Welcome! Welcome to Customer Service, which will teach you how to provide excellent, empathetic customer service to your residents.

Introduction

Table of Contents

- Importance of Customer Service
- How to Greet the Customer
- Establishing Rapport with a Customer
- Four Types of Customer Contact And How to Handle Them
- Practicing Empathy and Active Listening
- Developing Product Knowledge

Importance of Customer Service

The customer is a person or group, to whom we provide a promised outcome. Our customers are everywhere that we’ve promised an outcome. Good customer service is measured in the rate of returning customers. Just as poor customer service drives customers away, good customer service brings them back—and makes them talk favorably about you.

How to Greet the Customer

Answering the phone, you make the important, first impression of your community. These are the steps that will help you make that statement a good one.

1. Identify yourself/company. Express eagerness to help.
2. Verify the phone and email information for the resident. Explain that you’re updating your rent roll information.
3. Mention at least one thing – light and conversational – that you know about the resident from previous interaction.

Establishing Rapport with a Customer

Think of a good greeting as the spine of your first impression. The heart and soul of that impression comes from establishing rapport. Here are some guidelines for establishing rapport.

- Get the customer’s name.
- Use but don’t overuse their name.
- Ask a simple and positive question
- Set a relaxed pace. Don’t rapid-fire questions.
Four Types of Customer Contact

While resident needs seem to come in many shapes and sizes, they really fall into four basic categories: Requests, Complaints, Inquiries, and Follow-Up.

**Requests** – are a type of contact, in which the customer asks for something to be done.

**Complaints** – are a type of contact, in which the customer reports a negative experience with a product, with the presumption that something needs to be done to address it.

**Inquiries** – are a type of contact, in which the customer asks for information about a product or process.

**Follow-Up** – is a type of contact, in which initiative is taken to maintain a customer relationship, or ensure that a customer need has been addressed. There are two types:

- **Warm Calls** - Warm Calls maintain relationships.
- **Quality Assurance Calls** – Quality Assurance Calls ensure that a customer need has been addressed.

How to Handle Requests

In a community, residents don’t have time to shop for outside vendors to get things done. When residents make requests, your office needs to respond with the same level of professionalism every time. These are the steps to handling requests.

1. Greet the customer.
2. Repeat the customer’s request, in detail.
3. Assure the customer you can help, or refer him/her to the right help agent.
4. Give the customer a date or time of the Quality Assurance Call of the request.
5. Thank the customer.
6. Set a reminder, using your personal calendar system, or company’s system.
7. Follow up.
8. Record everything you did to help the customer, in case questions arise later.
How to Handle Complaints

Complaints can be tricky, since customers are already unhappy when they approach you. But using these steps gives you the best shot at turning the situation around and making the customer happy.

1. Greet the customer.
2. Let the customer vent.
3. Apologize.
4. State your positive intention to resolve the situation.
5. Probe for more information.
6. Repeat the facts back to the customer.
7. Identify a solution, and get approval of the solution from the customer.
8. Ask what else you can do.
9. Summarize the solution.

How to Handle Inquiries

Inquiries often evolve from simple questions into requests. Here are the steps that will ensure that you’ve covered all bases

1. Greet the customer.
2. Repeat the question, and assure the customer you can either answer it, or find the answer.
3. Provide an answer.
4. Ask if you can assist with a request.
5. Ask the customer if you’ve answered all questions.
6. Thank the customer.
Steps to Making Warm Calls

Because Warm Calls are an act of initiative, they can fall between the cracks as you react to the other, more customer-driven types of customer contact. But they’re important and deserve to be part of your regular routine. Here are the steps to making Warm Calls.

1. Greet the resident.
2. Ask if it is a good time to call them.
3. Explain why you are calling – emphasize that you’re being positive and proactive.
4. Complete your objective.
5. Ask if there is anything you can do for them, while you’re still on the line.
6. Thank the resident.
7. Make notes about the conversation.

Steps to Making a Quality Assurance Call

While Warm Calls don’t need to have a purpose, Quality Assurance Calls are made to follow up on a service you delivered or promised. Here are the steps to making Quality Assurance Calls.

1. Greet the customer.
2. Ask if it is a good time to call them.
3. Explain why you are calling – update them on a solution to a problem, or ask them how a solution is working.
4. Ask if there is anything else you can do for them, while you’re still on the line.
5. Thank the resident.
6. Make notes about the conversation.

Practicing Empathy and Active Listening

A little bit of empathy can go a long way toward giving your customers the type of customer experience we all expect and deserve. But, how do you express something as intangible as empathy? How do you let the customer know that you “get it”? Here are some guidelines.

- Let the customer tell you what they need. Don’t assume anything.
- Don’t interrupt.
- Demonstrate that you’re listening.
- Stay focused.
- Paraphrase and repeat the customer’s issue back.
- Verbally acknowledge the customer’s feelings and, where appropriate, that you understand.
• Continue to offer assistance.

---

**Developing Product Knowledge**

Product Knowledge - is the mastery of the labor, technology, or line of authority needed to respond to a customer’s need.

There are two kinds:

- **Property Knowledge** is the mastery of information pertaining to a property’s amenities, layout, and logistics.
- **Chain of Command** is the mastery of the line of authority needed to respond to a customer’s need.

---

**Developing Property Knowledge**

You can develop the first kind of Product Knowledge - Property Knowledge – through a little organization and proactive learning. Here are three important habits to help.

- Develop and maintain a 3-ring binder that has ready-access information about your property.
- Tour your property and amenities daily.
- Seek information from residents about their experience living there.

---

**Developing Chain of Command Knowledge**

When you don’t have the authority to make something happen for your customer, who does? Here are some guidelines to help you navigate your company’s unique lines of authority.

- Develop and maintain a ready-access folder or binder with
information about your company’s service hierarchy

- Post flow charts on chain of command for certain customer service scenarios.
- Take notes on any pricing, product, or policy changes that might be relevant in determining what you are empowered to do for a customer.
- Ask questions.

```
Resident Complaint

Emergency
- Take notes and immediately call after hours vendor.

Potential legal or lease term issue?
- Take a message for regional manager to follow up.

Noise, personal, or amenities issue?
- Take a message for property manager to follow up.
```