

Customer service for the public sector

Full Day



This session focuses on situations where customers need a service or have questions about policies they don't understand, or like.

The course focuses on higher level service skills.

What is excellent service?

- What is the difference between *OK* and truly *excellent* service?
- Why bother providing excellent service if the customer can't go anywhere else?
- The basics: greeting people early, presenting a professional image etc

Identifying people's needs and the right person to help

- Which services and policies do *your* customers find the most confusing?
- What is the difference between a customer's *wants* and *needs*?
- How to ask the right mix of open and closed questions to pinpoint the customer's real needs
- How to refer the customer to another area without giving them the 'run around'

Explaining complicated policies

- How to turn bureaucratic instructions into clear explanations
- How to keep explanations simple without patronising people
- The negative and vague words that undermine your credibility in the customer's eyes
- Using analogies to explain abstract concepts in terms the customer understands
- How to use eye contact and body language to *look* confident when you are being criticised
- 3 simple ways to ensure you listen and acknowledge the customer's opinion or complaints
- How to make sure you sound interested and involved in discussions on the phone
- How to take complete messages and transfer phone calls professionally

Prioritising requests and following-up.

- How to prioritise requests based on their importance and urgency
- Setting response times and customer expectations at a level you know you can meet
- Simple time management tools for balancing customer enquiries with other work you need to complete



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Writing professional emails and letters (optional)

- Writing letters and emails to customers that are clear and concise
- How to turn bureaucratic waffle into plain English

Dealing with difficult customers

- Which policies give you the most grief?
- How to avoid becoming defensive about policies by increasing your understanding - e.g. Why do we have such strict ID policies? Why does it take 2 weeks for a decision? Why do customers need to go to another department? etc
- How to move angry customers from a past problem to discussing possible solutions
- How to use *benefits* to explain policies that customers dislike
- Exercise - participants develop benefits for policies in their area

Giving 'bad news' with empathy and respect

Sometimes it is not possible to provide the service customers want because of resources or policies. However it is possible to give this 'bad news' respectfully.

- The proven 3 step technique for explaining the situation with empathy and respect
- When do you need to get help from colleagues or the boss?

Participants are split into pairs and given a series of scenarios to which they respond using the 3 step technique. Participants are encouraged to raise actual situations from their work to discuss.



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