Manage and resolve conflict situations

D1.HRS.CL1.09
D1.HOT.CL1.11
D2.TCC.CL1.06

Trainee Manual

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Trainee Manual

Project Base

William Angliss Institute of TAFE
555 La Trobe Street
Melbourne 3000 Victoria
Telephone: (03) 9606 2111
Facsimile: (03) 9670 1330

Acknowledgements

Project Director: Wayne Crosbie
Chief Writer: Alan Hickman
Subject Writer: Alan Hickman
Project Manager: Alan Maguire
Editor: Jim Irwin
DTP/Production: Daniel Chee, Mai Vu, Jirayu Thangcharoensamut

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Introduction to trainee manual

To the Trainee

Congratulations on joining this course. This Trainee Manual is one part of a 'toolbox' which is a resource provided to trainees, trainers and assessors to help you become competent in various areas of your work.

The 'toolbox' consists of three elements:

- A Trainee Manual for you to read and study at home or in class

- A Trainer Guide with Power Point slides to help your Trainer explain the content of the training material and provide class activities to help with practice

- An Assessment Manual which provides your Assessor with oral and written questions and other assessment tasks to establish whether or not you have achieved competency.

The first thing you may notice is that this training program and the information you find in the Trainee Manual seems different to the textbooks you have used previously. This is because the method of instruction and examination is different. The method used is called Competency based training (CBT) and Competency based assessment (CBA). CBT and CBA is the training and assessment system chosen by ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations) to train people to work in the tourism and hospitality industry throughout all the ASEAN member states.

What is the CBT and CBA system and why has it been adopted by ASEAN?

CBT is a way of training that concentrates on what a worker can do or is required to do at work. The aim is of the training is to enable trainees to perform tasks and duties at a standard expected by employers. CBT seeks to develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes (or recognise the ones the trainee already possesses) to achieve the required competency standard. ASEAN has adopted the CBT/CBA training system as it is able to produce the type of worker that industry is looking for and this therefore increases trainees chances of obtaining employment.

CBA involves collecting evidence and making a judgement of the extent to which a worker can perform his/her duties at the required competency standard. Where a trainee can already demonstrate a degree of competency, either due to prior training or work experience, a process of 'Recognition of Prior Learning' (RPL) is available to trainees to recognise this. Please speak to your trainer about RPL if you think this applies to you.

What is a competency standard?

Competency standards are descriptions of the skills and knowledge required to perform a task or activity at the level of a required standard.

242 competency standards for the tourism and hospitality industries throughout the ASEAN region have been developed to cover all the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to work in the following occupational areas:

- Housekeeping

- Food Production

- Food and Beverage Service

- Front Office

- Travel Agencies

- Tour Operations.

All of these competency standards are available for you to look at. In fact you will find a summary of each one at the beginning of each Trainee Manual under the heading 'Unit Descriptor'. The unit descriptor describes the content of the unit you will be studying in the Trainee Manual and provides a table of contents which are divided up into 'Elements' and 'Performance Criteria". An element is a description of one aspect of what has to be achieved in the workplace. The 'Performance Criteria' below each element details the level of performance that needs to be demonstrated to be declared competent.

There are other components of the competency standard:

- *Unit Title:* statement about what is to be done in the workplace

- *Unit Number:* unique number identifying the particular competency

- *Nominal hours:* number of classroom or practical hours usually needed to complete the competency. We call them 'nominal' hours because they can vary e.g. sometimes it will take an individual less time to complete a unit of competency because he/she has prior knowledge or work experience in that area.

The final heading you will see before you start reading the Trainee Manual is the 'Assessment Matrix'. Competency based assessment requires trainees to be assessed in at least 2 – 3 different ways, one of which must be practical. This section outlines three ways assessment can be carried out and includes work projects, written questions and oral questions. The matrix is designed to show you which performance criteria will be assessed and how they will be assessed. Your trainer and/or assessor may also use other assessment methods including 'Observation Checklist' and 'Third Party Statement'. An observation checklist is a way of recording how you perform at work and a third party statement is a statement by a supervisor or employer about the degree of competence they believe you have achieved. This can be based on observing your workplace performance, inspecting your work or gaining feedback from fellow workers.

Your trainer and/or assessor may use other methods to assess you such as:

- Journals

- Oral presentations

- Role plays

- Log books

- Group projects

- Practical demonstrations.

Remember your trainer is there to help you succeed and become competent. Please feel free to ask him or her for more explanation of what you have just read and of what is expected from you and best wishes for your future studies and future career in tourism and hospitality.

Unit Descriptor

This unit deals with the skills and knowledge required to manage and resolve conflict in a range of settings within the hotel and travel industries workplace context.

Unit Code:

D1.HRS.CL1.09

D1.HOT.CL1.11

D2.TCC.CL1.06

Nominal Hours:

25 hours.

Element 1: Respond to complaints

Performance Criteria

1.1   Handle complaints sensitively, courteously and discretely

1.2   Take responsibility for resolving complaint/s

1.3   Handle complaints in accordance with enterprise procedures

Element 2: Identify and manage conflict situations

Performance Criteria

2.1   Identify potential for conflict quickly and take appropriate action to prevent escalation

2.2   Identify threats to personal safety of customers or colleagues quickly and organize appropriate assistance

Element 3: Resolve conflict situations

Performance Criteria

3.1   Take responsibility for finding a solution to the conflict situations within scope of individual responsibility and job role

3.2   Manage conflict by applying effective communication skills and anger management techniques

3.3   Use conflict resolution skills to manage the conflict situation and develop solutions

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Assessment matrix

Showing mapping of Performance Criteria against Work Projects, Written Questions and Oral Questions

		Work Projects	Written Questions	Oral Questions
Element 1: Respond to complaints				
1.1	Handle complaints sensitively, courteously and discretely	1.1	1, 2	1
1.2	Take responsibility for resolving complaint/s	1.1	3, 4, 5, 6	2
1.3	Handle complaints in accordance with enterprise procedures	1.1	7, 8, 9, 10	3
Element 2: Identify and manage conflict situations				
2.1	Identify potential for conflict quickly and take appropriate action to prevent escalation	2.1	11, 12, 13, 14	4
2.2	Identify threats to personal safety of customers or colleagues quickly and organize appropriate assistance	2.1	15 – 22	5
Element 3: Resolve conflict situations				
3.1	Take responsibility for finding a solution to the conflict situations within scope of individual responsibility and job role	3.1	23, 24, 25	6
3.2	Manage conflict by applying effective communication skills and anger management techniques	3.1	26, 27, 28	7
3.3	Use conflict resolution skills to manage the conflict situation and develop solutions	3.1	29, 30, 31	8

Glossary

Term	Explanation
AQUA	An acronym used to describe a complaint/conflict resolution model based on A = Acknowledge; Q = Question; U = Understand; A = Answer
Barring	Banning a person from entering the business/premises
Complainant	Person who is complaining/has made a complaint
Due Date	The date by which an account must be paid
Early payment discount	A discount allowed by a supplier for paying an account before the Due Date
Gesticulating	Waving hands and arms about
Inclusions	Elements included in a package deal or Special Offer
Paraphrasing	Repeating back to a person what they have told you but putting the communication in your own words
Programmed decision	A decision thought about and put in place by management/owners to act as a standard organisational response to a given complaint/problem.
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
Scope of authority	The authorised ability for individual staff to take action (for example, in response to a complaint) without the need to refer to or involve anyone else/management
Terms of Trade	A range of terms and conditions imposed by a supplier on the transaction of business between them and those who buy from them. Terms may relate to Due Dates; discounts available; procedures applicable if there is short or incorrect delivery; Delivery charges

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Element 1: Respond to complaints

1.1 Handle complaints sensitively, courteously and discretely

Introduction

In a service industry it is unavoidable there will complaints.

This Section attempts to define what a complaint is, identifies the possible types of complaints which may be encountered and provides general requirements in dealing with them.

Complaints defined

A complaint is made by a customer or guest because they are dissatisfied.

Their dissatisfaction is generally caused by:

- You/the business failing to keep a promise
- Service and/or products not meeting needs, wants or expectations
- Actions of others (staff or patrons) in the business.

Types of complaints

In practice the list of possible complaints is endless.

Because our customers/guests are individuals this means they have individual needs, and hence individual complaints.

The following provides a representative example of topics which may be the cause of complaint.

Levels of service

Customers/guests frequently complain when they believe:

- Service staff have been rude or disrespectful
- Staff do not have the necessary skills to enable them to perform their job effectively
- Prices charged are in excess of the level/standard of service delivered
- Waiting times for service delivery are too long
- There are insufficient staff to cater for the level of trade
- Over-attentive service or service where people feel 'pressured' to buy.

Product standards

Patrons will complain when:

- Products provided do not match statements or advertisements about them

- There is inconsistency between items:

  - Some are big, others are small

  - Some are one colour, others are a different colour

  - Some taste one way, others taste differently

- Perception of the guest/customer is the item does not represent value-for-money

- The product 'today' is different to last time they had it

- Product is wrong – incorrect ingredient/elements have been used

- A fly (or other contaminant) is in their food.
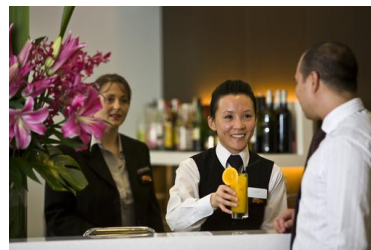
Processes

Customers/guests are likely to complain when processes:

- Result in them waiting too long

- Deliver an unacceptable outcome – in terms of product or service delivery

- Are unsafe

- Are unhealthy

- Are out-of-date

- Look unattractive – such as personal practices of staff.

Information given

Customer/guest dissatisfaction is always caused when:

- Staff are unable to provide answers to questions asked

- Workers do not have sufficient product knowledge to allow them to make relevant and intelligent suggestions or recommendations

- Information provided is incomplete, incorrect, out-of-date and/or irrelevant

- Follow-up/promised information is not forthcoming.

Charges and fees

Complaints are common when:

- Promised/advertised prices are not adhered

- Over-charges occur

- Hidden fees and charges are levied

- Charges and fees do not represent value-for-money

- Price increases are regarded as 'too high'.

Marketing materials

Customers and guests complain when:

- Marketing materials contain errors and/or omissions

- Raises expectations which are not/cannot be fulfilled

- False and misleading content is used, in terms of:

    - Prices

    - Times

    - Views

    - Features and facilities

    - Inclusions.

Failing to keep promises

People will always be annoyed when:

- An advertised promise is not adhered to

- A contracted agreement is not honoured

- A promise to be served in five minutes is not kept.

Condition of the premises

Customers and guests will complain when:

- The business/room is dirty

- Equipment and facilities are unsafe

- Areas are untidy

- Public toilets have not been serviced.

The environment

Complaints are often received where customers/guests feel:

- The room/area is too noisy

- Temperature is too hot or cold

- The level of music is too loud, or too low

- The room is too dark or too bright

- There is an offensive smell.

Issues relating to other patrons

Customers/guests will often complain when:

- They believe other customers/guests are receiving preferential treatment

- Other customers are swearing or using inappropriate language

- Other patrons are behaving inappropriately

- Other patrons are in any way adversely impacting on their experience.

Handling complaints

The objective

When handling a complaint your aim should be to convert a bad customer experience into a positive one by the way you deal with the situation, and retrieve the situation.

Keys when dealing with complaints

It is important to deal with all complaints in a friendly, efficient and thorough manner characterised by the use of:

- Sensitivity
- Courtesy
- Discretion.

Sensitivity

Being sensitive when dealing with conflict asks you to:

- Take time (5 – 10 seconds is often enough) to assess the environment in which the conflict is taking place – this helps to contextualise the conflict, and allows time to gather information about what is happening.

- This is beneficial because things are seldom what they appear to be at first glance

- Factor in relevant issues – which may include cultural and social issues, age, race, gender, whether the person is a regular/local, if the person is tired, if they are ill, if they are drug or alcohol-affected

- Approach each situation appropriately – a smile in one situation can be appropriate, while a more serious facial expression may be better in another context

- Make requests and give suggestions to people – as opposed to making demands of them, or giving them directions or ultimatums.

- Always be careful about giving ultimatums – if you are going to give an ultimatum you better be prepared and able to carry out whatever the ultimatum is or you lose credibility and risk having all your subsequent decisions rejected.

- Take into account not just what has happened to cause the complaint (bad service, sub-standard product) but also how the person feels about the situation

- See things from the other person's point-of-view

- Understand their disappointment, annoyance and frustration

- Demonstrate you acknowledge the focus of their complaint is a legitimate issue for them.

Courtesy

This highlights whenever dealing with a person making a complaint you must:

- Never shout at them
- Never interrupt them
- Never touch them

- Never threaten them

- Never meet bad language or behaviour (from the patron) with similar language or behaviour

- Always demonstrate respect for them

- Use 'please' and 'thank you' wherever possible during the complaint resolution process

- Use the customer/guest name, if known.

Discretion

Handling a complaint discretely can include:

- Talking in a low voice to avoid attracting attention to the situation

- Avoiding mention of other times the person has attended the venue/made use of venue services.

Need for positive and cooperative approach

When responding to complaints you must maintain a positive and cooperative orientation.

This is quite easy to say, but often proves much more difficult to actually do.

But, you must try, try, try!

A positive and cooperative manner can help to:

- Smooth over a potentially problematic situation – many, many complaints can be quickly and effectively handled by staff adopting the 'right attitude' to the complaint.

- Lots of customers simply want to air their grievance – they do not expect anything to happen and/or they do not want to be given a free meal or a free ticket: they just want to be heard – to get it off their chest

- Demonstrate your willingness to resolve the issue (see next section) – as opposed to ignoring the complaint or dismissing the problem out of hand.

- This respects the customer/guest as an individual and sends a definite signal they are of value to the business

- Create an initial friendly atmosphere – an approach showing a willingness to listen to, and work with, the customer/guest will always set the foundation for a faster and more acceptable resolution.

- It is much more difficult for the complainant to maintain their rage when the staff are displaying a friendly, helpful and courteous orientation to the problem

- Maintain positive customer relations – it is a standard requirement of all enterprises complaints be seen as 'opportunities', and staff are expected to achieve a final outcome to the complaint which will maintain (or convert) the person who is complaining into an on-going customer/guest who is an advocate for the business.

1.2   Take responsibility for resolving complaint/s

Introduction

It is essential you take responsibility for resolving all customer/guest complaints you are involved with.

This Section discusses how to identify a complaint exists, highlights the need for an apology, explains the need to take responsibility to fix the problem and lists personal characteristics which have been found to be effective when dealing with complaints.

Identifying a problem exists

You can become aware a complaint/problem exists through:

- Being informed by the guest/customer – where patron advises you they have a complaint, face-to-face

- Monitoring the business environment – which involves looking for 'warning signs' a complaint/problem is imminent or has occurred.

Warning signs

Warning signs there is a complaint will always be either verbal or non-verbal in nature.

Indicators there is an issue can include:

- Raised voices or an argumentative tone

- Facial expressions and/or body language showing:
    - Anger
    - Concern
    - Dissatisfaction
    - Aggression

- Situations where customers/guests appear:
    - Flustered
    - Unhappy
    - Upset
    - Frustrated

- Guests at a table who:
    - Glance around as if seeking assistance
    - Beckon you to come to their table

- People who:
    - Slam doors
    - Throw items
    - Thump the table or service counter

- Overhearing a conversation as you walk past a customer, group or table indicating there is a problem – people often deliberately talk loud enough for you to hear they have an issue as opposed to making a formal complaint

- They prefer/want you to enquire if there is a problem rather than initiating a complaint themselves.

The need for an apology

Whenever you identify a complaint situation the standard industry response is to give an apology.

This apology should be:

- Freely given – customers should not feel they have to drag an apology from you

- Given regardless of the type/nature of the complaint

- Provided even where you believe there is no legitimate basis for the complaint.

Providing an apology:

- Sets a positive scene for retrieving/resolving the situation

- Indicates to the customer/guest you are prepared to resolve the situation

- Demonstrates your involvement in the process of compliant resolution

- Shows concern for the guest/customer.

The need to take responsibility for resolving the complaint

After apologising it is important you demonstrate to the guest/customer you will take responsibility for resolving the complaint.

There is little point acknowledging a problem and then ignoring it – this will only make a bad situation worse.

Proving you want to be involved in resolving the complaint is critical because this is usually what the guest/customer wants you to do – fix the problem.

You can demonstrate your intention to resolve the complaint by using one or more of the following:

- Introducing yourself by name and position – so the customer knows who they are talking to

- Making an appropriate statement of assistance:
  - "How can I help?"
  - "Let's see what we can do to fix this"

- Finding out about the complaint – through:
  - Asking questions
  - Listening to responses

    More on these topics is presented in Section 1.3 and Element 3.

- Suggesting, developing or offering possible solutions – see next Section.

Personal characteristics to use when resolving complaints

At all times when handling a complaint (or conflict) situation you will need to display certain personal characteristics.

These have been found to be useful and effective when trying to resolve a complaint or negotiate a solution to a problem.

The relevant characteristics include:

- Being assertive – but not being aggressive.

    It is up to you to lead the discussion and determine the solution so you need to be confident and take charge/control of the situation without making the other person feel intimidated into submission or ignored

- Being constructive – it is important you realise whatever has *caused* the problem is past and has gone forever. You cannot change what has already happened.

    Your main concern must be in suggesting and identifying action to remedy or retrieve the situation and enable everyone to move on

- Being well-informed – you must know what you can and cannot do to fix the situation.

    You must know all about relevant house policies and procedures, your personal limits of authority and discretion, and any applicable programmed decisions (see next Section).

    Knowing what you are able/allowed to do and not do helps build your confidence.

- Exercising patience – you must realise very few (if any) complaints can be solved straight away.

    Most people demand an opportunity to voice their displeasure, vent their anger or 'get it off their chest'.

    In many cases it is only after this has been allowed to occur, can real progress be made on finding a solution.

- Showing tolerance – there are many times where you will be told you are the worst in the world, and you must be prepared to accept and put up with that.
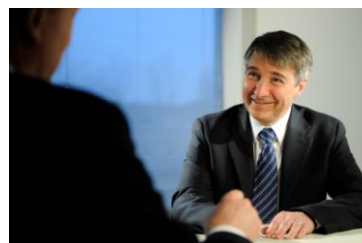
    People will often take their frustration out on you and sometimes may verbally abuse you.

    You must realise what they are saying is not personal, even though it may sound and feel like it. When dealing with complaints, being 'dumped on' is sometimes part of the process.

    No-one can change this – it is just the way it is. Accept the abuse and criticism as a part of the resolution process and move on with finding the solution.

    Never allow the actions or words of a complainant to create an additional problem over-and-above the original complaint.

- Understanding the total picture – try to see things from the other person's perspective.

    Take into account their feelings as well as considering the facts about what has happened.

For example, the fact may be the meal was late, cold and too small.

You need to acknowledge this but also demonstrate you understand this caused feelings of disappointment, caused the person to be late, made them feel ripped off and taken for granted/not valued as an individual.

- Being prepared to compromise – by being prepared to negotiate a resolution to the complaint.

  As opposed to insisting:

  - There is only one way to fix the problem

  - Your way is the only way

- Being consistent – when dealing with complainants it is vitally important to be consistent.

  Failing to be consistent sends a message certain people are rated differently – and is likely to generate new complaints.

1.3 Handle complaints in accordance with enterprise procedures

Introduction

All complaints must be handled in accordance with house procedures.

This Section presents the concept of 'scope of authority', describes possible examples of organisational complaint handling procedures, introduces 'programmed decisions and outlines an effective complaint resolution model.

Scope of authority

Most staff are given guidelines as to what action they can take in the workplace in response to complaints without having to get special permission from management.

This is referred to as their 'scope of authority'.

In general terms scope of authority may relate to:

- Their ability to act on behalf of the business

- Their authority to act in given situations – such as when there is a complaint (as well as in emergencies, accepting bookings, making special deals).

In relation to resolving customer complaints, organisations may give staff standard scopes of authority to act/respond in one (or more) standard ways such as:

- Offering a free product – glass of drink, free dessert, complimentary coffee

- Offering a service – such as dry cleaning if guest clothes have been soiled by spillage of drinks

- Offering a set percentage discount on advertised/stated selling prices.

See also 'Programmed decisions' below as these decisions are implicit in scope of authority considerations.

Organisational policies and procedures

The policies of the organisation will guide the development and implementation of procedures (also know as SOPs) for handling complaints (and conflicts).

Why do organisations develop house policies on compliant resolution?

Formal, written policies on dealing with customer complaints are useful because they:

- Provide guidance on what to do in order to resolve situations – by prescribing parameters and options available and/or by identifying what cannot/ must not be done to resolve a complaint

- Give consistency when dealing with customers – all customers should receive the same treatment regardless of the staff member dealing with them

- Relieve staff from the pressure and worry about having to make decisions – the policy sets out the decisions owners/management have made: staff are able to rely on 'house policy' when dealing with a complaint

- Provide the basis for in-house training – many organisations conduct internal staff training on complaint handling and the formal policies of the business underpin this training and the practical application of it.

Standard content of complaint resolution procedures

Organisational complaint resolution policies will commonly address issues such as:

- Who should deal with problems, complaints at different levels

- When management (or security staff) should be involved

- The approved complaint resolution model for the business

- The limits of scopes of authority

- Programmed decisions – and the situations to which they may be applied

- Situations under which the property will not try to resolve a complaint – regardless of what the customer may allege or say

- Documentation to be completed – to record the issue/complaint

- Training staff should receive before they are expected to resolve issues on their own.

Programmed decisions

Most conflict situations can be effectively resolved by more than one solution.

Your aim must be to find a resolution which:

- Is quick, easy and practical to implement

- Satisfies those involved

- Meets the limitations imposed on you by organisational requirements.

Many establishments use programmed decisions to assist with complaint resolution.

A programmed decision is a decision which has been considered and thought about and put in place by management/owners to act as a standard organisational response to a given complaint/problem.

Programmed decisions are usually put in place for situations which are common, predictable or can realistically be expected to occur.

Programmed decisions:

- May be implemented in response to all complaints. That is, there may be no requirement for you to investigate the complaint before implementing the programmed decision. Many businesses prefer to simply 'fix the problem' even where there may be no legitimate grounds for the complaint

- May need to be implemented only after investigation into the alleged complaint reveals the customer/guest has a genuine complaint and should be recompensed.

Implementing programmed decisions provide consistency in the way customers/guests are treated when a complaint arises and they save staff having to determine what action they should take.

Where a programmed decision is in place, staff usually have no authority to operate outside the parameters the decision provides for.

Sample programmed decisions

The following are samples of these situations and the possible response (the actual programmed decision) which might apply to complaint situations.

Situation	Response/Programmed decision
Guest complains their main course meal is not hot enough	Apologise Offer to replace with meal of guest's choice Provide complimentary coffee
Customer complains the booking was not honoured	Apologise Provide 25% discount voucher for next booking
Patron complains the service was not as advertised/expected	Apologise Deduct 25% from account Issue 25% discount voucher for next visit.

Note: the above are not *recommended* courses of action – they are simply possible examples of the use of programmed decisions.

Complaint resolution model

Several models exist for guiding the resolution of complaints and conflict.

The use of a model to address these circumstances is recommended as it provides a standardised way of responding to the issue.

One model which has proved to be effective is presented below.

AQUA

AQUA is a model for dealing with problems featuring a four-step approach:

A = Acknowledge

Q = Question

U = Understand

A = Answer.

Acknowledge

This first step in AQUA asks you to encourage customers/guests to explain the issue which is causing the complaint/conflict.

You are acknowledging there is a problem and you are signalling your intention to help.

An apology should be included as part of this step/stage.

Question

The second step in AQUA can be undertaken when the customer/guest has told you about their problem/issue.

This step requires you to ask questions to clarify the situation and to demonstrate a genuine interest in the issue/problem under consideration.

Questioning the person about the issue demonstrates a desire to understand the exact nature of the problem/complaint in order to be able to best resolve it.

Understand

In this phase you demonstrate you have understood what the customer/guest problem or complaint really is.

You do this by paraphrasing what they have said taking into account their emotions as well as the other (physical) elements causing the problem.

This helps calm the customer down by proving you have paid attention to what they have said to you.

It also provides an opportunity for them to add extra information or clarify issues they may not have fully explained when they first verbalised their complaint.

Answer

This could be said to be the crux of the whole process.

People usually want you to resolve their complaint or problem and this is where it happens: you develop an answer to their problem, complaint or issue.

Any answers (also known as 'solutions') decided on will greatly depend on the guidelines set out in workplace policies and procedures.

Referring a complaint

There can be a need to refer a complaint where:

- The person demands to see the manager

- The complaint can be regarded as an 'escalated complaint' – see below

- You feel it is beyond your expertise to remedy the situation

- A resolution is outside your scope of authority to implement.

Who should the complaint be referred to?

The appropriate person, in some situations, may be a co-worker who has more experience than you, or it could be the supervisor, manager or business owner.

In other cases it may be appropriate to notify security.

Organisational policies and procedures will indicate who should be involved.

Referring complaints is not necessarily an admission of failure on your part – it may quite simply be the most appropriate thing to do in the given situation. You might be unable to do, or authorise, whatever is required to resolve the complaint.

Indeed, not notifying the appropriate person could be seen as a poor choice.

Act swiftly

A key in referring complaints is to do it quickly.

Where you have tried to resolve the situation yourself, and are quite obviously getting nowhere – perhaps the situation is even worsening – you must quickly get someone else in to help.

When a complaint situation has arisen, time is critical, and your failure to notify the relevant person has the potential to greatly inflame the situation.

And, as you know, when you are upset or annoyed, one minute seems like 10 minutes.

Finally, no-one expects you to be able to manage all complaints on your own, so do not try to battle on when you feel you are out of your depth.

What is an escalated complaint?

An escalated complaint may be seen as one where one or more of the following applies:

- The organisational policies specifically call for the complaint to be handled by management or some other nominated person

- Every genuine effort on your part to resolve the issue has been unsuccessful

- A situation where the customer is becoming agitated and you believe there is a chance the situation could further deteriorate into a physical confrontation

- A situation where the customer is swearing, making threats and/or drawing (substantial) attention from other customers or members of the public

- The customer is alleging impropriety, dishonesty or other fraudulent activity on behalf of a staff member

- A situation where the customer states they intend taking legal action in relation to the complaint

- A situation where the customer mentions they intend referring the complaint to the authorities

- A situation where the customer mentions they intend taking the issue to the media.

Work Projects

It is a requirement of this Unit you complete Work Projects as advised by your Trainer. You must submit documentation, suitable evidence or other relevant proof of completion of the project to your Trainer by the agreed date.

1.1   Talk with management, your supervisor or an experienced staff member in your workplace and question them about your role in responding to customer complaints.

Prepare and submit a written report (or video) reflecting answers given to you on questions such as:

- What techniques, tips and/or strategies do they have for helping you deal with customer complaints?

- What advice can they provide to ensure complaints are handled sensitively, courteously and discretely?

- What is your personal responsibility for resolving complaints in the workplace?

- What are the organisation policies and/or procedures for handling customer complaints?

Summary

Respond to complaints

When responding to complaints:

- Be alert to the wide-range of potential complaints people may make

- Realise complaints are individual in nature

- Apply sensitivity, courtesy and discretion when handling complaints

- Maintain a positive and cooperative manner

- Try to convert a negative customer experience into a positive one

- Take responsibility for resolving the complaint

- Look for warning signs – monitor customers and the business environment

- Apologise

- Read and understand workplace policies and procedures for handling complaints

- Determine your personal scope of authority for taking action

- Learn the programmed decisions which are in place/available to you

- Apply an approved model to assist in resolving complaints

- Refer complaints promptly where there is a need to do so.

Element 2: Identify and manage conflict situations

2.1 Identify potential for conflict quickly and take appropriate action to prevent escalation

Introduction

When managing conflict situations a key element in the management of the issue is quick identification of the problem

This Section defines conflict, explains who potential conflict may involve, identifies possible reasons for conflict and describes action to prevent escalation.

Prompt identification of conflict is important because it allows action to be taken swiftly to try to resolve the situation before things get worse.

Ignoring the warning signs and failing to act only inflames the situation and is the worst thing to do when conflict has been identified.

Much in this Section expands on information presented in the previous Section.

What is conflict?

A conflict is a state of opposition between persons or ideas or interests.

It is essentially a disagreement about something.

A complaint which is not resolved can become a conflict.

The situation is characterised by the people involved holding 'conflicting' ideas or interests.

There is no need for there to be physical aggression in order for there to be conflict

Conflict may arise with:

- Customers
- Suppliers
- Co-workers.

Those potentially involved in conflict

Customers

Dissatisfied customers are often the source of conflict. The reason for their dissatisfaction may not make sense to you but does to the customer involved.

Reasons for their dissatisfaction can include:

- Lack of service, or poor, service – this can involve the guest having to wait 'too long', the quality of products being sub-standard, staff (waiters, drivers, tour guides) who are disrespectful, rude or offensive or who have little product knowledge to allow them to make recommendations or provide informed commentary

- Expectations not being met – the advertisements placed by the venue coupled with word-of-mouth advertising create these expectations and they may often be unrealistic

- All businesses must be aware of the dangers inherent in creating false expectations/expectations which cannot be met

- Dissatisfaction with the products or services – a steak may have been tough, the room too noisy or the view not what was anticipated; the plane may have been late and the flight may have been bumpy

- Unhygienic conditions – perhaps the room showed a lack of proper attention to detail and incorrect housekeeping practices, or the general public area appeared untidy; the food provided may have been contaminated out-of-date or tasted 'off'

- Low comfort levels – an area of the property could have been too cold, too noisy, or too crowded; the seat on the tour could have been too cramped and the bus may not have had air conditioning

- Rowdy and unacceptable behaviour displayed by others – the gaming room may have been patronised by a noisy and boisterous group who were swearing loudly, and making suggestive comments; a young group of footballers on the tour/plane could have made the experience unpleasant for others

- A mistake with an account – the customer account may have charged for items which should have been on someone else's bill. An over-charge may have been made; an advanced deposit may not have been deducted from the amount owing; a discount to which the customer was entitled may not have been given; a promised/quoted price may not have been charged

- Error in the reservation or reservation not found – the customer may have arrived, late at night, after a long drive in bad weather only to find there was a problem with a booking they had been led to believe was guaranteed; an airline may not have been able to locate a reservation made by an agent on behalf of the customer; the reservation for six people may have only been made for four; the dates and/or times of the booking may be have been incorrectly entered into the system

- Special requests not being adhered to – the flowers and champagne ordered for 4:00PM for the room were not delivered and spoiled a very special occasion; the request for an aisle seat was not fulfilled; the request for a quiet corner table translated into a table in the middle of the room in front of the band.

Because you work in a 'people business' these complaints are unavoidable – there are so many different things which can go wrong and cause dissatisfaction.

Suppliers

Conflicts with suppliers tend to be of a different nature than conflicts with customers or other staff members.

This is usually because you are the customer and the supplier wants to keep your business.

Reasons for conflicts with suppliers can include:

- The venue not paying their account from the supplier by the required time – all suppliers will have 'Terms of Trade' which will specify when accounts must be paid. Failing to pay an account by the 'Due Date' will often cause annoyance

- Not adhering to the specifics of the Terms of Trade – for example, the business may avail itself of an 'early payment discount' but pay the account late

- Late placement of orders – meaning the supplier has a short lead-time for delivering the required items

- Not signing for goods received – all deliveries from suppliers should be signed for top prove the business accepted the items

- Delaying delivery drivers when they arrive to deliver goods – suppliers want their delivery driver to spend the shortest amount of time possible at a business when they deliver their goods: if a business does not have someone available to receive the items, doors are locked or there is a delay in finding the correct person to check and/or sign for the good this upsets many suppliers

- Changing supplier – many suppliers will become annoyed if an organisation stops ordering from them without explaining why: if a business is dissatisfied with a supplier they should discuss the issue with the supplier before simply swapping suppliers

- Taking goods which were not allocated to the business – sometimes a supplier may deliver to the wrong business by mistake, or they may provide more items than what was ordered and what appears on the accompanying documentation: any business which simply accepts items they have not ordered and/or they have not been charged for is likely to cause conflict with the supplier

- Failure of the supplier to deliver as promised – this mean the business is annoyed with the supplier because, for example:

  - Goods promised for 7:00AM did not arrive until 11:00AM – or did not arrive at all – causing problems for the business in supplying its customers

  - Prices advertised were not the prices charged

  - Goods delivered were sub-standard

 - Quantity of goods delivered was not what was ordered.

You can see from the above the supplier may have a problem with your business, or your business may have a problem with the supplier.

Co-workers

There may be many reasons why conflict may flare up amongst colleagues.

Some reasons include:

- Pressure of work – staff feel they are being expected to do too much; they may feel they do not have the resources or equipment necessary to do what is required; rosters do not have sufficient staff to address demand

- Lack of – or bad – communication which may cause misunderstandings. Poor (or no) communication is a common reason for many conflicts

- Prejudices – about many things from which sporting team the other person follows, what kind of car they drive, through to issues of ethnicity, gender, body shape and age. Jealousy is often at the centre of these issues

- Ineffective working procedures – where the internal operations or systems of the business cause the problem through delays, inefficiencies, wastage, or production of inferior products

- Difference in opinions and/or beliefs – conflict may arise simply because two people hold a different view on the same topic. Common topics causing conflict are opinions about management and the way they run the business, politics and religion

- Team member not pulling their weight – staff not contributing 100% to a team effort causing other staff to work harder.
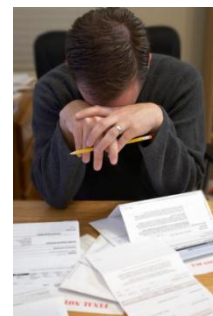
Warning signs

At all times during a shift, you should be aware of various 'warning signs' which may be displayed by either another colleague or by a customer which can indicate a problem/conflict exists or is imminent.

These warning signs will always be either verbal, non-verbal or a combination of both.

The warning signs given by a workplace colleague are usually quite different to those displayed by a customer.

Customer warning signs

A customer may indicate there is a conflict situation by:

- Looking angry or aggressive – this is part of their non-verbal communication and an aspect which frequently is very accurate at reflecting their state of mind.

  When a customer looks angry or aggressive, it is a sure sign that is exactly how they are feeling

- Appearing flustered or frustrated – the majority of your customers are in an environment strange to them, and it is to be expected they are somewhat confused to begin with simply by virtue of being in strange surroundings.

  You need to be able to differentiate this level of confusion from the higher level of frustration accompanying the onset of conflict. The fluster and frustration associated

with conflict is usually more intense, and often accompanied by other verbal and non-verbal cues too (such as threats, swearing and gesticulating)

- Displaying contorted facial expressions – many people are unwilling to verbalise their anger or frustration so they 'make do' with 'pulling faces' about the situation.

  The point to note here is just because someone has not stated they are upset or annoyed, does not mean they are not

- Glancing around as if seeking assistance – again, this person may be unwilling to ask for help but is presenting body language indicating they are seeking attention.

  It is part of our job to look for these signals and to respond appropriately

- Physically touching another customer or a colleague – this can be the real signal the customer has a problem and conflict is likely to ensue.

  Most people are reluctant to invade someone else's personal space, let alone touch a stranger, so this action is highly indicative a problem exists, and help is being sought

- Becoming too loud – as the customer becomes more and more annoyed, the volume level of their speech rises.

  This is another method of attracting help (they hope someone will help them so as to quieten them down) and a way of inflaming the situation (by letting others know about the problem)

- Slamming room doors – this is a characteristically frustrated response.

  It is obviously socially unacceptable to hit someone, or to break something but the customer can find a lot of satisfaction in releasing frustration by slamming a door.

  When, and if, this does happen, it is a common mistake for the 'discussion' to then focus on the 'door slamming episode': you must recognise the slamming as a symptom of a bigger problem and strive to fix the main problem rather concentrating on arguing over the door being slammed

- Throwing something – this is a variation on the 'door slamming' although with the obvious potential for more damage or injury.

  If nothing is damaged and no-one is injured it may be better to ignore the action and focus on the problem that caused it.

  On the other hand, security may need to be informed. The key, though, is to see the 'throwing' for what it is (a symptom of a bigger problem) rather than misconstrue it as a hostile act

- Being argumentative – this is very common and stands to reason.

  What else can the customer do?

  If you are not prepared to help them, listen to them or remedy a problem, there is little else left for them to do.
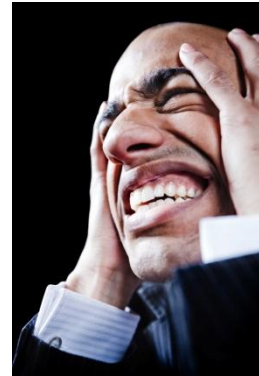
Colleague warning signs

When there is a conflict between you and another worker the colleague is likely to:

- Avoid verbal and visual contact – this may mean they take breaks or meals in a physically different area to where you are.

  They may avoid walking down the same corridor as you, they may ask the supervisor for shifts which are different to yours or they may sit so you are not in their direct line of sight

- Indulge in negative facial expressions – the person may sneer your way, roll their eyes and/or shake their head slowly from side-to-side when they see you.

  They may poke their tongue out or purse their lips. They may stare at you.

- Make negative remarks – this can spill over into areas outside the initial cause of the conflict. For example, a staff member may be annoyed you did not help doing the cleaning up after a function and their perception may be you are lazy and not a team player.

  The truth, however, may be the supervisor told you to go home because you had been at work for twelve hours, and were required back early the following day.

  The negative remarks will not stop at your perceived laziness, but will usually involve unrelated areas such as your attitude, your relationships with others, your personal habits, and so on

- Make rude gestures or remarks – these can be offensive remarks (perhaps of a sexual, racist or ethnic nature), or finger and forearm gestures designed to convey a specific message.

  Many organisations have bullying and harassment policies making these actions unacceptable in the workplace.

  If you encounter them you should seriously consider reporting them to management as they constitute workplace harassment.

Other possible reasons for conflict

Conflicts may also flare when:

- A colleague feels they are being treated unfairly – this may be because:

  - They feel their shift on the roster is less attractive than someone else's – for example they are rostered to work at times when there may be less tips, or work attracts no penalty rates

  - They are not being given the opportunity to work overtime – and earn some extra money

  - They were not selected to work on a certain function – which would increase the number of hours worked for the week.

    These feelings may also be caused by staff who fail to share information, refuse to help and co-operate in the workplace, and who favour some colleagues over others

- A customer feels they are being treated unfairly – this can be caused:

    - If they served out-of-turn – a person waiting at reception is served after a recent arrival;; Table 7 has their order taken before Table 2 even though Table 2 arrived 15 minutes before Table 7

    - If they become aware another customer has secured a better deal/price than they have.

Preventing escalation

Dealing with conflict will be addressed in more detail in later Sections.

A key element in preventing escalation of conflict with anyone is 'nipping it in the bud' – that is, stopping the existing problem from growing, getting worse and/or involving others through:

- Quick identification of the conflict – through being alert to the potential for conflict and monitoring customers and the general environment

- Taking action to address the identified situation – as is most appropriate to each individual set of circumstances.

Customers

The basics for preventing escalation of conflict with a customer are:

- Where possible and/or appropriate take a short time to observe (listen and look) the situation – and get a better understanding of the situation causing the issue, the context of the issue and those who are involved.

    Make sure there is conflict: ensure you are not over-reacting to a situation where there is really no problem/conflict.

- Intervene – go to the area/person and speak to the customer and (as/where applicable):

    - Advise them you are aware there is a problem

    - Ask what the problem is – get them taking

- Where appropriate/necessary – remove:

    - Others from the area – tell them to move for their own safety

    - Potential weapons – glasses or anything which could be used to cause harm/damage

- Make an offer of help – suggest a solution: a short-term solution may not be the best option but will often prevent escalation.

    Implementing a short-term solution allows you time to identify/develop a more effective response and also demonstrates willingness to take action to help (or pacify) the customer

- Try to contain the customer/situation – by moving them to a more discrete/private area: a quiet room, an office, somewhere where there are no other people

- Involve others from the business – call in management or (if appropriate) security to assist where you believe you will be unable to successfully resolve or contain the conflict.

Colleagues

The basics for preventing escalation of conflict with a colleague are:

- Think clearly about the situation – is there really an issue/conflict? Or are you being overly-sensitive and responding to an issue which does not actually exist?

- Plan your response – taking action rarely works unless it is considered and planned

- Determine:

    - What you are going to say to the person – write down a script/dot points: it is useful to make 'I statements':

        - "I feel really upset when you avoid talking to me in the lunch room and at staff briefings"

        - "I feel very annoyed when I hear you saying things about me to other staff"

            'I statements' are effective because they tell the other person how you feel **and** they do not put pressure on the other person as would be the case if you said ""You make me feel really upset when you …" or "You make me very annoyed when you …"

    - Examples you are going to refer to/use in order to justify your beliefs – there is a need to be very specific and very clear about what you will refer to and what you will say

    - Where you will speak to the person – in the change room? In a public area? Outside work?

    - When you will speak to the person – during work? Before work? After work?

    - What you want to happen to resolve the situation/prevent escalation of it – do you want them to stop doing something? To start doing something? To change the way they do something?

- Speak with the other person as planned – the best extent you can: say what you planned to say; use the examples you planned to use' make the 'I statements' you developed: ask for what you want to happen

- Be prepared to hear feedback – which may be confronting

- Be prepared to compromise – if the other person wants you to do/stop doing something

- Involve management only if you cannot resolve the situation between the two of you – try to resolve the situation without involving/notifying management.

2.2   Identify threats to personal safety of customers or colleagues quickly and organize appropriate assistance

Introduction

Throughout your working life there may well be situations which threaten your personal safety.

There may also be potential conflict situations when the personal safety of customers or colleagues may be directly threatened.

In such situations, it is essential the signs of conflict are quickly identified and the appropriate assistance sought immediately.

This section presents examples of threats to personal safety and identifies assistance options which may need to be organised

Important!

Always respond in some way

It is never acceptable to ignore situations where the personal safety of any person is at risk and simply hope things will resolve themselves.

It is a fact of life these situations only tend to escalate if left unaddressed.

Either intervene personally or notify and involve management, other staff, security or the authorities.

Never put yourself in danger

This said, the Golden Rule when dealing with personal and/or customer safety issues is you are **never expected** to put yourself in a position where you are in danger, or where you risk physical harm.

People take priority over property

It is more important to protect the safety of people than to protect property.

If there is ever a need to choose between taking action to protect property (equipment, cash, assets) or taking action to protect people you must always take action to protect the people.
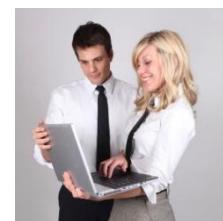
Threatening situations

Situations posing a threat to personal safety of customers or colleagues may include:

- Alcohol-affected persons – or anyone who appears to be affected by other substances such as prescription or illicit drugs

- People with guns or other weapons – these may be brought into the business to commit an armed robbery or to intimidate or injure someone.

It is standard industry practice when confronted with an armed robbery situation; **you should simply hand over the money: never try to foil the robbers, never try to be a hero** – the money will usually be insured anyway.

Any customer seen with a weapon of any kind should be reported as soon as possible to either management/security who will normally call police to deal with the situation.

- Situations where someone has already been hurt – as in these situations:

  - There is the potential for repeat violence/injury – the person who inflicted the initial injury may harm someone else

  - The injured person may seek to retaliate

- Individuals whose appearance and/or actions give rise to concern – common sense and experience should be used to determine these situations

- Situations where customers display a reluctance to leave the business when asked to do so – and/or is unwilling or unable to calm down or modify either language or behaviour when asked to do so

- Physical fighting – where people are actually assaulting each other/other people

- Verbal arguments – where people are raising their voices, engaging in heated exchanges and threatening/intimidating behaviour

- Erratic and/or irrational behaviour – of any kind such as ranting and raving, throwing objects, smashing/damaging items, behaving in a manner giving cause for concern

- Harassing behaviour – where a person if paying unwanted and unacceptable attention to others, verbally or physically.

House rules

Many businesses have written codes of conduct or house policies and procedures for determining if a threatening situation exists and for dealing with them.

The response to a threat will vary depending on the nature of the threat and the department (and staff or patrons) under threat.

You must obtain a copy of your workplace rules for threatening situations and discuss them with your supervisor so you are fully aware of what is required of you should such a situation arise.

House rules will address issues such as:

- Dress

- Language

- Behaviour

- Identification of dangerous situations and situations requiring staff to take action

- Description of the action to be taken

- Authority and responsibility for taking action

- Barring of customers – including details/direction as to:

  - Who may bar them

  - Reasons for barring

  - Duration of barring

  - Communication of barring to other staff.

What appropriate assistance may be organised?

Common sense must always be applied when dealing with threatening situations.

You must always consider the consequences of your actions before you take any action.

This means it may be best not to contact Security 'immediately' but wait for 20 seconds until you can do so without the offender seeing you make the call.

Action to take when sighting a possible threatening conflict may include:

- Contact the supervisor or duty manager – for them to come and handle the situation

- Contact in-house security – so they can deal with those involved

- Contact the police – this is generally done by the supervisor, manager, or security when all in-house options have been unsuccessful in defusing the situation, but there may be situations where you are on your own and your judgement is that involving the police is the best option.

  Where you do elect to call the police, it may be best that the people causing the problem do not see you making the call, or it could cause them to become even more dangerous, to begin damaging property and assaulting people with the intention of leaving the scene before the police arrive

- Take action yourself if necessary – and only if authorised by the appropriate person in your workplace and only if this will not place you in danger.

  You must never feel obliged to 'jump in and do something' just because you are the person 'on the spot', working behind the bar or working where the trouble is.

  Unless you have been hired as Security, your job is not to address threatening/dangerous situations.

Naturally your actions will greatly depend on the situation occurring and to what stage the conflict has escalated.

It will also depend on whether or not you have the authorisation to personally act in such situations.

However, all action taken should be constructive and appropriate – you do not have the right to punch someone just because you are trying to break up a fight or defuse a situation.

How can you organise the assistance?

Speed is essential so the best methods are:

- Face-to-face notification – going to see the manager or security staff in person and advising them of the situation

- Internal telephone – and providing details of the problem, your location and any action you may have taken/things you may have said

- Using the pager system – to ask security or management to attend

- Using the public address system to give a coded message – such as "Code Blue, Maguire's Bar"

- Emergency alert devices – where pressing a button activates an alarm in the manager's office, with security staff or at the police station.

Work Projects

It is a requirement of this Unit you complete Work Projects as advised by your Trainer. You must submit documentation, suitable evidence or other relevant proof of completion of the project to your Trainer by the agreed date.

2.1   Talk with management at your workplace and ask them questions about identifying and managing conflict situations necessary to obtain sufficient information to enable you to answer the questions below.

Submit a written report based on their responses.

- What do you identify as verbal and non-verbal signals/signs there is conflict brewing between staff members?

- How can you identify the potential for conflict between customers/patrons?

- Why is it important to identify potential for conflict quickly?

- What expectations do you have about me identifying and managing conflict between staff in the workplace?

- What expectations do you have about me identifying and managing conflict with customers/guests in the workplace?

- What examples of action to prevent escalation of a conflict can you recommend to me?

- What advice would you give me if I was faced with a personal threat in the workplace?

- What would you advise me to do if a customer was faced with personal threat in our workplace?

- What assistance is available to me in the workplace if I was in a situation where I felt my safety (or the safety of customers) was under threat?

- How can I obtain this support if I need it in a conflict situation?

Summary

Identify and manage conflict situations

When identifying and managing conflict situations:

- Realise conflict can occur with customers, suppliers and co-workers

- Always be alert to the potential for conflict to occur

- Understand there are many possible reasons for conflict

- Look for the warning signs of conflict – verbal and non-verbal

- Take action to prevent escalation of the conflict

- Seek to identify threats to safety as soon as possible

- Always take action when a threat has been identified

- Never put yourself in danger

- Put the protection of people above the protection of property

- Know the house rules, policies and procedures for handling threatening situations

- Obtain appropriate assistance when a threatening situation has been identified.

Element 3: Resolve conflict situations

3.1   Take responsibility for finding a solution to the conflict situations within scope of individual responsibility and job role

Introduction

While it is vital to quickly identify and take appropriate and swift action in response to conflict situations, no staff member ever has unlimited authority to act.

This Section recaps the concept of 'scope of authority' and identifies possible conflict situation.

Scope of authority

As discussed in Section 1.3 some staff in a business are given guidelines by management as to what action they can take in the workplace without having to obtain special permission from management.

This is referred to as their 'scope of authority'.

The scope of authority may relate to:

- Their ability to act generically on behalf of the venue

- Their authority to spend money on behalf of the venue

- Their authority to act in given situations – such as when there is a complaint as well as in emergencies, conflict situations, accepting bookings, negotiating on behalf of the organisation).

All staff are under a legal obligation to only act within their specifically assigned scope of authority.

Customer conflicts

In relation to resolving customer conflicts, establishments may give staff standard scopes of authority to act/respond in one (or more) standard ways such as:

- Refusing service

- Asking the person to leave the premises/business

- Calling internal security staff for assistance

- Contacting police – staff should not call for police assistance unless they have express permission from management to do so

- Barring the customer.

Once a situation has escalated into a conflict, you must take responsibility for finding a solution to the conflict within the scope of your authority.

The solution to the conflict will vary depending on the type of conflict encountered, and the type of conflict will also help to dictate the actions to take.

Taking personal responsibility for finding a solution

It needs to be said in some cases there is no real opportunity to 'find a solution' because the issue, problem or conflict is such immediate action has to be taken.

You will need to use your common sense and good judgement to determine the situations to which this applies – sometimes there can be a chance (or it makes good sense) to negotiate a solution to an issue with a customer whereas in other situations there is no room for negotiation; the customer simply has to leave the premises.

You must practice addressing these situations and it is worth noting you will not always get your decisions right.

The more you watch and listen to other, more experienced people handle these situations, and the more you gain first-hand experience the better you will get.

It is always useful to do some sort of de-briefing/evaluation after each of your first few conflict situations to identify:

- How you did

- What you did well

- What might be improved next time

- Lessons learned

- Feedback from others involved.

In essence, practice with conflict is how you gain knowledge and skills, and how you learn from your mistakes.

Take heart – no-one gets their responses to conflict situations right all the time/every time.

Possible conflict situations

Common situations causing conflict with customers can include:

- Customer complaints – see Section 1.1

- Conflicts among work colleagues – see Section 2.1

- Drug or alcohol affected persons

- People who have been kept waiting for service, entry or rooming

- Patrons who have been refused entry or service for any reason

- Persons who have been ejected from the business – or asked to leave

- Customers who have applied for, but been denied, a service, such as:

  - Refund or exchange

- Upgrade

- Special treatment

- Discount.

Conflict between colleagues

If the conflict is among colleagues, the colleagues themselves may be able to find a resolution without having to involve a supervisor or manager.

However, if a conflict between colleagues remains unresolved, then a supervisor or manager may have to step in to take on a mediator's role: certainly the sooner a problem is resolved, the better.

Many staff-to-staff conflicts can be relatively easily resolved once the two parties sit down and address the issue(s): in many, many cases staff are quite willing to do this because very few people genuinely enjoy being at conflict with others in their workplace.

If you are involved in such a conflict, then it may need to be you who makes the first move: there is no admission of guilt or responsibility, and no admission of blame in being proactive in trying to resolve a situation – it really is to everyone's benefit.

Conflict with patrons

On the other hand, if the conflict is with a customer, decisive and immediate action (in accordance with establishment procedures and policies) must be taken.

Remember all employees have different roles and responsibility levels when it comes to handling conflict situations: a contrasting example of the roles and associated responsibilities is seen in the roles of a waiter and a security employee.

Also remember house responsibilities vary between properties: the level of responsibility and authority for a bar attendant at one venue will not necessarily be the same as at another premises.

The following notes examine the role of certain staff positions in relation to conflict, but the practical reality is all staff must take some level of responsibility for conflict resolution – even if that responsibility extends only as far as notifying the relevant and appropriate person.

Give the customer as much control as possible

One technique for dealing effectively with customers when a conflict situation arises is to give them the greatest amount of control possible over the options that have.

For example, you may have decided the customer **must leave the premises** but simply telling them to 'Get out' is unlikely to be effective on its own.

It is, at least, also very abrupt and is certainly rude.

It is therefore better to explain the situation and then present them with options from which they can choose) as opposed to you making the choice for them):

> "I'm sorry Sir but I believe you are intoxicated and I have decided it would be illegal for me to serve you any more.
>
> The law says you have to leave the premises so would you like me to call you a taxi, is there a friend or family member I can call to come and pick you up or would you prefer our free courtesy bus runs you home?"

This example gives the customer three choices (three ways they can control their life) rather than presenting a situation where the customer feels they have no control/no say in what will happen.

This approach is very customer-focussed and the preferred option for dealing with this type of situation.

What does 'taking responsibility' mean?

Taking responsibility for finding a solution to a conflict situation – whether with a customer or a colleague – means being proactive and taking one or more of the following steps:

- Going to the person (where you feel it is safe and appropriate to do so) to talk to them face-to-face about the situation

- Asking them to modify their language and/or behaviour

- Making an offer of help – "Hi, my name's Alan. There seems to be a problem. How can I help?"

- Showing a physical presence – this is not intended to be intimidatory or aggressive but designed to let people know you are there.

    This may:

    - In itself, calm the situation down – some people modify their language/behaviour when they realise their activities are coming under scrutiny by staff.

        You might combine this presence with wiping tables, clearing tables, or chatting with others rather than simply standing and staring at the offending party/persons

    - Invite/encourage people to explain a problem/conflict situation to you – thereby beginning the process of resolving the situation: use open questions such as "What seems to be the problem?"

- Realising it is your job to handle the situation – you can not ignore the situation: if you believe you cannot effectively and safely address the situation then your role in handling the problem is to refer it to someone else.

3.2 Manage conflict by applying effective communication skills and anger management techniques

Introduction

All communications with customers and colleagues should be conducted in an open, professional and friendly manner. The need to do this in a conflict situation is even more important.

This Section highlights effective communication skills required to handle conflict and presents a range of anger management techniques which can be applied when managing conflict situations.

Communication skills

Communication involves sending and receiving messages verbally (speech) or non-verbally (body language).

Verbal communication involves questioning, listening, and answering.

Non-verbal communication comprises facial expressions, eye contact, gestures and posture.

What specific skills are involved?

Dealing effectively with conflict situations involving other staff or customers requires the use of a blend of communication and interpersonal skills.

General requirements

It is useful to ensure the basic background 'rules' for communication are adhered to in conflict situations for communication to be effective:

• Every message must have a purpose

• Messages should match the interests and abilities of the receiver

• Unnecessary words should be eliminated

• Chosen words should be within the experience range of the receiver

• Messages should be clear.

Speech – verbal communication

The voice (as distinct from the actual words used) is a very honest medium and relays how you are feeling.

You can alter your communication – making it more or less effective – by making changes to various elements of your speech.

These elements are:

- Pitch or tone

- Intensity

- Projection

- The pauses you use in your speech.

You might find occasions when it is appropriate for you to raise your voice to a friend or family member, but you should never raise your voice when speaking with a customer or a colleague.

This may not only be seen as rude, but can be interpreted as being threatening, or lacking in self-confidence.

To be an effective communicator, it is important to pick your words carefully: always be aware of the type of person you are speaking with and modify your language to suit the listener as much as possible.

It has been said so many times it loses its effect but it is true: everyone of our guests is an individual and must be treated as such.

The communication style you use for a group of young and rowdy, adventure seeking holiday makers should not be the same as for a bus load of senior citizens touring the region.

Body language – non-verbal communication

Non-verbal communication occurs in all person-to-person situations – it is impossible for it not to happen.

Some people use more non-verbal communication than others do, but everyone uses it to some degree.

When dealing with conflict:

- You need to pay attention the messages your body language is sending

- Make the effort to read the other person's body language.

Forms of body language important in conflict situations include:

- Your stance and posture

- Your facial expressions

- How you hold your arms.

Body language then, also transmits feelings.

You must take care these 'emotional messages' cannot be interpreted as conflicting with the verbal message sent: where your body language says one thing but your words say another, people tend to believe the non-verbal communication

It is extremely important to be consciously aware of your body language at all times when communicating face-to-face in a conflict situation, and to realise the total interaction involves much, much more than just the spoken word.

Listening

To be an active listener you must be able to concentrate well.

When you listen, you are also:

- Watching to identify non-verbal communication

- Analysing what the person is saying

- Interpreting the words and the body language – to understand the person and their message, to make sense of it and to determine what the response (if any) should be.

Remember communication is a two-way process between a sender and a receiver. It is the presence of 'feedback' which converts a monologue into a dialogue and hence defines the exchange between people as 'communication'.

Without feedback, communication cannot be said to have taken place – and feedback is based on the fact you have listened to and understood what the other person has said.

Likewise, if a message is not clearly understood by the receiver it can open the door for misunderstandings and the desired action or response not being achieved: in this case, too, it cannot be said proper communication has occurred.

Questioning

Asking the right questions at the right time is an important part of being an effective communicator in your dealings with conflict situations.

Asking questions enables you to:

- Acquire more accurate information

- Identify what the other person wants/prefers in order to solve the conflict

- Demonstrate you are actively and genuinely interested in resolving the conflict

- Clarify ambiguities

- Better understand contexts.

You can save a lot of time in conflict situations (and reduce anxieties, and the potential for violence) by correctly structuring your questions.

A blend of closed and open questions is usually the best option in these situations. For example:

- "Did the man hit you?"

- "Did you hear the swearing?"

- "Was that the person who touched you?"

- "Who did you speak with, Sir?"

- "What kind of service did you require?"

- "Where was the man the last time you saw him, Madam?"

- "When did the incident occur?"

- "How did he leave the premises?"

Useful techniques when questioning people to obtain information about a conflict – or to determine a possible solution – are to:

- Rephrase or repeat questions
- Paraphrase the responses they have given you

Language style

Language style refers to the way a person uses language when they communicate with others.

In addition to the issues discussed under 'Cultural and social differences' (below) it is important to:

- Use a language style the other person can relate to
- Identify cues from the other person as to what their language style is
- Reflect back to the other person the language style they prefer/use.

Using a similar language style to the other person will be interpreted as being less aggressive and will tend create a bond with the other person by virtue of sharing a common speech pattern.

Cultural and social differences

When communicating with others in any situation but especially in a conflict situation, it is important to take into consideration the cultural and social factors which may apply to the person.

These factors are the things that help that person 'make sense of' their world and of the situation they find themselves in.

You must constantly be on your guard to ensure you do not impose your own cultural and social values onto others.

Not only is this arrogant and short-sighted, but doing so will surely inflame any existing conflict situation.

Resolving conflict is not a neutral undertaking. It always occurs within a cultural and social context and needs to be customised to accommodate those needs. Always be alert to cross-cultural variations and differences which might impact on the conflict, the conflict situation and the potential for resolution.

Remember, differences between people do not make one person right, and the other person wrong: the differences just make them different – no more, no less.

Cultural factors

Until they are identified and addressed, any of the following factors may be at play influencing or sustaining a conflict situation:

- Their native tongue
- Personal values
- Religious beliefs
- Culturally-based dietary needs.

Socio-economic factors

Your customers are likely to come to from a wide variety of socio-economic backgrounds, and all these backgrounds carry with them differences in fact, and differences in expectations:

• Income levels

• Spending capabilities

• Social mores and values.

Health factors

Not everyone enjoys good health, and the needs and wants of those with less than perfect health can be the cause of conflict situations:

• Dietary needs – see above (regarding cultural considerations), and also try to accommodate dietary requests made by guests if possible.

   Consider speaking to the people in your kitchen and compile a list of what can be provided to cater for the dietary needs of those who commonly use your facility.

   Frequent demands are for items low in fat, sugar-free, low salt, and gluten free as well as for dishes meeting cultural and religious needs.

• Mobility – people with injuries may have impaired ability to get around. They may be using crutches, a wheelchair or simply have restricted movement or be unable to walk for long distances, or to climb stairs.

   It is important to respond to their needs and assist them in moving about the property or business without making them feel they are imposing.

   A lack of user-friendly facilities can cause those with a physical disability to quickly become upset and angry with a business.
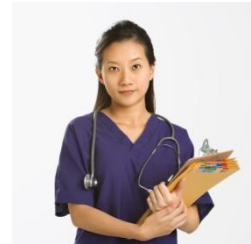
Age

The needs of children, adolescents, teenagers, middle-aged people and the elderly will all differ: they will even differ between individuals within the same age category.

Failure to accommodate this age variance can give rise to some conflict situations.

When dealing with members of the public/guests you need to remind yourself not everyone is going to be pleased with the same thing, and a person's chronological age could have a great impact on their orientation to things and their interpretation of events, service and language.

This highlights the way you address, respond to and deal with guests must be modified to factor in the age of the individual you are dealing with.

Our speech patterns must alter appropriately – for example, what is acceptable to a teenager may be totally inappropriate for an elder person.

What is suitable for a child may be unsuitable for and/or offensive to an adult.

Personality/mood

Customers will also arrive at a business with a wide variety of personalities and moods.

These may be their 'normal' moods, or they may be due to the that they are on holiday, in a strange/unfamiliar environment, or because they are angry and frustrated.

You must endeavour to read people's moods and personalities and respond appropriately.

People may be:

- Timid – this means you need to ensure you are not over-loud or too familiar.

  It also means you should not attempt to make them the centre of attention or take it upon yourself to draw them out of their shell

- Shy – shy people can be quite happy being shy.

  You should respect their orientation and not try to 'force' them to make new friends, participate in group activities or mix with others

- Extrovert – this person is a good mixer and likes everyone (although this perspective may not be reciprocated).

  They expect others to be like themselves – they want to talk, to spend time with others and to get out and do things.

  Anything or anyone who does not align with this is seen as 'strange' and this may give rise to conflict

- Moody – lots of people are moody.

  It is all part of the human condition – people may be laughing and happy one day, complaining and unhappy the next.

  In hospitality and tourism, you have to quickly learn to pick people's moods and respond appropriately.

  If they are a bit quiet and 'out of sorts' then they take offence more quickly and this can contribute to a conflict situation: generally they prefer just to be served and left alone.

Applying interpersonal skills

The following skills are important for effective workplace communication.

- Face the person you are talking with
- Maintain eye contact if possible
- Address the person by their name
- Establish a rapport.

Anger management techniques

Anger management techniques are intended to be applied to help lower the level of anger the other person may be demonstrating in the conflict situation.

Remember, if you believe the other person's anger places you in an unsafe/dangerous position you should:

- Leave the area/situation

- Notify management or security and allow them to deal with the problem.
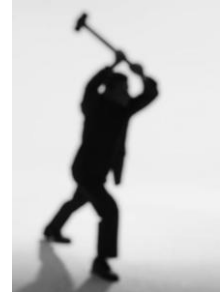
Anger management techniques which have proven to be effective include:

- Managing your own emotions – handling conflict can release adrenalin and cause you to shake and 'react' rather than 'respond'.

  Realise you may be impacted by adrenalin and practice deep breathing, working in stressful situations and focusing on intelligent action as opposed to innate reactions.

- Demonstrating empathy with the other person – by showing you understand their situation and how they fee. A central aspect here is to show sympathy for their situation and the feelings inherent in it

- Being assertive – and making statements such as:

  - "Sir, I need you to sit down, please"

  - "I want you to stop using that language immediately"

  - "I'm sorry gentlemen but I have to ask you to leave immediately"
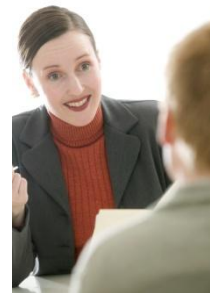
- Taking control – this can include:

  - Introducing yourself by name and position

  - Stating you will be dealing with the situation and have the necessary authority to do so

  - Telling others in the immediate area (staff and customers) to move away – to demonstrate your ability

  - Talking confidently – not loudly but with self-assuredness

- Looking for a win-win outcome – the end result of resolving any conflict should be (ideally) everyone wins.

  Obviously this is difficult to achieve and sometimes is not possible but it should nonetheless be an aim at the start.

  You must try to achieve an outcome where you get what you/the business wants and the other person (at least to some extent) gets what they want

- Showing a willingness to resolve the issue – ensure the other party knows you are genuinely intent of finding a solution to the situation.

  Keys are to:

  - Make an appropriate statement – "Sir I want to work with you to fix this" – or ask a question "What will it take for me to fix this for you?"

- Ensure non-verbal indicates openness to resolving the situation – use open body language (no crossed arms; no clenched fists or jaws; stand front on to the person)

- Where appropriate, defining common needs.

  This means stating what you believe to be the needs of the customer and also stating what your needs/the needs of the business are.

  This clarifies the situations and ensures you and the other party are working from the same foundation to solve the problem.

  It also shows you have been paying attention to what the other person has been telling you and again indicates your desire to address the root cause of the anger.

  Simply knowing someone has listened to what they have had to say and has understood what they have said can help de-fuse much of the anger in hostile situations.

- Not telling them to 'Calm down' – telling an angry person to cam down is one of the most counter-productive things to do.

  It achieves nothing more than inflaming an already volatile situation. People will resent being told what to do and being asked to calm down fails to address the root cause of the problem.

  If you start addressing the problem, then the person will automatically start to calm down without needing to be told/asked to do so.

- Using defusing techniques – these include:

  - Talking quietly

  - Shifting the focus for a moment – by introducing a new topic into the exchange:

    - "Come and have a cup of coffee while we talk about this: do you have white or black? Sugar?"

  - Accepting their feelings – "I can certainly understand why you are angry/upset"

  - Making placating gestures – using open-hand gestures

  - Allowing them to vent – many people will clam down once they have been allowed/given an opportunity to say what they want to say and 'get it off their chest'

  - Telling them they are right – "You have every right to be angry"

  - Assuring them a solution can be found which will at least in part meet their needs – "I'm sure we can easily find an answer to this"

- Moving the person to a quiet area in order to remove the person from their audience – whom they may feel they have to impress by their belligerent attitude.

  It is always more effective if you can talk with an angry person on their own without others around to see what is happening and hear what is being said.

  Most angry people will play to an audience but if there is no audience, they will tend to be more reasonable and more easy to negotiate with/talk to.

3.3 Use conflict resolution skills to manage the conflict situation and develop solutions

Introduction

Conflict resolution skills are required to effectively deal with conflict.

This Section presents more conflict resolution tips (including a model to apply when resolving conflict) and indicates how solutions to conflict may be developed.

Styles of handling conflict

There are five major ways to handle conflict:

- Avoidance
- Accommodation
- Forcing
- Compromise
- Collaboration.

Avoidance

This involves withdrawing from, or simply suppressing the conflict.

Avoidance is useful when the conflict is trivial, when emotions are running high, or when the resolution of the conflict does not outweigh the potentially disruptive aspects of it.

Accommodation

The goal here is to maintain harmonious relationships, but at the expense of placing the needs of others above your own.

This is most viable when the issue is not that important to you, or where you wish to build favour for situations in the future.

Forcing

This is where you attempt to satisfy your own needs at the expense of the other party.

Often supervisors will use this method when formal authority is needed to settle a dispute.

This works well on important, but unpopular, issues where action must be taken and where commitment by others is not critical.

Compromise

Compromise requires each party to give up something of value.

Compromise can be an optimal strategy when conflicting parties are equal in power, when you need a temporary solution to a complex problem or when time pressures force a need for a quick solution.

Collaboration

This is the ultimate win-win situation.

Here all the parties seek to satisfy their interests.

Active listening, open and honest discussions and careful deliberation over a whole range of alternatives is considered.

The idea is to find the solution that is acceptable to all.

When pressures are not paramount, where all parties seriously want a win-win situation, and when the issue is too important to be compromised, is when collaboration works best.

Need for communication and interpersonal skills

All the skills, strategies and techniques presented in the previous section are likely to apply in relation to the focus for this Section.

Generically, communication skills used when managing conflict are the same as the conflict resolution skills used when resolving conflict:

- Assertiveness

- Listening skills

- Non-verbal communication

- Language style

- Problem solving

- Negotiation

- Using de-fusing techniques.

Determining possible solutions

Most conflict situations can be effectively resolved by more than one solution.

Your aim must be to find a resolution which is:

- Quick, easy and practical to implement

- Satisfies those involved

- Meets the limitations imposed on you by the law and organisational requirements.

Frequently the best solution for the customer is not the best option for the venue and vice versa.

Compromise is often an essential ingredient from both parties.

Identifying and developing solutions to conflict situations may need to occur in situations where customers are involved, or where there is conflict between staff members.

The speed with which viable solutions can be identified often depends on the willingness or readiness of parties to communicate, negotiate or compromise.

Solutions may be:

- Programmed decisions – see Section 1.3

- Specific responses to individual conflicts determined on an individual case-by-case basis.

Case-by-case solutions

A variety of strategies is potentially available when trying to resolve conflict on a case-by-case basis.

Your reading of the situation, knowledge of those involved and understanding of what has occurred will combine to guide/indicate the approach you should take.

Once again, make sure any solutions agreed on are within your scope of authority and complies with all legal and organisational requirements.

You have four basic options to choose from:

- Ask the person what it will take to fix the problem and put an end to the conflict

- Meet the customer or other person half-way/part-way

- Offer a formal apology

- Do nothing.

"What will it take to fix the problem?"

In this option you simply ask the other person/party what they want in order to put an end to the conflict.

If their response is able to be accommodated (that is, the proposed solution is viable) then the easiest and most effective strategy is to do what the person identifies.

This should totally resolve the issue and provide the person with exactly what they want.

In many ways this is a win-win outcome because the customer/other party gets what they want and so do you (you have quickly resolved the issue within the boundaries you have to operate within).

Never be afraid to ask the other party what they want. If you cannot accommodate their demands you at least have more information which can be used to guide further negotiations. Be very careful, however, about promising what you cannot deliver – never tell the other person you will accommodate their wishes: just ask what those wishes are.

Where the other person makes a simple suggestion as to how to resolve the conflict this may be an approach not previously considered yet one which can be readily accommodated.

Meet the other party half-way

This is a 'compromise' solution where both parties give-up something.

It means the other party/customer is prepared to settle for less than their optimum solution, and the business is prepared to give more than what it wanted to initially give.

Compromises are a common way of settling conflict but they require goodwill on behalf of both parties.

If the other party is not prepared to compromise:

- A stalemate is reached where no progress on finding a solution can occur – both parties have entrenched positions and will nor retreat from them. Parties effectively 'walk away from the negotiating table'

- Customers often receive nothing from the business – instead of some form of recompense or apology the business gives nothing (other than what it is legally obliged to provide)

Offering a formal apology

It cannot be over-stated how often a genuine and formal apology will resolve a conflict between colleagues and between the venue and a customer.

In many situations a formal apology by one party will totally resolve the issue and bring an end to the conflict.

You should always consider offering a formal apology as a way of resolving conflict.

A formal apology may:

- Need to be given by a manager or high-level officer in the business

- Need to be in writing on company letterhead paper – as well as be verbally given

- Be arranged/scheduled with the person involved and occur in a manager's office.

Doing nothing

It may be your genuine belief after a considered assessment of the situation the best action to take is no action at all.

For example, if a conflict over a room reservation proves to be the fault of the customer (perhaps they booked a room at the wrong hotel, or made the booking for the wrong date), then it would be appropriate to simply explain the situation (perhaps a brief apology may also be appropriate for the purposes of civility) and not make any offers of discounts or complimentary items.

Note: where a conflict involves a customer the establishment has decided they no longer wish to have as a customer (perhaps they are serial complainers, have a record of annoying other customers, swearing, fighting, late payment) this option may also be used even where a legitimate complaint exists so as to encourage them to take their business elsewhere.

Some businesses also look at the costs inherent in the situation and where the cost of 'doing something' outweighs the cost of doing nothing, a decision is often made to do nothing because it is the cheapest, most cost-effective alternative.

Need to gain agreement on the solution

Once a viable solution to a conflict has been identified there needs to be genuine and definite agreement implementation of the solution will bring an end to the problem.

Parties involved need to understand you or the business will not entertain any further action on the issue.

If this agreement cannot be obtained, implementation of a solution should be postponed until such agreement is forthcoming.

In some situations it can be useful and appropriate to help move things along by advising parties the offer of a resolution is only available until XYZ time/date.

Organisational constraints

Conflict resolution solutions must occur within any applicable organisational constraints.

As already indicated these constraints may vary depending on the person involved and/or the exact circumstances of the conflict but they can be expected to include:

- Costs and budgets

- Written policies

- Availability – of rooms or seats.

    Organisational constraints in this regard may also apply to situations where there is a lack of:

    - Replacement items

    - Services – including people to provide the service

    - Tickets.

Legal requirements

No solutions to conflict situations can be proposed, or accommodated, where the venue (or staff) commit a breach of legislation.

For example, regardless of any factors applying to a conflict situation with a customer, you cannot ever agree to:

- Sell or provide liquor to an intoxicated person

- Allow minors to be illegally on licensed premises

- Supply liquor to minors otherwise in accordance with the law

- Provide tobacco products/cigarettes to minors

- Allow minors into gaming areas

- Action which would breach contracted obligations.

The Six-Step Method of Conflict Resolution

The Six-Step Method is an effective approach/option for dealing with conflict.

It can also be used to deal with complaints.

The six steps are:

Listen carefully

Acknowledge

Respond

Take action

Report

Follow-up.

Step 1: Listen carefully

It is essential to listen to everything the customer says in a conflict situation.

Listen, listen, listen to everything they have to say even though it may be the last thing you feel like doing.

Pay attention to the verbal language and the body language as both will provide insight into the issue and help determine the emotion the person is experiencing.

Recognise and respect the customer's/guest's thoughts and feelings.

Show genuine interest in their needs and expectations.

Demonstrate you are involved in the issue and want to resolve it.

Step 2: Acknowledge

Establish the scope and nature of the problem confirming what is involved, who is involved and the facts and feelings inherent in the complaint.

You may also re-cap any history which might accompany the problem – such as acknowledging this is not the first time the person has experienced this issue, acknowledging promises made by the business which appear to have been broken, and acknowledging how the person feels.

Verbally summarise the scope and nature of the conflict and ensure the person agrees with your summary.

Your acknowledgement provides another opportunity for the person to add more detail or context.
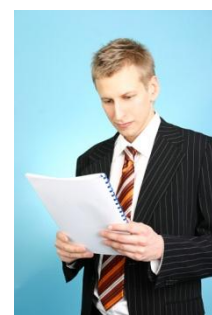
Step 3: Respond

Inform the customer/guest of the action you want to take/intend to take to resolve the situation.

This course of action may have been proposed by them, by you, arisen through negotiation or be prescribed by programmed decisions.

Check to see if this action is acceptable to the person to effectively resolve the conflict and confirm this response will fully resolve the situation. Avoid resolutions which will only *partially* resolve conflict.

Make sure the action is in-line with organisational policies and procedures and you have the authority to make such as decision and/or take such action.

If you do not have the authority to authorise or implement what is needed, refer it to someone who can.

Never make up excuses for a problem/situation and never blame another colleague for a problem – even if it may be true.

Step 4: Take action

This is usually what the person wants you to do.

The sooner you take action, the better.

Inform the person of the timeframe you expect to apply to implementing the resolution.

Always under-promise and over-deliver: for example:

- Do not promise their replacement ticket will be available in two minutes if it will take 10 minutes to prepare it

- Tell diners their replacement meal will be served in 10 minutes – and then make sure it is served in seven or eight minutes.

Act to implement the agreed solution within a reasonable time frame and if ever there looks like being a delay in executing the resolution within the promised time you must inform the customer/guest at the earliest possible opportunity and provide a full explanation of the delay.

Never let a delay in fixing a problem drag on and on without keeping the person/s involved up-to-date and informed.

Step 5: Report

It may be part of your role to inform management of all conflict situations or nominated types of conflict.

Most reports require a simple verbal explanation to management or the duty manager.

In some cases you may advise other staff of the action you have taken and tell them about the stage the conflict is at.

In some cases there may be a requirement, after the immediate complaint has been resolved, to record details and action taken on a nominated internal form.
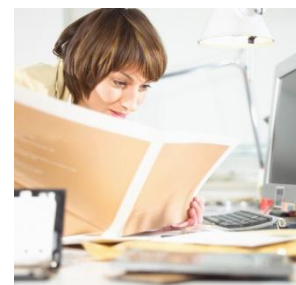
Step 6: Follow-up

This requires you to return to the person (customer/guest or staff member) and check the situation has now been resolved.

The intentions here are to:

- Ensure the promises made to fix the problem have been implemented

- Ensure the person is happy with the outcome.

Work Projects

It is a requirement of this Unit you complete Work Projects as advised by your Trainer. You must submit documentation, suitable evidence or other relevant proof of completion of the project to your Trainer by the agreed date.

3.1   Talk with management at your workplace and ask them questions about resolving conflict situations necessary to obtain sufficient information to enable you to answer the questions below.

Submit a written report based on their responses.

- How can I demonstrate I intend taking responsibility for finding a solution to a conflict situation involving customers?

- What and where are the limits of what I can, should or must do when attempting to resolve a workplace conflict involving a customer?

- What things should I never do when attempting to resolve a customer conflict?

- What things should I never say when attempting to resolve a customer conflict?

- What communication skills do you think are important/necessary when trying to resolve customer conflict?

- What anger management techniques have you found to be effective when handling customer conflict?

- What conflict resolution skills have you found to be useful when handling customer conflict?

- What solutions have you developed to help resolve customer conflicts? Why, when and how were they developed?

Summary

Resolve conflict situations

When resolving conflict situations:

- Take responsibility for finding a solution

- Only operate within your designated scope of authority

- Realise conflict can occur with patrons or colleagues

- Recognise sometimes there can be no negotiated solution

- Try to give control to the customer when resolving customer conflict

- Be prepared to show a physical presence

- Use appropriate communication and interpersonal skills

- Factor in social, cultural and other relevant contexts

- Apply anger management techniques

- Use conflict resolution skills

- Develop solutions to address identified conflict

- Be prepared to ask the person what it would take to fix the problem

- Compromise can be an effective solution strategy

- Always be prepared to apologise

- Accept 'doing nothing' can be an appropriate response

- Work within organisational constraints and legal requirements.

Presentation of written work

1. Introduction

It is important for students to present carefully prepared written work. Written presentation in industry must be professional in appearance and accurate in content. If students develop good writing skills whilst studying, they are able to easily transfer those skills to the workplace.

2. Style

Students should write in a style that is simple and concise. Short sentences and paragraphs are easier to read and understand. It helps to write a plan and at least one draft of the written work so that the final product will be well organized. The points presented will then follow a logical sequence and be relevant. Students should frequently refer to the question asked, to keep 'on track'. Teachers recognize and are critical of work that does not answer the question, or is 'padded' with irrelevant material. In summary, remember to:

- Plan ahead
- Be clear and concise
- Answer the question
- Proofread the final draft.

3. Presenting Written Work

Types of written work

Students may be asked to write:

- Short and long reports
- Essays
- Records of interviews
- Questionnaires
- Business letters
- Resumes.

Format

All written work should be presented on A4 paper, single-sided with a left-hand margin. If work is word-processed, one-and-a-half or double spacing should be used. Handwritten work must be legible and should also be well spaced to allow for ease of reading. New paragraphs should not be indented but should be separated by a space. Pages must be numbered. If headings are also to be numbered, students should use a logical and sequential system of numbering.

Cover Sheet

All written work should be submitted with a cover sheet stapled to the front that contains:

- The student's name and student number

- The name of the class/unit

- The due date of the work

- The title of the work

- The teacher's name

- A signed declaration that the work does not involve plagiarism.

Keeping a Copy

Students must keep a copy of the written work in case it is lost. This rarely happens but it can be disastrous if a copy has not been kept.

Inclusive language

This means language that includes every section of the population. For instance, if a student were to write 'A nurse is responsible for the patient's in her care at all times' it would be implying that all nurses are female and would be excluding male nurses.

Examples of appropriate language are shown on the right:

Mankind	*Humankind*
Barman/maid	*Bar attendant*
Host/hostess	*Host*
Waiter/waitress	*Waiter or waiting staff*

Recommended reading

Bell, A.H. & Smith, D.M., 2004 (3rd ed'n), *Winning with difficult people*, Barron's, Hauppage, N.Y.

Condliffe, P., 2008 (3rd ed'n), *Conflict management: a practical guide*, LexisNexis Butterworths, Chatswood, N.S.W.

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Trainee Manual
Manage and resolve conflict situations

Trainee evaluation sheet

Manage and resolve conflict situations

The following statements are about the competency you have just completed.

Please tick the appropriate box	Agree	Don't Know	Do Not Agree	Does Not Apply
There was too much in this competency to cover without rushing.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Most of the competency seemed relevant to me.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The competency was at the right level for me.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I got enough help from my trainer.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The amount of activities was sufficient.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The competency allowed me to use my own initiative.	☐	☐	☐	☐
My training was well-organized.	☐	☐	☐	☐
My trainer had time to answer my questions.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I understood how I was going to be assessed.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I was given enough time to practice.	☐	☐	☐	☐
My trainer feedback was useful.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Enough equipment was available and it worked well.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The activities were too hard for me.	☐	☐	☐	☐

The best things about this unit were:

_____

_____

_____

_____

The worst things about this unit were:

_____

_____

_____

_____

The things you should change in this unit are:

_____

_____

_____

_____