

**HK Tailoring Association
Customer Service Enhancement Workshop
Summary**

I. Workshop Objectives

- ❖ Enhance interactions between sales staff and customers
- ❖ Understand Customer Experience Journey and analyze needs of customers
- ❖ Effectively handle customer complaints
- ❖ Build and sustain long-term customer relationships
- ❖ Satisfy customers' need by offering knowledge and information
- ❖ Establish effective policy for returns and refunds

II. Content Summary

IIa. Defining Excellent Customer Service

Participants were asked to describe experience of excellent customer service that they have encountered themselves regardless of industry. Individuals and small groups share different experiences in industries that include the following:

- Retail which further broke down into phone/electronic goods, clothing and daily goods points of sales.
- Telecommunication
- Banks
- Hotels
- Restaurants

Despite the difference in industries and situations, the following are common points that define excellent customer service:

- Demonstration of thoughtfulness towards customers
- Ability to understand and cater to customer needs
- Ability to anticipate customer needs
- Sharing of professional knowledge with customers
- Friendly disposition: smiles, eye contact, friendly body gestures
- An overall 'feel good' sense
- Demonstration of balance between respect of individual space and acknowledging customer's presence

IIb. Defining Customer Experience

From current customer service perspective, experience of customer is the key focal point for service providers that in turn translates into a holistic approach to creating a seamless experience for customers. It is also important to acknowledge that customer experience begins before physical interactions take place between service provider (sales person) and customers.

Participants were asked to identify actions that contribute to positive customer experience in the following dimensions:

1. *Before entering point-of-sale*
 - The effectiveness of advertisements
 - Online presence: attractiveness, up-datedness and user-friendliness of websites
 - Reference, reviews and word-of-mouth
2. *In point-of-sale*
 - Physical attraction of point-of-sale: tidiness, cleanliness, display
 - Behaviour of sales staff: greetings, smiles, friendliness and willingness to assist
3. *After sales*
 - After sales service
 - Connecting with customers on a long-term basis
 - Informing of product update

Iic. Customer Journey Mapping

Participants were introduced to the tool of *Customer Journey Mapping* through which each *touch point* with customers was identified. Under each touch point, expectations of customer and actions of sales staff are identified. The actions are then divided into the following:

- Happy Face: exceeding customer expectations
- Neutral Face: meet expectations
- Unhappy Face: not meeting expectations

The discussion generated the following outcome:

- Shift perspective from sales person/service provider to customer
- Identify actions that merely satisfy customer expectation as the basic
- Identify actions that would exceed customer expectations and be considered in the category of excellent customer service
- Awareness of habitual actions that could be enhanced to raise level of service

Iid. Balance of Communicating Knowledge and Building Relationship

Bringing awareness to participants on the dynamic of communicating with customers by identifying the amount of knowledge (discussion of products and information) versus communication relating to the personal aspects of customers.

It is known that the most successful sales persons possess a high sense of awareness of balancing the quality of their communication with customers by alternating between information and personal conversations.

Iie. Becoming a Trusted Advisor

Anchored on the book and series of workshop “The Trusted Advisor” (David Maister, Charles Green, Robert Galford, Simon & Schuster, 2002, UK), participants were introduced to the most general concept in successful salesmanship.

The following components were introduced and discussed:

- Credibility
- Reliability
- Personalization
- Intention
- Consistency

Participants agreed that these qualities are positive in helping sales, augmenting service level and building long-term relationships with customers.

IIf. Handling Customer Complaints

While participants agreed that complaints are not pleasant occurrences, the following are common points shared by the groups:

- It is better to know what went wrong than not knowing.
- Complaints could be regarded as opportunities: to win back customer’s trust or to improve service.
- When customers take the time to complain, there is the underlying intention that they want to remain as customers.
- There would always be some complaints that are motivated by taking advantage. Based on this, return and refund policy and decisions have to be carefully considered.
- There were more concerns about the impact of negative comments on social media. The argument hinged on whether the relevant business should respond versus the shortness of retention on information shared in social media platforms.

There were also discussions on identifying emotions, such as the ‘umbrella’ emotion of anger and separate the listening of emotions from logics before sales person could tackle and resolve the issue, the ‘story’ involved in the complaint incident.

III. Conclusion

While there are no hard and fast rules governing quality customer service, it is an ever-evolving practice for the tailoring industry. The industry is now facing its own evolution from traditional practices to more updated ones. Customer expectations have also changed over time and practitioners have to explore ways to attract a new generation of customers in order to keep the legacy of bespoke tailoring and to sustain the survival and growth of the industry.