THE CASE FOR LEGITIMACY

A tiger met a lion as they drank beside the pool.
Tell me,” said the tiger, “why you’re roaring like a fool.”
“It’s not foolish, “ said the lion with a twinkle in his eyes.
“They call me King of Beasts and it pays to advertise.”
A little rabbit overheard and ran home like a streak.
He thought he’d try the lion’s plan but only made a squeak.

And a hungry fox that morning had his breakfast in the woods.

It doesn’t pay to advertise unless you have the goods!

Anon.
CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS

What is a legitimate need and expectation of a client? Generally it is formed either from a learned experience through contact with a similar business or business generally. It can also come from an image presented by advertising or the media - or from your own words, deeds and actions.

If you yourself create an unrealistic expectation in your customers, then you must be prepared to be accountable for the results.

It is possible to create bad expectations by being too willing to be of service and with the best of intent. If you give too much away, customers (especially internal customers) may try to exploit your good intentions. They often expect the work to be done yesterday and get their feathers ruffled when you propose more realistic time-frames.

Living up to this kind of expectation places a person in a double bind. A reputation for being reliable and efficient is essential, but do not create a situation where you can be abused.

There is a fine line between unrealistic expectations and workplace bullying.

Take some time each day to examine what went well and what went wrong. Use your client’s eyes to appraise your service. Are there any points at which you are always coming to grief?

So, how do you establish the legitimate needs of your customers and customers?

YOU ASK THEM!

Legitimate needs, illegitimate response

During some seminars I attended with an international organisation, the promise was made of a freecall line where informed advice could be obtained on personal issues and in crisis. Help, we were assured, was available constantly. If the person sought was not available, then the message would be routed to another person for speedy response.

I did seek to use this service. On one occasion, I waited for three weeks to be told simply that the person was not available. On another, I waited so long that I had already found a solution elsewhere. One call was never acknowledged.

When this was questioned, an arrogant letter implying dishonesty in my claim, was the reply.

The legitimate expectation I had formed, created by a senior representative of the organisation, regarding After-sales service was not met.

The organisation now has little credibility in my eyes and will receive no more custom or referrals.

Moral: If you value your credibility, make promises only if your organisation can honour them.

Avoiding the ‘Postal Worker’ syndrome

Make sure that you always follow the organisation’s customer service policy and procedures. However, there is an aspect of this that can infuriate customers. I call it the ‘po-face’ response.

How many times have you contacted a government department or a bank, or any other service organisation and got “BLAH-BLAH-BLAH” and not an honest and direct answer to your request?

Some people think that quoting the policy statement means that the policy is actually being implemented. They never get to the point of really dealing with your legitimate needs. This makes you mad, right? Angry customers who feel they have been treated unjustly can become abusive customers.

When you are given a copy of an organisation’s policy to follow, always ask your supervisor “How can I use this to make life easier for the customer?”

Moral: Never put on a ‘po-face’ when you get dressed in the morning.
I was told recently of a print shop, specialising in wedding stationery, who lifted their sales by more than 20% through one little phrase that they asked their staff to use when a customer walked in the door:

“In order that I may serve you better, please tell me about the wedding you are planning.”

People love to talk about themselves, their plans and their dreams. Every successful salesperson knows this. If you think, “This does not apply to me. I am not selling anything”, think again!

Your business is people, and in order to provide them with a service, you have to:

- Find out exactly what they want
- Find out what their expectations are of you
- Convince them to buy your services and products if they are unsure
- Convince them that they need to make changes in their lives if they are to get the most benefit from what you are offering
- Satisfy them that what they get from you is the best they can buy anywhere.

In other words, you have to first find out what they want and convince them that you have the answers they are looking for. You might not think of this as selling, but all transactions between people involve the exchange of ideas and beliefs. All salespeople do is focus on the wishes and beliefs of others to move them from inaction to action on something. Isn’t that what you do when:

You provide an advisory service?

Want your client to come back rather than go elsewhere?

Want them to tell someone else how well they were treated by you?

Want them to make a buying decision of some kind?

Want them to come back and refer their friends and relatives?

Please go to page 18 of your Assessment Manual and complete Task Six

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TO BE AN ACTIVE LISTENER:

- open your eyes, ears, intuition and heart
- discern between hearing and listening
- engage empathy
- observe non-verbal signals for contextual clues
- note the key points of the speaker
- listen for the language clues that tell you frame of reference

TO REMOVE BARRIERS TO UNDERSTANDING:

- suspend your own value system
- clarify any points that you do not understand
- use open questions to draw out deeper meaning
- ask ‘how, why and what’ to open up the conversation
- work towards the speaker proposing their own solutions
- limit your responsibility to gaining a clearer understanding of the issues
- work towards the speaker assuming responsibility for own actions
LISTEN

When I ask you to listen to me and you start giving me advice, you have not done what I ask.
When I ask you to listen to me and you begin to tell me why I shouldn’t feel that way, you are trampling on my feelings.
When I ask you to listen to me and you feel that you have to do something to solve my problems, you have failed me, strange as that may seem.
Listen, all I ask is that you listen. Not talk or do - just hear me.
And I can do for myself; I am not helpless. Maybe discouraged and faltering, but not helpless.
When you do something for me that I can and need to do for myself, you contribute for my fear and weakness.
But when you accept as a simple fact that I do feel what I feel, no matter how irrational, then I quit trying to convince you and can get about the business of understanding what’s behind the irrational feeling.
And when that’s clear, the answers are obvious and I don’t need advice.
So, please listen and just hear me, and if you want to talk, wait a minute for your turn
and
I’ll listen to you.

Source unknown
ACTIVE LISTENING

The ability to be a good listener is not something you are born with. Everyone has to work at this. Most people only develop this with time and experience, though some have more aptitude than others.

What makes a good listener is the *intent* to put the needs and opinion of the other person before your own and to apply some tried and true skills to make sure you maintain *focus*. Firstly, you have to be in the right frame of mind to listen well. You must be:

- **ready** to hear the message;
- **able** to hear the message;
- **willing** to focus on the message;
- **prepared** to make a mental note of the message;
- **interested** in analysing the message;
- **considerate** of learning from the message.

I have certain words because they are the best way to achieve the desired results.

Active listening is a vital part of client contact. Without it you cannot determine your client needs and wants, estimate their consumer preferences or make sales.

To be truly effective you need skills in interpreting both language and nonverbal clues. Listen for the little things which tell you how the person is really feeling and reacting.

Often a client using an advisory service may only tell you what they *think* you want to know. Others might not have formulated a clear set of questions that they want you to assist them with. In both these cases, you have to use sensitive questioning techniques.

Some people are reluctant to disclose personal information. You have to employ empathy to encourage the person to open up. This requires the building of a professional relationship based on trust and respect.

Of course, you may well find the opposite and be faced with a client who tells all. When this happens, you will have to be careful to maintain your professionalism.

Employ open question techniques (those which encourage more than a yes/no answer) to draw the client out. Be patient; wait for the client to come up with the responses.

If you need to get more information, try asking the question another way. Repeating what the client has said to you can also be helpful to make sure that you understand exactly what they are asking you to do for them.

“Now let me see if I have got this straight. You want me to call Mr. X on your behalf and arrange an appointment for Thursday. You expect to be home by 1.30 and I can contact you on your home phone number. Right, I have written it all down and I will call you back soon.”
ASSESSMENT RECORD

Student Name: 

Student Number: 

Postcode: 

e-mail: 

Assessor/Trainer: 

Telephone: 

e-mail: 

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Assessor’s comments: 

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Assessor Signature: 

Student Signature: 

Sign-off date: 

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TASK FOUR: MOMENTS OF TRUTH
This is a Moment of Truth I experienced with another organisation:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

In my organisation, it would be possible to create a negative service impression because:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

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I can prevent errors, omissions and defects in my response to customers service by:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

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________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

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________________________________________________________________________

When they leave, they take with them these good impressions because:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

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________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
The six main requirements of our organisation’s customer service policy are: