

Overview

This standard is part of the customer service competence area related to Customer Service Foundations. It covers dealing with customers. It includes the language and concepts of customer service as well as the organisational context and the external environment in which you work. Remember that customers include everyone to whom you provide products and services. They may be external to your organisation or they may be internal customers.

When working as a customer service professional, you influence how customers feel about the transaction in the way you look and behave to increase their satisfaction levels. Whilst verbal communication is important, your relationship also depends on the non-verbal communication that takes place. You also communicate in writing or electronically in a way that creates a permanent record. This form of communication carries risks and implications that are less likely to apply to verbal communication. You also interact with customers through social media platforms or web portals. Internet-based communication channels have led to customers using online communication with organisations and customers form expectations from how your organisation presents itself and the way it responds to existing and potential customers. Expectations are also affected by other customers and influencers. The reputation of your organisation can be directly affected by social media interactions and the way you deal with negative reactions and problems in the public arena.

This standard is for customer service professionals who deal with customers face to face, or online using written or electronic communication and through social media platforms or web portals to meet their expectations.

Performance criteria

You must be able to:

1. prepare for your conversations with customers
2. explain your products or services, anticipating customer requests and information needs
3. adapt your communication style to meet the individual needs your customers
4. manage your communication environment so that your customers' focus is not interrupted by colleagues
5. observe, listen and focus on your customers to read non-verbal clues about their needs and expectations
6. intervene when one customer is adversely affecting the service of other customers
7. identify the methods customers are using to contact your organisation
8. assess the options for responding to customers and the benefits and drawbacks of each option
9. choose the option that is most likely to lead to customer satisfaction
10. plan your communication objectives and gather the information that you need to respond
11. open the communication positively to establish rapport with customers
12. respond to customer communications in writing using a format, style and tone that reflects your organisation's guidelines and service level agreements (SLAs)
13. adapt your spoken, written or body language to meet the individual needs of customers
14. predict customer expectations taking account of any previous exchanges with them
15. summarise the key points from communications and any actions agreed
16. scan social media or web portals' exchanges to identify customer questions, requests and other communications to respond to
17. respond to direct queries or requests through social media or web portals' communications following organisational guidelines and service level agreements (SLAs)
18. explain your products or services to customers and adapt your response to meet their needs
19. anticipate your customers' requests and needs for information
20. maintain a professional and respectful image when dealing with your customer

21. interpret customers' feelings from the tone of their postings and respond empathetically
22. use direct and effective questions to clarify customers' requests
23. provide information in response to customers' questions and requests
24. check the security settings of social media platforms or web portals when responding privately to your customers
25. confirm that no further responses are expected by your customers when closing contact
26. take opportunities to impress social media community members by seeing how you deal with customers
27. follow the legal, organisational codes of practice and policies relevant to your role and the activities being carried out

Knowledge and understanding

You need to know and understand:

1. the importance of active listening to understand what your customers are saying
2. your organisation's procedures and service level agreements (SLAs) that impact on how you deal with customers face to face or online
3. the features and benefits of your organisation's products or services
4. the body language principles that help you to interpret customers' feelings without verbal communication
5. the range of behaviour methods and techniques for communication with customers
6. why the expectations and behaviours of individual customers demand different responses to create rapport and achieve customer satisfaction
7. the agreed and recognised signs in customer behaviours that indicate that your customer expects a particular action by you
8. the importance of using a spoken, written or body language that reflects your organisation's style when communicating with customers
9. the additional significance and potential risks involved in committing a communication to a permanent record format
10. the potential impact of different styles on readers of a written or electronic communication
11. the importance of adapting your language to meet the needs of customers who may find written communication hard to understand
12. your organisation's guidelines and procedures and service level agreements (SLAs) relating to written and electronic communication
13. how to operate equipment used for producing and sending written or electronic communications
14. the importance of keeping your customers informed if there is a delay in responding them within service level agreements (SLAs)
15. the risks associated with the confidentiality of written or electronic communications
16. your organisation's conventions and accepted practices for the channel or electronic platform you are using
17. your organisation's guidelines and service level agreements (SLAs) for dealing with customers through social media platforms or web portals
18. the ways that your organisation communicates information to social media

communities

19. how to search social media for customers postings related to your organisation
20. how to anticipate your customer's requests and needs when using social media platforms or web portals
21. the importance of interpreting customers feelings and perceptions from postings on social media platforms or web portals
22. the conventions of the social media platforms or web portals that your customers choose to use and how to align with these
23. the importance of sending concise messages when using social media platforms or web portals
24. how to control access to exchanges with customers using social media security settings
25. how to collaborate with colleagues if more than one of you become involved in a customer exchange when using social media platforms or web portals
26. how to recognise the closing step in a series of social media exchanges with a customer
27. the legal, organisational, codes of practice and policies relevant to your role and the activities being carried out

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Deal with customers

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