



COURSE NAME

Reception Skills

COURSE CODE

14351

LEARNER GUIDE

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Course Overview

This course will allow you to manage the reception area effectively as well manage your visitors professionally and effectively.

Course Outcomes

After you have completed this course you will be able to:

- Overseeing the reception of visitors
- Ensuring that visitors are consulted according to organisational requirements
- Monitoring visitors` satisfaction
- Manage the receiving and distributing deliveries effectively
- Manage oneself as a professional



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Chapter 1

Receiving Visitors

Receiving Visitors According to Organisational Requirements (SO1, AC1)

Receptionists perform administrative and clerical duties while serving as the public face of an organization.

This is the first contact a visitor has with your organisation; therefore it is of utmost importance that you create a good impression of the organization.

The receptionist greet visitors, answer phone calls, take messages, respond to or forward emails and receive mail and packages for the office.

Receptionists also make appointments, type documents, file correspondence and documentation and distribute the mail.

Being an effective receptionist requires a combination of business professionalism, social skills and administrative aptitude.

The receptionist should:

- Never keep a visitor waiting by talking on the phone
- Always offer the visitor something to drink
- Always offer the visitor to take a seat if they have to wait

The reception area should always:

- Be clean and tidy
- Have fresh flowers
- Have magazines to read which are neat and stacked away constantly
- Be managed by someone

Things Not To Do At Reception

- Eat at reception
- Have a personal conversation with friends while clients are waiting
- Apply make-up or comb your hair at your desk
- Enter into an argument with anyone
- Give confidential information about your colleagues
- Chew chewing gum

Successful Reception Skills

Helpful	Receive visitors promptly, show interest in what they are saying and never use the phrase “I don’t know”.
Tact	Must be a diplomat and handle situations with great care and wisdom
Friendly and Politeness	Be friendly and charming, make people feel welcome and at ease
Pleasant Voice	Be enthusiastic, speak clearly in a well-modulated voice
Balanced Personality	Never show you are irritated, control yourself at all times
Good Listening Skills	Listen carefully to everything said so that you know what to do
Good Relations	Must be able to defuse or avoid conflict situations and handle difficult people with ease
Know the Company	Must have knowledge of the company and departments as well as the policies
Appearances	Always be dressed neatly; be aware of your posture

Rate yourself on your own appearance

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Weak	Poor
Hairstyle, Suitable for the office, suit face shape, neat and clean					
Personal Neatness: Teeth in good condition, well cared hands and fingernails, remove unwanted body and facial hair					
Make-up: Suit tone of skin and colour of eyes and hair, light, subtle and feminine					
Posture: self assured, positive and confident					
Health & Figure: Ensure healthy eating and sleeping habits, try to keep figure in shape					
Clothing: Wear clothes which compliment your figure					
General Appearance: reflect professionalism in the job					
Attitude: Act and behave professional, loyal and positive towards your job, enthusiastic and want to make contributions					

What can you do to make sure that you always portray a professional image at your workplace?

List your qualities as a Receptionist:

Emotional Awareness and Self-Esteem

One's self-esteem could be defined as "appreciating your own worth and importance. Have a character to be accountable for one-self, and to act responsible towards others."

This is your self-image, self confidence, self-worth and self respect. It is experiencing a sense of harmony and peace within yourself. Feeling good about yourself should be a necessity! As it affects everything you do and to everyone with whom you come in contact with.

If you feel that have performed well, have met expectations or surpassed them, don't you want to keep it up, do even better? This reinforcement process of a positive self-image is cyclical. A better image leads to improved self-esteem, which gives you confidence, encourages your performance, which earns you more recognitions, which returns to bolster your self-esteem.

Self-assessment

How successful do you perceive yourself? There are not correct or wrong answers in this questionnaire. Place a number that best describes how you perceive yourself at work in the space provided. Then repeat the exercise on how you perceive yourself away from work.

Scale: Very high – 5, Moderately high – 4, Average – 3, Moderately low – 2, Very low -1

		At work	Away from work
1	I feel successful in my present work / career (D)		
2	I feel satisfied with my present work / career plan (D)		
3	I consider myself to be a risk-taker (H)		
4	I feel that continuing my education is important (L)		
5	I consciously look for the good in other (B)		

6	I can do almost everything I put my mind to (B)		
7	I am comfortable in new social situations (E)		
8	I appreciate compliments from others (E)		
9	I feel comfortable speaking in front of others (K)		
10	I enjoy telling others of my success (A)		
11	I am optimistic person (B)		
12	I am goal orientated (I)		
13	I am comfortable making most decisions (G)		
14	I am in good physical condition (C)		
15	I am respected by others for who I am (A)		
16	I project a positive self image (J)		
17	I am an active listener (P)		
18	I like being responsible for projects and others (P)		
19	I enjoy controversial discussions (O)		
20	I find obstacles challenging (H)		
21	I am able to ask for help without feeling guilty (F)		
22	I can laugh at my mistakes (H)		
23	I am responsible for my thoughts and actions (F)		
24	I am frank when I voice my feelings (F)		
25	I am leading a balanced life (m)		
26	I am an enthusiastic person (B)		
27	I use direct eye contact when talking to others (N)		
28	I genuinely like myself for who I am (A)		
29	I exercise daily (C)		
30	I feel it is important to dress for success (J)		

Add up your points in each column and place your total in the box provided.

TOTAL POINTS

AT WORK

AWAY FROM WORK

- SCALE:**
- (120 – 150) - Very high self-esteem**
 - (90 – 119) - Moderately high self-esteem**
 - (89 – 60) - Average self-esteem**
 - (31 – 59) - Moderately low self-esteem**
 - (0 – 30) - Low self-esteem**

Lets look at the areas where you need improvement.

Count all the marks for each of the above statements according to the alphabetical letter provided next to each sentence, then write in down in the section provided.

		At work	Away from work
Overall level of self-esteem	A		
Positive mental attitude	B		
Physical exercise programme	C		
Career focus / directions	D		
Social / Interpersonal skills	E		
Assertiveness	F		
Decision making	G		
Risk taking / overcoming fear	H		
Goal setting strategies	I		
Personal appearance / self-image	J		
Public speaking	K		
Professional skills	L		
Balanced personal and work life	M		
Awareness of non-verbal messages	N		
Negotiation skills	O		
Leadership / management	P		

Write down personal and work related aspects that need immediate attention. Prioritise them from important to less important.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10

Self-esteem is an ongoing evaluation of yourself and a belief in what you are able to do and what you are unable to do. A positive self-image can be learned.

To improve your self-esteem, you have to:

- Be aware of your current self-esteem
- Be willing to do something about it
- Take responsibility for your feelings
- Be committed until you see and feel results

You have to take action:

- Physical appearance
- Psychological abilities – believe in your self
- Social interaction with others

MAKE THE DECISION TODAY!

”That which is not written becomes lost and vague. Success can occur in your life, but awareness is the first key”

CHANGE YOUR BELIEVE SYSTEM !

A belief system is a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Visualize and believe and you will become confident in what you want to achieve.

Thus you have to change certain things (weaknesses) so that you are able to observe the reality of your believe system. You can change your life the way you believe it is the truth.

“WHATEVER THE MIND CAN CONCEIVE AND BELIEVE, IT CAN ACHIEVE!”

Elements necessary to become self-empowered

- Act and behave confident about your strong points and bring it to the attention of others
– sell yourself
- Empowered people make use of a network of other people to support or learn from them
- Empowered people are highly informed on all aspects in their work and the total company

- Empowered people seek constantly informal and formal training and education, they want to be multi skilled
- Empowered people listen open minded to other people’s ideas and use it
- Empowered people practice the art of conveying charisma – they copycat people who are successful in this aspect
- Empowered people are credible and trustworthy
- Empowered people participate voluntarily
- Empowered people are taking risk

EMPOWER YOURSELF – TAKE ACTION ON THE ABOVE ELEMENTS!

Now let us assess ourselves even further. Assess yourself on a scale from 1-4 (1 being poor and 4 being good)

1	CLARITY OF PURPOSE				
	People know where they stand	1	2	3	4
	I know what is expected from me	1	2	3	4
	Tasks and responsibilities are clearly organized	1	2	3	4
	Systems and procedures are adequate	1	2	3	4
	I know what the company (team) stands for	1	2	3	4
2	MORALE				
	People are trusted	1	2	3	4
	Policies are flexible enough to consider personal needs	1	2	3	4

	I feel respected as a person	1	2	3	4
	Individual differences in lifestyle and values are respected	1	2	3	4
	I like working here	1	2	3	4
	There is a positive spirit	1	2	3	4
	If I had a potential problem, the company would stand by me while I worked it out.	1	2	3	4
3	FAIRNESS				
	I approve of the things that go on there	1	2	3	4
	People are treated fairly	1	2	3	4
	I trust what the company says	1	2	3	4
4	RECOGNITION	1	2	3	4
	Individual effort is rewarded appropriately	1	2	3	4
	If people do something well, it is noticed	1	2	3	4
	The company looks only at what you can do	1	2	3	4
	The company expects the best from people	1	2	3	4
5	TEAMWORK				
	People help each other out	1	2	3	4
	People work together to solve difficult problems	1	2	3	4

	People care for each other	1	2	3	4
	People here are out for the company, not themselves	1	2	3	4
6	PARTICIPATION				
	People have a voice in decisions	1	2	3	4
	Problems are shared	1	2	3	4
	People get resources they need to do their jobs	1	2	3	4
7	COMMUNICATION				
	I am kept informed of what's going on in the company	1	2	3	4
	Communication is clear and timely between groups	1	2	3	4
	I understand why things are asked of me	1	2	3	4
8	HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT				
	People are able to manage the pressure of their work	1	2	3	4
	I am not expected to do too many things	1	2	3	4
	Change is managed well	1	2	3	4
	Red tape and procedures don't interfere with getting things done	1	2	3	4
	I am able to grow and learn	1	2	3	4
	There are opportunities for career development	1	2	3	4

SCORES:

For each of the eight areas average the scores by dividing your total of all the numbers you circled by the number of questions in that specific section.

Write your average scores here for each section

- 1. Total _____ divided by 5 = _____
- 2. Total _____ divided by 7 = _____
- 3. Total _____ divided by 3 = _____
- 4. Total _____ divided by 4 = _____
- 5. Total _____ divided by 4 = _____
- 6. Total _____ divided by 4 = _____
- 7. Total _____ divided by 3 = _____
- 8. Total _____ divided by 6 = _____

Mark your two highest scores with an asterisk (*). Circle you two lowest scores. The section in which the average is above 2 raises issues you should address and talk about in your team.

What changes can you make that will lead to more empowered workplace?

People want to make a difference in their working area. Some managers do not know how to take advantage of human creativity and potential. Today's workplace needs employees who can make decisions, who can take responsibility, invent solutions to problems, make decisions, and at the same time experience work satisfaction.

BUILDING AN EMPOWERED TEAM

A team is more than a collection of individuals. It is an emotional entity, rooted in the feelings as well as the thoughts of its members. The team members actively care about each other and their team's well-being.

We are all members of a team!

Always keep this in mind, then you will be more successful in achieving the company's goals.

In effective teams each member has a significant role and uses his / her talent to the best of the team's advantage. When members integrate their skills to accentuate strengths and minimise weaknesses, team objectives are achieved.

Let us assess the last time you formed part of a team how you were able to manage yourself.

	YOUR EFFECTIVENESS AS A TEAM MEMBER	YES / NO
1	Did you make a point to listen to other team members?	
2	Did you allow other members in setting objectives and guidelines for the team to work in?	
3	Did you check your progress towards the objectives?	

4	Did you ask for ideas from the other team members?	
5	Did you consider implementing the ideas of other members?	
6	Did you give recognition to other members when suited?	
7	Did you express your opinion, for and against something?	
8	Did you try avoid conflict at all times?	
9	Did you look for similarities between you and other members?	
10	Did you deal with disagreements in a constructive way?	
11	Did you accept and take responsibility for decisions made by the team, or did you blame them for wrong decisions?	
12	Did you fully participate with others to achieve objectives?	
13	Did you support the team leader?	
14	Did you try to be honest and open with other team members?	
15	Were you loyal to other team members?	
16	Did you work within the rules of the team?	
17	Did you protect and support other team members?	
18	Did you give continuous feedback on your performance and progress to the rest of the team?	
19	Did you try to act positively towards other members?	

20	Did you also mention your problems for team discussions?	
21	Did you participate voluntarily (without feeling forced to)?	
22	Did you participate with confidence and good self image?	
23	Did you try not to criticise other team members?	
24	Did you ask questions to ensure that you fully understand?	

An effective team members will answer YES to all of the above questions. You have to start to act as a professional and effective team member if you cannot answer YES to at least 20 of the above questions.

Professional Requirements of a Receptionist

a) Dress appropriately and professionally

As the first person a visitor will meet, the receptionist must make a good and professional first impression.

A business suit or a formal business-looking ensemble is often the key to establishing a professional tone. Receptionists in certain industries may have to wear a uniform or are advised by the employer to dress in another specific fashion. In all cases, the receptionist's appearance should be a reflection of the image the employer wants to convey to the public.

Here are some guidelines

COLOUR

Define your own colouring

Take a look at yourself in the mirror without any make-up, and with a bare neck and chest.

Describe your colouring according to the list provided below.

Concentrate on your present colouring – unless you colour your hair, in which case consider the colour it is naturally.

STRONG, DEEP COLOUR

Overall look	-Projects strength
Hair	-Black, brunette, dark auburn, salt and pepper
Eyes	-Brown or hazel
Skin tone	-Ivory, rich beige, dark olive, bronze black
Seasons	-Deep autumn or deep winter
General wardrobe	-Strong neutrals (Black, charcoal and navy) -Offset with vivid colours (royal blue, red, bright yellow, turquoise, emerald green) -You are all about contrast, so wear light with dark as opposed to blended monochromatic tones -Don't wear pastels it does not suite you. Instead wear white with just a hint of colour. Icy colours (lightest blues, pinks and lemons) -Your colours should be rich as well (mahogany, purple, olive and pine green as well as primary and clear)
Make up	-Rich lipstick and blusher (true red, translucent burgundy) -Eyes – use natural eye-shadows (pink, grey, peach or sage). Don't use black eye liner as it is too severe. Use a charcoal, plum, sage or brown eyeliner.

LIGHT AND DELICATE COLOUR

Overall look	-Delicate and translucent
Hair	-Blonde or light grey
Eyes	-Blue, blue-grey, aqua, light green
Skin tone	-Fair, ivory or porcelain, peachy
Seasons	-Light spring or light summer
General wardrobe	-Neutrals (camel, stone, taupe, soft blue, grey, light-navy) -Avoid dark, draining colours (black, charcoal) it will make you look pale and insipid -Your white is ivory but better to opt for soft pastels (apricot, buff, lemon, rose pink, sky blue) to use as offset colour -Have fun with bright colours – not too electric (royal blue, medium blue, blue-greens, clear red, mango or salmon pink)
Make up	-Lipstick and blusher (salmon and warm pink, plum rose). Avoid wearing frosted or pearlised lipstick which are too light. Wear more matt or medium shades for business. -Eyes – Use teal, grey or navy eyeliner. Use apricot, champagne, cocoa or soft grey shadow on your eyes.

WARM AND GOLDEN

Overall look	-Golden
Hair	-Strawberry blonde, red and auburn
Eyes	-Topaz, hazel, warm green, teal blue
Skin tone	-Ivory with freckles, golden brown, peachy porcelain, yellow beige
Seasons	-Warm spring or warm autumn
General wardrobe	-Should not wear greys or navies. Invest in colours such as (golden browns, olives, camels and rust) -Look for yellow, red or green undertones to your colours -Avoid white rather wear cream or buff -Rather wear brick red than burgundy

- Wear warmed up blue's like (teal blue)
- Think of an autumn landscape and blended golden tones (moss greens, mustards, terracotta and warm browns)
- Avoid black unless it is kept clear from your face – keep it to your trousers or skirts

- Make up
- Lipstick and blusher (terracotta, cinnamon, brick red).
 - Eyes – Use coffee or moss green, teal eyeliners. Use shadows such as apricot, light gold and strengthen with bronze, copper or brown shadow.

COOL COLOUR

- Overall look
- Rosy – not light or dark
- Hair
- Ash brown, blonde or grey
- Eyes
- Blue or brown
- Skin tone
- Pinky, rose-brown, beige, medium olive
- Seasons
- Cool summer or cool winter
- General wardrobe
- Stay clear from browns, beiges, khaki and cream tones. You will look better in (blue or pink). Neutral colours like navy and charcoal should be softened white, mauve, pastel blue, rose pink or soft fuchsia.
 - Pastels are wonderful with blouses, dresses or jackets
 - Sharp or bright colours will overpower you – aim for richness (burgundy)
- Make up
- Lipstick and blusher – light colours will let you look older, so yours should match the intensity of your eyes. Brown eyed – rich blue-reds, plums. Blue eyed – better in softer rose pinks.
 - Eye – dust your eyes with soft pinks, define with grey, navy or plum shadows. The same colours for eye liners will frame your eyes best.

CLEAR COLOUR

Overall look	-Bright and contrasting
Hair	-Black, brown or rich grey
Eyes	-Steel blue, green, clear hazel or rich brown
Skin tone	-Porcelain, ivory, dark ash brown, clear yellow beige
Seasons	-Clear spring or clear winter
General wardrobe	-Use light or dark colours mixed together, or one bold colour on its own. -Black, charcoal, royal blue and red will be basics you can mix with many other shades to look your best. -Avoid monochromes -Use strong neutrals such as black and navy. Lighten with more colour to your face (yellow, hot pink) -Taupe and pewter can lighten up your summertime wardrobe but don't team it up with light colours
Make up	-Lipstick and blusher – (true red, strawberry or hot pink, plumb and salmon) -Eyes – Blue eyed – opal pink with charcoal or navy. Hazel eyed – apricot with plum or spruce.

SOFT COLOUR

Overall look	-Blended and muted
Hair	-Medium grey, mid or mousy brown, ash blonde
Eyes	-Blue green, brown, grey blue
Skin tone	-Ivory, rose or yellow beige, light olive
Seasons	-Soft summer or Soft autumn
General wardrobe	-These women aren't obviously dark or light but somewhat in between. -Bright colours are too harsh but it doesn't mean that they limited in looking wonderful -Your colours should be rich and blended.

-Monochromatic dressing when you use the same hue, but in lighter and darker values, is your most wonderful look (ivory, taupe, pewter and bronze mixed together)

-Black and white will overwhelm your colouring

-Using pinks like (rose or raspberry) or salmons and more golden and creamy colours

Make up

-Lipstick and blusher – (terracotta, plum or rose)

-Eyes – Soft cocoa, grey or slate blue with soft non coloured highlighter such as a pale melon

Style

Recognise your body shape

Draw and outline of your body
List your physical inadequacies

No person has a perfect body!

When assessing your body shape, do so from the side as well as back.

Angular Shape

Like a rectangle with no waist and fairly flat hips and bottom

Curved Shape

With a defined waist and rounded hips and bottom

Combination Of Angles And Curves

Straight shoulders, definite waist and curvy bottom

Full Figured Round Body

Often combined with a short waist and long legs

Angular Woman's Clothes Options

SILHOUTTES

- Simple and unconstructed
- Straight lines
- Square shoulders
- Waist definition
- Tailored and tapered designs

FABRICS

- Crisp cottons and lines
- Wool that retains its shape (tweed, twill and gabardine)
- Tightly woven knits and jerseys
- Silk that is stiff (raw silk) blended with linen
- Blends of natural and man-made fibres with bode – don't drape excessively

DETAILS

- Sharp lapels (peaked or notched, asymmetrical)
- Edge to edge closings
- Lapel-less jackets
- Minimal darts or tucks at the waist

PATTERNS

- Stripes of all widths
- Fine to moderate polka dots
- Plaids or geometric weaves
- Modest paisleys
- Abstracts that are more geometric in shape

Curved Shapes, Woman's Clothes Options

SILHOUTTES

- Defined at the waist
- Rounded and flowing designs
- Softly unconstructed shapes
- Easy movement in skirts

FABRICS

- Jersey (cotton, wool, silk, blend)
- Silk crepe de chine
- Silk like micro fibres
- Stone washed silk
- Wool crepe
- Fine flannel
- Bouche
- Lambs wool
- Chambray
- Soft brocades

DETAILS

- Draped collars – shawl collars
- Lapel-less jackets
- Soft necklines
- Cinched waists, pleats at waist
- Gored, bell, sarong, dirndi skirts

PATTERNS

- Paisleys
- Soft abstracts
- Polka dots
- Multi-coloured weaves
- Abstract florals

Full Figured, Round Bodied Woman's Clothes Options

Balanced Tricks

PEAR – SHAPES

If you are narrow at the shoulders – never buy a jacket that is neat and fitted.

You should look wider at the shoulders and layer you look above the waist – wear loose jackets and tops.

If you are a size 18 in skirts and trousers and a size 12 on top, try on a size 16 jacket.

Have the sleeves shortened, if necessary and have the collar altered to fit more snugly if possible.

Minimise volume on your lower half within the limits of comfort : avoid wide skirts or those cut on the bias – this will visually pull you down and create more weight on your bottom half.

Wear brighter colours, patterns and details on your top half.

Try layering with shawls or scarves, or wear a waistcoat underneath you jacket to add needed volume.

SHORT WAISTS

Longer jackets (below the hip-line to just above the knee) are more flattering because they draw attention away from where you have no length.

Team jackets with short or long skirts.

You are better in the latter, as you probably have been overcompensated with long legs and can therefore successfully show-off the more interesting, lower lengths.

Avoid full skirts – long and lean styles are more professional.

If you wear a belt in the same colour as your top or blouse you can actually add length to your torso (dark colours – not white)

In dresses, opt for the simple coathdress, chemise or dropped waistline look your sleekest.

LONG WAISTS

You need to make your lower half appear longer and shorten your long torso.

The short jacket was made for you.

Long styles squash you deeper into the ground unless worn with a short skirt just peaking out from underneath.

Keep attention to the waist – which is often trim on woman of this type – with minimal details to your skirts and trousers.

Emphasise your waist by using belts to “break-up” the area visually. Avoid belts in the same colour as your top – it will let you longer.

If you match your belts to your skirts and trousers instead you will elongate the lower half.
Show some leg. Wear your skirts above your knee.

When buying a dress, try wasted designs, empire or a chemise style.

Do's And Don'ts For Your Body Shape

NECK

- | | | |
|-------|---|---|
| Short | - | Avoid choker and high round neck styles |
| Long | - | Avoid long, deep V-necks. Wear regular V-neck or a round neck to make your neck look shorter. |

Measure the length of your face and your neck length. If your neck is half the length of your face then your neck is in proportion. If your neck is less than half your face then you have a short neck. If more, you have long neck.

SHOULDERS

- | | | |
|--------|---|--|
| Narrow | - | Wide collars are too wide for narrow shoulders
regular collar is better |
| Wide | - | Very wide collars make shoulders even wider – wear regular or colourless styles. |

Stand up straight with your hands relaxed by your side. Compare the width of your shoulders to the width of your hips. If the width of your shoulders is wider than the width of your hips, you have wide shoulders. Less than your hips, you have narrow shoulders.

ARMS

- | | | |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| Short
this will make | - | Avoid wide cuffs, lots of bracelets and big, wide watches as
your arms look even shorter. |
| Long | - | Wear wider cuffs, to make your arms look shorter. |

Stand up straight and relax your hands down the sides of your body. If your elbow bone is in line with your waist, your arms are balanced. If your elbow is higher than your waist, you have short arms. If your elbow bone is below your waist, you have long arms.

BUST

- Small bust (A cup) - Avoid high round neck, this will flatten your bust even more. Wear draped and shaped silhouettes – sweetheart, V neck, scalloped neckline.
- Full bust (C-D cup) - Avoid excessive fullness or pleating. Wear clean, uncluttered soft lines.

WAISTLINE

- Waistline belts and tuck - Highlight your waistline by tapering sides of jacket. Wear tops into bottoms (except if you have wide hips).
- No waist - Do wear square, boxy shapes. Shape or taper your waistline slightly to create an illusion of having a waist. Curved hemlines create more shapes as opposed to straight hemlines. Do not wear wide belts.

If your waist and hips are the same width, you don't have a waistline. If your waist is smaller than the width of your hips, you have a waistline.

ANKLES

Skinny ankles are thin, nicely shaped is average and no shape (swollen) is full.

- Thin - Wear sling back shoes to make your ankle and calf slightly fuller. Avoid ankle strap shoes, as your ankles are too slim.
- Full - Court shoes are best. Avoid turn-ups on pants (when sitting down the turn up is right on top of your ankle, making it look even fuller).

JACKET LENGTHS

- Short Jacket - For people with flat tummy's and a good bottom.
- Medium Jacket - Just below the widest part of your hips.
- Long Jacket - Everyone can wear long jackets.

To get the best jacket length. Take off your shoes, measure the distance form the top of your shoulder to the floor. Divide your measurement in half to get the best jacket length.

MEN

Men should have at least two good suits, with a couple of different shirts and ties can be worn with the suits. Invest in a good briefcase and ensure that your shoes are clean at all times.

It is also very important to maintain a good personal hygiene at work and at home. You must bath or shower at least once a day, always have fresh breath (use mints not bubblegum), use deodorant and avoid overpowering fragrances.

b) Communicate effectively

Receptionists should be able to communicate well through polished, professional and articulate phone skills, verbal skills and written communication.

c) Be friendly, courteous and professional in all your dealings with both the public and the organization's staff

Companies want the general public, clients and providers to feel well taken of and receive good customer service, and providing the same high level of service to the office's staff will help you more effectively work with them and within the office.

d) Stay calm, organized and be an effective multitasker

Receptionists often deal with a number of tasks simultaneously and it is important not to let anything be forgotten or overlooked. For example, let's say a receptionist is busy responding to an email when a package is delivered requiring her signature at the same time that the phone begins to ring. Receptionists must instantly prioritize tasks and make the best use of available time and resources, not become overwhelmed or distracted.

e) Handle conflicts with tact and composure

As the first person an unsatisfied customer may come into contact with -- but often with no authority to fix that person's problem -- receptionists must always remain professional and try to sensibly defuse the situation. They must also know when to call for help, whether that involves the customer service department, the public relations department or, in extreme cases, security personnel.

f) Have cultural consideration

Culture is defined as the pattern of basic behaviour that a group has invented, discovered and developed in learning to cope with internal and external integration.

A cultural group is a group of people with the same norms, customs, traditions, values, behaviours and a standard of living.

Examples of a cultural group could be:

- Population groups
- Businesses
- Clubs

Cultures differ from each other in many ways. Below are some areas of major differences to consider:

- Language
- National holidays
- Dress
- Food preferences
- Body language (including eye contact, gestures, head movements)
- Traditions
- Customs
- Marriage practices
- Religious beliefs
- Lifestyles

g) Apply Good interpersonal skills

Working with or interacting with customers/visitors who look, believe, or act differently from you, may be difficult and uncomfortable. You may feel self-conscious and intimidated or unsure of what to expect when those from another culture are around you. It is important to do something about understanding other cultures because there will be more diversity, not less. The future of

the world depends on it as it faces the challenge of uniting individuals and groups to reach common goals.

Working together in harmony requires you to:

- Manage your mind (how you think about yourself and others).
- Manage your words (learn how to speak and listen to people with different backgrounds).
- Manage your unspoken language (body language – pay attention to the non-verbal language of where, when and how you do things).

h) Building a Rapport and Relationship with Customers

To “establish a rapport” means to create a harmonious relationship. This is especially important because visitors make their service decisions on the basis of the relationships they enjoy the most. They will choose to visit a business where they have a rapport with the management and staff before they choose to visit a business that they don’t know or where they are not known.

Here are some guidelines

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

- If a visitor approaches you while you are busy with something, stop what you are doing, make eye contact, smile and greet the visitor, using his/her name if you know it.
- Never say “hi” or “hello” as an element of formality is expected.
- Never call a visitor by his/her first name unless invited to do so by the visitor.
- Make an effort to greet visitors in their own language – even if the greeting is all you know in that language.
- If a visitor 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 visitors give about their needs.

Visitors 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 visitors 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?”

***“Is this your first visit to this business?” or “How are you enjoying your visit with us?”
or “Are you here on business or for pleasure?”***

- If you are assisting a visitor under any other circumstances, it is also appropriate to make conversation with them. They are all important and you recognise their importance when you make an effort to establish a rapport with them.
- If you show an interest in your visitors, pay attention to them, remember their names and their interests or preferences, you will have gone a long way towards establishing a rapport with them.
- Use their names and acknowledge their support for your business – our most important visitors are those who come back. Use your visitor history to give you information about the preferences of returning visitors.

i) Maintain professional relationships

The term “professionalism” can best be explained by considering the characteristic behaviours of professionals in any field:

- they are highly skilled experts in their field,
- they are constantly looking for ways to improve their performance,
- they learn, train and practice their skills both with the team and on their own,
- they accept that they are role models and behave accordingly in their professional and private lives,
- they are supportive of their colleagues,
- they get involved in the training and development of newcomers to the team,
- they are respectful of their customers under all circumstances,
- always treat your visitors respectfully, even if they are disrespectful towards you,
- if your personal friends are also visitors, remember that you are in a professional environment where people are always watching you, and behave appropriately. If your friends think you are being a snob, simply explain to them that you need to set the right example at work,
- do not speak disrespectfully of visitors behind their backs. Your disrespect will influence the behaviour of your colleagues and subordinates towards these visitors.

j) Establishing a Professional Rapport and Relationship with Colleagues and Internal Customers (suppliers)

Internal customers are your colleagues and workers. Building good relationships with both customers and people you interact with at work is critical to a successful business so endeavour to apply the following practices:

STEP	ACTION
1	Greet colleagues with warmth and friendliness. Rather greet someone too often than not often enough. Do not get into issues of who should greet whom first – there are cultural differences here that cause unnecessary unhappiness because people do not understand each other. Everyone should attempt to greet everyone else first.
2	When colleagues request your help, it is because they can do their work properly. We all rely on assistance from each other to get our work done to the required standard, so give colleagues whatever assistance you can in order to make it easier for them to do their work. If you are unable to help, apologise, explain why, and offer an alternative suggestion.
3	<p>It is particularly important to remember that your workers are also your customers. In fact, they might best be considered your primary customers for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they tend to have more continuous direct contact with visitors/customers, whereas you tend to manage the service they provide, • your workers can only do a good job if they are receiving service from you in the form of support, training, information and feedback, • if your workers are not receiving adequate service from you, they cannot deliver high standards of service to visitors/customers.
4	<p>In terms of your relationships with colleagues and subordinates this means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always treat your colleagues and subordinates respectfully, no matter what the circumstances. Do not raise your voice or use bad language, and never reprimand them in front of anyone else.

- Do not speak disrespectfully or gossip about colleagues. You will negatively influence the behaviour of your subordinates towards your colleagues, you will cause conflict and this will have a negative impact on team work and service.
- Never speak disrespectfully or gossip about your workers. You will lose the respect and trust of not only that worker, but also of your team, and you will damage the self-esteem of the worker. If you have a problem with the work performance or behaviour of a worker, handle it with him in a professional manner – do not resort to gossip.

k) Supporting Colleagues

There will be times when a colleague asks for your help in assisting a visitor/customer. This will usually be either when it is a situation that the colleague cannot handle alone or because the visitor/customer is angry or it may be that service desired requires a higher level of authority.

If you are asked to assist a visitor/customer, make sure that your colleague gives you the name of the visitor/customer and enough information before you approach the visitor/customer. It is very annoying for the visitor/customer to have to repeat the same story twice.

When you approach the visitor/customer, proceed as follows:

- greet the visitor/customer by name,
- introduce yourself by name and job title,
- tell the visitor/customer what you have been told by your subordinate,
- check that this is correct and request any further information that you require,
- explain any policies that may influence the range of actions that can be taken,

- offer the visitor/customer some choices, and come to an agreement,
- confirm what you will do,
- follow up to check visitor/customer satisfaction.

I) Promoting Products and Services

Importance of promoting products and services

Take every possible opportunity to promote the company's own products and services.

- The more information the visitor/customer has about the products and services of the business, the more use he or she is likely to make of them. By increasing visitor/customers' awareness of our products and services, we are creating increased sales.
- By promoting the products and services of the business, you are also in a position to obtain feedback about the products and services that visitor/customers are most likely to use. This information can then be passed on to the relevant responsible person.

Features and Benefits

When describing the business's products and services, it is useful to explain the **“features”** and **“benefits”** of the product or service.

A **“feature”** is some characteristic of the product, eg a “feature” of the restaurant is that it has an a la carte menu.

A “**benefit**” is something that the visitor/customer will get out of using the product. For example, a benefit of taking a family room rather than two double rooms is that the children and parents will be together, but will still have some privacy.

Only if the business’s facilities and services do not meet the visitor’s needs should you provide information about outside facilities and services.

Reception of Parcels (SO1, AC2)

The following guidelines apply when receiving parcels:

- Determine who the parcel is for and that the addressee is an employee at the company
- If it is not you or your manager you should forward it to the correct person immediately
- If it is for your manager do the following:
 - If the parcel has an accompanying letter, read it before opening the parcel.
 - Never sign acknowledgement of receipt unless you are sure that the number of parcels and items in the parcels correlate with the delivery notice.
 - When the parcel is opened, immediately countercheck the contents with the invoice or delivery note
 - Should a discrepancy occur, notify the sender immediately.
 - Ascertain the condition of the goods received.
 - Record receipt of the parcel in a register specially kept for this purpose, ensure that the date, time of arrival and person receiving the parcel are indicated.
 - When opening the parcel make sure that you keep the address of sender – it is often only indicated on the outside of the wrapper.

- Be aware of special indications on the parcel, for example – fragile, this way up, handle with care.

Confidentiality

When working at reception you have to guard the information of your company and so the following have to be complied with:

- Do not leave documents or discs on the desk while you are not in the office
- Place documents face down on your desk
- Ensure that cupboards are locked
- Keep a list of all people in possession of keys for the office or of the cabinets
- Make sure that people cannot eavesdrop on your conversation and be discreet when repeating sensitive information
- Do not throw away any documents – rather use a shredder
- All confidential, financial and staff related information should be locked away
- Empty waste paper baskets on a regular basis
- Transfer files that are clogged to the archives – do not let it lie around the office

Chapter 2

Consulting Visitors

Importance

South Africa's customer service does not compare well internationally. It will need to demonstrate an improvement in customer service if it wishes to compete in the world market. Customer satisfaction is an important factor in the success and future of any business.

Improving Customer Satisfaction

Front desk employees deal with the public daily and should always strive towards consistently improving customer satisfaction.

Guidelines to improve customer service are set below:

- Always display good manners.
- Show respect and make eye contact.
- Be outgoing and enthusiastic.
- Show patience.
- Listen and show genuine interest in the customer.
- Find solutions to any problems a customer might have.
- Be empathic and understanding about customer needs.
- Think and act promptly to customer request.
- Be familiar with your business and its products and services.
- Always be neat and clean in appearance and present yourself as competent and professional.
- Always smile and use pleasant facial expressions.
- Project your voice in a friendly and polite way.

- Give customers feedback.
- Give your customers personal attention. It makes them feel special and important and gives your business a competitive edge.
- Always meet your commitment to your customer and deliver what you promise.
- Ask questions - the more you know about the customer the better equipped you are to deliver a product and service to meet their needs.
- Be patient with a physically challenged customer and be careful to always address and to speak to him/her directly with the same courtesy you would to another customer.

Customer Requests

Requirements

It is important to recognise that all people who make requests or enquiries to you are either current visitors/customers or potential visitors/customers, and must be treated as such. The basic needs of a customer are as follows:

NEEDS	APPROPRIATE ACTION
TO FEEL IMPORTANT	They want your undivided attention when they are speaking to you and they expect you to greet them before they greet you.
TO BE RECOGNISED	If you know the visitor/customer's name, use it. If you recognise a visitor/customer, greet him or her in a way that shows recognition, and find out his or her name. Visitor/customers especially appreciate it if you remember their preferences.

TO FEEL IN CONTROL	Visitor/customers need to have choices, because this gives them a sense of being in control of how they spend their money or time. Give them choices and alternatives and let them make up their own minds.
To feel Appreciated	Your visitor/customers need to know that you value their support, so tell them.

Identifying Customer Needs

All visitor/customers have **two** sets of needs, and both of these must be satisfied in order for them to judge your service positively.

“**Practical needs**” are the needs that bring them to you in the first place.

Examples include the need for:

- a meal,
- a function,
- Information.

These needs are easy to understand because people ask for them – they tell you what they need or want.

“**Emotional needs**” are less obvious because visitor/customers do not know that they exist until they have either been met or not met.

Emotional needs relate to how people wish to feel as a result of their dealings with you.

When Dealing with Visitors

VISITORS WITH APPOINTMENTS	VISITORS WITHOUT APPOINTMENTS	UNWANTED VISITORS
1. Greet the visitor	1. Greet the visitor	1. Stay calm and polite
2. Verify the visitor's details in diary and the purpose of the appointment	2. Acquire the visitors name and details	2. Never lose your temper
3. Phone relevant person to inform them of visitor's arrival	3. Ask whom they've come to see and find out the purpose of their visit	3. Establish the reason for their visit
4. If the staff member is available to see the visitor, show them in	4. Assure the visitor that you will fit them in as soon as possible	4. Take firm action
5. If the staff member is not immediately available, tell the visitor and ask if he/she would like to take a seat	5. If the person they would like to see is not available – determine if anyone else can help. If not make an appointment at the first possible opening	5. Use a panic button or security to remove unwanted visitor
6. If there is a delay remind the visitor that you have not forgotten about him	6. Inform the manager that someone is waiting to see him/her	6. Ignore foul language
7. Offer refreshments	7. If you cannot accommodate the visitor at all, turn him/her away with tact	7. Remain polite
		8. Be aware of inquisitive visitors, be friendly but firm, and ignore questions without being rude
		9. Stay professional with talkative visitors. Accompany them to the visitors/waiting room
		10. If the manager does not want to speak to the visitor, convey the message in a polite way – remember don't tell lies
		11. If a visitor only wants to speak to a certain manager be diplomatic. Listen, show empathy, try to convince the visitor to make an appointment

Handling Complaining and Waiting Visitors

COMPLAINING VISITORS	WAITING VISITORS
1. Receive visitors friendly and tactfully	1. Welcome visitor and accompany them to the waiting room
2. Don't get involved in an argument-stay calm-don't become defensive	2. Ensure the waiting room is clean and tidy
3. Information must be purposeful and direct	3. Provide reading material – not old torn magazines
4. Comfort and apologise if necessary-be the least-the company's image is at stake	4. Offer tea/coffee/water
5. Don't criticise or frown	5. Complete necessary forms
6. Assure visitor of your awareness of the problem and that you will find a solution to the problem or someone who can	6. Ensure that the waiting area and bathrooms are clean
7. Listen and show interest and empathy	
8. Immediately follow-up on complaints / criticism	

Serving Refreshments

Tips on serving refreshments:

- Refreshments should be small and dainty and served in small portions
- Use a small milk jug to carry the milk and ask the visitor if take milk with their coffee or tea.
- When serving tea or coffee, provide a pot with hot water and ask the visitor if you may pour the hot water into the cups.
- Ensure that you have a substitute for sugar available. Ask a visitor how many sugars they take.
- Use a plain table cloth together with colourful serviettes when presenting a tea service
- Never use a coffee mug to serve tea
- Make sure that when you serve food that it is accepted by different cultures such as Kosher or Halaal.
- Make sure that always cater for vegetarians and diabetics

Information, Policy and Practice (SO2, AC2)

Below is a guideline to policy and procedure for providing information to visitor/customers:

- Always make sure that the information you provide is accurate. If you are in any doubt, check with someone who has the correct information.
- Whilst you are expected to give visitor/customers accurate information at all times, remember that you may not do the following:
 - **Never** tell any visitor/customer or member of the public the home telephone number of a visitor/customer. This is a serious breach of confidentiality and security, and could embarrass or even endanger the visitor/customer.
 - **Never** give any information to members of the media, always refer them to the manager.
 - **Never** give out information about staff members as this is confidential information. •
 - **Never** give out any information you may have regarding salaries, yours or anyone else"s.

Referring Requests outside Your own Area of Responsibility

Requests for Outside Service

If a visitor/customer makes an enquiry that relates to another person, put the visitor/customer in touch with the correct person:

STEP	ACTION
1	If the visitor/customer is with you, take him/her to the appropriate person.
2	While the visitor/customer is with you, telephone the person concerned and ask the appropriate person to come through and assist the visitor/customer.
3	While the visitor/customer is with you, telephone the person concerned and allow the visitor/customer to direct the request or enquiry over the telephone.
4	Inform the visitor/customer that you will ask the appropriate person to contact him/her - and pass on the request to this person.
5	If the enquiry comes telephonically from a visitor/customer, ask him/her to telephone the appropriate person and provide the extension number.
6	Ensure that you still follow up to check visitor/customer satisfaction, even if another person handled the enquiry or request.

Following up Requests

Procedures

- If you have assisted a visitor/customer by providing information or a service, it is important that you follow up and check whether the visitor/customer is satisfied with the information or service that he/she received.
- On most occasions you can immediately ask whether the visitor/customer is satisfied, while the visitor/customer is still in front of you or on the telephone. On such occasions, you could ask such questions as:

“Is there anything else I can do for you?” or “Does that meet your needs”

There will be other occasions when you need to respond to the visitor/customer at a later stage to check satisfaction, especially if the required action took some time to complete. On such occasions, you should contact the visitor/customer by telephone to check if he or she is satisfied with the action taken.

If the visitor/customer is not satisfied, it is essential to solve the problem or take further action until the visitor/customer is satisfied.

Take every opportunity to ask if visitor/customers are satisfied with the facilities and service in the business.

Such opportunities include:

- When a visitor/customer is leaving.
- When in a lift with a visitor/customer.
- When providing a visitor/customer with an account or invoice to sign.

When the visitor/customer responds to your question, listen carefully to what the visitor/customer is saying, and ask questions to ensure that you understand.

Thank the visitor/customer for his/her comments.

Inform your manager of what the visitor/customer has said.

Problems with Meeting Customer Requirements (SO1, AC3-AC4)

Problems and Alternatives

If you are unable to meet the visitor/customer's requirements, it is important to explain this to the visitor/customer, and to give a reason. If the visitor/customer knows the reason why you are unable to meet his or her requirements, he or she is likely to be far more amenable than if you simply say that something cannot be done. This is true, even if the request may have seemed somewhat bizarre to you. You could say something like:

“Ms/Mr (name of the customer) I am unable to provide you a time for a meeting with my Managing Director as he/she is at a conference now”

If possible offer an alternative.

For example:

“I see we have your contact details. I can schedule a meeting for you for the earliest possible time. Would that satisfy you?”

If a visitor/customer asks you for information that you don't have and are unable to find through your usual resources, explain this to the visitor/customer.

If appropriate, suggest an alternative. It is also important to explain any delays to the visitor/customer concerned. As long as visitor/customers know what is going on and why they are being kept waiting, they can make the choice either to wait or to do something else. The more information they have, the more they feel in control because they can still make choices about what they do.

Chapter 3

Monitoring Satisfaction

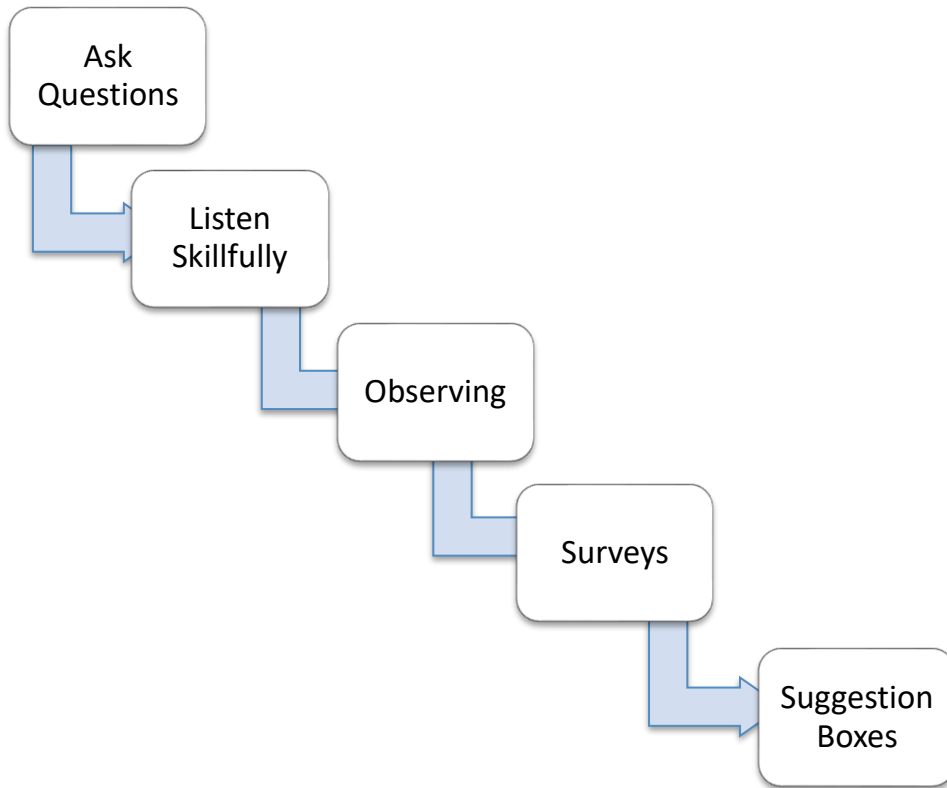
Satisfaction of visitors (SO3, AC1)

Importance

Obtaining feedback from visitors/customers about service provided is an important element in a business's customer service strategy. Feedback systems supply valuable information that will be of no value unless promptly acted upon and appropriate solutions for improvement are implemented.

Methods of Obtaining Feedback (SO3, AC2)

There are 5 ways in which feedback from customers is obtained namely:



Effective Survey Techniques

Ensure that you ask appropriate questions to measure what you are doing right and questions to measure where you need to improve. Below are examples of two simple open ended questions you should include in your surveys to measure this area:

- What do you like most about your visit?
- What didn't you like about your visit and how can we improve our services?

Other questions could be to include closed questions that prompt a YES/NO answer.

For example:

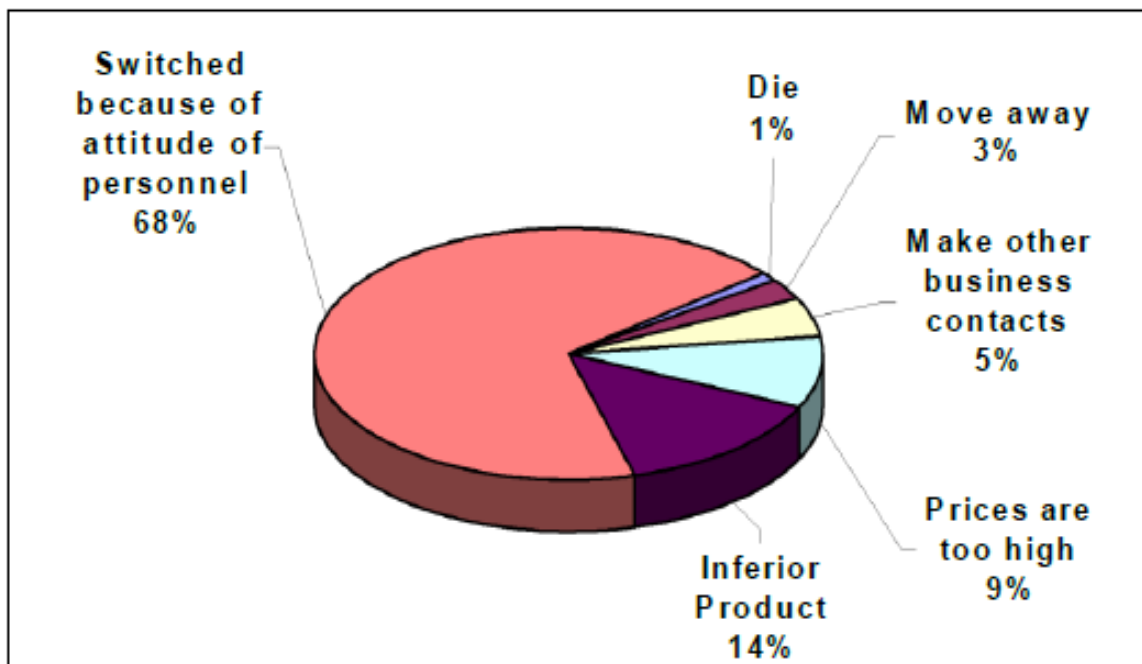
- Were you comfortable with our reception?
- Did you enjoy the display?
- Were you happy with the information we provided?

Evaluating/Dealing with Complaints (SO3, AC3)

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/visitor lost forever. This directly impacts on the profitability of the business 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% Say merchandise purchased was inferior.
- 68% Say they switched to the competitor because of the attitude of the personnel.



Dealing with Customer Complaints Effectively (SO3, AC4)

Guidelines

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 drop in standards or a mistake on our part, or was the visitor/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

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 visitor/customer invades your personal space do not step back.

Involve the visitor/customer in finding a solution; this increases the likelihood that the visitor/customer will be happy with the solution.

Identifying the Nature of the Complaint or Incident

Using Interpersonal Skills Effectively

Guidelines

1. Throughout the customer interaction, you should communicate in a way that promotes goodwill and understanding between the visitor/customer and the company.
2. Speak quietly and calmly, and make sure that your body language is calming. Do not react to any aggressive body language that the visitor/customer might be displaying.
3. Acknowledge the visitor/customer. Stop what you are doing. Make eye contact and smile.
“Good morning, Mr./Ms.
4. Offer assistance – “How may I help you? “
5. Hear the visitor/customer out. Listen to what the visitor/customer says without interrupting.
6. Do not show fear or anxiety. It is important to show confidence because the visitor/customer needs to know that you can handle the situation.
7. Once the visitor/customer has finished speaking, state your understanding of the problem.
8. If the complaining visitor/customer is disturbing other visitor/customers, calmly invite him/her to accompany you to an office away from the public area.
9. If the complaint is a telephonic one, transfer the call to another telephone where you can give the visitor/customer your undivided attention without disturbing other colleagues or visitor/customers. Establish the facts and use good questioning skills.

Reassuring the customer

- Thank the visitor/customer for bringing the problem to your attention.
- Empathise. State how you believe the visitor/customer feels, and acknowledge that he/she has the right to feel as they do.
- Apologies. Apologies briefly and sincerely that the visitor/customer has experienced a problem. Do not admit that you or the establishment is to blame.
- Accept responsibility for solving the problem.
- Never blame another person for causing the problem – it is unprofessional and disloyal to the company that you represent. Do not make excuses.

Tools for effective Negotiation and Communication

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 a 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 us. Positive body language sets the scene for success and negative body language sets the scene for failure.

Refer to the table below that highlights positive and negative body language. Pay attention to how you make your body language work for you.

Body Language	Positively	Negatively
1. Eye Contact	Eye contact will create the impression that you are interested in them.	No eye contact gives an impression of indifference and “I don’t care”.
2. Stance	Standing with your arms by your side, and facing your customer will create a sense of ease.	Standing with your arms folded across your body is a defensive gesture that suggests you want to

		distance yourself from the customer.
3. Posture	An upright posture gives an impression of enthusiasm and creates a caring atmosphere.	Slumping against furniture gives the impression of a defeated, depressed, or “I don’t care” attitude.
4. Facial Expressions	Smile as it offers friendship.	It’s no good telling a customer to “Have a nice day”, when you frown or scowl is just as good as saying “Good-bye and good riddance”.
5. Gestures	Offering a handshake.	Shrugging your shoulders, tapping your foot, drumming your fingers, wringing your hands.

Communication

When Communicating to Customers always remember to use the:

The Pleasing Principle

P – Always be polite.

L – Listen attentively.

E – Empathise and ensure feedback.

A – Ask questions and display a good attitude.

S – Smile.

I – Show genuine interest.

N – Never say “no” immediately, reword negatives and offer alternatives.

G – Go far and settle in the situation.

Watch your 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 that results in action. Therefore, by improving your thoughts you are improving your actions, resulting in improved personal and business relationships that have a great impact on your success.

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.

Use the 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:

- **(H) ear** them out, and listen - let them “give off steam”
- **(E) empathise** : “It must be very frustrating....”
- **(A) pologise** : “I”m sorry for the inconvenience....”
- **(T) ake** responsibility to put things right

Customer Complaints Procedure

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

- Discuss with the visitor/customer what action should be taken and come to a definite agreement on what will be done and by when.
- Take the necessary action.
- Do not offer something the establishment cannot provide.

The following complaints can usually be resolved by involving the staff members:

- Lack of supplies.
- Wrong order.
- Misunderstandings.
- Delays in service.
- Spills or breakages.
- Lost property.

Complaints can be handled at every level. If the solution is something that the employee can do without the permission of his or her manager, then the employee has the authority to solve the complaint and should do so.

If the solution is something that requires a higher level of authority, then it is at that level of authority that the responsibility for resolving the complaint lies. It is the manager's responsibility to step in and assist workers to handle complaints that are outside the scope of their jobs and which they don't have the authority to resolve, or which they feel uncomfortable about handling.

- It is still the responsibility of the employee who first heard the complaint to follow up and check that the visitor/customer is satisfied with the solution.
- It is important that you set the right example to your team. If you avoid handling complaints, you will lose the respect of your team, and service problems will worsen.
- By handling complaints effectively you are setting the correct example for your team and they will learn from watching you in action.

It is valuable to use negotiation skills when handling complaints because:

- When seeking an appropriate solution to the complaint, it is important to meet both the expectations of the visitor/customer and the needs of the company.
- Negotiation skills are used when it is necessary to reach a compromise between what the visitor/customer wants and what company policy allows you to do.
- The objective of negotiating is to reach a solution that represents a **win: win** – that is, both the visitor/customer and the company are satisfied.

You have the following options available for resolving complaints:

- Correct the mistake and give the visitor/customer what was requested or expected.
- If appropriate, you could pass a “no charge” for the item or service that was the subject of the complaint.
- Replace the problem product, eg offer another item.
- Give the visitor/customer a complimentary item, eg a liqueur coffee on the house.

Product and Service Complaints**Understanding your Business’s Standards**

It is important to understand business standards for products and services when dealing with complaints for the following reasons:

- If you understand business standards, you can evaluate if the complaint relates to failure to meet the standards or standards that are less than the customer expected.
- This enables you to handle the complaint effectively. If it was a failure to meet business standards, this can be remedied. If the business standards are not what the customer expected, you can explain the standards to the customer.
- If the business standards are causing repeated complaints, this is an indication that the standard needs reviewing and needs to be brought to the attention of senior management.

Procedures

1. If a complaint relates to product quality, investigate whether the quality received by the visitor/customer was indeed less than the laid down standard. If it was, handle the complaint as described above and take action to resolve the problem.
2. If your investigation reveals that the product quality received by the visitor/customer was in line with laid down standards, return to the visitor/customer and explain this. An explanation is usually sufficient. However, if the visitor/customer is still not satisfied, you may need to take some action that is out of the ordinary to resolve the problem.
3. A complaint about a service would be handled in much the same way. Investigate whether the service provided was in line with the laid down standard. If it was not, take appropriate action to correct the service problem. If it was, explain this to the visitor/customer.

Personal Complaints

If a customer complains to you about a member of your team use the **Heat Approach** and proceed as follows:

1. Hear the visitor/customer out

Listen to the visitor/customer without interrupting. Ask questions to check your understanding.

Thank the visitor/customer for bringing the problem to your attention.

2. Empathise

Describe your understanding of how the visitor/customer feels and why.

3. Apologise

Simply apologise that the visitor/customer has had an unhappy experience. Do not indicate that you accept the visitor/customer's story as the truth as you do not have the employee's side of the story yet.

4. Take Action

Tell the visitor/customer that you will follow up and take any necessary action.

Discuss the matter privately with the employee concerned. Make sure that you have a clear understanding of the details before making a decision about further action.

If the complaint is about another employee, handle the complaint as described above, then pass the information on to the manager concerned.

Dealing with Written Complaints

Procedure

1. If written complaints are received from visitor/customers, they will be referred to you only after the Director or Manager have read and discussed them with you. You will then be involved in an investigation about the complaint.
2. Accept that it is the visitor/customer's right to complain in writing to the Director or Manager and avoid questioning why the visitor/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 effort or an attempt to make you and your business look bad – it is an opportunity to learn.
3. 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 apologise if it is clear that you did not meet the required standards.
4. 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 conflict.

5. If the complaint is about the specific actions of a particular 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.

How to Ensure Efficient Work Practices

Guidelines

1. Handling complaints effectively is more important than any other work; so handle them immediately, even if it means completing other work later.
2. Never keep a complaining visitor/customer waiting; this will only make the problem worse.
3. As soon as a complaint has been resolved, document it and/or give feedback to the department concerned. If you wait you will forget some of the details and not be able to pass on complete information.
4. Get back to work straight away. Avoid spending ineffective time discussing the complaint – especially if you or your team feels that the complaint was unjustified. The visitor/customer has the right to complain, even if you disagree with the nature of the complaint and this must be accepted. If the discussion is not making a contribution to improving the work of the team, it is a waste of time.
5. As a supervisor or manager your role is to manage visitor/customer service. This means that you must make it possible for your team members to deliver service by giving them the training and support that they need. You must then monitor their work, reinforce their good performance, and give them feedback when problems arise.
6. It is also important to remember that visitor/customer service comes before any other work. If you find that you are spending so much time at your desk that you cannot interact with visitor/customers in order to obtain feedback, you need to consider delegating some of your paperwork.

7. If you delegate some of your tasks so that you can spend more time managing visitor/customer service, make sure that the people to whom you delegate these tasks receive the necessary training. It will still be necessary to check their work, even if you do not do it yourself because you will still be accountable.
8. Make sure that paperwork is delegated fairly, and that everyone is doing his or her fair share.
9. It is useful to use checklists to manage the operational tasks that need doing through the month. This ensures that nothing is forgotten.
10. If you were asked by a colleague to solve a problem with a visitor/customer, make sure that your colleague listens to how you have solved the problem, while in action. As soon as you have finished assisting the visitor/customer, discuss the solution with your colleague so that he or she has the opportunity to learn. This will enable him or her to handle similar problems in future.