Customers and Staff

How we speak to, listen to and assist our customers is as important as performing the requested service itself. The following guidelines suggest to members how to practice proper phone and e-mail etiquette, as well as good listening skills. In short, mastering the positive mechanics of effective communication is recognized as being fundamental.

- Phone Etiquette
- E-mail Etiquette
- Listening Skills
COMMUNICATE

C in ARCH is for Communicate!

CUSTOMERS AND STAFF

Delivering accurate and quick information to the College Community is one of the ETS goals. Communication is not only about getting the information delivered but also about the quality of the delivery. In day-to-day Customer Service interactions, whether it is with a customer or a colleague, we should strive to use the appropriate language or demeanor to convey our messages.

COMMUNICATION

“What you do speaks so loud that I cannot hear what you say.”
– Ralph Waldo Emerson

• When you listen, really listen, you put your own agenda completely aside and allow yourself to “be with” another person. That’s a great gift that too many people don’t fully appreciate the value of. When you do this, you may hear people saying things like, "Wow, what a great conversation we had," "That guy/gal really seemed to understand where I was coming from." And, when people feel fully understood and cared about, who do you think they want to do business with and send their friends, family and associates to?

• Communication is more than the words we speak. Communication is about who we are and how we express ourselves and relate to the world. Communication is the message we deliver through nonverbal as well as verbal means. Communication is the ultimate expression of who we are.

• Communication involves all of these things. Effective communication therefore requires awareness, flexibility and an acute yet agile listening – there’s a lot to listen for! (Tip: Pay attention to context, text and subtext for a more thorough listening & communication.)

• Let your associates, customers, vendors, backers, family know 'What, When, Where, How and Why.' Communicating fully – even when it’s about why you changed your mind – creates trust.

Bulleted items from http://www.topten.org
COMMUNICATION SERVICE GUIDELINES

C in ARCH is for Communicate!

Phone Etiquette

- Be prepared – have a pen and paper next to the workstation so you are ready to handle the call.
- Answer calls professionally, stating your office and your name.
- Avoid eating food or chewing gum when answering a call.
- Be sincere... "How can I help you?" "What can I do for you?"
- Give the caller your undivided attention.
- Listen carefully.
- Do not interrupt the caller; speak at natural breaks in the conversation.
- Speak slowly and clearly.
- Take accurate and detailed information of the description of the question/problem. In addition, find out the severity of the problem to the user.
- Control the conversation—learn how to get back on track with the related question/problem.
- If you have to place the caller on hold, ask the caller if they are able to hold and wait for a response before placing the call on hold.
- When transferring the caller to another department or person, verify the person answering is the person who can resolve the problem or question.
- Leave a good last impression to the caller – "Thank you for calling."
- If applicable, follow up a few days later.
E-mail Etiquette

- Remember courtesy. There are co-workers at the other end of the e-mail message.

- Create subject lines. This will help with filing, retrieving and sorting mail messages.

- Take the time to spell check and proofread. (Outlook has a spelling and grammar check on the drop-down Tools menu.) Remember, spell checkers and on-line help only go so far. When in doubt look it up!

- Be concise and stick to the topic. Keeping e-mails to a minimum helps keep them more productive.

- Avoid expressing a strong or critical opinion, also known as FLAMING. Using all capital letters is equivalent to shouting.

- Keep the acronyms in a message to a minimum. Not all users are familiar with abbreviations such as BTW = by the way or IMHO = in my humble opinion.

- Think before you send the message.

- Delete unwanted messages to keep your electronic mailbox to a minimum.

- Use emoticons sparingly. Not all users are familiar with their use, such as 😊 or :)

- You should not reveal your password to anyone including faculty and staff, nor should you let another person use your account. You are responsible for what is done with your account.

- Remember, the e-mail account is a business account owned by the college.

Listening Skills

What is Listening?

- Many studies show that listening actually consumes more of your workday than talking, yet few ever receive any training in listening.
• Research shows that without training in listening, most people do not exceed an efficiency rating of 25 percent when listening to another person. This is not enough to build and maintain good human relations. Organizations have unwittingly allowed themselves to operate at an effectiveness level in listening that would not be tolerable in any other measurable management or production activity.

• The active effort to listen indicates to the other person that we have a concern for them and for their situation. It means we are making an effort to understand their point of view. It means we have not “prejudged.”

• If we are trying to do more than one thing at the same time we may not be actively listening.

• Research has revealed good listeners have an array of HABITS that account for success in sales and customer relations.

  **Trained Listeners – They Are Able To:**

  • defer their judgment. They are more controlled. They listen for the customer’s feelings and situation.

  • pay most attention to CONTENT, not to appearance, form, or other surface issues. They look for the facts.

  • listen completely FIRST. They try to get every nuance of meaning, try to really understand. This enthrones people.

  • listen for the MAIN IDEA and disregard minor points.

  • concentrate only on the main issues. Do not worry about replying to everything. Avoid sidetracking remarks, especially those that might be considered sarcastic.

  • do one thing at a time. They realize listening is a full time job. They maintain eye contact as much as possible.

  • listen CAREFULLY, then sort, give feedback, and ask for confirmation.

  • do not allow the customer’s emotional reactions to govern their behavior.

  • give affirmative and affirming statements. Invite additional comments.

  • maintain patience and concentration while listening.
Untrained Listeners – Pitfalls

- Tune out the other person at the beginning – they prejudge without giving the customer a chance.

- Are quick to mentally criticize grammar, appearance, or speaking style. Their attention is directed to STYLE.

- Spend the time getting ready to talk when they should be listening. This becomes evident and is felt by the customer.

- Tend to listen mainly for facts – specific bits of information, possibly errors, to pounce on to prove the other person wrong.

- Try to take in EVERYTHING – try to reply to everything, especially exaggerations and errors.

- Fake or pretend attention.

- Divide their attention or try to do something else while listening.

- Give up too soon when they realize they have to work actively at understanding what the customer is trying to say.

- Tend to get distracted by emotional words – they don’t control their emotions; sometimes lose their temper and lash back.

- Give little, if any, verbal response.

- Are not aware of the talking/listening “speed limits” mismatch – they waste thought power and get lost in tangential thinking.

- Are impatient to “get on with it”.

Say it with style! Tips for using your voice to calm:

- Don’t sound like a recording.

- Smile (even when you are on the phone).

- Practice.

- Breathe.
• Your voice creates an image. What image does yours create?

• Tape yourself and listen to the tape.

• Be sure your tone is non-defensive: not easy to do.

• Be energetic without being too enthusiastic.

• Be expressive.

• Strive for resonance.

• Slow down.

Tips on Dealing with Angry Customers and Customer Complaints:

• Choose not to return aggression for aggression.

• Listen without interruption.

• Pause briefly and speak slowly.

• Use Postural Echo (lower your voice to calm the customer).

• Paraphrase the facts, acknowledge the customer's feelings, and ignore the anger and mistakes.

• Apologize when appropriate. (If only for the fact they have been inconvenienced or upset).

• Acknowledge the anger.

• Offer an alternative.
How to Keep Your Cool:

- DE-PERSONALIZE the situation by reminding yourself their anger is directed at the system—not at you personally.

- We cannot control the other person’s thoughts, words, or behavior. We MUST control our own.

- Use “I” messages vs. “You” messages.
  - “I feel _____ when you ______.”
  - “I would like to help you, if you ______.”