



Customer Service

2. Counter and face-to-face service

The way in which you or your employees deal with customers in over-the-counter and face-to-face situations is critical to all ongoing aspects of your future relationship with them.

Counter and face-to-face service generally covers any type of service where the customer comes to your business. It is not just confined to sales counters or checkouts in shops, but includes service counters, inquiry desks, claims counters, front office reception areas, booking counters, bank teller counters and so on.

The service encounter can be broken into a number of stages, including:

- first contact, either initiated by you or by the customer – first impressions are crucial
- dealing with the customer
- any required follow-up.

It is important to remember you are there to help the customer meet their needs.

To assist you to do this, follow the checklist on the next page.

Checklist - Counter and face-to-face service

1. Before contact

- ▷ Ensure your service areas are easy to find and accessible.
- ▷ Ensure areas are attractive, clean and well maintained.

2. First contact

- ▷ Ensure customers can readily identify and find your staff.
- ▷ Always have fully trained, competent staff available to deal with customers in a responsive manner.
- ▷ Ensure the sequence customers are dealt with is prompt and fair through suitable queuing arrangements.
- ▷ Acknowledge customers that are waiting, while still giving priority to the customer with whom you are dealing.
- ▷ Make sure staff are tidy and dressed appropriately.

3. Dealing with the customer

- ▷ Be responsive to customers, flexible in your dealings and treat them all as individually important.
- ▷ Personalise your dealings with the customer by introducing yourself and asking for and then using their name.
- ▷ Always deal in a genuinely friendly and courteous manner.
- ▷ Show an attentive interest in the customer by asking questions and listening to their requirements. Don't be overly attentive or pushy as customers may get annoyed.
- ▷ Always use plain understandable language.
- ▷ Apply your knowledge to meet the customer's needs.
- ▷ Ensure your staff are knowledgeable about your business, products and services and organisation.
- ▷ Take the time necessary to serve each customer to their satisfaction. Deal promptly and efficiently so as not to waste their time, but don't rush them.
- ▷ Demonstrate a good balance between a commitment to the customer and a commitment to your organisation, through flexibility and problem solving.
- ▷ Treat customers as you would wish to be treated.
- ▷ Always end your dealings by saying goodbye.

4. Follow-up

- ▷ Where follow-up action is required, make sure you clearly summarise to the customer what happens next:
 - What you will do.
 - What you require the customer to do – even if it means saying they don't need to do anything.
- ▷ Ensure the follow-up occurs within the customer's required time.

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