

Customer care

Activity 3: Principles of good customer care

Introduction

This activity introduces learners to some principles of good customer care. It presents practical examples and invites learners to:

- decide whether or not the examples reflect good practice
- match the behaviour in the examples to a particular item in a list of principles of good customer care.

In doing this, learners will come to appreciate that customer care is more than the repetition of formulaic phrases such as ‘Have a nice day.’ They will develop a ‘theory’ of good customer care by making the links between the practical examples and the list of principles. This stimulates learners to think for themselves and to explore their thoughts with their peers.

The resources with this activity can easily be adapted for use in different ways.

Learning objectives/outcomes

Learners should be able to:

- judge whether or not an action is an example of good practice in customer care
- justify their decisions.

Resources required

- One copy of **Sheet 3.1: Some principles of good customer care** for each group or projected for everyone to see.
- Copies of Sheet 3.2: Customer encounter examples

Starting points

Learners do not require previous knowledge of customer care for this activity. However, as the activity begins to introduce theoretical concepts, it will be useful if learners have begun to reflect on the topic. **Activity 1: My best and worst experiences as a customer** makes an ideal precursor.

Planning learning in multiple environments

This activity can be integrated into individual learning plans in a number of ways, including:

- as preparation for work experience
- as an activity in the workplace, perhaps with another learner who is on placement at the same company
- as part of a series of classroom-based sessions on customer care.

Suggested approach

The activity requires learners to interpret descriptions of behaviour and to explore the likely consequences of such behaviour. Discussing their ideas with others in a small group will help learners to see things from different points of view.

You will find more information about approaches to active learning in Part 3 of **Cross-curricular themes: continuing professional development guide**.

Stage 1

Invite learners to work in groups of three or four. Display **Sheet 3.1: Some principles of good customer care** or give a copy to each group. Provide each learner with a copy of **Sheet 3.2: Customer encounter examples**.

Set the task.

“Take turns to read out a customer encounter example and decide whether it is good practice or not. Say why you think it is good or poor practice by referring to one of the principles. Make a note of which example goes with which principle.”

You might also suggest that the person who reads out the example shares whether they feel it is good or poor practice, and attempts to explain why. The rest of the learners can then contribute their suggestions.

Do not explain the principles at this point. Allow the learners to develop their understanding of the principles by relating them to the practical examples.

Stage 2

Learners work through the examples, keeping a note of their decisions.

While the learners are completing the task, you will have an opportunity to listen to them and gain insight into their understanding of the topic. You might offer support by helping a group to:

- get back on track if it is clear that they have misunderstood something
- think more deeply about something that they have grasped at a surface level.

In neither case should you intervene to provide answers. Instead, your aim should be to help learners to think for themselves. Try asking questions like the following:

- There might be others who think...
- How much do we know about...?
- I wonder what it says in the books about...
- Who has an idea about...?
- Is it true that...?
- What is the reason why...?
- Think of a way to...
- I've often wondered why...
- Just imagine if...
- What would happen if...?

Stage 3: Consolidating, checking and reflecting on learning

Invite the groups to take turns to feed back their decisions. When learners do this, hold back from saying whether or not their answers are 'right'. Instead, ask questions to explore what they have said. This will help you to assess the extent to which learners understand the principles. It will also help them to think independently.

When learners feed back that the example shows poor practice, ask them what they think the person should have done. This will help to consolidate their learning.

The examples are intended to illustrate the principles as follows: A7, B3, C1, D8, E4, F2, G6, and H5. Other matches may be acceptable if the learners can justify their ideas.

Finally, invite learners to add any extra principles of good customer care that they think are missing.

Invite learners to reflect on the learning process. Here are some suggestions of questions you could ask:

- What did you enjoy about working in a small group?
- What did you find difficult about working in a small group?
- What will you do differently the next time you work in a small group?

Alternative approaches

If your learners already have some knowledge of the principles of good customer care, you might just give them **Sheet 3.2: Customer encounter examples** and allow them to compile their own list of principles. Groups can then compare their efforts and reach a consensus on the most important ones.

The activity can also work as a card sort. Put each principle and each example onto separate cards. Give each group the two sets of cards and ask them to match them, while also saying whether an example is good or poor practice.

Learners could be just given the principles and asked to find an example that illustrates each principle. The example could be specific to their subject or vocational area.

Differentiation to meet individual needs

The activity allows learners to engage with the task at different levels. At a basic level, learners can contribute their views about whether something is good or bad practice. At the most advanced level, they can formulate their own principles.

You could increase the differentiation by devising your own examples, including some that are very easy to assess and others that are less clear cut and raise more complex issues.

The activity can be simplified by converting it into a card-matching task. In this case be prepared to pair up confident readers with less confident readers.

Careful grouping of learners can be used to ensure they get the most from the activity.

Challenges – What learners might do next

Learners could explore customer care further through engaging with some of the other customer care activities such as **Activity 4: Analysing a real customer encounter**.

Embedding literacy, language and numeracy (LLN)

Every learning activity includes many different opportunities to develop LLN skills. Always try to find a naturally-occurring opportunity where learners can immediately appreciate the relevance and importance of the skills they are learning to use.

Your LLN specialist will be able to help you to identify specific levels and curriculum references relevant to this activity and to create engaging learning activities to develop the skills.

The priority LLN skills that learners will need to complete this activity are speaking and listening to share and respond to ideas.

At Level 1, express clearly statements of fact, explanations, instructions, accounts and descriptions.

- Understand that, to convey meaning clearly in talk of more than a few moments, it is necessary to sustain concentration and keep the thread running.
(Adult literacy core curriculum reference SLc/L1.3)

At Level 2, express clearly statements of fact, explanations, instructions, accounts, descriptions using appropriate structure, style and vocabulary.

- Know and use an appropriate range of vocabulary and syntax in order to communicate more complex meanings.
(Adult literacy core curriculum reference SLc/L2.3)

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) learners should cope well with the **Sheet 4.2: Customer encounter examples**, which use everyday vocabulary. They may need support to understand the principles. It may be appropriate for them to go through the materials in advance, perhaps with a specialist ESOL teacher to help them.

Useful activities might include:

- Asking learners to speak for three minutes, summarising what they have learned about good customer care.

Sheet 3.1: Some principles of good customer care

1. Be approachable and welcoming.
2. Ask the right questions to find out what your customer needs.
3. Listen carefully and show that you understand how the customer is feeling.
4. Take responsibility for meeting your customer's needs – don't leave it to others or blame others.
5. Treat every customer as an individual and treat them with respect.
6. Be responsive. Go the extra mile to help the customer.
7. Be reliable. Don't make promises you can't keep.
8. Turn a complaint into something positive by dealing with it effectively.

Sheet 3.2: Customer encounter examples

Example A

Your printer has broken. The IT technician says, "I'll have a new one for you by the end of tomorrow." Three days later you still do not have a printer. The technician says, "Oh, the supplier only delivers once a week. It should be here soon."

Is this good practice?

Justify your answer by referring to a principle of good customer care.

Example B

When enrolling your child at nursery school, you explain that they have some behaviour problems which need careful handling. The nursery supervisor listens intently and then summarises what you have told him.

Is this good practice?

Justify your answer by referring to a principle of good customer care.

Example C

You are in the sandwich bar waiting to be served. There is just one person ahead of you. The assistant does not make eye contact with you until it is your turn to be served.

Is this good practice?

Justify your answer by referring to a principle of good customer care.

Example D

You recently had the gutters on your house replaced. One section was not fixed properly and is now leaking. You ring your builder to complain. He apologises and arrives within the hour to fix it.

Is this good practice?

Justify your answer by referring to a principle of good customer care.

Example E

You are in a cafe. You have been waiting a long time for your meal. You remind the waiter that your meal has not arrived. He says, "It's not my fault. Blame the chef."

Is this good practice?

Justify your answer by referring to a principle of good customer care.

Example F

You want to buy a waterproof jacket to take on a trekking trip abroad. The sales assistant sees you trying on jackets and asks, "May I help you? What do you want the jacket for?"

Is this good practice?

Justify your answer by referring to a principle of good customer care.

Example G

You have ordered a taxi. A taxi turns up from another firm. It turns out that the taxi you ordered broke down and all their other taxis were busy. So the driver called another firm and asked them to send a taxi.

Is this good practice?

Justify your answer by referring to a principle of good customer care.

Example H

You take your elderly grandmother to the doctors' surgery. The receptionist looks at you and says, "Who's she coming to see?"

Is this good practice?

Justify your answer by referring to a principle of good customer care.

Session plan

Aim: To introduce learners to the principles of good customer care.

Learning objectives/outcomes:

Learners should be able to:

- judge whether or not an action is an example of good practice in customer care
- justify their decisions.

Time	Teacher plan	Learner activity	Resources
0-15 min	<p>Stage 1 Explain the purpose of the activity. Invite learners to work in groups. Display, or give each group a copy of Sheet 3.1, and distribute copies of Sheet 3.2 to each learner.</p> <p>Set the task.</p>	Get into groups of three or four.	Sheet 3.1. Sheet 3.2.
15-35 min	<p>Stage 2</p>	Work through the examples on Sheet 3.2 to decide whether they are good or bad practice. Make a note of decisions.	Paper and pens.
35-55 min	<p>Stage 3 Invite groups to feed back their decisions and identify any extra principles of good customer care practice.</p>	Share decisions with other groups and identify any extra principles of good customer care practice.	

Assessment of learning objectives/outcomes

- Monitoring of pair discussions and feedback.
- Learners reflect on what they have learnt and how they learnt.

Differentiation to meet individual needs

For less confident learners:

- convert the activity into a card-matching task
- buddy up with more confident learners.

For more confident learners:

- formulate their own principles of good customer care.

Teacher evaluation

Consider which parts of the session were effective and why.

Learner feedback

Consider whether the activities were suitable for all learners and whether the session helped to develop the expert learners.

Personal, learning and thinking skills developed

- Team workers:
 - Reach agreements.
 - Manage discussions to achieve results.
 - Show fairness and consideration to others.
- Effective participators:
 - Present a persuasive case.

Literacy, language and numeracy skills developed

Language

At Level 1 and 2, use speaking and listening skills to contribute to discussions, sharing and responding to ideas.