

An empathic response requires that your comments *reflect* what your customer has told you. When you listen with empathy you are able to read between the lines, and listen for what is not being said. You will be able to do this if you:

- Listen with your heart as well as your head – this means listening to the customer's feelings as well as his/her words
- Show him/her that you understand how he/she feels
- Apologize when necessary
- Commit to finding mutually acceptable ways of resolving the problem
- Use a warm, friendly and encouraging tone
- Be sincere

In your interactions with the client you must avoid erecting barriers to active listening and empathy. For more information on barriers to listening, you are advised to refer to the website noted on page 10.



CHECKPOINT

- Identify five barriers to active listening and empathy and explain the steps that you can take to eliminate them.
- List three active listening techniques that can be used to identify a customer's request.

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ACTIVITY

Engage your colleague in a discussion as a means of demonstrating and examining various active listening techniques. Alternate your roles so that you each get an opportunity to practise listening.



Refer to: *Active listening and empathy*

http://www.westcoast.wa.edu.au/callcentre2/toolbox/intranet/asm/act_list.htm

Site visited December 2005

The use of effective questioning techniques will help you obtain information in a more effective way. There are five main types of questions:

- Advise the customer of the product/service pricing options
- Give the customer an opportunity to question options or prices
- Explain the features and benefits of the various product /service options

Product/Service Pricing Options

Many times it will be the price and pricing options that cinches the sale. Pricing options are based on:

- Quantity
- Payment method
- Package deals
- Installation or maintenance charges

Tip! Where possible, avoid discussing the price until you have discussed the product/service features and benefits. However, if the customer asks up front about the price you should give it to him/her without hesitation.

Opportunity to Question Options

Customers often have concerns about whether the product or service will suit his/her needs and whether the price falls within his/her budget. Therefore, you should give your customer an opportunity to question your offer. If the customer offers any objections, you should go back to the product features and benefits, highlighting the benefits so that he/she can see how using the product/service will add value to his/her life. Until the customer is fully convinced that he/she wants what you are offering, there is always the risk of buyer's remorse which could lead to the customer returning the product or canceling the service.

EXPLAIN FEATURES AND BENEFITS

Features - the characteristics of a product or service such as weight, height or colour.

Every product or service has features. A feature is the distinctive or unique aspect/attribute of a product or service; a fact that is true about a product or service whether it is tangible or intangible. For example:

READY TO TEST PROVE YOUR COMPETENCE?

Now that you have completed this element, check whether you have fully grasped all the components by doing the following Self-assessment:

Checklist 1	Yes	No
1. I know how to acknowledge customer or agent using standard phrases within policy and established procedures	()	()
2. I understand how to identify customer request using active listening and empathy	()	()
3. I know how to identify and recommend options to satisfy the customer's request within policy and established procedures	()	()
4. I know how to explain features and benefits of products or services	()	()
5. I understand how to discuss and agree on a commitment to meeting the customer's request	()	()
Checklist 2	Yes	No
1. Customer or agent is acknowledged using standard phrases within policy and established procedures	()	()
2. Customer's request is identified using active listening and empathy as appropriate	()	()
3. Options to satisfy the customer's request are identified and recommended within policy and established procedures	()	()
4. Features and benefits of products or services are explained	()	()
5. A commitment to meeting the customer's request is discussed and agreed	()	()

READY TO TEST YOUR COMPETENCE?

Now that you have completed this element, check whether you have fully grasped all the components by doing the following Self-assessment:

Checklist 1	Yes	No
1. I know how make regular checks on supply of products or services to customers	()	()
2. I know how to inform customer of progress at appropriate intervals	()	()
3. I understand how to provide clear explanation to customers for delays or inability to meet commitments	()	()
4. I know how to monitor customer satisfaction at each stage of the supply process	()	()
5. I understand how to end call with expression of appreciation	()	()
6. I can observe legislation, codes, regulations and standards throughout transaction	()	()
Checklist 2	Yes	No
1. Regular checks on supply of products or services to customers	()	()
2. Customer is informed of progress at appropriate intervals	()	()
3. Clear explanation is provided to customers of delays or inability to meet commitments	()	()
4. Customer satisfactions at each stage of the supply process is monitored	()	()
5. Calls are ended with expression of appreciation	()	()
6. Legislation, codes, regulations and standards are observed throughout transaction	()	()