

## LECTURE 4

# Client and Customer Care

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- **Providing good customer care**
- **Making a positive first impression**
- **Building positive relationships**
- **Dealing with complaints**

# Client & Customer Care

One of the most important things to bear in mind when entering the fitness industry is that it is a customer-based place. For a customer there are lots of options, whether it be joining a facility or working with a particular fitness instructor. For this reason, it is important to offer excellent customer service and ensure that your customers recognise your service!

## Providing Good Customer Care

What is involved in good customer service? What makes you stand out? In the fitness industry, customers will ask questions around training and nutrition, they will want guidance and demand a clean facility. These things are a part of the job role, but there are many things that go above and beyond that would make your service exemplary.

### From The First Client To The Last

One thing to remember is that no matter how tired you are, what shift pattern you're on or what has happened in your day, the customer should come first. This may be their only session working with you and it is always important to leave a positive impression.

### Some Simple Guidelines

- Listen to your customers and act on their needs.
- Identify and predict the customer's needs.
- Form positive relationships.
- Try to go above and beyond where possible.

Above all - keep the customers at the centre of your actions. The basis of good customer service is understanding that while you have many roles and responsibilities when you are a fitness instructor, the customer-facing aspect is the primary one. If you can treat your customers so well that they remain loyal, then you cannot fail in your business.

## Making A Positive First Impression

You should be trying to go above and beyond what is merely expected when dealing with customers. If your service is only adequate, it is likely that it won't leave a lasting impression on the customer and it certainly won't set you apart from the competition. **Let's look at the basics, and what you can do to offer a good service day-to-day...**

- Offer help to new members.
- Praise consistent and regular attendance.
- Make an effort to remember and use first name.
- Offer advice on exercise variations.
- Offer to spot people when resistance training.
- Maintain a clean & tidy gym floor.

## Building Positive Relationships

The key to outstanding customer service is forming good relationships. If you can build relationships based on trust and respect then it should form a loyal customer base for your business, whether this is your own business, or the health club you are working for.

Good relationships require you to build rapport and some common ground; The idea here is that you build a relationship that makes all parties feel comfortable, respected and accepted. A relationship of mutual respect is important if you are to enable the client to succeed in their exercise and health goals. Being able to relate to your client, empathise with them and ultimately motivate them is important, and this is possible through enjoying a great relationship.

The key to relationship-building is great communication, which relies on the following principles:

**Verbal language** – tonality and use of language is really important. Saying the right words in the wrong way won't lead to enhanced performance and effort. They need to be used in the correct way.

**Mirroring** – subtle mirroring of your client's tone and body language can help to create common ground and a feeling of ease.

**Listening** – listening is one of the most important skills you can have. Not only physically hearing what someone is saying but being able to comprehend it through summarising, paraphrasing or clarifying.

**Names** – using someone's first name is one of the easiest ways you have of improving their experience.

**Body language** – body language outwardly portrays your attitude. Using hand gestures, eye contact, strong posture and smiling will help make the training experience more engaging and enjoyable as well as enhancing the communication.

**Encouragement** –encouraging and helping your client is vital. Not only will it help to improve performance but it will enhance your client's feeling of value.

**Remain positive** – for the duration that your client works with you, that time is about them. Regardless of your personal situation, you need to remain positive and make the session about them.

**Have empathy** – li you are able to empathise with your client and view things from their perspective, you will have a much easier time understanding and supporting them.



A business with a customer-first approach will be successful, hence this should be a theme you employ across your business. From first point of contact through the signup process, and finally the training, and follow-up.

If we can get these steps right, and keep the customer at the centre of our business activities and decisions, we will go a long way to keeping our client base happy.

### **Task**

Think about a time when you have had excellent service. It doesn't have to be in a fitness environment. What made the customer service so good? It might not even be a situation when everything went well. Maybe the way a complaint was handled was outstanding. What can you take from this and relate to the fitness environment?

## **Dealing With Complaints**

From time to time, regardless of how hard we work to maintain excellent service, complaints will happen. And when they do we have to deal with them with a clear, concise approach that is friendly and helpful. In a fitness environment, complaints might be about broken equipment not being repaired in a timely manner, about double-bookings for classes, or cleanliness of the gym.

Generally, if you work to amend the situation as quickly as possible people will be happy with the service. However, if these issues are consistent and the response is lazy, then it will escalate the situation.

Remember, clients spend their money on memberships, and will complain occasionally. It is important to consider how to handle it professionally to ensure it doesn't result in loss of business.

### **When dealing with a complaint, follow the following steps closely:**

- Listen fully to the customer without interrupting.
- Be polite and understand the client's point of view.
- Thank the customer for bringing the complaint to you so that you can improve the service, and apologise also.
- Record the complaint, referring it to the best person to handle it.
- Offer the customer a chance to speak with the appropriate person if possible.
- Offer a timeframe for when it will be resolved if possible.
- Work towards a resolution and keep the customer informed of the process.
- You should also learn from the situation. How can you handle this better next time? What can you do to avoid the same situation?

As we mentioned, regardless of the standard of service you offer, complaints will happen. How you deal with them is of paramount importance.

Working to a satisfactory resolution is all you can do, but maintaining the customer-first approach will ensure you can maintain a happy client-base along the way.

**Treat every complaint as an opportunity to learn and improve for your customers, and prove to them why you are the best health club / trainer for them...**

