farmer delays or does not package the vegetables well, they may begin to spoil.
4. Medical assistant: If the forms are not completed correctly, the insurance company may not pay the doctor, which could cause complications for your billing and fees.
5. Security officer who protects you at big events: If the security officer is not observant, you could be harmed.

Solutions to Activities (Continued)

Good Customer Service (Continued)

6. Cell phone technician who checks out your phone problem: If all problems are not located and corrected, the phone may not work when you need it.
7. Automobile repairer who locates the noise in your car's engine: If the problem is not corrected, you may be in danger or, at minimum, frustrated because you paid for a service you did not receive.

Know Your Customers

The Who-What-Why answers will vary depending on the company the student chooses. The purpose of this exercise is to engage students in critical thinking.

Giving Good Service

1. Computer technician: The technician can listen patiently and assure the customer that he/she will do everything possible to repair the computer quickly.
2. Nurse: The nurse can try to put the child at ease or distract her, while being gentle when injecting the medicine.

Solutions to Activities (Continued)

Giving Good Service (Continued)

3. Attorney: The attorney can ask questions that will clarify the problem, and then give the client an understanding of the legal process and the client's possibility of winning.
4. Sales clerk: The sales clerk can smile, ignore the impatience, and be attentive to the customer.
5. Waiter: The waiter can offer to find out the status of the order; and if the couple is inconvenienced, can ask the manager to reduce the check.
6. Painter: The painter can provide a color chart or suggest paints he has seen in other homes and make recommendations based on his experience.
7. Policeman: The policeman can realize that the driver may not have seen the sign, be courteous while issuing any necessary citation, and offer to provide directions or assistance.
8. Construction engineer: The engineer can offer adjustments that will reduce the price, suggest a payment plan over a period of time, or offer to help the town find a way to increase its budget.

Related Materials

Activities in this lesson are similar to the material found in *It's for Real Workplace Ethics*. *It's for Real Workplace Ethics, NEW Series III*, will be available for fall classes. Samples will be available by the end of March. Please contact us if you would like to be placed on the list for a sample at csp@careersolutionspublishing.com or (888) 299-2784.

For more information about *It's for Real*, or other CSP products,
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