

How to Develop Exceptional Customer Service Skills

No matter what profession you find yourself in these days, almost everyone has **customers**. Sometimes working with the public can be challenging due to staff shortages, urgent deadlines, priority projects, everyday stresses of life, or a customer who is already in a bad mood before contacting you.

Picture this: You've been on the phone with your residential electric company provider for 30 minutes, holding for the next available customer representative to assist you. After explaining your scenario to the representative, Person #1 informs you that they cannot help you with this issue and you are going to be transferred to another team member. Finally, you are connected to Person #2. You go through your electric issues again with the representative who tells you that you have reached the billing department and they cannot help you with getting your electricity back on. However, they will connect you with the right office and they will get some answers for you immediately – just hang on with them a little bit longer. The representative goes above and beyond to restore your faith in the electric company with the end goal achieved: your electricity is now back on at home!



Perhaps you have experienced something similar to the scenario described above. It is very frustrating to be passed around and put on hold and made to feel that you are unimportant or not understood. You do not want to have to tell your story to three or four people before you get to the “right person.”

Learning how to develop exceptional customer service skills takes a little time and practice. We have put together a short list to help develop these skills.

- 1) **Active Listening** – This is when you reassure the caller that you are engaged in what they are talking about. You let them know you are trying to understand their needs. Ask them clarifying questions about what it is they need assistance with. Once they know you are

trying to help them with their request, they will be more inclined to listen to recommendations.

- 2) Use Empathy – This is simply viewing the person’s issue/problem through your own eyes and imagine how they are feeling. If the person knows you understand them, it can diffuse a conflict and they will be more receptive to working with you on a solution to their problem.
- 3) Be Professional – To the caller, you are the one who understands your products and services best. They do not want to hear excuses or technical terminology as to why you cannot do something. Use positive language to give them the answers they are seeking. For instance, instead of, “we won’t be able to fix that issue until this fall,” you can say “we are aware of the issue you are concerned about and it is scheduled for this fall.”
- 4) Communicate Clearly – Answers should be clear, concise and spoken in a calm natural voice. This lets the caller know that you are not trying to hide anything or not be truthful. If you need to reach out to another team member for further information, let the caller know that you are putting them on a brief hold while you locate someone else to help with their concerns.
- 5) Your Customer’s Time is Important – If you put the caller on hold to locate a team member or look for a file, do not leave them hanging for more than 30-60 seconds without coming back on the line. If you are still trying to locate information, ask them if you may take their number or email address and reach back out when you have some information to report. They will appreciate your efforts.
- 6) Treat Customers with the Same Care that You Want to Receive – When we are dealing with the public each day, it’s always good to think about how we would like to be spoken to if we were the one calling for this information. When we put ourselves in those shoes, it is easier to understand how the caller may be feeling.



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