Customer Service
Over the Telephone
Learning objectives

Successful completion of this module will increase your knowledge and ability to:

- Recognize the components of customer service
- Build rapport with customers
- Practice techniques for taking control of the call
- Handle angry customers
- Use active listening skills
Components of service

- Friendliness
- Competence
- Reliability

Customers are not interruptions to our work but they are the reason for our work.
How is the Customer Service Message Communicated?

Parts of a message

- Nonverbal: 55%
- Voice Tone: 38%
- Words: 7%
Statistics

- Satisfied customers tell four to five others
- Dissatisfied customers tell nine to 12 others
- Only 4% of dissatisfied customers complain. If you respond within 24 to 48 hours, 82–95% of them will give you another chance.

Our customers can be internal (employees in the school district) or external (community, students, parents, etc.).
So what’s different over the phone?

- Not able to read gestures and body language
- No other information for the customer to rely on
- Harder to build trust
- Importance of greeting
Traits of a service star

- Developing rapport
- Accepting responsibility and ownership
- Handling angry customers effectively
Build rapport

- Leave your problems at home and give customers your undivided attention
- Use customer’s name and make customer feel important
  - Use positive phrasing
  - Use polite words and polished voice tone
  - Be patient and listen without rushing them
- Match customer’s style with pace and vocabulary
- Empathize with customers. If there is a problem, help solve it quickly.
Assessing ability to build rapport

When you answer a telephone call, do you:

- Project a positive, sincere attitude
- Project a high energy level
- Maintain excellent posture
- Smile before and during call (it does come through your voice!)
- Speak in a normal volume with a clear, natural tone of voice
- Enunciate clearly
- Use the customer’s name
- Avoid jargon or technical terms unless necessary
Accept Responsibility and Take Ownership

- **Take Control of the call**
  - Direct the conversation
  - Use closed-end questions
  - Avoid Condescending or Robotic tones
  - Clarify and summarize what you heard

- **Effective Transfers**
  - Transfer only if necessary

- **Effective Holds**
  - Explain why you are putting them on hold
  - Ask for permission and wait for an answer. Don’t say, “Hang on” or “Hold on”.
  - After you put them on hold, check back every 30-45 seconds. Don’t apologize for putting them on hold but thank them for holding.
Be a verbal escort

Effective Transfers
(Answer call, press transfer button, enter extension of person, press transfer button again, then hang up)

- Explain why you are transferring the call and to whom
- Alert the person to whom you are transferring the call (pass along customer information so they don’t have to repeat themselves)
Alternatives to “transfer”

- “Let me connect you with …”
- “Let me have you speak with …”
- “Ms. Jones can help you with that. Let me connect you with her.”
- If the person is not there, give them the direct number and ask if they would like to be put into their voicemail

(To go directly into voice mail without ringing: answer call, press transfer button, enter 58045 then the extension number, press transfer button, then hang up)
Roles You Need to Use with Customers

- Friend
- Detective
- Teacher
Friend Role

- Acts as host and makes caller feel comfortable and important
- Does not make promises that cannot be kept
- Use initially or when customer has experienced poor service
- Draw out feelings
- Reassure the customer
Detective Role

- Solves problems
- Is persistent
- Use when the customer has a problem
- Obtain specific facts
- Clear up generalizations
Teacher Role

- Gently educates but is never condescending
- Use when the customer is unsure or misguided in what they need
- Interpret what you heard the customer say
- Paraphrase and restate to confirm understanding
- Suggest a course of action
Active listening is Critical

- Eliminate distractions
- Suspend judgment
- Don’t interrupt
- Tolerate silence
- Take notes
- Ask closed-ended questions to obtain specific facts and information but avoid questions that begin with “why” or “who” which can sound accusatory
- Avoid questions that put the customer on the spot
- Paraphrase to confirm understanding
- Are the benefits to the customer clear?
Why Customers Get Angry

Most customer problems fall into these areas:
- Didn’t get what was promised
- Got something and it didn’t work correctly
- Service was slow or sloppy
- Were treated rudely or with indifference
Saying “no” positively

Don’t Say:
- “I don’t know.”
- “No.”
- “That’s not my job.”
- “You need to talk to Shipping.”
- “Calm down.”

Use instead:
- “I’ll find out.”
- “Here’s what we can do.”
- “_____ can help you.”
- “Fran in Purchasing can help you.”
- “I can tell you’re upset.”
Saying “no” positively

Don’t Say:
- “Call back tomorrow.”
- “It’s not ready.”
- “You should have called sooner.”
- “That’s not our fault.”

Use instead:
- “I’ll call you back tomorrow.”
- “It will be ready on _______”
- “I understand why you called.”
- “Let’s see what we can do.”
Saying “no” positively

Don’t Say:  Use instead:

• “That’s against our policy.”  • “Here’s the way we handle that.”

• “The only thing we can do is …”  • “The best option for handling this is …”

• “You’re wrong.”  • “Let me give you the information you need.”
Handling Mistakes

- Apologize sincerely for their inconvenience with the problem
- Take responsibility
  - Don’t blame or make excuses
- Solve the problem quickly
  - Do what is most useful to the customer, not what is easiest for you
- Do something extra
Obtain confirmation

- “I believe all the necessary details have been taken care of.”
- “I hope we’ve resolved this issue to your satisfaction.”
- “I’m confident X will be satisfactory.”
Staying motivated to deliver excellent customer service

- Avoid/relieve stress
  - Take a few deep breaths
  - Take a brief walk
  - Eat healthy snacks
- Maintain a positive attitude
  - Use positive self-talk
  - Remember to have a sense of humor
  - How does the customer feel about their experience with you? (how would I want to be treated if I was in their shoes)
  - Remember your successes
- Show competence and integrity as well as knowledge
- Develop a buddy system
  - Allows only limited venting
  - Ask for coaching and encouragement to stay motivated
Results-oriented feedback

1. Set the tone
2. State your observations
3. Identify the consequences
4. Use questions to explore more
5. Reach agreement
6. Follow up
Remember that every interaction with a customer (internal or external) reflects on Parkway School District as a whole.
Completion Certificate

I have read and understand the module on Customer Service over the Telephone.

Name ____________________________________________
(Please Print)

Building Location ________________________________

Department ____________________________________

Date completed: ________________________

Print out this slide, fill in the information and send it to Elizabeth Mayes, C & D, at ISC. It will be entered into your PEERS Development Profile.
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