Customer service for the cleaning industry

Course Overview

This introductory Customer Service course covers the outcomes required for cleaning and housekeeping staff to provide effective client service. Customer service covers many aspects of a professional cleaners or housekeepers role including:

- Understanding what it means to provide outstanding customer service
- Looking professional (personal presentation) and acting like a professional
- See issues/problems before they arise
- Providing assistance and information in a prompt manner
- Working and acting in a professional way - ensuring that wherever you are within the facility, even though there may not be a customer in view, you walk, talk and act like a professional.
- Fully understanding your job description and duties
- Communicating with others clearly, concisely and in confidence
- Having product and service knowledge about your company and the facility you work in.

In this course you will learn how to:

Section 1 – Customer Service in the cleaning industry
Section 2 – Acting professionally
Section 3 – Working professionally
Section 4 – Verbal communication skills
Section 5 – Non-verbal communication skills (body language)
Section 6 - Providing customer service

This course covers all required knowledge content for the following competency units:

CPPCMN2003A Provide effective client service
CPPCMN3004A Respond to enquiries and complaints
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Section 1 – Customer Service in the cleaning industry

When you finish this section you will have an understanding of the following concepts and ideas:

- Introduction to customer service
- What is Customer Service?
- Customer service in the cleaning industry
- Greeting clients - first impressions

Click "next" to get started on section (1) one.
1.2 Introduction to customer service

This unit is applicable in many workplace situations within the building services and cleaning industry. Depending upon the type of facility you are working in, customers and colleagues can include:

- Workmates/colleagues
- Building occupants
- General public visiting the facility/building
- Building management
- Other contractors working at your facility
- Government or other organisations

This list highlights the large number of the people with whom we are likely to interact in the course of our work.

All communications with customers and colleagues should be conducted in an open, polite, professional and friendly manner.

Why Customer Service is Important?

- Customers are the reason your company has a business. If we have no customers satisfied with our products or service then we have no business.
- Customers will continue to buy our companies cleaning service if we keep them happy with our level of service.
- **Fact:** Customers who are delighted with a purchase on average tell 3 others. Customers who are unhappy with a purchase on average tell 11 other people. *This is proof bad news travels faster than good news*
- “A customer is the most important visitor on our premises. They are not dependent on us – we are dependent on them.”
- No one remembers a clean toilet but everyone remembers a dirty toilet.

1.3 What is Customer Service?

Customer service can be described as:

- Great **customer service** is doing the ‘little things’ very well.
- **Customer service** can be likened to treating others as you would like to be treated yourself.
- **Customer service** is a proactive attitude that can be summed up as: I care and I can do.
- **Customer service** is going beyond what’s expected.
- **Customer service** is being at our best with every customer.
- **Customer service** is surprising ourselves with how much we can do.
- **Customer service** is actively displaying good manners to our customers.
1.4 Customer service in the cleaning industry

Customer service covers many aspects of your role as a professional cleaner/housekeeper and these aspects may include:

- See issues/problems before they arise - the key to doing this is keeping your eyes and ears open for potential problem. For example, overflowing waste bins could be collected more often, restrooms running out of toilet paper and other supplies should be checked more often.

- Providing assistance and information in a prompt manner - for example and visitor to a building could ask you for the location of a restroom, location of an ATM, where they can buy some lunch, or the location of a business in the building. If you are unsure you should take them to a building directory or customer service counter.

- Working and acting in a professional way - ensuring that wherever you are within the facility, even though there may not be a customer in view, you walk, talk and act like a professional.

- Fully understanding your job description and duties - being aware of what management expects you to do, right down to the smallest detail, and knowing how you can help your co-workers when required, to improve service levels. This means understanding your cleaning schedule and acting as a good team member.

- Communicating with others clearly, concisely and in confidence – when communicating with others follow the communication principals you have learnt such as active listening and questioning techniques.

- Having product and service knowledge - you should know all there is to know about your facility - or at the very least, know where to go and who to talk to in order to get it.
1.5 Greeting clients - first impressions

We do not get a second chance at a first impression.

First impression means what another person thinks of you when they first look at you and talk to you.

There are a number of key points to ensure we create a positive first impression:

**Grooming** - Looking neat and tidy and meeting, or better still, exceeding uniform expectations is imperative.

**Body Language** - Be aware of approaching customers, look them in the eye, stand tall and smile.

**Greeting** - Warm welcome, make eye contact, utilise phrases such as “good morning sir, how may I help you?”

If we are busy acknowledge the customer, make eye contact and use phrases such as “I will be with you in a moment.”

**Engaging Customers** - Show interest in our customers, repeat their requests to them and ask questions such as “how is your day going today?”

**First impressions and confidence**

Typical things to look for in confident people include:

- **Posture** – standing tall with shoulders back.
- **Eye contact** – solid with a 'smiling' face.
- **Gestures with hands and arms** – purposeful and deliberate.
- **Speech** – slow and clear.
- **Tone of voice** – moderate to low.
Section 2 – Acting professionally

When you finish this section you will have an understanding of the following concepts and ideas:

- Practice high standards of personal presentation
- Guidelines to assist with personal presentation
- Respecting the work environment
- Working in a timely and professional manner
- Contributing to a respectful and enjoyable workplace
2.1 Practice high standards of personal presentation

The large amount of customer contact in our industry makes good personal presentation very important. We need to be aware that people often form an opinion about us personally, and the establishment we work for as a result of our appearance, long before we speak to them. They very often form their opinion based on what they see initially. Remember in section (1) we spoke about 'first impressions'.

As a result we must make sure we always maintain high levels of personal presentation.

**Dress or uniform** – you work uniform (supplied by you company) or work clothes (supplied by yourself) must be kept clean, neat, tidy and presentable at all times.

**Grooming** - personal grooming (your appearance and make-up) not be too overdone nor must it be forgotten or careless. Hair must be neat, clean and properly brushed and styled; make-up should be kept to a minimum and not be over done; finger nails must be clean and trimmed — nail polish may or may not be permitted, but will be forbidden where the staff member is involved in food handling.

**Personal hygiene** - staff need to maintain a high degree of personal hygiene so that there are no problems such as body odour, bad breath or smelly feet.

Regular showers, frequent changes of clothes and use (but not overuse) of deodorants and some perfume are important for your personal presentation.

2.2 Guidelines to assist with personal presentation

| Appropriate and complete uniform | ✓ Ensure your uniform is in good condition  
|                                | ✓ Make sure it is the right size — poor fitting uniforms look unattractive  
|                                | ✓ If you are required to wear a name badge make sure it is easy to see  
| Hair care                      | ✓ Tie long hair back, and/or wear an appropriate hair net/hat  
|                                | ✓ Maintain hair at a suitable length and/or in an appropriate style for the establishment/job  
| Make-up                        | ✓ Be sparing with it. Do not use a lot of make-up  
|                                | ✓ Be very sparing with perfume — it shouldn't dominate or intrude; check and adhere to any establishment policies in this regard  
| Jewellery                      | ✓ Don’t wear a lot of jewellery to work. Preferably do not wear any jewellery  
| Personal Hygiene               | ✓ Shower and bathe regularly  
|                                | ✓ Eat sensibly, realising that others may have to smell what you have eaten  
| Hand care:                     | ✓ Use protective gloves where necessary to help protect skin  
|                                | ✓ Cover cuts and abrasions with waterproof bandages  |
2.3 Respecting the work environment

*Respecting the work environment*
One of your most important tasks is keeping a clean, tidy and secure cleaning room. Your job starts and finishes with the cleaner’s room so keep it clean: Keep it tidy. Keep it secure.

**Equipment storage**
The area where equipment is stored must be maintained in a clean, dry and secure way. If equipment and supplies are not stored correctly than can be damaged and wear prematurely. Keep your equipment in good condition by:

- Emptying wet cleaning equipment every time you use it.
- Cleaning and drying all equipment after use. Equipment can rust and smell unpleasant if it is left damp or wet.
- Keep electrical cords neatly wound-up and stored with equipment.
- You should clean the floor every day. A dirty floor looks bad and it is also dangerous! Wipe up any spills as soon as they happen. You, or someone else, can slip and fall on a wet or dirty floor.
- Keep the floor space clear and uncluttered. Cluttered and untidy areas can be a trip hazard.

Your storage area shows that you are a professional. It should be clean and tidy so that you are proud to show it to your client.

If you cannot respect your own work area by keeping it clean, tidy and safe; how could you provide a clean and safe environment for your client?

2.4 Working in a timely and professional manner

*Respecting time*

**Start time:** It is important that you arrive at work at least 10 to 15 minutes prior to commencing your shift.

**Finish time:** If we have personal matters that demand we finish on or before time (such as doctors’ appointments), we should always inform our supervisor at the commencement of our shift.

**Work schedules:** When working in cleaning or housekeeping it is important we understand our work schedules and timeframes for cleaning various areas or rooms.

During your shift you may be asked to help some team members complete some urgent cleaning, or you may be asked by a customer to do fix a cleaning problem. It is important to adjust your cleaning schedule to complete all your high priority cleaning tasks before the end of your shift.

High priority cleaning tasks commonly include, emptying waste bins, spot cleaning furniture and floors, cleaning bathrooms and spot cleaning high traffic and highly visible areas including entrances, lobbies and staff rooms.

**Tip:** As a professional cleaner you should always wear a watch to help you effectively manage your time and understand the time remaining in your shift to complete all your high priority cleaning tasks.
2.5 Contributing to a respectful and enjoyable workplace

Before speaking or acting on a problem, consider the impact of your words and actions on others. Always be respectful to other people’s feelings.

- Understand your triggers or “hot buttons.” Knowing what makes you angry and frustrated enables you to manage your reactions and respond in a more appropriate manner.
- Create a work environment where everyone is respected and feels comfortable. Treat everyone equally and involve everyone in the team irrespective of their sex, race, colour, religion, sexual preference, disability etc.
- Take responsibility for your actions and do not blame others.
- Have a positive attitude – we can fix everything together as a team.
- Rely on facts rather than assumptions. Gather the facts before speaking up.
- Act as a bridge builder and not a divider. Be proactive in helping solve problems and conflict in the workplace.
Section 3 – Working professionally

When you finish this section you will have an understanding of the following concepts and ideas:

- Acting professionally and ethically
- Poor service
- Make Suggestions and Share knowledge
- Product knowledge
- Maintain client confidentiality
3.1 Acting professionally and ethically

Professional ethics includes the standard of services and behaviours provided by the company and its employees.

Acting ethically means you try to do everything to industry standards and always work at your best.

It starts with your company providing the necessary resources in terms of people (labour), equipment and chemicals to ensure the client is getting the level of cleaning service promised to the client.

Demonstrating a high standard of professional ethics requires staff to comply with organisation standards and procedures on a consistent basis, including:

- Respecting your employer
- Arriving at work on time
- Wearing a clean and tidy uniform
- Understanding your job description and perform your cleaning tasks to the best of your abilities
- Working as part of a team and supporting other team members
- Working safely and in accordance with company procedures
- Communicating effectively with clients and co-workers
- Attending to client or customer requests in a friendly and efficient manner
- Keep confidential information private.

NEVER blame your company or other people for mistakes. You may think this makes you look better, but in the customer’s eyes you have just told them your company is NOT good and provides poor quality services.

3.2 Poor cleaning service

Customers who believe the service being provided is below their expectations will have a range of negative thoughts regarding the service.

Changing a customer’s thoughts of the service being provided can be difficult and will require the input from company management to firstly explain the problems and secondly agree how to fix the problem.

Should poor service levels remain, there is a high likelihood the cleaning contract will not be renewed when the current contract expires.

Fact:
People who are very happy with a purchase on average tell 3 other people.
People who are unhappy with a purchase on average tell 11 other people.
This is proof bad news travels faster than good news.

Good service:
Companies that provide good consistent service develop a reputation by word of mouth – that is people talk about the good service.
For example most of us are happy to stop at a McDonald’s restaurant to use their restrooms, because we can be fairly confident they are always clean.
3.3 Make Suggestions and Share Knowledge

To be a good team player means you should support the group by communicating effectively.

If you sit silently while someone else discusses an idea that you know won't work, you could damage the team's chances of achieving its outcomes.

If you're got an alternative suggestion that might be more effective, then share it with the group.

If people discuss a plan that you think is great, then speak up. Tell them what a great idea you think it is. They may need and appreciate your support, even if they don't show it.

When you communicate with your team members – whether showing support, or challenging their thinking – it's important to stay positive and respectful. Even if you disagree with someone, don't become emotional.

Being objective and fair will make a good impression; getting upset and angry won't.

3.4 Product Knowledge

For any of us to make a decision on buying a product we need information about the product to make our decision.

This is where it is important to understand the products or services your company provides so you can provide this information to your customers and they will hopefully purchase (buy) more from your company.

To develop product knowledge you must find out:

- The range of services your company provides. This could include different types of project cleaning, window cleaning, waste removal, security and a variety of other services; providing your client company brochures detailing your company's additional services.
- The features of the service and the ways in which these benefit the client. For example regular carpet cleaning will increase the life of their carpet and purchasing longer entrance matting will improve facility cleanliness by trapping soil at the door.

3.5 Maintain Client Confidentiality

Confidentiality is the protection of personal information. Confidentiality means keeping a client's information between you and the client, and not telling others including co-workers, friends, family, etc.

Examples of maintaining confidentiality include:

- Information you may see when cleaning people's offices and desks.
- Employee files including employee records, employment contracts, pay agreements and other personal information.
- All correspondences between yourself and your client should be considered confidential unless specified otherwise.
- Information about clients is not discussed with people who do not need to know.

There are various pieces of confidential information that you may encounter in the service industry, including:

- Office - Information on people's desks
Retail - Company information
Health/Aged Care – Client and patient files
Hotel/Motel – Individual’s personal items

Note: If during the course of your work you are exposed to, see, read or hear information that is likely to be a serious criminal offence, then it should be reported to your supervisor immediately.

3.6 Communicating with colleagues and clients

Use language and tone of voice appropriate to a given situation.

Working in the cleaning industry involves communicating with clients and other staff members on a regular basis. Every staff member will need to communicate with someone. Communication could be with customers, suppliers, other staff members etc.

In fact, it is often said cleaning is a ‘people business’.

The purpose of communication is to get your message across to others clearly and simply.

Communication involves sending and receiving messages via language or speech (verbal communication) or via body language (non-verbal).

Many people think that communication is a one-way thing - you send a message and that is it. However, for communication to occur there must be ‘feedback’ the receiver must also send a message that indicates they have understood the message that has been sent.

Without feedback, you cannot be sure the person receiving the message has understood the message.

**Sending a message:** For your communication to be effective you must think about:

- Every message must have a purpose – what is your main point you would like people to understand.
- Make sure your message is not complicated and you use simple language.

Communication comprises both ‘verbal communication’ and ‘non-verbal communication’.

- Verbal communication is questioning, listening and answering - the spoken word
- Non-verbal communication is body language - facial expressions, eye contact, gestures and posture,

**Feedback:** For communication to be effective you need feedback, because without it, you cannot be sure people have understood your message.
Section 4 – Verbal communication skills

When you finish this section you will have an understanding of the following concepts and ideas:

- Listening to clients
- How to ask questions
- Cultural and social differences
4.1 Listening to clients

Listening is one of the most important skills you can have. How well you listen has a major impact on your job performance and on the quality of your relationships with other people.

- We listen to obtain information.
- We listen to understand.
- We listen for enjoyment.
- We listen to learn.

Most people are not good at listening. Most people talk more than they listen.

Studies show we only remember between 25% and 50% of what we hear.

Most of us need to improve our listening and become ACTIVE listeners. There are five key elements of active listening.

1. **Pay attention**

   Give the speaker your full attention, and acknowledge the message. Recognize that non-verbal communication also "speaks" loudly.
   
   - Look at the speaker directly.
   - Avoid being distracted.
   - Watch the speaker's body language.

2. **Show that you are listening**

   Use your own body language and gestures to convey your attention.
   
   - Nod occasionally, smile and use other facial expressions.
   - Note your posture (body language) and make sure it is open and inviting. Do not cross your arms and legs. Make sure your body and feet are pointing in the direction of the speaker.
   - Encourage the speaker to continue with small verbal comments like yes and uh huh.

3. **Provide feedback**

   Our personal filters, assumptions, judgements and beliefs can distort what we hear. As a listener, your role is to understand what is being said. This may require you to reflect what is being said and ask questions.
   
   - Reflect what has been said by paraphrasing. "What I'm hearing is" and "Sounds like you are saying" are great ways to reflect back.

4. **Do not interrupt the speaker**

   Interrupting is a waste of time. It frustrates the speaker and limits full understanding of the message.
   
   - Allow the speaker to finish.
   - Don't interrupt with counter arguments.

5. **Respond Appropriately**

   Active listening is a model for respect and understanding. You are gaining information and perspective. You add nothing by attacking the speaker or otherwise putting him or her down.
   
   - Be fair, open and honest in your response.
   - Explain your opinions respectfully.
4.2 How to ask questions

To get the right answer you must ask the right question.

By using the right questions in a particular situation, you can improve a whole range of communications skills: for example, you can:

- Get better information and learn more.
- Build stronger relationships by understanding people better.
- Avoid misunderstanding.

A question can be asked in many ways, though they all fall into one of two possible categories: closed questions or open questions.

**A closed question** usually receives a single word or very short, factual answer. For example, "Are you thirsty?" The answer is "Yes" or "No"; "Where do you live?" The answer is generally the name of your town or your address.

Closed questions are good for:

- Testing your understanding, or the other person’s: "So, if I understand your question correctly, you would like me to empty your garbage bin twice a day?"
- Concluding a discussion or making a decision: "Now we know the facts, are we all agreed this is the right course of action?"
- Frame setting: "Are you happy with the service we are providing your office?"

A misplaced closed question, on the other hand, can stop the conversation and lead to awkward silences, so should be avoided when having a conversation.

**Open questions** are questions requiring more than a ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ answer. An open question, in fact, cannot be answered with ‘Yes’ or ‘No’.

They usually begin with **who, what, when, why, how**. An open question asks the respondent for his or her knowledge, opinion or feelings. "Tell me" and "describe" can also be used in the same way as open questions. Here are some examples:

- What happened at the meeting?
- Why did he react that way?
- How was the party?
- Tell me what happened next.
- Describe the circumstances in more detail.

Open questions are good for:

- Developing an open conversation: "How was your holiday?"
- Finding out more detail: "What else do we need to do to improve our service to you?"
- Finding out the other person’s opinion or issues: "What do you think about the changes to our cleaning schedule?"
4.3 Cultural and social differences

People working in the cleaning industry work with people from many different cultures and must be aware of differences between cultures.

Things that Australians regard as 'normal' may be seen in a different way with people from other cultures. Just because Australians see things differently that people from other cultures does not mean we are correct or they are correct – we just see things differently.

We may have different ways of greeting people and talking with people. We may have different body language and gestures. We may eat our food differently and have different table manners.

When communicating with someone from a different country, politeness and respect of each other’s differences will build a strong relationship.

It is common for some Australians to believe anyone who can't speak English as 'being stupid', but they should consider how well they speak another language.

Many people from other countries will have some knowledge of the English language; however, they may often have problems understanding the Australian accent and Australian slang.

When working with people from different countries and cultures you should:

- Be aware of the potential for communication problems and difficulties.
- Speak clearly, do not use jargon and do not be afraid to ask them to confirm what you have said if you think they do not understand.
- Accept that people from different parts of the world may have different views to Australians. This does NOT mean we are right and they are wrong!
- Try to find out more about the culture and communication styles for the countries your clients and colleagues come from.
- Do not speak loudly – they are not deaf. Speaking loudly can be embarrassing and insulting.
- Do not approach dealings with people from overseas with an attitude that it is up to them to learn English.
- Do not assume people from other countries will like or dislike the same things that you or your friends do - your values and your way of seeing the world is not the only way.
Section 5 – Non-verbal communication skills (body language)

When you finish this section you will have an understanding of the following concepts and ideas:

- Communicating with colleagues and clients
- Understanding non-verbal communication - Body Language
- Personal Space
- Eye movement & gestures
5.1 Understanding non-verbal communication - Body Language

Have you ever been in the situation when you really didn't believe what someone was saying? Did you have a sense that something being said was not true or a feeling that all was not right? Perhaps they were saying 'Yes' yet their heads were shaking 'No'?

The difference between the words people speak and our understanding of what they are saying comes from non-verbal communication, otherwise known as 'body language'. By understanding the signs of body language, you can more easily understand other people, and what they are thinking.

Watching how someone reacts to what we are telling them can give us a lot of information about what they are thinking. For example do they look happy? Do you think they understand what you are telling them? Do you think they agree or disagree with what you are telling them?

Some examples of body language include:
- Sighing – may mean they do not agree
- Slumped shoulders - may mean they are not happy
- Folded arms or looking around the room - may mean they are not interested
- Drumming fingers on the table or desk - may mean they are bored or unhappy
- Smiling and nodding their head – means they agree with you and are happy

5.2 Personal Space

Everyone has their own personal space that makes them feel comfortable. We know this because when someone stands too close to us we may be uncomfortable – they are invading our personal space.

When we stand in a crowded lift we may also feel uncomfortable because people are too close to us.

**Touch:**

Touch is similar to personal space. While children use touch as a means of communication, adults do not touch others unless they feel very close to each other.

Many cultures feel touching another person is very rude.

In Australian workplace law touching someone may result in them saying you have sexually harassed them which is illegal.

Most customers will feel very uncomfortable if you touch them.

**Orientation and posture (how a person stands or sits)**

The way we stand or sit may send signals to other people about how we feel. Standing side-by-side with someone can mean we agree with them and are happy to help them.
Standing in front of someone can mean a serious discussion.
If you stand very close and invade another person’s personal space this can mean there is conflict – you are unhappy with each other.

5.3 Eye movement & gestures

Eyes can indicate interest when regular eye contact is maintained.
Very long periods of eye contact can indicate a desire for intimacy (you like the person) and is therefore to be avoided in a business or workplace setting.
Long periods of looking away may indicate they are not interested in what you are saying.

Gestures
Movements of the arms, legs, hands and feet all send information. Here are examples of some body movements and their meaning or purpose:

- Pointing (to reinforce the direction given)
- Throwing up the hands in alarm (to reinforce emotions)
- Moving the head or other body parts to stress certain things (to support the spoken word)
- Mirroring the stance etc of the other person, where two people are talking about something they share (to indicate agreement)

Case Study Questions - Kym’s version
Steve and Paul both work for the ACME cleaning company. Steve is Paul’s boss and Steve is on the job site to do an inspection of Paul’s work.

After the inspection Steve sits Paul down to go through the notes he has been writing about Paul’s work. Steve is not happy with Paul’s work.

"Paul", Steve said, “I have asked you on numerous occasions to ensure that the bathrooms are properly cleaned in these premises. The owner of the building is getting complaints from his staff about the dirty toilets”.

Steve talked continually about the dirty state of the toilets for the next five minutes. Steve said that there was toilet paper on the floor, basins were not cleaned properly, there were no paper towels and the electric hand dryers were not working.

While Steve was talking, Paul was sitting slumped over the desk with his eyes looking down. Paul did not speak. He had his arms crossed and regularly glanced over at his mobile phone.

Paul was thinking to himself that he was a good worker and had been told many times on other sites that he was doing a good job.

Paul believed that the problem on this site was that there was not enough equipment to get the job done properly. Regularly there were not enough chemicals to clean properly, hand towels and toilet paper were regularly used up before more was ordered and he was never given enough time to do his duties properly. He had mentioned to this to the building owner’s receptionist numerous times, but never to the building owner because he always seemed too busy.
Section 6 - Providing customer service

When you finish this section you will have an understanding of the following concepts and ideas:

- Respond promptly and politely to client requests
- Handle complaints politely
- Make apologies when there is a breakdown cleaning/housekeeping servicing
- Agree with customers on timelines for meeting requests
- Unacceptable customer requests
- Turn complaints into opportunities
6.1 Respond promptly and politely to client requests

Customer service is meeting the needs of your clients and colleagues.

Customer service means attending to customer requests in a polite, efficient and friendly manner.

What you say and perhaps more importantly how you say it, will show clients and colleagues what sort of attitude you have.

In your workplace you are always aiming for a positive ‘can do’ attitude.

You can show this by:
- making appropriate eye contact
- using polite terms such as 'thank you' and 'you are welcome'
- using positive body language such as standing up straight and walking briskly
- using active listening to find out the customer's needs

The trick to good customer service particularly in cleaning or housekeeping is showing guests you enjoy what you do and do not regard their requests as a waste of your time.

6.2 Handle complaints politely

When handling all complaints it is important to deal with customers in a respectful and efficient manner.

Take responsibility
You should listened carefully to a person making a complaint - asking questions as appropriate, and repeating what has been said to confirm the problem.

You should take responsibility for resolving the complaint by telling the client you will do everything in your power to resolve the situation.

A customer will always remember high quality and responsive (fast) customer service.

Establish the nature and details of the complaint
The first thing you must do is understand the complaint.

In most cases, the complainant will tell you what the problem is.

Sometimes the customer may not tell you important information that would make the complaint less serious.

It is important talk to the customer and ask questions to find out all the details of their complaint.

When talking to the client you should attempt to find out various bits of information, the more detailed and accurate the information the better.

If you are not able to help them you should refer them to your supervisor. When this occurs you should continue to take responsibility until your manager tells you otherwise.

The next step is to seek agreement about what can or should be done to fix the problem.

Take action
This is usually what the client wants you to do!
Report
It is part of your role to inform a higher authority of the complaint where necessary.

Follow-up
There may be a formal or informal team meeting to follow up on a complaint. Where complaints are of a serious nature company management may arrange a meeting with the client to fix the problem.

6.3 Make apologies when there is a breakdown cleaning/ housekeeping servicing

Even when you try your best every day at work there will be occasions where something goes wrong and the client is not happy with the cleaning service.
They might have gone to the bathroom and found a mess in one of the toilets; a public garbage bin could overflow on a busy day; a client’s waste bin may not have been emptied.
Always ensure the information is passed on and always do your best to apologise and organise for the issue to be fixed as soon as possible.
If you can fix it, then do so; if it is something that is outside your responsibility, ensure your supervisor is alerted immediately.
Customers often decide on what they think about your company based on your ability to fix their problems. Remember, great customer service is everyone’s responsibility, all of the time.

6.4 Agree with customers on timelines for meeting requests

One of your most important functions as a professional cleaner or housekeeper is to ensure your customers are happy with your cleaning or housekeeping services.
A big part of this service is carrying out service (cleaning) requests in a timely manner.
Most requests which are easy to solve should be dealt with immediately; for example, emptying a rubbish bin, cleaning a toilet, cleaning a spill, providing directions to a toilet, office or shop.
If you are working in a housekeeping environment, customers may require additional bathroom supplies or request instructions for using equipment such as telephone or television.

6.5 Unacceptable customer requests

As a service industry we must do all that we can to meet the needs of our customers.
However, these needs and requests must be of a ‘reasonable’ nature - you are not expected to break the law, humiliate or demean yourself (make yourself look bad), or to meet any requests that involves you doing anything that is unsafe or dangerous.
Should a client asked you to perform anything that you consider unfair or potentially dangerous, you should excuse yourself, and immediately contact your manager.
6.6 Turn complaints into opportunities

Strange as it may initially sound, when a complaint is made, it provides us with an opportunity to improve our relationship with our clients.

Our clients will always remember a company that quickly responds to complaints and fixes their problems.

If a customer were to complain about our cleaning or housekeeping services you may be able to turn the situation into an opportunity by doing the following:

- Showing concern for the individual and for the situation they find themselves in.
- Acting promptly rather than treating the complaint as a thing of lower importance.
- Demonstrate your interest to fix the problem quickly.
- Follow up with the customer to make sure the problems has been fixed and they are happy.

6.7 Providing information to clients

In order to provide high quality, professional customer service you must have good communication skills as well as a good knowledge of the services your company provides.

We have all been customers at some stage of our lives and we have all experienced both good and bad service.

You should be able to provide the kind of service to your customers that you would like to receive if you were the customer.

Providing assistance and information in a prompt manner may include a customer asking you for the location of a restroom, location of an ATM, where they can buy some lunch, or the location of a business in the building. If you are unsure you should take them to a building directory or customer service counter.

**Great customer service:**

Don't just tell them – TAKE THEM. Providing great customer service means that you will take them to the toilet or ATM, not just tell them.

Unless you are attending to an emergency you should always have time for your customers – that extra 1 minute of your time is the difference between good customer service and GREAT customer service.