

NCFE Level 2

Certificate in Principles of Customer Service

COMMUNICATION

PRODUCTS

EXPECTATIONS

SERVICES

POLICIES

Workbook 1

Section 1: Principles of customer service and delivery

When working through the examples, activities and assessments, please base your answers on any of the following:

- a customer service role you have in your current job
- a customer service role in a previous job
- an organisation that is familiar to you
- an organisation that you have researched

Introduction

In this section, we are going to look at the principles of customer service and delivery. We will look at the products and service that organisations offer their customers, legal and ethical requirements and how to manage expectations. We will also examine how to deliver excellent customer service, manage customer information and understand the relationship between customer service and a brand.

The purpose and scope of customer service

Please read the following as it will help you to answer question 1.

We all know when we have received bad customer service, for example:

- when sales assistants are too busy chatting to serve us
- when staff in a restaurant or store are rude and unfriendly
- when a call centre puts us on hold for half an hour
- when our complaints are handled badly

But what makes customer service good?

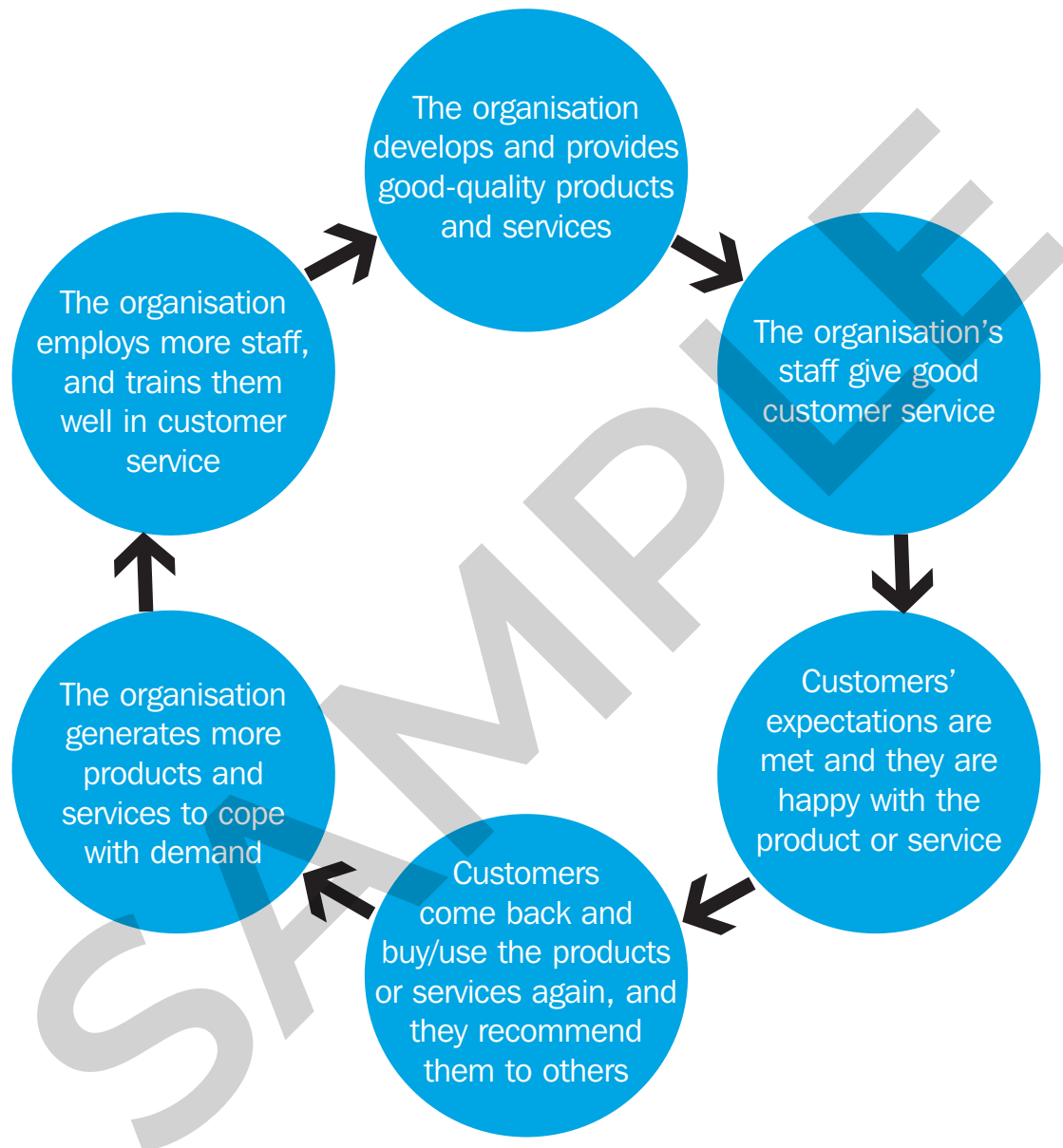
Customers have expectations. They want:

- an efficient and polite service before, during and after a transaction (buying or using products or services)
- good-quality products and services
- any complaints and problems to be dealt with properly
- their opinion to matter

Good customer service meets these expectations.

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An organisation needs to offer good customer service at all times so that it can survive and thrive. If the customers are satisfied with the products or services, they return and they recommend the organisation to others. Quite simply, this keeps the organisation alive and means that their employees' jobs are safer.



The **purpose** of customer service is to:

- provide good-quality products and services that meet or exceed customers' expectations
- provide an efficient and polite service before, during and after a transaction
- treat customers with respect and consideration
- deal with any feedback, complaints and problems effectively

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The **scope** of customer service is very broad as it can affect many people. There can be serious consequences if customer service is not good enough, for example:

- dissatisfied customers who go elsewhere for their products and services
- a loss of revenue and good reputation for the organisation
- loss of jobs, security and career development for employees
- a knock-on effect on suppliers if the organisation reduces its output or fails
- a knock-on effect on the local community if an employer moves away or makes its workers redundant

On the other hand, good customer service has the scope to make a positive impact on everyone concerned. For example, good customer service can:

- meet or exceed their customers' expectations, inspire their loyalty and encourage repeat business and recommendations
- ensure that products and services are developed and provided to meet and exceed current and changing expectations
- help to make sure that the organisation is successful and sustainable, which can have a positive knock-on effect on suppliers and the local community
- help to give staff job security and scope for career development with a successful employer

When considering the scope of customer service, we need to remember that it is important before, during and after the transaction when the customer buys or uses a product or service.

Knowledge Activity 1: Look on the Internet and find three examples of how companies define their customer service (e.g. the John Lewis Partnership) and make a few notes about each statement.



1.

2.

3.

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An organisation's service offer

Please read the following as it will help you to answer questions 2 and 3.

Organisations offer their customer a range of products and services. The extent and limits of the customer service that an organisation offers its customers is called its **service offer**.

The service offer will cover many things, for example:

- **the range of goods and services offered**
- **pricing** – e.g. stating the price including Value Added Tax (VAT), or maybe excluding VAT for trade customers
- **discounts** – e.g. buy one get one free; 10% off if customers buy today
- **delivery options** – e.g. free for standard delivery when customers spend above a minimum amount; charges for overnight or weekend delivery
- **installation options** – e.g. charges for installing household appliances like washing machines
- **warranties** – e.g. extended warranties on electrical goods that guarantee repairs or replacement if there are faults after the period covered by the manufacturer
- **returns policies** – e.g. rules about exchanges or refunds on returned items that are not faulty
- **other value-added features** – e.g. loyalty card points

The service offer can include items and deals that are in addition to the customer's normal statutory rights, which we cover later on.

An organisation's service offer might be covered in a Service Level Agreement (SLA) between two parties. For example, trade show organisers will have an SLA with the catering outlets that serve the public attending the show. This will cover agreed levels of prices, quality, service, waste disposal, safety and emergency arrangements and so on.



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The value of service offers for an organisation

Service offers can all be different, which can be valuable to an organisation that wants to offer something that their competitors do not.

Supermarkets often change their service offer to make themselves more appealing to current and potential customers. They might, for example:

- have a special deal for a week to lure customers in within a few days
- have long-term deals and bargains that customers know will always be there
- offer a very wide range of choice – e.g. 50 brands of bread or coffee
- offer a select and restricted choice – e.g. only locally-produced, organic food and drink
- stay open for longer hours
- offer free parking for a few hours
- have a variety of trolleys and baskets to suit different customers
- have wider aisles for easy access
- make sure that their staff are known for always being polite and friendly
- offer a 'no-frills' service with a very short turnaround time at the till
- pack customers' bags for them
- take groceries to their cars
- offer home delivery for in-store or Internet shopping
- offer free coffee and newspapers to loyalty card customers
- have loyalty schemes so that customers can earn points that they can redeem for goods and services
- offer non-grocery services – e.g. foreign currency exchanges, pharmacies or eye tests

These service offers are all valuable to the organisation as they allow them to:

- differentiate themselves from competitors
- attract more business
- keep themselves in the public eye when they make announcements or offer special deals
- secure and maintain customer loyalty
- set a high standard of customer service
- meet and exceed customer expectations

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Knowledge Activity 2: Think about businesses that you use and make a few notes about what they offer to make themselves seem different to their competitors. For example:



Supermarkets and local food stores

Mobile phone providers

Local restaurants and cafes

Delivering high-quality customer service

Please read the following as it will help you to answer question 4.

As we have already seen, good customer service is at the heart of an organisation's ability to survive and thrive, look after its customers and provide better job security and prospects. To provide high-quality customer service, an organisation needs to:

- meet or exceed customers' expectations
- ensure that staff perform at the highest level

Customer expectations can be met or exceeded by giving them:

- the best service offer
- good-quality products and services
- the highest quality of customer service before, during and after the transaction



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