



# Customer Service 101: *Providing Top-Notch Service to Boston University's Diverse "Customers"*

## General Customer Service Tips & Techniques

- ◆ Speak to customers in a mature, professional manner.
- ◆ Put yourself in the customer's position. Follow the "**Golden Rule**" (i.e. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you").
- ◆ Have commonly used resources available (i.e. commonly requested phone numbers and/or information, etc.).
- ◆ Be **accountable** for customers you assist, whether on the phone or in person. **Example:** If you tell a customer that you will call him/her back, be sure to follow through in a timely manner. If you are unable to get back to the person during your shift, pass along the details of the situation to your supervisor, so he/she may follow up.
- ◆ If you are dealing with a customer in person, be aware of your body language and "non-verbal communication". Make eye contact and act interested in the customer's inquiry.
- ◆ When speaking to customers outside the BU community, avoid using BU "lingo", such as GSU, CAS, or SEO.
- ◆ If you don't understand the customer's question or situation, ask him/her questions to clarify your understanding...don't make assumptions about what the customer is asking.
- ◆ If you can't answer the customer's question or you are uncomfortable handling the situation, refer him/her to a staff member who is able to help. Try to explain the situation as best you can to the person you're referring the customer to, so the customer does not have to reiterate what he/she has already told you.

## Providing Customer Service on the Phone

- ◆ Ask your supervisor if there is a specific protocol for answering phones in your department...and if so, use it. Otherwise, answer the phone in a professional manner, identifying the name of the department as well as your name.

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## Providing Customer Service on the Phone (*continued*)

- ◆ Find out the procedure for transferring calls to other staff members or to voicemail.
- ◆ Speak clearly and at a normal volume and pace. Keep in mind that if a customer is a non-native English speaker, you may need to speak more slowly (but not more loudly!).
- ◆ Use conversation cues—such as “yes”, “okay”, “uh-huh”, etc.—to let the customer know you’re paying attention to what he/she is saying.
- ◆ If it’s going to take a while to resolve the customer’s issue/question, ask the customer whether he/she would prefer to hold or have you call him/her back with an answer. If the customer is holding, do not keep him/her on hold for more than a minute or two. If you are calling the customer back, try to give him/her an approximate time frame in which to expect a response.

## Dealing with Difficult Customer Service Situations

- ◆ Listen patiently to the customer and allow him/her to “vent”. Angry or frustrated customers generally will not listen to or accept your response until they have had a chance to voice their concerns and frustration.
- ◆ Express empathy/regret.
- ◆ Don’t get defensive and don’t blame the customer. The problem may be a result of something the customer did incorrectly, but blaming the customer will only exacerbate the situation.
- ◆ Don’t argue with the customer. If you have tried to resolve the situation and are not getting anywhere, refer the customer to your supervisor.
- ◆ If possible, offer several ways of dealing with the problem at hand and allow the customer to choose a resolution.
- ◆ Don’t make promises to customers unless you are absolutely certain you can deliver what’s been promised.
- ◆ If the customer asks to speak to your supervisor or a manager, don’t take it personally; it’s natural for customers to want to confirm information with a manager-level staff member. When this happens, simply ask your supervisor if he/she is available to speak with the customer. If so, refer the customer to him/her. If not, politely ask the customer if he/she would like to speak to another staff member or leave his/her phone number for the supervisor to contact him/her later.
- ◆ After dealing with a difficult situation or angry customer, it is advisable to inform your supervisor about the interaction, even if you feel that you handled it appropriately.