

# Customer Service With a Smile! Face to Face Interactions

Presented by

The Ohio AWWA Customer Service Committee

# 1<sup>st</sup> Impressions...

If your interactions with customers takes place face to face, you are the face and image of your company that the customer will remember...

- \* Dress in a professional manner.
- \* Present yourself with welcoming and appropriate body language. (Non-verbal communication.)
- \* Greet each customer with a smile.
- \* Keep the office space that the customer will see clean and organized.

# Identify your customers' needs...

- \* After greeting your customer get down to business. (Other customer could be waiting.)
- \* Keep your interaction with your customer professional. (Do your best to keep the customer on topic.)
- \* Listen to their situation and give them the best solution. (Customers usually come in for a face to face interaction when other options have failed.)
- \* The quicker you can reach a solution and get your customer on their way with a resolution the better their memory of their experience will be.

# Recognize how your attitude affects customer service.

- \* If you start out with a positive attitude the customer is more likely to respond with a positive attitude.
- \* If you immediately start out with quoting policy and “schooling” they are likely to put up defensive tactics.
- \* Having a “can do” attitude goes a long way with customers. Even if you “can’t do” exactly what the customer wants. There is almost always something you “can do” to help them.

- ✓ Identify bullying and manipulative behavior and take control. Restate your facts, offer to involve a supervisor, or involve another service representative in your conversation.
- ✓ Remain calm and focused. Don't respond to rudeness or aggression with rudeness and aggression. If possible reiterate your position and move the customer away from the aggressive topic.
- ✓ Get through difficult days with a smile. Don't take any of the customer's actions personally. You have a job to do, don't take it home with you. Their response to you is actually a response to company policy and procedures.

**Deal appropriately with difficult customers.**

# Obstacles of Face to Face Interactions...

- \* Opportunities to build rapport with customers are not taken.
- \* Long lines or poor staffing cause unacceptable wait time.
- \* Staff isn't knowledgeable.
- \* Language barriers or customer disability causes miscommunication of needs or understanding of policy.
- \* Unrealistic expectations by customers.
- \* Inaccurate information has been previously provided to the customer.
- \* An exception needs to be made and supervisors need to be called in to handle the situation.

# Safety in the workplace!

- ✓ Always be aware of your surroundings.
- ✓ Review your workplace security procedures and protocols.
- ✓ Know the exit routes for emergency situations. Don't leave your customer's stranded in an emergency.
- ✓ Look out for your coworkers. Try and help when you hear customers getting upset.
- ✓ Have a code word or saying that notifies others that you need assistance.

In-person interactions provide a great opportunity to build rapport with customers. Although challenging at times, with practice, they can offer exceptional insight into what customers really want.





Questions?????

Kim Spiert  
City of Columbus  
Department of Public Utilities  
KASpiert@columbus.gov  
614-645-3967