

ENGLISH FOR PHARMACISTS: INTRODUCTION TO CUSTOMER CARE



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WHAT MAKES GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE?

Providing a good service to your regular and also new customers is important for many reasons. When you provide good advice and sell appropriate products they will return again to your pharmacy. It costs six times more to attract a new customer than it does to keep an old one. The top priorities in determining their satisfaction include:

- friendliness of pharmacy staff
- speed of dispensing service
- competence in counselling
- helpfulness and flexibility
- being treated as a valued customer

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Many elements of good customer service depend on you having good communication with your customers. There are two key skills it is important to develop to be effective in communication: questioning and listening. Effective communication depends on:

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| 7% | What you say (the words you use). |
| 55% | What you do (facial expression, gestures, touch, how close you stand to someone, eye contact etc.). |
| 38% | How you say it (timing, volume, pitch, fluency – “ums and errs”). |

QUESTIONING

There are two main types of questions we call them “open” and “closed”.

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|-------------------------|--|
| Open questions | They start with words such as: Who? What? How? Which? When? |
| Closed questions | Are those that people can only give a short answer to, usually “yes” or “no.” e.g. “Have you a temperature?” |

The advantage of open questions is they make people talk more fully. They will give you a better understanding of the customer’s needs as you can use them to explore and gather information. The advantage of closed questions is that they are good when you want brief factual information e.g. “Did it start today?” It is best to use a mixture of open and closed questions to get the information you need. A reflective question is basically repeating back what someone has said to you, e.g. “So you want something for indigestion, for yourself. It started this morning and you haven’t taken anything for it. Is that right?”

Get familiar with WHAM approach to questioning

This should be the basis of the questions that you need to ask customers. Remember to use it flexibly; be yourself and use words you are comfortable with.

W-Who is the medicine for?

Is the medication for you? Who is it for? How old is he (she)?

W-What are the symptoms?

Can you describe your symptoms? Do you suffer from any diseases or medical conditions? Have you got allergy, diabetes, heart disease or high blood pressure?

H-How long have you had the symptoms?

When did they start? How long do they usually last? Where you have the symptoms? Do they spread anywhere else? Do they come on slowly or suddenly?

A-Action has already been taken?

Have you already tried something to relieve the symptoms? What have you done? Did it help you? Did you take any pills against the symptoms?

M-Medication they are taking?

Are you on any medications taken on daily basis? Can you name the medicines you take daily? Do you have a list of medicines you are taking, so I can check the drug to drug interactions for you?

LISTENING

For customers to feel they are receiving a good service you need to carry out what is known as active listening. This involves showing you are interested and receiving someone’s message and showing empathy (seeing the situation through their eyes). What are the signals that show someone is listening? Eye contact: looking at the person helps you concentrate on them and reduces the chance of you being distracted. Making eye contact is the single most important way to make contact with a customer. Smiling, laughing: this may not always be appropriate in pharmacy setting. Body language: turning your body or leaning forward towards someone slightly will indicate you are interested and listening. Nodding, asking questions, making noises like “um,” “ah,” “yes,” “right,” all indicate you are listening.

PRODUCT INFORMATION

As well as knowing the right product to recommend, for good



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customer service you need to be certain the customer is going to use it properly. Again this should be part of a conversation, not as if you are giving them a lecture. When explaining a product to customer:

- Make a brief explanation of the product
- Present the facts simply
- Highlight any cautions or warnings and make sure they know what to do if symptoms don't improve
- Check they understand

People usually only remember three things so if you have a lot to tell them you need to decide what is most important. It is a good tip to point to where on the packaging the dose is printed and also where there are any warnings. Then if the customer forgets the exact information you have given them they will remember that you showed them where it is written down.

SELLING SKILLS

Being able to sell customers the goods that they need, and more importantly, the goods that they want is a skill. Your role is likely to include:

- finding out what the customer requires (sometimes they aren't clear themselves what they want)
- matching the customer's preferred options to products, checking whether those products are available and if not, offering an appropriate alternative
- explaining the features and benefits, for example: "The product is available either as a tablet or a liquid (feature), and as you've said you find tablets difficult to swallow, then I'd recommend the liquid as being easier for you to take (benefit)."
- making sure that opportunities are taken to promote additional or associated products; don't be afraid to suggest an additional product. Try something like "Have you also thought about tissues?" e.g. if you are selling a cold or flu product.
- dealing with complaints is an important form of communication. If you handle a complaint well, unhappy customer can be turned into a loyal one.

In the end of the day, customer loyalty builds when the customer experience has been good. This may be achieved by communicating effectively and developing a good relationship. The best reward to the pharmacy is when the patients leave with the product that best meets their needs and later return satisfied with a positive feedback.

VOCABULARY WITH FREE TRANSLATION

customer service
 regular and new customer
 friendliness of pharmacy staff
 speed of dispensing service
 competence to give advice / counselling
 helpfulness and flexibility
 valued customer
 effective communication skills
 open and closed questions
 reflective question
 Is the medication for you?
 Who is it for? How old is he (she)?
 What are the symptoms?
 Can you describe your symptoms?
 Do you suffer from any diseases or medical conditions?
 Have you got allergy, diabetes, heart disease or high blood pressure?
 How long have you had the symptoms?
 When did they start?
 How long do they usually last?
 Where you have the symptoms?
 Do they spread anywhere else?
 Do they come on slowly or suddenly?
 Have you already tried something to relieve the symptoms?
 What have you done?
 Did it help you?
 Did you take any pills against the symptoms?
 Are you on any medications taken on daily basis?
 Can you name the medicines you take daily?
 Do you have a list of medicines you are taking, so I can check the drug to drug interactions for you?
 signs of active listening and empathy
 eye contact, body language, nodding
 brief explanation of the product dose
 features and benefits of the medicine
 highlight any cautions or warnings
 customer preferred available product
 offer an appropriate alternative
 dealing with complaints
 loyalty builds through good service

SLOVNÍ ZÁSOKA S VOLNÝM PŘEKLADEM

péče o zákazníka
 stálý (pravidelný) a nový zákazník
 přátelský přístup zaměstnanců lékárny
 rychlost expedování
 kompetence poradit /poradenství
 ochota pomoci a flexibilita
 ceněný (hodnotný, vážený) zákazník
 účinné, efektivní komunikační dovednosti
 otevřené a uzavřené otázky
 kontrolní otázka, shrnující tvrzení a potřebu zákazníka
 Ten lék je pro Vás?
 Pro koho to je? Jak je stará/ý?
 Jaké má (jsou) příznaky?
 Můžete popsat Vaše příznaky?
 Trpíte na nějaká onemocnění nebo zdravotní obtíže?
 Máte alergii, cukrovku, onemocnění srdce nebo vysoký krevní tlak?
 Jak dlouho máte tyto příznaky?
 Kdy začaly?
 Jak dlouho obvykle trvají?
 Kde máte ty příznaky?
 Šíří se i někam jinam?
 Přicházejí pomalu nebo náhle?
 Zkusil jste už něco na zmírnění těchto příznaků?
 Co jste zkusil (udělal)?
 Pomohlo to?
 Užil jste nějaké léky (tabletky) proti těmto příznakům?
 Užíváte pravidelně (denně) nějaké léky?
 Můžete vyjmenovat ty léky, které užíváte denně?
 Máte seznam léků, které užíváte, abych pro Vás mohl zkontrolovat lékové interakce?
 příznaky aktivního naslouchání a empatie
 oční kontakt, řeč těla, přikyvování
 stručné vysvětlení dávkování produktu
 vlastnosti a výhody (benefity) léku
 zdůrazní upozornění nebo varování
 zákazníkem preferovaný dostupný produkt
 nabídne vhodnou alternativu
 řešení stížností
 loajalita se buduje prostřednictvím dobrého servisu