



# Work effectively with customers and colleagues

D1.HRS.CL1.18

D1.HOT.CL1.01

D2.TCC.CL1.01

Trainee Manual





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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 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

## Work effectively with customers and colleagues

This unit deals with the skills and knowledge required to Work effectively with customers and colleagues in a range of settings within the hotel and travel industries workplace context.

### Unit Code:

D1.HRS.CL1.18

D1.HOT.CL1.01

D2.TCC.CL1.01

### Nominal Hours:

30 hours

## Element 1: Communicate effectively

### Performance Criteria

- 1.1 Relay information in a clear and concise manner using appropriate communication techniques
- 1.2 Use language and tone appropriate to a particular audience, purpose and situation, taking into account the relevant factors involved
- 1.3 Use active listening and questioning to facilitate effective two-way communication with others
- 1.4 Identify potential and existing conflicts and seek solutions in conjunction with all involved parties
- 1.5 Complete routine workplace documentation accurately in a timely manner

## Element 2: Establish and maintain effective relationships with colleagues and customers

### Performance Criteria

- 2.1 Meet both internal customers' and external customers' needs and expectations in accordance with organisation standards, policies and procedures and within acceptable time frames
- 2.2 Assist to resolve workplace conflict and manage difficulties to achieve positive outcomes
- 2.3 Use formal feedback and informal feedback to identify and implement improvements to products, services, processes or outcomes for both internal customers and external customers
- 2.4 Handle complaints positively, sensitively and politely in consultation with the person/s making the complaint
- 2.5 Maintain a positive and co-operative manner
- 2.6 Use non-discriminatory attitudes and language when interacting with customers, staff and management consistently

## Element 3: Work in a team

### Performance Criteria

- 3.1 Request or provide assistance so that work activities can be completed
- 3.2 Provide support to colleagues to ensure achievement of team goals
- 3.3 Discuss and resolve problems through agreed and/or accepted processes
- 3.4 Recognise and accommodate cultural differences within the team
- 3.5 Identify, prioritise and complete individual tasks within designated time lines
- 3.6 Acknowledge and respond to feedback and information from other team members

# Assessment matrix

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

		Work Projects	Written Questions	Oral Questions
<b>Element 1: Communicate effectively</b>				
1.1	Relay information in a clear and concise manner using appropriate communication techniques	1.1	1,2	1
1.2	Use language and tone appropriate to a particular audience, purpose and situation, taking into account the relevant factors involved	1.1	3,4	2
1.3	Use active listening and questioning to facilitate effective two-way communication with others	1.1	5,6	3
1.4	Identify potential and existing conflicts and seek solutions in conjunction with all involved parties	1.2	7,8	4
1.5	Complete routine workplace documentation accurately in a timely manner	1.1,1.3	9,10	5
<b>Element 2: Establish and maintain effective relationships with colleagues and customers</b>				
2.1	Meet both internal customers' and external customers' needs and expectations in accordance with organisation standards, policies and procedures and within acceptable time frames	2.1	11,12	6
2.2	Assist to resolve workplace conflict and manage difficulties to achieve positive outcomes	2.1	13,14	7
2.3	Use formal feedback and informal feedback to identify and implement improvements to products, services, processes or outcomes for both internal customers and external customers	2.1, 2.3	15,16	8
2.4	Handle complaints positively, sensitively and politely in consultation with the person/s making the complaint	2.1, 2.2	17,18	9
2.5	Maintain a positive and co-operative manner	2.1	19,20	10
2.6	Use non-discriminatory attitudes and language when interacting with customers, staff and management consistently	2.1	21,22	11

		Work Projects	Written Questions	Oral Questions
<b>Element 3: Work in a team</b>				
3.1	Request or provide assistance so that work activities can be completed	3.1, 3.2	23,24	12
3.2	Provide support to colleagues to ensure achievement of team goals	3.1	25,26	13
3.3	Discuss and resolve problems through agreed and/or accepted processes	3.1	27,28	14
3.4	Recognise and accommodate cultural differences within the team	3.1	29,30	15
3.5	Identify, prioritise and complete individual tasks within designated time lines	3.1, 3.3	31,32	16
3.6	Acknowledge and respond to feedback and information from other team members	3.1	33,34	17

# Glossary

Term	Explanation
<b>Back of House</b>	An area in the workplace which is not in the view of the public. These areas normally comprise kitchens, storerooms, reservations areas
<b>Communication</b>	The imparting or interchange of thoughts, opinions, or information by speech, writing, or sign language
<b>Disabled</b>	A person that is partially or totally unable to use one or more limbs; a lame or disabled person
<b>External customer</b>	A person who purchases goods or services from another
<b>Feedback</b>	Information in response to an inquiry or experiment
<b>Formal</b>	Being in accordance with the usual requirements, customs, conventional
<b>Front of House</b>	An area in the workplace which is in the view of the public. These areas normally comprise restaurants, bars, reception
<b>Harassment</b>	The act or an instance of harassing, or disturbing, pestering, or troubling repeatedly; persecution
<b>Informal</b>	Not according to the prescribed, official, or customary way or manner, irregular, unofficial
<b>Internal customer</b>	Someone with whom you have a professional relationship with the aim of working together to provide a product or service: staff and suppliers
<b>Kosher</b>	Fit or allowed to be eaten or used, according to the dietary or ceremonial laws
<b>Offering</b>	A combination of products and services that are provided to an external customer
<b>Prioritise</b>	To arrange or do in order of priority or importance



# Element 1: Communicate effectively

## 1.1 Relay information in a clear and concise manner using appropriate communication techniques

### Application of the unit

This unit applies across the service industries to all job roles and levels and in particular to the full range of tourism and hospitality industry sectors and environments.

It applies to those who deal directly with customers as well as back of house staff.

### Introduction

When working in the hospitality industry, there is a need to communicate with both customers and colleagues. In essence colleagues are other staff in your business. However it may also apply to people working in external businesses that help provide products or services provided to your customer. This can include contractors or suppliers.

It is important that all of these communications, whether with customers or colleagues, are conducted in a polite, professional, clear and concise manner.

### Who might communication occur with?

This unit is applicable in many workplace situations within the hospitality, tourism and events industry.

Depending upon the enterprise or specific situations, customers and colleagues can include:

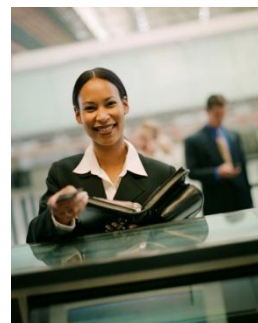
- Workmates
- External customers and clients
- Members of other tourism and hospitality industry sectors
- Individuals or groups such as consultants and committees
- Government agencies and private organisations
- Local residents
- Visitors
- Media.



This broad list serves to highlight the diverse nature of the people with whom we are likely to interact in the course of work.

The situations and contexts in which this unit might be applied include:

- In an office environment
- Back of house – where there are no customers
- Front of house – in situations where there is customer contact including kitchens, stores
- Reception areas –front office, restaurants, cafes or leisure facilities
- On tour
- On site
- At an event
- Using a phone.



Again, this highlights the potentially wide-ranging nature of our role within industry, and the continual and diverse way in which we may be called on to interact with all manner of individuals.

Remember, all communications with both customers and colleagues should be conducted in an open, polite, professional and friendly manner. The information provided must be clear and concise.

## What types of communication are there?

There are a variety of communications mediums used in the industry. Some may be specific to a particular establishment or industry sector, and others are quite general across all industry types and venues.

The basic communication options include:

- Verbal –including face to face communication and talking on the phone. This also embraces the use of languages other than English and the use of Indigenous languages
- Written format which includes electronic mail and hard copy communications such as letters, signs, labels, posters and advertising and warning material
- Non-verbal – facial expressions, gestures, sign language
- Use of an interpreter to interpret verbal and printed language.



## What should I be aware of?

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

- Follow all establishment policies regarding communication with customers and colleagues. These may exist for greeting customers, interacting with staff and answering the phone
- Use a person's name where it is known. If you don't know a customer's name use 'Sir' or 'Madam'
- Be honest – but be sensitive, tactful, caring and respectful
- Use 'please' and 'thank you' a lot
- Don't interrupt
- Speak at an appropriate pace and volume – don't yell, don't whisper
- Make sure your non-verbal language matches the verbal communication you are sending. This commonly means smiling when it is appropriate to do so, and displaying a serious demeanour when something serious is being discussed.



## 1.2 Use language and tone appropriate to a particular audience, purpose and situation, taking into account the relevant factors involved

### Introduction

Whether communicating with others in verbal form (face to face or by phone), or in written format it is vital to make sure that the language and tone is appropriate to the nature of each individual communication.

This highlights that many communications need to be undertaken taking into account the context in which each communication occurs.

This means there is a need to modify most communications to suit the individual set of circumstances that apply, and to take into account the individual with whom the communication is taking place.



### The 'internal' customer

Customers come from outside the business and may be referred to as 'external' customers. That is, they are external to the business.

By contrast, 'internal' customers are other staff, workers and colleagues from within the business.

It is as important to serve and communicate with internal customers with the same care and attention that is used to serve and communicate with external customers.

### The need for effective communication

All communication, whether verbal or written, needs to be effective in order to demonstrate our intention to meet customer and colleague needs and to deliver service and responses quickly.

- To help achieve effective communication, the following five rules apply:
- 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
- Verbal messages should be clear and concise, using the correct words and their pronunciation, along with appropriate inflection, tone, language, speed and volume of voice.



This means that in some instances, written communication may need to:

- Use graphics or pictures to help clarify meaning
- Be produced in a language other than English
- Be printed in a font that is easy to read and in a print size that encourages people to read it
- Be available in 'take away' form so that people can take a copy with them to read later and or in more detail.



## Clear verbal communication skills

Verbal communication involves sending and receiving messages via language or speech (verbal communication) or via body language (non-verbal communication).

Many people think that communication is a one-way thing where you send a 'message' to a customer or staff member, or vice versa.

In actual fact, for communication to occur there must be 'feedback'. The receiver must also send a message that indicates they have understood the message that has been sent.



Without feedback, there is only monologue, not dialogue. Without feedback it is possible to argue that no real communication has occurred.

It is now recognised that communication comprises both 'verbal communication' and 'non-verbal communication':

- Verbal communication is questioning, listening and answering – the spoken word
- Non-verbal communication is body language – facial expressions, eye contact, gestures and posture.

It is important for the body language to match the verbal message because where there is a mismatch. This occurs when a positive verbal message is sent while the speaker is frowning and or looking annoyed), the listener will nearly always:

- Be confused about what they are hearing or seeing
- Believe the message that the body language is sending, rather than believing the verbal message.



## Check your establishment policies

Many venues have policies and procedures to guide communication so it is necessary to find out what these are.

Even where no formal printed policies and procedures exist, there are usually many generally accepted and unacceptable communication techniques. The best way to determine what applies in your workplace is to:

- Read the policies and procedures
- Look and listen to what others do
- Ask your supervisor.

## What do we communicate?

Communication takes place with customers and colleagues on a constant basis. Whilst the content of the communication may vary for different audiences, the success of effective communication is vital to ensure the success of the customer's visit to your establishment.

In this Section, we will explore the different types of communication provided to:

- Customers
- Colleagues.

### Communicating with customers

Communication with the customers visiting your property is primarily aimed at providing information about such products and services. It not only means providing a standard answer to questions that may be asked, but to provide information tailored to the needs of each individual customer.

You have to be able to supply relevant information immediately in an accurate and concise manner in order to build your credibility in the eyes of the customer, and to optimise the potential to make sales.

It is important that staff not only have communication skills, but a good understanding of product knowledge. In this case 'product' knowledge, not only refers to all the products that your establishment provides such as beds, pools and gym equipment, but also all the 'services' that are also provided. Examples of services may include massage services, kids' club and cooking demonstrations.



Another reason to develop knowledge is that a customer may be indecisive about making a choice and you might be able to assist by providing information that will allow them to make a decision more suited to meet their needs. This may refer to where to visit, what to eat, which room to choose or which wine to select.

The better you meet their identified need, the greater the chance of them making a purchase, returning to the venue to spend more money at a later date, and recommending us to their friends.

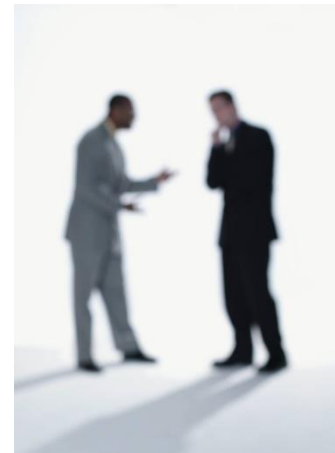
Whenever you identify an opportunity to improve your product and service knowledge, seize it! By effectively communicating this information, all stakeholders benefit. Customers are happy as they are having their needs met, staff are happy through greater tips and service and managers are happy through increased sales and repeat business.



### ***Methods to improve product knowledge***

There are many ways staff can improve their product and service knowledge. This can be achieved through:

- Speaking with colleagues
- Attending staff meetings
- Attending product launches
- Speaking with customers to obtain feedback, opinion and thoughts
- Speaking with friends and family
- Speaking with sales representatives
- Speaking with industry representatives
- Listening to, or reading, the media
- Visiting other venues within the industry to see what they are doing.



### ***Types of product knowledge***

Your supervisor is likely to advise you of areas about which you should generate product knowledge. There may even be 'required reading' such as an Induction Workbook, so that you can learn details about the business and its products and services.

The following are areas where knowledge should be sourced and relevant details remembered:

- General property features, services and facilities as appropriate to your workplace. This means taking into account the type of business you are working in such as commercial catering, hotel, restaurant or bar. It may include matters relating to layout, trading hours, senior personnel or emergency information
- Special features – times when the venue is offering a special event, such as religious events, festivals or holidays
- Benefits available to customers, taking advantage of certain offers, promotions or packages that you offer
- Disadvantages. You need to know the bits about your venue that are not particularly attractive. For example, you should know the accommodation rooms that are not especially quiet (usually the ones closest to the lifts), and the dining room tables that are not the best (perhaps they are near the entrance, near the toilets, or near the kitchen doors)
- Price. You have to know the bargains, the discounts, happy hours, when certain savings cut in and out, what packages are currently available including what they contain and the value they represent



- Special offers. These can be in any area of the property from dining, to retail shops, gaming, bars and through to accommodation. Some of these specials may also include off-site activities such as tickets to a live show, entry to the zoo, free day tour of the local tourist attractions
- Availability. You don't have to necessarily keep up to date at all times with vacancies, occupancy rates or table bookings. But, you should at the very least know where to go, who to ask or what number to ring to find out. There is little point in convincing a guest to stay an extra night or two, and then find out you are fully booked
- How to purchase or order. Even though you may work in a bar area, it is part of your establishment knowledge that you can inform a guest or potential customer of how to make a booking in other areas of the property. This maximises revenue and provides outstanding customer service.

### **Golden rule when communicating with customers**

It must be a Golden Rule for you when working in the industry to never say "I don't know" to a customer, and leave it at that.

If a customer asks a question and you do not know the correct answer you should:

- Be truthful – tell them you don't know the answer
- Apologise – where appropriate
- Inform them you will find out the answer to their question
- Find out the answer. This may involve accessing a web site, contacting another staff member, looking up information in a brochure or making a phone call
- Pass on the information to the customer – either verbally or in written form as appropriate.

### **Communicating with colleagues**

Communication with colleagues is different to that provided to customers. However the objective is the same i.e. to ensure each customer has an enjoyable experience at your establishment.

Communication used between colleagues may come in different formats, whether through meetings, emails, documentation or phone calls, but the purpose normally is 'operationally focused' relating to relaying information in one of the following:

- Operational performance – financial summary, feedback of activities or customer complaints
- Upcoming events – times, dates, inclusions, staffing requirements and requirements for ordering of stock
- Products and services – new or amended offerings
- Promotional activities – scheduled activities, merchandising, promotional codes, inclusions in packages or promotions, prices and availability
- Specific customer issues – VIP status, special requests, bookings or complaints.

Regardless of the information communicated, the importance of having clear and concise communication channels can never be underestimated.



## Non verbal communication

'Body language' is also called 'non-verbal communication'.

Non-verbal communication is anything other than words that communicates a message.

It includes:

- The way we stand including the use of 'space' and where we stand in relation to others
- The way we talk
- The clothes we wear and the accessories we use
- Our facial expressions.



All these things communicate something.

In dealing with other people, the non-verbal cues are often used, consciously or subconsciously, in making judgements about people, about what they say and about their honesty and deceptiveness.

It is important to remember that while we are making judgements about customers based on their non-verbal communication, the customers are also making judgements about us based on the non-verbal communication we consciously or unconsciously send.

### Major aspects of non-verbal communication

Five distinct aspects of non-verbal communication have been identified.

#### 1) *Emblems*

These are the explicit type of gestures and body language that are used with complete intention, and whose meanings are generally accepted and understood.

Examples are:

- Cupping the hand to the ear to indicate 'I can't hear you'
- Holding the forefinger vertically in front of the lips to indicate 'Shhh, be quiet'.



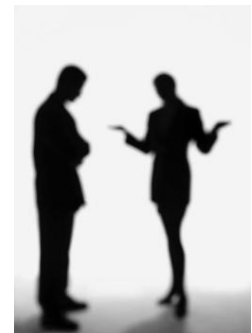
#### 2) *Illustrators*

These are mannerisms that are unique to individuals.

They are what people do when talking. They are used to reinforce the verbal message they are sending.

They are usually related to the use of the hands, but they also include things that mark a person's speech, such as the way one person may end a sentence, pauses in their speech, and emphasise on certain words.

While these mannerisms are all individual, the people are usually not aware that they do them until they see or hear themselves recorded on video or audio sources.



### 3) *Affect displays*

These are the ways in which our facial expressions or our body movements reveal our emotions.

In everyday life, people tend not to monitor or intentionally control their affect displays. Their true emotions are allowed to show.

In certain workplace situations however, staff may be required to display emotions that are contrary to their real feelings.

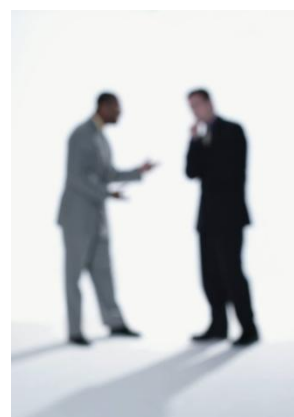
This is the case where staff are primarily in contact with customers that requires them to smile all the time and present themselves as happy and nice when they may even feel the opposite.

### 4) *Regulators*

Everyone expresses themselves using regulators.

They are behaviours such as:

- Nods
- Stance
- The direction and the duration of someone's gaze
- Vocal pitch
- Raised eyebrows
- The position of the head.



These behaviours regulate the verbal message, for instance, making it stronger or gentler, more authoritative or friendlier, casual or more formal. Just like illustrators, regulators are hardly noticed by the person speaking, but they are certainly noticed by others.

### 5) *Adaptors*

These are unconscious behaviours that are mainly nervous in nature.

People are generally unaware of making them.

Examples are:

- Doodling during meetings
- Itching your nose in a meeting
- Picking your nails in a meeting
- Scratching.

### **Importance of non-verbal communication**

Body language has a positive impact on communication when it supports the verbal message, and when it signifies genuine interest and attention.

Body language is negative when there is no match between the verbal and non-verbal messages. In other words, the spoken message and the body language should say the same thing. If they don't, the result is negative, because the two different signals are confusing.

In most instances where there is a conflict between verbal and non-verbal communication, the body language is the one that people tend to take more notice of. Actions do indeed speak louder than words.

### Reading body language

The following information can be used to help read the body language of others, and used to assist in sending the required non-verbal communication when communicating with others.

#### *Kinesics*

Kinesics is the art or science of decoding body language.

There are many aspects to be considered:

- Space. The allocation of space is important. There is a direct relation between a person's power and space. More important and powerful people have bigger offices, and people tend not to stand as close to them
- People also have a need to stake out a claim on a piece of ground so that it is their own territory, within which they have control. Attempts to invade this are commonly resisted or, at least, evoke negative or defensive behaviour. For example, staff may seek to establish their own space in and around their work station
- People also move around with an imaginary bubble of private space surrounding them. They regard this as their own personal space. Only known people or loved ones can break into this area. When others cross into this personal space, it is a negative experience causing concern
- The size of the 'bubble' depends on the nature of the context. It is different in a crowded room to what it is in a social gathering where there is no crowd, and different again to what is acceptable for a fleeting social meeting or a talk with a senior or junior colleague
- While children use touch quite instinctively as a means of communication, adults tend to steer away from it in most cases, although some individuals are very much 'touchy-feely' people
- As a general rule, touching guests has little or no place in hospitality, tourism or events. Exceptions are hand shaking, and the placement of a reassuring hand following some anxious moment or event
- Legislation regarding harassment has meant that many people restrict natural touching instincts. Certainly it is more acceptable for women to touch men socially, than it is for men to touch women.



### ***Orientation and posture***

The physical position in relation to the person we are communicating with, and the posture we adopt, all have the potential to convey signals.

Standing side by side tends to indicate compliance and a willingness to assist. Standing in front tends to indicate confrontation.

For this reason it is seen as unproductive to conduct an interview of any kind with the two parties sitting opposite each other, especially across a desk. Armchairs at ninety degrees and a low coffee table are preferred to encourage a non-threatening, non-confrontational situation.

Other examples of the impact of position and posture is the effect that a standing person has on someone who is sitting, the impression that hunched shoulders conveys, and the different impression that standing upright with, say, hands on hips gives.

Similarly, a person who talks to you while they continue walking and doesn't stop to communicate gives a certain impression that is different to a person who stops and talks.

### ***Facial expressions***

Facial expressions are the ones that humans are best able to control.

While much can be read from them, it must be remembered that they can be controlled or manipulated, and must be interpreted together with the verbal messages.

### ***Eye movement***

Eyes contribute a significant amount to total body language.

Eyes can indicate interest when regular, but intermittent, eye contact is maintained.

Very long periods of eye contact can indicate a desire for intimacy and is therefore to be avoided in a business or workplace setting.

The listener looks at the speaker far more than the speaker usually looks at the listener.

Long periods of looking away from the speaker or listener can indicate disinterest.

Looking is very tied to obtaining information and feedback. The person talking will quickly receive the 'not interested' signal where the person to whom they are talking looks away.

### ***Gestures***

Movements of the arms, legs, hands and feet all send information. They can be used to supplement information given verbally.

Examples of some body movements and their meaning or purpose include:

- Pointing - to reinforce the direction given to a customer or to indicate the location of an item
- Throwing up the hands in alarm - to reinforce emotions
- Moving the head or other body parts to stress certain things – especially to support the spoken word
- Using wide and energetic gestures - to convey a certain personality type or to express self-image
- Mirroring the stance of the other person, where two people are talking about something they share to indicate agreement or submission, and to express or reinforce person to person relationships.



**Silence**

Many people will say that 'silence is golden' but in reality it is not.

Generally speaking, most people find long periods of silence awkward and embarrassing in conversations and communication.

It may also be seen as threatening and can be misinterpreted as boredom or rejection.

However, it does have its place in genuine communication:

- When the receiver of a message keeps quiet to allow the sender to send their message
- When allowing a customer to think about information they have been given so that they can make a buying decision.

**Time**

The interpretation that a person puts on 'time' is very much an individual thing. One person may regard a 30-minute conversation as a brief matter, while others see it as a long ordeal.

Another aspect of the impression you make in valuing other people's time is the ability to turn up at a meeting when required or when you say you will. Being either early or late says something.

Again, what is regarded by some people as getting something done quickly and therefore being efficient, eager to serve, willing to please, may be seen by others as almost the opposite. They might see it as too hasty and therefore as being disinterested, detached and impersonal.



## 1.3 Use active listening and questioning to facilitate effective two-way communication with others

### Introduction

The use of questions and effective listening are keys in nearly all effective two-way communication.

An important fact is to realise that just because we talk and listen on a regular basis, we are not necessarily good at it.

### Listening

Listening is sometimes referred to as the neglected skill.

It is without doubt a much underrated skill, especially when you consider we have two ears, and only one mouth!

Because we listen so often, we assume we are good at it and do not need to spend any time worrying about how to do it, or how to improve doing it.

Fortunately, if we practise, we can improve our listening.

Effective listening:

- Encourages others to fully transmit their message by indicating our interest and concern
- Increases the likelihood that the receiver is in possession of all the relevant facts before proceeding
- Improves the quality of relationships – staff to staff, staff to customer and staff to management
- Assists in problem resolution
- Enhances the chance of a proper understanding between people
- Reduces many problems and conflicts found in the workplace
- Improves staff morale
- Raises workplace productivity.

When we listen effectively we gain the appreciation, gratitude and respect of the other person, whether a customer or staff member.

We have two listening options. One involves listening only (active listening). The other involves you giving verbal feedback that ensures the channel of communication continues clear and without conflict (reflective listening).



## Active listening

When engaged in active listening, you do not speak, but listen.

You allow your body language to encourage the speaker.

Active listening is:

- Showing sensitivity to the talker and showing all due respect
- Displaying empathy with the person speaking
- Demonstrating your attention to all the non-verbal signals you send
- Not interrupting the speaker
- Encouraging the other person to continue talking by using encouraging behaviour – nods, murmurs, short words of encouragement
- Concentrating on what is being said rather than allowing yourself to drift off and thinking of something else
- Not being judgmental about the way the speaker looks, or what they are saying.



## Reflective listening

In this variation, you still listen to the speaker, but you encourage them to continue with your words rather than non-verbally.

Reflective listening is especially useful where emotions are seen to be clouding the issue. This form of listening enables you to acknowledge the way the person is feeling.

Reflective listening requires you to:

- Paraphrase what the speaker says i.e. sum up what has been said and repeat it using similar words
- Read between the lines of what is actually being said factoring in their body language
- Utilise questioning to sum up or clarify the situation. In many situations, an effective communicator will ask lots of questions
- Continue being non-judgmental
- Refrain from making comments or interrupting
- Continue being sensitive which means taking into account the way the speaker feels, as well as what they are saying.



## Questioning

The asking of questions is a powerful tool in communication.

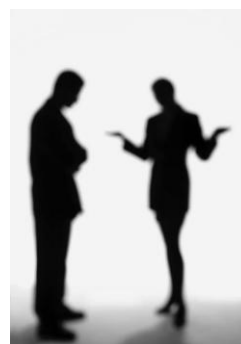
Questioning is not simply a method of eliciting information, although it naturally performs that primary role.

'Reflective questioning' is the same idea as reflective listening, in that it involves repeating back to the speaker what they have just said. In addition, as its name states, reflective questioning puts the words in the shape of a question.

It frequently begins with the word 'So ...' For example, "So, you feel really angry when you see someone walk out of the room and not turn out the light?"

This method:

- Shows the speaker that you have listened to what they have said
- Gives them feedback as to whether or not you have focused on the main points of the issue as they see them
- Encourages them to go on and provide more information
- Encourages them to clarify what they have already stated. Many people will provide extra useful information when encouraged to keep talking.



## Open and closed questions

When asking questions we can use 'closed' and 'open' questions.

Closed questions are asked in such a way as to elicit only a 'Yes' or 'No' answer. They are suitable only in rare customer-service instances because they do not encourage the speaker to talk.

A much better choice is the use of 'open' questions.

These are questions that probe the talker for more information and encourage them to supply further detail.

They are questions that begin with:

- What
- Why
- How
- Where
- When.



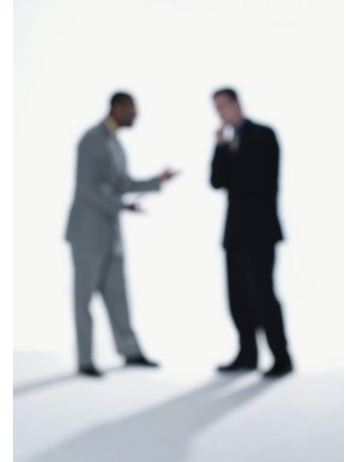
These questions dig for further information, show attention, interest, concern and a desire to assist, as well as giving another opportunity to gain facts. An open question cannot be answered with a 'Yes' or 'No'.

## Methods to aid effective listening

Effective listening requires practice, and concentration is the key.

Practice should be focused and based on the following points:

- Prepare yourself to listen. Get rid of things that may interrupt or act as blocks to communication. Get into the right frame of mind
- Become interested. Focus on what is being said and get caught up in it. Make sure you find some way to find interesting what is being said. Ask questions, look interested, ask yourself how you can use what you are being told
- Keep an open mind. Do not pre-judge the situation, do not interrupt and do not tune-out. Make sure you don't try to make what is being said fit into your pre-conceived notions, ideas and prejudices
- Identify the main idea. Listen to what is being said with the intention of extracting the core message. Realise that this may come at the start of the message, the middle or the end. There is no set rule
- Listen critically. Weigh up what is being said without simply accepting what is being transmitted
- Don't get distracted. Focus your attention on the speaker and what they are saying
- Take notes. Don't be afraid to write down vital points; it demonstrates interest and that you are taking things seriously
- Help where necessary e.g. where the speaker pauses, prompt them into continuing
- Reflect on what has been said. Restate a point the speaker has made. For example, "You said that ..."
- Keep quiet. Realise that interrupting is a major cause of communication breakdown, and often annoys the speaker.



## 1.4 Identify potential and existing conflicts and seek solutions in conjunction with all involved parties

### Introduction

Whenever a potential or existing conflict is identified, action must be taken to attempt to resolve the issue.

It is never acceptable to ignore this situation and simply hope things will resolve themselves.

Note however that you are never expected to put yourself in a position where you are in danger, or where you risk physical harm. In some conflict and complaint situations your course of action may be to notify a supervisor (or security) to deal with the situation.

### What is conflict?

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

For all employees, it is far better for them to be able to identify swiftly the potential for conflict and try to resolve the situation before things get worse.

Ignoring the warning signs and failing to act only inflames the situation.

Firstly, let's look at some situations where a conflict may arise in the hospitality workplace.

Conflict may arise with colleagues or customers.

### A colleague

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

Some reasons include:

- Pressure of work
- Lack of, or bad communication which may cause misunderstandings
- Prejudices –issues of ethnicity, gender, body shape and age
- Ineffective working systems where the internal operations of the venue cause the problem
- Difference in opinions. We are all entitled to different views
- Difference in beliefs. It would be a pretty boring world if we all believed in the same thing!
- Misunderstanding. This can be caused by barriers to communication, not listening properly, putting a different interpretation on a word or phrase than what was intended
- Team member not pulling their weight – staff not contributing 100% to a team effort.



## A customer

Once again, there may be many reasons for a conflict situation to arise with a customer.

Examples 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 who are disrespectful, rude or offensive
- Expectations not being met. The advertisements that your venue runs, coupled with word of mouth advertising, create these expectations and they may often be unrealistic
- Dissatisfaction with the accommodation or services e.g. a steak may have been tough, the room too noisy or the view not what was anticipated
- Unhygienic conditions; perhaps the room showed a lack of proper attention to detail and incorrect housekeeping practices
- Low comfort levels – an area of the property could have been too cold, too noisy or too crowded
- Rowdy and unacceptable behaviour displayed by other patrons – the gaming room may have been patronised by a noisy and boisterous group who were swearing loudly, and making suggestive comments
- A mistake with an account e.g. the guest account may have charged for items that should have been on someone else's bill
- Error in the reservation or reservation not found. The guest may have arrived late at night, after a long drive in bad weather only to find there was a problem with a booking that they had been led to believe was guaranteed and problem-free
- Special requests not being adhered to. The flowers and champagne that were ordered for 4pm were not delivered and spoiled a very special occasion.



## 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 patron that can indicate that a problem exists or is imminent.

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

The warning signs given by a workplace colleague are usually quite different to those that we may observe in a guest.

### Colleague warning signs

The workplace colleague is inclined to:

- Avoid verbal and visual contact. He or she may take their breaks in physically different areas, avoiding walking down the same corridor, asking for shifts that help avoid the chance of contact, sitting so that the other person is not in the direct line of sight



- Indulge in negative facial expressions. The person may sneer your way, roll their eyes and shake their head slowly from side to side, or purse their lips
- Make negative remarks. This can spill over into areas that are outside the initial cause of the conflict. For example, a staff member may be annoyed that you did not help do the cleaning up after a function. Their perception was that you are a slacker, you are lazy and not a team player
- The truth is that the boss told you to go home because you had been at work for twelve hours that day 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 nature), or finger and forearm gestures designed to convey a specific message.



Most establishments have bullying and harassment policies that make these sorts of actions unacceptable in the workplace. If encountered, you should seriously consider reporting them to management as they constitute workplace harassment.

## Customer warning signs

A customer or guest in the workplace may, by comparison:

- Look angry or aggressive. This is part of their non-verbal communication and an aspect that frequently is very accurate at reflecting their state of mind. When a guest looks angry or aggressive, it is likely that that is exactly how they are feeling
- Appear flustered or frustrated. The majority of our guests are in an environment that is strange to them, and it is to be expected that they are somewhat confused. We need to be able to differentiate this level of confusion from the higher level of frustration that accompanies 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
- Contorted facial expressions. Many people are unwilling to verbalise their anger or frustration, and so they 'make do' with 'pulling faces' about the situation. The point to note here is that just because someone hasn't said they are upset or annoyed, doesn't mean that they aren't!
- Glance around as if seeking assistance. Once again, this person may be unwilling to ask for help, but is giving off plenty of body language that indicates they are seeking it. It is part of our job to look for these signals and to respond appropriately
- Physically touch another guest or colleague. This can be the real signal that the guest has a problem and that conflict could ensue. Most people are reluctant to invade someone else's space, let alone touch a stranger, so this action is highly indicative that a problem exists, and help is being sought
- Become too loud. As the customer becomes more and more annoyed, their volume level rises. This is another method of attracting help 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'. The smart operator will recognise the slamming as a symptom of a bigger problem. Strive to fix the main problem rather than getting bogged down in arguing over the door

- Throwing something. This is a variation on the 'door slamming' although with the obvious potential for more damage or injury. If nothing is damaged or 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, rather than misconstrue it only as a hostile act

- Being argumentative. This is very common and stands to reason. What else can the customer do? If we are not prepared to listen to them, or to remedy a problem, there is little else left for them to do.

At all times, you should be alert to the above warning signs.

## Other possible reasons for conflict

Conflicts may also flare when:

- A colleague feels they are being treated unfairly. This may be due to their shift on the roster appearing less attractive than someone else's, not being given the opportunity to work overtime or not being selected to work on a certain function. This feeling 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 are served out of turn, if a promise has not been kept, or if they become aware that another guest has secured a better deal
- A misunderstanding between a colleague or customer. This can be a simple misunderstanding brought about by poor communication, the use of a certain word that has different connotations for both parties, unintentional slurs and statements which were spoken in jest but not received the same way.



## Seeking solutions

By identifying the risk of a possible conflict via a warning sign you will have a greater chance of stopping a conflict from escalating into an unwanted situation.

The moment you identify one of these warning signs, you should do everything in your power to stop the problem getting worse. This means you must take swift action and act in a tactful manner. Not acting is the worst thing you can do.

There is an old saying that you should 'nip it in the bud' (act now before things get worse), and it is very true.

The majority of conflicts can be overcome, or simply avoided if someone does something. The customer has to see that we are taking their problem seriously and that we are doing something about it.

Being tactful means that you have to show a sense of what is appropriate for the circumstances at the time.

It means being considerate when dealing with others, especially to their emotions and their needs. It also includes showing skill and sensitivity when dealing with people and ensuring that they know you are doing your best to help them.

## Conflict resolution techniques

When faced with a conflict situation, it is standard operating practice to apply generally and widely accepted conflict resolution techniques.

While the techniques presented here are widely recognised and used, you should be aware that your individual workplace may have a different approach. Naturally, house rules and policies must be followed where they differ from what is presented here.



Definitely finding a speedy resolution to a conflict should be your main aim. The quicker things can be resolved, the better. Remember that not only will the conflict affect the guest, but it also has the potential to rub off on to anyone else who hears or sees the conflict taking place. Conflict situations are bad PR for the establishment.

Various tools have been tried and tested and found to be useful in helping to help reach a resolution. Some of those tools include:

### Listening and discussing the conflict

When confronted with a conflict, the first thing the employee should do is listen to what the parties involved have to say.

Listening to the parties allows you to collect facts about the situation. It is very true that situations are rarely what they appear to be 'on the surface' or at first glance. The more information you have, the greater the chance that you will select the right course of action to resolve things.

By discussing specific points of a conflict a more in-depth picture may be gained and the time you spend doing this also helps send a message that you are genuine in your attempts to resolve the situation.

### Show empathy

Empathy means showing understanding and understanding another person's feelings. The employee should always try to put themselves into the other person's shoes.

Within the limits of your authority or discretionary power you should aim to 'take the customer's side'. It is useful if you can become the advocate for the customer rather than be seen as an 'enforcer' for the venue.



Being empathetic also involves verbally recognising that you realise not only the problem that has caused the conflict, but that you also appreciate the emotions and feelings that are now caught up in the whole thing.

Remember that when dealing with a complaint from a customer not to take the matter personally, and be aware that when you deal with a complaint you represent the company you work for.

## Compromise

To compromise means finding an acceptable solution that is less than the initially expected position. The steak may have been tough and cold but that's something that can't be changed.

The question is: what can we do to try to put it right?

Perhaps we can offer not to charge for it. Perhaps we can offer a free item and a verbal apology from the manager. The possibilities for compromise are endless. You just have to make sure that you don't step outside the limits of your powers.

When seeking to compromise, it is important to make sure that all parties involved accept the resolution that is finally agreed on. If we agree to do something then that should be an end to the conflict, as opposed to a partial solution.

Compromising, too, requires the parties to be flexible in their approach to the situation, and to arrive at a workable outcome.

Unfortunately, though, compromising may not always reach an outcome that is satisfactory to all concerned, but it generally brings the parties at least closer together and helps to set the groundwork for eventual resolution.



## Cooperating

When handling a conflict situation, you may decide it is best to cooperate with the parties involved.

This generally means agreeing with the parties in a positive manner and working with them to find a speedy resolution.

In most conflict situations, cooperating is an excellent technique to use because it gets the customers what it is they are after.

However, you must never agree with the parties' requests or demands if they are not in line with the establishment's policies and procedures or if they are beyond the limits of your personal jurisdiction.



## Defining the conflict

Once all parties have voiced their concerns, you should verbally summarise the conflict, defining the key points. This will ensure that you fully understand and appreciate the issues in the dispute. It further demonstrates that you have been paying attention to what has been said.

Consider using a notepad to write down key details to show the customer you are taking the matter seriously.

You should then make sure that all parties involved are in agreement with the summary you have given. It is important that you have not left out any points that the guests see as critical.

Be prepared to amend your summary to factor in any further points that are made.



## Developing solutions

Any solutions decided on with the conflicting parties will greatly depend on the guidelines set out in the workplace policies and procedures.

For example, a hotel may permit their reception staff to give away a complimentary restaurant meal to a guest who has complained. Another property may stipulate that only managers are authorised to give away complimentary restaurant meals to guests who have complained.

It is important for the employee to have the skills, ability and knowledge to find resolutions for conflicts that not only meet the needs of the conflicting parties. Adhere to all establishment policies and procedures as well as any Health and Safety regulations.

In some cases, you may choose to ask the conflicting parties what they would consider to be a satisfactory resolution to the situation. This saves you having to try to determine what they are seeking. There is always the risk that you may misinterpret their demands when you don't ask them specifically what they want. Misinterpreting demands, even when done innocently, will only serve to inflame the situation.

Wherever possible, try to accommodate the parties' suggestions, but accept that this will never happen 100% of the time.

## Personal characteristics to employ when resolving conflict

At all times when handling a conflict situation, you will need to display certain personal characteristics.

These have been found to be useful and effective when trying to negotiate a solution to a problem, and they include:

- Being assertive without being aggressive. It is up to you to lead the discussion and determine the solution
- Being constructive. It is important you realise that whatever has caused the problem is past and has gone forever. Your main concern must be in suggesting and identifying action that can remedy the current situation and enable everyone to move on
- Being well-informed. You must know all about house policies and procedures, your personal limits of authority and discretion, and all about the in-house rules and regulations and how far you can bend them before they are broken
- Acting on workplace policies and procedures. Like it or not, there will be certain boundaries that you must not cross. Where you believe these boundaries should be crossed, you should involve a more senior person who has the power to do so
- Exercising patience. You must realise that no conflict can be solved instantaneously. 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 that 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, but you should bear in mind that what they are saying is not personal, even though it may sound and feel like it! When dealing with the paying public, being 'dumped on' goes with the territory. You can't change that, it's just the way it is. Accept the abuse and criticism as a part of the resolution process, and get on with finding the solution. Don't let it cause further conflict.

- Understanding the total picture. Try to see things from the other person's perspective. Take into account their feelings as well as considering what has happened to them
- Compromising – be prepared to negotiate a way out of the conflict
- Being consistent. When dealing with guests it is vitally important to be consistent. Failing to be consistent sends a message that certain guests are rated differently. That is likely to spark a whole new rash of conflict situations!



## 1.5 Complete routine workplace documentation accurately in a timely manner

### Introduction

Each position will have its own specific tasks which will have its own specific documentation for completion. This Section will explore:

- Different types of generic written communication that is used in a hospitality or tourism organisation
- Examples of specific documentation that may be produced for key job roles in the hospitality and tourism industry.

### Purpose of written documentation

Regardless of the type of written document you are producing, the objective remains quite similar.

A document with a clear purpose has all the information the reader needs without being long or containing too many words.

When identifying your purpose, determine first:

- Key messages you want to give your reader
- Action you want your reader to make in response to your written communication.



### Types of written documentation

Different types of generic written communication that are used in a hospitality or tourism organisation include:

- Letters
- Memos
- Faxes
- Emails.

They are used to communicate with others to:

- Provide information in a clear and concise manner
- Inform work team members of a change in policies or procedures
- Reply to a booking inquiry or guest complaint
- Record decisions made at a meeting.

## Letters

In your working day, you will need to write many different kinds of letters. The layout of any letter should be clear and have all the information set out in an easy to read manner.

Letters are often used to communicate to individuals outside an organisation. Common business letters include:

- **Covering letter**  
The covering letter briefly describes what is being sent (e.g. brochure) and the purpose of sending it
- **Letter of inquiry**  
Asks for information
- **Information letter**  
Written in response to a letter of inquiry (e.g. the letter confirms details of a guest booking).

### *Parts of the letter*

Most business letters have a standard structure.

Please look at the sample letter on the next page, with a guide for the standard parts of a letter.

If your organisation has a specific style for business letters, follow that format. Otherwise, business letters are commonly formatted full-block, with every line starting at the left margin and usually a business letterhead at the top of the page and one or two blank lines between each part of the letter.



**SAMPLE LETTER**

Luxury Hotel  
PO Box 2345  
Jakarta, 10002  
Indonesia

4 January, 2012

Mr X  
24 Sunrise Road  
Jakarta, 10002  
Indonesia

Dear Mr X,

Congratulations on your recent engagement. We are delighted that you are considering Luxury Hotel as a possible venue for your Wedding Reception. Here at the Luxury Hotel, we pride ourselves on our catering facilities and the entire team of staff are excited at the prospect of helping you with your big day.

Please find attached our Wedding Package, detailing menus and inclusions. We appreciate the multitude of tasks involved with organising your wedding, and so we are only too happy to help with suggestions for flowers, cars, photography, cake etc.

Included with our compliments will be your Bridal Suite, complete with spectacular City Views, a Champagne breakfast and late check-out.

If we can be of any further assistance, or should you wish to view our Reception facilities, please do not hesitate to contact us on 9922 2211.

We look forward to welcoming you to the Luxury Hotel, and to working with you to make your Wedding Reception truly memorable.

Kind Regards

Nick Hyland  
Banquet Manager

## Memos

A memorandum or memo is used to send a brief message to a large number of people within the organisation.

### *Format of memos*

If your organisation has a specific style for memos, follow that format. Otherwise, memos are commonly formatted with the **Date**, **To**, **From** and **Subject** (usually last) headings appearing on the left-hand side of the memo with a blank line between each section.

Please refer to the sample memos that appear on the next two pages.

## SAMPLE MEMO #1

### Memorandum

To: All Department Managers  
From: Nick Hyland, General Manager  
Date: 4 January 2012  
Subject: Recycling Program

Please be advised that our recycling program, implemented in 2010, is being significantly expanded:

- Two full-time employees have been hired to concentrate on recycling with mixed paper now being picked up from guest rooms
- The number of recycling containers and locations has been increased so that their locations are convenient for all employees.

We expect the cost of waste disposal to decrease by about 20% so all managers are required to stress the importance of recycling in the daily operational meetings. This message should be reinforced with the latest cost savings.

**SAMPLE MEMO #2**

Organise your information in letters, memos, and other documents. This is particularly important for documents such as timetables and instructions where it is essential that readers receive information in the right order.

**Memorandum**

DATE:	4 January 2012
TO:	Finance Director
FROM:	Mr Peters
SUBJECT:	Travel reimbursement

Mr Peters requests reimbursement of expenses associated with attendance of a recent business meeting.

Listed below is a breakdown of expenses (attach receipts).

	<b>ITEM</b>	<b>US Dollars (\$)</b>
A	Airfare	1,000
B	Taxi fares	150
C	Hotel	2,000
D	Meals	500
E	Miscellaneous (other)	100
<b>Total Reimbursement Requested</b>		<b>3,750</b>

Should you require any further clarifications, please feel free to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Mr Peters

## Faxes

A coversheet has details so that the recipient knows what the fax is about.

Some businesses have pre-printed fax coversheets. You can write the details in by hand.

The easiest way is to use a fax template. You can type in the details on the computer.

If no fax coversheet or no template is available, you might need to produce one.

The next section tells you about the parts of the fax in a fax template, or in a fax coversheet that you make.



### Parts of the fax

You send the coversheet as the first page. A coversheet has information about what is inside. A coversheet has details about the communication. These details are the same for emails, memos, and faxes.

### Sample fax coversheet

<b>Fax</b>	<b>BIG HOTEL</b>
<b>To:</b> Mr Rodgers	<b>Date:</b> 4 January 2012
	<b>From:</b> Reservations
<b>Fax:</b> 03 822 3489	<b>Fax:</b> 01 241 2632
<b>Phone:</b> 03 852 1272	<b>Phone:</b> 01 241 2633
<b>Re:</b> Room reservation	<b>Pages</b> (including coversheet): 2
<p>Dear Mr Rodgers</p> <p>Attached please find the details of your room reservation from 1-5 February 2012.</p> <p>Please contact me if you have any questions or if I can help you with anything else.</p> <p>Sincerely</p> <p>Reservations Department</p> <p>Big Hotel</p>	

You can make a fax coversheet like this one, if you want to. Here is how to fill in the details:

- Put the name of the recipient in **To**
- Put the recipient's **fax** number and **phone** number below their name. You will need to have the fax number so that you can send the fax
- Note that '**Re**' is short for 'regarding'. It is the subject of the message
- Put your name in **from**
- Put your **fax** number and **phone** number below your name. This is useful if the recipient wants to talk to you
- Put the date in the space for the **date**. (The sender's fax number and the date and time are usually printed by the recipient's fax machine on each page, but it is also a good idea to put this information in the details)
- Put the number of **pages**. The recipient can count the number of pages in their fax and make sure that they got all the pages
- Type or write a message to the recipient on the coversheet.

## Emails

Emails are electronic. Letters often use paper. Compared to letters, emails are:

- Faster – almost immediate delivery
- Cheaper – no postage costs
- Tree-saving – you do not have to print out every email
- Easier to sort and file – you can sort emails electronically and the computer does the work for you.



In the days before email, memos were printed and sent to staff. Now, you can send memos by computer, so memos and emails are almost the same thing.

Emails can be made in different programs (MS Outlook and MS Outlook Express). But the parts of an email are usually the same. And the actions (reply, save, delete, add attachments) that you can do are usually the same, too.

Some email programs have features (font type, font size, text alignment, bullets, underline, bold, adds pictures and more) that are the same as the programs for writing letters. You can make emails look as good as letters.

To produce an email, you first need to open the email program and then get a New Message on the computer screen.

You should have the necessary information and communication technology skills to open email programs.

### **Parts of the email**

To fill in the **To:** box, first, you need the person's address. For other staff members, usually this is easy to find. For guests:

- Use the property's database. Guest information often includes their email address
- Look in the email address book as there might be previous email communication with that guest
- **CC** (now) means 'courtesy copy'. Put in the email addresses for the people whom you want to tell, just for their information. You do not have to fill in this space.

The **Subject** should tell you what the email is about. Put words such as 'Confirmation of booking Oasis Hotel', 'Blue Water Restaurant closed tonight', or 'John's farewell party'. Do not put words such as 'Hello', 'Important', or 'Read this' because they do not give any information.

For a formal greeting, you can use 'Dear', the same as for letters. For an informal greeting, you can use 'Hi'.

Follow your property's policy and procedure on emails. If there is not a policy and procedure especially for emails, you can follow the rules below. You should follow email rules because:

- It makes your work professional
- It makes your messages efficient
- It protects your property from misunderstandings, lawsuits, and angry customers.

Another name for these rules is 'etiquette'. Here are some rules, or email etiquette, that you should use when you write the information:

- Keep the email short
- Do not write long sentences
- Do not use abbreviations. These can cause confusion or the recipient might not understand them. Some people use abbreviations such as FYI (for your information), BTW (by the way) and B4 (before) to make emails short, but it is better to write words in full
- Talk about only one subject in the email. If you need to talk about many things, write many emails
- Check your punctuation. Make sure that periods, commas, capital letters are all correct
- Do not write in ALL CAPITAL LETTERS because it is like SHOUTING
- Do not use fancy fonts, because the recipient might not be able to see them on their computer. Use standard fonts like Arial or Times New Roman
- If you use colour in your writing, make sure it is easy to read
- Use plain text, and not HTML, if you are not sure about the recipient's computer
- Do not send big attachments. They can make the recipient's email box full
- Compress large files, or send smaller size files if you think this will be useful

- Before you send the email, read it to find mistakes and do a spell check. Make sure that the message means what you want it to mean, and that there can be no misunderstanding
- In the same way that letters can have enclosures, emails can have attachments. You can send (as separate electronic files) pictures, brochures, itineraries and text documents. **Attach** any necessary files
- At the end of the information, you can write 'Regards' or 'Thanks'
- Finally, put your name. Write your full name and position for 'business to customer' emails. For internal emails, this may not be necessary.



## Types of job specific documentation

As previously mentioned, there are many generic types of written communication that can be used in any position, within any organisation. The following are examples of specific documentation that would be completed for F&B and Front Office departments within a hospitality organisation. They only provide a brief example and are not for specific roles, as there are many roles within each department.

These documents are commonly prepared using the previously mentioned types of documents.

### Food and Beverage

- Reservations – including booking information, special requests, receipts and confirmation to customers
- Menus – including specials of the day, menus for specific groups, drink lists and menus in different languages
- Banquets – menus, schedule of events, invitations, enquiry letters, invoices, name cards
- Conferences – schedule of events, enquiry letters, confirmation letters, secretarial services
- Financial documents – daily checklists, sales sheets, register docketts, reconciliation sheets, breakage sheets, 'comp' (complimentary) sheets, forecasts and budgets.



### Front Office

- Activity Sheets – arrivals and departure sheets and VIP Lists
- Registration Cards – for completion and signature by customers
- Guest Accounts
- Customer Surveys and complaint forms
- Currency exchange documents
- Payment forms, vouchers, letters and receipts.



## 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 To fulfil the requirements of this Work Project you are asked to submit a video of you communicating effectively that provides evidence you can:
    - Relay information in a clear and concise manner using appropriate communication techniques
    - Use language and tone appropriate to a particular audience, purpose and situation
    - Use active listening and questioning to facilitate two-way communication
    - Complete routine workplace documentation.
  - 1.2. To fulfil the requirements of this Work Project you are asked to submit evidence of three conflicts you have handled in a successful manner including:
    - A description of the conflict
    - Possible solutions
    - Involvement of others including customers, staff or management
    - Solution reached.
  - 1.3. To fulfil the requirements of this Work Project you are asked to submit a written communication (such as an email, memo, report or letter) between yourself and either a colleague or customer informing them about a particular issue (you decide the issue that will be the focus of this Work Project). The submission needs to provide evidence you can:
    - Take into account the audience you are writing to when preparing the written communication
    - Follow standard and establishment protocols for the type of communication you elect to write.
-

## Summary

### Communicate effectively

#### **Relay information in a clear and concise manner using appropriate communication techniques**

- Identify who you may communicate with
- Understand different types of communication.

#### **Use language and tone appropriate to a particular audience, purpose and situation, taking into account the relevant factors involved**

- Identify the difference between an internal and external customer
- Understand the need for effective communication
- Use verbal communication skills
- Identify what we communicate
- Use non-verbal communication.

#### **Use active listening and questioning to facilitate effective two-way communication with others**

- Appreciate importance of listening including active and reflective listening
- Establishing questioning techniques including open and closed questions
- Understand importance of effective listening.

#### **Identify potential and existing conflicts and seek solutions in conjunction with all involved parties**

- Identify types of conflict
- Identify warning signs
- Implement conflict resolution techniques.

#### **Complete routine workplace documentation accurately in a timely manner**

- Identify purpose of written conflict
- Utilise types of written communication
- Utilise types of job specific documentation.



# Element 2: Establish and maintain effective relationships with colleagues and customers

## 2.1 Meet both internal customers' and external customers' needs and expectations in accordance with organisation standards, policies and procedures and within acceptable time frames

### Introduction

As a staff member, it is your role to fulfil the needs of all stakeholders of the business. This includes both the 'internal' and 'external' customer.

An 'internal' customer is anyone who is associated with the provision of services to customers. In summary this includes:

- Management and staff of the organisation
- Suppliers and contractors who provide services to your organisation.



An 'external' customer is anyone who receives the products and services provided by the organisation. In summary this includes:

- Customers who enjoy the 'offerings' at the venue – restaurants, functions, accommodation and bars
- Customers who enjoy the 'offerings' that are supplied to them, at a location not at the venue. This is common where a hotel provides catering at the customer's location, or where a tour is conducted in multiple locations.



Regardless of the type of customer, it is vital that all staff provide suitable service and assistance to all its customers.

In order to provide service to customers it is necessary to identify their needs and expectations. It is always dangerous to assume we know what these needs and expectations are because we might get it wrong.

Sometimes customers will tell us what their needs and expectations are, and in other cases we will have to ask questions.

## Servicing customer needs

As service industries we must do all that we can to meet the needs of our customers.

It is necessary to state, though, that these needs and requests must be of a 'reasonable' nature. You are not expected to:

- Break the law
- Humiliate or demean yourself
- Meet any requests that involve you in doing anything that is unsafe or dangerous.

Where you are asked to perform anything that you consider dubious, you should excuse yourself, and immediately contact management.

Fortunately, most requests from guests are perfectly acceptable and well within our ability to satisfy.

While it is essential to treat all customers as individuals, every customer defines 'service' differently. It is up to you to determine the individual definition of what follows, and provide it.

The following notes will indicate how to service customers, both with and without special needs. However, some general techniques apply.

There is no doubt that when dealing with customers who have needs you need:

- A genuine service ethic
- Patience
- Excellent communication skills, especially non-verbal skills
- A sense of humour
- The ongoing need to be polite and courteous
- Warmth and empathy
- To know when to back off and allow people to help themselves. By all means make the offer, but accept that not all people need your help. Don't let this 'rejection' affect your offer the next time
- To be yourself – don't try to be someone else when dealing with those who have needs
- To know your own personal limitations and realise when to:
  - Involve another staff member
  - Obtain an interpreter
  - Refer them to somewhere, or someone, else
  - Redirect them to another section, department or area within the store
- Consistency. Make an offer to all people with needs so that they are able to rely on your willingness to help whenever they call in
- To research what in-house support exists, or can be obtained, to help you serve these people.



## Internal customer needs



As mentioned, 'internal' customers are those associated with the provision of products and services to the 'external' customer, and hence their communal aim is ensuring they have the necessary resources to be able to complete their job roles and responsibilities in a professional manner.

Communication amongst internal customers is extremely important. Teamwork and understanding of each other's needs is vital. The saying 'a team is only as strong as its weakest link' is very true. An external customer does not see all the staff involved in the provision of products and services. They only see the end result. Therefore if a problem exists, it does not matter who is to blame, a problem still exists.

Whilst each 'internal customer' has their own needs that relate specifically to their job role, there are a number of common needs which must be recognised by all staff.

These needs include:

- Knowledge – understand and perform their job role, product knowledge, menu knowledge, external customer preferences, upcoming events, policies and procedures and schedule of events for particular shifts
- Skills – the ability to practically perform selected tasks including making beds, cooking meals and checking in guests
- Training – both practical and theoretical training to ensure staff skills sets are appropriate to provide quality customer service
- Equipment – this can include mechanical equipment (computers, ovens, blenders) and associated tools of the trade (plates, glassware, pens, cleaning cloths)
- Time – staff need adequate time to perform their tasks in the correct manner
- Appropriate allocation of work – appropriate allocation of customers per staff member to be able to deliver quality service. Management must ensure adequate levels of staff are on duty to perform the necessary
- Support – staff must receive support and guidance from management
- Fairness – equality in areas of pay, work rate, scheduling of activities.



## Identifying internal customer needs

Identification of internal customer needs normally is reflected in the requirements of their job responsibilities. However, at times these may change. The best method of identifying internal customer needs is through constant communication:

- In meetings, whether at a departmental or senior management level
- In staff briefings at the start of a shift
- During a shift as needs arise
- In staff debriefings at the end of a shift
- Through comments in handover documents between shifts
- Through emails, memos and telephone calls.

## External customer needs

### Generic customer needs

Whilst every customer to the organisation has their own individual needs, there are a number of generic needs that staff must address when providing quality customer service.

These needs include:

- Value for money
- 'Offering' reflecting what was advertised
- Expectations met or exceeded
- To feel respected which is why we use "Sir" and "Madam"
- To feel welcomed which is why we give all our customers a warm, genuine and sincere smile and welcome. We really are pleased to see them
- To be served by friendly staff which is again why we smile and why we spend that extra few seconds with them, talking about how their day went and so on
- To be dealt with in a prompt and courteous manner which is why we don't keep them waiting at reception, the bar, for room service, meals etc.
- To receive assistance when necessary which is why we have excellent product and local knowledge and why we look for opportunities to pass this on to them whenever we can, even without their having to ask
- To be in comfortable, clean surroundings which is why we make sure the facilities, rooms, grounds and equipment are spotless
- To feel remembered and recognised which is why we use the customer's name as often as we can
- To be heard and understood which is why we listen to complaints and adopt the role of their advocate whenever there is a complaint, problem or dispute. We want to fix their problems, not create new ones.

Customers have perceived expectations of what level of service they expect when visiting a venue arising from:

- Past visits
- Advertisements and promotional messages
- Competing hotels
- Industry standards
- Comments from family, friends and colleagues
- Price charged for the offering.



## Specific target market needs

A hospitality and tourism business will have customers from a number of different target markets, each with their own specific needs. It is important that staff recognise the needs of each target market and tailor their service accordingly.

The following are different target markets and their specific needs:

- Business – computer and internet access, newspapers, executive lounges, laundry services, business or executive centre, business and news channels. Businessmen are more likely to frequent a hotel bar and eat in the restaurant
- Women – hairdryers, larger mirrors, healthier food options, specific bathroom amenities, fashion magazines, bath. Businesswomen are more likely to use the gym and eat room service
- Family – interconnecting rooms, costs, entertainment options, child care facilities, children's television programs, package deals and safety
- Leisure – cheaper rates, local attractions, concierge services
- Elderly – single beds, medical facilities, suitable food options and cheaper rates
- Groups – need for large allocation of rooms, cheap rates, meeting rooms, specialised menus, bus access and parking.

## Identifying external customer needs

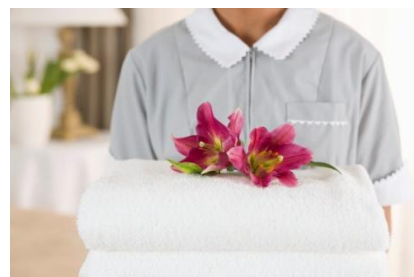
Identifying needs of the external customer are varied and are not the same for everyone. In fact, the needs for the same customer may change on a daily basis. It is important staff remain aware of the satisfaction of customers and look for ways to improve the experience for all customers.

In reality, most customer needs are quite simple and easy to accommodate. It may relate to needing more pillows or towels, steak cooked a certain way, accommodation with a specific view or need for wake up calls or taxis. Quite often customers will let you know of their needs through the use of direct questions.

However, some customers will not let you know if their needs are unmet and will leave a venue disappointed with little or no prospect of a return visit.

Staff must be pro-active and try to anticipate the needs of guests where possible. This can be achieved through:

- Observation. Quite often the body language of a customer will indicate their true feelings. They could be looking around for staff to serve them, angry or frustrated, or simply disappointed in what has been provided
- Asking questions. Offer recommendations or find out if they want things done a certain way
- Putting yourself in the shoes of the customer. Ask yourself 'What would I like if I was in their position?' If guests have arrived from a long flight and look tired, a speedy check in service is vital. You may also want to arrange room service dinner for them whilst they are checking in so they can eat quickly and go to bed sooner.



## Special needs customers

As mentioned, all external customers will have their own individual needs that a venue must try to meet as a minimum, and exceed as standard protocol.

There are some customers with special needs that a venue must accommodate.

Customers who come to us with special needs may be categorised as:

- Disabled
- Unable to speak English
- Having other special needs. These needs can be 'here today and gone tomorrow' needs.

We must make every effort to respond to those with special needs with the same professionalism as we respond to requests made by other customers.

Preparation and knowing what the venue can offer are the keys to dealing with customers with special needs.

We will normally identify people with special needs by sight, or through listening to them. Where we are unsure about what specific needs they have we should use questions to identify what their needs are.

### Disabled customers

In general terms the same approach that is taken with other customers should apply to customers with a disability:

- Don't ignore them. Ensure you interact with disabled people in the same way as other customers
- Greet them warmly and in a genuine and friendly manner. Don't reserve your welcomes just for those without a disability
- Make an offer of assistance in relation to what you can offer or do for them. Recognise that disabled people aren't stupid, they are disabled. Shouting won't make you better understood. Disabled people have similar needs for information as do those who are not disabled
- Don't assume you know what they want. Let them finish sentences and don't prejudge a disabled person's wants from their disability
- Ask questions and listen to the responses. Adopt the same professional manner and strategies as usual
- Talk to the disabled person initially and then to their support person if there are difficulties. Never ignore the presence of the disabled person and never give the impression they aren't there or are an irrelevancy
- Make an offer of physical assistance where the person is physically disabled. Realise that most people treasure their independence. Consider sitting when talking with someone in a wheelchair so that communication levels are equal and you are not adopting a superior position



- Where people with a disability are regular customers, encourage their patronage. Contact their association to discover if there are any specific steps or actions you can take to facilitate their experience with you.

### **Customers who are unable to speak local language**

Customers of the hospitality and tourism industry traditionally come from all corners of the globe, so it is common practice to have many customers on a daily basis who do not understand the local language.

When faced with a language barrier, staff should attempt to communicate through the use of gestures, signs or simple words.

While this is obviously not a perfect situation, it does at least show your desire to communicate.

Gestures are preferable to saying nothing and risking the customer feeling ignored.

Attempts at gestures may include:

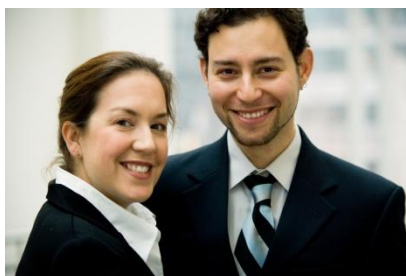
- Pointing to indicate a location
- Holding fingers up to establish quantities
- Rubbing your hands to indicate temperature
- Nodding your head in agreement
- Shaking your head in disagreement
- Using facial expressions to relay your feelings
- Removing adjectives (descriptive words) from your speech
- Slowing your speech down and speaking clearly and concisely
- Avoiding using local idiom or slang.



Where possible documents should be printed in a variety of languages to enable customers to understand information relating to the property and the surrounding region. The printing of a selection of documentation in various languages should include, but not be limited to:

- Information compendium
- Emergency procedures
- Menus.

Most businesses now employ staff who are multilingual. This enables staff to be able to answer direct questions from customers and be able to provide tailored information to meet their specific needs.



## Finding assistance

When dealing with people from different countries or cultures, it may be necessary to seek assistance.

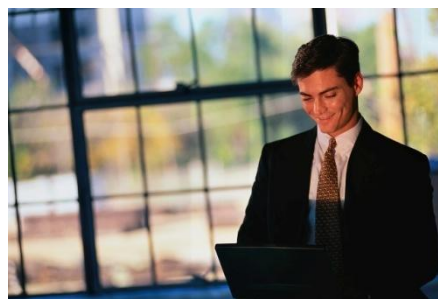
The type of assistance or information required can vary a great deal.

Call on the experience of other staff members if you get stuck.

## Other sources

Written information on cultures and their differences may be also found through:

- The Internet – type key words in the search engine
- Media – cultural newspapers, radio stations and magazines
- Local cultural centres
- Local library – books, tapes and videos
- Language centres
- Industry groups or organisations
- Purchased or borrowed books.
- Colleagues
- Teachers – in-house industry trainers
- Family and friends
- Regular customers.



## Convey a willingness to assist

Being proactive is the best way to convey willingness, both verbally and non-verbally, to assist any customers you believe have special requirements.

Verify your perception about their requirements by approaching them and asking them if you can help them.

Don't wait for them to come and ask you.

Waiting for them to do so only increases their anxiety and makes their situation worse.

The important ingredient is 'equality'. This means treating everyone equally, but treating those who need it more equally than others.

Being proactive to people with these special needs can easily become your Unique Selling Point (USP). Word will spread quite quickly and can result in a very profitable surge in sales from this group of special needs people.

A willingness to be of service to these people may also be conveyed by placing an appropriate sign somewhere in the property including reception, in-room compendiums and posters.

This may advertise or indicate:

- The venue is a supporter of a certain group, club or organisation
- The property welcomes people from XYZ
- Staff speak XYZ languages
- The business is 'wheelchair friendly'
- 'Our staff have kids too!'
- 'Senior Citizen's card accepted here'.

These signs can be duplicated in other media advertisements, in any flyers the venue does, and on any accounts or newsletters printed or distributed.

## Overseas visitors

With the ever-increasing number of overseas travellers to Asia, it is important that we know a little about the people who are likely to be our customers.

The following information illustrates differences between cultures and nationalities. Take note of these so that you might learn how to better serve your patrons, to cater to their special needs and expectations, and to deliver the products, services and information they want.

### American

- Initial contact via a firm handshake and direct eye contact is acceptable. Men usually wait for women to offer their hands rather than initiating the handshake
- Realise that when an American gives you a detailed food or drink order (even down to what sort of bread they want for their toast, and how they want it done), this is what they do at home. They aren't trying to be difficult, obsessive or irritating
- Take some time to show an interest in the very fact that they are American and maintain eye contact during conversations
- They find silence in conversations uncomfortable
- Make an effort to explain things to Americans. By their nature they are used to asking questions before making a buying decision and expect respectful, intelligent and helpful answers
- Americans at home are used to being supplied with a bottomless glass of iced water at table. Ensure this is supplied where you work.



## German

- The initial handshake is usually a brief encounter with only one or two shakes, rather than an extended affair
- Provide quick, efficient, no-frills service
- Germans will interpret a sloppy personal appearance and presentation as potential incompetence
- When speaking with them remain polite and treat them respectfully using 'Sir' and 'Madam' to indicate your recognition of their position
- Do not be offended by what you may see as abrupt treatment and speech. There is no hidden meaning behind it other than an attempt to obtain what they want
- They expect as a matter of course to be served quickly and may become annoyed at having to wait, especially where no reason for the delay in service is provided
- An upright thumb, means 'one', and rapping of the knuckles by guests at table is a way of saying hello to the others there
- Refrain from attempting to entertain them as there is always the risk that your humour will either not be appreciated or will be misunderstood. Leave the entertaining up to professional entertainers
- Attempt to give Germans accurate and decisive information, rather than vague generalities
- Realise that the direct method of communication is the accepted way of Germans and that there may be little regard for what we may consider to be the niceties of general conversation. They may not use 'Please' and 'Thank you' to the same extent that we do but this is not to be misinterpreted as ill-mannered or uncivil action, but rather a representation of the fact that different people are, simply, different.



## Jewish

- There are variations on the degree to which individual Jews adhere to the principles and requirements of their faith. Do not expect all Jews to act in the same way
- Their traditional religious day (the Sabbath) is Saturday. Many Jews will refrain from much activity on this day including driving a car, and using electrical appliances
- Catering may be required to be done by a Rabbi and there may be special requirements regarding cooking areas, equipment and cutlery
- Pork is unacceptable and meat, including chicken, must be specially slaughtered and prepared – see below
- Fruit and vegetables are acceptable, but the modern hybrid types are shunned
- Traditional Jews will drink Kosher wine, which is usually presented unopened to allow the guests to open it themselves
- There is an expectation that guests will be able to wash their hands under running water
- Jews may bless their food prior to consumption and so may not thank service staff in the same way that others might
- Fish meat should only come from fish with scales and fins.

### ***Kosher food***

Jewish customers may wish to eat 'kosher' food – meaning food that is deemed by them to be 'proper' according to Biblical beliefs and laws.

A full understanding of kosher food is complex and the following notes are designed to provide an overview rather than a detailed study.

Kosher meat may only be sourced from certain allowed animals such as ruminants with split hooves, domestic birds (such as chicken and turkey) and fish with fins and removable scales.

All ruminants must be slaughtered by special slaughtermen according to Jewish law, and during food preparation, other special considerations must be observed such as ensuring that milk and meat are not mixed together.

Special requirements also apply to the equipment used (that is, making it kosher), including special cleaning techniques and resting periods between usage.

A limited number of establishments have addressed the needs of those seeking kosher food and provide all necessary prerequisites, supervision and requirements. They advertise their ability and capacity to provide these services and a web search will readily identify them.

### **What timeframes apply?**

When dealing face to face with a customer the standard timeframe for meeting requests from customers and colleagues is 'as soon as possible'. This generally translates into 'immediately' wherever this is practicable.

In other situations, such as dealing with requests that arrive on the internet, fax, by post or as a result of a telephone request for information the timeline options include:

- As soon as possible/immediately
- Before the end of your shift
- Within 24 hours.

There may be other service requirements for colleagues that have longer timeframes.

For example the preparation of reports, the provision of trading figures, or the ordering of stock may have to be completed:

- Same day
- By the end of the week, month or designated trading period
- On a nominated day or at a nominated time.

## 2.2 Assist to resolve workplace conflict and manage difficulties to achieve positive outcomes

### Introduction

Regardless of how smooth the operations of a hospitality enterprise runs, with endless interactions and actions taking place on any given day, at times things may not go to plan and conflicts arise. With everyone having their own expectations and opinions about what quality customer service involves, there will be instances where disputes will take place.

Workplace conflict can be defined as any conflict that takes place in a workplace. This could be between:

- Staff at all levels of an organisation including line staff, supervisors and managers.
- Staff and suppliers
- Staff and customers
- One customer and another customer.



It is the role of staff to be able to identify where conflict exists and find a suitable solution as soon as possible, with an outcome that, hopefully, meets the expectations of all parties concerned.

In essence, a conflict normally will exist where a person feels:

- An expected product or service is not as expected
- Their opinion, advice, customs or beliefs are more appropriate than that of another person
- They were not treated in a fair, helpful or polite manner.

In Section 2.4, a standard approach to handle workplace conflict is identified. However there are some issues to keep in mind when trying to resolve workplace conflict:

- Consider every conflict as important. Whilst the conflict may seem small or irrelevant to you, it obviously is not treated as such by the parties involved
- Try to handle the conflict as soon as possible. Don't expect it to go away by itself
- If you are unable or do not have the authority to handle the conflict, refer the matter to the most appropriate person as soon as possible
- Every conflict has a solution. Try to approach the experience in a positive manner
- Try to look at the situation in a factual manner. Whilst it is important to acknowledge that the situation contains emotion, try to take the emotion out of it when trying to find a solution
- Be flexible in your approach to reach a suitable solution
- Involve both parties when trying to reach a suitable solution. What you consider to be a suitable solution may not appear that way to the parties involved. If they are able to reach a mutually agreed solution, that will be accepted
- Be diplomatic and sensitive. Keep the details of the conflict confidential, and those who are required to be involved in finding the solution to a minimum.

## 2.3 Use formal feedback and informal feedback to identify and implement improvements to products, services, processes or outcomes for both internal customers and external customers

### Introduction

Every complaint or conflict identifies a flaw in some aspect of an organisation's operations and delivery of service.

Whilst handling conflict is often stressful and difficult on all parties concerned, it is a great opportunity to address an issue which may lead to improved service to customers.

As the saying goes 'every cloud has a silver lining'; each complaint or conflict can lead to a positive outcome for all.

### Importance of feedback

It should be imperative that any business, regardless of what it does or provides, actively collects feedback from all stakeholders of an organisation.

Any comments, whether positive or negative, help direct the operation towards greater success. The saying 'a rolling stone gathers no moss' is a great way to identify the need for gathering feedback. A business and its operations will always be a 'work in progress' and must always find ways to not only keep up with the demands of its customers, but to have a competitive advantage over the competition.

When handling complaints or conflict, a large amount of comments, opinions, suggestions and information will be presented. This is called feedback.

In most cases feedback will come without prompting. The parties involved are happy to get their point across. Whilst feedback will contain both relevant and irrelevant information, it is a valuable source of identifying current thoughts about a particular issue.

This feedback can become the template towards change for the better if handled correctly.

At times, however more feedback is required to get an 'all round' understanding of an issue.

In this Section we will explore the importance of feedback.

### Types of feedback

Feedback can either be defined as positive or negative.

Positive feedback is information confirming that a particular action has been received in a complimentary manner. It reinforces that the current actions or operations are acceptable and should be continued. Suggestions or recommendations for improvement are also considered positive feedback.

Positive feedback validates what customers identify as successful and should be continued.

Negative feedback relates to comments about a poor or inadequate action, comment or performance. It explains what is 'bad' or what was done incorrectly.

In essence, all feedback can be deemed as positive, as it provides an opportunity for improvement.

## Collecting feedback

Collecting feedback should be an ongoing activity of all organisations and can be obtained using a combination of formal and informal avenues.

### Formal feedback

This approach is used when established avenues have been established to collect information.

These approaches include:

- Customer comment cards. These are established documents aimed at getting responses to a wide range of questions covering all facets of an operation
- General Manager cocktail parties. This approach involves selected guests enjoying refreshments with senior management. It is common for management to ask questions about their stay and suggestions for improvement. This approach is also beneficial in finding out more about the customer, which can be used to provide more personalised service
- Interviews and follow up calls. At times management may contact customers to find out about their experiences or visits
- Meetings. Staff meetings are held on a regular basis and normally will explore the performance of operations. At these meetings, comment cards from customers are discussed with strategies for improvement implemented
- Performance reviews. This approach is used by management when providing feedback to staff regarding their performance. During these reviews, management will also ask staff for their suggestions or recommendations for improvement. At times, causes of poor staff performance will identify faults in the operation (lack of training, understaffing, limited or faulty equipment) which can be improved.



### Informal feedback

This approach is a very effective way to get feedback. This information may come in the form of 'gossip' or 'through the grapevine', however is the provider of the largest amount of feedback.

Informal feedback involves collecting information and feedback outside the above mentioned formal avenues. This includes:

- General discussion with fellow staff and customers. By interacting with people, you can get a good feel of what they are thinking
- Observations. This is a great form of feedback. Staff need to be encouraged to observe the actions and reactions of customers and fellow staff. Most people are often uneasy about truthfully giving negative feedback, so this approach is useful in getting an accurate reading of what people are thinking in different situations.

## 2.4 Handle complaints positively, sensitively and politely in consultation with the person/s making the complaint

### Introduction

Complaints are a common part of any organisation. Every day complaints will be made by any stakeholder in the organisation. This includes staff, management, customers, owners, suppliers and the general public.

Complaints can come in an array of circumstances and be based on endless situations. Regardless of the situation there is a standard approach which can be applied to help resolve the complaint.

### Dissatisfaction

Usually, before someone makes a complaint, they give outward signs of their dissatisfaction.

It is essential to pick up on these signs before an unnecessary incident occurs.

Some signs of dissatisfaction include negative changes in:

- Body language
- Voice
- Actions.



### Taking action to resolve the situation

The following are keys to successfully resolving customer dissatisfaction:

- Listening to the issue and making sure you have a full understanding of what is the cause of the problem. You have to make sure you are treating the root cause and not a symptom
- Offering a solution which includes encouraging the customer to identify what will solve the issue
- Agreeing on a solution ensuring that once the agreed solution is implemented, the issue that gave rise to the dissatisfaction will be finished
- Taking action – implementing the agreed solution. This should be done as soon as possible and must be exactly in accordance with the agreement that has been reached
- Checking with the customer to verify that the solution has successfully addressed their dissatisfaction and that the agreed solution has, in fact, been implemented
- Changing any necessary standard operating procedures to help reduce the likelihood that a similar problem will occur again with a different customer.

This process will be explained in more detail later in this Section.

## Scope of authority

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

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

The scope of authority may relate to:

- Their ability to act 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, accepting bookings, making special deals).

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

- Offering a free product e.g. a glass of drink or free dessert
- Offering a service such as dry cleaning
- Offering a set percentage discount on advertised selling prices.



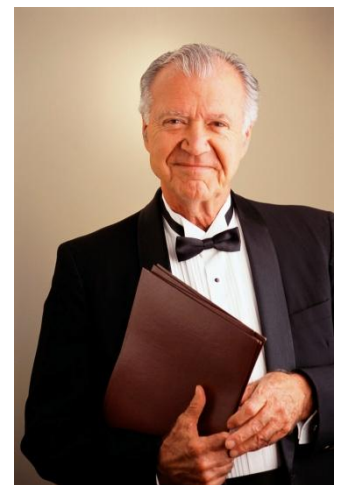
## Organisation policies

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

- Provide guidance on what to do in order to resolve situations
- Give consistency when dealing with customers
- Relieve staff from having to make decisions. The policy sets out the decisions that management have made.

These policies may address issues such as:

- Who should deal with problems or complaints at different levels
- When management (or security staff) should be involved
- The limits of scopes of authority
- Situations under which the property will not try to resolve a conflict regardless of what the customer may allege
- Documentation that needs to be completed to record the complaint
- Training that staff should receive before they are expected to resolve issues on their own.



## Handling complaints

It is important to deal with all complaints in a friendly, efficient and thorough manner.

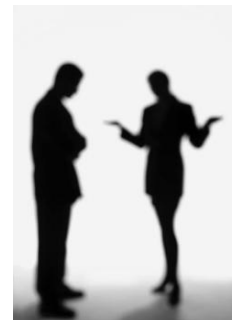
You must always give the customer time to explain themselves fully. This means never cutting them short when they are complaining, or putting words into their mouth.

Three keys in responding to customer complaints are to be positive, sensitive and polite at all times.

In short, we must be sensitive to the customer, their needs, the nature of the complaint and their mood.

The customer, guest or patron must be given the time to explain fully, without the employee cutting them short or placing words into their mouth.

It cannot be emphasised enough how important it is for the person to say their piece.



## Take responsibility for doing something

Having listened fully to the person, ask questions and recap what has been said to verify what has been said. You should take responsibility for resolving the complaint by telling the customer that you will do everything in your power to resolve the situation.

As mentioned above, you may elect to ask the guest what they want done to fix the problem.

By taking this responsibility, it ensures you never ignore complaints, but instead take constructive measures to ensure they enjoy a speedy and mutually satisfactory resolution.

## Establish the nature and details of the complaint

A critical aspect of resolving the complaint is to identify the extent of the complaint.

In most cases, the complainant will tell you what the problem is, but their offering is certain to leave out relevant information. This information may be information which lessens their case, or which puts a different slant on their allegations.

Or it may be information that would really help them if they only knew it.

The fact remains that you must talk to the customer. Ask questions to determine the full nature of the conflict. In the first instance, this detective work may simply serve to alert you to the fact that the issue is beyond your ability or scope of authority to remedy, thereby indicating that a manager needs to become involved.

When talking to the person(s) involved you should attempt to find out various bits of information. The more detailed and accurate the information, the better:

- Names of those involved
- Promises that the establishment may have made
- Service or products that failed to live up to promises or expectations, including how they failed to deliver on quality or expectations
- Timelines relating to the complaint
- Costs, money or charges involved

- The factual details, as far as can be determined, as to what was said and by whom
- Actions – or inactions – taken or not taken by the staff.

In all cases, it is advisable to try to remove the complainant to a private area so that others are unable to overhear what is being said. Doing this also removes the person from a potential audience to which they may decide to play. The offer of a cold drink or a coffee may also be appropriate.

When you have uncovered all the details about the issue, repeat them back to the person to ensure you have interpreted them correctly and to give them an opportunity to clarify points or to add further comments.

The next step is to seek agreement about what can or should be done to fix the problem.

Whatever is decided on must be described and explained in detail so that there can be no room for misinterpretation about what you are going to try to achieve. If you can't get agreement on the proposed solution, how is 'fixing it' going to resolve the problem?

When such agreement is forthcoming, your next step is to take action to achieve your objective.

## Take appropriate action

The commonly used Six-Step Method for dealing with all complaints is the recommended course of action.

Some of the points set out below have been covered earlier, but is useful to see the model laid out in one place in its entirety:

### Step 1: Listen carefully

Listen, listen, listen to everything the customer has to say even though it may be the last thing that you feel like doing! Recognise and respect the customer's thoughts and feelings. Show genuine interest in their needs and expectations.

### Step 2: Acknowledge

Establish the scope and nature of the problem along with any history that might accompany it, or the complainant.

Verbally summarise the conflict and ensure that the parties involved agree with your summary.

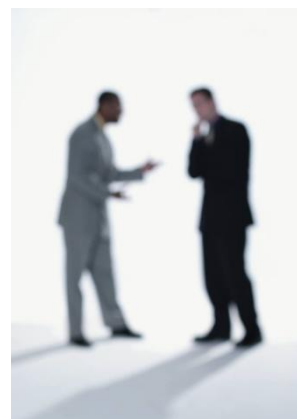
### Step 3: Respond

Inform the customer of the action you wish to take. This course of action may have been proposed by them, by you, or arisen through negotiation. Check to see if this action is deemed acceptable.

Make sure the action is in line with establishment policies and procedures and that you have the authority to make that decision. If not, seek information from a higher authority.

Inform them of the timeframe that you expect to apply to implementing the resolution.

Never make up excuses or blame another colleague for a problem – even if it may be true!



#### Step 4: Take action

This is usually what the guest wants you to do!

You now have to act to implement the agreed upon solution within a reasonable time frame. If ever there looks like being a delay in executing the resolution you absolutely must inform the guest at the earliest possible opportunity and provide a full explanation of the delay.

Never let a delay just drag on and on, without keeping the guest up to date and informed.



#### Step 5: Report

It is part of your role to inform a higher authority of a complaint where necessary.

These instances are usually where the person:

- Was very, very irate
- Made threats
- Indicated they would complain in writing
- Damage was done
- Is a regular patron.



#### Step 6: Follow-up

There may be an in-house meeting to debrief with other staff or management, or to complete relevant documentation as requested by the establishment.

There is commonly a timeframe within which such follow up must occur – within 24 hours is common.

### Referring complaints

In any situations where you believe a complaint to be beyond either your expertise to resolve, or outside your area of delegated authority, you must refer this type of complaint to the appropriate person.

Written policies of the venue together with an understanding about your individual scope of authority will help you work out whether or not the complaint needs to be referred.

#### The appropriate person

The appropriate person, in some situations, may just be a co-worker who has more experience than you, or it could be the supervisor or manager. 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 simply be unable to do, or authorise, whatever it is that is required to resolve the complaint.

A key to referring complaints is to do it quickly.



Where you have tried to resolve the situation yourself, and are quite obviously getting nowhere, 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 we all know, when you are upset or annoyed, one minute seems like ten.

Finally, no one expects you to be able to manage all complaints on your own, so don't try to battle on when you feel you're out of your depth.



### **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 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 including government agencies such as liquor licensing, health, gaming, other agencies
- A situation where the customer mentions they intend taking the issue to the media.



## 2.5 Maintain a positive and co-operative manner

### Introduction

At all times, when responding to conflicts and customer complaints you must maintain a positive and cooperative manner with other parties.

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

### Why

A positive and cooperative manner can help to:

- Smooth over a potentially problematic situation. 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 don't expect anything to happen or they don't want to be given a free meal. They just want to be heard to get it off their chest
- Demonstrate your willingness to resolve the issue as opposed to ignoring it or dismissing it out of hand. This respects the customer as an individual and sends a definite signal that the individual is of value to the business
- Create an initial friendly atmosphere. An approach that indicates a willingness to listen to, and work with, the customer will always set the foundation for a faster and more acceptable resolution. It is much more difficult for the customer 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 that complaints be seen as 'opportunities'. Staff are expected to achieve a final outcome to the complaint that will maintain the person complaining as an ongoing customer.



### Practice

Preparing yourself to deal with complaints is something that nearly every staff member can do.

You should consider:

- Identifying situations about which it can realistically be expected that customers might complain about
- Determining, in advance, the possible solutions that might achieve a resolution of the issue. Make sure these possibilities are within your scope of authority
- Asking management or a more experienced worker about how they would deal with such a situation
- Undertaking role plays in relation to the identified customer complaint situations and scenarios
- Debriefing with management or other staff after handling a customer complaint situation to get their feedback on how you performed.



## 2.6 Use non-discriminatory attitudes and language when interacting with customers, staff and management consistently

### Introduction

All staff must be aware of the differences that exist between all stakeholders of the organisation. As mentioned staff, suppliers, customers and owners come from different backgrounds, beliefs, religions, cultures and countries. Hence there will always be difficulties when interacting with each other.

It is important that staff appreciate these differences.

Things that one person may regard as 'normal', 'acceptable', 'likeable' or even 'preferable' can be, and frequently are, very different to what customers from different countries expect.

It is a basic requirement of all service industries that staff show sensitivity to cultural and social differences, and demonstrate respect for such differences.

### Expectations of overseas visitors

As a result, you will find that guests from other countries and cultures could have differing views in terms of:

#### Customer expectations

Many staff would benefit from viewing advertising that promotes their country overseas because these advertisements often create the expectations that visitors arrive with.

For many visitors, time is a critical factor.

They expect to have their time in the country fully occupied, and for their time to conform to the expectations created by a variety of promotional sources. Your country may be presented as 'modern and attractive' with images of high standard accommodation, fine food and wine and world-class service.



In addition, the venue may have advertised overseas and these advertisements could have raised expectations about the property, the service, the facilities as well as the local region (shopping, tourist attractions, natural landmarks, friendliness of the locals) and the country in general.

#### Levels of formality and informality

In general terms businesses should adhere to a formal level of operation allowing other operators to provide the informality.

Where there is doubt, house rules should be followed, with the individual guests being allowed to set the degree of formality required.

Experience will be a big factor in determining what is appropriate in each instance, but the style of promotion the establishment engages in is a pretty good guide about the standard or level of formality that the guest can expect.

Social and cultural differences in this regard commonly apply to modes of greeting, farewelling and general conversation.

### **Appropriate non-verbal behaviour**

All staff should realise that there is more to communication than the spoken word.

When dealing with overseas guests, this realisation is even more critical as what is deemed acceptable in one country can be offensive, intimidating or hurtful to those from a different land.

Staff should take the time to determine the major tourist groups using their venue and seek specific information regarding their particular non-verbal characteristics.



### **Communicating sincerity**

Sincerity is easy to convey where it genuinely exists. Most guests are prepared to initially believe that staff are sincere unless it is proven otherwise.

Making a genuine effort, being attentive, showing concern and honestly trying to assist will shine through even where there may be a language or communication problem, or even where there is existing hostility or dissatisfaction.

### **Dress and appearance**

Once again, the establishment where you work will demand certain dress standards and these must be complied with.

The image created by the establishment's advertising will dictate the level required and also serve to create expectations in guests' minds.



## **General strategies**

As with many other customer-contact situations sensitivity, patience, sincerity and a willingness to serve and please are vital ingredients in any difficult or different guest relation or inter-personal situation.

### **1) Culturally-based communication differences**

When faced with a guest or work colleague where there is a nationality difference, politeness and respect are the essentials on which to build.

The initial greeting should generally be formal and direct. You should be ready and prepared to apologise where difficulties surface.

When using the guests' names, staff should enquire as to how the guests would prefer to be addressed, thus taking into account any special overtones the individual may attach to their name or title.

### **2) Establishment organisation**

The way in which an establishment is organised and the way it functions on a day to day basis can provide the platform for more effective cross-cultural communication.

The provision of multilingual or bilingual staff is obviously an advantage, especially in key guest-contact areas such as reception, and food and beverage areas.

For some guests, the language difficulties encountered when travelling overseas can add an interesting dimension to a holiday. However, communicating basic needs and wants are not a part of this language play.

Providing documents in different languages including registration cards, menus, directions, instructions and maps. The use of multi-language establishment signage will also encourage overseas guests.

It will also increase their feeling of being made welcome.

Other considerations are:

- Supplying food and beverages readily found in their home countries
- Providing news, newspapers and magazines from these places
- Having homeland music available
- Employing a selection of staff from different cultural backgrounds.



Where an establishment does not have any staff proficient in the languages spoken by the establishment's guests, a reliable interpreter should always be able to be contacted.

### 3) *Language difficulties*

Many visitors will have some knowledge of the local language, and the problem in communicating can often be traced to difficulties with accents, local dialects and the use of idioms or slang.

Resorting to written language may sometimes resolve the communication dilemma.

In addition, when speaking with overseas visitors, staff will find it helpful to:

- Speak clearly – but do so without inferring that the person is stupid
- Remember to speak at normal volume – people won't understand better if you shout
- Avoid idiomatic language as this is frequently extremely confusing for the foreigner and may be misinterpreted as an attempt to belittle them
- Give the guest your full attention when communicating with them, and show that you are trying to be of assistance.



Be alert for signs that there has been no real understanding of what you have said. Be prepared to repeat yourself, restate what you have already said in different terms, or expand on what you have said.

It is common for some staff to categorise anyone who cannot speak the local language as 'being stupid'. Consider how well they would cope in a strange land, speaking a foreign language and trying to cope with different habits.

#### 4) *Non-verbal communication and messages*

Most people gain a lot of information about communication from the non-verbal component.

They look to body language to help them infer meaning and to help make sense of the spoken word.

Various non-verbal communications (gestures and eye contact) mean different things to different peoples.

You should be aware of problems that misinterpretation can cause.

In some countries it is commonplace for people to look each other in the eye when talking. It is even seen as an expression of the individual's honesty. By contrast, other cultures regard that same direct eye contact as offensive, insolent and even to convey sexual overtones. In some cultures, avoiding eye contact is a mark of respect, rather than an indicator of dishonesty or guilt.



Smiling is another non-verbal expression that, especially in the hospitality, tourism and events industries where staff are encouraged to be friendly, we need to be careful about. We may find smiling to be representative of happiness, friendliness and a warm and welcoming approach, but some cultures interpret it as a means of covering up embarrassment, displeasure or dissatisfaction.



Always try to find out more about the customs and behaviours of people from countries who stay with you. Talk to friends; visit the countries, read some books.

Another way is to keenly observe individuals from that country and make notes, mental or even written, about what you see. Check what you have found with other staff members. Critically analyse your guest's reactions to what you do.

Do your observation with sensitivity to the fact that you cannot afford to make any assumptions about what you are likely to find.

Remember that our culture does not apply to others.

#### 5) *Stress*

Stress occurs in both customers and in staff who are serving them.

Visitors are often under a great deal of stress. They are in a foreign land, confronted with an alien language and not having even the basic day to day working knowledge that everyone simply takes for granted.

And the staff who deal with them are also usually a bit stressed by the normal work routine, plus the challenge of having to cope with a difficult situation.

This situation obviously produces anxiety which can impede effective communications.

To combat stress interfering with cross-cultural communication, the first step is to accept that feeling a raised level of stress in these situations is normal. It is not an indicator that you are hopeless or cannot handle the situation.

The next step is to identify, in advance, the possible cross-cultural situations that may arise and do some preparation that will enable you to cope with them when they do arrive.

Finally, when the situation arises, take steps to create a quiet and calm environment in which to conduct the communication.

## To conclude

The following will help when attempting to use non-discriminatory attitudes and languages:

- Be aware of the potential problems and difficulties. This is the first step in effectively dealing with cross-cultural communications
- Accept that people from different parts of the world will interpret their world, the people in it, establishments, and actions using a different frame of reference from us
- Realise that differences between people are not indicative of superior or inferior status
- Endeavour to find out about the culture and communications of the countries of your guests
- Be alert to the need for you to clarify what has been said. Speak clearly, rephrase and do not be afraid to use written communication
- Do not approach dealings with people from overseas with an attitude that it is up to them to learn your language
- Make sure you do not allow preconceptions or national stereotypes to influence your attitude to guests. Guests are individuals and must be treated as such
- Do not assume that overseas guests will like or dislike the same things that you or your friends do. Your values and your way of seeing the world is not the only acceptable and proper way of seeing it.



## 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 To fulfil the requirements of this Work Project you are asked to submit a video of you communicating effectively that provides evidence you can:
- Identify and meet internal and external customer needs
  - Assist in resolving workplace conflict and difficulties
  - Identify and use formal and informal feedback to improve products and services offered to customers
  - Handle complaints in a positive manner
  - Maintain a positive and co-operative manner
  - Use non-discriminatory attitudes and languages.
- 2.2. To fulfil the requirements of this Work Project you are asked to submit evidence of three complaints you have handled in a successful manner including:
- A description of the complaints
  - Possible solutions
  - Involvement of others including customers, staff or management
  - Solution reached.
- 2.3. To fulfil the requirements of this Work Project you are asked to submit a written report identifying how feedback from customers and colleagues can result in improvements in products and services provided to customers. Please explain:
- Five types of feedback, either formal or informal, that you would use in the workplace to gather information from colleagues or customers
  - Five specific examples of feedback and how you would use.

## Summary

### Establish and maintain effective relationships with colleagues and customers

**Meet both internal customers' and external customers' needs and expectations in accordance with organisation standards, policies and procedures and within acceptable time frames**

- Understand how to service customer needs
- Identify internal customer needs
- Identify external customer needs
- Identify special needs customers
- Access other sources to identify customer needs
- Convey a willingness to assist
- Appreciate needs of overseas visitors.

**Assist to resolve workplace conflict and manage difficulties to achieve positive outcomes**

- Identify types of conflicts
- Explain how you can assist.

**Use formal feedback and informal feedback to identify and implement improvements to products, services, processes or outcomes for both internal customers and external customers**

- Understand importance of feedback
- Identify types of feedback
- Collect feedback.

**Handle complaints positively, sensitively and politely in consultation with the person/s making the complaint**

- Identify dissatisfaction of customers
- Take action to resolve the situation
- Understand scope of authority
- Identify ways to handle complaints
- Take appropriate action
- Explain how to refer complaints

**Maintain a positive and co-operative manner**

- Understand why it is importance
- Practice.

**Use non-discriminatory attitudes and language when interacting with customers, staff and management consistently**

- Identify expectations of overseas visitors
- Develop general strategies.

# Element 3:

## Work in a team

### 3.1 Request or provide assistance so that work activities can be completed

#### Introduction

Teamwork is classified as the collective actions towards a number of people towards a collective goal. Whilst each business will have a range of goals, in essence the primary goal is to provide an enjoyable experience for customers for a reasonable return on investment for owners, in a safe and lawful manner.



In a hospitality or tourism organisation, no one person can meet the needs of all customers. It requires the collective efforts of many people to achieve success.

Each team member brings with them their own unique characteristics, experiences, knowledge and skills which, when used correctly, can have a positive impact on customers. Everyone has different strengths and these should be celebrated and used for the benefit of the customer.

It should be the goal of any business to use its staff to the best of their abilities, to create an offering that meets the needs of its customers.

Synergy is a phrase that represents the concept of effective and successful teams. Synergy is the concept where the accumulated actions of a group are more powerful than the sum of individual efforts.



A challenge for managers of a group, is to get everyone thinking in the same direction, even though they may all individually have different opinions. One way to improve teamwork is to get individual staff members involved in activities that require them to work together.

A team is often characterised through:

- Having a common goal. It is important all staff not only identify the goal, but why it is important
- Work interdependently with each other. The actions of one person impacts on other staff
- Independent job functions. Whilst staff are working together, they perform different roles and have different activities. Staff must understand how their actions contribute to the greater good of the team
- Enjoy working together. This may be hard with different personalities, however in most cases people enjoy working together. Get staff involved in activities where they can find out more about each other

- Accountability. Staff will not only have their own responsibilities, but will also have collective responsibilities
- Empowerment. Staff have their own power to act and make decisions
- Understand the importance of teams.

## Requesting assistance from other team members, supervisors and managers

Not everyone can do everything! This may seem simple but many staff feel they can do everything and solve every problem. This is just not realistic. On many occasions we need the assistance of others because:

- We don't know how to do it
- We don't have the time
- Others are better equipped to do it
- We need more than one person to do it.

It is a fact that many of us are afraid to ask for help. It is also a fact that many of us actually like being asked for help. In many ways being asked for help is a compliment!



Within a work context it is rarely acceptable for anyone to simply continue to work when they know they are falling behind or are failing to achieve the work set for them.

One way to address this situation is to seek assistance from others before the situation becomes critical.

### Time orientation

Our industry is one that is very much time oriented. Customers and other staff will rely on you to get nominated work finished by a set time.

Customers expect service, food, drinks or rooms cleaned by a set time and when this doesn't happens their satisfaction levels drop.

Other staff may depend on you doing a certain task so that they can then do their work. They may have factored this into their planning and prioritising of their workload.

In brief, you rarely have the luxury of doing things when you want to do them. They usually have to be done by a set time.

However, there are often situations where you can't possibly accomplish something on your own so you must:

- Be able to identify situations where you are not going to be able to finish an allocated task on time. Do this well enough in advance to allow you to obtain help that will enable timelines to be met
- Be prepared to actually ask others for help as soon as you identify a need to do so.



Often there are service peaks that require some help for 5 – 10 minutes and then it's over.

Examples include:

- The arrival of a coach of tourists who all require a quick check-in and their luggage portered to rooms
- A group arrival in the restaurant with all needing to be seated, supplied with their first drink, and have their order taken
- A sudden rush in the retail shop
- The first half hour of trade when the nightclub opens
- That one day when every room service tray has been requested at 8.30am.



### Who can you ask for assistance?

The people you may ask to assist can vary, but will commonly include:

- Others from your team
- People from other, but related, departments
- Managers and supervisors.

### Reflect on the times when you could not meet your goals

It is always worthwhile taking time to think about situations where you had to ask for assistance.

This process is designed to identify what caused you to ask for help.

Sometimes the cause will be an unexpected interruption to your work such as the need to do extra duties that were not initially allocated or identified.

Perhaps a team member was absent and you had to take over their duties as well as your own, perhaps there was some sort of unforeseeable emergency that you had to respond to or perhaps there was an equipment malfunction.

These issues cannot really be planned for. They just occur and you have to do your best.

However, where these types of issues did not cause you to ask for help, reflecting on the situation may identify that you need to:

- Obtain more training to become more proficient in your work
- Do more practice to fine tune the skills you already have
- Speak to your supervisor to ask for a reduction in, or alteration to, the duties you are being given. This is especially significant where you are being allocated tasks that are new to you or where you are being asked to do work that others normally do in addition to your usual tasks
- Spend more time planning your duties with a view to making better use of your time, or making sure your output integrates properly with others who rely on you.

## Providing assistance to other team members, supervisors and managers

In the same way that you may need help from others, you must be similarly prepared to render assistance to others when it is called for.

Our industry has little room for prima donnas.

Those who don't pitch in and help, for whatever reason, will soon find themselves excluded and shunned by the other staff. You may have a very good reason for not helping when asked to do so but this is usually not good enough!

Co-workers will judge you by how much they can rely on you in a pinch, and you have to make the effort to be there when needed.

Your other work has to be reprioritised, and done later.

### Offering assistance before it is asked for

Certainly you must be prepared to assist your team mates when asked, but it is always better to offer help before it is asked for.

This shows your concern for team members and lets them know you are aware of what's going on. In addition, when you provide assistance, you need to do it:

- Without complaint
- Without making a big deal of it
- Without constant reference to the fact that you did help - just do it!

Give your assistance freely and fully and then get back to your own tasks.

The intent of helping team members is:

- To ensure that team goals are achieved
- To deliver excellent service to customers
- To prove your commitment to the team
- To encourage team members to help you when you need assistance.



## 3.2 Provide support to colleagues to ensure achievement of team goals

### Introduction

If you want staff to trust, support and respect you, then first you have to trust, support and respect them.

You have to walk your talk. You can't just say you trust, support and respect. You have to do it!

Support and assistance is quite similar and often the two are interlinked. Simply, where assistance may require you to undertake some activities on their behalf, support may involve:

- Providing guidance
- Offering encouragement
- Making recommendations or suggestions for improvement.

### What's involved in demonstrating trust, support and respect?

In practical workplace terms demonstrating trust, support and respect for others in your team means:

- Never participating in gossip or talking negatively about any staff member
- Not spending time with customers who want to criticise work mates
- Not blaming any work mates for anything even though you may suspect or even know it was their fault
- Not taking the credit for what another staff member has done no matter how small the job
- Supporting decisions that colleagues have made, for instance, in refusing to serve a person with alcohol
- Treating co-workers in keeping with any cultural individualities that apply to them.



### Teamwork works

A team must work together and it is frightening to see how quickly a team, department or business can be torn apart by just one person with either an axe to grind because of a real or imagined act, or a prejudice to air.

The truly sad thing about a lack of trust, support or respect is that no one wins. Someone can be 'on the winning side' of a lack of trust, but they still lose.

The keys are to remain detached, stay professional and let your actions speak for themselves:

- Trust the people that merit your trust. These are the ones that prove by their actions that they are genuinely trustworthy themselves
- Support those who warrant your support. They are the ones whose actions have shown that they deserve your support

- Respect those who deserve your respect. They are those who have earned it through their words and their actions.

There may well be times when the customer must truly come first in these situations, too. On other occasions, you might have to support a colleague even when you don't want to.

What do you do in these cases?

You give them the support their position demands. Like it or not, these situations simply 'come with the territory'. It is, after all, very much a people business.

## Importance of support

You must make sure you demonstrate trust, support and respect for other staff because:

- You need them to do the same for you in your current operational workplace role
- Management and supervisors will always be looking to see if you are genuinely a team player.

When you achieve promotion within the establishment, you need to have a team that already has respect for you, who already trust you and who will support your decisions



## 3.3 Discuss and resolve problems through agreed and/or accepted processes

### Introduction

It doesn't matter how well thought out and prepared you are, at times problems will arise in a hospitality and tourism business which require your team to work together to find a suitable solution.

Many of the problems that occur are out of your control and may result from:

- Weather – due to bad weather, more people are staying in the hotel and eating room service
- Flight delays – a cancelled flight has resulted in an extra 200 requiring rooms and will check in at the same time
- Lack of supplies – a supplier has failed to deliver a vital menu item
- Electricity problems – the power has gone out, resulting in no lighting or electrical items working
- Emergency – heart attack, allergies or fire.



These are just a few examples; however every property will have a list of regular or unexpected scenarios leading to serious problems in the workplace.

Regardless of the problem, a solution must be found. As a member of a team, you must be flexible and inclusive in your approach to solving any problems that may arise.

Every organisation will have policies and procedures for handling unexpected problems, however for instances where none exist, as a staff member you should:

- Use common sense
- Don't panic
- If a solution is clear, put this into place
- If no solution is clear, seek the assistance from the necessary colleagues
- Notify management and other staff members where required.

The priority when any problems arise, is to find a solution that has the least impact on the customer and operations of the business.

## 3.4 Recognise and accommodate cultural differences within the team

### Introduction

The hospitality and tourism industries boast staff from a variety of backgrounds.

Many of these staff are employed specifically on the basis of their language skills, their awareness of different customs and their knowledge of foreign lands and features.

This often means you will be working with people from different cultures so it is necessary, to enhance service delivery and foster a genuine team environment. This means to recognise and accommodate relevant cultural differences.



### The role of planning

Planning and simple awareness can reduce the incidence and severity of cross-cultural misunderstandings.

Prior thought can produce strategies to address misunderstandings and issues and thus prevent major confrontations, difficulties or upsets.

The following instances have traditionally provided a fertile ground for cross-cultural misunderstandings:

- Promotions and authority issues
- Rostering
- Interrelations between staff and sections
- Interpersonal relations
- Traditional nationality-based hostilities.

A large amount of prior consideration, direct communication with those involved, explanation of the decisions taken and an open and sensitive approach will assist in these situations.

### Addressing cross-cultural misunderstandings between staff

Where cross-cultural misunderstandings between staff arise, certain strategies can be applied to help resolve the problems.

Action should focus on:

- Providing additional information to clarify the situation and explain decisions taken
- Active listening to show genuine concern regarding the issue and a desire to resolve the situation
- Acting as a mediator to help reconcile parties



- Team building to foster a co-operative group working effort rather than a splintered approach to work
- Questioning in order to accurately determine the root causes for the dissatisfaction rather than assuming you know the reasons
- Observing body language to gauge how proceedings are going and whether or not there is still underlying and unresolved tension
- Seeking advice or assistance from others within the workplace or professionals from outside the establishment.

### Other action you can take to accommodate cultural differences

In addition, positive action can be taken by management and supervisors in advance of actual problems arising by:

- Creating a climate of tolerance within the department that will help cushion any misunderstandings that may actually occur
- Implementing team building exercises to foster and extend trust and understanding
- Providing training and education to help make all staff more culturally aware. Cultural awareness training is a common topic in many businesses that employ people from a diversity of cultures, or where the enterprise deals with customers from a variety of cultures
- Providing mediation and counselling to assist in retrieving situations where misunderstanding occurs or conflict already exists.



### Why do businesses concern themselves with cultural awareness and tolerance?

There are several benefits that flow from creating and maintaining a harmonious multicultural working environment. These include:

- Compliance with Equal Opportunity requirements. Employers are obliged to facilitate integration of workers from different cultures and to be responsible for ensuring there are no instances of discrimination (racial or otherwise)
- Improved levels of goodwill and tolerance which will lead to greater productivity, reduced staff turnover rates, and enhanced standards of service delivery
- A happier workplace culture where staff are more likely to help each other, co-operate with each other, share information, and be flexible in terms of responding to workplace needs
- Continuing jobs, profit and growth for all which may mean extra hours of paid work, higher levels of pay, promotion, additional responsibility, and multi-skilling
- Increased return rate of customers because they have received better quality service, standards etc.
- Reduced likelihood of industrial disputes such as strikes, work to rule and other forms of industrial sabotage.



## 3.5 Identify, prioritise and complete individual tasks within designated time lines

### Introduction

Within the overall context of team goals, you will have individual tasks that you will be required to complete.

These tasks are like the links that make up the chain that comprises your department and the service it provides.

If you fail to complete your individual tasks then the possibility is that the team will fail to achieve its overall objectives.

Implicit in completing your tasks is an ability to prioritise them.

### What is prioritisation?

Prioritising your tasks means that you will have to determine which tasks are the most important and should be done first, and which ones can be left until later.

It is the nature of our industry that many tasks are fluid in nature. A task that may not be important at 5.15pm can become critical at 5.16pm. This means that you have to be flexible in your approach, realise that such changes are commonplace and strive to respond accordingly.

Given the 'service oriented' nature of our industry, which essentially means a person-focussed approach, this should come as no surprise. We can't possibly know what customers or guests will want, but we must nonetheless make every effort to satisfy what they want.

### Ways to ensure you complete your allocated tasks

Tips to make this happen are:

- Work quickly. Get as much done as fast as possible in keeping with quality, safety, house standards or noise. The point being that you can't afford to dawdle or waste time
- Practice being interrupted. Accept that many of the things you start will not be able to be completed without interruption, so work with that understanding. The fact that you get interrupted demonstrates that there are people there for you to serve. The real worry would be if you had no one to interrupt you!
- Practice tact and diplomacy. There will be instances where you simply can't stop what you are doing to do something else, so you must develop a set of responses that lets the customer know you are busy but you will be with them very shortly
- Take a minute to plan and prioritise. Too many people just jump in and start their work without planning and without giving their tasks a priority order. A minute spent working out what to do first, second or third, is time well spent as it forces you to identify why tasks have the urgency you allocate to them. It makes you justify to yourself why things should be done in a certain order
- Ask for help where required.

## 3.6 Acknowledge and respond to feedback and information from other team members

### Introduction

From time to time your colleagues will provide you with feedback and information. For them not to do this would mean they are not doing their job.

This feedback and information can be positive or negative, or neutral in nature.

Whilst we have explored the concept of positive and negative feedback in Section 2.3, the focus of that section explored feedback given by customers. In this Section, the focus will be feedback given by fellow team members.

### Positive feedback

Positive feedback can involve team members passing on a comment they have heard about your excellent service.

You should take a second or so to rejoice in such feedback. Accept it and enjoy it because you've earned it.

Never simply dismiss it or brush it off. Make the most of it!

Never say something like "Oh, it was nothing", or 'Just doing my job'.

You should thank the person who gave you the compliment or positive feedback and take a moment to enjoy it. If you let people know you appreciated their positive comment, it will encourage them to do more of the same.

If you simply dismiss it, then they will tend not to bother about giving you any more, even though you may well deserve it.



### Negative feedback

Negative feedback is not so much fun but will at least provide you with advice as to how you might modify your approach in order to provide even better levels of service or cooperation.

Take the negative feedback in the right way. See it as an opportunity to improve and as a challenge.

Make sure you don't dwell on the negative message and start getting everything out of perspective. This is a common and very damaging response that causes much tension, anxiety and workplace conflict.

Above all, don't shoot the messenger!

If a staff member delivers this negative message, realise that they are not making the criticism. They are just doing their job by letting you know, and, if you think about it, would not be doing their duty if they didn't bring the negative matter to your attention.



The keys are to listen to the criticism, determine objectively if there is truth in it and then work out how to rectify things so that it doesn't happen again. We are all human after all, so mistakes will happen. Like the old saying goes "there hasn't been a world champion who hasn't had a glove laid on them".

## Neutral information

Neutral information can occur when staff members deliver updates or new information about what's happening. The result of this information is usually that you will need to factor it into your work and the priorities you have already set.

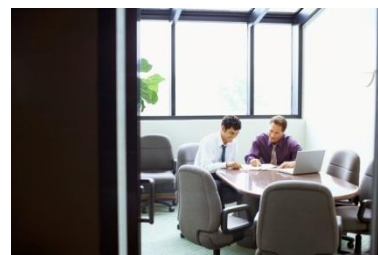
For example, you may be told that the group due in at 7pm have cancelled, that the Chandelier Room will stay open for today's function until midnight instead of the previously arranged 10pm, or that due to a problem in the cellar there will be no draught beer for the next 5 – 6 hours!

This information may be presented at a daily staff briefing before work starts for the day, or during the working day as you are going about your normal duties.

Again, when it happens, don't shoot the messenger.

Listen to the information, making sure you fully understand all aspects of it, and then determine how this updated information affects your work plan:

- Are there things now that don't need to be done?
- Do things need to be reorganised, priorities changed?
- Are there now things to be done that didn't need to be done five minutes ago?
- Do you now need help?
- Are there others who now need your help?



Where you have spare time or capacity, and the situation merits it, be proactive and offer assistance without waiting to be asked.

## 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 To fulfil the requirements of this Work Project you are asked to submit a video of you communicating effectively that provides evidence you can:
- Request assistance to ensure work activities can be completed
  - Provide support to colleagues
  - Discuss and resolve problems that have occurred in the workplace
  - Recognise and accommodate cultural differences within a team
  - Identify, prioritise and complete individual tasks
  - Acknowledge and respond to colleague's feedback.
- 3.2. To fulfil the requirements of this Work Project you are asked to write a report explaining three examples of assistance you have given a colleague:
- The assistance you provided
  - How it was helpful to the achievement of tasks.
- 3.3. To fulfil the requirements of this Work Project you are asked to submit a written report identifying how you effectively undertake your daily activities. Please identify:
- Ten tasks that you are required to undertake on a daily basis
  - Identify the order in which they would be completed, explaining why they have been prioritised in this order.
-

## Summary

### Work in a team

#### **Request or provide assistance so that work activities can be completed**

- Understand what is a team
- Appreciate why teams are important in the workplace
- Requesting assistance from other team members, supervisors and managers
- Provide assistance to other team members, supervisors and managers.

#### **Provide support to colleagues to ensure achievement of team goals**

- Understand what is involved in demonstrating trust, support and respect
- Highlight the importance of support.

#### **Discuss and resolve problems through agreed and/or accepted processes**

- Identify types of problems that occur that are out of your control
- Describe the approach you would use to handle these problems.

#### **Recognise and accommodate cultural differences within the team**

- Appreciate the role of planning
- Address cross-cultural misunderstandings between staff
- Realise businesses concern themselves with cultural awareness and tolerance.

#### **Identify, prioritise and complete individual tasks within designated time lines**

- Understand what is prioritisation
- Identify ways to ensure you complete your allocated tasks.

#### **Acknowledge and respond to feedback and information from other team members**

- Understand the types and importance of positive feedback
- Understand the types and importance of negative feedback
- Understand the types and importance of neutral information.

# 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 organised. 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 recognise and are critical of work that does not answer the question, or is 'padded' with irrelevant material. In summary, remember to:

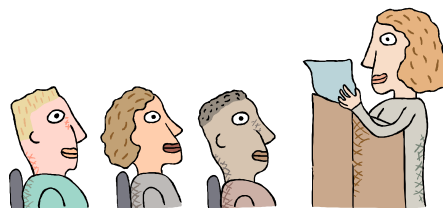
- Plan ahead
- Be clear and concise
- Answer the question
- Proofread the final draft.

## 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 patients 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	<i>Humankind</i>
Barman/maid	<i>Bar attendant</i>
Host/hostess	<i>Host</i>
Waiter/waitress	<i>Waiter or waiting staff</i>

## Recommended reading

Bhagat, M., 2002, *Maintain personal presentation in the workplace*, Software Educational Resources, Auckland

Cyster, E. & Young, F., 2008, *Etiquette and Modern Manners*, Teach Yourself, London

Dunn, D. M. & Goodnight, L.J., 2011(3<sup>rd</sup> edition), *Communication: embracing difference*, Allyn & Bacon, Boston

Fitzgerald, Helen, 2002 (3<sup>rd</sup> edition), *Cross-cultural Communication: For the Tourism and Hospitality Industry*, Pearson Education Australia

Holloway C, Davidson R, Humphreys C, 2009(8<sup>th</sup> Edition), *The Business of Tourism*, Pearson Education

Johnston, R & Clark G, 2008 (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition), *Service Operations Management*. Pearson Education

Maxwell J, 2001, *The 17 Indisputable Laws of Teamwork: Embrace Them and Empower Your Team*, Maxwell Motivation, USA

Kudrle, Albert.1995, *Public Relations for Hospitality Managers: Communicating for Greater Profits* Publisher, Wiley, USA

Kusluvan Salih 2003 *Managing employee attitudes and behaviours in the tourism and hospitality*, Nove Science Publishers, New York

Walker, J, 2009, (3<sup>rd</sup> edition), *Supervision in the Hospitality Industry: Leading Human Resources*, University of South Florida



# Trainee evaluation sheet

## Work effectively with customers and colleagues

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	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Most of the competency seemed relevant to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The competency was at the right level for me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I got enough help from my trainer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The amount of activities was sufficient	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The competency allowed me to use my own initiative	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My training was well-organised	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My trainer had time to answer my questions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understood how I was going to be assessed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I was given enough time to practice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My trainer feedback was useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enough equipment was available and it worked well	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The activities were too hard for me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The best things about this unit were:

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The worst things about this unit were:

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The things you should change in this unit are:

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William  
**Angliss**  
Institute

Specialist centre  
for foods, tourism  
& hospitality



**Australian  
AID** 