

Effective Business Communication

How to develop and maintain professional communications with customers

Course benefits:

Effective and professional communication with customers is essential in today's business. It does not matter how the communication is effected, whether face to face or written, by mail or email, whether formal or informal, we are projecting an image and that image must be professional and show our concern for good customer service. When this culture applies also to the internal customers of the business, support and management processes are accomplished more effectively and with less stress for the customer, the team and the individual.

This course examines the role of communications in business and their impact on customer service. It reviews different forms of communication and the ways in which our expectations and attitudes, and those of the customer, affect the success of each contact, most particularly the behaviours that we and they exhibit. Effective communication involves working with others whatever their position, to ensure that we get things done. This in turn enables us to enjoy a respectful and beneficial working relationship with our team, our customers, and indeed anyone with whom we must cooperate to get things done.

Who should attend:

Anyone who works in a service oriented environment and who has a responsibility to deal with both customers and colleagues in a professional and courteous way.

Anyone who has contact with customers in whatever role and through whatever medium.

What you will learn:

On successful completion of the course, attendees will be able to:

- Describe the different forms of communication and the benefits and problems of each
- Exhibit a clear understanding of what constitutes good communication
- Provide a professional, courteous and effective service to customers
- Communicate more effectively through planning customer contacts
- Apply techniques to solve problems
- Behave assertively when handling difficult situations

What you will cover:

- Communication – how we communicate; how to communicate in different situations; methods of communication; engaging with your customer in meetings and when on the telephone; active listening; body language and positive posture; choosing the most appropriate medium, particularly when and when not to use e-mail; class exercise to describe the skills most needed when answering the telephone; team exercise to describe the process for handling a call
- Customer Service – principles of a customer oriented organisation; what customer service is; the effects of good and bad customer service; being professional, some simple but effective rules; class voting on aspects of the work and assessment of current levels of skill; team exercise on who the customer is and what service they require; class exercise to define current feelings about the customers and their perception of the support they receive

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- Problem Solving – understanding what the problem is; taking ownership of a problem; keeping the sufferer informed; choosing the most appropriate course of action; planning and implementing the change; the process used
- Handling Difficult Situations – understanding why customers complain; how complaints arise and develop; handling complaints; understanding why customers are, or appear to be, difficult; influencing and assertiveness; arriving at a win-win situation; team exercise to define what it is that makes a situation difficult; class exercise to employ a process for reducing tension and bringing together the parties involved
- The Assertiveness Model – Behavioural Types – Passive, Aggressive, Assertive and Passive/Aggressive; how to recognise these types of behaviour; how others label you through their reading of the way you act and the body language you exhibit; four key indicators – eye contact, tone, posture and phrasing
- Behaviour – Why we behave as we do; how different types of behaviour affect the outcomes achieved; understanding our own behaviour through Eric Berne's Ego State Model and 'Drivers'; understanding the situation and learning to adjust your behaviour to achieve a desired outcome; recognising our 'in-built' feelings about a given situation; how feelings can dictate negative behaviour; thinking before acting; how we can think more assertively and use our thought process to influence our behaviour; knowing our rights as individuals and members of a team; respecting that other people also have rights and that theirs are similar to, or the same as, your own
- Assertive Behaviour – Staying in control; acknowledging and analysing the situation; responding to another person's wants by explaining how one feels and by describing wants of your own; using repetition to reinforce your message
- Developing Assertiveness – How to develop your newfound skills; a reusable process for assertiveness and a process for improving your abilities over time; being assertive outside the working environment

How you will learn:

Discussion, multiple exercises and simulations make this a stimulating course. Role-plays are used to simulate customer contacts, with instructor and peer review throughout. Participants should recognise that the instructor will ensure that this is a safe environment for them to practice and to improve.

Duration and availability:

Two days non-residential. In-house only.