

Overview

This standard is part of the customer service competence area related to Impression and Image. It covers building and maintaining customer relations. It includes area that covers the customer service behaviours and processes that have most impact on the way your customer sees you and your organisation. Remember that customers include everyone to whom you provide products and services. They may be external to your organisation or they may be internal customers.

Building and developing customer relations is a vital aspect of customer service. Strong customer relations help your organisation to identify and understand your customers' expectations, encourage a way of working that is based on partnership and mutual trust, and establish and maintain customer loyalty. You may establish and maintain customer relations by encouraging loyalty and repeat business from large numbers of customers. Alternatively, you may nurture a smaller number of valued customers who make an important strategic contribution to your organisation's success.

This standard is for customer service professionals who build and maintain customer relations, influencing the way that their organisation determines the level of service offered to different customers.

Performance criteria

You must be able to:

1. identify the types of customers for building longer term customer relations and loyalty
2. communicate with the identified customer types so that they know they are important to your organisation
3. explain your role, the purpose of making contact and the mutual benefits of building a longer-term relationship with customers
4. welcome two-way communication about customer expectations
5. keep customers informed about your organisation's service and products
6. accept criticism from customers openly and constructively
7. assess whether customer expectations are being consistently met
8. create solutions to maintain and improve customer service relations
9. influence customer service delivery to ensure that you meet customer needs and expectations, and exceed them where possible
10. collect feedback from customers to ensure that the solutions provided result in customer satisfaction
11. collect feedback from colleagues about the impact that solutions have on customer satisfaction and loyalty
12. analyse feedback to propose changes that will develop longer term customer relations and loyalty
13. present your proposed changes to decision-makers in your organisation and agree actions
14. follow the legal, organisational, codes of practice and policies relevant to your role and the activities being carried out

Knowledge and understanding

You need to know and understand:

1. the types of customers that your organisation provides services or products to
2. how to identify and prioritise the types of customers with whom you should build a longer-term relationship based on your organisation's plans
3. the methods that your organisation used to establish longer term relationships with the prioritised customer types
4. your role and responsibilities for building and maintaining customer relations, and the colleagues that you work with
5. the importance of communication skills when dealing with customers and building relationships
6. how to explore and agree the mutual benefits of maintaining and developing a longer-term relationship with customers
7. how to communicate with customers when they are dissatisfied with services or products
8. how to negotiate with customers in a way that balances their expectations with the expectations of your organisation
9. the types of compromises that are acceptable to your organisation when meeting customer expectations
10. how to use your influence and authority in your organisation to meet or exceed customer expectations
11. the methods of monitoring customer satisfaction appropriate to your level of authority in the organisation
12. the part played by internet contact, social media and the potential this offers for building and maintaining customer relations
13. the legal, organisational, codes of practice and policies relevant to your role and the activities being carried out

Build and maintain customer relations

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