

20 Obstacles to customer service

Aim

To consider the things that can get in the way of good customer service.

Overview

Participants choose a 'route' of customer service (for example, a telephone call, a letter, and so on) and then think about the obstacles that can get in the way to prevent the customer from feeling that they have experienced good service.

Numbers

Any number, working in groups of three or four.

What you need

Resource 1 – Obstacles to customer service

Handout 1 – The brief

Handout 2 – Action plan

Handout 3 – Report back (for evaluation)

A supply of flipchart paper and marker pens for each group

Preparation

1. Decide which 'route' of customer service you want the groups to work with.
2. Print out or photocopy Handout 1 – The brief (one per group).
3. Print out or photocopy Handout 2 – Action plan (one per participant).
4. Print out or photocopy Resource 1 – Obstacles to customer service, to use as a handout (optional).
5. Arrange the room so that participants can work in groups of three or four.

 **What to do****Activity** 05:00 **Groups**

Give each group a copy of Handout 1 – The brief, together with a supply of flipchart paper and some marker pens.

It may be appropriate to specify which route of 'customer service' you want them to concentrate on (for example, a telephone call, a letter, and so on).

If any of the groups need help, use Resource 1 – Obstacles to customer service, to prompt them.

Reflect 02:00 **Individuals**

Ask each group to display their sheet of flipchart paper so that all the participants can look at the other outputs.

Conclude 02:00 **Whole group**

Lead a discussion in which you gain consensus about the main obstacles that get in the way of good customer service.

Use Resource 1 – Obstacles to customer service, as a handout if appropriate.

Plan 01:00 **Individuals**

Give each participant a copy of Handout 2 – Action plan, and ask them to complete it.



- 😊 **Evaluation**
Two weeks after the session, send each participant a copy of Handout 3 – Report back, asking them to complete and return it.
- **Variation**
Participants could map out the customer 'route' on the floor of the training room and build physical barriers to represent the obstacles that they have identified.
- ➔ **Follow-on**
This session could lead into Session 21 Removing the obstacles.

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Obstacles to customer service

Here are a few of the things that can get in the way of good customer service:

<p>In general</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The staff member doesn't have the right knowledge. • The staff member doesn't have the right skill. • The staff member doesn't have the right attitude. • The customer has special needs (for example, they are disabled). • There are language difficulties/differences. • The customer doesn't have a technical understanding of the product/service. • The customer doesn't know what they want. • The customer has unrealistic expectations. • Inaccurate information is given, either to or by the customer.
<p>Telephone</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephones don't get answered. • The person the customer wants is not available. • Customers get passed from one person to another. • Customers are put on hold too often and for too long. • Voicemail is not responded to. • Messages are not taken or not followed up.
<p>Letter</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are backlogs or delays in replying. • The whole letter does not get replied to. • Letters contain spelling or grammatical errors.



Obstacles to customer service (continued)

Face to face

- Opportunities to build rapport are not taken.
- The customer cannot find the location.
- There are queues or delays.
- The premises are untidy or inconvenient.
- Customers cannot find what they want.

The brief

Turn one sheet of flipchart paper horizontal and draw a line from one side to the other.

Imagine that this line represents the 'route' that a customer takes when they are in contact with your organisation.

What are the things that get in the way of good service?

What are the obstacles or barriers in the way of customers before they get the service that they expect?

List these obstacles along the 'route' on the sheet flipchart paper.

You have 5 minutes.



Action plan

Following this session, I shall:

I shall start this by (date): _____

I have chosen this because:

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Signed _____

Date _____



Report back

As a result of the training session, I took the following action:

The result has been:

I now need to:

Signed _____

Date _____

Please complete this form and return it to:

By (date): _____

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