

SECTION 6: CUSTOMER CARE

In the following pages you will find information about looking after our Customers. Remember that, customers are the reason we are in the job we do, and without the Customer, there would be no job. Our customers are always our 'number one' priority. Before reading the 'hints and tips' section, take time to read the information below:

CUSTOMERS

- **are the most important people in this business** – face-to-face, by post or on the telephone
- **do not depend on us** – we depend on them
- **are not an interruption to our work** – they are the purpose of it. We are not doing them a favour by serving them – they are doing us a favour by giving us the opportunity to provide a service for them
- **are not outsiders to our business** - they are part of it
- **are not cold statistics** - they are flesh and blood human beings, with feelings, emotions, likes and dislikes
- **are not people to argue or match wits with** - nobody ever won an argument with a customer
- **are people with individual requirements** - it is our job to satisfy them *for their benefit and ours*

Hints and tips when looking after our Customers

1. Remember that most people will make up their mind about somebody within the first 8 seconds, so that initial impression that you give is all important
2. Always be aware of your appearance and ensure that you are always smart, wearing the correct uniform and badge and have a 'smile' on your face!
3. Always make the first move with Customers, don't wait for them to have to approach you.
4. Always ensure that you listen carefully to what your Customers are saying and use open, friendly body language. Make eye contact with your Customers.
5. Try to deal with all your Customers in a prompt and professional manner, apologising if you have had to keep them waiting.



Occasionally, no matter how hard we try, things do go wrong and our Customers have cause to complain. Listed below is a 'formula' for you to apply if dealing with a complaint.

Remember that Customers that have their complaints handled effectively often turn into your most loyal followers!

DEALING WITH A DIFFICULT CUSTOMER OR COMPLAINT – THE FORMULA

First and foremost.....APOLOGISE!

- **If possible, handle in a less public environment**
Whether customers are playing to an audience or embarrassed to be complaining, you stand a better chance of helping them if you move away from other customers.
- **Offer a seat if this is possible, and sit down yourself**
Eye contact is important, and if two people are seated, it can diffuse a situation, and nobody has a height advantage!
- **Listen to the complaint, and understand what it is the customer wants**
Use open questions to establish the exact nature of the problem and find out what the customer really wants to happen next.
- **Show you are taking the guest seriously**
Use of the correct body language, additional apologies, and show sympathy for the guest's situation. Ask questions to clarify points and to show that you are listening, and that you have understood.
- **Suggest solutions if able to do so**
It may not be possible to satisfy all customers, but if you have followed the steps above, you should be in a strong position to negotiate with the customers who are not being reasonable.
- **Refer the problem to someone more senior**
If unable to make the guest happy yourself, or if you do not have the authority to make the decision, inform the guest of the actions that you are going to take, and contact a senior member of staff.
- **Thank the customer for bringing the problem to your attention**
If meant sincerely, this reassures customers that you value feed-back and want to help.
- **Follow up**
Ensure that the guest is informed at all times about what is happening, and ensure that you follow up to check that the agreed action has been carried out and that the customer is satisfied.

Dealing with dissatisfied or difficult customers and complaints

Use the Take 'HEART' process:

H – HEAR	Listen to what is being said
E – EMPATHISE	Show that you understand
A – APOLOGISE	For the upset/inconvenience that this situation has caused them
R – RESOLVE	Work together to find an appropriate resolution
T – THANK	Thank the Customer for giving you the opportunity to make things right!

How to put Take 'H.E.A.R.T' into practice:

- Put yourself in the customer's shoes and try to see things from their perspective
- Do not treat it as a personal attack – The Customer is not angry at you personally
- Focus on the problem, not the person's attitude or behaviour
- Display empathy towards the customer's situation
- Think about what you can do – Be part of the solution
- Feel proud when you can turn a dissatisfied customer into a lifelong ambassador for your company

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

- Actions speak louder than words
- Try very hard to avoid saying No
- Erase the words "I can't" from your vocabulary
- Tell customers what you *can* do
- Never use inappropriate language with a customer
- Listen – listen – listen
- Listen for what is not said
- Never jump to conclusions. Never assume
- Use language your customers understand
- Display empathy to show your customers you understand

DEFINITIONS – CUSTOMER SERVICES

Bad/Poor

When a Customer has a negative experience. Expectations are not met and this brings about damaging emotions.

Good/Neutral

When a Customer's expectations are met but nothing more, which does not create any real emotion either way. Too many of these and they create an overall feeling of dissatisfaction.

Brilliant/Wow

When a Customer is surprised by how good something or someone is, where their expectations have been surpassed, leaving them with a good feeling about the business