

## Customer service therapy

We all have bad days. They're part of life and unavoidable. But you know what can make a bad day worse? Receiving bad customer service. On the other hand, great customer service can turn a bad day around in no time. And the latter is the sort of experience a person never forgets. It's true—you can make a difference in someone's day. And soon you may find that same person returning on a regular basis for some of your "customer service therapy!"

Good customer service is about more than just the basics. For this reason, we're not going to focus on the obvious, but rather on some basic techniques and practices that will make you the best customer service therapist the world has to offer.

## Know thy product

No matter how great your demeanor may be, providing a good customer service experience depends on knowing thy product. Before starting your shift each day, try doing a little exercise that will help you to be successful.

At the start of each day, get a load of the daily special. Imagine that you have just handcrafted this sandwich to absolute perfection and you're about to take a big juicy bite out of it. Now that you're all fired up and thinking about your creation, consider what makes that particular sandwich *so good*. Think about each of the ingredients and how everything comes together just right. Go ahead—sell yourself on it! Now, remember all of these things, because you're going to put them to use in a moment.

***Be forewarned, this next activity is going to be a little awkward, but fun.***

You won't want to do this every day, but try it once just for exercise.

### ➔ **Exercise:**

Find a mirror—and no, not in a public restroom, but in a private spot. Here comes the fun part! Make eye contact with yourself in the mirror. Take a moment to admire yourself ... then lets get back to that daily special. Hold your hands up in front of yourself like you're about to take a big juicy bite. Now, in your most flamboyant tone—just for thrills and practice—begin describing all of those great characteristics you came up with a moment ago. Why flamboyant? Because you're not going to be so over the top with your customers, but we want you to have a good laugh while you try this. Plus, it helps to get the creative juices flowing!

**Note:** So you're not a tuna salad fan and today's special is just that—no problem. Just fake it! What? Didn't you know that customer service involves a smidge of acting? By the time you're done with this little exercise, your next customer won't be able to wait to get a taste of the daily special.

Try putting the above exercise in practice. When a customer approaches the sandwich station and asks about the daily special, don't just point to the sign or say the name of the sandwich. Hold your hands in front of you like you're holding one of these delicacies, and then take the time to describe it to them. Tell them what makes your creation so darn good!

## Listen with your eyes

**Did you know that we're psychic? We're going to prove it to you.**

We all tend to pay closer attention to job performance when it comes to something that we do ourselves. It's human nature. Think about it—which of your friends pays the closest attention to the wait staff and tips the best when dining out? Those who are waiters or waitresses themselves, of course! Now, think back to the last time you experienced poor customer service and recall the experience. Trust me, this is going to be fun. Now, place the tips of your index fingers to your temples and answer the following questions:

- Did they make eye contact with you when you came into the business?
- How long did it take for them to acknowledge and help you?
- Once you had their attention, was it their full attention? Did they make eye contact with you when you were speaking?

Okay, now comes the psychic part. You can stop touching your temples.

You answered the first question with "No." For the second question, you said something along the lines of "Way too long! I practically had to hunt them down!" For the third, you said "No. They kept looking at their cell phone while I was speaking!" Okay, you may have said "clock" or something else for the third one. Our psychic reading was a little foggy at that point.

Pretty good huh? The point is, most poor customer service experiences share a few common threads. Now, did you notice any key words in our questions? How about "eye contact?"

It's nearly impossible to ignore a customer or to not be actively engaged with them when you're looking them in the eyes. [For contrast, imagine looking them in the eyes and insert an awkward and creepy moment of silence. See!] On your next shift, give this a shot: Each time someone walks into the restaurant and approaches the sandwich station, make eye contact with them as soon as possible, but not while you're slicing tomatoes! And don't forget to add a slight smile [Insert creepy and unwelcoming stare here for contrast. See?] This lets them know that you have taken notice of them and that they matter. When they approach the sandwich station, keep up the good work. But hey—no flirting!

## It's in the pronunciation

Last, but not least, let's touch on vocabulary. Don't worry; we're not going to inundate you with a lengthy "do not use" list. Everyone knows that words like "huh" and "yeah" are off limits. Instead, let's focus on some simple techniques you can add to the right words.

Here's an exercise that is sure to make you sound more genuine and pleasant when you greet someone.

### → **Exercise:**

**Try speaking the following words while adding these techniques:**

- Say the word "hello," but instead of saying it like you normally would, imagine it with an extra "o" on the end of it. It's nearly impossible to have an unpleasant tone while doing this. Give it a try! You should be saying something that resembles "Helloo."
- Instead of saying "You're welcome," separate the words by saying "You are welcome." Again, it's nearly impossible to say this without sounding genuine and polite. Give it a try!

There are so many tips and so little time. We hope that these ideas will help you earn happy and repeat customers. Adding these little details to your daily practices will make you more than a customer service representative. They will make you a customer service therapist!