

## Stellar Customer Service Skills

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**Know Your Target Customer:** Personalize the service. Address the customer by name if possible and take on their problem as your own. Ask for a number in case you are disconnected. If they sound like they are in a rush, ask if it would be better if you call them back in a few minutes or perhaps on another phone. Find out who the end user will be.

**Listening:** Active listening occurs when the CSR does not interrupt or finish the customers' sentences but instead asks for corroboration when the customer has finished speaking.

**Ex:** CSR: Let me see if I understand you correctly. You said you are frustrated because the product you in fact ordered was not the same product that arrived? Is that correct?

[Remember not to interpret what the customer said but repeat back what they did say.]

**Problem Solving:** CSR uses problem-solving tools from the CSR tool belt:

### 1. Define the problem or problems.

- Be curious — get specifics — more is better.
- Determine what the customer is seeing or experiencing from their end.
- Who is experiencing the problem; is it the end user or no? What do you need to accomplish?
- Compare it to the intended experience and then use the 5 W's — who, what, when, where, and why? Use open-ended questions (these are questions that the customer cannot answer with a simple yes or no) to obtain additional information.
- Use screen shots or pictures so customers can see what you are speaking about. Alternatively, have the customer send screen shots of the problem.
- In other words what does a resolution to the problem look like from the customer's viewpoint?

### 2. Prioritize the resolution:

When: When did it happen and how important is the process of resolution? What is the priority in fixing the problem according to the customer?

### 3. Brainstorm alternative solutions based on priorities.

You can involve the customer if they are communicating in live chat or on the phone or blog. Ask them what a resolution to the problem looks like.

### 4. Come to a mutually agreed upon resolution that pleases the customer.

**5. Follow-up** to make sure they are very satisfied with the agreed upon resolution. Get any additional feedback and express appreciation for that feedback and their continued business.

**Attention:** Eye contact, voice tone, and body language all communicate appreciation for customer's contacting the CSR and communicates a total focus on them. If you are trying to contact someone else who can help them or if you are texting someone at distribution for instance, let the customer know what you are doing. If you are consulting the tracking for the package let them know... Ex: CSR: Let's find out exactly where that package is. I am going to take a look at the tracking for it now.

*Note: Eye contact and other non-verbal and verbal communications are dependent on the culture of the customer. In some cultures it is not polite to have direct eye contact. Consult the Internet cultural etiquette websites.*

### **Technology/Social Media Skills as Needed:**

What experience do you have with the technology required? If you do not have experience with the technology and you are in a job interview, let them know that you are familiar with it (if that is the case) and/or you are certainly willing to learn a new skill.

### **The Golden Rule:**

Treat the customers as you would want to be treated. Have at the ready any information that the customer might want to know: Are there any sales coming up? Could the customer benefit from a particular week of discounts? Would it be cheaper for the customer to purchase an item or items in a more efficient manner? If you cannot help them make sure you know who can and direct the call or inquiry quickly while reassuring the customer that you will stay on the line until the other person who can help them is on the line.

**Use Etiquette:** Etiquette means introducing yourself and treating customers politely responding with "please" and "thank you Mr. Samson" as well as introducing them to other CSR personnel if it is necessary to bring them into the conversation to help. It also means asking permission to put a customer on hold or to access other data while they wait. Refer to them by name if at all possible to personalize the transaction.

### **Take an Irate Customer as a Challenge:**

Take on their problem as a challenge. Can you not only assuage this irate customer but convert them to be a loyal one for the future? To reduce the volatility of the situation, first reassure them that you are going to get their problem fixed so they need not worry. Then ask them to describe their most crucial problem first.

*If you are interacting with an angry customer try following these steps:*

### **De-escalate the situation:**

1. **Empathize** with the customer concerning their problem and apologize if in fact there was an error made by the company.
  2. **Reassurance:** Let them know that the two of you are going to find a solution. If they are yelling, let them know you understand that they are angry, but that you are there to resolve the problems. Ex: “I can understand you being angry about this experience. First I need to ask you some questions to better understand what is happening from your standpoint. Then we will find a solution together. Does that sound reasonable to you?”
  3. **Get information** and look for accessible information and share every step you take with the customer.
  4. **Let the customer make suggestions** and share the resolution experience.
  5. **Keep them informed of your progress** and reassure them that there is something positive that can be done to resolve the problem.
  6. **“Under promise and over-deliver.”** This popular saying is correct. Promise to correct whatever the promise is and then give your customer more than that.
  7. **If you cannot help them be candid with them** and say so, then let the customer know you are going to escalate the issue to get more help at a higher level. If at all possible keep them on the line while you do this after asking their permission. Then introduce them to the new customer service contact who will help them and give them the issue number, a succinct description of the issue and any other pertinent data needed to resolve the issue.
- Reach out for help:** If you do not know how to help the customer make sure you know who does. In some cases there is a Supervisor either at the call center or on call. If there is another call center’s CSR personnel that work for your company you can contact for further help, develop relationships with those CSRs you encounter at their center that perhaps work the same shift as you and that you know you can rely on for help. Express appreciation for their help and develop a professional relationship with them. Either ask the customer if you can put them on hold for a few moments while you access additional help before contacting the other CSR, or tell the customer that you are going to stay on the line but will be connecting them to someone who can help resolve the issue. Then when the other CSR is on the line, introduce them to the customer and the problem. Make sure that the customer is satisfied completely with the resolution and if you can build more value add possibly some extra points to a customer’s reward card if allowed by the company or some similar gift for their patience.