

Customer service in the leisure industry essay sample

[Business](#), [Customers](#)



Introduction to customer service

Excellent customer service is the biggest and least expensive favour you can do yourself and your business. To stay viable, any business depends on both new customers and on repeat customers. The old adage that “ the customer is always right” isn’t correct, of course, but it should be your guiding light in dealing with your customers. Even if you have a situation where you must disagree totally with your customer, you need to do it in a win/win way. No one likes to be backed into a corner or told that they’re dumb or a deadbeat (even if they are). You need to be assertive but not aggressive, and allow your customer to walk away from your discussion feeling he has been treated fairly, and that you’re an okay person.

In the leisure and recreation industry customer service is very important. Where you mainly provide a service you have to deal with many issues that arise from customers. In this investigation I am going to look into different types of customer service situations and I will evaluate two leisure organisations to see how they deal with customers.

Task 1: dealing with customers

During my work placement as part of this unit, I encountered many different situations that arose with customers these situations ranged from face to face. Telephone, in writing and handling complaints. Each different situation needed handling in different ways in which suited the situation for instance I would change the tone of my voice or adjust my body language to keep the customer welcome.

Face-to-face situations

1. The first real situation that I had to deal with was with a group of death and dumb people that use the gym. This was a face-to-face encounter. They came over to me to ask for help on one of the treadmills. They wanted the incline to be flat rather than on a hill as it was set on. As I have had no training in dealing with this type of situation I had to think on the spot of how to deal with it. What I did was speak slowly and clearly, which still didn't seem to work so as I explained things to them I actually showed them how to do it. This seemed to work and they were very thankful for my help. This type of customer was disabled and a group.

2. My second face-to-face encounter was to try and get someone to join our gym. It was on my third day on work experience and I had just learnt about the different types of memberships available. Gentlemen came into reception and asked about joining. Normally we pass them on to a member of our sales team but no one was in at that point so I took the role of the sales team. I asked the gentlemen if he would like a tour of our facility. Whilst showing him around I spoke in a formal manor about the equipment and services on offer to our members. I used a lot of persuasive language during the conversation. Then when we went back down stairs and sat down I told him about the various promotions and deals that we had on at that point. He seemed very interested which made me more confident in trying to get him to sign up. I went and got the application forms he filled them out and then he was a member. This was my first ever sale but it was quite easy

because the gentlemen already wanted to join without being persuaded. This type of customer was an individual.

Telephone situations

At fitness first there are many different telephone situations that are used. On reception I had to take bookings for classes and take messages for staff, also I had to provide information to people regarding many different things such as our timetables and prices.

1. One situation that stands out to me whilst I was on reception was that I had to give clear directions to someone who had got lost whilst trying to look for us. Firstly they phoned asking how to get here from their house. This was easy for me to do, as I knew the area that they were coming from. I spoke in a clear manner giving simple directions. I spoke slowly as I could tell that the customer was writing the details down. Then the customer phoned about twenty minutes later saying that they had copied the instructions down and was lost. What I then did was stay on the phone talking to her friend next to her whilst she was driving. I directed her to the centre within two or three minutes. The customer was very grateful and apologetic for having to ring twice. This type of customer was a businesswoman.

2. The second phone situation that I was in was a follow up call. This was made to the gentlemen that I had signed up the week before. This was an informal phone call to see how he was getting on to find out if he had any problems and if he knew any one else who would like to join. When I spoke to him he seemed very happy with the facilities and the service provided by the

staff he said that he has never had so much value for money before and didn't realise how dedicated the staff are to helping the customers. This phone call was very easy for the customer and myself due to the fact that we had built a rapport with each other so it was easy to have a conversation. I adapted my tone of voice to a more friendly welcoming tone than the formal persuasive language used to get him to join. This type of customer was an individual.

Writing situation

1. My situation in writing was to invite people to an open wine and cheese evening exclusive to members. This letter went out to members to our facility, I had to type the letter but our head receptionist sent them all out to people. Enclosed is a copy of the letter;

Fitness first Swindon west

Chelmsford road

Swindon

Wiltshire

Sn5 7nx

Dear member

I am writing to you today regarding our open evening at fitness first which is exclusive to our members only. We are inviting you to come along to our

wine and cheese night to meet other members and socialise with our guests and staff. At this evening we are putting on a buffet and drinks.

The evening is Wednesday 23rd April 2003 and starts at 7pm and will finish at 11pm I am looking forward to seeing you there.

Yours sincerely

David Lloyd

Handling a complaint

1. My second instance of writing to a customer is in receipt of this letter:

I have written a letter of response to this letter answering the issues that have been raised.

Museum

Swindon

Wiltshire

Sn5 7px

Dear Mr R. N. Scales

I am writing today to thank you for your letter regarding the issues that arose. I received your letter on the 24. 03. 03 and as promised I am replying within ten working days.

Regarding the complaint about the long queue on arrival and staff not informing you about the other entrance. I apologise for this and I am happy to inform you that our staffs are in the process of going through our new training program for full and part time staff, which will increase efficiency and staff attitudes towards customers.

Our museum is aimed at children and adults of all ages in your opinion it was not suitable for 9-15 year olds our members of staff and myself feel the facilities are more than adequate for this age group and that is why you would have been informed that it was suitable. We are now introducing more exhibits to the museum to keep people interested in coming.

I apologise for the situation regarding the disabled toilets. I would like to inform you that the reason that our duty manager keeps the key is because in the past we have had a lot of trouble with vandalism so therefore the toilet is to be kept locked. I have now said that the key must stay behind reception so that it is always accessible for staff to use. The problem with the hygiene is a fair point that the duty manager made about the cleaner not turning up but I have had a word with him and informed him that some one should of cleaned them and that you should never blame some one else.

Regarding the incident in the cafeteria as I have already said staff are being trained and will be more efficient and friendly rather than pointing the blame towards the customers I am sorry for the way that the member of staff treated this incident.

We are introducing a new way of helping customers to find other local leisure facilities and town centres this scheme will mean that all staff are trained in local knowledge or will pass you on to someone in our facility that will be able to help you next time.

Again I would like to thank you for bringing these incidents to my attention and I would like to offer you and your group a complimentary pass to our museum and I guarantee you that your experience will be an enjoyable one

Yours truly

David Lloyd

Handling a complaint is very important in this business. The manner in which you do so could reflect very highly or very badly. There are many different types of complaints made be by face-to-face, telephone or in a letter.

2. At fitness first I came across one main complaint and that was when one of the coaches phoned in sick and no one else could take the class that they were meant to be doing in the evening. In most classes you have a list of people going to be in that class with their contact numbers so you can phone them and let them know that the class is going to be cancelled but the pilates group class you just turn up to therefore you cannot inform people that it won't be on. Most people who turned up were fine and understanding but one lady in particular got very angry about the situation and I had to deal with her. Firstly I stood there with very open body language listening to what she had to say and then I tried to explain to her in a soft

tone of voice what the situation was. She wasn't happy and said that she wanted to make a complaint so I went through the procedure with her and filled out the comments form. The next day I phoned her and she had calmed down a lot he informed her that what they had agreed she would receive in writing within the next two weeks.

Task 2: evaluating performance with customer situations

In this section I am going to evaluate my performance and suggest key points that I could do to make my performance better and deal with the situation better. In the leisure industry you come across many different types of situations and to be able to do better in the next situation you need to be able to evaluate your self to think of how you could improve.

Face-to-face

1. The first situation I had was with the death and dumb people. This situation was difficult for, as I have never had any training in dealing with this type of person let alone customer. I feel that I handled the situation to the best of my ability at the time. The situation was difficult because there was no one else around to help me so I had to think fast and on my feet. In this situation the only way I think that I could improve is if I have training to understand and respond to this type of disabled group.
2. The second situation was a face-to-face encounter to get someone to join the gym. I hadn't had any proper training at the time to deal with sales but I had watched the others and picked up the general idea of it. To be honest I

didn't feel very comfortable with what I was selling because it was my first occasion and my product knowledge wasn't brilliant. Although I made the sale I feel that the customer was always going to join but you always have to give them a tour and go through the forms with them. I feel that I could improve in this area a lot firstly by having the proper appropriate training secondly by being more confident in front of the customer i. e. eye contact and open body language. I feel that my language was well presented I spoke loudly and clearly. I think that practice makes perfect for instance I might try some role-play to gain more confidence.

Telephone situation

1. My third situation was giving directions over the phone. This was difficult, as I had to think quickly about where they were coming from and where we were situated in accordance to them. Firstly I gave directions and then they rang back because they got lost. This in a way makes my directions look incorrect but I feel that I spoke in a clear manor and gave clear and precise directions to the customer. The one problem though was that she was on a mobile phone line, which wasn't to clear; therefore I adapted my tone of voice so that she could understand me better. Luckily I live in the area so I was able to think quickly to direct her. To improve on my performance I feel that I should of gone over the directions twice which I didn't do to make sure she copied them down correctly.

2. The fourth situation that I came across was also on the telephone and it involved calling a new member to find out how they were getting on. I had

good training for this and I was the one who signed the gentlemen to the gym so I had already built a rapport with him. I found it quite easy to talk to him and ask if he's enjoying it and if he has any problems. The one thing I found difficult was asking him for friends or families telephone numbers who may be interested in joining. I found it difficult because I felt a bit cheeky but I asked and he was willing to help. The thing that I could improve on is talking slower on the phone I tend to babble on as if it were face-to-face sale but on the phone people can't always understand me.

Writing situation

1. My fifth situation was a letter to all new and old members to invite them to and evening at fitness first. This was quite easy as I was taught the format of letters at school but if I am honest I tried to make the letter longer but just sticking to the information needed. In the end I realise that I should just provide the information in a pleasant and formal manner, which was appropriate for the situation. I feel that after more practice the letters will flow and I will be able to do them quicker unlike this one that took me half an hour.

Handling a complaint

1. My final situation was in writing and it was a reply to a letter of complaint made by a customer. Dealing with this situation was difficult because I have never done it before and it was a sensitive situation. Firstly I covered all of the points raised by the customer and offered an explanation for these problems then I apologised and offered a free pass for the group to use.

Before sending the letter I had it looked over and they said I didn't need to change it. I feel that to improve in this situation it would pay to practice responding to old letters of complaints that we have on file to learn to tackle different situations.

Task 3: use two different leisure facilities and give examples of practices and procedures used

In this section I am looking at the aims of the companies and organisations. Most aims are to generate maximum sales or to increase numbers using the facilities in the council's aims. I am going to look at how these organisations use their procedures and practices to achieve the aims.

Fitness first

Firstly I am going to use fitness first in west Swindon. This organisation is a privately owned one therefore their main objective is to obtain maximum sales in a year to increase profit. The way to do this is to offer good competitive rates and excellent customer service.

There are many different practices and procedures they go by to keep customer happiness and to increase the excellent levels of service provided. Fitness first various complimentary services to keep customer happy here is a list:

We will ensure that in all our facilities there is a free DVD and video library.

They do this by having a separate room in the facility where people go and choose what they want take it to reception and off they go.

We will ensure that in all of our facilities there will be a complimentary juice bar for all members.

They do this by having a separate lounge where members can relax before, during and after a work out.

We will ensure that in all of our facilities we provide complimentary toiletries.

They do this by having shower gel and shampoo containers in the showers for people to use.

We will ensure that once a month all our members receive a free monthly magazine about fitness first.

They do this by mailing them out each month.

We will ensure that in each one of our facilities we will provide a free newspaper stand.

They do this by having the papers by the door for customers to just pick up.

We will ensure that we provide entertainment calendars all year round to our members.

They do this by having the calendars in a rack on the reception that is clearly visible.

We will ensure that each facility provides free members only Car Park.

They do this by having gates at the car park that only the member know the code to.

We will ensure that upon joining the gym you will receive a free gym pack.

When you join Fitness First, you will receive:

- * Headphones for use with Cardio Theatre
- * Fitness First Training Towel
- * 3 Personalised Fitness Programmes
- * 2 Guest Passes for your friends or family
- * Beauty and Personal Training Vouchers
- * 1 Free Sun bed Session

These things may only seem small but they keep customers happy and it helps to keep them loyal to the club they join. Other procedures are the comments box that they use. They use the word comments because it encourages constructive criticism and problems and they can be anonymous comments or members can put their names down so that we can respond on a personal level. The actual complaints procedure is as so: a face to face complaint you deal with on the spot and try to come to a compromise to make the customer happy, a letter they say they will always reply to within 10 working days. A telephone you will ask to meet them face-to-face to come

up with a compromise. All complaints are recorded and kept on file for a year so if a similar complaint occurs you can recognise the problem and decide if it is a persistent one.

Another key procedure is for the use of sun beds and health rooms. Before someone can use a sun bed they must fill out a health questionnaire, which is then marked by a member of staff who then tells you the longest amount of time that you are allowed to stay on in one period.

The policy about counselling contracts with the club is that you need to give a clear 30 days notice by means of a written or typed letter. This is important for record purposes.

Policies about staff are that they are always to be in appropriate uniform for the department they work on for instance reception you wear black trousers shoes and a red fitness first blazer and the gym staff wear the t-shirts and trousers or shorts.

This is essential to customer service so they can notice the correct workers that they need to approach.

The link centre

Next I am going to look at the Swindon borough council's criteria. Their criteria are to provide a service to the public with good customer service to increase the number of people using the facilities. Their main aim is to provide the general community of Swindon with facilities appropriate for

sport and recreation. Councils in general don't have to provide a specific amount of facilities but luckily Swindon has a lot to offer.

Their procedures and practices used are so:

We aim to ensure that our centre offers a range of activities for all ages with special classes when needed.

They do this by having over 50s gym sessions.

We aim to ensure that we offer a range of activities to do at our centre by providing the following facilities:

- * Ice rink
- * 25m deck level swimming pool
- * Active Lifestyle Centre (gym)
- * Climbing wall
- * Multi-purpose sports hall (eight-court)
- * Squash courts
- * Meeting rooms (available for hire)
- * Snooker hall
- * Children's play area
- * Cafeteria

- * Bar

- * Library

- * Free car parking

We aim to ensure that our facility is always clean for use. They do this by having a contracted company at night and general workers in the day.

We will ensure that our staff wear uniform all of the time so that if customers need any thing they know whom to come to. They do this by giving free uniform with the distinctive Swindon logo on it.

We aim to ensure that all members of staff are happy and helpful around customers. They do this by monitoring staff and those who aren't have monthly reviews to correct the problem.

We aim to ensure that we reply to any complaint or comment within 10 working days.

The comments procedure is in two different formats you have a sheet that you can fill in for the centre or you can write to the council itself by using the forms in a special booklet.

Swindon council also have a training procedure where staff attend a course to learn about there job there responsibilities and most to a first aid course before they are aloud to step foot on what's called the shop floor.

They have fire drills to practice the safety procedures to ensure all customer safety all the time.

Task 4: critically evaluate the customer delivery performance by each organisation

In this task I am going to research in different ways that these two facilities go about insuring customer happiness and how they deliver affective customer service. I will use different means to gain information such as a questionnaire to the customers, a mystery shop where I will attend the facility and judge their performance. Then I will evaluate the situations compare them against each other and advise how they could improve in the situations.

Fitness first

Firstly I am going to look at the way fitness first delivers customer service. I am going to do a mystery shop into the gym where I am actually going to join the organisation. I aim to make the procedure hard for the sales team to see how they deal with it.

I went into the reception area and said I am interested in joining, the first thing the receptionist did was take through to the juice bar and said ' help yourself to any drinks and I will just go and get a member of the sales team for you'. This lady seemed very professional and she was in a very distinctive uniform, which I thought was very professional. I was only waiting around a minute and I was approached by one of the sales team, they introduced

themselves to me and asked me if I had time to have a look around the gym I obliged. On the tour he talked about the sort of things they do such as the classes on offer and the special themed evenings that they have. I was happy with the way he delivered the information it was in a confident manor and he seemed that he new what he was talking about I asked a couple of questions and he answered them with no problems. Then we went down stairs to complete the formalities this was an application form which I must say was not well laid out it was difficult to find the right questions and boxes to answer them. After 5 or 10 minutes we had finally finished this form and then they took my picture and printed me a membership card and then gave me a free bag with goodies in it.

Overall I was happy with the service each member of staff looked smart in their dress and their mannerisms were very good. The facilities were very clean although in the juice bar there was a lot of stains on the side where it hadn't been cleaned I thought this was a big let down as you expect that where you relax to be really clean and tidy. There were a few things that I noticed around the building such as tiles missing in the floor and general tidiness and organisation of the cupboards he showed me that members are allowed to go into.

On my second visit which was my first work out I found that the staff weren't so helpful after they had got there sale, well that's what it seemed to me. I had a problem using one of the machines and I asked a member of the gym team and they were less than helpful. At first they didn't comment on what I said and just walked over to the machine, then he said how to do but his

tone of voice was awful maybe it was because im a young lad and if that was the case then its wrong because we should all be treated equally.

Ways to improve

By looking at the centre in general they do stick to their quality standards.

Ways I would suggest that they pay more attention is the cleanliness of the facility and the treatment of the younger generation of customers because they are still paying the money therefore they should get the same treatment.

They should also have more members of staff walking around the facility to help customers so the customers can find them easily.

The link centre

Again I am going to mystery shop the link centre in which I am going to open a Swindon card so I can use their facilities such as booking the football courts.

When I first went into the link I was surprised how many staff there were that were walking around checking the facility or who were in the cafe; ¹/₂ serving people I was surprised because I had heard that there is never normally any one around to help you. I went up to reception and said that I would like to open a Swindon card she then gave me the booklet a pen but she didn't give me any instructions on what I had to do, maybe this was because she had a queue behind me but I didn't feel that she helped me at all in fact I could of

got it myself. I tried to go through the form but the way it was worded was unclear about how I should fill it in and which sections I should use. Finally I finished she typed it into the computer and took my picture and that was it.

I wasn't very impressed by the way that the staff had treated me in the facility so I wasn't sure when I would be going back. I was surprised how the members of staff could be so ignorant I thought that in a job such as that one you have to be a happy upbeat person.

The second time I visited was to book the football pitch for five a side. This took a long time as she asked me when I wanted and it was booked, then my second choice was booked and my third. I asked her what they actually had available in the next week and they had two slots which I couldn't make so I asked for the week after and she said they cant book further than a week ahead so how am I expected to get a booking I said. I left this meeting very unhappy.

Again the staffs were very rude to me an unhelpful I told my friends about the experience and they said it is always like it. This is not good enough for customer service.

Improvements they could make

If I had to suggest ways they could improve they would be to improve the manor of the staff towards customers.

The members at reception need to be more informative in their approach to customers to help them understand things clearer.

With the booking fiasco they need to improve the system so that you can book two weeks because it is very hard to get a booking in there and they could arrange it so that the same people can only book it once a week.

They need to have more members of staff behind reception when I went both times there was one person struggling with the long queue and maybe this was why she wasn't very helpful, people were queuing for up to 15 minutes.

Comparing the two centre delivery in customer service

What I did to evaluate the two centres against each other is that I produced a questionnaire to myself to rate the two facilities against each other it was just ratings out of 10 on certain things such as appearance friendliness and helpfulness.