

Teacher's notes Unit 2 Customer support

Level: Intermediate

Slide 1: photos of three different ways of communicating.

Slide 1 gets students thinking about how they communicate with customers face-to-face, on the telephone and in writing, especially when dealing with a problem or complaint. Ask your students to consider what the issues are when dealing with customer problems in these three ways. And which method they prefer or would prefer to use.

[5 minutes]

Commentary

Dealing with a problem **via email** takes longer but gives you time to plan your response. Dealing with a problem **face-to-face** allows you to gauge your customer's emotions through their gestures and facial expression, and to build rapport.

Dealing with a problem **over the phone** is probably the most stressful of the three situations. You have to deal with the problem in real time but without the advantage of being able to make eye contact and establish a rapport with your customer. On the other hand, you can take notes as you talk, to help you organize your thoughts and deal with the situation.

Slide 2: six extracts from phone calls dealing with problems.

Slide 2 exemplifies some of the **don'ts** in customer service featured in the *Subject background* section on page 21 of the *Teacher's Book*. Ask your students to comment on what was said. Students could do this activity in pairs or groups of three, and report back to the whole class.

[5 to 10 minutes]

Commentary

Hi there! Karl calling. I've got some good news ...

This is very informal, even if the context is that you are talking to someone you have spoken to before. The speaker should probably say something like *Good afternoon, Mr Bush. This is Karl Jackson calling from Digilab. I've got some good news ...* (identifying his company as well as himself.)

No one has ever complained about this before!

Saying this denies there is a problem, and is likely to start an argument as it suggests the customer is wrong or has made a mistake. Better not to say anything like this at all!

Good morning, how can I help you?

The speaker does not identify themselves.

Don't worry. I'll remember to do that for you!

The speaker may forget. Better to write down the action point and to say that is what you have done, for example *I've written that down and will deal with it as soon as I've finished our conversation.*

I'm sure we can sort it out.

It can be dangerous to make a promise that you may not be able to fulfil. Unless you are very confident you have the solution. Better to say that *We will do everything we can to sort it out.*

I'm afraid I can't help. You'll have to speak to our sales department. Their number is

...

Not very helpful! The speaker should offer to contact the sales department or have the department get back to the caller.

Slide 3: four extracts from phone calls.

Slide 3 exemplifies some of the **dos** in customer service featured in the *Subject background* section on page 21 of the *Teacher's Book*. Ask your students to comment on what was said. Students could do this activity in pairs or groups of three, and report back to the whole class.

[5 to 10 minutes]

Commentary

Excuse me, so what you are saying is that your computer keeps crashing when you're using Excel? Is that correct?

Here the speaker checks their understanding of the problem and apologizes for interrupting as well. An example of **Active listening**, which we focus on in **Slide 4**.

I really am very sorry about this.

The speaker apologizes sincerely.

I'm afraid I can't help on this but, if you give me your name and number, I'll make sure someone who can help gets back to you today.

The speaker apologizes, treats the customer with maximum politeness and focuses on positive action for the future.

I see ... really! ... oh, dear ... I understand ... uh huh ... I'm sorry to hear that.

These short interjections show that the customer service staff member is paying attention – another example of **Active listening**.

Slide 4: link to Wikipedia site.

If you are online and if this is a concept with which your students are not familiar, you can use this link to find out more about **Active listening**. There is a good section on this in Wikipedia with useful links to other sites for further reading.

[5 to 10 minutes]

Slide 5: photos of four different products and service.

Customer support is an aspect of Customer relationship management (CRM). Good customer support as part of CRM can differentiate a company from the competition and give competitive advantage and build the reputation of the brand. People sometimes talk about *learning organizations* in this context, meaning companies that are good at using customer contact among other things to improve their products or services.

Slide 5 provides visual cues for students to express their opinions about different products and services they are familiar with. Ask your students which computer and car manufacturers, supermarkets and airlines have good and bad reputations for looking after their customers? And why? Of course, you can choose another product or service or brand to talk about, perhaps one that has been in the news recently.

[10 to 15 minutes]

Slide 6: At the end of the line reading comprehension.

This provides a second reading comprehension task that focuses on some of the most useful vocabulary in the text on page 19 of the *Student's Book*.

[5 to 10 minutes]

Answers

In paragraph A, what word tells you that the Indian workers are well educated?
Workers are often *graduates*.

In paragraph B, which word means 'the people who work for a company'?
staff

In paragraph C, which phrase indicates Ron Harley is angry about the proposal?
He says it is a *slap in the face* for union members.

In paragraph D, which word means 'agreement'?
deal

In paragraph E, which word means 'cutting'?

axing

In paragraph F, which word tells you that the training cost is very, very high for Indian workers?

a *massive* £200

In paragraph G, which phrase shows Indian call-centre operators understand their situation?

They are *well aware* that ...

In paragraph H, which word means 'boring and repetitive'?

monotonous

Slides 7 and 8 provide you with the four emails found on page 27 of the *Student's Book*. The purpose of offering them in PowerPoint is to allow you to focus more easily on the inconsistencies in style in each email, and to deal with any questions arising about vocabulary.

Slide 7: Emails 5 and 6.

Answers/Suggested answers for two inconsistencies in style (from Teacher's Book page 32)

(Question 2)

Email 5

Thanks -> Thank you ...

Cheers -> Yours sincerely

Email 6

I would be very grateful if you could -> Can you ...

I would like to express my gratitude -> Thanks for ...

Slide 8: Emails 7 and 8.

Answers/Suggested answers for two inconsistencies in style (from Teacher's Book page 32)

(Question 2)

Email 7

I've attached -> Please find attached ...

Hope this helps. -> Do not hesitate to contact us again if you need any further information.

Email 8

I was wondering if you'd mind coming ... -> Could come / Why don't you come ...?

Yours sincerely -> Best wishes

Acknowledgements:

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