



Customer Service

Workbook for Bunjappy's Staff

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Topic Overview

All employees of our company must complete this unit on customer service. We recognize that the only reason our company continues to operate and be a leader in this industry is the success we have with our customers. They are the key to our business's success and the jobs we can offer to our staff.

Customer service is paramount to having a successful tourist focused enterprise!

This workbook covers two units of the national training endorsed qualification – [SITXCCS003](#) and [SITXCCS006](#).

This workbook provides you with the standards of service and backgrounds to how Bunjappy wishes it customer service to operate. The workbook covers the core knowledge and skills expected of our staff when they interact with customers as well as the knowledge and skills required to provide a consistent and quality level service to our customers across all our sections and sites.



Communication

Effective communication is essential to the success of any business. The ability to effectively communicate with customers can lead to improved sales, repeat business and referrals. Poor communication rapidly leads to upset customers, declining sales and poor reputation.

All communications whether with customers, suppliers or work colleagues, must be conducted in a polite, professional, clear and concise manner.

All organisations (including Bunjappy) have two groups of customers. The table below provides you with examples of these two categories.

External customers	Internal customers
Suppliers	Work colleagues
E-business	Managers and Supervisors
Government agencies	Work team members
Shareholders	Staff from other sections of the organisation
Retail	
Wholesale	

There are many ways to communicate with customers. Some require simple face to face presence; other forms require differing levels of technology. These forms of communication may be grouped into three broad categories:

Verbal Communication

Verbal communication is the use of words to communicate information to other persons. While sometimes it is considered to cover both spoken interaction and written forms, in this work, it is used solely as a group for spoken communication. Verbal communication is about the words you use when speaking and how other people interpret and understand these words.

Oral communication encompasses the choice of word, starting/sustaining/closing conversations, asking questions, etc.

Non-verbal Communication

Nonverbal communication is about the other elements of our communication that do not use words. Research shows that over 80% of meaning in a conversation is conveyed by nonverbal communication and not the words spoken. This category of communication includes body language, paralanguage, gestures, use of space, etc.

Written communication

The other grouping of communication is that from the written word. In this instance, the literacy level of both persons communicating is an essential element for meaning to be shared between people.

Irrespective of the means of communication, you must always ensure that you communicate with customers in accordance with our policies and procedures using standards of communication.

Verbal communication skills

Making noise with your mouth is not verbal communication. Successful verbal communication involves both how messages are sent and how they are interpreted.

Bunjappy strongly respect workers who can communicate information accurately and efficiently. Employees who can interpret messages and efficiently act on the information they receive are valued.

In the tourism and travel industry it is essential that all our employees have strong communication skills. A major element of our work here at Bunjappy is that we need to focus on identifying and addressing our customers' needs.

Here are some tips to consider when using verbal communication to maximise the positive elements of the communication:

- Use the name of the person when it is known. When you do not know the name of a customer, choose Sir or Madam.
- Be honest, but be sensitive, courteous, caring and respectful.
- Always use please and thank you.
- Don't disrupt or interrupt.
- Speak at an appropriate speed and volume, don't scream, don't speak softly.
- Make sure that your non-verbal language suits the verbal communication that

you deliver. This usually means smiling when it is appropriate to do so and having a stern face while addressing something serious.

Non-verbal communication skills

Non-verbal communication skills such as active listening and identifying and understanding non-verbal signs are as essential as the words in verbal communication. Developing these skills help you understand what our customers want, so you can give endeavour to mee their needs and wants.

Listening skills

Listening to customers helps to discover and determine their needs. This enables you to suggest appropriate products or services required to satisfy those needs.

Active listening is the method of verifying what the customer claims to have said and meant by analysing their verbal and non-verbal signs. To be an excellent active listener, you must:

- Focus your attention on your customer.
- Summarise your interpretation of what your customer has said.
- Take notes if possible.
- Use positive non-verbal signals such as nodding your head, inclining your body forward and holding your eye contact.
- Note the non-verbal cues of your customer, are they willing, hesitant, impatient?
- Using relevant, timely sampling questions and questions of summary confirmation.
- Recognising nonverbal signs.

Interpreting non-verbal signs and actions from our customer helps you to read their mood and understand their needs better. Here are some good and bad examples of non-verbal cues:

Facial expressions	Negative: Wrinkling of the nose; rolling eyes, frowning of brow; frowning Positive: Smiling, raised eyebrows, relaxed mouth
Eye contact	Negative: Avoiding looking a person's face; staring outside the interaction space Positive: Making eye contact; looking at other's face;
Gestures	Negative: Folded arms; closed body, dismissive hand gestures Positive: Open arms; nodding of the head
Mouth	Negative: Closed; firm lips; expressionless mouth Positive: Smiling or relaxed mouth
Posture	Negative: Slouching; shoulders turned away from another person Positive: Standing upright; body inclined slightly forward
Hands	Negative: Hands clasped close to the body Positive: Hands moving freely; relaxed; touching of the product, brochures, etc.
Position	Negative: Moving to close to other person (invading personal space); facing away Positive: Observing personal space while accommodating cultural differences

Communicate within appropriate time frames

When dealing face to face with a customer, meeting requests from customers and colleagues should occur as soon as possible. In other circumstances, such as dealing with a request that arrives online, by post or because of a telephone request, the timeline options are set by BRTG's policies and procedures. Generally, our business standards state that a response will be sent within 2 working days, but this may change depending upon emergent circumstances. Other businesses may have response times ranging from immediately after receipt of the message to some days later; this will depend upon the size of the business, the number of employees and the volume of work at that time.

To ensure that your communication is polite, professional and friendly, the following tips will assist:

- Follow all our communications policies developed for customers and colleagues. These exist to welcome customers, communicate with employees and answer the phone calls.
- Always use the name of the person when it is known. When you do not know the name of a customer, choose Sir or Madam.
- Be honest, but be sensitive, courteous, caring and respectful.

Select an appropriate medium of communication

A channel of communication is the means, way, manner or method by which a message is transmitted to its intended recipient. The key channels are in written form (hard copy print or digital formats), oral or spoken, and electronic and multimedia.

Another essential element in maintaining excellent customer service is the selection of the correct means of communication. The medium of communication may include:

Assistive Technology

Assistive Technology is the equipment, devices, aids or systems that support and assist people who experience physical impairments that disadvantage them in verbal communication. The purpose of the technology is to assist that person communicate with others and to have greater independence in their communication.



Email or other electronic communication

E-mail enables rapid communication contact with people at nearly insignificant costs. Bunjappy uses emails to not only reach our clients, but also as a means of communications within our broad organisation, the general community and others within the communities we serve. Our customers use e-mail to troubleshoot any problems they might have with our goods or services, provide feedback and ask us a variety of questions. E-mail has become a powerful resource by which our organisation provides customer service. It is critical in today's business world, that you understand how to use this tool, its protocols and the language it requires.

E-mail Etiquette - Rules for Customer Correspondence

Like all businesses, Bunjappy has the expectation that all employees will follow the style guide for emails and adhere to the requirements as outlined in our policies and procedures documents.

Remember that in the use of emails as a communication tool there are some standards which must be followed:

- Follow standard rules of grammar, punctuation, and capitalisation. Email is thought to be more informal than letters, but that does not mean that incorrect use of language or slang is used. E-mail, like all forms of communication from Bunjappy, projects an image of both you and our business. Misspellings and poor grammar will reflect poorly on you and the service Bunjappy offers.
- Use a professional, yet conversational tone. Avoid jokes, cliches, and abbreviations. Only use abbreviations if you know the reader will understand them. "Emoticons" -- smiles, winks, or other symbols used to convey tone -- should not be use in business e-mails
- Be brief and make your message easy to read. Lead with the most important information, in case the reader doesn't finish the message. The subject line of the email must short and concise.
- Respond promptly. Try to respond to emails as soon as possible as outlined in our policies. Note, you can set up your email software to automatically respond indicating w=you will get back with a response shortly. This is often an effective

way of telling the client their message has been received. Your automated message should let the person know when they could expect you to reply in person.

Face-to-face communication

What is Face-to-Face Customer Service?

Face-to-face customer service is supporting customers by working with the customer and one of our staff physically present at the same location.

Although technology allows for several ways to communicate with customers, a face-to-face approach requires a customer visit one of our locations. These communication 'events' allow the customer to receive a more personalised experience. With face-to-face customer service, it needs some crucial aspects to ensure that customers have a pleasant experience.

Fundamentals of Face-to-Face Communication

When you meet face-to-face with a client, note those points:

- **Be welcoming.** Face-to-face customer support can be improved by merely smiling and welcoming customers to the company's work locations.
- **Brush up on product information.** If a customer has taken time to visit our business, make sure that you have a strong understanding of our product and travel package characteristics and company policies.
- **Watch your body language.** The way you stand, hold your arms or use your eyes imply a lot. Show you are compassionate, caring and considerate.
- **Actively listen.** You should listen rather than speak so that customers are aware that their questions or comments are heard. Listen critically to find out what the customer needs and wants.
- **See things from a different perspective.** Try to picture the situation of customer service from the customer's point of view. This can make you think twice about your actions, both in terms of how you'd like it to be handled and how you'd like to manage your situation.
- **Send customers on their way with smiles on their faces.** If a customer

approached you after entering the establishment, you managed to make a strong first impression. Ensure customers leave your business with the same good feeling and positive overall experience.

Text messaging

With 98 % of all text messages opened and 90 % read in 3 minutes, SMS would seem to be the ideal way to connect with customers. However, a word of warning! Text messages are short and often filled with abbreviations, icons and other shortcut messages; couple this with the rising negative community belief that unsolicited business promotion through text messages is another form of spam, it may be well worth staying away from this communication medium.

After consideration, Bunjappy will not use text messaging for promotional purposes; it may be used to have informal contact with existing clients or between staff members, but it does not have a broader role than that in our operations or, we believe, in any reputable business.

Selecting the correct communication medium

Employees must be able to recognise the situation and then select the correct contact channel for our customers. These expectations are clearly outlined in Bunjappy's industry-specific policies and procedures.

To identify the communication channel, you must consider:

- Access to the appropriate equipment and resources by the sender and recipient, i.e. do they even have access to email?
- Degree of formality needed.
- Format required and the amount of content to be shared with others.
- Organisational policies and procedures.
- Technical knowledge and skill necessary to use that channel.
- Urgency and timeframes impacting on that situation.

Telephone

The way such telephone calls are conducted makes a big difference to the relationship

an organisation has with its customers. Competent and courteous use of the telephone is essential to customer service. Bad telephone etiquette can have a devastating impact on your customer service.

Tips for providing excellent telephone customer service include:

- **Preparation.** Have a good idea of what you'll be doing in advance of your phone call. Have a visual script that you can refer to if the conversation marvels.
- **Introduction.** When we meet people face to face, we always take a handshake to introduce ourselves. On the phone, we must do so orally by acknowledging sincere affection from the customer.
- **Build rapport.** Many callers prefer to communicate with a human being rather than a computer. Therefore, be yourself and stay friendly.
- **Speak clearly.** A fundamental principle of efficient telephone customer service is to get yourself understood.
- **The tone of voice.** A friendly but authoritative approach works perfectly. To avoid sending the caller to sleep, build your phone personality and change your voice pitch.
- **Keep it positive.** Make and use a list of words which sound cheerful. Do not use derogatory terms and phrases on the telephone – examples include *“it's not likely”, “forget it”, “why you haven't”, “I don't know”, “never heard of it”,* etc. Keep bureaucratic words and terminology out of discussion about customer service.
- **Actively listen.** It is more important to listen to our customers than to speak. Find out just what our customer wants before meeting their needs.
- **Putting callers on-hold.** If you must leave the customer at any point, be sure to explain when, why and for how long. The offer to call the customer back shows kindness and a desire to support.
- **Transferring calls.** One thing that destroys a customer partnership is to move from pillar to post or even worse, get lost inside a virtual switchboard. Be sure you know how our telephone system functions and get information about the callers before you transfer them, so you can call them back if necessary.
- **Use voicemail effectively.** Compose your voicemail correctly until it is delivered.

- **Dealing with difficult calls.** Try to think about why the caller behaves the way they are and do not take what people say as a personal insult to you. Do not lose your patience and stick to the truth. Seek to get an agreement with your customer as a way forward to settle the call.
- Use of Interpreters
- The tourism and travel industries often require the assistance of skilled interpreters. The interpreter needs to understand the language, procedures, and processes associated with travel, hospitality and tourism industries.
- Ensure the interpreters and translators have a history or training in the business, as well as being highly qualified and experienced. This ensures precise interpretation and translation, and no misunderstandings occur.
- The first step in recognising the need for an interpreter is to determine how well a person can understand and communicate in English. Often our international tour groups are accompanied by an interpreter. If during a tour, the accommodation phase or during travel, seek the interpreter's help when:
 - The customer asks for language assistance.
 - The customer wishes to communicate in his/her native language.
 - The customer cannot understand or answer questions in English.

Two-way communication systems

Customer satisfaction is unarguably the most important aspects of running a business. This leads to customer retention. One way of building our business's capacity to retain and build our customer base is to increase the pace at which we react to customer problems.

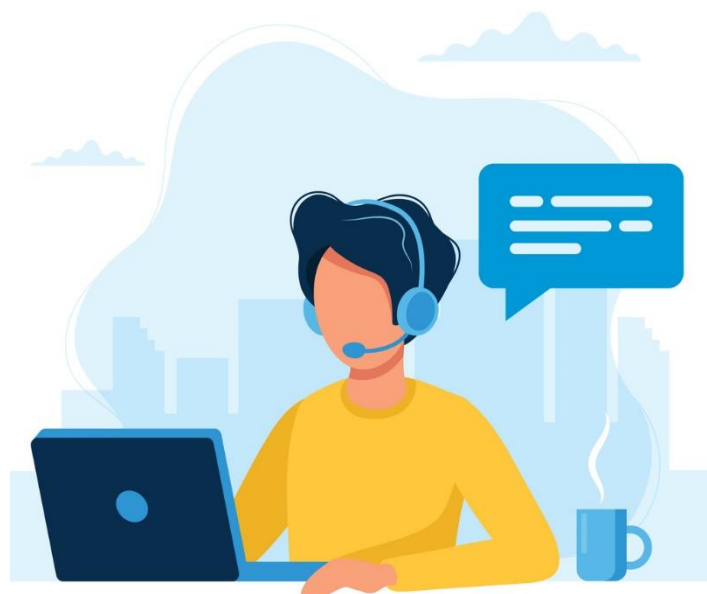
Successful organisations are aware of the need for fast response times and are now prioritising two-way communication which has become possible through the developing technologies and the ready access to the Internet. Two-way communication is the term used for those technologies that enable two persons to communicate rapidly and nearly instantaneously. Through this communication channel customers can connect with a representative of our company and initiate a business conversation.

The best thing about 2-way communication tools is the variety of ways that

companies can communicate with their customers. In exchange, consumers can choose what's most convenient and enjoyable for them.

Some of the most popular forms of 2-way communication seen today include:

SMS Messaging	Customers can text messages using their mobile phones.
Group messaging	Like text messaging, but the SMS message is sent to multiple recipients at the same time.
Live Chat	Customers communicate with a company using an online messaging application. Commonly now found on websites to answer potential customers product enquiries or solve problems with products already purchased.
Video Chat	A face-to-face video meeting where participants can see and hear one another and share documents and presentations.
VoIP	Voice Over Internet Protocol – using the Internet digital capacity for telephone calls rather than the traditional telephone system. Reduces a business's expenditure.



Activity 1

Respond to the following questions. Your responses are to be word processed and the digital files are to be placed in a digital folder to be used as your e-portfolio. At the end of the workbook, you are to send the completed activities to your supervisor as a compressed folder via email.

1. How would you differentiate between internal and external customers? (max. 200 words)
2. Explain the difference between verbal and non-verbal communication. (max. 200 words)
3. Give some examples of assistive technology used in the hospitality industry. (max. 150 words)
4. Using a table, provide examples of the following forms of communication you would use in your employment with Bunjappy:

Verbal

Written

Non-verbal

Personal presentation

Our employees' appearance and presentation are critical in the tourism, hospitality and travel industries. People make conclusions about others within the first few seconds of meeting them, and this assumption is drawn from the person's appearance and presentation.

Personal hygiene

Customers are easily turned off by a 'bad breath' employee. An employee whose body odour is offensive has the same effect on the potential customer. Customers are unimpressed by dirty hands or fingernails. Potential customers will avoid engagement with a person whose personal hygiene is below an acceptable standard.

Proper grooming practices, (e.g. wearing clean clothing, showering before work and using a deodorant) ensure that personal hygiene issues are addressed before work.

The following tips are provided for other areas of personal grooming:

Hair

Hair should be clean and tidy; long hair should be tied back for both protection and hygiene reasons especially if you are working in our cafes and restaurants.

Radical hair colouring is not suitable for most customer service roles in our company.

Uniform

It is expected that you will keep the work uniforms issued to you, clean and pressed.

High visibility clothing must be worn for safety reasons while you are working outdoors.

Personal presentation

You represent not only yourself but our company when you are working in any of the roles within our diverse business. Your personal appearance provides the first impression that the customer has of where you work.

Your appearance tells the customers a lot about you, how you handle your job and what service you are likely to provide. The image you need to present is clean, competent and caring. This can be achieved by:

- Maintaining hygiene standards

- Wearing clean and pressed clothes.
- Having clean and neat hair.
- Limiting the jewelry that you wear during work hours.
- Ensuring your fingernails are clean and well maintained.
- Cleaning your teeth regularly and ensuring they are in good condition.
- Covering open cuts or wounds while at work by using a band-aid or bandage.
- Ensuring hands are washed frequently especially after eating, smoking, handling garbage or using the bathroom.



[Standards of Personal Presentation and Hygiene](http://kvevents.weebly.com/standards-of-personal-presentation-and-hygiene.html)

(<http://kvevents.weebly.com/standards-of-personal-presentation-and-hygiene.html>)

Activity 2

Briefly explain the standards of personal presentation and hygiene expected in a tourism business and why these standards are so important.



Customer service policies and procedures

Any business of a similar size to the Bunjappy Regional Tourism Group (BRTG) must have well-documented policies and procedures to function effectively and to be compliant with Australian laws. These documents also provide information on the organisation's values to employees.

It is generally the management team and supervisors' responsibility to ensure that employees adhere to the organisation's standards. This means that this group of employees communicate what is required to their team of workers. Ongoing monitoring and review of work practices also needs to occur to ensure ongoing compliance with the business's standards and procedures.

Like most organisations in the tourism and travel industry, Bunjappy's policies and procedures has a focus on customer service and support. By ensuring these standards are routinely applied in our workplaces, all of us are contributing to providing a consistent level of service that reflects the expectations and values of our organisation.

It is unfortunate however in the tourism and travel industry the quality of service delivered can vary considerably. This may, in some establishments be quite poor and these are the businesses that have short 'lives' and quickly fade away.

Businesses that demonstrate consistent high-quality standards stand out from the competition. The level of customer service is one of the major factors in why customers regard these organisations as worthwhile and suitable for return business.

Factors often considered in customer service requirements may include:

- The time frame for greeting the customer
- Engagement with customers
- Closing purchases
- Multiple selling techniques (sometimes called up-selling)
- Farewelling the customer
- Building customer loyalty
- Handling customer complaints
- Customer satisfaction

It is vital that our employees not just meet these requirements but also understand why such things are so necessary.

Monitoring adherence

While team members must have a clear understanding of our organisation's customer service requirements, it is equally important that all of us follow these principles in our daily interactions with customers.

If a customer observes differing standards of customer service within our organisation, then he/she will assume that we are not professional or are haphazard in our service. Each employee is part of a team; each team is led by a supervisor. It is the supervisor's role to decide if each employee meets the basic expectations set by Bunjappy. For example, do they greet each customer within the time frame defined, do they provide correct product knowledge, etc.?

Monitoring of employees against the organisation's expectations may occur in several different ways:

- Observing the team member during normal work activities.
- Feedback received from the customer.
- Analysing customer complaints to identify deficiencies.
- At performance review times scheduled for each employee.
- Asking the team member what their process for a task is.

It is worthwhile mentioning, that under a continuous improvement focus all of us working at Bunjappy can continually improve in our work routines. When areas of improvement are identified, the next step is to act is to work towards improving those areas.

Providing feedback to the team

Work teams must receive frequent input to support their continuous improvement agenda. Feedback is a mechanism in which the consequence of a person's actions is brought to their notice.

The main reason why feedback is given is to encourage a member of staff to see whether they meet the customer service requirements or require further

development.

As the tourism and travel industries are continually changing, customer service standards also shift. Employees need to adapt their customer service to meet the emerging trends and changes in retail strategies; this then requires feedback to let them know how well they are doing. When providing feedback to our staff, supervisors need to apply the following guidelines:

- Be specific.
- Ensure it is based on facts, not opinion or hearsay.
- Remain objective.
- Offer suggestions for improvement. Also open it for their ideas on enhancing their skill set.
- Ensure consistency amongst the team.
- Ensure it relates to behaviour that the team member can do something about.

Status of business feedback

Budgets and financial targets are the focal points for those employed in our industry. All team members contribute to our company's achievement of its targets whether these are time based or financial returns. It is essential our staff are regularly updated on how our business is progressing towards our targets as set by the executive management team. This feedback is critical to the success of any business in our industry. Remember, our staff are vitally interested in how our business is travelling as it is this business that provides them with financial security and the ability to live securely and comfortably. This type of business status feedback could be given in several different ways:

- Individually to each team member.
- At a team meeting.
- As part of the work notices each week.
- Via email
- A notice placed on the staff notice board.

Adhere to professional standards

Customer service standards

Expectations of customer service promotes effective customer service. Service standards set the expectations that employees can apply in their efforts to meet customer needs and wants.

Bunjappy has established a comprehensive set of service requirements which provide the basis for job specifications, recruitment of staff, induction procedures, staff training and employee performance evaluation and feedback.

The following are some general examples of our standards.

General standards

- Meet consumer needs by recognising and working towards meeting expectations.
- Exceed all customer requirements.
- Each employee is responsible for following our organisation's standards of service.
- Be competent in communicating with customers and other staff members.
- During meetings, switch off mobile phones and personal computers.

General standards (external customers)

- Active listen to customer requests and take immediate action to assist them.
- Keep customers informed of any delays in service.
- Greet all customers professionally and courteously.
- Inform customers on what to expect and normal process time.
- Respond to website requests and questions by the end of the business day.
- Respond to job applicants within 24 hours and inform them of process time and when they can expect completion of the process.
- Finish all interactions with customers in a professional and courteous manner.

General standards (internal customers)

- Inform customers of typical process time and any delays that may arise.
- Interact professionally and courteously.

- Communicate with internal customers by email or phone with updates on any activity currently underway.
- Work to resolve internal issues with co-workers by addressing problems and working toward solutions as a team/co-operatively.
- Demonstrate respect for each other and hold ourselves and each other accountable for appropriate behaviour.

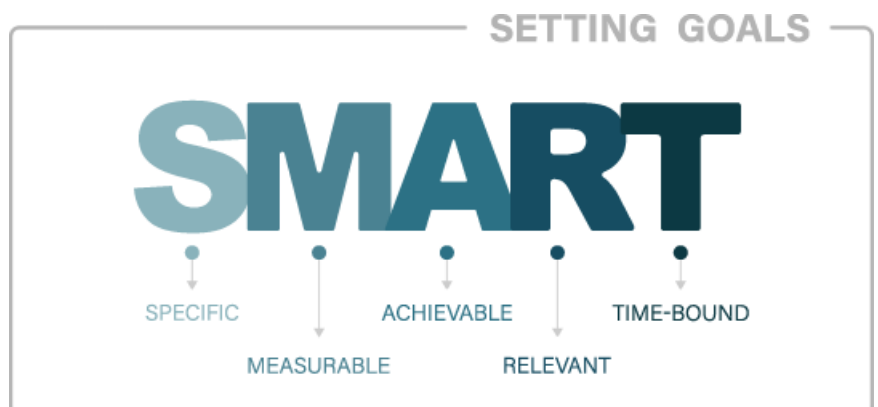
Developing standards of service

All employees of Bunjappy will have the opportunities to provide input into appropriate service standards that impact on their daily work routines. To this end it is important that all our employees should have a broad understanding of the underpinning principles of how this process works.

SMARTS standards

When writing service standards of business plans, the format should reflect the SMARTS analogy:

- **Specific** - they should be precise in meaning.
- **Measurable** - they need to be quantifiable, or able to be measured.
- **Achievable** - they must be realistic to the work to be done with the available resources.
- **Relevant** - they need to focus on the correct priorities, that is, the needs of the customer.
- **Time-Limited** - there should be a time frame set on the standard to indicate how often or how quickly action is to occur.
- **Supported** – The internal business systems that support our staff in delivering this service standard must be available.



When developing service standards, the following criteria should be used:

- The standard must be planned and agreed upon by the staff affected by the standard.
- Be created carefully.
- Be stated in writing using clear and concise language.
- Meet customer needs.
- Be endorsed by management.
- Be reviewed regularly to ensure that they remain current, relevant and focused on the business's success.
- Reflect Bunjappy Regional Tourism Group's organizational goals.
- Be communicated effectively and continually.

Ensuring your team meets the standards

How do we encourage our teams to meet the service standards Bunjappy has in place?

First it is appropriate to link our service standards to performance measures, usually called Key Performance Indicators (or KPIs) for our staff reviews. All our staff performance reviews should be aligned with the service standards of our organisation.

When we have the right service standards in place, training becomes much more manageable. Our staff then know what is expected and how to fulfil those expectations. It is then our organisation's role to provide the initial and ongoing training that ensures our standards drive the work of our staff.

By measuring each of our work teams' progress over a specific time, it is possible to identify a consistent level of service to our customers.

Activity 3

Question 1

Why is it important for a supervisor to provide feedback to team members?

Question 2

List the general standards to follow when dealing with external customers.



Greet and serve customers

Prioritise customers ahead of other workplace duties

The core element of a successful business is good customer service.

Customer service is the support you offer your customers - both before and after they buy and use your products or services - that helps them have an easy and enjoyable experience with you. It is more than just providing answers; it's an important part of the promise Bunjappy makes to its customers.

Good customer service has many elements, but the perhaps the five most important components are:

Promptness

The delivery of products must be on time. In a restaurant or cafe, good customer service means that the order is served promptly. People do not like to wait. This should be evident throughout any contact with customers. For example, it is our target that any customer is greeted within 30 seconds of standing at a counter or is seen waiting for assistance.

Courtesy

It is essential that courtesy underpins all encounters with customers. Being polite costs us nothing but is perhaps one of the greater investments in terms of return business. Saying *"Hello," "Good afternoon," "Sir," "Ma'am"* and *"Thank you"* are all part of good customer service. Being in a hurry to make a sale without a warm welcome is not polite. In some countries such action is regarded as the height of rudeness if a welcome and courtesies are not the prelude to discussing the customers' needs. Saying 'thank you' is appropriate even if the customer does not purchase anything – remember they may come back due to your courtesy.

Performance

All Bunjappy's services should be performed with skill and accuracy. Folding garments, preparing a latte, cleaning a window or booking a tour should all be performed with care and skill.

Professionalism

All customers should be treated in a way that conveys that the person offering the service has a high level of knowledge and skills in thar area of our work. When a

customer makes a request, the way in which they are treated, and the request addressed clearly demonstrates if the business values them. Simply pointing to a sign or a section of the site is not professionalism; asking clarifying questions, leading them to the product and expanding their understanding are. Professionalism by our staff means the customer is likely to return to our business. Example: When a customer accidentally breaks something or spills a beverage in our cafes, the actions of our staff in quickly cleaning it up and letting the customer know it is not a problem is a sign of professionalism behaviour.

Personalisation

Personalisation is when you, using a customer's name or your personal knowledge of them, you can craft your conversations to the person. Example: Using the customer's name is very effective in producing loyalty – *“Good morning Mr Smith, what can I do for you this morning?”*. People go to a business and pay money, in part because of the good customer service. For example, they could get a just as satisfying meal at home with a little effort, but they decide to eat in our cafes!

Customers will return to a business for many reasons, but perhaps the most important reason is the customer service they receive. People will pay more for an item if the customer service standards are high, and they feel like they have been treated well. Great customer service is much more than a friendly greeting; it involves our staff doing that 'bit extra' to exceed our customers' expectations.

It is a bit of a 'motherhood' statement, though backed up by market research that it costs five times more to attract a new customer than it does to keep the customer a business already has. The aim of our customer service policy is to make every customer experience so good that they become a long-term customer.

Exceeding your customer's expectations

There are ways of exceeding our customers' expectations include:

- Be more courteous and friendly than customers are used to in other businesses.
- Stay with the customer until the transaction or communication is complete. Don't let the customer just wander off.
- Take more time to find out in detail what they need.
- Follow up every enquiry not resolved at the time with a phone call.

- If requested, give professional advice which is not strictly part of the sale. This can amount to teaching the customer about how to use the product or to get the best out of our service.
- Reward regular returning customers with special service: remember their standard order, *“Good morning Mr Smith – Your latte again this morning?”* As an organisation we email them about special tour deals and follow up with each customer at the end of each tour.
- Provide some interesting information about the product or service if the customer seems interested. For example: *“Mr Smith, Akubra hats are actually made of felt that is formed from rabbit fur.”*
- Be enthusiastic – about doing your job, about the product, about our company and about your customers!

Customer service surprises

It is always nice to give positive surprises to our customers. It does not take a lot of effort nor is it expensive. As you read through the list below, you will see some of these ‘surprises’ are embedded in our normal sales processes, but it is up to each staff member to ensure that it is provided to our customers with enthusiasm.

- Giving a discount when one isn’t asked for. (Remember: That’s our policy – Cash sales get 5% discount and check the monthly listing for the sale items that have been targeted to allow sales staff to surprise the customer at the point of sale).
- Helping to carry the item out to the car or arranging it to be placed on the tour coach.
- Gift-wrapping a certain item without being asked to. If the customer indicates that it is being purchased as a gift spend three minutes wrapping it up to make it seem special.
- Packaging a fragile item with special care so it absolutely won’t break.
- Placing a rose on the restaurant’s table if you know it is a romantic night for two people.
- Giving away an accessory that adds value to the purchase. If they are spending hundreds of dollars on a unique digeridoo then adding \$15 ‘clapping sticks’-

with the supervisor's permission – makes the customer's purchase, in their minds, spectacular.

- Entering the customer into a competition they didn't know about.
- Making sure you return their call as promised – always important.
- For returning customers, introduce them to the manager or supervisor as a valued customer.
- Remembering their birthday or other important date in their life.

Importance of the customer in the service industries

All the things mentioned above provide an indication you are showing the customer how important they are to our business.

The importance of our customers cannot be understated. Without customers, Bunjappy would not exist; neither would your job. Always treat our customers with respect and do everything you can, within the policies and procedures of our company, to meet their needs.

Activity 4

Question 1

You are busily engaged in setting up your work area for service when you notice a customer approaching the service area. What should you do to meet industry standards and customer expectations?

Customer service standards

Engaging your customer

The word 'engage' means to "draw-in", "connect", and "win over". Customers have made a conscious choice to come into your business; therefore, it is your responsibility to engage them.

This first customer contact could be an acknowledgment through a smile, nod or a simple, welcoming comment. The acknowledgement is followed by the first conversation a staff member has with the customer.

Engagement is very important. This sets the tone for the customer's experience and either defines Bunjappy for the customer during their first time or reinforces an expected experience for our regular customers. It puts the customer at ease, but it also helps the customer differentiate our business from other tourism and travel enterprises. When we all get this right, it leads to increased sales for Bunjappy.

Two pieces of market research:

1. Customers are 4 times more likely to purchase when greeted, compared to when they are ignored by staff in a business?
2. Customers are 100% less likely to steal from our business if staff greet them with eye contact!

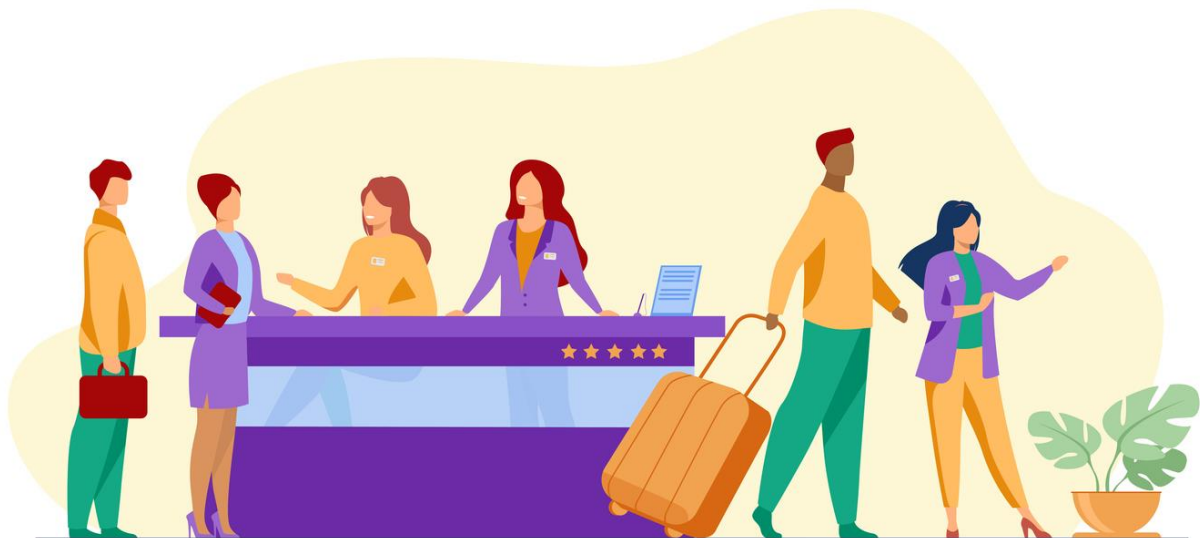
Acknowledging the customer

Acknowledging the customer as they enter our business demonstrates that you have recognised their presence and should convey a friendly attitude. What does that mean? In how you act, it simply means you would smile, your body language would be open, and you would maintain eye contact. (Remember though eye contact is a culturally sensitive behaviour – you will need to 'read' the situation to ensure that direct eye contact is appropriate culturally.)

Acknowledgement of a customer may be verbal or nonverbal. A verbal acknowledgement can be exchanging some form of welcome such as "*Good morning, welcome to Bunjappy*" or even simply "*Hello*". A non-verbal acknowledgement may be making eye contact with customers and smiling and nodding if you are busy with another customer.

Other points to consider:

- When greeting a customer use your own personality to create a unique opportunity to build rapport between yourself and the customer.
- Acknowledging the customer makes it easier to build up trust and a relationship.
- Body language needs to be open.
- It is about your interest in the customer's need, not about you being 'interesting'.
- When busy with tasks, remind yourself to scan for customers. Never let a task come before a customer.
- Always approach a customer when they have had adequate time to 'look around' or they are clearly interested in a product/service being advertised.



Types of approaches

There are three ways in which staff could approach a customer. Selecting the correct approach method comes with experience and customer observation. The observation will generally provide direction as to what approach is most likely to succeed. The three basic ways to initially engage with a customer are:

	PRODUCT APPROACH	SERVICE APPROACH	SOCIAL APPROACH
Definition	Start the conversation talking about product.	Start the conversation by trying to help the customer. This approach tries to make it easy for them.	Break the ice and start a light social conversation.
When to use	When the customer is already showing interest in a particular product. The customer may have picked up a product and they are holding it up against them.	When the customer seems to have already selected.	When the customer is freely browsing the business and has not shown much interest in a specific product.
Benefit	The customer is focused on a product; any other approach would seem out of place, so talk product.	You're there to help the customer and respect that they are in decision-making mode. The last thing you want to do is slow them down.	Done sincerely, this approach engages the customer and shows an interest in the customer.

Establishing rapport with customer

Establishing rapport with a customer assist in promoting goodwill and trust during the time the sale or service is occurring.

Regardless of what Bunjappy can offer in terms of tourism experiences, cheaper products, trendy eateries or fancy add-ons, unless we offer excellent customer service, we will be over-taken by our industry competitors and experience a gradual decline in our business. Understanding how to establish a good rapport with our customers is one of the most critical aspects of excellent customer service.

Rapport is the feeling when two or more people understand each other's feelings or ideas and communicate well. One of the consequences of building rapport is having a clear understanding of where the other person comes from. This leads to several benefits in our customer interactions:

- Customers find it easier to build trust with you.
- Customers communicate more openly with you.
- Customers feel confident in your abilities, recommendations and products.
- Customer responses are more open and welcome suggestions.

A retail homily states that customers buy into the personality first, and then the product. This means, if a customer builds a good relationship with you, then selling the product is a lot easier.

So how can you make sure you can build a relationship with each customer?

Rapport at its heart is about creating a shared sense of friendliness.

1. Be mindful of how your client wants to interact. Would your customer want to go straight down to business, or to ease into it with small talk? Will they enjoy a casual, friendly approach, or react better to a more formal communication style? Excellent customer service teams should know how to adapt to various customers, helping each client to build a successful and productive relationship.
2. Engage your customers in active listening. To be able to satisfy their needs, desires and expectations, you need to focus 100 % on what they are saying. It is also signal appreciation and valuing so customers become more confident with you.
3. Another significant aspect of building relationships is that you always deliver on

what you say. This is the easiest and most efficient way of building trust with our customers. When you say you are going to call someone, or send a follow-up text, make sure you do so. Failure to keep your promises or fall back on your word will easily ruin your good work. Be careful not to make promises you may not be able to fulfil. Many individuals make good-intentioned promises only to find themselves unable to find time to meet them. This does not create the kind of confidence that will make the customer willing to return or offer referrals.

The ultimate obligation to build rapport falls to the individual employee. Building rapport is a mindset and is not a skill everyone has. It is something that needs to be continuously worked on. It has been proven that in any service-related industry, the value of personal relationships is immense. This can simply be in the form of remembering how the regular customer in our café has their morning coffee, a special free lunch ready on the table for our bus driver, through to remembering guests' names and a couple of little details about them to greet them warmly on their arrival at one of our hotels. Most importantly, it all needs to come with a smile.

Activity 5

Question 1

Explain the benefits of building rapport with customers.

Managing the perusing customer

Sometimes a customer, when approached, will indicate that they are alright and do not need any service or attention at that time. This is not a rejection of you or the service you are offering. The message here is simply that they need some time alone – they are still open to communicate with you when they are ready.

There are reasons why customers may resist attention. These include:

- A fear of being pressured by the business's staff.
- They are not sure of what they want and need time to look and think.
- They are shy and perhaps a little wary of getting into detailed conversations.
- They do not want to be rushed – we all think and make decisions at our own pace.

- They just don't need any help – they know what they want, and they will come to you with the purchases.

When a customer answers your offer of assistance with *"I'm just looking"*, or something similar, then:

- Maintain open body language and smile.
- Encourage the customer to stay and browse.
- Make appropriate comments such as:

"Just let me know if there is a particular thing, I may be able to help you with."

"That's fine, just wanted to let you know that we have a discount on tour bookings today."

Self-reflection

It has been our experience that there are common reasons why a staff member may not acknowledge and approach customers. The table below summarises these reasons:

PROCESS	<p>There are too many tasks. They think unpacking stock is more important than working with customers.</p> <p>They expect other staff members to do that job.</p> <p>They are busy with another customer.</p>
MINDSET	<p>The person has an attitude that they really cannot be bothered. They are too tired/lazy/or whatever other excuse they tell themselves.</p> <p>They think (wrongly) that it alright to leave customers for an extended period to make up their own minds.</p> <p>They sometimes forget that their role is to generate sales – they have forgotten what the purpose and goal of the business is.</p>
CONFIDENCE	<p>Some staff believe that they are not good talking with strangers (customers).</p> <p>Some staff feel embarrassed about trying to sell products and services.</p>

You should always check with your Supervisor about the timing and nature of the acknowledgement and approach that is being used in our different sections of the business – how this is done in one of our restaurants will be different if you are working in one of souvenir stores.

The first part is understanding what good customer service; we also need to understand how each of the Bunjappy staff can build strong customer relationships.

When a customer enters our business, they want to deal with a staff member that they can feel a bond with. Even if that connection is quickly and short in duration, customers prefer 'feel good moments' to feeling dissatisfied or uncomfortable. The more quickly and thoroughly you can establish a relationship with your customer, the better the results will be, and you will create a memorable experience for them.

Our customers' underlying needs

There are some underlying needs that apply to most of our customers, most of the time. Being aware of and understanding these needs allows you to apply them at the right times, adding to your ability to create successful relationships with your customers.

Consistency

Consistency is important in commercial activity – it builds trust and allows us to establish expectations - to know what to expect and what not to expect. It helps the consumer establish buying habits. Example: When booking holidays, consistency of service and product will build up a clientele that is happy with the service and product – it is reliable. Generally, those customers will return to the same business to make their bookings – very rarely will they go a new agency unless they were disappointed.

Consistency is also about how you present yourself. A customer expects the same level of service when they walk into our business, every time they walk in. When it changes, they notice. Example: McDonalds is successful because of its ability to offer and deliver the same service levels within every business – whether it is the cleanliness of their facilities, the short wait times, or the consistent standard of its products each contributes to people returning to that business.

Value

Customers look for value in their purchases and it is your job to help them perceive this by finding out about their wants and needs. It is then our role to satisfy customer's needs and wants; not what you or the company think is important. Customers care about is what our product or service can do for them, not the technical aspects of how it is produced or manufactured. This means you should be talking about benefits, not features.

Example: Imagine a customer was buying a backpack for bushwalking. They are probably more concerned that it is light to carry around all day (not that it weighs 650 grams and is made of GoStore fabric).

Always think of the importance of active listening. Listen as customers talk about what is important to them. Note the words and terms they use to describe what they need and want, this then gives you the lead on what you can do for them. Active listening helps you to identify what is most important to the customer, then you can select which benefits to focus on and explain them in terms that the customer can readily understand.

Identifying customer needs

Delivering outstanding customer service means meeting the needs of clients by supplying them with the goods and services they want or by offering successful solutions to their problems. To do so, team members must be able to define the needs of the customers reliably and thoroughly.

You need to know what our customers want, and why. Good customer research helps you work out how to:

- ask the right questions to identify needs accurately.
- identify and take advantage of cross-selling opportunities.
- present products, services and solutions that meet customers' needs.

Identify your customers

Research is the first step in identifying what our current and future customers require. Bunjappy spends quite a bit of money on researching what may be future trends and

tourism/travel packages the market may seek. Research on customers helps all of us, the employees of Bunjappy, to build a more comprehensive image of our customers and understand how to approach them. This will also highlight the essential features our consumers have in common, such as:

- gender
- age
- occupation
- disposable income
- residential location
- recreational activities

Understanding why they purchase

As a business, Bunjappy needs to know who our customers are and what motivates them to buy our services and visit our venues. We also need to know if they are making decisions based on:

- work demands
- family needs
- budgets
- social or emotional needs
- preferences

Consider our customers spending habits

Various types of customers can pay varying amounts. Again, as a business, Bunjappy needs to have a clear idea of the financial potential our customers and what their spending patterns are. This in turn allows us to have several different packages targeted at differing groups of customers. The research provides Bunjappy with information on, for example:

- their average income.
- the portion of their income they spend on the type of products or services you

sell.

- if they budget.

Find out what they think of you

Why identifying customer needs matters

To ensure customer service and loyalty, it is essential to recognise the needs of customers correctly. When we do not identify the needs of customers accurately, or if our staff are oblivious to their needs, they will take their business elsewhere.

Customers have special requirements. By simply assuming what a customer needs or wants or having the attitude that our business will provide what we want to, will drive the customer away.

Identifying the interests and needs of customers helps our team members to cross-sell similar goods or services. Cross-selling will boost the original purchase, make it easier to use, or make it more flexible, and is of financial benefit to the company. The same advantages apply to the 'up-selling' technique.

Our staff need to be able to ask the right questions, listen to feedback and customise their response to meet customer needs. Identifying customer needs/wants and then providing the service to meet these needs/wants, produces happier and satisfied customers who are more likely to come back to Bunjappy for return business.

Key points:

1. To ensure customer satisfaction, you must correctly identify customers' needs.
2. To identify needs, you must both listen and ask the right questions.
3. After identifying needs, always check for additional or related needs.

Use your expertise and experience to recognise and demonstrate the best goods, services, and solutions to meet the needs of our customers.

Are you working in one of our hospitality venues?

If you are working in one of Bunjappy's food/beverage sites, catering to customers with special dietary requirements is often a challenge.

Generally, the hospitality side of our industry has moved ahead in dealing with nutritional conditions, allergies and food intolerances. Nearly every menu we offer today has a breakdown of gluten-free, dairy-free, halal and vegetarian choices.

Why are dietary options so important?

Many people have different reasons for having alternative diets. It could be a dietary requirement, a medical reason or simply a lifestyle choice. Some of the most popular options you would find on many of our menus include:

- Vegetarian
- Vegan
- Dairy-free
- Gluten-free
- Food allergies
- Halal

Always ensure that our range of food options is clearly identified in our menus and menu boards. If a customer asks about one of the options, ensure you are familiar with what is available at your location.

Catering successfully for customers with food allergies and intolerances will help set our business apart from the rest.

As a business our strategy to meet the diverse food needs of our potential customers relies on the following approach:

Adaptation of the menu: An allergy matrix that lists the dishes available against most specific dietary conditions, from gluten to fructose, nuts, lactose, and so on is available in all our venues.

Fresh ingredients: Always read the ingredients and ensure you are aware of what conflicts with each food option. Gluten-free choices should always be available on the menu.

Open communication with customers: If guests are aware of their dietary requirements at the time of booking, it is also simpler because restaurants have more time to prepare personalised items. You should also make sure the kitchen can handle anyone with special dietary requirements, without notice. If anyone has any such conditions, our serving staff should ask the guests at the table.

Knowledgeable staff: Workers need to be familiar with the distinctions between a food allergy and sensitivity and how to handle each efficiently and safely.

Activity 6

Question 1

How can you identify customer needs?

Question 2

List six (6) ways you can connect with your customers.

Adapting your communication style to a customer

There's one more consideration that we haven't included – and that is the personality of the customer. Is your customer informal and relaxed or more formal and serious? Is he fast paced and on a mission, or is he a thinker that needs to make sure his choice is correct? There are so many subtleties when it comes to communicating to customers in a way that best connects with them. Effective salespeople are more attuned to these subtleties and are equally more flexible or adaptable to change their own style to the style of the customer.

How to adapt

Adapting allows you to be empathic and to “get into the other person’s shoes”. The more you can do this, the more effective your relationships will be.

Before you look at adapting your behaviour, there are three principles to be aware of. These principles will influence the success of your efforts.

1. The more you see someone as being like you, the faster you will build trust between you.
2. Listening to others builds their trust in you.
3. Treating others the way they would like to be treated will improve the communication.

Different types of personalities

BOLD	Decisive, Efficient, Purposeful
EXPRESSIVE	Spontaneous, Lively, Talkative
SYMPATHETIC	Easy going, Patient, Co-operative
TECHNICAL	Detailed, Precise, Questioning

In theory, you should be most comfortable with customers that have the same personality style as you.

Opportunities to delight your customer

Farewell - For customers, this is icing on their cake. It's true for you too because it's easy to do yet it pays huge dividends in customer loyalty.

When do you farewell a customer? You farewell a customer when the sale or communication is over.

The way in which you farewell a customer may be dependent upon any pre-existing relationship you may have with the customer, and the length of time you have known them. A repeat customer whom you have been dealing with for years may be more comfortable with less formal greetings and farewells

Generally, a smile and say *"Goodbye,"* or *"See you next time"*. Do not be too casual nor use slang.

You might add something which personalises the exchange you have had. Foreexample: *"I hope your wife likes the trip to Bali."*, *"Good luck with the camping gear. I hope it does not rain next weekend."*

You might even mention another product: *"Let me know if we can help you with another rail trip through Canada."*

If there is further action to take place, it is a good idea to leave the customer with a summary of what you have both agreed on. Example:

"Okay, then, as I said, expect the courier to deliver the air tickets on Thursday morning. My name is _____ if you need me again. But don't worry, there won't be any trouble."

Give your customers the farewell they deserve. They have just spent money in our business ensuring our continued operations and contributed to your salary, so thank them with a sincere smile.

Thank them

After the customer has finished and is preparing to leave, thank them for the business. This often gets forgotten or is treated lightly. When you thank our customers, be genuine. Thank them in multiple ways, not just once. Make sure they know you are grateful for their business.



Communicate in a clear and professional manner

Creating a good first impression is very important in good customer service. It has been found that every person who leaves the business dissatisfied with the products or services tells five other people about it. This is an enormous amount of negative advertising.

It is you who is communicating directly with customers.

When a customer says:

"That hotel is so friendly and helpful"

OR

"I can't stand that hotel. It's so snooty and unwelcoming"

The customer is not talking about the business's bricks and mortar. The customer is talking about the way the staff have communicated and behaved.

If you are working on one of our hotels, to customers, "you" are the hotel.

It is important you understand you are regularly communicating with customers without knowing it and so must be mindful about:

- What you say
- What you do
- The way you do thing
- How you look
- Your speech
- Your gestures

What is customer service?

Customer service is all about building a rapport with the people who enter the business. It involves offering the customer help and support to satisfy their needs and wants.

Customer service does not always finish at the end of the service. It may continue with follow up, e.g. A phone call to the customer regarding the arrival of goods they have ordered. Ultimately the object is to satisfy the customer and establish customer loyalty.

Good customer service is what makes the individual or business stand out from the rest.

Factors customers expect in good service

Good customer service includes:

- Individualised attention
- Price
- Quality
- Product knowledge
- Presentation
- Polite and courteous service
- Efficiency
- Consistency

Consistency

Consistency is also important. It is not enough for you to be professional and courteous to customers today, but not tomorrow.

It's not enough to be polite and welcoming in the morning, but not in the afternoon.

It's not enough to be civil and hospitable to those you know, but not to those you don't know.

You must be professional and courteous, always - to all customers.

Explain and match products and services to customer needs

Determining my customers' needs

You must establish the customer as your priority. By asking questions and listening, you understand their needs. Because excellent customer service involves meeting and exceeding the needs of your customers, it makes sense that you will want to find out what their needs are. A good way to do this is to target your questions to get the information you need. You can then help the customer as quickly and effectively as possible.

There are two types of questions that can be asked to find out how you can assist your customers: closed and open

Closed questions

Closed questions receive only a yes or no answer. They are useful to get a limited amount of information. They restrict the answers that someone can give.

These are closed questions: *"Do you like this colour?"; "Do you wish to lay-by?"; "Is this the room you were after?"*

Closed questions are excellent for obtaining facts and keeping the customer focused on the discussion you are having.

Situation	Example
For getting facts quickly.	Is this for you or someone else?
For testing understanding.	Does this sound like what you are after?
For setting up a positive or negative frame of mind in the other person.	Would you like to cut the time it takes to do your cooking? I hate white clothes coming out grey after you wash them, don't you?

Open questions

Open questions elicit more than a yes or no answer. They begin with words like what, where, how, when, and why.

They are good questions to use when you want to find out information. Open questions also help find out what the customer needs.

Here are some open questions:

- “Who are you buying the gift for?”
- “What types of food do you like?”
- “How many people will be staying with us?”

Overuse of open questions can be a problem in certain circumstances, and with types of customers. The key to effective questioning is using a balance of both open and closed questions.

Open questions help to establish rapport and generate information from your customer, allowing you to make recommendations to suit their needs. Open questions are great for starting effective two-way communication.

Asking smart questions is about knowing what questions to ask customers and when to ask them! Many people think your credibility comes from your answers to customer's questions, but in fact, your real credibility comes from asking smart questions. Through good questioning, you can demonstrate to the customer that you know what you're talking about and importantly, you are interested in the customer.

Active listening

So now you know about the importance of asking great questions to determine the needs and wants of our customers, you need to focus on the skill of listening.

Active listening is a communication technique that requires the listener to feedback what they hear to the speaker, by way of re-stating or paraphrasing what they have heard in their own words, to confirm what they have heard.

When interacting with a customer, people often "wait to speak" rather than listening attentively. They might also be distracted. Active listening is a structured way of listening and responding to others, focusing attention on the customer and what they are saying.

In a tourism environment, customers will shop elsewhere if they feel that the staff member is not listening and paying attention to their needs. Effective listening requires you to focus your full attention on the person who is sending the message.

After you have asked a customer a question, always ensure you listen to what has been said and then repeat it back to them in a shortened version. If they agree with you then you and they know you have been listening attentively and the customer feels heard.

This is the basis for an on-going relationship with your customer and should encourage business.

Here are some useful tips to improve your listening skills...

- To ensure understanding, rephrase what the customer has just told you at key points in the conversation, i.e. *"So let me quickly summaries what you've just said. What you're after is ..."*
- Listening does not mean you can't talk. To keep the conversation two-way and to give it some energy, inject words like *"that's great", "OK", "yes", "I know what you mean"*, etc.
- Resist the temptation while listening to the customer to mentally jump straight to a product that will match their needs. It's the most obvious thing to do but try staying longer in the conversation to find out not just what they want, but why they want it. This will give you more opportunity to create the total solution for them
- Work on your body language and focus on your facial expressions. You must look interested, have good eye contact and don't forget to smile!
- Standing with arms folded, or hands in your pockets are often perceived as either defensive or signs of boredom and should be avoided when dealing with customers.
- Stop talking! To others and to yourself. Learn to still the voice within. You cannot listen if you are talking.

Listening takes effort, patience and practice as well as a wish to build empathy and understanding. True listening is not easy, but the results are well worth it.

Look at the characteristics of poor and effective listeners below and circle two or three bad habits you intend to stop and two or three habits that you intend to start.

POOR LISTENERS	SKILLED LISTENERS
Being easily distracted	Asking questions
Failing to ask questions	Letting people finish what they are saying before offering an opinion
Fidgeting	Looking alert and interested
Finishing people's sentences for them	Remaining poised, calm and emotionally controlled
Inattentive body language	Responding with nods and 'uh-hums'
Interrupting	Summarising frequently what the other person has said
Jumping to conclusions	Looking at the person talking to observe body language

Customers need information to help them make a buying decision. The essence of selling is to communicate this information. Your customers are going to think that you know everything about the products and services of our business from the moment they step into our business and face you. It will not matter if you have been employed there for 10 minutes or 10 years, the customer's first perception will be 'this person can help me'.

Not all customers know what they want, nor do they know all that there is to know but you are expected to. You must be able to supply relevant information in an accurate, concise and believable manner.

This is all part of the service that customers, colleagues and your employer expect you to deliver as a professional employee.

Product/service knowledge

Specialised product and service knowledge means that the employee can provide relevant information to the customer so they can make informed and considered decisions with which they are happy.

An employee who has good product/service knowledge and has considered the

specialised applications available with products and services, will be able to explain to the customer, in easily understood language (not jargon or technical terms), the advantages and disadvantages of each product and service and of any attached warranties, terms or conditions.

Specialised product knowledge means that you know the product you are selling but you also know what goes with what, how it can be best applied, what terms and warranties are attached, what the service and maintenance requirements are.

If you are not able to answer a particular question knowledgeably, do not pretend to do so. Rather than try and provide an answer which you hope will appease the customer, admit to any uncertainties, but proceed to find out the appropriate answer to their question. Conferring with colleagues and or management is one method of resolving this situation.

Product knowledge includes:

- Being able to explain why there are different pricing arrangements for different tours going to the same place.
- Being able to explain why one travel group is better than another.
- Knowledge about the business – Payments, Refund policy, Discounts, etc.

Warranties and Agreements

Suppliers differ in what they warrant, and you need to know something about the differences so that the customer can compare the advantages and disadvantages of each.

Your business might offer extended warranties or guarantees for some items, usually at a cost to the customer. You must know how they work, what the inclusions and exclusions are as well as the benefits customers receive.

Ensure that the customer understands the fundamentals of the warranty. It should be clearly explained, and the customer must agree to the warranty terms and conditions by signing the documentation.

Under the Fair Trading Act a salesperson is obliged to interpret warranties and guarantees fairly and correctly. This means that salespersons must not represent the elements covered by warranty agreements or to press customers for extended warranties under misleading conditions. You are also obliged to clearly explain any

extra or on-going costs associated with warranty and/or service agreements.

Terms and conditions

Terms and conditions define how a contract is implemented for a customer organization. They define what is being sold under the contract; the price of the items being sold; how the items are shipped; how orders are paid for; how item returns are handled; how orders are approved; and where orders are shipped from.

Contract terms and conditions can also be referred to as contract terms or terms.

Many terms and conditions reference business policies because many aspects of a business's operation are defined by business policies. Terms and conditions provide some standard parameters for the business policies they reference. Providing parameters to the business policies allows you to modify the behaviour of business policies for each contract.

Activity 7

Provide 2 examples which reflect active listening and effective questioning to determine customers' needs.

Promptly meet all reasonable requests

As a member of staff, it is your responsibility to fulfil the needs of all the company stakeholders. This concerns both internal and external customers. An internal customer is someone involved in delivering customer service. Regardless of the type of customer, it is essential that all employees provide our customers with adequate service and assistance.

It is necessary to define the needs and priorities to provide customer service. It's also risky to say that we know what these desires and needs are because we may get it wrong.

Often customers will tell us what their needs and aspirations are, and we'll have to ask questions in other situations.

Servicing customer needs

As service providers, we have to do whatever we can to fulfil our customers' needs. However, it is essential to note that such requirements and requests must be fair. You shouldn't hope to:

- Encounter any requests that involve you in doing anything beyond safety.
- Humiliate or demean yourself.
- Break the law.

Whenever you are asked to do something you think is questionable or outside of what Bunjappy considers ethical behaviour, you will excuse yourself and contact management immediately. Fortunately, most customer requests are entirely appropriate and well within our service capabilities.

Although treating all customers as individuals is essential, each customer defines service differently. It is up to you to decide and have specific interpretations of what follows.

Internal customers

Internal customers have a mutual objective to you, that is, the success of Bunjappy Regional Tourism Group. Assisting them to do their job roles and responsibilities professionally is also important.

Communication is vital among internal customers. Teamwork and empathy are essential to each other's needs. The potential client does not see any of the staff involved in the delivery of goods and services. They just see the result.

Although each internal customer has their own needs directly related to their position in the job, there are some basic needs that all workers must understand. These needs include:

- Information – knowing and executing their job position, product awareness, menu information, local consumer habits, future activities, policies and procedures and timetable of shift activities.
- Skills – ability to perform specified tasks related to their specific jobs.
- Training – both realistic and theoretical preparation to ensure sets of skills for employees.
- Equipment – this can include mechanical equipment related to their specific job (computers, buses, ovens, blenders) and related trade tools (plates, glassware, pens).

- Time – workers need enough time to carry out their duties correctly.
- Enough allocation of work – enough distribution of customers per staff member to allow quality service to be rendered. Management must ensure that enough personnel are on duty and responsible for carrying out the required tasks.
- Support – managerial and supervision support and instruction for workers.
- Fairness – equity in the areas of pay, the pace of work, scheduling of activities.

Identifying internal customer needs is usually reflected in their job duties requirements. However, these can alter at times. Continuous communication is the best way to recognise internal consumer needs. This communication may be through:

- Meetings and staff briefings
- Statements in shift/work documents
- Via emails, memos and telephone calls

External customer

While the customers handled by each section of our organisation have their own specific needs, there are many similar or generic needs. These needs include:

- Value for money.
- Service and activities that reflect what was advertised.
- Expectations met or exceeded.
- To feel respected.
- To feel at home, which is why we offer a warm, genuine and sincere smile and welcome to all our customers. We are delighted to see them.
- To be greeted by friendly workers, which is why we smile again and why we spend the extra few seconds with them, discussing how their day went and so on.
- To be handled immediately and courteously, which is why we do not keep them waiting at reception, restaurant, room service, meals etc.
- To receive assistance when required, which is why we have an excellent product and local knowledge.
- To be in a friendly, clean atmosphere which is why we make sure that the services, offices, grounds and equipment are spotless.

- To be reassured and respected which is why we use the customer's name as much as we can.
- To be heard and understood, which is why we listen to concerns and act whenever a question, issue or dispute occurs.

Customers have perceived perceptions of what level of service they want to provide while visiting a venue which is based on:

- Past visits they have made with Bunjappy.
- Bunjappy's advertisements and promotional messages.
- Competitor advertising and industry standards.
- Comments from family, friends and colleagues – the 'word of mouth' network.
- The price charged for the offering.

As a tourism and travel company Bunjappy deals with customers from several target markets, each with their own unique needs. Employees must understand each target market's needs and tailor their service accordingly. The current target audiences and their requirements are as follows:

Business: Computer and Internet access, corporate lounges, laundry facilities, business or corporate centres, media outlets and news channels. Business people will generally visit our hotels' restaurants, cafes and bars.

Family: Interconnecting spaces, prices, Internet, entertainment choices, childminding facilities, TV programs for children, package deals and protection.

Leisure: Concierge programs, lower costs, nearby attractions, gymnasiums.

Elderly: Value for money, shared accommodation, group tours.

Groups: Big allocation of offices, low prices, conference areas, customised menus, bus access and parking spaces.

External customer needs are always varying and not the same for all. The same customer's needs can change day after day. Staff must remain mindful of customer loyalty and search for ways to enhance all customers 'experience.

Most consumer requirements are simple and easy to satisfy. It could include the need for more pillows or blankets, a change in travel, cooked steak in some form, accommodation with a specific view, or wake-up calls or taxis. Customers most often use specific questions to inform you of their needs.

However, some customers don't let you know if their needs are not met, leaving a venue disappointed with little to no hope of a return visit.

Staff should be vigilant and try to anticipate guest needs whenever possible. That is possible with the following:

Observation: Quite often, the body language of a customer will indicate their true feelings. They could be looking around for staff to serve them, angry or frustrated, or merely disappointed in what has been provided.

Asking questions: Offer recommendations or find out if they want things done a certain way

Putting yourself in the customer's shoes: Ask yourself, *"What would I like if I was in their position?"* If guests have arrived from a long flight and look tired, speedy check-in service is vital. You may also want to arrange room service dinner for them while they are checking in so they can eat quickly and get to bed sooner.

Identify and anticipate operational problems and act

Regardless of how well thought out and organised our business is, often there will be challenges that require the team to work together to find an acceptable solution. Many of the problems that occur are beyond our control, and can result from:

Weather: Example - due to bad weather, tour groups to the wetland habitats have been cancelled and 100 people are now asking for an alternative activity.

Flight delays and cancellations: Example - a cancelled flight has resulted in an extra 200 people requiring rooms and they will check in at the same time.

Lack of supplies: Example - a supplier has failed to deliver the coffee beans and there are no supplies in the stores.

Electricity problems: Example - the power has gone out, resulting in no lighting or electrical items working.

Customer emergency: Example – a customer has a heart attack in the foyer; a client tries to make a toasted cheese sandwich in the toaster and sets off the fire alarms.

Irrespective of the issue, a solution has to be found to satisfy customers' needs. As a team leader, you must be versatile and inclusive in your approach to addressing any issues that may arise.

Most companies have policies and procedures for coping with unforeseen problems, so as a member of staff you should:

- Use common sense.
- Don't panic.
- If a solution is clear, put this into place.

- If no resolution is clear, seek assistance from the necessary colleagues.
- Notify management and other staff members where required.

The goal when any issues occur is to find a solution which has the least effect on Bunjappy's customers and our operations.

Problem solving of re-occurring problems

If your venue is experiencing a re-occurring problem, it is worthwhile to carry out a process to find solutions and fix it permanently. The problem-solving approach can be broken down into seven steps.

1. Identify problem

A problem may pose a temporary setback, wasted resources or production interruptions. The first step is to recognise that there is a problem and see it as an opportunity to improve.

2. Describe the current situation

You need to go to the source of the problem to identify all the contributing factors to understand the issue better. Ask yourself questions on this:

- Who - who is concerned or needs to be informed?
- What - what are the processes, products or parts in question?
- When - when did the problem occur?
- Where - where did the problem occur?
- Why - what changed recently?
- How - Does the problem consistently happen or only occasionally?

3. Take temporary countermeasures immediately

Do not start by looking for the perfect solution. Fix the urgent consequences first. Example: If you find that one of the tour buses has broken down, a potential countermeasure may be to ask for assistance from a local tour company that gets quite a bit of business from Bunjappy.

4. Find the root cause

Analysis of a problem's causes is essential – unless all are identified and fixed, the problem will re-occur. You can use the five whys method for easy to everyday issues, asking "why" at least five times to trace the problem back to its fundamental source.

5. Propose solutions

Consider solutions which address the root causes of the problem. Examine multiple solutions, including what the effects of each solution will be on Bunjappy employees. Come to a consensus on the appropriate solution.

6. Establish an action plan

Build an action plan to implement the solution. Allocate appropriate resources and set a timeline. Remember the SMART approach to planning – use it!

7. Check results

Collect data and analyse it. Use performance metrics to assess improvement, benchmarking against the initial condition and other applicable criteria. Evaluate the differences between real and planned outcomes; keep team members informed, and change the strategy as required.

Recognise and act upon opportunities to deliver additional service

What are customer expectations, and how have they changed?

Customer expectations are any set of behaviours or actions people anticipate when they communicate with a business. Historically, customers have expected basics such as reliable service and reasonable pricing, but new customers have far higher expectations, such as responsive service, personalised interactions and a welcoming environment.

Customers have more options than ever as innovative businesses exploit breakthroughs in cloud, web and social technologies to offer personalised, useful, and immediate experiences. As a result, they are rising to demand this superior experience from any company with which they interact.

Three ways to exceed expectations

Some of the best and easiest ways to exceed customer expectations are as followed:

Quality first, Speed second: We live in a fast-paced world, and the daily demands do not get any slower. At the end of the day though, service should be measured on what is delivered, not on how much is done. If you provide a high amount of service that is not quality, then nobody cares. It is always better to have predictable quality service than to have loads of service that never actually hits the mark or achieves anything. Being busy giving poor customer service is foolish behaviour.

Concentrate on making the service right. Don't ever make a customer feel pressured.

Connect with our customers: If you do not genuinely care about our customers, it is hard for you to connect with them and perhaps you are in the wrong job. Connecting

with customers at an emotional level is a core part of any work in the tourism and travel industries. By doing so, you are more likely to see repeat customers and they will have no hesitation in recommending you and Bunjappy to others.

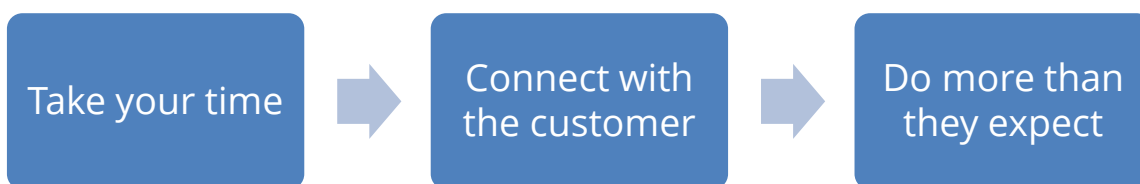
Six (6) ways you can connect with customers and keep them loyal are:

- Treat each one as an individual.
- Respond to concerns.
- Keep it personal, not transactional.
- Focus on face-to-face contact wherever possible.
- Grow with your current clients in mind.
- Always show your appreciation.

Give the extra effort: Happy customers are loyal customers. If need be, give the extra effort, provide additional items or services where possible, this always seems to impress. Example: On a tour package to Bali, see if you can wrangle a free day tour from the provider and pass onto the customer. Always remember, customers, are the most crucial part of the business; without customers Bunjappy would cease to exist and so would your job and the security it provides. Focus on the customers.

Seek to think of a memorable thing you can do for any customer. Remember, if you ever have a chance to do something, then do it. Today's customer service isn't about telling people how nice you are and offering figures to prove it. It's about creating unforgettable moments that make the customers appreciate you.

All you need to remember is to:



Never take your customers for granted as they are the livelihood of our business. Making each individual feel special will help us increase our revenue in the long run.

Work with others to deliver service

Identify personal limitations in serving the needs of customers

Appropriate

No matter where you work there will always be limitations to the information or service that you can provide. This may be because of our businesses policies and procedures, or it could be that you do not have enough information to give your customer the information they require. It could also be because your job role defines it as something you need to pass on to a supervisor or manager.

Below are some examples of people you may not be able to assist, that may need to be referred to someone else or you may need assistance from another staff member to help them.

Special needs customers

Essential elements of service are:

- The ongoing need to be polite and courteous.
- The need to be warm, genuine and empathetic.
- Knowing when to “back off” and allow people to help themselves.
- Being yourself.
- Knowing your own personal limitations and realising when you will need to:
 - Involve another staff member
 - Obtain an interpreter
 - Refer the customer to somewhere, or someone else
- Consistency

Serving customers with special needs requires you to have a positive attitude, good communication skills, patience and, often, a sense of humour.

Serving Customers with intellectual disabilities

Some techniques of good service are:

- Understand that people with intellectual disabilities may or may not have physical disabilities as well.
- Serve them the same way you serve other customers: make them welcome, find out their needs, meet their needs, and complete the sale and farewell them.
- Always first try to communicate directly with the customer. If you cannot establish communication with the customer, communicate through the companion.
- Do not guess what the customer wants: clarify and confirm.
- Do not guess what the customer is like as a person.
- Do establish a warm, humorous relationship if both you and the customer genuinely share the warmth and humour.
- Find out by asking if there is any special service you can provide. Make your own suggestions too.
- Don't try too hard. It comes out as artificial. Being yourself is the best there is.
- Treat the customer with the same respect you'd show any other customer.
- Be patient if the customer needs time to communicate.
- Give feedback to show you've understood.
- Act naturally.

Serving Customers who are deaf or hearing impaired

- Get the person's attention before talking. A tap on the shoulder or a wave of the hand in their field of vision are two acceptable ways of doing this.
- Do not stand in front of a window or bright light. You are then easier to see.
- Look at the person as you talk.
- Speak naturally. Don't exaggerate your lip movements or speak louder. These distort your speech and make you harder to understand.
- Don't mumble, eat or smoke.

- Use simple language and sentence structure. Don't however, patronise. There is a difference between keeping things simple and being patronizing.
- Avoid background noise.
- Use visual clues and gestures.
- Write down what you want to say.
- Be patient. Show tolerance and good humour.
- Use a combination of speech and writing.

Serving Customers who are blind or vision impaired

If you are serving customers who are blind or vision impaired, there are some simple things you can do which make their shopping easier.

- For a start, walk up to a customer straight away. It is awful standing in a business for a long time waiting for someone to notice you.
- Say something simple like *"Hi, would you like some help?"*
- Then tell the customer you are a salesperson/waiter/tour guide to show you are not another customer.
- Then ask the customer *"What is your guiding technique?"*
- Do not just grab the customer's arm and start leading. The customer will tell you the best way to guide.
- Talk as you usually would. Don't shout. They're not deaf.
- To provide good service, you must listen to the customer very well.

Serving Customers from Non-English-Speaking backgrounds

- Greet the customer as usual. Most non-English speaking customers recognise some basic words.
- Use positive body language to assist your communication.
- Speak slowly and in simple English.
- Listen carefully.
- Give feedback to show you understand.

- Use pictures and diagrams if necessary.
- Show friendliness and tolerance.
- Get feedback from the customer: *“No”, “Yes”, “Bigger”, “Another one”, etc.*
- Use the Translating and Interpreting Services if necessary. Phone 13 1450 from anywhere in Australia, 24 hours a day¹

There may be circumstances where you are unable to help or assist a customer with special needs and you may need to refer the situation to your supervisor to handle.

Always make sure that you are clear on all our organisational policies and procedures regarding Equal Employment Opportunity and discrimination and are fully aware of all the legalities.

You will find these policies and procedures in the business policy and procedure manual, the HR policy manual and the Code of Conduct.

There is no doubt that when dealing with customers who have unique needs, you require:

- A genuine service ethic.
- Patience.
- Excellent communication skills, especially non-verbal skills.
- A sense of humour.
- The ongoing need to be polite and courteous.
- Warmth and empathy.
- To know when to back off and allow people to help themselves. Make the offer but accept that not all people need your help. Don't let this rejection affect your offer the next time.
- To be yourself, don't try to be someone else when dealing with those who have needs.
- To know your limitations and realise when to seek assistance from someone else.
- Consistency – Work with all people who have needs so they can count on your willingness to help whenever they call.
- To find out what in-house support is available, or can be made available, to

help you serve these people.

Follow directions of supervisors and managers

Everyone knows that the key to building a strong business is great customer service.

Customer service and a great product means repeat customers, referrals and word of mouth advertising. Once a business has established strong repeat customers, it will continue to grow.

Businesses want customers to bring referral repeat business.

Referral business is when customers tell others and convince them to give us a try - they refer new customers to us. Customers will refer people to your business if they feel they have received good service.

Repeat business occurs when existing customers come back to us.

Activity 8

Question 1

Why is it important to follow instructions from supervisors when delivering services?

Question 2

Why do you need to report service issues and customer problems to your supervisor?
How soon should this occur?

Question 3

How can you collect and provide customer feedback to supervisors and managers?

Encouraging repeat customers

You can encourage repeat customers by:

- Creating and maintaining a welcoming shopping environment.
- Stocking a suitable range of products and services.
- Providing value-for-money.
- Demonstrating excellent levels of product knowledge.
- Using excellent customer service skills.
- Advising them of other products and services that the business offers.

The key to building repeat business is to develop and maintain a comprehensive knowledge of the products, services and travel packages available through our business. You will also need to know about all the service-related facilities our business offers and be able to fully explain each service.

Promoting products and services

We must let customers know about all the products/services we offer because then they are more likely to return and buy something else.

If you must promote products or services while serving a customer, there are a few tips to follow:

- Work out the customer's needs first, then suggest or show a product in which s/he may be interested.
- Mention the product or service to be helpful.
- Respect the customer's lack of interest. Don't spoil a good customer encounter by being too heavy.
- Be straightforward rather than sly in how you bring up the product or service. For example, *"We're showing customers the new 4WD tours this week because it's such a good price"*.
- Be enthusiastic but at the same time be sensitive to the customer's reaction.

To encourage repeat business and customer loyalty, existing customers must have a reason to return to our business regularly. By continually providing useful products and services, you are keeping our business in their minds, for whenever they are ready

to re-purchase.

In all cases your supervisor will be able to guide you in the procedures of our business and how we do things. You must always ensure you follow the directions of your superiors as they are the ones who have had the most experience and can make decisions based on the business' best interests and in line with our organizational policies and procedures.

Resolve routine customer problems

One responsibility all staff have is to, wherever possible, resolve routine customer problems according to your level of responsibility and Bunjappy's policies and procedures.

Use active listening and questioning

Before resolving a customer's concerns, you first need to know what the complaint is about.

A critical aspect of resolving the complaint is to identify what the complaint really is. In most cases, the customer will tell you what the problem is. Their version will, of course, be focused from their point of view – it will be biased. It is important to ensure you hear from all persons involved to obtain a complete picture of what occurred or what the problem may be.

Listen to your customer

Listening to our customers is one of the best ways to help resolve any issues. By listening to customer concerns, you are showing that you and our business care about them and that all of us are endeavouring to care for them.

Establish nature of complaint

You must talk to the customer to work out whether the issue is beyond your authority to fix. If it is beyond your level of responsibility, then a supervisor or a manager needs to become involved.

Attempt to find out:

- Names of those involved.
- Promises that the business/staff may have made.
- Service or products that failed to live up to promises or expectations, including how they failed to deliver on quality or expectations.
- Timelines relating to the complaint.
- Costs, money or charges involved.
- The factual details, as far as can be ascertained, as to what was said and by whom.
- Actions, or inactions, taken (or not taken) by the staff.

When you have uncovered all the details about the issue, repeat them back to the person and then move on to seek agreement about what should be done.

Whatever is decided on must be explained in detail so there can be no doubt about what you are going to do. When such an agreement is reached, your next step is to implement the agreed solution.

Dealing with difficult customers with the aim of retaining them as customers is vital to our success.

Market research shows that nearly 96% of customers who have problems do not complain – they just do not come back to that business - put this data into perspective, if Bunjappy has only four complaints a year it more than likely means that we have 96 other customers who have simply not come back. Of the 4% that do return, 95% of these will do business again with the business if the problem is solved quickly; 54% to 70% will do business again if the problem is simply solved. This highlights the importance of taking immediate action if a customer returns with a problem.

This figure becomes more alarming when you consider that people who have had difficulties with our business could relate the story to up to 20 other people. The main reason that people do not return is because they expect that nothing will be done, and they can do without the hassle of arguing and being treated poorly.

Regardless of who or what has caused the problem, in almost all cases customers genuinely believe they have a legitimate problem. Handling all customers with problems tactfully and thoughtfully is critical to retaining them, regardless of the way they choose to let you know of the problem.

Why do customers get upset?

All customers are different. All employees may expect to come across a difficult customer at some point in their work. This customer may be either an internal customer or an external customer. How you deal with this situation is vitally important and turning an angry or difficult customer into a loyal customer is a skill that you will be required to use many times in the tourism and travel environment.

There are many reasons why customers become difficult. These could include:

- Someone was rude to them, whether it was intentional or not.
- No-one listened to the customer.
- The customer's needs were not met.
- The customer may be intoxicated or affected by drugs.
- The customer may be responding to peer pressure to cause a problem.
- The person may simply have a personality that is aggressive and difficult to get along with.

Reasons for customer complaints

Most complaints fall into 4 groups. These groups are:

- Value for money - a customer's perception of value is very important. Business presentation and excellent customer service reinforce the customer's perception of value
- Price overcharge - mistakes happen, so the way a mistake is dealt with and corrected will determine customer satisfaction. Good customer service is essential.
- Product - faults or complaints are not necessarily the fault of the business, but the way the complaint is handled determines the customer's perception of the business.
- Service - is the essence of good customer service. Rudeness and poor service discourage customers from returning.

Procedures for responding to routine customer problems:

In all customer service environments, from a restaurant to a supermarket or retail chain, there are always the same general routine causes of customer problems and complaints.

It is important that you are aware of the procedures that are used to respond to these routine problems.

The most common of these include:

Incorrect pricing of products and services

The incorrect pricing of products and services can happen for any number of reasons, usually because there is a sale happening and the new prices haven't been adjusted properly.

When a customer brings to your attention a problem with the pricing of a product or service, you will need to check to see what the price of the product is meant to be compared to what it has been marked as. You can do this by asking relevant personnel or by checking the documentation for any currently running sales and seeing if the item is listed.

After this you will need to apologise to the customer for the inconvenience this has caused and readjust the price to the correct one.

Delays or errors in providing products or services

The hospitality industry is prone to having an environment that encourages timely delivery of products and services. This has become the case due to the shift in trends toward wanting high quality products and services given quickly and correctly.

Because of this new trend for wanting their products given to them quickly and accurately, complaints can occur from delays or errors in the product or service.

It is important that there is constant communication between all staff members. This communication helps in identifying potential challenges early, enabling measures to be taken to placate customers before problems occur.

The main procedure for handling delays or errors is to clearly explain the situation to the customer and offer them something as a consolation while they wait.

In certain circumstances you may need to void some of their items or make them "on the house" as a response to some problems that happened. In these situations, you

will need to ensure you follow your workplace procedures for the refunding of products and services.

Misunderstanding customer requests

The misunderstanding of customer requests falls into the same category as errors with products and services, where in the hospitality industry, customer requests will almost always have something to do with what they are purchasing.

As such, the same general procedures will apply to handling problems that come from misunderstanding customer requests.

Customer service policies for resolving routine customer problems

Along with these procedures, there will be some policies that will apply to the resolution of routine customer problems. These policies will outline which laws and regulations you need to adhere to when dealing with customers, as well as the way you do so.

Following policies and procedures is the best way to ensuring you are within your rights and responsibilities, as well as not making yourself liable for anything during the resolution process.

Methods of handling customer complaints

Letters

Letters are a very common form of complaint; they are generally seen as the most official way of complaining. This means that most customers will only use a letter of complaint where they feel there is a serious dissatisfaction, and where the business has a separate address for complaints or head office.

Letters have an advantage to your business, as they allow you time to look at a problem, solve it, and reply to the customer; hopefully ensuring they are satisfied enough to remain a customer.

Spoken word to employees

The most common form of complaint, particularly in hospitality businesses; is face to face with an employee (usually the front-line staff). This could take the form of a passing word or gesture and can be for small or large problems.

Although there is no official complaint in most cases, spoken word comments can provide information on the everyday problems that customers are experiencing, and provide an opportunity for your employees to solve these problems, both for these customers, and for future ones.

Phone calls

Phone calls are a common form of complaint. Generally, complaints received by this method are of a minor nature but can also be used by a highly dissatisfied customer who does not wish to write. The frequency of phone complaints generally depends on how much your business site uses the phone; the Bunjappy call centre will receive many more complaints than the café at Cape Upstart.

Phone complaints allow you to investigate a problem. However, phone complaints do not give you as much time to solve the problem as a letter or email.

Email

Emails are like letters, in fact are probably overtaking letters as the major method of complaint. The number of email complaints you receive will depend mostly on how widely the customer uses email.

Communicating with a complaining customer

Step One: Listening

- *Engage with the customer:* Greet the customer, smile and tell them your name. Ask the customer for their name (always be respectful and use their title Mr, Mrs, etc.); Once they have given you their name continues using it throughout the discussion.
- *Listen to the complaint:* Let the customer get it off his/her chest. Don't interrupt. Make sure you hear the full story. Ask open questions to encourage the customer to tell you as much as s/he wants to. Don't argue and don't explain. Remember, a complaint cannot be handled correctly unless you understand

why the customer is complaining. Listen carefully and make it clear that you are prepared to listen.

- *Communicate warmth and understanding:* Use body language which shows understanding - don't cross your arms, lean slightly towards the customer, nod, have a pleasant but serious expression. It is not a laughing matter - don't paint a fixed smile on your face. Say things that encourage the customer to speak: "Ah-ha", "Mmmmm", "Right", "Gosh", "How awful" and so on
- *Use the customer's name.*
- *Show empathy.* Imagine what you would feel like in the same situation as you concentrate on listening to what the customer is saying.
- *Do not commit Bunjappy to anything.* Don't commit the company to any action. Don't admit liability. Action is for a later stage
- *Don't take it personally.* The customer is not angry with you, but with the company and the service or product.

Step Two: Calm the Customer

- Apologise and acknowledge the customer's feelings. Example: "I am so sorry. You must have been annoyed. I would have been".
- Paraphrase the complaint to show the customer that you have listened and understood. Example: "As I understand, this is what happened Is that right?"
- Thank the customer for assisting you by pointing out a problem and apologise for their inconvenience. Take care not to admit liability for the problem, just apologise for their inconvenience and distress.

Step Three: Take Responsibility

- Check with your supervisor. Summarise the complaint to him/her. Do not have a dig at the customer when you tell the supervisor the tale. State the facts – not your personal opinions.
- Communicate as soon as possible to the customer what the business proposes to do.
- Explain (don't excuse) what went wrong if you need to. By now the customer is

relaxed because you are going to rectify the problem and will listen and probably even understand.

- Check that the customer agrees with the course of action. If s/he does not, then ask the customer what their expectations are. Relay this to whoever it is that makes decisions. At this stage if the customer is still unhappy, it is probably best for a supervisor to take over.
- Record details of the complaint such as customer's name and contact details, the product or service, how you dealt with it and how the customer reacted.

Step Four: Follow Up

- Check that what you promised happens and that it occurs within the time frame agreed upon. You should keep a diary note so that you can check up at a future date.
- Ring the customer up after the complaint has been rectified and make sure s/he is happy (or check at the end of the conversation).

Remember that usually, a customer will mainly complain about the service being poor, the goods being faulty or goods that do not meet the required needs of the customer. It is important that an employee can use his skills in customer service to turn a customer complaint into a positive experience for the customer.

If an employee receives a customer complaint, it should be dealt with quickly and sympathetically. The customer should be thanked for taking the time to highlight a problem with service or product. Most customers who have a problem with a business do not complain directly to the business - they just don't deal with the business again and they tell their friends about the faulty product or poor service they received. The ramification for the business is that it ends up losing not just the dissatisfied customer but everyone s/he tells!

Remember that if a customer complains they are doing your business a service by letting you know about the infraction, and they should be treated accordingly.

No matter how good business is, there will always be customer complaints. How you handle them is what is important. A well-handled complaint can ensure you have a repeat customer. A poorly handled complaint will lose you that customer and several others as 'word of mouth' from that customer spread to others.

A prompt response is critical. Customers want the problem fixed immediately that they have been inconvenienced. We should try and remove the inconvenience if it is possible.

When a customer has been shown that everything possible had been done to resolve their problem, they have confidence in dealing with Bunjappy again.

Remember taking the appropriate action can only be done after hearing the problem, understanding the customer's feelings and combining it with a sincere apology.

It is important to thank the customer. While it may sound odd, thank the customer for bringing it to their attention. Many people may be too proud or do not want to inconvenience the person who is assisting them. When thanking your customer for bringing it to your attention, they are giving you an opportunity to fix the issue.



[Complaint Handling Guidelines](http://www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/Publications/Documents/guidelines/Binder-Complaint-Handling.pdf)

(<http://www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/Publications/Documents/guidelines/Binder-Complaint-Handling.pdf>)

Listen

Here are a few tips on demonstrating you are listening:

- Show the customer you are taking them seriously.
- Allow the customer to completely express themselves.
- Nod your head frequently.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Do not interrupt unless they are aggressive or affecting other customers. If this is the case, you may need to ask them to move to a more unobtrusive spot
- Introduce yourself and take control of the situation. This helps to build their confidence and reinforces the fact that you are the person to solve their problem
- Wherever possible, get the customer's name and use it when dealing with them.

Escalating complaints

Where a complaint cannot be resolved at your level within our organisation's policies and procedures, you are to escalate the issue to a supervisor for their attention. For several customers, there is a common perception that if they escalate to a senior leader, then change will happen more quickly. This group of people will never be happy with your responses and will always seek the next person in the hierarchy.

The importance of effective resolution of customer complaints impacts upon the overall customer service performance of the Bunjappy Regional Tourism Group (BRTG). All complaints should be resolved in a way that is professional and in accordance with our policies and procedures.

You may not be able to resolve a complaint because:

- The customer is unprepared to negotiate what they see as being the only acceptable resolution.
- The customer is irate, aggressive, threatening or intimidating to staff and/or other customers.
- The solution is beyond your authority to act on.
- There is a lack of understanding in relation to the complaint.
- There is a language problem.

Sometimes, the customer's issue needs to be dealt with by someone with a different authority level. All these situations must be referred to the appropriate person as soon as possible to prove their complaint is not being ignored.

- The appropriate person in our organisation may be:
- Supervisor or other member of the management team
- A more senior staff member (i.e. one who is more experienced).

When customers are referred to other members within an organisation, they can feel frustrated and perhaps even become hostile if they feel they are getting the "run around". Here are some ideas you can apply to help reduce customer frustration:

- Inform the person that the complaint is being referred to of all the appropriate information so that the customer does not have to repeat themselves.
- The act of referring to a supervisor or more senior staff member may settle hostile customers as it is an indicator that the complaint is being taken

seriously.

- Before referring the customer to another staff member, ensure you understand the situation and what they want to achieve so that you can convey this to the next person.
- When referring, try to tell the person how long the wait will be, or what to expect.

Remember, it is the little things that make the difference.



[10 Tips to Master Customer Escalation Management](https://theoperationsblog.com/2016/04/customer-escalation-management/)

(<https://theoperationsblog.com/2016/04/customer-escalation-management/>)

Thoughts on escalating complex service

Your goal as a leader is to stop needless escalations. If that is not feasible, best practice is to ensure the best outcomes are achieved from the escalations.

In the management of escalation of client-initiated service issues, your focus must be on the delivery of the best results for our clients, our employees and our company.

Prevent escalations

Your goal as a team leader should be to solve the problems at your level and stop needless escalations. Make sure that the team members who work directly with the customers have the resources and training they need to resolve customer service problems. The employees need to be encouraged to use their discretion on behalf of their customers and make most of the day-to-day decisions. If a team seems to spend most of their time putting out customer 'fires', then there is usually an issue with the leadership in that team.

Ownership

All team members should endeavour to take care of challenging customers and stop handing them over to someone else. It is widely assumed that there is always something that you can do to support a customer. This could be as simple as listening, providing your name and contact number, reaching out to someone else on their behalf, asking more questions, giving them some relevant documents or going

out of your way to finding the best answers to their questions or concerns.

Customers may ask for things that we cannot give. In these cases, it's best, to be honest with the customer while focusing on what you can offer. Always try to retain control of the situation, instead of contributing to it.

Encourage an environment where employees are not afraid to take on ownership of the issue, ask for help and endeavour to work through the problems with the customer. The majority of Bunjappy's work positions are customer-facing as is expected in tourism and travel and challenges will always arise at some point. As these challenges occur, by asking for assistance, each of us has the potential to turn a problem into a meaningful learning experience for both employees and customers. Asking for guidance from a colleague (not for someone else to do the job) is one way of extending your own learning and development. The more we, the Bunjappy staff, work together and proactively define solutions and resolution of problems, the more focused our customer service will become.

Use less email

The communication tips below apply to most information systems but are especially relevant when communicating with customers or asking internally for assistance.

Email is a useful tool for an initial contact or a written after fact description. However, email is not the right tool to solve difficult problems when working back and forth with a customer or a group of co-workers.

Email adds time to a resolution. Wasting time with emails can double the time it takes to get to the next step in problem resolution. It is always best to get the right parties together on the phone, face to face or some combination to discuss the issues.

Email can be impersonal. Email can tell a factual story, but it is not a medium to empathise or sympathise. When reading an email, you cannot see any facial impressions or the paralanguage which is so important. Emails can often increase anxiety and aggression due to their impersonal nature.

Adjust the communication style to your audience

While dealing with a problematic customer problem (internal or external), it is important to establish a common level of information adapting the level of detail to

your audience, and then explain the intent and next steps.

Do not presume that all members of the participating group know the context or have learned of the problem before the meeting. Be sure to start with establishing an information level that is common to all participants.

Senior executives of Bunjappy want to hear or read a summary of the issue, know the causes and, most importantly, who owns the resolution and what the next steps are. Instead, an IT focused audience might want to get into the in-depth specifics of the problem using technical terminology, error messages received, network symptoms, etc.

Use language that us calm and expresses credibility

When dealing with a customer escalation, the words you use to interact with your customer is critical to improving the likelihood of a successful outcome. It is easier often to say less than more.

Do not go into why the problem occurred. Instead, focus on what you can do to fix the customer's issues.

Define clear escalation paths

Ensure you understand the correct pathways for escalating common issues. Refer to Bunjappy's policies and procedures on how this should occur.

A skip-level escalation happens when an issue is not brought directly to the attention of the relevant team leader or supervisor but is sent to their boss or someone further up the hierarchy. This approach is both disrespectful and harmful to the concept of customer service.

Bunjappy's policy is quite clear: Escalation of issues will follow the predetermined course set out in our policy documents. Skip-level escalation will be stopped and returned to the appropriate level as indicated by our policies. This ensures respect is show to all our workers, as well as encouraging the appropriate people to resolve the customer service issue.

It may be smart to alert a senior leader when dealing with significant problems, to keep them in the loop and to prevent potential surprises. Ensure they know that you oversee everything and that simply sharing this information sharing with them.

Activity 9

Question 1

Provide 3 examples of situations where you should seek the assistance of higher-level staff or supervisors.

Question 2

Explain the steps to use to resolve customer dissatisfaction.

Question 3

What is a stepped process for dealing with customer complaints?

Question 4

Describe what happens when a complaint is escalated.



Provide feedback on customer service

When there are problems and issues or a customer has a complaint/problem that they have brought up with you, it will be important to ensure that you handle the problem and report it to the appropriate personnel.

The reporting of service issues and customer problems require you to follow the BGTG's policies and procedures for reporting complaints. All complaints, even when resolved, must be reported to the appropriate person, generally your supervisor or manager.

It is important that you report any problems that happen as they arise, so there is no time wasted for finding a suitable resolution for the customer. Being proactive in the resolution of customer problems will show our customers that we are sympathetic to their concerns and willing to help. This makes the complaint resolution process easier and is an opportunity to convince the customer to remain with our business.

The reporting process can be completed through a verbal report to make someone aware of the situation, then a formal written report completed to document the problem and the steps taken to resolve it, as well as the outcome.

Always provide customer feedback to relevant supervisors or managers.

Customer feedback in improving service delivery

Feedback on the quality of service and the products provided to customers is the backbone of an organisation's continuous improvement program. If we do not know what is wrong, we cannot fix it. Equally, if we do not know where we are doing well, we cannot take advantage of this and continue to improve.

So, feedback, both good and bad, is a valuable tool for both our employees and the senior management team of Bunjappy to investigate and carry out continuous improvements to our business.

Feedback can be gathered by:

- *Conducting surveys* (pre-printed questionnaires, online or in groups) - A customer satisfaction survey is a survey given to a customer by a business to measure the customer's happiness or satisfaction with the company; this survey typically includes questions about the product or service obtained and

the people who helped the customer; the survey can be short or long, with a few questions to a long list of detailed questions for the customer to answer.

- *General discussion* with customers and colleagues.
- *Taking note of customer complaints and compliments* – Assembling a list of both over a period, e.g. each quarter.

Valuable information is often forthcoming in feedback including questions such as:

- Are customers satisfied with the products and services we offer?
- What are we doing well?
- What could we be doing better?
- Are our processes and procedures efficient? If not, how can they be improved?
- Are our products and services competitive with other similar tourism focused businesses?

It is imperative to communicate feedback on service or operational issues with people on your team and with our organisation's management. Sharing information on such issues as new product trends, customer satisfaction levels or competitor information increases our organisation's knowledge and allows us to make informed decisions about a range of business-related issues.

This information can be communicated in a few ways: during team or staff meetings, emails, individual discussions, etc. You must discuss feedback you receive with your supervisor or manager.

Supervisors or managers may also communicate feedback they have on your job performance during staff appraisals. These appraisals are extremely useful as they offer both you and your supervisor an opportunity to discuss your competence levels and talk about any training that might need to be undertaken or develop/refine a career progression plan for you.



[7 ways to give valuable and constructive feedback to staff](https://www.seek.co.nz/employer/hiring-advice/7-ways-give-valuable-constructive-feedback-staff)

(<https://www.seek.co.nz/employer/hiring-advice/7-ways-give-valuable-constructive-feedback-staff>)

Enhancing service delivery in response feedback

Gathering and analysing feedback, regardless of the source, is the cornerstone of any organisation's continuous improvement program and Bunjappy believes it is essential to continued business success. Because no business can remain static, we need to have a continuous improvement process driving our current and future work. This process must review the way in which our organisation operates, the products and services we offer, how it compares to our competitors. This is all necessary so that BRTG may remain successful and at the forefront of the regional tourism business environment.

Continuous improvement also means identifying and addressing problems in service delivery or product quality, as well as responding to new trends and customer needs quickly.

Always ensure whether the feedback is positive or negative that you report it to your supervisor. Your supervisor must know as it is essential, they are "kept in the loop" when it comes to the satisfaction of our customers.

If a supervisor does not get feedback and there is a problem, they appear uninformed and to an extent incompetent which does nothing for our business reputation and status.

One of a supervisor's primary duties is to provide feedback on service processes, policies, and procedures and to recommend changes. This promotes the learning and development of their workers. Providing this feedback regularly is important, not just when the annual performance evaluation of the employee rolls around. Constructive feedback is particularly vital when there are issues requiring staff to improve on errors or deficiencies, without stirring up negative feelings.

Here are a few tips on how to provide input that helps workers understand and prevent their mistakes and encourages them to realise their potential.

Be problem-focused and specific

Tell our workers why, as well as asking the employee what they must do differently. For example, beginning the conversation with "*You need to get into the office faster*" assumes they know why it's so important to be on time. Be straightforward about the actual issue at hand (for starters, you don't want to wait for your customers), and plan your input around it.

Also, do not presume the employee always has all the background details they need. If possible, inform them how the situation impacts on you and the rest of the team. The more precise the input can be, the more actionable it is.

Talk about the situation, not the individual

By its very nature, the emphasis of positive feedback is on performance and impartial conclusions rather than personal characteristics of the employee. When you explain the issue, rather than your viewpoint on it, you demonstrate that you are more concerned with solving the problem at hand, not the personality of the employee itself.

Give praise where it's due

While discussing the negatives, some constructive points may be a helpful way to convince the staff that you have not lost perspective. Just be careful not to over-emphasise the positive ones, because this can make you appear unsure or ambiguous.

Be direct but informal

Try not to use technologies like email, text message or telephone to convey your feedback. This may lead to misinterpretation and make it seem less relevant than it is. Find a private space where you can engage the employee in a free and casual one-on-one conversation. At the same time, try not to beat around the bush; whether this is positive or negative when you get straight to the point, constructive feedback is most successful.

Be sincere

If your tone and manner do not suit the feedback context itself, you may give a mixed message that confuses the recipient. If the feedback is excellent, let your emotions show you appreciate their efforts too. A more concerned tone will demonstrate for negative feedback that you think the issue should be taken seriously.

Most importantly, always seek to avoid expressing negative emotions such as frustration, sarcasm or disappointment, because they are likely to be viewed as a personal criticism.

Listen

Make sure that workers are given a chance to respond while providing positive feedback. This shows that you can listen to their needs and their understanding of

events. It can also be used to allow the employee to share their thoughts and become part of the solution.

Make it timely

Always try to provide constructive feedback when the commendable accomplishment of the employee is still fresh in everyone's mind. The same applies to negative feedback, except that if you've done something that makes you feel bad, it's better to wait until you have cooled down before discussing it. This should help ensure that the feedback is objective and not effective.

The best form of feedback is based on behaviour, not on personality. It is portrayed in a language and environment that communicates support and appreciation. Keep in mind that we all thrive on positive feedback, so don't think workers will always know when they're doing well, come out and tell them.

Whether positive or negative, offering continuous constructive feedback is one of the most significant and useful employee growth resources at your fingertips.

Individual and recurring complaints

Individual and recurring complaints from customers may occur but we can reduce their future occurrence.

Customer complaints are a reality. Even if our service is excellent, and our products are of the highest standard, criticism is unavoidable. If your team has the experience in managing customer issues, you are going to be able to overcome any problem that comes your way. Identify any recurrent issues and educate the staff on how to treat them to prevent potential occurrences.

Below are some examples of complaints that are recurring especially in the tourism industry. The brief also provides possible ways of mitigating such issues.

Complaint #1: Product disappointment

Nobody wants to purchase a product or service which does not meet expectations. The most common complaint focused on products that were ordered but did not meeting exact requirements. This can be anything from an item ordered from a menu, an air fare or types of accommodation. When customers do not get what they expected, they will be negative in the view of a company.

There are two critical ways of preventing product deceit: quality assurance and

management of consumer preferences. It is up to each staff member to ensure that every order is correct, and the details are shared with the customer. A customer must be provided with what has been advertised or promised in the description.

Managing customer needs is critical too. When you do not provide detailed explanations of the product we are selling, consumers may believe that we are selling something that is different to our offerings. Always clarify our cancellation and refunds policies.

Complaint #2: Poor service

Bad service will immediately push customers to our competitors. The main concerns about service often include pace, rudeness and information. Customers do not like being made to feel unimportant. They also expect the person serving them has a strong knowledge of the products offered in our business. It is always best to think about how you would feel if you were on the end of bad service.

To avoid this complaint, cultivate a culture of proactive customer support to deliver a great brand experience. This means everybody in your team should recognise and demonstrate the essential principle of Bunjappy, respect for the customers. Train and constantly remind our employees that customer service is one of the most valuable assets in our business, and it is essential to appreciate, support and delight every customer they encounter.

Complaint #3: Negative atmosphere

The quickest way to get a negative reputation is to have establishments that have filthy toilets, hot temperatures, noisy music and uncomfortable seats. Customers will also be upset by poor site navigation, i.e. not being able to locate those places they've been searching for.

Providing our customers with a memorable experience is what will help all our establishments achieve a positive reputation. Some of the best ways to improve the customer experience in our establishments are correct lighting, correct seat spacing, music at appropriate levels and clean floors and restrooms. These simple things will go a long way to making an establishment profitable long term.

Complaint #4: Poor communication

Things go wrong with a customer occasionally. You cannot provide the service that was promised if the goods are no longer available, or you made a mistake. It is going to happen. Most customers will understand if the service team are just honest and

upfront.

Customers dislike long wait times and delays in contact. A lack of follow-up is also a concern, with many customers reporting problems with unresolved issues, or having to follow-up with the same question repeatedly.

Be open-minded, straightforward and always accessible. Make timely communications a priority for your work team and keep customers informed, even if it is to provide bad news.

In the travel industry it is important that our travel customers can contact one of our representatives at any time. This is why we have a 24/7 telephone service available to our international travellers.

Complaint #5: A lack of information

Customers need to know more than collection times, opening days and other general information. Providing as much information as possible so that customers feel safe and assured. Some of the necessary information Bunjappy shares include:

- Clear, easy to find contact information.
- Directions with parking details.
- Service details with available amenities.
- Testimonials or reviews.
- Options for giving feedback.
- Menus and prices.
- Photos of our establishments.

Complaint #6: Service disappointment

Customers complain when they don't get the service, they believe they have paid for. It may be because one of our team has not done what they promised, or it may be a matter of misunderstanding.

Expectations need to be crucially handled. Always do what you promised to do, just make sure that what you promise is transparent. Customers will have a clear timetable, so it's always best to give them a heads up before it becomes a problem if you cannot make it.

To prevent potential problems, consider under-promising and over-delivering. Surprise and joy are often better than frustrating and coping with grievances.

Complaint #7: Waiting

Waiting is a universal problem that is tackled by any company. Regardless of the business, generally customers and clients want what they want right now, and they don't want to wait for it. The pressure is on to perform fast, and while you're expected to be on top of the time limits, the fact is that someone will still wait.

Although nobody likes to wait, most consumers are reasonable people and recognise that services and goods sometimes do not appear immediately only because they want them to. At some point in life, everyone will need to wait. Whether that's in line, on hold, or for a product or service to arrive.

You can help make the process smoother and head off problems before they begin by controlling customer expectations. Keep the customer updated.

Complaint #8: Hidden costs or fees

Nobody likes to be surprised, and nobody likes paying more than they expected. Which is why consumers dislike hidden charges or fees; they are going to complain about these if they appear. They feel betrayed and loyalty to our business is lost.

Always be specific on pricing and get the details correct. If parking is an extra cost for staying at a hotel, make sure the customer is aware of this at the time the booking is taken.

Complaint #9: Difficulty returning or refunding items

If a customer is not pleased with a product, there are decent chances they just want to return it for an exchange or refund. This can lead to severe dissatisfaction and grievances when companies find it impossible to do so.

Always apply our policy on return of products so that customers understand what they are getting into. If you cannot easily give returns on certain products, say so, and let customers know about it several times over. If you are providing returns, simply make them according to the company policy. Protecting the customer relationship is almost important.

Complaint #10: Billing or fee disputes

This problem often comes down to customers not understanding their bill.

Clarity is vital in a situation like this. Always ensure our customers know in advance what they are supposed to pay for the products and packages they are purchasing. Our invoices must be comprehensive, easy to read, clearly detail all items covered and

have specific contact information that they can use to get questions answered if necessary.

Complaint #11: Arguing with customers

Perhaps the biggest mistake is trying to win a fight against customers. When you pick a fight with a customer, nobody wins. If you disagree on any issue, you must work out disagreements in a way that shows respect for customers and allows them to maintain a good relationship with you. Losing a customer over a product or service is never worth it.

All of us have learned that "the customer is always right," and we all know that it is not always correct. Occasionally, the customer is incorrect. But often you will let your customer win for your company to win. Whatever the problem, if your customer is not satisfied, then it is up to you to make things better. You don't have to give them the universe, or even anything they ask. Yet you should owe them your full attention and find a settlement in which they are pleased. That means, sometimes, swallowing your pride and losing some money though also remember never go beyond your level of authority.

Always remember that being listened to is an experience which delights all customers. It not only prevents interactions ending in complaints but by getting the feedback from customers right, you have made the customer journey more satisfying.



[How to Handle Customer Complaints](https://www.reputationmanagement.com/blog/how-to-stop-the-top-10-customer-complaints-before-they-start/)

(<https://www.reputationmanagement.com/blog/how-to-stop-the-top-10-customer-complaints-before-they-start/>)

Activity 10

Question 1

Explain the significance of providing feedback to improve services within an organisation?

Question 2

Briefly explain what a manager should do while providing feedback.

Question 3

Discuss an example of a recurring problem along with how it could be prevented.



Additional knowledge

Profiles of different types of customers

The customers that come into our business will fall into different profiles. Customer profiles are business orientated.

The main customer profiles include:

External

External customers are those persons or organisations that buy products or services from our business but are not a part of our organisation, i.e. the bulk of our customers are from the public and so are 'external' customers. These are our generic customers.

Essentially, an external customer has no connection to our organisation, but they provide the revenue that our business needs to continue to operate.

Internal

An internal customer is not a customer in the traditional sense. These are people or sections within Bunjappy (our own organisation). Example: Our tourism agency in Brisbane may not have sold all their allotment of Barrier Reef holidays in the past quarter, but our Sydney office has and is looking for more 'product' – so the Brisbane office works to supply our internal customer, the Sydney office, with the product they require.

Internal customers (across our organisation) need to have good relations with those they are working with to allow for a smoother performance.

New

A new customer is someone who has never interacted with our business before. New customers are difficult to bring in as they have no experience with what we offer or what our service is like. This means that we all need to ensure that our business looks inviting and meets all customer needs. Building new customers is the best way of enhancing our business and growing each site.

Regular and repeat customers

Our regular and repeat customers are the main staple for any tourism business. These are the customers that frequently return to Bunjappy and spend more money with us.

The retention of customers is a vital piece of work that all staff must be involved in.

Many of our return or regular customers become familiar with members of our staff, which makes meeting their needs easier as we already have that personal and service connection to them.

Visitors

Visitors are the people who come into one of our business sites to visit someone there, usually a friend of a staff member. These people generally won't spend anything at our business, however if they regularly visit, you may be able to try and turn them into a new customer.

Presentation standards

Ensuring the environment that our customers will be walking into is well presented, clean and hygienic is essential for giving our customers a good first impression. If they enter a business that is dirty, messy, unkempt, etc. they will receive a negative first impression – it is then unlikely that they will return.

Ensuring the business is kept to a high presentation standard will require regular cleaning and maintenance, removing used dishes, glasses, and cutlery as soon as possible, keeping the front of the business tidy and clear from rubbish, leaves, etc. and ensuring that all furnishings and linen are replaced when soiled.

Personal presentation is also vital in a customer service environment. No customer wishes to experience staff that are dirty, disheveled, and smelling of body odour or bad breath.

There are some things that you can do to make sure your personal presentation is at its best when going to work. These include:

- *Checking personal hygiene* – Potential customers, let alone your fellow staff members, wish to experience bad breath or body odours during their experience with any business. Ensure you are always aware of your personal hygiene – showered, deodorant, teeth cleaned, clothes are clean and presentable.

- *Hair* - Your hair should be neat and clean. If you have long hair, it should be tied back for safety as well as for neatness.
- *Uniform* - If you are wearing one of our uniforms, you need to keep it clean and ironed.
- *Department* - Good posture helps to give the customer the impression that you are interested in talking to them. When speaking to a customer, stand straight, be aware of body language and use cultural appropriate techniques.
- *Language* - Use appropriate language; avoid slang and colloquialisms; always be polite. Use body language to show you are interested in what the customer is saying.

The Bunjappy Regional Tourism Group has a set of policies and procedures that outline our expectations. Always follow these policies while at work.

Documents and promotional materials

The way that any workplace documents and promotional materials are presented is also important. All business documents must follow Bunjappy's style guide; this dictates the fonts, colours, layout, and pictures that can be used for any documents that you create.

A style guide is used to ensure that all business documents are uniform in appearance.

It is important that any documents and promotional material directed to our customers and the public are easily interpreted, and the presentation is professional and inviting.

Response times for delivering products and services

Some tourism and travel focused businesses may have a delivery system in place to deliver services to their customers whether this is as a collection or couriating of products.

Your workplace will have specific procedures for handling deliveries. If this applies to one of our sites, it is important that you follow the procedures established at that site with care.

Policies regarding product pricing and quality

The procedures for pricing and guarantees involve our staff ensuring that our prices are reasonable and that the company had service guarantees in place.

Keeping our prices reasonable requires us to consider the cost of creating the products and travel packages we sell, as well as what other places are charging for similar travel packages. We also need to consider our clientele and what they are possibly able to spend.

Some of our travel packages and products are covered by warranties or guarantees.

A warranty or a guarantee is a promise or assurance, usually given in writing by the package provider or even travel agencies that the travel/accommodation/tours are of a specific quality. It generally includes an undertaking to make good any defects that may arise under certain conditions. A warranty or guarantee is a powerful advertising and marketing tool because it shows that we believe in the products that we sell.

It is important that where such guarantees exist, you make our customer fully aware of the fact that a Guarantee covers the travel package that they may be interested in. You also need to explain in detail what this means for the customer.

There are two types of warranties:

Express warranty: This is a warranty given voluntarily by a retailer/manufacturer that promises to correct any problems should these arise.

Implied warranty: This is a guarantee that the package provider will ensure that every product provided is suitable for the purpose for which it is sold. Under the Sale of Goods Act and the Trade Practices Act, the implied warranty states that an organisation that sells products, other than at auction, is automatically implied into a contract between the seller and the purchaser.

It is very important that customers know exactly what their legal rights are if they have purchased a product covered by a warranty or guarantee.

When explaining to a customer at the point of sale about the warranty or guarantee, it is important that you are honest and truthful, and that you keep within legal requirements, as well as our organisation's policies.

There may be conditions or limits that apply, such as:

- Time limits – claim to be made in nominated time frame.

- Interference by others – attempting to repair may void warranty.
- Postage and transport – purchaser may have to pay.
- ‘Reasonable use’ – deliberate misuse may void warranty.
- Certain conditions – e.g. regularly serviced, load limits.

Should the need arise, and a customer seeks a guarantee or warranty against a travel package or service we have provided, it is vital that you seek assistance in accurately appraise the item and provide advice

BRTG, as well as having legislative regulations, has their own internal policies. Ensure that you are aware of what these legal requirements are and the Bunjappy policies to address such situations should they arise

Having high quality products requires our organisation to have policies and procedures in place for the packaging, promotion and selling of tourism related products and services. Bunjappy is certain that its communication networks with our suppliers are sound and effective so that if needed, these groups will be able to assist us source the quality products we need and address any customer concerns we may face.

Processing refunds and exchanges

Businesses like Bunjappy are responsible for providing refunds for goods and services should there be a major problem with them.

A product or good has a major problem when:

- It has a problem that if known about would have stopped it from being purchased.
- It is unsafe.
- There is a significant difference between the sample or description and the actual product.

A service has a major problem when:

- There is a problem with the service that would have stopped it from being purchased if known about.
- It is not fit for its purpose and can't easily be fixed within a reasonable time.

- It does not meet client needs and cannot easily be fixed within a reasonable time.
- It creates an unsafe situation.

When there are problems with a product or service, we are required to provide the client with a refund. Refunds are where the customer receives some form of monetary compensation to address any problems with their product or service.

Bunjappy has specific procedures for administering refunds, so these need to be followed. Always direct these customer enquiries to your supervisor.

Levels of authority

There are different levels authority within our personnel across all our business sites to resolve complaints, disputes, service issues and customer compensation.

When there are complaints, disputes, issues, etc. a member of staff will need to resolve the situation to the best of their ability. If they are unable, or it is outside of their level of authority, then the situation will need to be escalated to a higher level of authority.

Customer compensation comes in the form of a replacement at no charge, a refund, or some other gesture that may compensate a customer when they have a problem with our service or the travel package that our suppliers have provided. Our policies and procedures detail what level of staff have the authority to negotiate compensations.

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