Develop customer service skills



As an employee, how you handle a first contact with a customer is critical to your job and the company's success. The customer will judge the company by the first person they come in contact with from that company. Therefore, understanding the "rules" of a first contact is important.

Think about a first contact you had with an employee of a store. Consider the following:

- How were you greeted?
- Did you feel comfortable?
- Did you feel the person recognized you as being important?
- How did they determine your wants and needs?
- What did they do to fulfill your needs?
- Would you go back to the company again?

Activity 1

Based on your thoughts from the reading, in a group, brainstorm at least eight "rules" needed to make a successful first contact.

Activity 2

Consider the following customer service scenario. Keep in mind your "rules" of first contact. Record your thoughts about the questions that follow.

Harvey Visits the Doctor

One Tuesday at 9 a.m., Harvey visits the doctor for a 9:15 a.m. appointment. He notices a new receptionist at the desk and proceeds to the counter. Harvey sees from her name tag that her name is Tracey. Tracey is busy at the computer and doesn't look up for a minute, which seems like 10 minutes to Harvey. Harvey clears his throat, which causes her to notice him. She then points to the clipboard on the counter and tells Harvey to sign in.

While flipping through a magazine in the waiting room, Harvey notices that over an hour has passed. He feels uncomfortable about approaching Tracey, but is concerned about the delay. He calls to Tracey. Tracey, who doesn't look at him, says gruffly that she's not sure what is wrong. After shuffling through papers, Tracey disappears through a door for another five minutes. She emerges to tell Harvey that the doctor was called to an emergency surgery, and his appointment has been cancelled. She states, "The records indicate that you were notified last night about the cancellation."

Harvey, who was not aware of the schedule change, becomes irate and storms out of the office.

Tip

The following are some suggested "rules":

- Be prepared.
- Have a positive attitude.
- Make eye contact.
- Smile.
- Answer questions.
- Know your limits.
- Use the customer's name.
- Take a sincere interest in customer's needs.
- Don't argue.

Tip
Question "D" can be done as a group activity.

Optional Activity
Have a group of students walk around in a room and greet everyone as if they don't know one another. Do this for one to two minutes. Then, have the same group of students walk around and greet everyone as if they were their long lost friends. Ask the students the following: How did each experience make you feel? How were the experiences different?

Questions:

a. From your list created in Activity 1, what first contact "rules" were violated? _____

b. What could Tracey have done differently to meet Harvey's needs?

c. If you were the doctor, what would you do as a follow up? _____

d. Based on your responses to a-c, write a new scenario depicting what Tracey should do.

e. If Tracey follows your scenario, what is the long-term impact? _____