HANDLE COMPLAINTS AND PROBLEMS

FACILITATOR/LEARNER GUIDE

Unit Standard No: 244179
Unit Standard Credits: 6
NQF Level: 3

SKILLS PROGRAM 1
BOOK 7
REVIEW AND ALTERATION OF TRAINING MATERIAL

What follows is a brief explanation of the process that was followed in the alteration of this training material. A working group was formed after inviting interested parties to attend a meeting at SASSETA.

The working group was mandated to review the material and thereafter make the necessary changes so as to provide the industry with a more user friendly set of materials which better reflects the needs of the security industry.

It must be understood that this is the first review and by no means the final review. The working group was placed under enormous pressure to get a workable set of materials into the hands of the accredited security industry training providers as quickly as possible. We therefore have no doubt that even though the materials have been vastly improved upon, there are still areas that may require change. This we plan to do in the next renewal phase after we receive feedback from training providers who have used the material for approximately a year.

Our review process focused on the following:

- Removal of unnecessary information/duplication from the learning material.
- Ensure alignment with the unit standards.
- Re-draft all formative and summative assessments.
- Correct inappropriate use of language.

TASK TEAM

The task team that completed the work on this training material deserves a very special “thank you”, considering that all their time and efforts were provided free of charge. Nobody was paid for any of the work done on behalf of the task team. SASSETA provided funding for the expenses incurred in printing, typesetting, lunch and refreshments.

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A very sincere thank you to all of these individuals and the companies they work for, who allowed them to participate during business hours. This could not have been done without your commitment.

Sincerely

Andre Pretorius
Task Team Chairman
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1. Introduction

This learning program is part of a complete qualification. The qualification is General Security Practices NQF level 3.

2. Purpose of this learning program

A person credited with this unit standard will be able to:

♦ Explain the safekeeping and storing of security equipment.
♦ Demonstrate the use of security equipment.
♦ Confirm the working condition of security equipment.

2.1 Target group

This program is compiled for the following target group:

♦ Security members
♦ South African Defense Force members
♦ South African Police Force members
♦ Correctional Services
♦ Individuals who wishes to complete the NQF level 3 National Certificate in security Practices.

3. Standards and qualifications

Unit standards are the “building blocks” of qualifications. All qualifications are plotted on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

Unit standards comprises of outcomes. An outcome is a statement that describes the required competency that must be demonstrated by the learner on successful completion of a training intervention.

4. Assessments

The assessment criteria in this unit standard describes the evidence that is needed that will show that you have demonstrated the outcome correctly.

Kindly refer to the unit standard attached hereto for the assessment criteria listed under each Specific Outcome in order for you to see what you will be assessed against.

You will be required to complete 2 written exams. The first is a formative assessment (open book exam) and the second is a summative assessment (closed book exam). The purpose of the formative assessment is to prepare you for the summative assessment.

The learner guide will remain the property of the learner once the LEARNING PROGRAM has been completed.
### 5. Security program matrix

#### SKILLS PROGRAM 1: SASSETA E

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<th>Level</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>246694</td>
<td>Explain the requirements for becoming a security provider</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>4 Credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>244184</td>
<td>Apply legal aspects in a security environment</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>8 Credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>244182</td>
<td>Give evidence in court</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>4 Credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>244176</td>
<td>Use security equipment</td>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>2 Credits</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>244181</td>
<td>Perform hand over and take over responsibilities</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>2 Credits</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>244177</td>
<td>Conduct a security patrol in area of responsibility</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>7 Credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>244179</td>
<td>Handle complaints and problems</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>6 Credits</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>12484</td>
<td>Perform basic fire fighting</td>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>4 Credits</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>116534</td>
<td>Carry out basic first aid treatment in the workplace</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>2 Credits</td>
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- **Patrol Security officer/Grade E**

#### SKILLS PROGRAM 2: SASSETA D

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<td>1</td>
<td>244189</td>
<td>Conduct access and egress control</td>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>7 Credits</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>242825</td>
<td>Conduct evacuations and emergency drills</td>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>4 Credits</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>11505</td>
<td>Identify, handle and defuse security related conflict</td>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>12 Credits</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>117705</td>
<td>Demonstrate knowledge of the Firearms Control Act 2000 (Act No. 60 of 2000)</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>3 Credits</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>113924</td>
<td>Apply basic business ethics in a work environment</td>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>2 Credits</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>119465</td>
<td>Write/present/sign texts for a range of communicative contexts</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>5 Credits</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>114979</td>
<td>Operate a computer workstation in a business environment</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
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- **Access control officer/Grade D**

#### SKILLS PROGRAM 3: SASSETA C

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<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Level</th>
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<td>Coach a team member in order to enhance individual performance in work environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>Apply occupational health, safety and environmental principles</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>Outline the legal environment of a selected industry</td>
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<td>2 Credits</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>Accommodate audience and context needs in oral/signed communication</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>5 Credits</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>11508</td>
<td>Write security reports and take statements</td>
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<td>10 Credits</td>
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- **Asset & Reaction officer/Grade C**
LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completion of this study unit you will be able to:

♦ Explain the importance of the customer.
♦ Explain the impact on the organization and on oneself of losing regular customer business.
♦ Discuss annoying habits that irritates customers.
♦ Explain how the officer can anticipate a customer’s needs.
♦ Discuss guidelines that can be followed to maintain good customer care.
♦ Explain methods to maintain good customer service.
♦ List the expectations that customers have from any organization.
♦ Describe possible ways that customers could react to poor service.
♦ Apply and explain the guidelines for superior customer care.
♦ Explain the factors to consider when improving customer care.
♦ Identify type customers by explaining the range of customers that an officer might encounter during his/her duties.
1. **Importance of the Customer**

The better the customer care given to customers, the more business they will do with your company and the more business the company generates, the more profit it stands to make. This enables the company to pay competitive salaries and therefore makes good business sense to look after customers as a disciplined practice.

Customers are not dependent on you, you are dependent on them as they pay the salaries and without them businesses have to close down as a result people would lose their jobs.

When customers make purchases or use services and are parting with hard-earned money, they like to be treated properly, irrespective of their gender, age, race, colour or creed, and will otherwise take their business elsewhere if not.

Keep in mind that you are the link between the outside world and your organization and as first impressions are lasting, it is up to you to make your first impression count.

**If it were not for your customers, there would be no need for your company**

2. **The Impact on the Organization**

The organization that delivers superior customer service will achieve major benefits in competitive advantage and profitability.

Client/customers are your organization's most important assets and the relationship you have with them will be the benchmark by which your site/company is judged in terms of customer focus and quality of service. Their attitudes towards your site/company will depend on the way in which you treat them.

The lack of caring for your client/customers could result in the site/company not reaching it’s true potential. Caring about your client/customers can create a competitive and harmonious organization as people like dealing with people who care and this results in the client/customers returning generating repeat business and increased profits.

For every bad service a client/customer experiences he/she will tell at least 5 others, who in turn will tell 5 more and soon resulting in 10 people and more having a bad impression of the site/company, which is 10 potential client/customers lost – a loss of income/turnover for the site/company and decreased profits.

Site/company employees contribute in specific ways to create an overall positive experience for customers. As an employee, you represent the company’s image. If your image is professional and personal, then customers will have this image of the company.

The key to growth in an organization lies in having a caring attitude towards all customers, even the difficult ones. Good customer service must therefore be a part of an organizations' very reason for being, and not seen simply as a tool to prevent customers from going elsewhere.
3. Customer satisfaction and company profitability

The illustration below indicates how customer satisfaction impacts on the company’s profitability.

Is the customer satisfied?

- **NO**
  - Customer defection
  - Lower profit margins
  - Dissatisfied employees
  - Employee defection

- **YES**
  - Customer retention
  - Higher profit margins
  - Satisfied employees
  - Employee retention

Extracted from “Intensive Customer Care” by Paul Dorrian - Original source (The Marketing Mix - March 1991)
4. Annoying Habits

Annoying habits that irritate customers include the following so take care not to subject customer to this sort of behaviour and unprofessional conduct:

- Being ignored and not greeted by staff.
- Being false and smiling insincerely at a client/customer.
- Not calling a client/customer by name.
- To be yelled at.
- To stand in long, slow-moving queues.
- People that make no effort whatsoever.
- Not paying attention to what the client/customer is saying.
- Keeping client/customers waiting, without acknowledgement, while completing a previous task.
- To wait for service while you chat on the telephone.
- Talking to a colleague when dealing with a client/customer.
- Unhelpful monosyllabic answers, especially “NO”.
- To be served by a person that smokes cigarettes or chews gum.
- Any negative body language.
- Play loud music while dining.
- Cashiers that run out of change.
- People that don’t answer letters or return phone calls.
- If you run out of basic goods, for example their favorite drink.
- Confusing signs or directions.
- Not thanking a client/customer when the transaction has been completed.

5. Anticipating Client/customer Needs

Anticipating your client/customer’s needs could eliminate unnecessary time and irritation. Pay attention to the client/customer’s need and decide how your site/company’s service can benefit them:

If you identify products and/or services that the client/customer has not requested, offer to provide the service without requiring the client/customer to ask for it.

Anticipate your client/customer’s needs and wants and look for clues in the verbal and non-verbal messages they are giving you. Listen attentively, ask appropriate questions and observe the client/customer’s body language.

To anticipate the needs of your client/customers, you should ask yourself the following questions:

- Have I considered all of the client/customer's needs?
- What is the client/customer likely to need or want next?
- How can I improve the service for the client/customer?

The difference between your customer’s needs and wants may be that some client/customers know what they want, or they will have a general idea. Generally, client/customers will often tell you what they want but their needs are not stated so often, e.g. a client/customer may state he/she wants a room with twin beds but he/she may also need an extra pillow for one bed and more blankets.

If you know your site/company well, you are in a good position to help a client/customer. It helps to keep appropriate materials you can refer to close by (e.g. product lists, services offered, tariffs, general tourist information). If you first have to check up on the information, tell the client/customer and remember to contact him/her back with the relevant information.
It can happen that you have a client/customer caller who has been transferred incorrectly to your department. Unnecessary time can be saved if you have anticipated such a situation and know enough about the site/company providing relevant information, providing specific contact names) before redirecting the frustrated client/customer to the correct department.

Anticipate calls by using a message pad and using the correct technique for taking a message should the client/customer be unable to reach the correct person:

- Make sure the message is complete and understandable.
- Get the complete name and contact details of the caller.
- Note the reason for calling.
- Note the time of the call and date.
- Note the name of the person the client/customer wanted to speak to.

6. Maintaining good customer care

6.1 Guidelines of good Customer Care

Always strive to be consistent in your interactions with your client/customers and ensure and maintain good customer care by considering the following guidelines:

1. Never show that you are angry or upset when dealing with an angry client/customer. It will make matters worse and you will lose their business.
2. Your client/customers expect reliable and prompt service. If they do not get it from you they will take their business elsewhere. This could jeopardize your job in the organization.
3. Tardiness is not tolerated well by most client/customers; show your respect for them and for their time by always being punctual.
4. Demonstrate high moral values – Don’t tell lies, you will lose your integrity and possibly your job by doing so.
5. Create a climate of warmth before client/customers’ even approach you.
6. Send out warm and positive signals to each client/customer prior to the start of the interaction.
7. Be as sensitive as possible to the client/customer’s emotional state. Bear in mind that if you attack him/her verbally and cut him/her down to size, and cruelly expose his/her ignorance – you will damage his/her self-esteem. Show some sensitivity when you point out his/her error.
8. Allow and possibly encourage client/customers to express their feelings should you feel they want to.
9. Listen with genuine interest and feeling to what your client/customers have to say.
10. If you don’t know the answer to a question, assure the client/customer that you will find out and let them know as soon as possible.
11. Try to find something you like in each client/customer and let it show.
12. Never make client/customers feel bad for expressing their feelings, but always try to make them feel good for talking honestly about how they feel.
13. Eliminate any negative feelings you have about your client/customers. These feelings will show no matter what you do.

7. Customer service

7.1 Greeting of client/customers

The way you greet a customer is important for creating a favorable first impression of yourself and the company. Here are a number of key points that you should commit to memory:
“Whilst what you say and do is important, what really counts is your posture when you say and do it.”
“The most powerful form of communication is behaviour.”
The tone of your voice shows what you feel and think.

Extracted from Sold on Life by F. Romano

Suggested practices

An important step in providing exceptional customer care is learning how to greet your customers properly. Here are some suggested practices to follow when greeting client/ customers:

1. Always portray good manners.
2. Greet your client/customers when you see them. Smile with sincerity and say “Good Morning/Afternoon” Use the client/customer’s name if you know it.
3. If you are being introduced – acknowledge the introduction with a sincere smile and friendly greeting in return. If you are being introduced – acknowledge the introduction with a sincere smile and friendly greeting in return.
4. Familiarize yourself with your company’s policy regarding titles and use them correctly.
5. Make an effort to greet client/customers in their own language – even if the greeting is all you know.
6. Be warm, good natured, patient and be as courteous and helpful as possible.
7. Never allow client/customers to see your private moods or preoccupations.
8. Allow the client/customer to speak without interrupting him/her.
9. Offer assistance to a client/customer if he/she looks lost or seems to be looking for someone.
10. Don’t consider client/customers to be an interruption of your work. No matter how much work you have or how often the phone rings, you should never be too busy to give a client/customer your undivided attention.
11. Your handshake says a lot about you. A firm handshake (without pumping or clutching) shows confidence, warmth, openness, and sincerity; a weak, limp handshake indicates the opposite. A bone-crusher handshake tells people you’re a dominating, insensitive type.
12. If a customer knows no English at all:
   ♦ Ideally, find another staff member who is fluent in the customer’s language and may act as an interpreter.
   ♦ Keep your normal procedures in mind, make the customer welcome with a smile, use non-verbal communications to help the customer or find out their needs, e.g. draw diagrams, refer to maps or signs etc.
   ♦ Use body language. For example, use gestures, pointing, shaking or nodding head etc.
   ♦ Even people with no English know a word or two. Use the few words they know.
   ♦ Speak in English; otherwise the encounter is unnaturally silent. Also, your voice itself conveys a meaning, e.g. your voice rises when asking a question.
13. Greeting customers on the phone:
   ♦ Be expressive and warm – The caller doesn’t know you have to repeat the same greeting 20 times a day.
   ♦ Identify yourself.
   ♦ Keep a smile in your voice - the caller can “hear” the smile.
   ♦ Sound alert and ready to help.
   ♦ Speak clearly, don’t shout or talk too loud.
   ♦ Never talk on the phone with gum or food in your mouth.
“Please” and “Thank you” are guaranteed to improve the relationship between you and the caller, as are “Have a nice day”, “You’re welcome” and “It's a pleasure”.
Show sincere interest in what the caller has to say.

14. Saying goodbye:

- The final farewell is very important in ending the client/customer’s experience with your establishment on a positive note. When the customer leaves the service area, greet them, wish them well and invite them to return. Remember the final impression is a lasting one and it could be the one thing that influences a customer to return.
- Try using the client/customer’s name when saying goodbye. Ask the client/customer if there’s anything else you may help him/her with.
- Invite the client/customer to contact you should they experience any problems with the products or service the site/company provides.
- Wish them a safe journey on departure.

8. Client/customer Expectations

Each client/customer is important and has the following expectations when making use of your organization:

- Make me feel important
- Don’t lie to me
- Keep your promises
- Give me understandable information
- Be sensitive to my needs
- Listen to my advice on improving your service or product
- Be fair - If I am expected to pay for my service then I expect value for my money
- Treat me in such a way that I will come back to your site/company
- Don’t underestimate my intelligence, that would be insulting.

9. Client/customer reaction to poor customer service

Poor customer service evokes certain negative reactions and perceptions from client/customers and as a result you need to be sensitive to the most common causes for negative client/customer reaction, as identified below:

- Client/customer callers get extremely frustrated being kept on hold without checking if they are willing to wait and may become aggressive and abusive. Go back to them regularly to see if they are still prepared to hold.
- A client/customer will feel ignored when not being asked whether he or she has been attended to. This may result in the client/customer leaving and going elsewhere. Attend to customers promptly.
- Attending to other client/customers first when the client/customer was there first will make the client/customer feel ignored and could also result in aggressive outbursts from the client/customer.
- Client/customer callers could be affronted if their conversation is ended abruptly and may result in the client/customer not calling back and or going elsewhere. A sincere “Thank you for calling. Goodbye “ will make the caller feel appreciated – and secure his/her loyalty. Let the client/customer hang up first.
- A client/customer could feel insulted if the phone is slammed down after conversation. This might just provoke the client/customer and influence her to call back and complain – so take care and put the receiver down softly.
- Eating, drinking or gossiping on front of client/customers will make them feel that your organization is unprofessional and will most certainly not encourage them to return.
10. Guidelines for superior client/customer care

Superior client/customer care is an important ingredient to set your organization apart from the competitors and is a good method to gain and maintain the competitive edge on the competitors. Below are some guidelines and suggest practice for superior client/customer care.

♦ **Teamwork:** Take into consideration the expectations and needs of your colleagues. Never do or say anything, which may break down team spirit. Remember you need each other.

♦ **Project the right image:** Adhere to your site/company’s corporate image and be aware of your written and spoken language. Project a confident and assertive attitude at all times.

♦ **Cultural Differences:** Learn the cultural differences of your various client/customers. This way you will avoid unintentional insensitive mistakes.

♦ Understand that you are dealing with the person – not the culture. Each person is unique and ignorance leads to prejudice and intolerance.

♦ **Keep your promises:** Don’t make any promises you cannot keep. It reflects badly on you and the site/company.

♦ **Be reliable:** Unreliability can impact negatively on the site/company’s profitability – If a client/customer requests a certain product or service and you don’t make the effort to fulfil the request they will take their business elsewhere.

♦ **Listen to your client/customers:** They will give you free and valuable information

11. Improving customer care

Always strive to improve on the customer care you give your client/customers by considering the factors below:

1. Understand what the client/customers like about what we do and plan to do more of it.
2. Understand what the client/customers are less happy about in how we are delivering our service and agree on plans to improve this.
3. Be open to the cultural differences of your client/customers and try to familiarize yourself with information regarding the various cultures of your client/customers.
4. Be tolerant of the different values, attitudes and beliefs, as well as the different ways of behaving, of your client/customers.
5. Being responsive to your client/customers’ needs.

12. Range of Client/customers

Your aim in providing and maintaining customer care is to provide an exceptional standard of service to your client/customers so that they are satisfied.

Your organization's customers can be categorized as follows:

♦ Regular client/customers.
♦ Chance client/customers (passing trade)
♦ Visiting client/customers.

Regular client/customers enjoy the standard of service you provide and the environment and facilities you offer and should never be taken for granted. Every effort must be made to tune into their needs as regular client/customer can become a dissatisfied client/customer and take their business elsewhere.
Chance client/customers or passing trade are also important to your organization. Attracting and winning the loyalty of chance client/customers is an opportunity to expand your regular customer base. Chance client/customers may enter your premises because it is convenient, or other satisfied client/customers may have recommended your organization. The first impression of your organization on the chance client/customer is crucial because first impressions tend to be lasting impressions.

A visiting client/customer may be a local or overseas tourist. If your organization deals with a significant number of visiting client/customers, they should be regarded as regular client/customers. Every effort must be made to meet the particular needs of visiting client/customers, for example, this may include extra services such as multi-lingual staff, special tourist packages or deals.

In the three categories of customers listed above, there is a range of different types of customers, each having their own particular needs and requirements. This range may include:

♦ Adults
♦ Children
♦ Customers with mobility difficulties
♦ Customers with communication difficulties.
LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completion of this study unit you will be able to:

- Explain the advantages of receiving customer complaints.
- Use the most appropriate method to deal with customer related issues.
- Identify and explain the range of customer complaints that the officer may encounter during his/her daily duties.
- Identify common customer complaints.
- Use methods to satisfy irate customers.
- Establish customer needs in line with organizational requirements and decide what follow up action to take.
- Explain how to deal with a customer complaint effectively.
- Use the correct customer complaints procedure.
- Deal with a written complaint in line with organizational requirements and decide what follow up action to take.
- Apply the correct procedure when documenting customer complaints.
- Demonstrate skills in dealing with a personal complaint of a customer.
- Demonstrate skills in following up a complaint to take appropriate action.
- Explain the requirements for superior customer care.
- Demonstrate knowledge by understanding when to refer a client.
- Demonstrate knowledge by explaining the guidelines to build rapport with the customer.
1. **Advantages of Complaints/Customer feedback**

Customer complaints offer you an opportunity to rectify a situation resulting in prevention of further complaints and continuous improvement of service. You should react and respond to all complaints to make sure you never receive the same complaint twice. Always endeavor to identify and work to eliminate the cause of the complaint.

Dealing effectively with complaints can result in:

- Elimination of product or service defects.
- Improved operating procedures.
- More skillful customer service behaviour.
- Higher performance standards.
- Complaints and customer feedback forces problems out into the open and people have to examine them and work towards a solution.
- It enables client/customers, as well as the site/company to state their goals and perhaps achieve them.
- Prevents hostilities and resentments from festering.

2. **Methods of dealing with customer related issues**

Customer complaints and irate customers must always be dealt with in line with your organization's policy. Below are some methodologies on dealing with customer complaints related issues:

**When several customers are upset at once:**

- Address them as a group and invite them to discuss the matter in a private area.
- Work with each according to priority, while making sure those waiting are kept busy entertained, or at least comfortable.
- Get help from management or staff if you are unable to deal with the situation on your own.
- Give them attention, show patience and stay calm.

**When required to explain unpopular policies:**

- In advance, discuss with your team the proper language; terminology, or “scripting” approach while explaining difficult policies.
- Always let the positives imply negatives when explaining policies.
- Emphasize customer benefits always.
- Relay complaints to management, accepting them graciously.
- Offer options.

**When a client/customer is upset in front of a crowd:**

- Whisper - imply the need for privacy.
- Direct the customer away from others.
- Get help so other customers won’t be neglected.
- Proceed with a company-approved complaint-resolution policy.

**When there isn’t enough resources:**

- Compensate for the lack of resources - bonuses, tickets, etc.
- Ask for time to research alternatives.
- Ask the customer for other acceptable solutions.
- Review the problem with management.
When the client/customer is really wrong:

♦ Always put yourself in their shoes.
♦ Share the problem with them; “I understand your perspective”.
♦ Ask open-ended questions.
♦ Give reasons; try to negotiate a comfortable solution.

When the client/customer is still upset after your best efforts

♦ Understand that there may be a personality clash.
♦ Do not take it personally.
♦ Find someone else who may relate better to the customer.
♦ Send a follow-up note

3. Range of customer complaints

A Client/customer expectations not met

The client/customer may feel that he/she did not get what he/she was promised or thought was promised. Whomever the client/customer has contacted or who ever has dealt with the customer’s complaint must apologize and accept the blame on behalf of the site/company. That person must then do everything in his or her power to give the client/customer exactly what was promised. If this is not possible, a negotiated alternative must be suggested.

A Client/customer treated badly

Usually one finds that this type of client/customer will not complain to the “offender”, but rather to another member of staff. Whoever deals with the client/customer should, firstly apologize for the offender’s behaviour. Secondly, be polite, courteous and helpful. The client/customer will need to be reassured that the offender’s behaviour is not indicative of the company as a whole.

A Client/customer ignored

Sometimes a client/customer may have to wait for service. The fact that the client/customer is still waiting when he/she is eventually attended to, gives the employee handling the situation the opportunity to rectify the poor impression. Ensuring that the client/customer is attended to immediately can do this. Whoever handles the situation must apologize for the error, delay and any inconvenience that has been caused, and set about reassuring the client/customer that the matter will be dealt with.

An Initial complaint not dealt with

If this is the issue, the client/customer will often take the matter to a supervisor or manager. To avoid this scenario, the employee dealing with this kind of complaint will need to make extra special effort. He/she will need to show a lot of understanding and concern, but under no circumstances should that employee run down his/her colleagues or complain to the client/customer about them.

The employee handling the complaint should extend an invitation to the client/customer to bring any further problems to him/her. A mutually agreeable solution to this type of complaint is the best course of action.

Always do your best to ensure that your client/customer never feel neglected or taken for granted!
4. **Common Client/customer Complaints**

Over and above what has already been discussed in section 2.7 (please refer), there are several things that really irritate client/customers. The following list is based on the most commonly accepted issues that irritate client/customers:

- Waiting in line.
- Being put on hold.
- Being quoted one price and then learning the actual price is much higher.
- Poorly informed or unprofessional personnel.
- Employees who say, “*It's not my department*” and are reluctant to help client/customers.
- Employees who talk down to the client/customers.
- Employees who can’t describe how a service operates.
- Employees who speak on the phone while serving a client/customer.
- Dealing with complicated forms and no one to assist.
5. Methods to satisfy irate client/customers

The following are a few examples of how a caring manner can be achieved:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When the client/customer ........</th>
<th>Reward him or her ......</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Calls in at your office or by telephone........</td>
<td>By being prepared to serve him or her in a prompt and friendly manner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Becomes irate or rude.......</td>
<td>By understanding his or her position and by adopting a kind stance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Makes a special request…</td>
<td>By trying to grant that request. It may not be possible, but don’t give the client/customer the impression that you have not tried or couldn't be bothered to try.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Is indecisive…</td>
<td>By trying to suggest a suitable course of action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Starts to voice his or her objections during a discussion…</td>
<td>By empathizing and by answering all the client/customer’s objections to his or her satisfaction, thereby projecting an image of true professionalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Refuses to agree with you…</td>
<td>With polite appreciation. Never enter into an argument with a client/customer. Although you may win the argument, you could lose the client/customer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Registers a complaint……</td>
<td>With fast, positive action to resolve the matter to his or her satisfaction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Establish and understand the client/customer’s needs

♦ Greet the client/customer: “Good morning, Mr. / Ms. __________”
♦ Offer assistance: “How may I help you?”
♦ Clarify requirements: Ask for additional information, for example:
  ♦ “At what time would you like that?”
  ♦ “Would you like two double rooms or a family room?”
  ♦ “How would you like your steak prepared?”
♦ Confirm action to be taken: Tell the client/customer what you will do
♦ Take action: Do what you have agreed to do.
♦ Follow-up: Check if the client/customer is satisfied, by asking questions:
  ♦ “Is there anything else I can do for you?”
7. Evaluating/Dealing with Complaints

The importance of evaluating customer complaints and taking appropriate corrective action is critical to the success of a business as a complaint ignored, is a customer/client/ customer lost forever.

This directly impacts on the profitability of the organization and could result in loss of employment. The statistics and the pie chart below further indicates why customers do not return:

♦ 1% Die
♦ 3% Move away from the area
♦ 5% Make other business contacts
♦ 9% Say prices are too high
♦ 14% Are not happy with quality
♦ 68% Are not happy with the service/attitude.

7.1. Why customers leave

Why do customers leave your company, anyway? There are only four possible reasons:

1. They die, or are no longer buying from your company.
2. They are unhappy with the price
3. They are unhappy with the product
4. They are unhappy with the way that they are treated.

Managements always focus on reason number two. "If we just cut our price below Company X, and let everyone know it, our customers would never leave." But research in a wide variety of industries shows that reason number 4 is the most common. Why is this so? Because what binds relationship buyers to your company is not the price alone, it is the totality of the relationship which includes:

- Recognition
- Service
- Information
- Helpfulness
- Friendly employees
- Brand identity
- Product quality and price

Relationship buyers stop buying when you stop loving them, and stop treating them as they want and expect to be treated. How can you hang on to relationship buyers?

- **Know who they are.** Keep track of them in a database. Let your employees at every branch, or on the telephone, who your gold customers are. Be sure that they are treated as Gold.
- **Communicate with them.** Find special ways to build a relationship with them. Thank them for their business.
- **Use your best customer service people with them.** Some banks segment their customers by profitability. When the phone rings from a profitable customer, their ACD uses ANI automatically to shift these calls to a specially selected Gold customer service team.
• **Build equity in the process.** Provide rewards for volume business and for length of service. Make it expensive to leave.

• **Don’t stress price.** If your neighbor helps you carry a heavy item of furniture upstairs in your house, you would never think of offering him money. You will supply a beer or a cup of coffee and conversation. This is what your relationship buyers want. They want to be treated like a good neighbor – a good friend.

### 7.2 Dealing with Customer Complaints Effectively

1. In handling complaints, you will need to know the following:
   - What are the details of the complaint – what happened?
   - Does the complaint relate to a slip in standards or a mistake on our part, or was the client/customer expecting something that we don’t provide?
   - Does the complaint relate to something over which we have control?
   - Is there a solution, and is the best solution something that falls within my level of authority?
   - What follow-up is necessary to prevent a recurrence of the complaint?
   - Who needs to receive feedback about the complaint.

2. Manage the effectiveness of your communication as follows:
   - Keep your voice clear and calm.
   - Speak as you would normally do – do not speak faster or louder than usual.
   - Watch your body language:
     - Maintain a comfortable level of eye contact.
     - Keep your facial expressions calm. Look concerned and interested.
     - Use calm, friendly gestures – avoid any aggressive gestures – and keep your gestures small.
     - Maintain a professional posture and do not fold your arms.
     - Stand your ground – if the client/customer invades your personal space do not step back.

3. Involve the client/customer in finding a solution – this increases the likelihood that the client/customer will be happy with the solution.

### 7.3 Identifying the Nature of the Complaint or Incident

- Throughout the interaction, you should communicate in a way that promotes goodwill and understanding between the client/customer and the company. Speak quietly and calmly, and make sure that your body language is calming. Do not react to any aggressive body language that the client/customer might be displaying.

- Acknowledge the client/customer - Stop what you are doing.
  
  Make eye contact and smile.
  
  "Good morning, Mr./Ms. ________
◆ **Offer assistance** - “How may I help you? “
◆ **Hear the client/customer out** - Listen to what the client/customer says without interrupting.
◆ Do not show fear or anxiety – it is important to show confidence because the client/customer needs to know that you can handle the situation.
◆ Once the client/customer has finished speaking, state your understanding of the problem.
◆ If the complaining client/customer is disturbing other client/customers, calmly invite him/her to accompany you to an office away from the public area.
◆ If the complaint is a telephonic one, transfer the call to another telephone where you can give the client/customer your undivided attention without disturbing other colleagues or client/customers. Establish the facts and use good questioning skills.

7.4 **Reassuring the Client/customer**

◆ Thank the client/customer for bringing the problem to your attention.
◆ **Empathize:** State how you believe the client/customer feels, and why you acknowledge that he/she has the right to feel as they do.
◆ **Apologize:** Apologize briefly and sincerely that the client/customer has experienced a problem. Do not admit that you or the establishment is to blame.
◆ Accept responsibility for solving the problem.

8. **Negotiation/Communication Tools**

This is defined as the means in which you communicate with others in order to reach a compromise and an agreement.

Consider the following suggestions and guidelines for an effective negotiation and communication style:

◆ **Appearance:** First impressions are formed within 30 seconds and are a major contributing factor to enhancing or diminishing your negotiating power. By dressing for the workplace you indicate that you have respect for yourself, your work and your customers. You represent yourself and your company well as you place a high value on good service levels.

◆ **Body Language:** Body language projects a message not only of our attitude towards others but about ourselves. Positive body language sets the scene for success and negative body language sets the scene for failure. Refer to the table which highlights positive and negative body language. Pay attention to how you make your body language work for you.
Positive and Negative Body Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body Language</th>
<th>Positively</th>
<th>Negatively</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Eye Contact</td>
<td>♦ Eye contact will create the impression that you are interested in them</td>
<td>♦ No eye contact gives an impression of indifference and “I don't care”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Stance</td>
<td>♦ Standing with your arms by your side, and facing your customer will</td>
<td>♦ Standing with your arms folded across your body is a defensive gesture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>create a sense of ease</td>
<td>that suggests you want to distance yourself from the customer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Posture</td>
<td>♦ An upright posture gives an impression of enthusiasm and creates a</td>
<td>♦ Slumping against furniture gives the impression of a defeated, depressed,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>caring atmosphere</td>
<td>or “I don't care” attitude.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Facial</td>
<td>♦ Smile, as it offers friendship</td>
<td>♦ It's no good telling a customer to “Have a nice day”, when you frown or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressions</td>
<td></td>
<td>scowl is just as good as saying “Good-bye and good riddance”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Gestures</td>
<td>♦ Offering a hand shake</td>
<td>♦ Shrugging your shoulders, tapping your foot, drumming your fingers,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>wringing your hands</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using body language effectively is important because:

♦ You cannot control the behaviour of other people but you can always choose your own behaviour when dealing with client/customers.
♦ If you remain in control and respond in a calm and assertive way, you will usually reduce the client/customer’s level of anger and this, in return, will lead to a solution to the situation
♦ You could say “I understand your feelings about this issue, let me see what I can do to rectify the situation for you”.

Positive & Negative Body Language

Characteristics of both the positive and the negative of body language are identified below which will assist you to avoid projecting negative body language and promote effective non-verbal communication through positive body language practice.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Body Language</th>
<th>Negative Body Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Looking at the client/customer’s face</td>
<td>Avoiding looking at the client/customer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making frequent eye contact</td>
<td>Avoiding the client/customer’s eyes or staring aggressively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nodding and smiling as the other person speaks</td>
<td>Repeatedly licking you lips or clearing your throat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncrossing your arms</td>
<td>Keeping your arms folded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having “open” hands</td>
<td>Clasping your hands tightly together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steepling your fingers</td>
<td>Banging the table or pointing at the client/customer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If standing, turning towards the client/customer</td>
<td>Standing over the client/customer when seated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaning slightly towards the client/customer</td>
<td>Leaning away from the client/customer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining a relaxed posture</td>
<td>Fidgeting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Pleasing Principle:

- Always be polite
- Listen attentively
- Empathize and ensure feedback
- Ask questions and display a good attitude
- Smile
- Show genuine interest
- Never say “No” upfront, reword negatives and offer alternatives
- Go and fix the problem.
Attitude: this refers to a person’s way of thinking. Thoughts shape actions and behaviour, which impacts on relationships. A positive attitude can be your greatest asset as thoughts create feelings, feelings brings about emotions and emotions create the excitement, enthusiasm, drive and commitment which results in action. Therefore by improving your thoughts you are improving your actions, resulting in improved personal and business relationships, which have a great impact on your success.

9. Behaviours to avoid in negotiating:

- Avoid getting involved in confrontational situations.
- Do not use forceful hand gestures, finger pointing or talk with your hands too much. This is perceived as aggressive behaviour.
- Do not move into the other party’s personal space. This is perceived to be threatening.
- Avoid defensive body language i.e.: folded arms, indirect eye contact, etc, it creates distance between parties.
- Avoid raising your voice and use of bad language.

9.1 Heat Approach

Using the Heat approach can be a useful tool when a customer is irate, upset and emotional about an issue of complaint. The “HEAT” approach is further explained below:

Hear them out, and listen - let them “give off steam”

Empathize: “It must be very frustrating....”

Apologize: “I’m sorry for the inconvenience....”

Take responsibility to put things right.
10. Customer Complaints Procedure

If the complaint or incident is something which you can handle, then it is your responsibility to take appropriate action as follows:

1. Never ignore a complaining client/customer. Give him or her your undivided attention.
2. Listen carefully to the reason for the complaint. If you are not quite sure on the point he/she is making, ask him/her to clarify the complaint.
3. Put yourself in the client/customer’s shoes, and use positive and friendly words and comments throughout the conversation.
4. Stay calm and if you feel irritated by the nature of the complaint, don’t show it. You won’t get very far if you start being aggressive.
5. Ask pertinent questions so that you remain in control of the situation and generate the information required to be of assistance.
6. Record all complaints, however trivial:
   ♦ Name of customer
   ♦ Date
   ♦ Nature of complaint
   ♦ Action taken
   ♦ Date complaint is resolved
   ♦ Any follow-up if necessary
7. Apologize and show the client/customer that you are taking immediate action. E.g. rectify the problem or take down all their details so that you can refer the problem to your manager.
8. Explain to the client/customer how the problem started and that it was not done intentionally. Stick to the facts; don’t create false impressions or be dishonest. Don’t tell a client/customer her room is being cleaned when you know that the cleaners are still on lunch.
9. When working on a complaint, keep the client/customer informed. Inform the client/customer if there are going to be any delays in solving the matter.
10. Follow the complaint through to its logical conclusion and make sure that the complainant is perfectly happy about everything before you close the matter.
11. Remember, a client/customer’s complaint is always valid, no matter how outrageous it is.
12. Mistakes happen and complaints will occur. Don’t get depressed by them. Every complaint is an opportunity to demonstrate your commitment and professionalism to your client/customers and that can lead to increased client/customer loyalty.
13. Let the client/customers know that, if they are unhappy about something, they will find it very easy to approach the site/company with their complaint, and that complaint will be attended to promptly.
14. You could say something like: “We’re sorry for the inconvenience you have been caused”.

11. Written complaints

If written complaints are received from client/customers, they will be referred to you only after the General Manager and your Head of Department have read and discussed them. You will then be involved in an investigation about the complaint.

The following practice applies in the event of a written complaint being received:

♦ Accept that it is the client/customer’s right to complain in writing to the General Manager or even the Managing Director, and avoid questioning why the client/customer did not bring the complaint directly to you – there is no answer to that question and you will only make yourself unhappy. Do not regard the written complaint as a personal affront or an attempt to make you and your department look bad – it is an opportunity to learn.
If the complaint relates to something you personally have done, cooperate in the investigation by giving your side of the story as clearly and as unemotionally as possible. Be gracious and apologize if it is clear that you did not meet the required standards.

If the complaint relates to a problem that affects the entire team, discuss it with the team with a view to finding a solution rather than finding someone to blame and punish. It is only by finding a solution that you prevent a repetition of the incident. Finding someone to blame and punish solves nothing, and only leads to poor morale and team work.

If the complaint is about the specific action of a specific person, handle it privately. Your objective is to find a solution in order to prevent a repetition of the incident, so handle the discussion constructively.

12. Documenting Complaints

All complaints are to be documented as per the following procedures:

- Complaints received by the Night Manager or a member of the night shift team must be recorded in the Night Manager’s handover book. Describe the complaint, the action taken, and whether the client/customer was satisfied with the action taken.
- Complaints received by Reception must be recorded in the shift handover book so that the next shift knows what happened, what action was taken, and whether the client/customer was satisfied with the solution. This enables the new team to take appropriate action should there be a sequel to the complaint.
- If you handled a complaint that related to another department, make sure that you give feedback about the complaint to the department concerned.
- Give feedback to your immediate manager about complaints that you or members of your team have handled. This ensures that he or she is able to act appropriately if there is a sequel to the complaint. It also ensures that you create useful opportunities for the team to learn from the complaint.
- Discuss creative solutions to complaints with your colleagues – this enables them to learn from your experiences, and take opportunities to learn from them.

13. Personal Complaints

If a client/customer complains to you about a member of your team, proceed as follows:

13.1 Procedures

1. **Hear the client/customer out:** Listen to the client/customer without interrupting. Ask questions to check your understanding. Thank the client/customer for bringing the problem to your attention.
2. **Empathize:** Describe your understanding of how the client/customer feels and why.
3. **Apologize:** Simply apologize that the client/customer has had an unhappy experience. Do not indicate that you accept the client/customer’s story as the truth – you do not have the staff member’s side of the story yet.
4. **Take Action:** Tell the client/customer that you will follow up and take any necessary action. Discuss the matter privately with the staff member concerned. Make sure that you have a clear understanding of the details before making a decision about further action.
5. If the complaint is about a staff member in another department, handle the complaint as described above, then pass the information on to the Head of Department concerned.
14. How to deal with a complaint – Follow up action

Follow up actions need to be carried out as soon as possible after a complaint has been lodged. Suggested practices are given below to ensure the speedy resolving of complaints:

- Write down the specific complaint or incident in the complaints/incidence register.
- Prioritize the complaint/incident and set your target in rectifying the complaint/incident in the shortest possible timeframe.
- Keep record of what you have done to rectify the problem and monitor your progress.
- Ask other people to help if you will not be able to solve the problem/incident by yourself.
- Notify the client/customer immediately if the problem is solved.
- Take the necessary steps to avoid the complaint or incident from surfacing again.
- Notify your unit manager of the outcome.

15. Do’s and Don’ts of customer complaints

Inevitably there are times when client/customers lodge complaints that they are difficult, persistent or even rude to you. Your reaction will greatly influence the outcome of the situation. Summarized below are some behaviour patterns to avoid and some to cultivate:

Avoid:

- **Confrontational behaviour:** It reinforces conflict and creates more ill feeling. One side demands apologies from the other and the redress of perceived wrongs. One party wins at the expense of the other.
- **Avoidance:** It prolongs the problem and keeps it just below the surface. Avoiding a problem might make the situation even worse.

Cultivate:

- **Compromise:** Both parties make concessions, bargaining with each other until a compromise is reached.
- **Collaboration:** Both parties solving the problem together. Both sides focusing on the problem, rather than proving who is right and who is wrong. Both parties striving towards a common goal.

16. Complaints practices

Practices to avoid

Always ensure you behave professionally during an entire complaints process. Listed below are some of the numerous practices to avoid whilst dealing with a customer’s complaint:

- Don’t tell a client/customer something cannot be done or will not be done. Rather advise the client/customer that you will investigate the matter and see what can be done.
- Never pass the buck. Don’t refer a client/customer to another person or department when you can handle the issue yourself. It might never be attended to and your credibility will be lost.
- Never keep a client/customer waiting unnecessarily.
- Never name another client/customer as the reason for a fault. Not only will this be perceived as unprofessional, but also the customer may begin to wonder if you say the same about him or her.
Never argue with a client/customer, ignore a complaint or use bad language.

Don’t lose your temper, even when confronted by an angry or difficult client/customer. You are more likely to diffuse a difficult situation by staying calm and in control. Avoid sarcasm at all costs.

Never challenge the client/customer.

Killer phrases to avoid when dealing with client/customers
- We’ve never done it that way before.
- We don’t have enough people.
- You don’t understand the problems in this department.
- That’s not my problem.
- That’s how we’ve always done it.
- I have no idea. Ask someone else.
- I’m busy at the moment. Can you call back later?
- Didn’t you listen to what I just said?
- What you see is what you get.
- Hang on a moment. I have another call I must attend to.
- What do you want?
- Can’t you just wait a minute?
- I’m off on lunch now. Sorry, you’ll have to come back later.

17. Requirements for Superior Client/customer Care

The more effort that is made to satisfy and delight client/customers, the higher the degree of client/customer loyalty. Always ensure that all your client/customers are treated with the utmost respect and courtesy. Indicated below are some characteristics to pursue in your daily dealings with your client/customers:

- **Reliability**: Ensure that your client/customers can depend on you every time to do what has been promised.
- **Knowledge**: Know your services/products offered.
- **Empathy**: Do your client/customers receive individual attention?
- **Responsiveness**: Give your client/customers prompt service every time
- **Receptiveness**: Be willing to accept new ideas and to learn.

You expect to be treated properly when you are a customer. Do the same for your client/customers.

18. Dealing directly with client/customers

When dealing directly with client/customers you might find that you may not always know the answers to a client/customer’s questions, as it could possibly not be within your area of expertise and responsibility. In this situation however, when in doubt, find out from alternative resources and follow the guidelines below:

Always keep your manager informed of important matters when you have referred client/customers to someone else. You need to use your best judgment. If a client/customer presents you with a complaint, consider it your problem to manage. You may or may not choose to involve someone else. You should refer the complaint on to your supervisor or manager if the nature of the problem is clearly out of your sphere of authority.

The client/customer who is ill or has hurt himself:

- Ensure that you are familiar with the site/company’s emergency procedures.
- Don’t panic if a client/customer faints or hurts him/herself in reception.
Stay calm and reassure the client/customer. If you know first aid, do what you can to help the client/customer.

Keep the phone numbers of the ambulance and/or closest hospital at your phone for emergencies.

19. Referring Client/customers

Although it is best to resolve complaints and incidents yourself, sometimes you have to refer the situation to a person in a more senior position. Use the following guidelines when referring a client/customer:

In most cases, customers do not want you to refer the situation to someone else because it could imply you are not interested or you believe it is not your problem. On the other hand, if a person is really angry, perhaps this is exactly what he or she wants because it is one way of expressing the need to talk to ‘someone more important’.

A more senior person may also have more experience in dealing with difficult situations or with the types of alternatives available to satisfy the customer.

If a client/customer wants information and you are unable to assist him or her, find out who else has the information and refer the customer to that person/department. Alternatively, make the time to read the site/company’s policy, document so that you can answer common questions.

A client/customer might feel that your unit manager is the only person that can help him/ her. Ask the client/customer’s name and phone your unit manager to find out if he/she is available. If he/she agrees, show the client/customer to his/her office. If your unit manager has asked not to be disturbed and the client/customer still insists on seeing him/ her only, you could say “Mr. Fernandes has specifically asked not to be disturbed. But if you would like me to interrupt her, I could phone and see if he is available” This is usually enough to convince the client/customer.

Transfer call only when necessary, explain your reasons, and ask permission first. When callers are transferred from place to place, their good feelings about your site/company quickly dwindle. Don’t just say, “Hang on,” and let them go. Now and then caller will not want to wait. When that happens say, “Fine. I’ll be happy to ask Mrs. Jones to call you back.”

Transfer a client/customer as quickly as possible to the correct department and introduce the client/customer to the referred person. E.g. “Mrs. Jones, this is Miss Black at reception. I have Mrs. Cole on the line regarding a booking that has been double-booked. Could you please assist her?” Remember to inform the client/customer (Mrs. Cole) who you are referring her to.

If you are unable to help a client/customer, be tactful and polite. You could say “Excuse me Mr. Smith, but I believe Mrs. Jones in the Administrative Department would be in a better position to assist you. May I transfer your call?”

20. Building a Rapport and Relationship with Customers

To “establish a rapport” means to create a harmonious relationship. This is especially important because client/ customers make their future accommodation decisions on the basis of the relationships they enjoy the most. They will choose to stay in a site/company where they have a rapport with the management and staff before they choose to stay in a site/company that they don’t know, or where they are not known.
20.1 Guidelines

Follow the guidelines below to ensure courtesy at all times to clients:

♦ If clients approaches you while you are busy with something, stop what you are doing, make eye contact, smile and greet the client/customer, using his/her name if you know it.
♦ Never say “hi” or “hello” as an element of formality is expected.
♦ Never call a client by his/her first name unless invited to do so by the client.
♦ Make an effort to greet client in their own language, even if the greeting is all you know in that language.
♦ If a client looks lost or as though he/she is looking for something or someone, offer assistance.
♦ Always observe what is happening around you and respond to signals client give relating to their needs.
♦ Clients are frequently asked, “is everything alright” by people who are not really interested and seem to be only going through the motions. Take the time and the trouble to make conversation with clients while you are assisting them. If you are checking their satisfaction whilst they are dining, you need to do more than simply asking “is everything to your satisfaction?” The following questions are examples of how to open up a conversation:

"Is this your first visit to the company?"
or
"How are you enjoying your stay with us?"
or
"Are you here on business or for pleasure?"
or
"I see you are golfers. What do you think of our local golf course?"

21. Customer Service

21.1 WHY IS SERVICE SO BAD?

1. Customers have become willing victims
Customers have been putting up with poor service for so long that they have come to expect poor service. When customers don’t complain about poor service, they set themselves up as willing victims and subconsciously send the message that anything will do.

2. Staff are not adequately trained
Would you let a brain surgeon loose in your head, after a short induction course on the anatomy of the brain? Certainly not! Yet some customers are expected to be satisfied with security officers to work at their frontline, protecting or transporting valuable property, without proper training.

3. Staff are not properly motivated
If top performers receive the exact same amount of money and perks as the under-performers, then what motivates the top performers? The obvious answer is nothing! They become demotivated, and their performance starts to deteriorate. Staff should be rewarded for good performance and service. An incentive scheme is one way that we can make sure that staff is motivated to deliver good service. Make it worth their while to deliver good service and extremely uncomfortable not to.

“Role model excellence and you will start to deliver excellence yourself”
21.2 THE CUSTOMER SERVICE MODEL:

Customer Service is a process that starts with identifying the customer’s needs and runs through to the evaluation of the Customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction and the securing of repeat business or failure to do so.

Step 1: Understanding Customer Needs
Step 2: Understanding Customer Expectations
Step 3: Serving the Customer
Step 4: Customer Assessment of Quality of Service
Step 5: Feedback on Service

STEP 1: UNDERSTANDING CUSTOMER NEEDS

1. Personal Contact

The objective of the methods mentioned below is to listen to our customers and to ensure that you understand their individual needs well.

- Encourage them to visit you in your offices,
- Establishing a Customer Register for suggestions, enquiries and complaints, kept at the guard room on site,
- Monthly minuted meetings,
- Calling customers,
- Carrying out surveys and site audits to establish their needs / shortcomings,
- Providing the customer with a questionnaire, which rate our service, products, managers, attitudes, neatness etc.,
- Inform the customer of best practises, which were successful at the sites of other customers.

2. Listening

Why?

- It is the first step in understanding your customer’s needs and in achieving Customer satisfaction,
- To really understand the customer and the problem,
- To hear their emotions and listen to the unspoken meaning,

Listening is a full time job. We have to keep listening and change accordingly to satisfy our Customer’s needs, or start losing customers.
Why can’t we hear them?

We are:

♦ Distracted,
♦ Not focussing,
♦ Talking,
♦ Not paying attention,
♦ Not listening with our eyes.

2.1. WAYS OF LISTENING:

Quantitative Listening:

Can be achieved through a quality audit, site visits and personal interviews through which you can;

• Establish the problems, opportunities or issues,
• Identify sources of information to help answer questions.

This technique requires that you:

• Prepare questions for the personal interview,
• Implement your audit,
• Summarise your results,
• Summarise the conclusions,
• Create an action plan and timetable to do something to improve your customer satisfaction.

Qualitative Listening:

• Gathering subjective information about your customer’s likes and dislikes directed to you or your staff through personal talks and telephone calls.

• Customer comments can be actively obtained through Customer Registers and Questionnaires.

• You can ask to interview a panel of people from your customer’s business, i.e. the Financial Manager, MD, Health and Safety manager etc. it will give you a broader view of how your service is perceived.

• Whatever the customer and/or his colleagues say, commit yourself to take action on what they say to improve their satisfaction.

2.2. TIPS ON LISTENING TO CUSTOMERS:

• Make the customer at ease and comfortable
• Let them talk and you listen
• Do not interrupt (unless you are seeking clarification of what they are saying)
• Pay attention to what they are saying
• Make notes of key points
• Ask questions to clarify
• Give reflective summary from time to time
• Maintain eye contact but not a fixed stare
• Use their names
STEP 2: UNDERSTANDING CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS

Customer service is all about expectations. When you and your customer get face to face, or phone to phone, or interact in any other way, the customer has expectations about the encounter. How you measure up, relative to those expectations, will determine whether your service is perceived as good or bad.

“Outstanding service is about EXCEEDING customer expectations”.

1. **Factors Affecting Customer Expectations:**
   - What the customer has heard about our service,
   - Customers experience with other security companies,
   - What the customer believes he needs,
   - The communication of our salesperson or representative,
   - Previous experience of our quality of service.

You should therefore ensure that you understand what the customers’ expectations are to make sure that they are realistic and you are able to fulfil them.

STEP 3: SERVING THE CUSTOMER

Service delivery is determined by several factors, among them are:

- Knowledge, skills and attitude,
- Service delivery tools and equipment,
- Service delivery environment,
- Quality of support and / or supervision provided by your company,
- Availability of service standards and procedures,
- Training

STEP 4: CUSTOMER ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY OF SERVICE

Quality of service is the result of the assessment that a customer makes of the service he / she receives.

“Quality is the comparison of the customer’s expectations with the performance in service delivery”.

There are three possibilities when a customer makes this comparison:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OUTCOME</th>
<th>EMOTION</th>
<th>QUALITY LEVEL</th>
<th>REMARK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P&lt;E</td>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>Poor Service</td>
<td>Improve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P=E</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>Expected Service</td>
<td>OK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P&gt;E</td>
<td>Delighted</td>
<td>Excellent Service</td>
<td>Goal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Where:  

P = Performance  
E = Expectations

**STEP 5: FEEDBACK ON SERVICE**

Providing a service to a customer is a dynamic process of give and take. So, while you have communicated and agreed to look into, correct, or do something for the customer, you have to create a “feedback loop”. Often, the only way that the customer will know that you have done what you have promised is to tell the customer that you have. Accurate feedback to your customer is one of the most important steps in providing excellent service.

**22. P. R. I. D. E.**

To be good at customer service, you must have pride – and **P. R. I. D. E.** P. R. I. D. E. helps us to remember to offer spectacular service at all times.

**P**  
Tells us to be **POLITE** at all times. Even if you are having a bad day, the customer deserves the best. No prejudice, no arrogance, no defensiveness – just politeness.

**R**  
Stands for **RESPECT** for the customer. We need to treat our customers the same way that we would treat our boss, or even better. The customer pays our salary.

**I**  
I indicates **IMPORTANCE**. The customer is king. They are the most important person in our work life and should be treated like royalty. Products, services, systems and procedures are important – but they all pale into insignificance next to the customer.

**D**  
The D in the formula means **DELIGHT**. Enjoy what you are doing. If you are not enjoying yourself, customers will not enjoy their encounter with you. Behaviour breeds behaviour.

**E**  
Stands for **EFFICIENT**. Do your job, and do it well. Make sure that it is done right the first time, every time. Don’t force your customers to ask two to three times to get things done.
LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completion of this study unit you will be able to:

♦ Demonstrate practical skills in the recording of complaints and problems by completing the necessary documentation.
1. **Occurrence book**

An occurrence book is used to record all security related activities that occur during your period of duty.

The following examples of information could be included in the occurrence book:

- Reporting on and off duty.
- Crimes committed during your duty.
- Arrests made.
- Action resulting from the arrest.
- Accidents that occurred during the duty.
- Damage to property.
- Special duties that you may have executed.
- Visits made by supervisors or other staff members.
- Patrols undertaken – including the time the patrol started and ended and where it was done.
- Any unusual incident that occurred.
- **Complaints received.**
- Security breaches.
- Items found.

**Keep the following in mind when writing entries into your occurrence book:**

- Number your entries in a chronological sequence starting with one.
- Ensure the correct date, month and year is recorded in the occurrence book.
- Make entries in the order in which they occurred and make sure the correct time is allocated to each event.
- Use black ink to write and red ink to underline. Registers are usually inspected in red ink.
- Write neatly and legibly.

There are various ways that an occurrence book can be laid out. This will differ from company to company.

Below is an example, which you may adapt to meet the requirements of your company.
Occurrence Book (example)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volg Nr.</th>
<th>Tyd</th>
<th>AARD VAN VOORVAL/NATURE OF OCCURRENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>123</td>
<td>21:00</td>
<td>Patrol back: During the routine patrol it was discovered that a housebreaking and theft occurred at the computer lab. The housebreaking and theft was reported to Mr. Maseko the security manager on duty. Mr. Maseko determined that a Maser laptop was stolen (asset number. 4342222). The incident was reported to the SAPS. The SAPS reference number is SAPS S/SIDE 123/10/2010. The investigating officer is Inspector Botha 012 321-4333.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Signed by J. Ramoba
2. Pocket book

Pocket books are small A-6 books that each security officer must keep with them at all times and are checked by supervisors and management. These books are used to assist the security supervisor to maintain a high standard of control of all staff and to monitor the activities of all officers. Any deficiencies in the security system through entries made by his/her staff member should also be followed up. When a pocket book is full, it is handed in and a new one is handed to the security officer as per company procedure. The reasons for keeping the pocket book are:

- Keep records of duty hours on site.
- Keep notes, orders and instructions.
- Document items when away from the occurrence.
- Record necessary details to use at a later stage.
- **Complaints and problems**

No personal telephone numbers or scribbling is allowed. You may also not tear out pages of the pocket book. This book is used as an aid to a security officer within the work environment.

**Pocket book (example)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/Time</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010/10/24 21:00</td>
<td><strong>Housebreaking and theft report:</strong> On 2010/10/24 at 20:30 during a routine patrol I discovered a housebreaking and theft at the computer lab of Building BB. No suspects or witnesses could have been identified. I secured the crime scene and no one was allowed to enter the scene.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I reported the matter to Mr. Maseko my security manager and the SAPS investigated the crime scene. SR Reference Number 13/10/2010 and OB Reference Number 123/10/2010.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Message book

The message book is used to record any messages either telephonically or in person. The date, time, who the message is for and from whom, is to be noted. Remember to convey the message to the applicable person if a message has been taken down. When taking the message make sure that you document exactly what the person has said. If necessary, read back the message you have taken to make sure it is accurate.

4. Incident report

The security officer may also record complaints and incidents by writing an incident report out. This report will serve as an investigation tool when an incident needs to be investigated.
LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completion of this study unit you will be able to:

- Define communication.
- Explain the importance to the organisation and oneself of being able to communicate effectively with internal and external customers.
- Describe the various ways of communicating in a particular context with supplier, customer and colleagues and explain why these ways are appropriate.
- Demonstrate skills by communicating effectively in context.
- Explain way of how the officer can improve his or her communication towards customers.
- Describe potential barriers to effective communication.
1. Effective Communication

The communication process takes place when information sent by a person (the sender) is received by a second person/persons (the receiver), decoded and reacted upon.

2. Importance of effective communication

Effective communication only takes place when the reaction of the receiving person is positive, according to the expectations of the sender. For example, by altering the intonation of the voice a customer may either receive the message that a waiter is really pleased to see and help him or that he is merely another nuisance to be served. Effective internal and external verbal communication has a direct effect on a company’s image and success in the following ways:

♦ Good, clear, concise communication eliminates time wastage in trying to resolve confusion, errors and conflicts
♦ Customers/client/customers/patrons like feeling important and will return and recommend the establishment to others if they are treated with politeness and helpfulness. This promotes return business.
♦ Staff with positive attitudes, who speak to each other with respect, reflect a positive company image. This gains customer confidence in the establishment.
3. Types of Verbal Communication

3.1 Internal communication

- Internal verbal communication may be categorised as follows:
  - **Intra-personal communication** is communication with one’s self. Talking to one’s self is an example.
  
  ![Bye bye, useless computer!](image)

- **Extra-personal communication** (as illustrated above) refers to communication to an inanimate object or non-human (plant or animal). For example, talking to a cat/ dog or saying: “You naughty table!” after a toddler bumps his head on it.

- **Interpersonal communication** refers to an ordinary conversation on a one-on-one basis, or a very small group. It may also refer to communication between groups of individuals (group discussions or informally in a crowd). For example, communication within and between departments in an organisation.

The experience in business has been that, generally, as the size of the organisation increases, communication decreases and morale declines. The ever-increasing size of organisations means that lines of communication are further and further extended. The more communication “centres” (e.g. departments within an organisation) a message has to pass through, the greater the chance of distortion or breakdown.

Instead of trying to improve communication abilities of all employees, there are steps that may be taken to alleviate the situation:

- Open channels for feedback should be established.
- Policy and procedure for communication should be laid down.
- Top management should communicate directly to all staff using the public address system or public notice.

3.2 External communication

This refers to communication with an audience or people outside of an organisation.

- Suppliers, Cleaning Services, Out-sourced Facilitators
- conducting lectures in a corporation.
3.3 Face to face communication

When communicating face-to-face, body language plays a vital role in conveying the appropriate messages.

Eye Contact: In the business culture, it is imperative to make eye contact if one wishes to make a positive impression with client/customers and maintain a relationship based on trust. Consider the following:

- Maintain eye contact without staring, as this is arrogant and threatening.
- Avoid blinking too much as this communicates nervousness and can be interpreted as an indication of dishonesty.
- Try to keep eye level on the same level as the client/customer. Stand if the client/customer is standing. If the client/customer is seated, accommodate this by standing.

Facial Expressions: Be aware of facial expressions when speaking to people. Professional service providers who deliver excellent service have alert, lively and appropriate facial expressions.

Avoid the following facial expressions:

- **An expressionless or deadpan face** showing no emotion in response to what client/customers say makes them feel uncomfortable. This may be interpreted as boredom, rudeness or indifference.
- **An arrogant or stern expression** creates the impression of being superior to others.
- **Grinning continually** makes one look stupid. It creates the impression of misunderstanding what is being said or done. It may also create the impression of being deliberately unhelpful.

Gestures: Head and hand movements are common during speech:

- Smooth and wide gestures with palms facing upwards, are warm and welcoming. People react positively to friendliness and helpfulness. Client/customers are naturally drawn to people who use calming gestures.
- Sharp, short gestures with palms facing downwards, are aggressive and negative. People react by wanting to either dispute or avoid. When upset or if there is a need to discuss problems, gestures should be controlled. Problems are never resolved through aggressive gestures.

Posture: The way the speaker stands, sits or walks, indicates a great deal about the speaker’s attitude, mood and self-esteem.

A correct posture entails the following:

- Stand upright with arms comfortably at sides
- Keep shoulders dropped and slightly back
- Stand with feet slightly apart to maintain balance
- Walk briskly because it creates a professional impression
- Sit upright with shoulders back. Slouching looks lazy
- When speaking to client/customers, either face them or turn the body slightly sideways towards them
- Avoid leaning against walls or furniture
- Avoid folded arms – they create the impression of being shy or arrogant
- Standing with hands on hips looks arrogant
- Swinging when speaking to people suggests a lack of self-confidence
- Resting the face on hands while leaning on counters looks lazy.
Personal space: This refers to the space each person has around him/her and into which intrusions are unwelcome. The exact size of the area around each person differs and depends on a variety of factors including, personality, culture, family background and even the type of sport played.

Shy people usually need a wider personal space than outgoing people do. People instinctively indicate when their space is invaded - they either move away slightly, look uncomfortable, blink their eyes to show their discomfort, or look behind the speaker to avoid eye contact.

3.4 Telephone

- **It is important to always answer the telephone professionally** as this creates an image of the speaker as a representative of the company.
- **Identification is important.** Start with a greeting of “Good Morning” and then follow with the Department you are working in. The caller then immediately knows whether he/she has reached the intended institution and division.
- **Give your first name and surname:** “I am Peter Ngcobo...”. Never give a customer nicknames, as this is not appropriate in a professional situation. When addressing a customer, use their title and surname: “Mr/Ms/Mr/Dr Kekani...”

When speaking on the telephone, the following principles apply:

- **Speak clearly and slightly more slowly than normal.** The telephone has the effect of distorting voice and words – this needs to be overcome.
- **Smile when greeting people on the phone:** They can hear it and will respond to the warmth in your voice.
- **Speak directly into the mouthpiece:** This ensures being heard as clearly as possible
- **Avoid noisy areas:** This only serves to further distort voice and makes conversation very difficult

4. Communication Context

Verbal communication in the business world varies with different circumstances or contexts. The table below describes ways of communicating in different contexts with suppliers, customers or colleagues and explains why these ways are appropriate:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Conduct</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| With Supplier                | Suppliers should be regarded as both business partners and potential client/customers. They must be handled with courtesy and respect. There is a need to be clear and firm with suppliers when:  
  ♦ Communicating expectations  
  ♦ Handling problems with delivery, quality and service                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Suppliers have the potential to do “word-of-mouth” marketing for the organisation. Consequently, they must be handled with respect and courtesy. The better the relationship with suppliers, the greater the co-operation will be from them.  
If an organisation is clear about what is expected from the start, and if there is consistent fair performance in instances of dissatisfaction, the organisation will establish a reputation for being a firm and fair customer. Respect is essential in obtaining the best service a supplier can offer. |
| With Customer/Client/customer | Establish client/customer’s requirements by asking questions and presenting choices. Consider the following examples:  
When responding to a client/customer’s request for information about rates over Christmas: “Our high season rates are R480.00 per shift during day shifts and R550.00 during a night shift.  
**Special Arrangements:**  
Feed the dogs and cats.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Verbal communication with client/customers (external customers) usually have one of the following objectives:  
  ♦ To establish client/customer requirements  
  ♦ To provide the service the client/customer requires  
  ♦ To obtain feedback  
  ♦ Every interaction with a client/customer is an opportunity to sell. This is accomplished by giving client/customers information, and opportunities to make choices. When speaking with client/customers, it is important to speak clearly and to make eye contact periodically – particularly while busy doing something (such as checking the client/customer out or in). Client/customers like to be given attention and treated with importance. This is important for repeat business. It is important that client/customers are aware of what is being done when providing a service. This is particularly important in the case of special arrangements that may have been made for VIPs otherwise they may not notice, and will have no idea that something special has been done for them. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Customer/Client/customer Feedback:</strong></th>
<th>Client/customers seldom volunteer feedback unless they are particularly dissatisfied or especially satisfied. This means that the Client/customer Satisfaction Analysis will be skewed. To ensure that the analysis of client/customer satisfaction is as realistic as possible, it is important to receive as many completed client/customer questionnaires as possible.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✦ Actively encourage the completion of questionnaires. Try the following:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ Ask client/customers to complete the client/customer questionnaire while they are checking out or having breakfast</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ Include a client/customer questionnaire when the room bill is placed under the door on the last night</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ Place a client/customer questionnaire on the client/customer’s pillow when the turndown is done on the last night</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ Do not miss opportunities to ask client/customers for feedback:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ When checking client/customer satisfaction in the restaurant, ask if their rooms are comfortable.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ When speaking to client/customers, ask which site/company facilities they used and what they think of them</td>
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<tr>
<td>✦ When in a lift with client/customers, ask them for feedback.</td>
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<tr>
<td>✦ Pass feedback on to the people or departments that can use them – whether the feedback is positive or negative</td>
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<tr>
<td>With Colleagues</td>
<td>While the same communication principles apply (speaking clearly and audibly) – no matter whom one communicates with – there are some special considerations when dealing with colleagues:</td>
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<td>✦ Take responsibility to ensure that a positive contribution is made to the relationship with colleagues at all times.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>✦ Avoid addressing conflict with colleagues in front of others – always do it in a private office, out of the earshot of client/customers and other colleagues.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>✦ Greet colleagues when they are seen – even if they have been greeted already</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✦ Be polite and respectful to colleagues – good manners</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✦ Always make a positive impact on a relationship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Internal Customers:**

Always speak clearly to internal customers, and make eye contact regularly. Make sure that instructions or information given is clear, and that it is understood. Ask open-ended questions to check understanding. An open-ended question is one that requires a detailed answer (“yes” or “no” answers will not do).

**With Colleagues**

The following examples may help:

✦ “Explain how this works?”
✦ “What information would you need to confirm the reservation?”
✦ “Where has the client/customer’s car been parked and where are the keys?”

By replacing questions that begin with “Did you…” or “Have you…” with What, When, Where, How, one requests a more in depth answer and prevents the opportunity for “Yes” or “No” answers.

Encouraging personal comments and feedback about management style from the team and subordinates is the best way to improve as a manager. This will also increase the trust and honesty in the team. Respect any feedback given, and do not reject what people say. If there is discomfort about any feedback, try to learn from it rather than discount it.

If one claims to have an “open door policy”, make sure that people are not punished for coming through that door. Make it comfortable and safe for subordinates to give feedback or ask for help. If it is not comfortable and safe, they will not give relevant information needed to improve. This will hamper personal progress and the performance of the team.

Verbal communication with internal customers usually has one of the following objectives:

✦ To give an instruction
✦ To provide information
✦ To obtain feedback or information
5. Improving Communication

Be aware of your own style of communication. How do people feel when you communicate with them? Watch their reactions and improve your style.

5.1 First impressions

Set the stage for conversation with a courteous and respectful attitude. The first words spoken can influence the entire conversation. A question or remark about something that a customer/client/customer is interested in is an acceptable opening, instead of: “Can I help you?” Use names with appropriate titles if they are known when greeting the person.

Correct timing is just as important. Avoid pouncing on a person, without them seeing you approaching. Try not to stall for too long before approaching someone who needs assistance. Remember to smile as this puts the other person in a good frame of mind.

5.2 Improve face-to-face contact

- Poor face-to-face contact is usually symptomatic of deeper problems:
  - Poor supervision
  - Unsuitable working conditions
  - Personal problems
  - Faulty product/service/equipment

Examine possible underlying problems thoroughly and then tackle behavioural problems to ensure long term success.

The ability to read a person’s body language is also useful. Most people can read body language intuitively. Although, some are more skilled than others. If the body language and the spoken language appear contradictory, believe the body language.

5.3 Voice modulation

The tone, speed and loudness of one’s speech can convey alertness, responsiveness and interest. People must be able to hear what is being said crisply, clearly and the first time round. Avoid shouting (aggressive) and mumbling (disinterest).

5.4 Active Listening

People want to be listened to, not merely heard. Many good contacts go sour because what the customer is saying or trying to say is misunderstood.

Active listening skills include:

- Facial expressions
- Appropriate responses
- Exercising patience
- Not interrupting

This will please the customer and improve the way he/she communicates. A bad habit that irritates most customers is staff carrying on a conversation with colleagues or other customers. The customer must have the service provider’s full attention.
5.5 Minimising Interruptions

Assess how urgent and lengthy an interruption is likely to be:

♦ If very brief, deal with it immediately and return to the customer with a smile.
♦ If lengthy but urgent, apologise to the customer with an adequate explanation and deal with the interruption.
♦ If it appears more lengthy and less urgent, apologise to the interrupter and attend to the customer first.

One of the worst mistakes is to be interrupted by a more favoured customer and to display favouritism towards him/her.

5.6 Ending a conversation

Regardless of the situation (selling, reception, handling complaints etc) it is essential to carry out a conversation to its logical conclusion.

The end of a conversation is important. Avoid talking oneself out of a sale. Recognise the best moment to conclude. Most business communication needs to be precise, clear and concise. Get the point across clearly and crisply, to save the company time. If a customer/client/customer is not going to buy or leave, conclude the conversation by offering a business card, brochure or similar literature. One may also accept an interruption to see to another customer, or attend to a task that needs to be completed.

Take note of the reaction, if the customer/client/customer is ready to leave, he/she will take the hint. If the name of the customer/client/customer is known to the service provider, he/she should always use it when saying goodbye.

6. Communication Barriers

In its journey from one person to another, information encounters a whole range of obstacles that can alter, change or completely block out the message. These are called “Barriers” and include assumptions, distractions, discomfort, language, jargon, anxiety or jargon.
6.1 Cultural Differences

Intercultural communication has been defined as communication between members of different cultures (whether defined in terms of ethnic, racial or socio-economic differences or a combination of these.)

Factors affecting cultural differences

A culture is made up of the attitudes, values, language, dress, customs and behaviour of a group of people. In South Africa, with its very heterogeneous population, i.e. wide variety of cultures, inter-cultural communication is relevant. We will inevitably have to deal with intercultural situations.

There are a number of factors that can disrupt efficient intercultural communication. For example, intercultural communication can occur:

♦ At a personal level
♦ Between groups of people
♦ In business
♦ At an international level

The disruption of a smooth communication process can have more serious effects than hurt feelings or indignation i.e. a company could lose a valuable client or a country a valuable ally.

Roles

Role expectations and prescriptions vary greatly culturally e.g. the role of woman in Westernised society differs greatly from some African and Eastern societies.

Minimising role expectations:

Although intercultural communication has possible stumbling blocks, there are methods that can be employed to help produce more effective communication and understanding between cultures. For example:

♦ Try not to judge people of other cultures and take time to make intercultural communication more effective and meaningful.
♦ Base decisions in the workplace on skills, qualifications and abilities rather than gender, race, socio-economic status or creed.

Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism occurs when people become so unconsciously accustomed to their cultural upbringing that they believe their basic assumption should be identical to those of other cultures. This can cause people to pass judgements and make evaluations of people from other cultures in a biased way. They see only their attitudes and values as natural and moral. Behaviour is directed according to values learnt, for example, what is good or bad, ugly or beautiful, true or false.

Minimising Ethnocentrism:

♦ Learning about other cultures helps one to understand that one’s own value systems are just as important as those of a person from another culture.
♦ Treating others with respect, sensitivity and consideration are vital in conveying the message of accepting them for who they are and what they believe in. This improves the trust factor and improves communication.
Dress

Dress partners (people who dress in a similar fashion as part of a group identity) and stereotypes associated with them have an important impact on intercultural communication. Even though clothing can provide some information about a person, it can also block input of other information by causing us to perceive selectively. This is based on stereotypes of clothing patterns and personality types.

Minimising dress stereotyping:

♦ Be sensitive to people’s need for group identity and dress style of other cultures, thereby creating a healthy climate for effective communication
♦ Put prejudices aside as far as possible so that they do not create a communication block.

Remember the saying: “don’t judge a book by its cover”.

6.2 Stereotypes

A stereotype refers to the mental picture formed and behaviour displayed when classifying people according to general type, rather than attending to the specific characteristics displayed by an individual.

As impressions are formed of other people, there is a tendency to classify them into categories based on their characteristics, namely:

♦ Culture/religion
♦ Race
♦ Occupation
♦ Accent
♦ Socio-economic level
♦ Physical appearance

The way a person is ‘expected’ to behave influences the way one communicates with him/her.

Stereotyping provides a convenient way of summing people up. This approach is very limiting and leads to drawing incorrect conclusions about a person, which can have negative consequences for interpersonal relationships.

Minimising Stereotypes

It is important to promote effective communication through the deconstruction of projected perceptions of the person one is attempting to communicate with. This is achieved by actively practising minimising stereotyping in everyday situations. Improving the accuracy of perceptions of others is largely a process of being aware that initial perceptions are not always correct and that they need to be revised.

Guidelines: Consider the following guidelines for constructing a more realistic impression of others and assessing the validity of one’s own perceptions:

1. Improve the accuracy of one’s perceptions of others by being mentally aware that initial perceptions are not always correct and that they may need to be revised.

2. Actively question the accuracy of first impressions. These are not necessarily the reality. Try to recognise the possibility of error and seek further verification.

3. Seek more information to verify perceptions. Take time to gather more information about people that one meets to determine whether the original perception is accurate.
4. Get to know more about the person or find out more about a group of people by talking to them. This will increase the likelihood of accuracy.

5. Perceptions of people change over time. People’s attitudes and behaviour often change and perceptions need to change accordingly. It may be easier to hang onto one’s original perceptions, but communication based on outdated, inaccurate perceptions can be more costly than revising one’s perceptions.

6. Check perceptions verbally before proceeding as this may avoid misunderstandings and future problems. Make a ‘perception check’, a verbal statement that reflects one’s understanding of the meaning of other people’s non-verbal cues.

7. For example if a client/customer speaks to you in a harsh tone and seems cold and impersonal, ask: “How are you, Sir/Madam? How was your stay at the site/company?” The question is a perception check. On the one hand, the client/customer may be upset with the service, in which case the perception check may lead to a discussion and resolution of the problem. On the other hand, he/she may be concerned about an entirely different matter and inadvertently created that perception of the situation.

6.3 Educational Differences

Despite any differences in education, all clients/client/customers should be treated with the same courtesy, respect, attitude and consistent use of language. Slang or poor word usage is not appropriate business language. Language should be used appropriately to suit the situation and person.

Guidelines: To ensure that language is used correctly in business context, follow the guidelines below:

1. Be exact – don’t waffle. Say what needs to be said clearly and concisely
2. Avoid stereotyped words and expressions
3. Speak with enthusiasm
4. Always use elegant and polished language
5. Adapt language to the situation – don’t speak down to people on the same level and don’t use slang to superiors
6. Avoid tedious descriptions. – If they are longwinded, people will lose interest in what is being said
7. Build a good vocabulary (read, do crosswords, practise good conversation

6.4 Voice and Articulation

The human voice is flexible and musical. Use the voice effectively and pay attention to articulation, pronunciation, volume, quality and pitch. The best way to improve the voice is to use a tape recorder.

If someone talks in a monotone this is bound to put the listener to sleep. Pause for emphasis. Alternate the level of volume as this will arouse attention and cause people to have to listen more closely

7. Range of Situations

In the table below are a range of situations with customers, suggestions on how to deal with them and reasons why:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Reasons</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreign/Regional language</td>
<td>If someone is having difficulty understanding because he/she speaks a different language, consider the following: ♦ Speak slowly and clearly and use the hands to explain what needs to be said ♦ If necessary, draw pictures ♦ If one knows a staff member who speaks the guest’s language, ask that colleague to assist.</td>
<td>Using alternative methods to communicate shows guests/foreigners that one is sensitive to their needs and is trying to accommodate them as best as one can. This makes the person feel important and promotes repeat business.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deaf person</td>
<td>Be sensitive and helpful to the needs of a person with a disability. It is important for the service provider to be polite and discrete when he/she discovers that a customer is deaf. If a person is hard of hearing, make sure they can see your lips when speaking.</td>
<td>Deafness and other disabilities can give the impression that the customer is being difficult as disabilities are not always immediately apparent and people with disabilities usually try to conceal them from the public. Most deaf people can lip-read and interpret facial expressions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Different level of language</td>
<td>Deal with guests with speech impediments in exactly the same manner as one would any other guest. A common mistake staff tend to make when dealing with someone who has a speech impediment is that they look down, or past the guest whilst the guest is speaking to us, that we correct the guest’s attempt to communicate with us, or that we finish the guest’s sentences. This should never be done. In a different situation, when a customer appears aloof and uses complicated words, it is important to swallow one’s pride and pander to his/her vanity. Don’t hesitate to stop and ask for a meaning of a word that is not understood if it affects the perception of what the customer needs.</td>
<td>Using inappropriate body language will intimidate a guest and make him or her feel uncomfortable, unwelcome and that the organisation is unhelpful or insensitive to his/her needs. A speech impediment is not necessarily an indication of a lesser intellect. Neither is the use of high, complex language a sign of superiority of a guest over the service provider. Customers, guest and clients are vital to any business and should always be treated with importance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural differences</td>
<td><strong>Eye contact:</strong> Make a little less eye contact than usual if necessary— but do not avoid it completely.</td>
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<td><strong>gestures:</strong> Gestures vary from one culture to another.</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Latin” people (Spanish, Greek, Italian, Portuguese) tend to use very big gestures. Do not be intimidated by such gestures. Cultural groups using smaller gestures to complain should be taken just as seriously as those who are animated.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Personal space:</strong> This may vary according to culture. Be sensitive to the indications that people give regarding their need for space – if a person moves back slightly, realise that he or she needs more space.</td>
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<tr>
<td>In some cultures, direct eye contact is regarded as insolent and disrespectful.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Big gestures are not necessarily aggressive – they might better be described as expressive.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some cultures use very few or very small gestures. This may suggest that they are less emotional than they really are.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oriental (Japanese, Chinese, etc.) people require a large personal space and do not like to be touched.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Most African people tend to require a smaller personal space, and tend to touch more than other.</td>
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UNIT STANDARD
Handle complaints and problems

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<td>Safety in Society</td>
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<th>NEW NQF LEVEL</th>
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PURPOSE OF THE UNIT STANDARD
The purpose of this unit standard is to equip learners with the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes that will enable them to handle customer complaints in a given environment or area of responsibility. This unit standard is to provide persons with the competencies to deal with customers, understand their complaints and use various strategies to resolve complaints.

A person credited with this unit standard will be able to:

- Assess customer needs and complaints.
- Respond to customer inquiries and problems.
- Communicate with customers to resolve problems and complaints.

LEARNING ASSUMED TO BE IN PLACE AND RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING
- Communication at NQF Level 2 or equivalent.
- Mathematical Literacy at NQF Level 2 or equivalent.

UNIT STANDARD RANGE
The term customer also refers to internal and external customers and clients as well as stakeholders and role-players integral to an organisation or business.

A given situation may refer to but is not limited to case studies, role-plays and structured scenarios.

Specific Outcomes and Assessment Criteria:

SPECIFIC OUTCOME 1
Assess customer needs and complaints.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

ASSESSMENT CRITERION 1
Customer needs are identified in order to assist in the provision of customer service.
Customer concerns are identified to anticipate potential complaints.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERION 3**
Customer enquiries are assessed to determine the actions and responses to the enquiry.

**SPECIFIC OUTCOME 2**
Respond to customer enquiries and problems.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERIA**

**ASSESSMENT CRITERION 1**
Causes of customer dissatisfaction are identified to inform possible reaction strategies.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERION 2**
Methods to resolve problems are assessed in order to match them with specific problems.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERION 3**
A selected method is used to resolve a customer complaint.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERION 4**
Negotiation and communication techniques are applied in order to reach agreement.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERION 5**
A solution is implemented according to reached agreement.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERION 6**
The importance of recording and actioning of complaints are described in terms of their future influence on the organisation.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERION RANGE**
Recorded may include but is not limited to in occurrence book, pocket book, customer visit document, digital, etc, Communicated may include but are not limited to Two-way radio, telephone, verbally, digital, etc.

**SPECIFIC OUTCOME 3**
Build and maintain customer relationships.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERIA**

**ASSESSMENT CRITERION 1**
The role of customer relations is described in terms of their potential consequences on the organisation.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERION 2**
Customer service techniques are described in terms of their uses within a specific organisation.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERION 3**
Customer service techniques are applied in a given situation.
UNIT STANDARD ACCREDITATION AND MODERATION OPTIONS

- An individual wishing to be assessed (including through RPL) against this unit standard may apply to an assessment agency, assessor or provider institution accredited by the relevant ETQA.

- Anyone assessing a learner against this unit standard must be registered as an assessor with the relevant ETQA.

- Any institution offering learning that will enable achievement of this unit standard or assessing this unit standard must be accredited as a provider with the relevant ETQA.

- Moderation of assessment will be conducted by the relevant ETQA at its discretion.

UNIT STANDARD ESSENTIAL EMBEDDED KNOWLEDGE

Refer to the Specific Outcomes and the Assessment Criteria contained in this unit standard and specifically to:

- Principles of conflict resolution.
- Company policy and workplace procedures.
- Interpersonal skills and customer needs.
- Customer care.

UNIT STANDARD DEVELOPMENTAL OUTCOME

N/A

UNIT STANDARD LINKAGES

N/A

Critical Cross-field Outcomes (CCFO):

UNIT STANDARD CCFO IDENTIFYING

Identify and solve problems related to customer complaints and problems.

UNIT STANDARD CCFO WORKING

Work effectively with others to bring about the speedy resolution of customer complaints and problems.

UNIT STANDARD CCFO ORGANISING

Organise oneself and one's activities so that causes of customer dissatisfaction are identified and dealt with in accordance with workplace procedures.

UNIT STANDARD CCFO COLLECTING

Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information related to the handling and responding to customer complaints and problems regarding security services rendered.

UNIT STANDARD CCFO COMMUNICATING

Communicate effectively with customers and superiors in order to solve complaints and problems that arise.

UNIT STANDARD CCFO DEMONSTRATING

Demonstrate an understanding the world as a set of related systems in that if customer inquiries are not attended to according to workplace procedures and company policy it could lead to loss of business.

UNIT STANDARD CCFO CONTRIBUTING

In order to contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of society at large, it must be the intention underlying any programme of learning to make an individual aware of the importance of: Being culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts when dealing with customer complaints and problems.
1. To anticipate the needs of your client/customer, you need to ask yourself 3 questions. What are these questions? (3 Marks)

2. Read the following statement and explain the procedure you will use in order to take down a message: "Anticipate calls by using a message pad and using the correct technique for taking a message should the client/customer be unable to reach the correct person". (5 Marks)

3. List at least 6 (six) guidelines of good customer care. (6 Marks)
4. In business we always strive to improve on customer care. List 5 (five) factors which you will consider. (5 Marks)

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5. List 5 (five) common client/customer complaints. (5 Marks)

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_________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________6. Look at the 7 (seven) problems in the table and provide the correct method to solve it when trying to satisfy irate clients/customers. (7 Marks)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When the client/customer ......</th>
<th>Reward him or her ......</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Calls in at your office or by telephone........</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Becomes irate or rude......</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Makes a special request...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Is indecisive...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Starts to voice his or her objections during a discussion...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Refuses to agree with you...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Registers a complaint......</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. List the 4 (four) possible reasons why a customer/client could leave your company? (4 Marks)


8. List the reasons why a customer/client will stay with your company, in order of importance. (7 Marks)


9. With reference to body language explanation, fill in either negative or positive when you consider what effect this body language will have on the client. (10 Marks)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body Language</th>
<th>Positively</th>
<th>Negatively</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. No eye contact with the customer/client.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Standing with your arms folded across your body.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Slumping against furniture.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Offering a hand shake.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Banging the table or pointing at the client/customer.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Smile.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. An upright posture.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Slumping against furniture.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Repeatedly licking you lips or clearing your throat.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. List the 8 (eight) steps of the **PLEASING** principle. *(8 Marks)*

**P**

**L**

**E**

**A**

**S**

**I**

**N**

**G**

11. Explain the 4 (four) steps of the **HEAT** approach *(4Marks)*

**H**

**E**

**A**

**T**

12. List the 7 (seven) follow up actions to be taken when dealing with a complaint. *(7 Marks)*

13. Name the 5 (five) steps in the customer service model. *(5 Marks)*
14. To be good at customer service, you must have pride – and **P.R.I.D.E.** discuss the **P.R.I.D.E.** principle. (5 Marks)

15. Fill in the missing words (4 Marks)
   An occurrence book is used to record all security related activities that occur ________________ ________________ of ______________.

16. Explain what the message book is used for. (1 Mark)

17. Explain the purpose of an incident report. (1 Mark)

TOTAL MARKS: ____________

87