

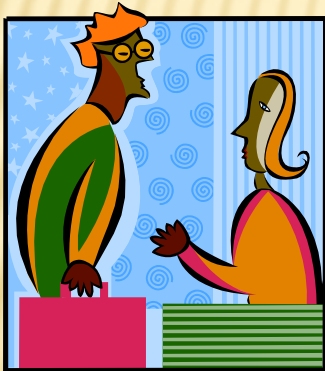


The Do's & Don'ts of Interacting with Residents

# **CRACKERJACK CUSTOMER SERVICE FOR THE MAINTENANCE PROFESSIONAL**

# DEFINITION

- × **Customer –**
- × a person or company that buys goods or services
- × somebody who interacts with others in a particular way



- × **Service:**
- × Work done by somebody for somebody else as a job, duty, punishment, or favor
- × An action done to help somebody or as a favor to somebody
- × Work done for the customers of a store, restaurant, hotel, or similar establishment, often with regard to whether it pleases them or not
- × The work that somebody can do or does by virtue of their job, profession, or training

# CUSTOMER SERVICE SKILLS LISTS – TOOL BELT!

1. Who is the customer in Customer Service?
2. Communication (verbal, written and listening)
3. Problem resolution
4. Task orientation and time management
5. Persuasive abilities
6. Flexibility
7. Work ethic
8. Professionalism
9. Confidence
10. Leadership



# 1. WHO IS THE CUSTOMER IN CUSTOMER SERVICE?

✘ Know who your customer is. It will vary depending on the circumstance, and who you are providing service too. It can be any of the following:

- ✘
  - + Your Property Manager/Administrator
  - + Your supervisor
  - + Your resident
  - + Your vendor
  - + Anyone who makes a request of you for work or service.



# 1. WHO IS THE CUSTOMER IN CUSTOMER SERVICE?

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- ✘ Know the demographic of your community and the cultures mores and customs.
- ✘ For example, should you remove your shoes when you enter an apartment (in Hawaii this is a common practice).
- ✘ How do the elders prefer to be addressed? If there is a custom you are unfamiliar with ask the question. It will be appreciated.
- ✘ Is your resident non-English speaking or is hearing or sight impaired? If so how will you communicate with them?



## 2. COMMUNICATION (VERBAL, WRITTEN AND LISTENING)

- ✘ You are effectively representing your company in any one-to-one communications you have with residents. You need good customer service skills with regard to your diction, clarity of communications and how you converse with residents in order to get to the root of their problems.
- ✘ The goal is to improve resident satisfaction. This requires the ability to use positive language in all communications and to actively listen in any verbal interactions.



# COMMUNICATION

- ✘ All employees need to understand what communication techniques are important and when they are applicable. E-mail is well-suited for informational messages, whereas phone calls/IM chat are much better for debates and discussions.



# COMMUNICATION

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- ✘ Listen well. Be a great listener.
- ✘ Part of listening to be able to get to the point of a concern, but stay on target as well. Best to not let a conversation get away from you.



# COMMUNICATION

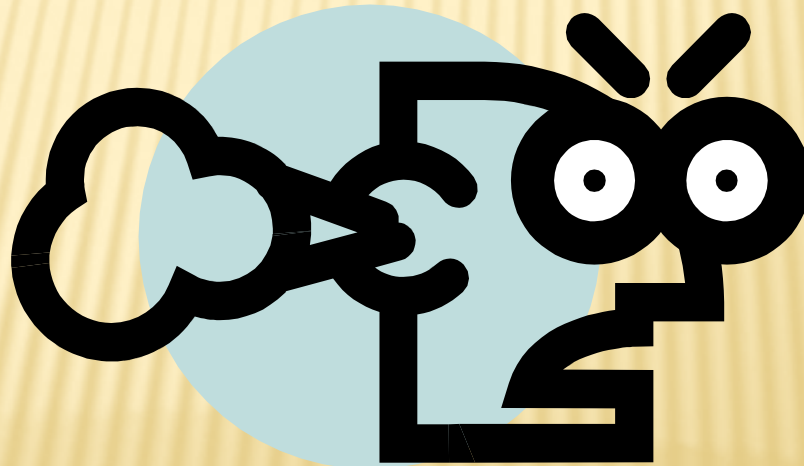
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- ✘ Make the resident understand how important they are to you! Introduce yourself, remember their name and use it every time you encounter them.
- ✘ Thank them every time you encounter them. Using a person's name is very important. Having that connection.
- ✘ Also, be aware of how to properly address a senior. Some prefer Mr. or Ms. so & so, and not to use first names. It's a sign of respect for their age.

# COMMUNICATION

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- ✘ When dealing with residents be consistent. Do not play favorites. Even the most difficult resident deserves excellent customer service.



# DON'TS

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- ✘ Don't play favorites, it will backfire on you.
- ✘ Don't address a senior by their first name unless you have a relationship with that resident and have permission to do so. There are cultural and generational traditions that would see this is a sign of disrespect. Know your population
- ✘ Don't use slang and unprofessional language when dealing with residents. You will alter their perception of you and can diminish your credibility.
- ✘ Don't distribute a notice or work order with miss-spelled words or hand written and not legible. This is a record of your work, and needs to be clearly stated.
- ✘ Don't be rude to a rude or angry resident. Find out what they are upset about and try and resolve it. Try defusing the anger if possible.

# 3. PROBLEM RESOLUTION

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- ✘ Most customer service work is concerned with resolving issues or problems for residents. This means being able to effectively analyze the information you receive from the resident and provide quick and accurate decisions about what can be done.



# 3. PROBLEM RESOLUTION

- ✘ You need to be able to understand how to use the resources available to you to seek out new solutions.
- ✘ Keep the “yes we can” in the conversation! Within reason, always present a positive attitude to the resident and explain how and when the solution will actually materialize.
- ✘ Or if cannot complete a request give them a reasonable time frame to expect it. Open communication is crucial.



# 3. PROBLEM RESOLUTION

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- ✘ Always try and give more to the resident/customer than what is expected! It is simple to understand how impressed your resident will be if they feel that you are going out of your way from business as usual. However, do not over promise either.
- ✘ Do not promise something you cannot deliver. It is best to overestimate a deliverable rather than give an unreasonable expectation because you think that's what they want to hear. Over estimate then if you come in early you have exceeded their expectation.

# 3. PROBLEM RESOLUTION



- ✘ Question? Who is the decision maker? In order to move forward do you need input from your supervisor? The property Manager/Administrator? Can you resolve a problem?
- ✘ It is very important to know the chain of command on decision as it will affect your ability to resolve a problem. Make sure you have a clear understand on how problems are resolved.

# 3. DON'TS

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- ✘ Don't promise something you are not absolutely sure you can deliver
- ✘ Don't promise a delivery date you may not meet. Over estimate a delivery date, rather than under estimating because you think that it will defuse a problem at the moment.

## 4. TASK ORIENTATION AND TIME MANAGEMENT

- ✘ For many, your day is full. There are work orders, preventative maintenance schedules to follow, the next REAC or physical inspection to prepare for. It is always something.
- ✘ This requires careful time management by Maintenance to focus on providing a good quality service in a timely manner, as well as completing all your scheduled tasks.



## 4. TASK ORIENTATION AND TIME MANAGEMENT

- ✘ Work on a schedule with your supervisor or site Manager/Administrator. Know your daily, weekly and monthly work load and where you have wiggle room.
- ✘ Stay on task and allow yourself sufficient time to complete a task or work order.
- ✘ If time allotted is not reasonable then discuss it with your supervisor or site Manager/Administrator. Work together as a team.

## 4. DON'TS

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- ✘ Don't engage too long with a resident. Be polite and courteous, but let them know you have a lot of work to do that is important to complete. If they are having a problem actively listen to see where you can help, but if it is outside the task at hand you may refer them to the Manager/Administrator or Service Coordinator.
- ✘ Don't spend your early morning getting coffee, reading the paper, asking your co-workers how their weekend was. Get prepared and get to work.
- ✘ Don't forget to turn in your paper work. Remember work orders not only a record of the work done in a unit, but a record of your time and work day as well.

## 5. PERSUASIVE ABILITIES

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- ✘ The art of persuasion is something that is most commonly used in sales but this can also play a major part in your customer service skills list. Being able to persuade residents who may be aggravated or emotional to see things clearly can prove to be most helpful in one-on-one communications.

# 5. PERSUASIVE ABILITIES

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- ✘ Teach the resident about your maintenance department and how it works! You may have the best maintenance response team in the world, but if the resident does not know how it is organized and how it is supposed to work then the resident may never appreciate how you respond to their needs.
- ✘ Ignorance breeds misunderstanding, impatience and anger! Let our residents know.

## 5. DON'TS

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- ✘ Don't be pushy and fail to engage in active listening
- ✘ Don't be talked into going outside your established process.
- ✘ Don't be dismissive no matter how busy you are. Take a moment and listen.

## 6. FLEXIBILITY

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- ✘ The simple fact is that each resident may have different requests, queries and issues they wish to raise so you have to have the flexibility and presence of mind to be able to deal dynamically with requests.



## 6. FLEXIBILITY

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- ✘ This requires a certain amount of confidence and a keen understanding of your own knowledge in order to provide flexible solutions that are appropriate to each request.
- ✘ Bottom line is be flexible when you can. If it is not possible then clearly explain the reasoning behind it.

## 6. DON'TS

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- ✘ Don't get stuck in the mud. Keep your mind open and look for a solution.
- ✘ Don't just say No. Give an alternative.

# 7. WORK ETHIC

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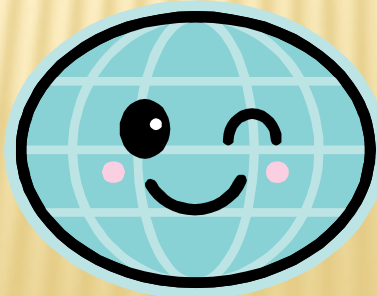
- ✘ All service representatives need to have a strong work ethic. This type of work requires a lot of interaction with residents so having a positive attitude towards your work and towards the residents is essential.



# 7. WORK ETHIC

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- ✘ Understanding your value on your team is essential to a positive work ethic as well. You are the face of Management, the face of your community, the face of your company.
- ✘ How you work, how you present yourself represents not only you but everyone above you. You are their face. You are (name the company) to the people you help, service and interact with.



## 7. DON'TS

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- ✘ Don't speak poorly about your team member, your company or other residents to your residents.
- ✘ Don't forget how valuable your contribution is to your residents, your community, your team and your company.

# 8. PROFESSIONALISM

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- ✘ One of the outcomes of these skills and training is that the individual becomes more professional in their dealings with residents/customers.
- ✘ Better communication skills can instill a better attitude and level of courtesy when dealing with residents/customers.
- ✘ It is essential for managers to track and gauge their team members on a regular basis to ensure that levels of professionalism are being maintained in all dealings with residents.

## 8. PROFESSIONALISM

- ✘ This can be measured by resident satisfaction. Surveys should be taken at least once a year to measure resident satisfaction.



- ✘ Supervisors can follow up on work orders to see if the resident was completely satisfied. This feedback can be used to mentor to the staff.

## 8. PROFESSIONALISM

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- ✘ By developing professionalism you are gaining credibility, gaining respect, and even possibly setting yourself up for advancement.
- ✘ Create a culture of Good Customer Service. Reinforce the culture amongst your team members. Give positive feedback when you see your staff give excellent customer service. Also council those who fall off track.

# 8. PROFESSIONALISM

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- ✘ Quality of Service includes:
  - + Pride
  - + Passion
  - + Exceed Expectations.



## 8. DON'TS

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- ✘ Don't fail to deliver on a promise or expectation. You will undermine your credibility.
- ✘ Don't fake it. Be yourself and stay approachable.

## 9. CONFIDENCE

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- ✘ Confidence is one of the more elusive traits in customer services. Some would say that confidence in individuals cannot be learned in customer service skills training. However, a confident individual is nearly always a result of proper training and education on their products as well as incremental levels of experience.

# 9. CONFIDENCE

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- ✘ This brings them to the point where they themselves are confident of their own abilities.
- ✘ Positive reinforcement by management will also help encourage confidence within individuals.
- ✘ This level of confidence instills a sense of trust within residents as regards your ability to effectively deal with their issue in a professional and prompt way.

## 9. DON'TS

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- ✘ Don't become too casual about confidence. Always remember who your customer is.
- ✘ Don't pretend to know something you do not. If you don't know the answer or solutions say you will get back to them. Then don't forget to get back to get back to them.

# 10. LEADERSHIP

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- ✘ Once you build up excellent customer service skills it is important to share this knowledge with others.
- ✘ Leadership and mentoring of new staff should be a long-term goal as this ensures the company can improve the quality of service they provide by all team members.

# 10. LEADERSHIP

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- ✘ By passing along the skills you have acquired you will accomplish many things.
  - + You will build a strong team.
  - + You will provide opportunities and create a pool of individuals who can be promoted within.
  - + You build confidence and contentment among your team.
- ✘ Remember to lead by example, not by command. You will foster the loyalty and respect of your team.

# #10 DON'TS

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- ✘ Don't bully your way into compliance (BECAUSE I SAID SO!). Keep the line of communication open.
- ✘ Don't be afraid to take a stand. There will be times when you have to make a decision quickly. Make it and be prepared to stand by that decision and/or accept the consequences.

# FINALLY!



- ✘ You are the eyes and ears of Management when you interact with residents. You are in apartments daily and see firsthand the condition of the units and the residents. You may see subtle or profound changes in the units, in behavior or health that could impact the resident's ability to successfully live in their unit. If you bring this to the attention of the Manager/Administrator or your supervisor you may be able to avoid serious damages, or loss of a resident. It could have a profound effect on the welfare of your resident, not to mention costs to your property. Be a good steward. Be observant and be a strong team member.