



UNIT-4

Solving Customer's Problem

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

Unit 4

Solving Customer's Problem

The Process

So far we have looked at a process to help us solve problems in general. Now, let's look at a specific process that we can use to resolve a customer's problem.

1. Express respect
2. Listen to understand
3. Uncover their expectations
4. Repeat the specifics of their problem
5. Look for possible solutions
6. Take action and follow through
7. Double check for satisfaction

Practice

Role Play

Situation One: Happy Burgers

Jane is working at Happy Burgers alone one night. A customer comes in and orders a Super Smiley Meal. This customer then changes his mind and wants a Beamer Special. He then changes his mind again and wants a Smirky Sundae. He becomes frustrated because Jane can't get his order right.

Situation Two: Your Cash Bank

Sam walks into the bank one day to take money out of his account. The teller informs him that that account has been closed due to suspicion of criminal activity. Sam becomes very upset and demands to speak to the supervisor, who is not in.

Situation Three: Acme Widgets Inc.

On her way to work, Erin stops in at Acme Widgets to pick up her company's order. She is told that their order hasn't been received and will need to be placed again. This is the fourth time that this has happened this year and Erin is not happy.

Situation Four: Fresh Veggies

Tom is planning a big birthday dinner and goes to Fresh Veggies to get everything he needs. He's particularly excited about the fresh berries that the store's flyer promised. However, when he arrives at the store, there are none to be found. A cashier tells him they are out of stock.

Situation Five: Leaky Pipes

Jacob calls in a plumber to fix his leaky bathtub. He goes downstairs to let the plumber do his work. He returns to the bathroom to find the plumber asleep in the bathtub and the work uncompleted.

Situation Six: We Fix It

Joan calls technical support one evening to fix a recurring problem with her computer. She is told that the computer is supposed to do this and there is nothing they can do. Naturally, she is not very happy about this.

The Recovery Process

Once a customer problem is identified, the service recovery process should begin. Not all of the six steps described below are needed for all customers. Use what you know about your products and services, and what you can discover about your customers' problems, to customize your actions to the specific situation. One size doesn't fit all.

You should always take immediate steps to solve problems. The sense of urgency you bring to the problem solving tells your customers that recovery is important to you and to your organization.

Apologize.

It doesn't matter who is at fault. Customers want someone who will acknowledge that a problem occurred and show concern.

Listen and empathize.

Treat your customers in a way that shows you care about them as well as about their problem. People have feelings and emotions. They want the personal side of the transaction acknowledged.

Fix the problem quickly and fairly.

A "fair fix" is one that's delivered with a sense of professional concern. At the end of the day, customers want what they expected to receive in the first place. The sooner, the better.

Offer atonement.

It's not uncommon for dissatisfied customers to feel injured or put out by a service breakdown. Often they will look to you to provide some value-added gesture that says, in a manner appropriate to the problem, "I want to make it up to you."

Keep your promises.

Service recovery is needed because a customer believes a service promise has been broken. During the recovery process, you will often make new promises. When you do, be realistic about what you can and can't deliver.

Follow up.

You can add a pleasant extra to the recovery sequence by following up a few hours, days, or weeks later to make sure things really were resolved to your customer's satisfaction. Don't assume you've fixed the problem. Check to be sure.

The Fifth Critical Element – Measure It

Tools to Use

Wouldn't it be great if all of our customers were happy and we didn't have to deal with complaints or problems? The only way to know what's really going right and wrong is to measure regularly. When we rely on our memories, we can let a lot of things slip away.

Critical Evaluation

You can measure a particular service or product in great detail. Follow up with customers and ask what's working, what can be improved, and how much they like it. Also ask what could be done differently to develop options. Then assess the advantages and disadvantages to determine whether it makes sense to make changes.

Informal Surveys

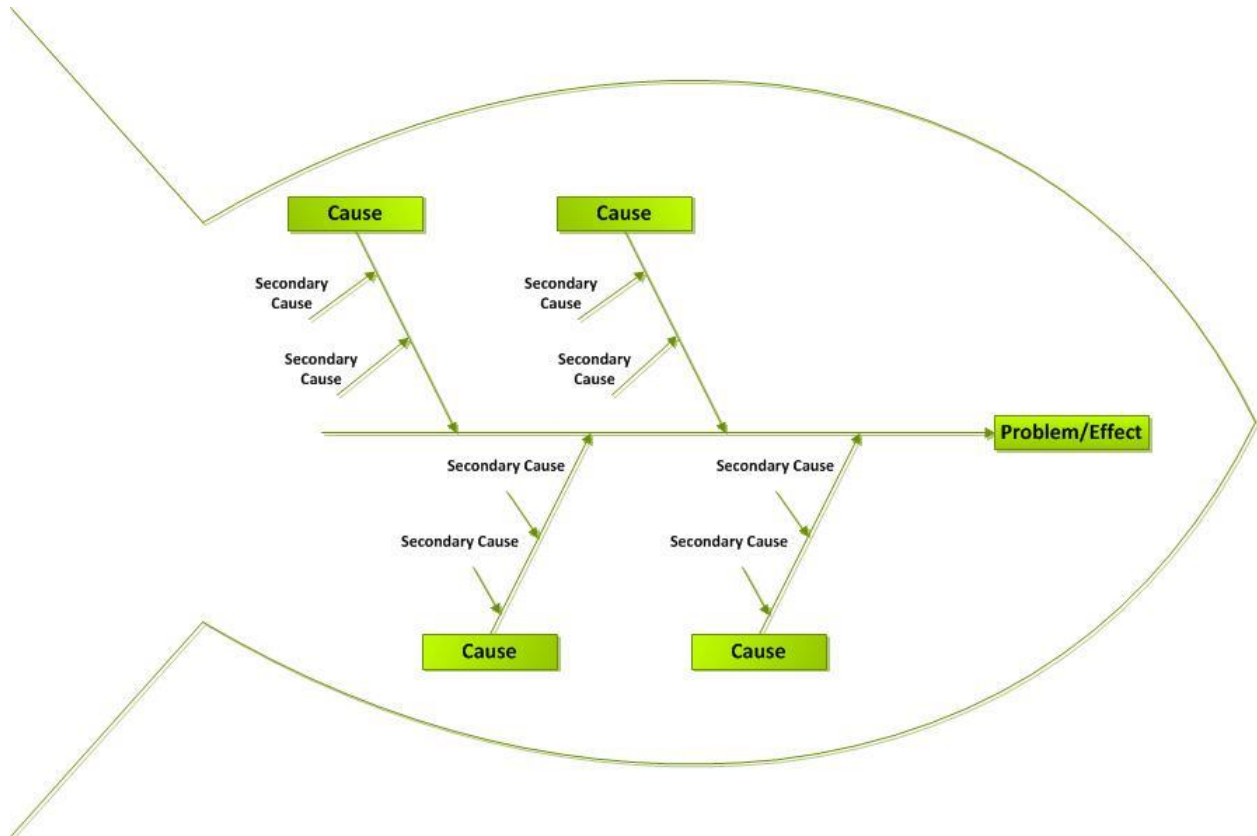
Ask your customers what they want. Ask them how you are doing. If you ask the same questions from one year to the next, you can compare periods of time. Offer your customers a gift to thank them for participating.

Focus Groups

These usually have eight to ten participants who are pre-screened for subject matter experience. During the focus group, a moderator discusses specific issues with participants. These are very structured sessions, and after group discussion, the moderator produces the results in a report format. Don't try this if you haven't participated in one or done sufficient research into focus group structure, questioning, and analysis. If done well, expect to get lots of detailed feedback and to have a very good understanding of what the group thinks.

Fishbone (Cause and Effect, or Root Cause)

This method is used to identify the causes of a problem. Each major bone of the fish has a heading that is a cause of the problem, such as Equipment, Systems, Processes, People, and Environment. The head of the fish is the problem. This method allows participants to discuss the problem and categorize possible reasons under the headings. Each heading is then examined to determine if it is causing a symptom until the root cause is determined. The fish bone is a way to combine brainstorming with a visual representation that organizes the information at the same time.



Brainstorming

Everyone in the group makes suggestions and shares ideas. All ideas are considered. Ground rules establish that there are no poor or stupid ideas. No critical comments are allowed during the brainstorming activity. The point is that although an individual idea may not be feasible, someone might use that idea and expand on it to create a fantastic idea.

Benchmarking

See how others do what you do and use their ideas if they are applicable. Sometimes you can simply ask and they will let you know how they do things. Otherwise, you will have to do some research, or measure yourself at a particular time and set your benchmarks from there. Benchmarking is helpful whether you are looking at systems, processes, or methods.

The Sixth Critical Element – Reinforce It

Reinforcement Techniques

Once an organization decides how they are approaching customer service and makes a commitment to their processes, they must live up to the expectations that they have subscribed to. Just as important, those practices must be reinforced.

If you are receiving pay (hourly, salary, or by commission), then you are getting paid to do your job, and that is often reinforcement enough to deliver what is expected. Sometimes companies will put enhanced reinforcement in place by doing things such as:

- Having customers complete a survey about the service they received
- Having supervisors observe when we do good work and provide some kind of recognition
- Celebrating when targets are met, like an increase in returning customers

All of these activities are a way to reinforce our commitment to providing excellent customer service. They reflect the relationships we build within the organization and with our customer base.

Developing and Maintaining Relationships

Relationships are the key to a functional, positive team. There are several parts involved when developing and maintaining relationships with your team members.

Clear Expectations

Every partner in a relationship has certain expectations of other partners. Most expectations remain unspoken until they have been violated. One way to develop and maintain effective relationships is to make your expectations of one another clear.

Recognizing the Reciprocal Quality of Relationships

We can use the reciprocal nature of our relationship with others to establish interpersonal cooperation and trust. Remember two clichés: “It’s a two-way street,” and, “You only get back what you give.”

Understanding Different Communication Styles

We can communicate more successfully with others and establish more meaningful relationships if we not only understand others' styles, but can also attune our styles to theirs.

Recognizing the Power of Your Behavior

The secret to success is not very hard to figure out. The better you are at connecting with other people, the better the quality of your life. Is there a natural talent for getting along with people or is it something we can learn? The truth is that it's a bit of both.

Connecting with other people brings infinite rewards. Connecting is what our ancestors were doing thousands of years ago when they gathered around the fire to eat woolly mammoth steaks.

Likeability Works

No matter what you do or where you live, the quality of your attitude determines the quality of your relationships—not to mention just about everything else in your life. The good news is that attitudes are yours to select. And if you are free to choose any one you please, why not choose a really useful attitude?

In face-to-face situations, your attitude precedes you. It is the central force in your life—it controls the quality and appearance of everything you do.

Power Talk

Phrases for Customer Service Success

Ten Most Helpful Phrases

1. I care.
2. I'd like to understand. Help me to understand.
3. How are things with you?
4. Let's define the problem.
5. This is what I heard you say.
6. Let me put this another way.
7. How can I help you? Can I do anything to help?
8. What would you do?
9. Thank you.
10. Silence, with concern.

Ten Least Helpful Phrases

1. You shouldn't feel that way.
2. Why did you do/say that?
3. That's not important.
4. I know exactly how you feel.
5. I know what you are going to say.
6. How come you're not as good as...?
7. Do you want to know what I think? Here's what you should do.

8. I told you so.
9. Any phrase that contains the words always, never, all the time, everyone or permanently.
10. Silence without concern/indifference.

How to Feel Powerful in Your Position

What comes out of our mouths can strengthen our relationships with our customers, or weaken our place in their heart. Along with our knowledge, skills, abilities, and a willingness to provide excellent customer service, the words we use with our customers are so powerful that they can build or destroy relationships.

Power Talk examples:

- “That may be so, but....” can be changed to “That may be so, and...”
- Instead of “I disagree,” how about, “I understand. Let’s consider another viewpoint.”
- Change, “I think I got that,” to, “Let’s verify that.”
- Change, “I’m so sorry, I’m afraid I’ve forgotten your name,” to, “Hello I’m.....”

Whether at work or in your personal life, people who make things happen learn how to phrase their words so they are encouraging and decisive. We can project positive expectations, both in ourselves and in others, by remembering some basics of good communication.

Project Positive Expectations

| If you’re going to say... | Try instead... |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| I’ll have to | I’ll be glad to |
| I’ll try | I will |
| I’d hate to | I want to |
| I can’t | I haven’t yet, and I can |
| If you can | When will you |
| This is a terrible problem | This is a challenging opportunity |
| I’m never any good at ... | I’m improving at.... |
| I’ll spend time/money | I’ll invest time and money |
| That’s impossible | That can be done |

Give Credit Where It's Due

| If you're going to say... | Try instead... |
|-----------------------------|---|
| I really just got lucky | I planned well and worked hard |
| I've never done this before | This is an opportunity to learn |
| I'm getting too old | I feel good. I have lots of experience. |
| They did a good job | You did a good job! |

Rebound from Failure

| If you're going to say... | Try instead... |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| I failed | I learned |
| I can see negative consequences | I can see positive consequences |
| I'm a loser | I'm a winner |

Accept Responsibility

| If you're going to say... | Try instead... |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| They make me so mad | I feel mad when |
| I don't have enough time | I can manage my time |
| It's the other guy's fault | It's my responsibility |
| Someone else will do it | I will take care of it myself |
| I can't change things | I choose to make the best of what is |

Further Reading: