

CERTIFICATE IN SALES SKILLS

SALES ADVISOR

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT MATERIALS

The following notes are designed to introduce you to some of the basic concepts of sales. You should read these skills development materials first and complete the activities within the notes before moving on. Once completed, you should begin working through the course workbook, completing the exercises as you go and then tackle each assignment once you have completed the relevant unit.

Customer Care Skills

Customer Care Skills

We will look at the following:

- 1 Attitude and behaviour
- 2 Appearance
- 3 Body language
- 4 Eyes
- 5 Ears
- 6 Mouth

1 Attitude and Behaviour

Behaviour begets behaviour

Close your eyes and think of anybody that you know. Sometimes that person is happy, smiling, amusing and charming. They are amenable; they are prepared to be led by you - to let you choose. Sometimes that same person is aggressive, short tempered and unpleasant. They are dogmatic, unreasonable and insist on having their own way.

Why? Often it is because of the way they were treated just before that. People behave like a mirror. They mirror you. They respond in kind. It's as if they are saying, "And the same to you". Friendly behaviour begets friendly behaviour . . . "No, thank you for calling."

Curt unpleasantness begets more of the same . . . "And drop dead yourself!"

Behaviour is a Choice

You can choose your behaviour. You don't have to be a prisoner of it. Something may have happened to make you feel angry, sad or unhappy. And you're about to talk to a customer. Before you do that, you can say to yourself, "I'm going to smile and pretend I'm happy". After a minute or two, you find that the customer is a very pleasant person

to talk to. They thank you warmly for the help you have given them - and you start to feel genuinely happy.

Perhaps a customer is aggressive with you and starts to blame you for someone else's mistake. You could follow your natural inclinations and be aggressive in return. Or you can choose to be patient and remain pleasant. You will probably find that their aggression will dissipate like steam from a kettle. And they will apologise for venting their anger on you.

Behaviour is a choice. You can select behaviour that will help you deal with the customer, or select behaviour that will hinder you.

There is a similarity here with driving a car. In a 15 minute journey, you probably make hundreds of choices. Because you were trained properly in the first place, making the right choice has become a habit. Likewise, if your firm's staff are trained properly in customer care skills and practise them, they will find that making the right behaviour choice becomes a habit.

What Behaviour Should be Chosen?

When dealing with customers, your behaviour should be:

Professional Your personal feelings should be submerged. You should leave your own worries and strife in a parcel outside the door when you go in to work. If you want to, you can collect them again on your way home.

Understanding You are in the 'people' business. They want help. They will turn to you for that help and give you their business *if* you can show them that you fully understand their situation.

Patient Yes, it may be a stupid question that the customer has just asked. And you may have already answered it 50 times this week. But it's the first time *this* customer has asked it, isn't it? So, be patient. Remember that, at Disneyworld, staff are taught to treat the customer as an individual, not as part of a crowd.

Exercise



Assess yourself below. Then assess a member of your staff who has regular contact with customers.

Score out of 10

1 You:

Professionalism

Understanding

Patience

2 A key member of your staff:

Professionalism

Understanding

Patience

3 Is it a cause for celebration, or have you found some training needs?

How to Deal With Customers:

- Acknowledge them as soon as possible
- Apologise for any delay
- Be friendly and welcoming
- Use their name
- Smile
- Show them that you really are listening
- Reassure them
- Explain things fully to them
- Lean forward with an open body posture
- Check you've understood and agree the next step
- Perhaps, touch them on the arm

Choose the right behaviour

Exercise Dealing with customers



- Assess yourself
- Assess members of your staff who have regular contact with customers

Mark the appropriate box with **Good**, **Fair** or **Poor**

	You	Member of Staff(1)	Member of Staff(2)
Acknowledge them as soon as possible	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Apologise for any delay	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Be friendly and welcoming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use their name	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Smile	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Show that you really are listening	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reassure them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Explain things fully to them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lean forward; open body posture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check you've understood and agree the next step	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Perhaps, touch them on the arm	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Again, have you found some training needs? Yes No

Attitude . . . *Take responsibility for helping the customer*

The right attitude is to take responsibility for sorting out what the customer wants. The wrong attitude is to pass the buck or blame onto someone else in the firm.

Your customers want help, not to be passed from pillar to post. And it's vital that they see your firm as a team who all care and want to help. They don't want to be faced with bickering, blaming or buck-passing.

Exercise



How would you change these phrases if you heard them (or something similar) being used by people in your business to a customer?

Sorry, (s)he's not in today. Do you want to phone back tomorrow? _____

No, it's nothing to do with my department _____

Sorry, our sales people are always making a mess of things. They're useless really

Look, don't blame me. It's not my fault! _____

Can you ask somebody else, it's my coffee break? _____

I don't know, but if you ask that bloke over there he might know _____

Again, have you found any training needs? Yes No

Explain to your staff that, before they point the finger of blame at a colleague, they should first look to ***where the other 3 fingers are pointing***.



The fingers of blame

CUSTOMER CARE

Be enthusiastic - It's contagious.

Be confident - It increases a potential customer's trust in you.

Be welcoming - It satisfies your customer's basic human desire to feel liked and approved of.

Be helpful - Customers want that more than anything else.

Be polite - Always be well-mannered.

Show you care - Make all customers feel they are important *individuals*.

Exercise



Assess yourself on these 'customer care' attitudes. Then assess a member of your staff who has regular contact with customers.

Mark the appropriate box with **Good**, **Fair** or **Poor**.

	You	Your Staff
Show enthusiasm	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Appear confident	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Be welcoming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Be helpful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Be courteous	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Show you care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Once again, have you found any training needs? Yes No

2 Appearance

You never get a **SECOND chance
to make a **FIRST** impression**

Customers judge your business on what you wear. It's part of your firm's image.

Some firms set standards. Should you?

Here's how a hotel might do it:

Uniform	To be worn at all times, clean and in good repair
Shoes	Black, well polished
Stockings	Black for men. Black or flesh coloured for women
Jewellery	Men: neat and unobtrusive
Hair	Tidy, smart, conventional
Personal hygiene	Clean, fresh, no body odour. No excessive perfume/aftershave
Nails	Clean and tidy
Tattoos	None to be visible
Shaving	Men to be clean shaven
Make up	The effect must be conventional

Example of setting standards for a hotel

Exercise



1 Should you set standards for appearance? What would the advantage be?

2 Should you provide staff uniforms? What would the advantages be?

3 Body Language

Charlie Chaplin was superb at using body language. His silent films have delighted countless millions. He could show the full range of human emotions without saying a word. Views differ but probably 70% of communication is non-verbal.

Body Language Includes:

- choice of clothing
- distance from others
- posture
- stance
- sitting position
- movements
- gestures
- facial expression
- eye contact
- eye movement.

Body Language tells you what People Really Mean

It is the art of seeing what others are thinking. And, if someone tells a lie, their body language will usually give them away.

By focusing on other people's body language, you can discover their true feelings towards you and what you are saying. It has clear value in social as well as business situations and is important in customer care.

Using Body Language Successfully Involves Four Stages:

- Learn what to look for
- Recognise it in other people so you can 'read' them better
- Recognise it in yourself
- Control it and use it to your advantage so you give the right messages to other people

With the first stage - learning what to look for - do be careful if your business brings you into contact with people from different nationalities and cultures. Many body language gestures are universal. But many others are not - and you could, unwittingly, give or take offence because of these differences.

These notes relate to body language in Western cultures.

Look for Clusters and Look for Changes

Just as one swallow doesn't make a summer, one gesture doesn't prove what the other person is thinking.

The fact that they have their arms folded may mean that they are being defensive about something. Or it may mean that they are cold. Or it could simply mean that it happens to be comfortable.

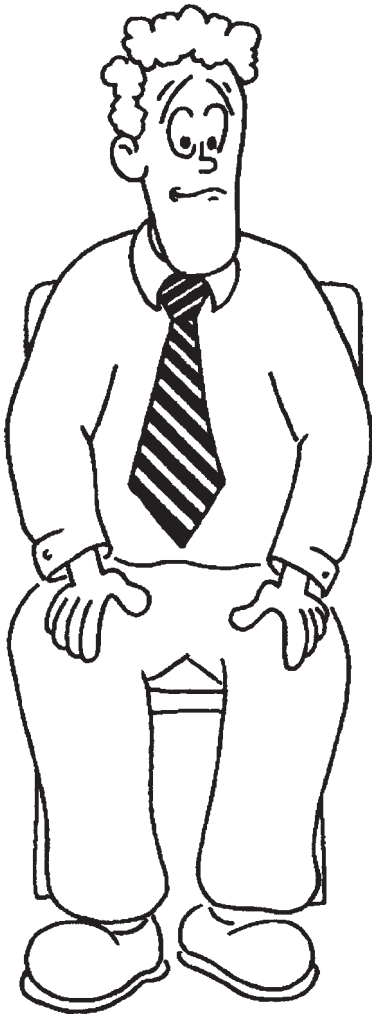
Look instead for clusters - several individual bits of body language that fit together to tell the same story.

And look for changes in body language as you speak. It can give you an accurate picture of what they think about what you are saying.

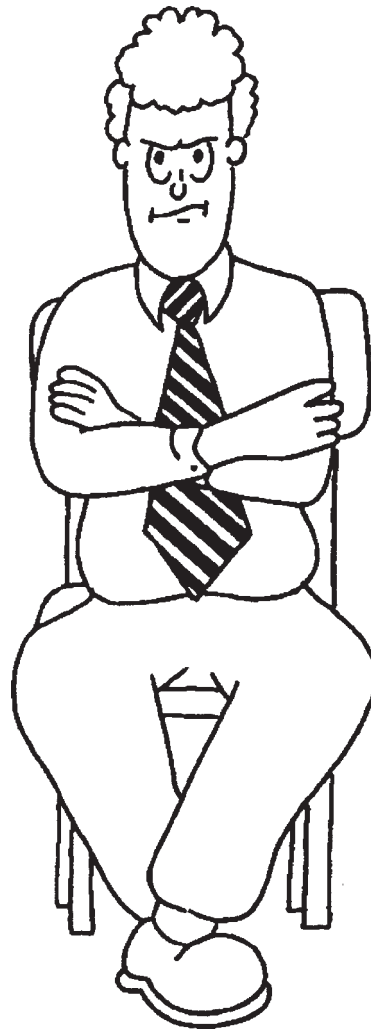
Open or Closed?

Some body language gestures are open, expansive and positive, eg leaning forward with open palms facing upwards. These show interest, acceptance and a welcoming attitude. (See the figure on the left below.)

Some others are closed, defensive and negative. For example, leaning backwards, arms folded, head down. These may signal the person is uninterested or rejects someone else or their ideas, like the figure on the right below.



Open, interested, keen to hear more



Closed, disagrees, does not approve

Cold or Warm?

If you use plenty of gestures, other people interpret you as being warm, enthusiastic and emotional. This would be appropriate if you want to generate enthusiasm for a new idea. For an extreme example of this, think of Magnus Pyke. If you don't remember this gentleman, he was a 'television scientist' who used excessive hand and arm movements to great effect.

Using gestures sparsely would make you seem cold, reserved and logical (Mr Spock?). This could be suitable if you wished to convey cold facts or bad news.

Mirroring

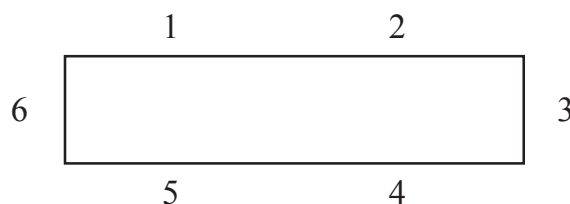
When two people use similar gestures, they tend to believe that they think alike. This helps create a bond. You can use this to your advantage when dealing with customers by, unobtrusively, mirroring their open gestures. If you are dealing with a group of people, you concentrate on the leader.

Mirroring closed gestures is different - it tends to be counter-productive.

Distance from Others

People have around them an area that they regard as personal space. It has a radius of roughly one yard/metre. Beware intruding into a customer's personal space. Although some may regard it as friendliness, you will make most people feel uncomfortable.

You may be able to use distance to your advantage. One example is seating at a table.



Seating at a table

- To achieve a friendly meeting, use a corner situation, eg 1 and 6.
- To stress teamwork - 'us' - sit side by side, eg 1 and 2.
- To maintain formality, sit opposite, eg 1 and 5. Even more formal would be 3 and 6.

4 Eyes

Use eye contact as a way of acknowledging customers, making them feel welcome and building a happy relationship. Use eye contact to show that you really are listening.

5 Ears

Listening, *really listening*, is the highest form of courtesy

Exercise

Do you know someone who has a habit of interrupting when you are speaking? If you do, how does it make you feel?



Do you need to teach any of your staff how to listen? (Yes, that's right . . . do you need to *teach* them how to listen?) You see, they may never have been taught properly before. Will *you*?

	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
How often taught	Least	Next least	Next most	Most
How often used	Most	Next most	Next least	Least

Listening is taught least but used most

How to really listen

- Look at them; use your eyes to show that you are listening
- Turn off any negative thoughts you have about them
- Lean towards them
- Start listening with the first word and listen intently
- Think at the speed they are talking; don't jump ahead
- Do not interrupt
- Nod in agreement; use facial expressions and body language to show you understand
- Ask questions
- Stick to their subject
- Use their name and use "you".

The more you really listen, the more they feel recognised as being important. And the more they respond.

6 Mouth

Question 3

Suppose, as a customer, you are waiting at the counter to be served. When someone *does* come to find out what you want, they just look at you without speaking a word. How do you feel?



Check your answer with page 80.

Greet People

If you are already dealing with another customer, acknowledge newcomers and reassure them that you will help as soon as possible.

Smile

Remember that people mirror you. So, smile. Give them a genuine, sincere smile. You'll probably get one in return, and it helps to smooth the transaction. It's infectious. It's disarming. It's free.

Be Well-mannered

With many customers, it matters. And it costs nothing.

Use their Name

Just look how important it is. It grabs people's attention. It shows recognition and respect. It stops conversations. It starts conversations. And it controls them. *Their name is the most important word in the world . . . to them.*

So, ask for their name and use it. But be well-mannered and use their surname until they have given you permission to use their first name.

Ask Open Questions

Closed questions can be answered with 'yes' or 'no'. Open questions require a full answer, so you find out more information quicker.

Open questions begin with:

- Who (... is it for?)
- What (... do you need it for?)
- Where (... did you see our ad?)
- When (... would you like it delivered?)
- Why ...?
- How ...?

These questions can't be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no'.

Closed questions begin with words like:

Is	Are	Was
Can	Will	May
Could	Should	Would
Has	Have	Had
Do	Does	Did
Don't	Won't	Can't

Why ask Open Questions?

- to properly understand what the customer wants
- to give them the opportunity to talk
- to show interest
- to make them feel important
- to find out how they feel
- to keep control of the conversation
- to make them feel better
- to understand their complaints.

Exercise



Consider a situation where you or your staff come into contact with customers. What open questions could you ask? (Make sure that they really are open ones.)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10