

Ohio



Serving Customers in a Challenging Environment

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Today's session . . .



- In this session we will explore providing the best possible customer service in today's challenging environment:
 - The face of today's job seeking customer.
 - What creates an outstanding customer service experience?
 - Customer wants and needs vs. realistic expectations.
 - Helping customers identify options and alternatives.

Today's session . . .



- When it's not what they want to hear . . . sometimes it's not the message, but how we deliver it.
- Letting customers know its not personal . . . explaining policies and procedures.
- Dealing with customer emotions, reactions, and anger.
- Techniques you can use when facing a variety of difficult customer attitudes and behaviors.
- You don't have to do it alone . . . harnessing the power of your community partners.

Your Customer Now...



Low-income, high barrier, at-risk, individuals PLUS...

People. . .

- All Industries
- Professionals +
- Extended UI Benefits
- High Salaries
- High Volume
- People in Crisis
 - Lost Homes
 - Lost Retirements
 - Lost Savings
 - Lost Families

Needs. . .

- Money
- Basic Needs
- Work

Requires. . .

- Crisis Intervention
- Understanding
- Hope

Need to stabilize?

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Basic Needs

- What will keep your customer from realizing his/her employment goals?
 - Food
 - Shelter
 - Clothing
- Where can the customer be referred in order to meet basic needs?

Your Customer



Characteristics . . .

- Afraid
- Angry
- Anxious
- Confused
- Depressed
- Denial
- Desperate
- Frustrated
- Hurt
- Hysterical
- Negative
- Resentful
- Stressed
- Withdrawn

Help . . .

- Knowledge & Expertise
- Empathy
- Encouragement
- Listen
- Plan
- Income
 - Short-Term Answers
 - Long-Term Growth
- Motivation
- Focus
- Hope

On Customers. . .



<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I want a product/service that fills my need	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Satisfaction with Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I want it to be easy to get	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Satisfaction with Process

Process Considerations



- Be Calm.
- Listen Carefully and Acknowledge.
- Look and Act Like You Are Confident and Know What You Are Talking About...
- Then, Know What You Are Talking About!
- Treat as Individuals...Not One of a Hundred You Are Rushing Through.
- Give Information in Writing.
- Give Next Steps in Writing.
- Provide Hope and Encouragement.
- Let Individuals “Vent” and Diffuse the Emotion.
- Focus on the Positive.

Customer wants and needs
vs realistic expectations

Managing Expectations



- Customers are capable of controlling their own lives.
- Customers have . . .and make . . . choices.
- Customers are responsible for their own outcomes.
- Staff are responsible for the process.
- Customers should be actively involved in assessment, planning, problem solving, finding resources, and implementing plans.

Managing Expectations



- Success is positively related to:
 - Amount of interaction with customers.
 - Customer orientation. (concerns viewed from *their* perspectives.)
 - Compatibility.
 - Empathy.
 - Credibility.
 - Evaluation of change.

Enabling Versus Empowering



- Enabling:
 - Solve problems for customers.
 - Give customer entitlements and resources.
 - Make plans for them.
 - Take ownership of their problems, thereby taking away their power and responsibility.
- *Assumes the staff is responsible for customer's outcome & causes dependency!*

Enabling Versus Empowering



■ Empowering:

- Form partnership with customer.
- Share responsibility for the relationship.
- Responsibility for action and change belongs to the customer.
- Assist them in identifying their own strengths and resources.
- Teach customers how to solve their own problems.

Problem-Solving



- Problems belong to the customer . . . they do not belong to the staff.
- Do not solve problems for your customers.
 - *“We can take care of that for you.”*
- Do not let them give you ownership.
 - *“What are you going to do about _____?”*

Problem-solving is a learned skill:
Teach it!

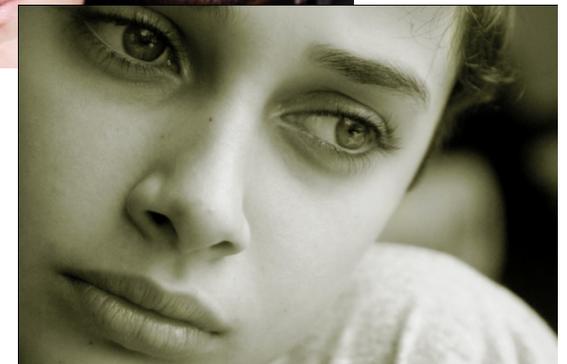
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1. Find out what they want or don't like.
2. Restate in the form of a goal.
3. Ask problem solving question.
4. Elicit options & consequences.
5. Facilitate decision on how best to accomplish goal.

Managing Time

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- State upfront what your agenda will be for the time you have available.
- Plan the agenda for the next meeting.
- Give your customer a task to complete for next meeting.
- Schedule the next meeting.



The Helping Relationship – Tools and Techniques
Fundamental Skills



Let's take a look at the basics of the helping relationship . . .

- Acceptance and respect
- Understanding and empathy
- Trust
- Confidentiality
- Warmth and genuineness

The Helping Relationship – Tools and Techniques
Fundamental Skills



- ***Attending***
- ***Listening***
- ***Reflecting***
- ***Encouraging***
- ***Questioning***

The Helping Relationship – Tools and Techniques

Fundamental Skills



Attending Skills:

- **S** (face client squarely)
- **O** (open posture)
- **L** (lean toward client)
- **E** (eye contact)
- **R** (relax)

The Helping Relationship – Tools and Techniques
Fundamental Skills



Listening Skills:

- Hear the message content.
- Hear the feeling conveyed along with the message.
- Allow customer to explain their situation and/or concern.
- Do not interrupt.
- Acknowledge you are listening by making eye contact, nodding your head, and taking notes if appropriate.

The Helping Relationship – Tools and Techniques

Fundamental Skills



Reflecting Skills:

- A reflecting response indicates you have heard both the content and feeling in a customer's message

Reflecting . . .



■ Phrases to use...

- From your point of view...
- It seems to you...
- So, you are suggesting...
- Then you feel...
- So, based on your experience...
- You seem really angry about...
- Let me be sure I understand. You said...
- Correct me if I'm wrong...
- This is what I think you are saying...

The Helping Relationship – Tools and Techniques

Fundamental Skills



Encouraging Skills:

- “Minimal encouragers” like “umm hmm,” as well as gestures like head nodding.
- Asking customers to clarify what they are saying.

The Helping Relationship – Tools and Techniques

Fundamental Skills



Closed-ended questions:

Advantages –

- Easy for customers to answer
- Yield information quickly
- Useful for clarifying information

Disadvantages

- Restrict customers to brief answers
- Keep staff in control of the discussion
- May make clients feel interrogated
- May be perceived as advice or criticism

The Helping Relationship – Tools and Techniques

Fundamental Skills



Open-ended questions:

Advantages –

- Explore customers' thoughts and feelings
- Give customers some control in the conversation
- Convey your interest in the customer
- Provide information you may not think to ask

Disadvantages-

- May allow customers to wander or to avoid a topic
- May lead to a series of "I don't know" answers

Asking questions . . .

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- Phrases to use...
 - What if...
 - Is it possible that...
 - It appears that...
 - Perhaps if...
 - Do you feel that...
 - Does it sound reasonable...
 - I wonder if...

More Communication Skills



***Communication is a people process,
not a language process.
Sometimes, how we present a point is
more important than the point itself.***

More Communication Skills



- ***Message Impact***
- Vast majority of what you say is communicated through non-verbal means.
 - 7% of the impact of a message is conveyed through words.
 - 38% of the impact of a message is conveyed through para-language (volume, pitch, rhythm).
 - 55% of the impact of a message is conveyed through non-verbal (body language).

Watch Your Language!



What you say has to be explicitly understandable by a layperson!

- Use plain English words and terms that customers will understand. Beware of “insider language.”
- Don’t talk about “*services*” or “*programs*” or “*funding sources*”.
- Describe services in terms of the FABs – (*features, advantages, benefits*) to the customer.
- Explain processes in logical steps.
- Use valuing language to describe your job seeking customers.
- Avoid bureaucratic terms!

Workforce Language



- Assessment & Testing
- Job Search Workshop
- Basic Skills Training
- Case Management
- Certifications, Credentials
- Career Counseling
- Dislocated Worker Programs
- Resume Assistance
- Labor Market Information

Consider . . .

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- What “insider” or workforce language do you use with your job seeking customers?
- Do your job seekers always understand what you mean when you use workforce language?
- How can you communicate better so that customers will comprehend what you mean and understand the benefit or value?
- Are there words that need to be replaced or titles that need to be renamed?

It Is Often How You Say It . . .



What is a better way to say each of the comments listed on the right?

- “You must fill out these forms.”
- “You have to come back tomorrow.”
- “I wasn’t there when that problem happened. They should have given you the information.”
- “You have to give me the number before we can do anything.”
- “You should have brought the information with you because we can’t process your paperwork without it.”
- “We are so busy that I don’t have time to do that for you.”
- “There are no jobs.”

More Communication Skills



- When meeting with customers practice good non-verbal communication:
 - Hand shake
 - Eye contact
 - Relaxed posture
 - Non-judgmental facial expressions
 - Affirming gestures
 - Calm voice
 - Positive pitch

Its not personal explaining policies and procedures



- Customers often do not understand why policies and procedures are in place.
- Customers who don't understand a policy are more likely to become upset if they see the policy as interfering with what they want.
- If you can explain the policy, and the reasoning behind it, you are less likely to meet resistance.

Its not personal explaining policies and procedures



- Acknowledge the customer's feelings: "I understand this can be frustrating . . ."
- Explain the purpose of the policy or procedure in plain language.
- Don't quote specific policy numbers, sections, or detail from a policy manual or document.
- Policies and procedures are not written with the customer as the intended reader. They can sound bureaucratic -- and will come across as if you care more about policies than people.

Its not personal explaining policies and procedures



- Explain from the point of view of the customer . . . if possible, highlight how the policy benefits the customer.
- Provide print material to take home if the customer must return with additional information, documents, etc.
- If you don't know the rationale behind a policy or procedure, offer to find out for the customer.

When you don't know the answer



- Let the customer know we take their need for information seriously.
- Don't fake it . . . OK to tell the customer you don't know, but commit to getting the answer.
- Offer a choice:
 - "I can research it and get back to you."
 - Refer the customer to someone who will know.

When you don't know the answer



- If you refer to another party, make sure that person can, in fact, answer the question. The customer shouldn't have to be passed off to anyone else.
- Let the customer know what you are doing. Don't walk away with out explaining.
- Convey flexibility and willingness to “go the extra mile.”

Techniques to use
when facing a
variety of difficult
customer attitudes
and behaviors

Difficult Attitudes

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- Expert
- Whiner
- Passive
- Attacker
- Negative
- Controlling

The Expert Attitude

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- Is a know-it-all.
- Acts superior and condescending.
- Tries to impose views on everyone.
- Always has an opinion on every subject.
- States a viewpoint as fact.
- Has arrogant tone of voice and posture.

Strategies for Working More Effectively with an Expert



- Be prepared to state the facts.
- Ask detailed questions.
- Never argue or challenge.
- Actively listen.
- Be respectful and tolerant.
- Acknowledge different viewpoints.
- Don't paint the expert into a corner.

The Whiner Attitude

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- Complains about everything.
- Sees life as unfair.
- Refuses to accept any responsibility.
- Blames others or the system.
- Constantly whines about how awful life is.
- Wants sympathy or for someone else to fix problems.

Strategies for Working More Effectively with a Whiner

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- Clarify the purpose.
- Actively listen and paraphrase.
- Acknowledge the whiner's feelings.
- Ask questions.
- Ask for alternatives.
- Ask for specific results.

The Passive Attitude



- Is withdrawn.
- Refuses to participate or contribute.
- Rarely voices an opinion or takes a stand on an issue.
- Does not want to rock the boat or create any conflict.
- Goes along with what others want.
- Shows little enthusiasm.

Strategies for Working More Effectively with a Passive



- Describe the behavior.
- State what you want.
- Ask for a commitment.
- Ask questions.
- Use direct eye contact.
- Put the passive person in charge.

The Attacker Attitude



- Likes to criticize and belittle others.
- Snipes at people in groups.
- Talks behind other's backs.
- Sometimes explodes in anger.
- Uses jokes or sarcasm as a way to put others down & is often moody.
- Often says others are too sensitive and can't take a joke.

Strategies for Working More Effectively with an Attacker



- Stay calm.
- Express your feelings.
- Use confident body language.
- Focus on the problem.
- Ask for a private meeting.

The Negative Attitude



- Tends to analyze every detail.
- Focuses on the negative in every situation.
- Sees obstacles as overwhelming barriers.
- Is a wet blanket to any new idea.
- Uses phrases such as “This will never work,” or “I’ve tried this already.”

Strategies for Working More Effectively with a Negativist



- Remain optimistic.
- State your optimistic viewpoint.
- Actively listen.
- Ask for alternatives and solutions.
- Take action independently.

The Controlling Attitude



- Acts in a manipulative manner.
- Disregards others' feelings or suggestions.
- Likes to control situations and to shake things up.
- Interrupts people.
- Wants to win at any cost.
- Focuses on their preferred outcome.

Strategies for Working More Effectively with a Controller



- Stand up.
- Don't argue.
- Make your points clearly and firmly.
- Ask for controller's objections.
- Calm them down.
- Demand respect.
- Find common ground.
- Get an agreement on future occurrences of same problem.

General Strategies to Diffuse Difficult Attitudes



- Assess and face each situation directly.
- Actively listen to the other person.
- Express your feelings from your point of view.
- Describe the situation in a clear, concise manner.
- State what you want.
- Practice.

■ ***Determine which difficult attitude is most challenging for you.***

Services

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- We are more than distributors of training dollars.
- We must have a robust menu of core and intensive services.



Services

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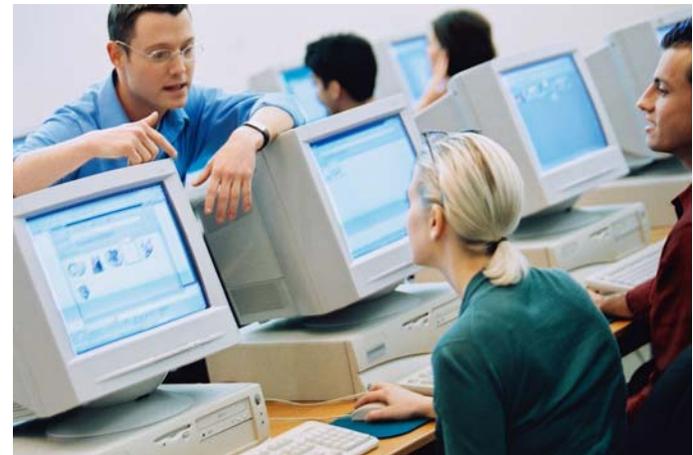
- Harness the power of your community partners (resources and referrals).
- You don't have to do it alone!



One-Stop Service Delivery

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- Each local system is comprised of partners that provide core services through the One-Stop.
- Services are to be integrated and “seamlessly” delivered.



Mandated Partners



- Title I of WIA:
 - Adult.
 - Youth.
 - Dislocated Worker.
 - Native American Programs.
 - Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers.
 - Veterans Workforce Programs.
 - Job Corps
- Employment Service
- Title V, Older Americans
- Unemployment Insurance
- Vocational Rehabilitation.
- Welfare-to-Work.
- HUD Employment and Training.
- Community Services Block Grant.
- Adult Ed and Literacy.
- Post Secondary Vocational Education.
- Trade Adjustment Assistance.

Beyond Mandated . . .



- Health Care Assistance
- Mental Health Services
- Drug and Alcohol Abuse
- Child Support Review
- Food Banks
- 211 Information and Referral Services
- Ohio Benefit Bank
- Help for Homeowners - "Save the Dream"

Resources



- **“If you need us . . .We’re Here” (Rapid Response brochure)**
- **This brochure was designed to inform job seekers about the wide variety of services available to them, from training opportunities to food assistance. To download a free copy, go to:**

[http://www.odjfs.state.oh.us/forms/interfind.asp?formnum=08123.](http://www.odjfs.state.oh.us/forms/interfind.asp?formnum=08123)

Service Integration



- How well does your One Stop integrate programs and services?
- Routinely ask . . .
 - *Are job seekers missing out on referrals to partner services because staff is unaware of partner services available?*
 - *Is there redundancy in the system, where more than one partner is doing the same work?*
 - *Do customers have to “jump through hoops” in order to access a full array of One Stop system services?*

Creating Integrated, Customer-Friendly Processes



Develop & nurture the following strategies:

- Cross training of all staff in the system
- Shared case management among partners
- Shared job development and business services
- Common intake & assessment processes
- Locally standardized information & referral
- Shared marketing and outreach

Professional Scope



If a customer's needs require assistance beyond your scope of practice and responsibility, be sure to discuss the case with your supervisor or refer the client to appropriate sources in the community.

Our Customers...

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- ✓ They are not outsiders, but an integral part of our business.
- ✓ They are not an interruption of our work, but the sole purpose for our work.
- ✓ We are not doing them a favor by serving them; they give us the opportunity to do so.
- ✓ They do not depend on us; we depend on them!
- ✓ By serving customers well, we are able to distinguish ourselves and our organization.

■ Thank you for your participation!

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