

LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT
DISPATCHER/CUSTOMER SERVICE

1850-30874

Expanded Course Outline

Instructional Goal: To define, explain and demonstrate the need for positive communication skills in a customer service training format for Public Safety Dispatchers (PSD).

Performance Objective: The PSD will be able to:

- ❑ Identify the proper customer service techniques
- ❑ Demonstrate proper customer service skills

I. CUSTOMER SERVICE OVERVIEW

(1 hour)

A. Introduction

1. Instructor (s)
 - a. Name and assignment
 - b. Experience
 - c. Contact Numbers

B. Administrative Responsibilities

1. Breaks
2. Facility information

C. Course Overview

1. Expectation of course demeanor

D. **ICE BREAKER:** Customer Service Introduction

Procedure: Large group activity

1. Lead a group discussion about customer service; specifically, quality customer service and poor customer service and the customer goals for the Public Safety Dispatcher (PSD.)

E. Overview of training goals and objectives

1. Work Environment
2. Customer Service Specifics
3. Communication Guidelines
4. Progressive Communications Training

F. **LEARNING ACTIVITY:** Disclosure Introduction-

Purpose: To get the class familiar with all the students and to encourage class interaction.

Procedures: Small group activity

1. Divide the class into pairs
2. Advise the class they have 10 minutes to interview each other by asking the following questions.
 - a. What is your greatest achievement?
 - b. What is your most prized possession?
 - c. If you can have a T-shirt made with a message, what would it say?
 - d. What is the most fun you have ever had?
 - e. If you discovered you had only one year to live, what would you do differently?
 - f. If you were stranded on a desert island, what 3 books would like to have along?

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- g. What 3 people would you like to have with you?
- 3. Have each group, upon completion in the allotted time, stand up in the front of the classroom or at their seats and introduce each other to the class based upon the information from the interview.
- 4. Review the class the following key points
 - a. The exercise was conducted to familiarize the class with each other
 - b. Produce a level of ease with each other.
 - c. This course will involve group discussion and interaction.
- G. Reinforce key learning points.

II. WORK ENVIRONMENT

(1 hour)

A. Customers

1. Public as Customers

Procedures: Large Group Activity

Point Out: How the PSD can change their concept of the Public calling for police service. Make the connection between how labels influence perceptions and can affect the quality of service given.

- a. The Caller versus Customer
- b. **Scribe** on the board or poster paper.
 - 1) Make two columns separated by a bridge or line connecting the two columns.
 - 2) Title column one "NEGATIVE CONNOTATION". Write complaining witness/caller under the heading
 - 3) Title the second column "POSITIVE CONNOTATION" with the word customer under the title.
 - 4) Write on each line or bridge the title in this section, DEVELOPING A SERVICE ATTITUDE AND IMPROVING LISTENING SKILLS

NEGATIVE CONNOTATION	CHANGE	POSITIVE CONNOTATION
COMPLAINANT/CALLER	DEVELOPING A SERVICE ATTITUDE	CUSTOMER
	IMPROVING LISTENING SKILLS	

c. A change can be achieved by "DEVELOPING A SERVICE ATTITUDE and IMPROVING LISTENING SKILLS."

- 1. Who are our customers?
 - a. **ASK** the class to name the "customers" we serve
 - b. Reinforce the points to keep in mind regarding the public as our customer:
- 2. **LEARNING ACTIVITY:** Customer Service Demonstration-(LA-3)

Procedures: Large group forum activity

Purpose: To demonstrate how volatile customer service complaints can be, convey the importance that "attitude" plays in customer service along with the importance of communication skills.

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- a. Have one student play the role of the customer and one student to play the role of the call-taker/dispatcher.
- b. The facilitator will distribute scripts to the role players.
- c. The two students will follow the script portraying a call-taker/dispatcher and a customer, to demonstrate negative/positive aspects of customer service.
- d. Debrief the activity after role playing.

III. GENERATIONS/CULTURE DEFINED

(1 ½ HOURS)

- A. Define “generation”
- B. Define “culture”
- C. **LEARNING ACTIVITY:** Generation/Culture Breakdown (LA-4)
 1. Each group / table is assigned a generation, have each group choose a culture that is represented in their community.
 2. Each group will use available technology (i.e. Cell phones, tablets, etc.) to research topics as it relates to their assigned generation/Culture
 3. Explain and expound
 4. Instructor will facilitate a discussion.
- D. Discuss characteristics of generations
 1. Traditionalist
 2. Baby Boobers
 3. “X” Generation
 4. “Y” Generation
 5. “Z” Generation
- E. Facilitate a discussion about how Generations and Culture can impact a PSD.
- F. Attitude (GROUP DISCUSSION)
 1. Developing a Service Attitude
 - a. Representation Skills
 - b. Disney’s Customer Service Technique¹
 - 1) On Stage
 - 2) Off Stage
 - c. Discuss with the class what can be the result of using your “Off Stage” behavior “On Stage”?
 2. The Voice
 - a. It’s not always what we say but how we say it.
 - b. Your voice is the first representation that the public will encounter.
 - c. First impression can be based upon how it is interpreted and later influence the caller’s attitude.
 - d. Discuss voice representation
 3. Choose your Attitude
 - a. Select a positive attitude prior to work to facilitate your “on stage” behavior
 - b. Choose an attitude that will have a positive affect not only the customers, but your co-workers as well.
 - c. Discuss the consequence of displaying a negative attitude for a PSD.
 - d. Discuss the consequence of displaying positive attitudes for a PSD.
 4. **LEARNING ACTIVITY:** Dispatcher Attitudes

Procedure: Small group activity

¹ Kevin Willett-PSTC 911-Customer Service the 911-Way

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Purpose: The students will participate in a learning activity that will reinforce the importance of modeling a positive attitude and how they can affect change by improving their own attitude. Emphasis on attitudes the student would like projected in their Communications center.

5. **LEARNING ACTIVITY:** Employee Attitudes

Procedures: Small group activity

Purpose: The students will participate in a learning activity that will reinforce the impact of a positive attitude as it relates to the duties of a PSD call-taker.

- a. Divide the class into small groups, discuss;
 - 1) Valuing Diversity
 - 2) Being Liability Conscious
 - 3) Avoiding Discriminatory Behavior
- b. Debrief reinforcing key learning points.

6. **LEARNING ACTIVITY:** Back to the Headlines

Procedure: Small group activity

Purpose: To demonstrate the importance of not only personal liability but agency liability.

- a. Divide the class into equal groups
- b. Distribute the **Handout:** Back to the Headlines² to each students
- c. Advise each student to quietly read the article the group will discuss the article.
- d. Distribute poster paper with the heading Excuses, Liability, and The Change in three columns
- e. The groups will lead a discussion and answer the following questions for each column.
 - 1) Excuses-in this section student will try to guess and write down three possible reasons these employees performed in this manner.
 - 2) Liability-in this section the group will list all areas where they see a liability issue and their possible outcomes for discussion.
 - 3) The Change- in this section the group will decide on three training related issues they would first address if they were the "chief" of this agency to ensure to the public this would never happen again.
- f. The class will reconvene, and each group will discuss their findings.
- g. Debrief by reinforcing the following key points:
 - 1) Liability issues plague every call in the Communications center.
 - 2) Liability issue becomes departmental training issue
 - 3) Liability issues can affect public trust in your agency.

C. CLOSING: Reinforce key learning points

⁴ The Baltimore Sun Company, Copyright 2001, 8/25/2001

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IV. CUSTOMER SERVICE SPECIFICS

(1 ½ hours)

A. Customer Service Specifics (Group Discussion)

1. **ASK** the class to identify the three most important rights the public has when contacting their agency for assistance.
2. The Caller's Rights
 - a. Privacy
 - b. Confidentiality
 - c. Quality Service:
 - 1) Police Protection
 - 2) Fire Response
 - 3) Emergency Medical Services (EMS) response
3. **ASK** the class how can an agency ensure that the following rights are provided to each caller?
4. **ASK** the class are these rights realistic for law enforcement situation? Why or why not?

B. The Public's Expectations

1. **ASK** the class to give five expectations they have when contacting emergency services.
2. Reinforce key point:
 - a. Remember that many negative views about customer service are due to unmet expectations
 - b. Providing the best customer service does not necessarily translate into pleasing your all customers

C. Ethical Behavior

1. Ethical standard of conduct
 - a. Ethics are the accepted rules of conduct governing an individual or group, which are based upon held values. Essentially, one's ethics constitute their morality.
 - b. Ethics play a dominant role in one's daily conduct, affecting the personal choices that are made.
 - c. Common to almost every major philosophy of life throughout history is the basic ethical concept of the Golden Rule: "Do unto others what you would have others do unto you". This concept recognizes the intrinsic value of everyone. It establishes an essential aspect of ethics: a good person is concerned with and responsible for the well-being of others.
 - d. Scribe the following responses on the board or poster paper
 - e. Discuss the role ethics plays in the job of a PSD?
2. Reinforce the following key points:
 - a. As a part of law enforcement, the PSD is held to a higher level of ethical standards
 - b. Vested with a public, peer and officers trust
 - c. Worthy of that trust
 - d. Professional conduct above reproach
 - e. Recognize the influences on ethical reasoning when making decisions regarding appropriate ethical conduct
 - f. Profound unethical behavior, such as, discrimination, alcohol and other substance abuse, obstruction or miscarriage of justice, may be obvious.
 - g. Inappropriate ethical behavior/decision making is not the same as avoiding wrong behavior.

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h. Making ethical decisions require more than compliance with the law, rules, and regulations that govern professional performance.

3. **LEARNING ACTIVITY:** Ethical Dilemma

Procedure: Large/classroom activity

Purpose: To view and discuss what affects ethical behavior for a PSD

a. The students will participate in a learning activity that will reinforce the importance of ethical behavior for a PSD.

b. The instructor will facilitate a discussion on ethical behavior.

c. Discuss call-taker "ethical reasoning."

4. **LEARNING ACTIVITY:** "Ethics Scenarios"

Procedure: Small group activity

Purpose: To apply ethical decision making based on the various scenarios

Optional variation: The facilitator may assign each group to address one of the following issues:

- Community attitudes,
- Citizens in the scenario
- The other PSDs in the scenario,
- The PSD's Department,
- The PSD (him/herself)

a. Divide the class into small groups

b. Each group will select a recorder and a reporter (it can be the same person)

c. Have each group discuss ethics scenarios.

d. The group will have fifteen minutes to discuss and answer the following questions:

1) What was the unethical behavior?

2) What was some option behavior?

e. Debrief the activity by having each group reporter read their scenario and findings to the class.

V COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES

(1 ½ Hours)

A. **LEARNING ACTIVITY #9:** Daisy Chain Story (LA-9)

Procedure: Large group activity

Purpose: To demonstrate the importance of communication

1. The facilitator will select one student from the class to silently read the Daisy Chain Story.

DAISY CHAIN STORY

Mrs. Madeline Rodriguez arrived at her residence at 123 El Camino in Menlo Park, on Friday, February 16th, at approximately 8 p.m.

She found her diamond and amethyst earrings on top of a table in the hallway, and her pearl and onyx choker were lying on the floor near the kitchen.

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A goldfish bowl was overturned with half the water spilled and Siamese fighting fish flip-flopping on the floor near the fireplace.

Mrs. Rodriguez was in the midst of calling the fire department to report a burglary when her Siamese cat, "Coco", came into the living room dragging a gold chain in her teeth. She pushed the partially open bedroom door and saw "Coffee", her Persian cat, lying in the middle of the floor playing with the contents of the jewelry box scattered around it.

She placed Coco in the laundry room and scolded the Persian cat saying, "That's the second time this week. Next time you're going to the SPCA!" knowing they somehow knew she did not mean it.

2. After the student has read the story, the facilitator will take away the paper and that student will whisper the story to another student, recalling the story to the best of their ability. The story will continue to be whispered from one student to the next until the last student receives the story.
3. Once the last student has been told the story, that student will repeat the story aloud to the class.
4. Debrief the activity by reinforce the following key points:
 - a. Information can be distorted when information is passed down
 - b. Distorted information can produce untrue and hurtful rumors
 - c. Distorted information in law enforcement can mean the difference in apprehension of a suspect, solving a case, or the outcome in a court case.

B. Communication Styles (Discussion)

Point Out:

1. A person's communication style depends upon the delivery of verbal and non-verbal communication combined.
2. A friendly style is simply expressed with open body language and an upbeat voice tone and tempo.
3. This contrasts to an argumentative style, which generally has closed body language and harsh voice tone and tempo.
4. A successful PSD requires a temperament that is assertive, precise, attentive, flexible, and relaxed. And all of these simultaneously!
5. Often the pressure of trying to quickly gather or disseminate information results in a style that is aggressive, abrasive, and dominant.
6. Always be conscientious of feedback.

C. Listening Skills

1. Active Listening

Scribe the answers on the board or on poster paper

- a. **ASK** the class to provide examples of active listening

Correct Responses:

- 1) Wanting to understand the other's message.
- 2) Trying to understand the other's message and feelings.
- 3) Respecting the other's feelings.
- 4) Trusting and believing in the other person.
- 5) Refraining from projecting feelings onto the other person.

- b. **ASK** the class to provide examples of what is not active listening

Correct Response:

- 1) Lecturing;
- 2) Sympathizing;
- 3) Criticizing;
- 4) Minimizing;
- 5) Preaching; or
- 6) Providing Unsolicited Advice.

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- c. **ASK** the class: What are some the benefits of using active listening?

Correct Response:

- 1) Positive Attitude;
- 2) Safe Environment; and
- 3) Open Mind.

2. **LEARNING ACTIVITY:** Active Listening

Procedures: Small group activity

Purpose: To have students apply and practice active listen skills

- a. Discuss: Active Listening
- b. Briefly review the types of active listening:
 - 1) Minimal Encouragement
 - 2) Paraphrasing
 - 3) Emotion Labeling
 - 4) Mirroring (or Reflecting)
 - 5) Open-Ended Questions
 - 6) "I" Messages
 - 7) Effective Pauses
- c. Divide the class into groups.
- d. Have each group decide who will play the role of:
 - 1) Active listener
 - 2) Role player
 - 3) Observer
- e. The students will participate in a learning activity that will reinforce the importance of active listening and the impact of applying and practicing listening skills through role play.

3. Listening Obstacles

- a. Outside interference (noise/location)
- b. There are a wide number of sources of noise or interference that can enter the communication process.
- c. Noise may be a result of perceptual biases, stereotyping, past experiences, cultural differences, language barriers.
- d. In the workplace noise can be misreading of body language, tone, selective hearing, power struggles, self-fulfilling assumptions, lack of candor, physical distractions.
- e. Communication "Noise" is caused by a distrusted source, erroneous translation, value judgment, and the state of mind of parties involved. This can even occur when people know each other.
- f. In a dispatch center the setting can add to the complicated and complex nature of communication.
- g. In addition to common workplace "noise", continuous interruptions from calls or officer broadcasts can disrupt non-verbal cues and thought processes.
- h. Additional listening obstacles to reinforce:
 - 1) Jumping to conclusions
 - 2) Interrupting -Good verses Bad
 - 3) Judgement/Stereotyping
 - 4) 275 Gap -Talk at 125 wpm/Process 400 (400-125=275). The gap between words that are processed and the rate in which we speak.

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D. LEARNING ACTIVITY: Effective Interviewing and Listening Skills

Procedure: In a large group forum briefly overview some common listening obstacles

Propose: The students will engage in an activity to familiarize the students with the various listening obstacles that have an impact during an interview.

1. **ASK** the class to give an example

Expected Responses:

- a. Minimal Encouragement- "uh huh", How, Where
- b. Paraphrasing-"let me understand. You are saying that
- c. Emotion Labeling-"You sound afraid, I hearing you crying ...
- d. Mirroring (or reflecting)-You went to the station for a police report?
- e. Open-ended Questions-What Happen?
- f. "I" Message- "I was feeling confused when you started talking about.....
- g. Effective Pauses- Customer is venting #*@&&^\$##... the caller-taker remains silent for a few minutes and listens to the information.

E. LEARNING ACTIVITY #12: "Dos & Don'ts" (LA-12)

Procedure: Small group activity for students to share their knowledge of Customer Service Dos and Don'ts

Purpose: Participants will share their knowledge of Customer Service "Dos and Don'ts"

1. Divide the class into equal groups
2. The group will select a recorder and a reporter. (one person can do both duties)
3. The groups will discuss and compile a list of behaviors that are appropriate and inappropriate in the workplace as it relates to dealing with:
 - a. The Public
 - b. Officers
 - c. Supervisors
4. Each group will select a spokesperson and present their findings.
5. Debrief the activity with the following key points:
 - a. The Don't List
 - 1) Don't lie
 - 2) Don't make empty promises
 - 3) Don't patronize
 - 4) Don't be rude
 - 5) Don't condescend
 - 6) Don't use profanity
 - 7) Don't sympathize
 - 8) Don't let caller control the conversation
 - 9) Don't personalize
 - a) Be careful about injecting personal feelings, experiences
 - 10) Don't diminish the importance of the caller's issue

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11) Don't give legal advice

b. The Do List

- 1) Be truthful
- 2) Be polite
- 3) Be empathetic
- 4) Take control of the conversation
- 5) Use courteous language
 - a) Please, thank you
 - b) Proper titles (Mr., Mrs. Sgt., LT., etc.)
- 6) Be a good listener
- 7) Provide options/solutions
 - a) Includes agency referrals
 - b) Hotlines

F. Difficult Callers

Briefly **Point Out:** The Five Step³ for handling difficult callers

1. **Ask**

This is the greeting, introduction, or first contact.

2. **Set Context**

This is the reason for the contact, stop, detention etc. During this phase, the questioner also discusses the situation with the involved party.... Reasons for actions, behavior etc. and obtain related details.

3. **Present Options**

After the matter has been discussed, the questioner or presenter offers options for disposition of the situation. These are disposition choices and the other person is encouraged to choose one of the options.

4. **Confirm**

Questions like.... "Is there anything I can say or get you to....? Is appropriate here. The point is to keep the other party focused on the issue at hand, to eliminate excessive repetition, and to make a choice, which would resolve or help resolve the situation.

5. **Act**

Self-explanatory. Do what you are going to do. (George Thompson)

- a. Begin in a friendly way
- b. Use reasoning and calming communication techniques
- c. Verbal abuse; don't engage in verbal confrontations
 - 1) Example: "I understand it's been 20 minutes Sir, I'll get an officer there as soon as one is available."
 - 2) **ASK** the students to give another example
- d. Redirect and focus –on the problem or situation
- e. Explain reason for unsatisfactory service and apologize, etc. if needed

G. **LEARNING ACTIVITY:** Things You'd Love to Say to the Public but Can't

Purpose: To allow the PSD to create humorous antidote for difficult customers.

Procedures: Small group activity

1. Divide the class into small equal groups
2. Each group will select a reported/recorder

³ SGT Rand Padgett, Clovis Police Department

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3. Distribute poster paper
 4. **ASK** the groups to create a list of things they would love to say to the public but can't
 5. Advise the class of the ground's rules for this activity:
 - a. No inappropriate language or derogatory statements that would degrade a person or groups of people.
 - b. No derogatory racial or sexual comments
 6. After 10 minutes stop the activity and have the class reconvene
 7. Each groups reporter will present their list to the class
 8. Debrief the activity
- H. CLOSING: Reinforce key learning points
1. Remember that many negative views about customer service are due to unmet expectations
 2. Providing the best customer service does not necessarily translate into pleasing all customers
 3. As a part of law enforcement, the PSD is held to a higher level of ethical standards
 4. PSDs are vested with a public, peer and officers trust
 5. Worthy of that trust
 6. Recognize the influences on ethical reasoning when making decisions regarding appropriate ethical conduct.
 7. Profound unethical behavior, such as, discrimination, alcohol and other substance abuse, obstruction or miscarriage of justice, may be obvious.
 8. In appropriate ethical behavior/decision making is not the same as avoiding wrong behavior
 9. Making ethical decisions require more than compliance with the law, rules, and regulations that govern professional performance.
 10. A person's communication style depends upon the delivery of verbal and non-verbal communication combined
 11. A friendly style is simple expressed with open body language and an upbeat voice tone and tempo.
 12. This contrasts to an argumentative style, which generally has closed body language and harsh voice tone and tempo.
 13. A successful PSD requires a temperament that is assertive, precise, attentive, flexible, and relaxed. And all of these simultaneously.
 14. Often the pressure of trying to quickly gather or disseminate information results in a style that is aggressive, abrasive, and dominant.
 15. Always be conscientious of feedback.

**VI. PROGRESSIVE COMMUNICATIONS TRAINING
(1 hour)**

- A. New training concepts
1. Verbal Judo: non-confrontational conversation
 2. Tactical Communications: non-confrontational conversation
 - a. We should avoid the following:
 - 1) Being too authoritative
 - 2) Preaching
 - 3) Prejudging
 - 4) Law school 101
 - b. **ASK** the class for addition points to avoid
Expected Responses

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- 1) Passive
 - 2) Elusive
 - 3) Not using active listening skills
 3. Technological Advances-Companies, government and private sector have changed dramatically in how we technologically accomplish our job.
 4. New equipment, ideas and outlooks can be mastered
- B. **LEARNING ACTIVITY:** Strategies for Superior Customer Service

Purpose: To improve problems solving and communication skills

Procedure: The students will participate in a learning activity that will reinforce how to effectively deal with problem customers to their satisfaction.

1. **Core Values:** Debrief by reinforcing customer service with these
 - a) "Service to Our Communities-we are dedicated to enhancing public safety and reducing the fear and the incidence of crime. People in our communities are our most important customers... "- Los Angeles Police Department
 - b) To those we serve, we want to be the best..." – Clovis Police Department
 - c) "..... Partner with the people we serve to secure and promote safety in our communities ..." – Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

VII. CONCLUSION

(30 MIN)

- A. Reinforce the learning points
1. The goal of the PSD is to have positive contact while providing the appropriate service to meet the needs of the caller.
 2. The work environment has an impact on positive contact.
 3. The PSD should view callers as customers
 4. The Customer as a caller rights must be honored:
 - a. The right to quality service
 - 1) Let's tell our customer what we **CAN DO** instead of emphasizing what we **CAN NOT DO**.
 - b. Highly trained personnel
 - 1) Professional attitude
 - 2) Continuously updating skills
 5. The right to privacy
 - a. Not allowing other PSD to listen or view calls for non-business-related reasons
 7. The right of confidentiality
 - a. The ability to report a crime without necessarily exposing who they are to others (i.e. officers, media, etc.)
 - b. Obtaining and relaying information only on a need to know basis within the scope of your duties.
- B. Individual responsibility and roles
1. It's the employee's responsibility to be the agency representative
 2. It's the caller's responsibility to assist in the solving the problem
 3. The PSD solving every problem may not be the best customer service
 4. The victim/involved needs to sometimes feel a part of the solution process.

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5. "They will forget what you said, they will forget what you did, but they will never forget how you made them feel." ⁴
- C. Course Evaluations and Post Roster

⁴ Anonymous Author