

Student name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Identify strategies to use with a difficult customer.

### Objectives:

- A. Identify the common types of difficult customers.
- B. Explain the causes of handling a difficult customer ineffectively.
- C. Describe the skills needed to handle a difficult customer.

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### MODULE 4H: INFORMATION SHEET

*TO THE STUDENT: Read and study this information sheet and complete the student activity at the end.*

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#### **The best work environment**

The best work environment is one in which employers and employees work together as a team, supporting, leading, and sharing goals. In such an environment, each person must meet his or her responsibilities and do a good job. Every employee on the team must help the employer sustain this spirit of cooperation and achievement. One of the biggest challenges that a team can face is in dealing with a difficult customer. If you can't handle such challenges effectively, you will be limited in your ability to respond to a variety of customers. If you have difficult customer relations, you may lose your job.

#### **Difficult Customers**

Every business has its difficult customers. We all know them, the people who complain about everything. They come in all shapes and sizes, but here are a few of the more common types.

- People who know everything (some even appear—or try to appear—to know your

business better than you do.)

- People who are indecisive and don't know what they want.
- People who are rude or thoughtless to personnel or salespeople.
- People who always want to negotiate a lower price for a service or product.

These types of customers, whether right or wrong, can create difficulties in any workplace. Their way of handling problems is often to attack the people who serve them, including you. Complaints, real or imagined, can create a negative impression for your organization and may even cause problems with your employer down the road.

### Causes of Handling a Difficult Customer Ineffectively

A major problem that often arises in handling difficult customers is when the employee takes the whole incident as a contest of wills and decided to show the customer who's right. Here are some possible causes for this behavior.

- Failure to listen carefully to the customer's complaint.
- Failure to try to see the other person's point of view.
- Failure to acknowledge that the customer may be right (or at least partially right).
- Failure to negotiate (to try to achieve a "win-win" solution).
- Failure to be flexible.
- Failure to find creative ways to address and solve the problem.

### How to Handle Difficult Customers

Handling difficult customers effectively is often a matter of three qualities: tact, creativity, and empathy. Let's look at the role of each of these qualities.

***Tact*** is the ability to present or state the truth in positive and non-threatening terms. For example, if a customer asks your opinion about a certain purchase, you can respond, truthfully but tactlessly: "Oh, that's too much for you! You can't afford that!" A more tactful response would point out that the product chosen is more than the customer needs; that a scaled-down version of the product (which is also less expensive) would meet the customer's needs just as well.

**Creativity** is the ability to find unusual solutions to a client or customer's unique problems. Instead of recommending the standard software package to a client who wants a simple database management program, for example, you might find a less popular piece of software that does everything the client want and has several other features that he/she didn't explicitly request.

**Empathy** refers to the ability to put yourself in the customer's position, trying to understand and identify with his/her situation. Thus, you begin a conversation with a difficult customer who has a list of complaints about your business by listening carefully to him or her.

It may help to recall similar situations when you were angry or annoyed with a store or company. You don't have to tell each incident to the client - just let him or her know that you have had similar experiences and share their feelings of frustration.

Often, the customer's greatest need is simply to be heard - he or she wants to make sure that someone is listening to the story. If that someone happens to be you, listen carefully. Often the real complaint isn't the one the customer brings to you - it's something different.

The customer who begins talking about the poor quality of something he bought at your store may go on to talk about the declining quality of all merchandises of a certain kind. He's expressing frustration with not being able to get some product or service that was once very important to him, not just with your store's inability to deliver.

### Case Study - "*Difficult Diane*"

Diane works in an exclusive women's clothing store. The store customarily accepts returns on merchandise only within ten days of the purchase.

Sally Smith is one of the store's best customers. She often calls the store and asks that the merchandise be sent to her home via UPS. Sally travels a lot and often doesn't have the time to come in and try on items.

Diane had several blouses and a skirt sent to Sally's home. Two weeks later, Sally appeared at the store to return one blouse. "Wrong size, wrong color, wrong everything." explained Sally. "You sent the wrong thing!"

Diane reminded Sally of the store policy on returns. But Sally became angry, "It was YOUR fault!" she snapped at Diane. Diane became irate and shouted back at Sally, and an argument ensued. At last, Diane's supervisor came by to see what the trouble was.

Diane angrily explained, "She's trying to make us change our policy on returns! No way!"

When the supervisor heard the story, she took Diane aside and explained that Sally was one of their best customers and that in this case we can make the return ten days from the date of arrival rather than the date of order. "Rules can be bent a little for customers like her, so go back and tell her that we'll accept the return."

Diane refused to back down and walked away in a huff and the supervisor had to finish the transaction for her. Sally made the return and went home with the blouse she originally ordered. Diane will soon be looking for a new job - one in which she doesn't deal directly with customers.

### **Problem Prevention**

How can you prevent problems with difficult customers? Learn from the scenario above. Don't try to challenge the customer or prove him/her wrong in order to prove your point. In addition, follow these guidelines:

Agree with any points that the customer makes that are true. Don't get into a contest in which you argue every point the customer makes.

Try to find a win-win solution - a situation in which you and your business get what you want and need, but the customer also gets something he/she wants. While the old phrase, "The customer is always right." isn't literally true, it is operationally true--that is businesses should operate as if it were true.

Try to focus on "the big picture," which includes repeat business and an ongoing relationship with the customer. Instead of becoming involved in a contest of wills with the customer over the current issue, try to foresee what your future relationship with him or her will be like. It may be necessary to make concessions in order to preserve or build better relationships in the future.

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**MODULE 4H: STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

*TO THE STUDENT: Read and study the information sheet above and complete the following questions.*

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1. Why is it important to handle difficult customers effectively?
2. What might be some difficult customers for you to handle? Why?
3. What does "tact" mean? Give an example of an incident where you used (or might have used) tact in handling a difficult situation.
4. What is the relationship between creative thinking and handling a difficult customer? Explain your answer.
5. Have you ever been a difficult customer in a business situation? Explain why you felt the need to be difficult.



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**MODULE 4H: STANDARDS ADDRESSED IN THIS MODULE**

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**Pennsylvania’s Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening (RWSL)**

**1.1.11. Learning to Read Independently**

- E. Establish a reading vocabulary by identifying and correctly using new words acquired through the study of their relationships to other words. Use a dictionary or related reference.

**1.5.11. Quality of Writing**

- F. Edit writing using the conventions of language.
  - Spell all words correctly.
  - Use capital letters correctly.
  - Punctuate correctly (periods, exclamation points, question marks, commas, quotation marks, apostrophes, colons, semicolons, parentheses, hyphens, brackets, ellipses).
  - Use nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions and interjections properly.
  - Use complete sentences (simple, compound, complex, declarative, interrogative, exclamatory and imperative).

Student name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Describe racial, ethnic, and sex equity concerns.

### Objectives:

- A. List examples of stereotypes that affect the workplace.
- B. Discuss reasons why we should not stereotype.
- C. List groups that are affected by equity concerns.

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### MODULE 4-I: INFORMATION SHEET

*TO THE STUDENT:* Read and study this information sheet and complete the student activity at the end.

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#### **Racial, Ethnic and Sex Concerns**

Most companies will probably have statements such as; this company is an equal opportunity employer. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex or non-related handicap or disability. America became the world's melting pot but it was not an easy road and we still battle equality problems.

#### **America Equity Concerns**

America is arguably the most powerful nation in the world. It is also one of the youngest nations in the world. We have a rich history but not a perfect one. Some of the original settlers came to America to escape religious persecution. We established our government under the premise that all men are created equal. This unfortunately meant certain people were equal.

#### **A History of Inequality**

- Slavery
- Persecution of immigrants (Irish, Chinese)
- Women couldn't vote
- Japanese Americans put in internment camps



- The fight for civil rights
- Ethnic profiling

These are just a few examples of problems that we have encountered in our history. Can you think of any other concerns not mentioned?

### **What is Stereotyping?**

1. Webster's defines stereotype as a standardized conception or image held in common by members of a group. Stereotypes can be both positive and negative. You could look at a football player and think he is an athlete and he must be mentally tough. You may have heard all football players are dumb jocks. Neither of these statements is true for every football player. The key is to form opinions about people based on information you gain by getting to know that person.

### **Why is it important to understand racial, ethnic and gender concerns?**

Any type of racial, sexual or ethnic harassment or intimidation is against the law. It is important to understand that these laws not only protect students at school but people at work.

Some examples of harassment or intimidation include:

- Using insulting words or pictures such as jokes, letters, cartoons, etc.
- Using insulting comments such as slurs, jokes or name-calling
- Threats or force or violence
- Gestures or physical behavior

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**MODULE 4-I: STUDENT ACTIVITY**

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*TO THE STUDENT: Read and study the information sheet above and participate in the activity below.*

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**Jellybean Activity**

1. The instructor will provide jellybeans that are different colors but the colors do not correlate with one specific flavor.
2. The students will divide into even groups of 4-6 students in each group.
3. Divide the jellybeans by color and assign them to a group. The groups can be adults, boys, girls, Whites, Blacks, Hispanics, Orientals, teenagers, doctors, lawyers, custodian, police officers, Catholics, Jews, etc.
4. List all stereotypes attributed to that group.
5. Correlate the color with the flavor and the class stereotype, i.e. all lawyers are represented by green and the taste like lime.
6. The members of the group will sample the beans. Record your perception before you taste the bean and the reality of after you tasted the bean.
7. Have your group discuss how looks and perceptions can lead to judgments.
8. Define Diversity
9. Do you feel differently about stereotypes?
10. How did you feel when you expected one color to taste a certain way and it didn't, i.e. the green tasted like lemon instead of lime?
11. Explain how false perceptions could cause hurt feelings.

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**MODULE 4-I: STANDARDS ADDRESSED IN THIS MODULE**

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**Pennsylvania’s Academic Standards for Career Education and Work**

**13.3.11. Career Retention and Advancement**

- C. Evaluate conflict resolution skills as they relate to the workplace.
  - Constructive criticism
  - Group dynamics
  - Managing/leadership
  - Mediation
  - Negotiation
  - Problem solving

**Pennsylvania’s Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening (RWSL)**

**1.1.11. Learning to Read Independently**

- E. Establish a reading vocabulary by identifying and correctly using new words acquired through the study of their relationships to other words. Use a dictionary or related reference.

Student name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Developing problem-solving skills in the workplace.

### Objectives:

- A. Identify the five components for problem solving.
- B. Describe ways to solve a problem at work.

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### MODULE 4J: INFORMATION SHEET

*TO THE STUDENT: Read and study the following information sheet and then complete the student activities at the end of this module.*

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#### **Introduction**

In this module you will identify the five components used in problem solving strategies used in the workplace. The information provided is not all-inclusive; it is intended to serve as a guide for basic problem-solving skills used in the workplace.

#### **Problem-solving skills**

Employers, managers and employees are faced with problems every day. Having problems to deal with seems to be a fact of life. We cannot always prevent problems from occurring, but we have control over how we handle problems and how we cope with problems. Being willing to recognize problems is a start to finding effective solutions. There are no guarantees that the decisions we make will always be the right decisions. People who are willing to work through problems, though, are less likely to make snap judgments or generate more problems for themselves. They are more likely to be problem-solvers.

As new technologies make old job skills obsolete the nature and character of work changes. Business leaders stress that to be successful, today's workers must be able to solve problems in a variety of settings and adapt to this changing environment. These leaders are quick to point out that they need people who can analyze problems, gather and synthesize information, and present ideas clearly.

The environment in which it occurs shapes problem solving. Most shops or companies have procedures and guidelines that outline how many problems are investigated and how recommendations are to be made.

Trial and error and an extended, systematic approach are two ways of dealing with problems. Trial and error is a key strategy for problems that do not involve risk to people, equipment, or large sums of money. Trial and error is simply trying different solutions to see if they work; it is trying out a reasonable guess.

Extended systematic problem solving occurs when workers break a problem into parts and gather evidence before acting on a solution. Extended problem solving is a key approach for large problems involving many departments or offices or when people, equipment, and capital are at risk.

Problem solving is a skill that can be learned. There are many ways to solve problems. There is no one right way. However, using a problem-solving procedure may help find the best response to the situation.

### **Problem-solving procedure**

There are five steps in a problem-solving procedure:

1. Identify the problem.
2. Gather information about the situation.
3. List possible solutions to the problem.
4. Evaluate possible results of each solution.
5. Decide on the best solution.

#### 1. Identify the problem.

It is important to correctly identify the problem. Control your emotions so that you can talk about the problem. **STOP.** Many students have a problem with that word. They continue with the service but fail to realize by continuing they may be making it worse.

#### 2. Gather information about the situation.

You need to know all the facts so you can make a good decision. **RE-TRACE THE STEP-BY-STEP PROCEDURE.** By allowing yourself to re-trace what you have done up until this point this sometimes allows you to see something that you might have overlooked.

#### 3. List possible solutions to the problem.

Think of all the ideas you have that may solve the problem. Be creative. Discuss the problem with others.

4. Evaluate possible results of each solution.

Think through the problem enough to know what might result from you decision.

5. Decide on the best solution.

After you have given the problem some thought, gone through the problem-solving process and discussed the problem with someone you trust, be ready to make the decision you feel is best for the situation.

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**MODULE 4J: STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

***TO THE STUDENT:** After reading and studying the information sheet, complete the following questions.*

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**Activity 1: Rate Yourself as a Problem Solver**

How systematic are you when you must solve a problem? Use this checklist or a copy of it to rate your problem-solving skills. Read each sentence. Put a check in the column that best describes how often you do what each sentence says. Circle the number of the items that you have checked “never” or “unsure.” The circled items are skills you need to learn and use.

**Rate Yourself as a Problem Solver**

<b>Problem-Solving Skills</b>	<b>Always</b>	<b>Some- times</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Unsure</b>
1. I try to find out as much as I can about a problem before trying to solve it.					
2. To get information, I talk to others who may be familiar with a problem.					
3. I consult printed or visual resources such as trade journals and troubleshooting guides when trying to solve a problem.					
4. I list possible solutions to a problem before choosing one.					
5. I try to judge how well a solution is suited to a problem before trying it.					
6. I consider safety precautions and warnings when solving a problem.					
7. I conduct a test or dry-run of a solution before carrying it out.					
8. When recommending a solution, I describe the problem, a solution, and its advantages and disadvantages.					

**Activity 2: Write the step-by-step procedure used in problem-solving.**

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.



**Activity 3: Solving a problem**

Work in pairs. Think of a problem situation that may occur at work. You may use a real-life example, but avoid using real names. Work through the situation using the problem-solving procedure described in the lesson material. Discuss your responses with the group.

1. Identify the problem.
2. Gather information about the situation.
3. List possible solutions to the problem.
4. Evaluate possible results of each solution.
5. Decide on the best solution.

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**MODULE 4J: STANDARDS ADDRESSED IN THIS MODULE**

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**Pennsylvania's Academic Standards for Career Education and Work****13.3.11. Career Retention and Advancement**

- C. Evaluate conflict resolution skills as they relate to the workplace.
- Constructive criticism
  - Group dynamics
  - Managing/leadership
  - Mediation
  - Negotiation
  - Problem solving

**Pennsylvania's Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening (RWSL)****1.1.11. Learning to Read Independently**

- E. Establish a reading vocabulary by identifying and correctly using new words acquired through the study of their relationships to other words. Use a dictionary or related reference.

**1.6.11 Speaking and Listening**

- D. Contribute to discussions.
- Ask relevant, clarifying questions.
  - Respond with relevant information or opinions to questions asked.
  - Listen to and acknowledge the contributions of others.
  - Adjust tone and involvement to encourage equitable participation.
  - Facilitate total group participation.
  - Introduce relevant, facilitating information, ideas and opinions to enrich the discussion.
  - Paraphrase and summarize as needed.

Student name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Identify teams in relation to the workplace.

### Objectives:

- A. Describe the definition of “team.”
- B. Identify how a team benefits the organization.
- C. Identify how a team benefits the worker.
- D. Identify the characteristics of a team player.

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### MODULE 4K: INFORMATION SHEET

*TO THE STUDENT: Read and study this information sheet, then complete the activities at the end of this module.*

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### **Introduction**

In this module you will analyze human relations in terms of working with the employer, employees as part of a team with the same general goal in mind. This information is not all-inclusive; it is intended to serve as a guide for basic teamwork in the workplace.

### **What is a TEAM?**

The definition of team is a group on the same side, organized to work together.

There is a saying, “There is no “I” in TEAM”. What does that mean? When you are working together, it is not all about one person or all of the responsibility doesn’t rest on just one person. Teamwork means everyone involved puts in a shared effort to accomplish one goal. Everyone has his or her responsibilities to get the job done, but the team works together in harmony to accomplish it. This also includes helping each other out to get the job finished.

## Benefits of a TEAM

### The organization

The employee is looking for workers who can work together as a team. When there is a team effort happening many things start to fall into place for the organization. For example:

- Work gets completed on time
- Less errors
- More production
- Production flows smoothly
- Profits increase
- Customers are satisfied
- Business stays strong and consistent

### Harmony

Working as a team will produce harmony in the workplace. When listening to harmony in music, the sounds blend and flow together producing a pleasing sound. Harmony in the workplace is relatively the same. Employees blend and flow together while they work to produce the product.

### The worker

The worker benefits from working as a team in various ways. The workday will go much smoother if you know there are others there to help if you need it. It is all too important to have good relations with other employees.

As stated above that the organization will profit with teamwork that will lead the employee to a steady job that will hopefully show increase in pay as profits increase.

### Production

There will be a great increase in production if all employees work together. Jobs will be completed more efficiently and be completed on time the first time. Employees work together each having responsibilities to get the job done. If production is slowed in one area, team members should help to see that the work gets done.

### Characteristics of a team player

We have briefly touched upon some of the characteristics that a team player should have. Listed below are some, but there are many others.

- A. Willingness to help others
- B. Dependability
- C. Positive attitude toward work and others
- D. Ability to help others as needed
- E. Responsible
- F. Cooperation
- G. Organized
- H. Good attendance

#### Willingness to help others:

There are times that other employees may need help to get the job done. At some point you may need to help out in the production. Doing so without hesitation or dispute is an excellent characteristic.

#### Dependability:

There are many people depending on you and your work. The other employees on your team need you to hold up to your responsibilities. This will enable the work process to flow smoothly.

#### Positive attitude toward work and others

Positive attitudes are a must on any team. You never hear a professional sports start being interviewed saying negative things about their team. They always have positive comments and have the attitude that they can win. The same goes for teamwork on the job.

#### Ability to help others as needed

Keeping the job running smoothly often means pitching in and helping others get the job done. This could be if someone is running behind, out for the day, or needs help with an area. Whatever the case is, it is very important that you be willing to help others, you never know when it could be you who needs the help.

#### Responsible

Being responsible is a quality every team member should have. You need to be accountable for the portion of the job you were given. Without responsibility in your work, the team will fail.

#### Cooperation

Cooperation is a must whenever you need to work with others. It is a give and take situation. You need to cooperate with the employer and other employees as

well as they with you. You may not get along with someone in the workplace, but you need to react in a positive manner and cooperate to get the job done.

### Organized

Organization is very important when working with others. Without organization, things can be mistakenly done more than once or even missed all together. The team needs to be organized with a plan to complete the job. Communication will play an important role with staying organized on the job. Be sure that everyone involved knows and understands his or her part.

### Good attendance

As an employee, you have a responsibility to your company, your job, and the team of coworkers on the job. Attending work is critical to playing the game. The team depends on you being there on time every day. No matter how organized you are, how much people help each other out and how positive an attitude the other employers have, it is hard to complete work with one less person, therefore the job does not get completed as planned. You do not want to let your teammates down.

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**MODULE 4K: STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

*TO THE STUDENT:* After you have read and studied the information sheet above, complete the following activities.

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**Activity 1: True or False. Write T or F in the blank space.**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. There is no “I” in Team.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. One of the characteristics of a team player listed above is to always dress professionally on the job.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Good attendance is a quality of a team player.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Part of being organized is having good communication.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. The definition of a team is a group on opposite sides working against each other with different goals in mind.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Being organized will have nothing to do with an increase in profits.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Harmony in the workplace is similar to musical harmony that it creates a sense of blending and flowing together.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. It doesn’t matter if you are not at work every day, other employees will have a positive attitude and pick up the work that you are missing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Working as a team will help your business grow strong and consistent.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. It does not matter if one person doesn’t cooperate with the others when working as a team. As long as there are two other people working together the job will get done.





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**MODULE 4K: STANDARDS ADDRESSED IN THIS MODULE**

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**Pennsylvania’s Academic Standards for Career Education and Work****13.2.11. Career Acquisition (Getting a Job)**

- E. Demonstrate, in the career acquisition process, the application of essential workplace skills/knowledge, such as, but not limited to:
- Commitment
  - Communication
  - Dependability
  - Health/safety
  - Laws and regulations (i.e. Child Labor Law, Fair Labor Standards Act, OSHA, Material Safety Data Sheets)
  - Personal initiative
  - Scheduling/time management
  - Team building
  - Technical literacy
  - Technology

**13.3.11. Career Retention and Advancement**

- B. Evaluate team member roles to describe and illustrate active listening techniques:
- Clarifying
  - Encouraging
  - Reflecting
  - Restating
  - Summarizing

**Pennsylvania’s Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening (RWSL)****1.1.11. Learning to Read Independently**

- E. Establish a reading vocabulary by identifying and correctly using new words acquired through the study of their relationships to other words. Use a dictionary or related reference.