



# 6 Customer service

## Learning objectives in this unit

- Talking about customer service rules and experiences
- Making comparisons
- Responding to complaints
- Asking for and giving opinions

## Case study

- Rewarding good customer service

## Starting point

- 1 What problems can you have when you contact a company?**  
  
**2 Read the comments about poor customer service. Which of these experiences have you had? Which one is the most annoying?**  
‘You have to wait so long to speak to someone.’  
‘They put you on hold and you can’t turn off their awful music.’  
‘They ask you to repeat the information so many times and then nobody can help you.’  
‘They try and sell you other services.’
- 3 What is your idea of good customer service?**

## Working with words | Customer satisfaction

- 1 Read the six rules for good customer service in the text below. Does your company follow these rules? Do you have experience of them as a customer?**

### Six rules for good customer service

#### 1 Answer your phone

The golden rule is ‘never miss a phone call,’ so someone should always be available to pick up the phone. Your company may have to set up a call centre to **meet the needs of customers**.

#### 2 Keep your promises

Customers want a reliable service, so always do what you say you will do. **Keep to your delivery dates** and you’ll **get repeat business** from your satisfied customers.

#### 3 Listen to your customers

**Conduct surveys** periodically to find out what your customers think. Learn from their feedback and change your strategy if necessary.

#### 4 Give complaints your full attention

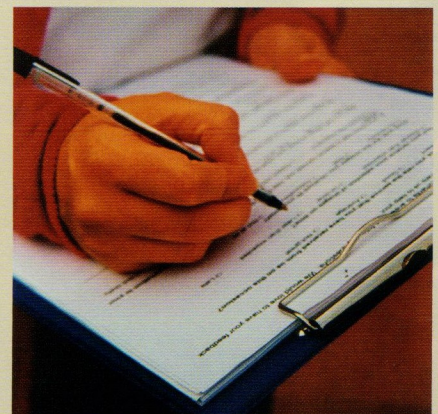
**Deal with complaints** quickly and efficiently. If you have to give a refund, do it with a smile. Satisfied customers will recommend you to friends and get you more business.

#### 5 Take the extra step

**Offer a personalized service** to your customers and they will feel more important. Deal with their requests on a personal basis and make sure they know what their options are at all times.

#### 6 Give customers something extra

**Encourage customer loyalty** by giving your regular customers something extra. Your customers will be happy to get something they didn’t expect.



**2 Match these quotes from a company employee to the six rules in the text in 1.**

- a We design every machine to meet the specific needs of customers. \_\_\_\_
- b We negotiate special prices for our loyal customers. \_\_\_\_
- c We give customers their money back if they are not completely satisfied. \_\_\_\_
- d We send our customers questionnaires every two years to get their opinions. \_\_\_\_
- e We employ 40 people to ensure we deliver on time. \_\_\_\_
- f We have four receptionists taking calls at all times. \_\_\_\_

**3 Match the phrases in bold in the text in 1 to definitions 1–7 below.**

- 1 Try to make sure customers stay with your company. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 Design a service suitable for each person. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 Ask customers questions. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 Provide the service people want. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 Make sure you take the goods to the customer on time. \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 Solve problems. \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 Make a customer use you again. \_\_\_\_\_

**4 Work with a partner. Complete the questions about your company / companies with a suitable verb. Then take turns to ask and answer the questions.**

- 1 Does your company \_\_\_\_\_ the needs of its customers? Why? / Why not?
- 2 Does your company always \_\_\_\_\_ to its delivery dates? Why? / Why not?
- 3 How often does your company \_\_\_\_\_ surveys?
- 4 How does your company \_\_\_\_\_ with complaints?
- 5 How does your company \_\_\_\_\_ its customers a personalized service?
- 6 How does your company \_\_\_\_\_ customer loyalty?

**5 28▶ Listen to three speakers talking about their experiences of bad customer service. What problems did they have?**

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_

**6 28▶ Complete the sentences with a word from the list. Then listen and check your answers.**

*dissatisfied helpful impossible loyal unreliable*

- 1 They said it was \_\_\_\_\_ to give me a refund.
- 2 Actually, they weren't at all \_\_\_\_\_.
- 3 I'm not going to use that taxi company again because they're so \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4 We've been \_\_\_\_\_ to the same company for years.
- 5 We were \_\_\_\_\_ with the service this time.

**7 Work with a partner. Take turns to explain and guess the words in 6.**

»» For more exercises, go to **Practice file 6** on page 112.

**8 Work with a partner. Ask and talk about good or bad experiences you have had with customer service, using the prompts below to help you.**

- what / buy?                                  • satisfied / dissatisfied?
- why / this company?                      • feel about experience?
- rewards to regular customers?         • do repeat business?

**Tip | Negative prefixes**

Use the prefixes *dis-*, *un-*, and *im-* to make adjectives negative.

*satisfied* – *dissatisfied*  
*reliable* – *unreliable*  
*possible* – *impossible*

## Language at work | Comparisons

### 1 Work with a partner and answer these questions.

- 1 Do you buy many things online? If not, why? If yes, have you had good customer service?
- 2 What is the quickest way of contacting an online retailer?

### 2 29▶ Listen to an extract from a radio programme about consumer affairs and compare your answers.

### 3 29▶ Listen again and underline the correct word in italics.

- 1 Online retailers are *less difficult* / *more difficult* to contact than before.
- 2 *The cheapest* / *the most expensive* way to contact an online retailer is by email.
- 3 The returns policy of most online retailers is *better* / *worse* now.
- 4 Customer service *is* / *isn't* as efficient as it should be.

### 4 Complete the rules about comparisons using the adjectives in 3.

- 1 The comparative form of one-syllable adjectives like *cheap* is *cheaper* and the superlative form is \_\_\_\_\_.
- 2 The comparative form of three-syllable adjectives like *difficult* is \_\_\_\_\_ and the superlative form is *the most difficult*. You can also use *less difficult* and *the least difficult*.
- 3 *Good* and *bad* have irregular comparative and superlative forms:  
*good*, \_\_\_\_\_, *the best*  
*bad*, \_\_\_\_\_, *the worst*
- 4 Use *as* + adjective + *as* to compare two things which are similar and *not* \_\_\_\_\_ + adjective + \_\_\_\_\_ to compare two things which are different.

### 5 30▶ Petr and Ludmila work for the Customer Service Department of an Internet provider company. Listen to Petr reporting the results of a recent survey to Ludmila and answer the questions.

- 1 Which age group and sex uses the Internet the most?
- 2 What are the two most popular activities?
- 3 Where do we usually log on?
- 4 Why don't we use the Internet more?
- 5 What do we buy the most of online?

### 6 30▶ Work with a partner. Complete the results with a comparative or superlative form of the adjective in brackets. Then listen again and check.

- 1 The age group with \_\_\_\_\_ (low) number of Internet users is the 65+ age group.
- 2 Sending and receiving emails isn't \_\_\_\_\_ (popular) as searching for information on goods or services.
- 3 Women are \_\_\_\_\_ (interested) than men in looking for health-related information.
- 4 It's \_\_\_\_\_ (common) for Internet users to access the Internet from work than from home.
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_ (important) reason why Internet users do not use the Internet more is that they don't have time.
- 6 Sales of travel, accommodation, and holidays aren't \_\_\_\_\_ (high) as sales of films, music, and DVDs.

» For more information and exercises, go to **Practice file 6** on page 113.

## Tip | Two-syllable adjectives

Two-syllable adjectives ending in *-ful*, *-less*, *-ing*, *-ed*, *-ous* usually form their comparatives and superlatives with *more* and *the most*.

*tiring* – *more tiring* – *the most tiring*

*careful* – *more careful* – *the most careful*

A small number of two-syllable adjectives form their comparatives and superlatives with *-er* and *-est*.

*quiet* – *quieter* – *the quietest*

*clever* – *cleverer* – *the cleverest*

Two-syllable adjectives ending in *-y* form their comparatives and superlatives with *-ier* and *-iest*.

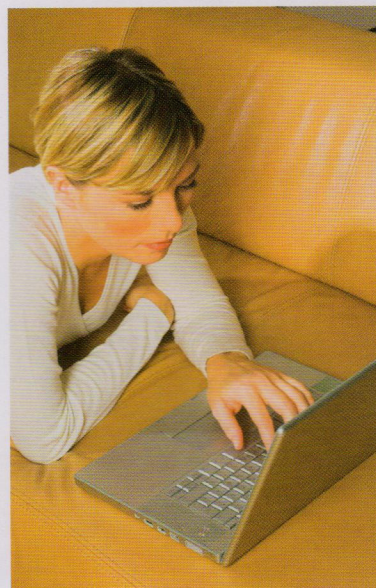
*easy* – *easier* – *the easiest*



7 Work with a partner. Make sentences about the best place to buy goods, using the ideas in the table.

Example: If you buy a plane ticket online, it is often cheaper, but the service is less personalized.

goods	place	adjectives	things to think about
a laptop	online	fast / slow	choice
some flowers	in a supermarket	cheap / expensive	price
a CD	in a small shop	wide	quality
a desk		reliable	service
a book		fresh	delivery dates
a plane ticket		personalized	staff
a mobile		helpful	
a suit		good / bad	



### Practically speaking | How to respond to complaints

1 31> Listen to three phone calls where people are making a complaint. Number the complaints in the order you hear them.

Number the complaints in the order you hear them.

- a \_\_\_ A supplier makes a mistake with an invoice.
- b \_\_\_ A supplier doesn't deliver an order on time.
- c \_\_\_ A supplier has sent the wrong product.

2 31> Listen again and match a response to a complaint in 1.

- 1 \_\_\_ That is a problem.
- 2 \_\_\_ I see.
- 3 \_\_\_ Oh right.

3 31> Listen again and complete the apologies.

- 1 I'm \_\_\_\_\_ about \_\_\_\_\_.
- 2 It's our \_\_\_\_\_. I'm \_\_\_\_\_.
- 3 I do \_\_\_\_\_ that.

4 Work with a partner. Look at situations 1–4. Take turns to complain and reply, using the apologies from 3 and the responses from 2.

- 1 You returned a book to an online retailer, but you have not received a refund for it. Your order number is AX347219.
- 2 An IT technician repaired your computer yesterday, but it still doesn't work. The technician's name was Luc.
- 3 You ordered a taxi for 10.00. It is now 10.15 and it still hasn't arrived.
- 4 You ordered 50 desks, but received five. Your order number is OP32497.

**VIDEO**



**Business communication | Asking for and giving opinions**

- 1 32▶** Listen to four managers of an international high street retailer talking in a meeting and answer the questions.
- 1 What three complaints have customers made?
  - 2 What two plans of action do the managers agree on?
- 2 32▶** The verbs in the box are often used in phrases for *asking for* and *giving* opinions. Listen to the conversation again. Complete the box with any of these phrases you hear.

think	agree	feel
1 <i>I think</i>	1 <i>I don't agree</i>	1 <i>I don't feel</i>
2	2	2
3	3	3
4	4	

- 3** Which phrases in **2** are used to ask for an opinion?

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
2 \_\_\_\_\_  
3 \_\_\_\_\_

give an opinion?

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
2 \_\_\_\_\_  
3 \_\_\_\_\_  
4 \_\_\_\_\_

agree?

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
2 \_\_\_\_\_

disagree?

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
2 \_\_\_\_\_

- 4** Work with a partner. Ask for and give opinions on the following ideas, using the phrases in **3**.

- 1 Staff should always be polite to customers.
- 2 The best customers should get the best service.
- 3 The customer is always right.
- 4 Customer complaints are good for a company.
- 5 Customers don't always tell the truth in questionnaires.
- 6 Call centres are very popular with customers.

» For more exercises, go to **Practice file 6** on page 112.

- 5** Work with a partner or in small groups. You work for Pan-European Oil (PEO), which has petrol stations in your country / countries. PEO wants to improve customer service in its petrol stations. Have a meeting to discuss the proposals and decide which one is the best.

- To introduce a new loyalty card: customers get one free litre of petrol for every 200 litres bought.
- To improve the quality of the food in petrol station cafés.
- To employ new staff to operate the petrol pumps for customers.
- To offer a half-price car wash when customers buy 40 litres of petrol.

**Key expressions**

**Asking for an opinion**

What do you think?  
How do you feel about that?  
Do you agree?

**Giving an opinion**

I think we should ...  
I don't think we should ...  
Personally, I feel we should ...  
I don't feel we should ...

**Agreeing**

I agree with you.  
I think you're right.

**Disagreeing**

I don't agree.  
I don't agree at all.  
I disagree.

» Interactive Workbook  
» Phrasebank

» Interactive Workbook » Email and » Exercises and Tests

## Rewarding good customer service

### Background

# The WOW Awards

The WOW factor, or the ability to impress or surprise people, is something which Derek Williams believes is important in customer care. In fact, Derek is Mr WOW, whose mission in life is to inspire great customer service in the UK. He believes that price competition and product promotion are not as important as employees and existing customers. He says companies should make customers fall in love with them to achieve greater sales and profits. In 1998 he helped establish the National Customer Service Awards, which have an annual Oscar-style ceremony at a top London hotel.

### Discussion

- 1 What do you think are the benefits to a company of winning a customer service award?
- 2 What categories of award do you think there could be?
- 3 Can you think of any companies you would or would not nominate?
- 4 Turn to File 14 on page 138 to find out about the different categories and one winning company.

### Task

- 1 You are on the committee for the National Customer Service Awards. Turn to File 13 on page 137. Student A read about Company 1, Student B read about Company 2, Student C read about Company 3, Student D read about Company 4.
- 2 Have a meeting. Take turns to present your company's story. Then decide which company you think has given the best customer care and should be given the WOW Award.



## Case study

## File 10 | Unit 4

Case study, Task, Exercise 1, page 29

### Options

- an aquarium
- a shopping centre
- a multi-purpose indoor arena
- a theme park
- a business park
- an industrial estate
- a conference centre

### Possible benefits

- provide employment
- bring more business to city
- improve image of city
- attract visitors
- provide entertainment

### Factors to consider

- cost
- size of site
- transport
- benefit to local residents of different ages

### How you did the research

- email
- door-to-door
- phone
- in the street
- letter

### Who you talked to

- the local government / town council
- the national government
- local residents – what age groups, and families or single people?
- local business people and companies

## File 11 | Unit 5

Case study, Discussion, Exercise 4, page 35

Oxfam introduced an e-recruitment solution.

- All applications are monitored online.
- All unsuccessful applications can be stored in a talent bank.
- Applicants can update their skills in this bank.
- When there is an emergency, applicants are contacted through email.
- Money is saved because jobs are not advertised in national newspapers.
- Paper applications are put onto the system.
- The site is in four different languages, which helps recruitment abroad.
- Applicants can find out about the charity on the website.

## File 12 | Unit 5

Case study, Task, Exercise 1, page 35

### Student A

Look at the situation with the recruitment process six months ago and the progress made.

Six months ago	Progress made
Jobs were advertised in the national press every three months.	Had one meeting to discuss problems.
Hundreds of applications.	Talked to a company about an e-recruitment package.
Many candidates were unsuitable.	Agreed what the budget is.
Cost of advertising was very high.	
Only one part-time HR manager.	

## File 13 | Unit 6

Case study, Task, Exercise 1, page 41

### Company 1 – Nothing quite like home

I bought some furniture from this company. When I went into the shop, they offered me some coffee and there was a sofa to sit on. When I paid for the furniture, they gave me an envelope which had two balloons inside. They asked me to blow up the balloons on delivery day and put them outside my house. They said it would help the driver find my house and deliver on time. Ten days later they sent me some vouchers for that company to thank me for helping the driver.

### Company 2 – Gizgets

I bought a gadget from this company. The first thing that happened was that they sent me the wrong product. I rang them and they sent me another one immediately, but it was more expensive and better quality. Then, unfortunately, a few days later, I dropped it and broke it. It was my fault, but when I phoned the company asking for a replacement, they were so friendly and offered to give me another free one. It arrived the next day.

### Company 3 – Poochworld

I bought some products for my dog from this online company. A couple of weeks after they arrived, I got an email from the owner of the company asking me how my dog was getting on. I was also asked to send in a photo of my dog to go onto their website. People can visit the website and vote for their favourite dog each month. The winner receives a special bag of dog biscuits. I felt as if the company really wanted to get to know me and my dog.

### Company 4 – TV news

I went to this shop one day looking for a new flat-screen TV. I couldn't decide which one to buy, but the owner of the shop said I could take two of them home and try them. There was no time limit and I did not have to pay for them. I rang the shop at the end of the first week and said that I wanted to buy one of the TVs and so I paid for it over the phone. I offered to come straight back in with the other TV. However, they told me to bring it back when I was next in the area. When I went back to the shop, I was given a cup of coffee and treated as if I was a friend.