



SEASON READY



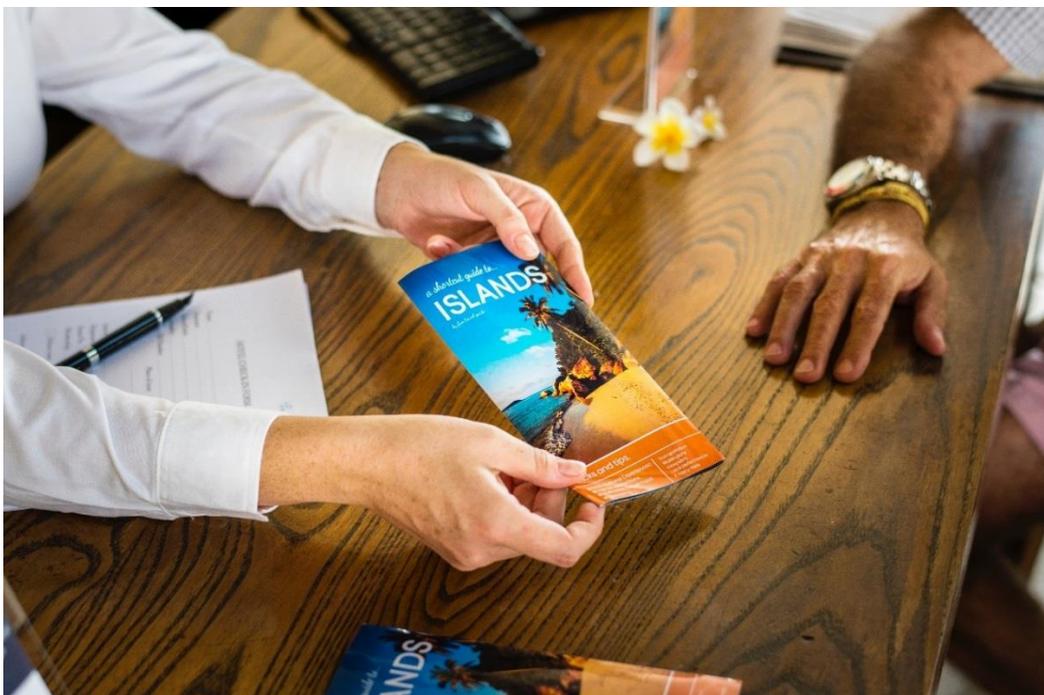
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# SeasonREADY: Work-Based Methodology for Seasonal Hospitality workers

## Training material for the up skilling of seasonal hospitality workers

### Module 1: Customer Service



1 Picture credit: Rawpixel.com. Available at: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/person-holding-ticket-1537003/> [06-04-19]



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## Explanation of symbols

For the facilitation of your study the icons below are introducing to you some different activities in this document

	Theory – Information
	Think about it
	Additional information from external resources
	Video
	Reflection exercise
	Apply what you have learnt

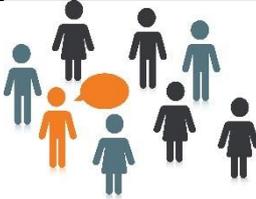


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	<p>Solve a problem with peers</p>
	<p>Self-assessment exercises</p>
	<p>Review</p>



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## Introduction

This first module is dedicated to customer service in the hospitality and tourism industry. In this sector, care for guests is crucial to attract new and keep loyal clients and partners. Excellent customer service must be provided by all employees. In order to represent well the enterprise and ensure the best customer experience possible, employees have to be equipped with the key competencies in customer service. This module covers the following competencies necessary for high-quality customer service: Customer care, customer relations and problem solving.

After the end of this module you will:

- understand the importance of customer service and its key principles;
- be able to provide high-quality customer service and interact with customers professionally and effectively;
- learn to deliver quality services to guests with special needs;
- be able to handle challenging situations with patience and positivity keeping self-control and staying professional.

## Subunit 1: Customer service in tourism and hospitality

Skills in customer service are crucial for all the roles in tourism and hospitality industry. Studying the following unit will help improve your competencies in interaction with customers and make your performance more professional and your job easier.



### Customer service and its importance in the tourism and hospitality sector

Customer care or customer service is *“the provision of service to customers before, during and after a purchase”*.<sup>2</sup> In the sector of tourism and hospitality, customer service is the key component of the service on offer. The core of a good customers service, in fact, is to be hospitable, satisfy and exceed customers’ expectations. From restaurants to hotels, customers’ delight and satisfaction should be at the forefront of the business.<sup>3</sup>

Customer service is so important in this industry because customers mostly use your services to **relax and enjoy a good experience**. If customers believe to be getting good value for their money, they will return, recommend your service or product to the

<sup>2</sup> Customer service. From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia. Available at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Customer\\_service](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Customer_service) [06-04-19]

<sup>3</sup> The importance of customer service in the hospitality industry. Epitom Consulting. 2013. Available at: <http://www.epitom.org/the-importance-of-customer-service-in-the-hospitality-industry/> [06-04-19]



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people they know or leave a positive review. This will help you develop a loyal customer base, attract new customers and generate better revenues in the future.<sup>4</sup> Hospitality businesses in favourite tourist destinations often face **intense competition**. In this case, an excellent customer service can significantly contribute to differentiate your facility from these competitors and make your business stand out instead of being lost in the crowd. Great customer service may be more effective in increasing your business than paid advertising.<sup>3</sup>

In the today's word, customers have gained an unprecedented power to **share their experience** with an infinite pool of other (actual or potential) clients. With websites, blogs, apps and tools gathering and publishing reviews and customers' feedback, you can't effort to make your customers angry. One bad review probably won't shake your customer base, but numerous poor reviews can destroy your business reputation. On the other hand, a company providing truly good customer service, is very likely to gain positive reviews and thus gain very powerful and credible publicity for free. So, businesses in hospitality and tourism industry are put on a lot of pressure to prove their values, but once you get it right it will pay off and your good customer service will boost positive reviews and increase your reputation for all to see.

Last but not least, well performed customer services increases your workplace profile and makes you a better professional. Doing your job well will make you feel proud of yourself and customers' positive feedback and sincere appreciation can make your job more enjoyable too.



*Think about how important your role is for your enterprise and the whole industry. Your good work makes the real difference. Be proud of the job you do.*



### The key principles of customer service

#### Etiquette and courtesy

Hospitality is all about interacting with guests and customers. However, such interaction and communication have some rules which should be respected in order to ensure professional and quality service. The first two key rules are etiquette and

<sup>4</sup> The Harvard Review claims that customers who had great experiences in the past with a company will spend 140% more compared to people who had poor experiences. Available at: <https://hbr.org/2014/08/the-value-of-customer-experience-quantified>

Zoobi, W. & Adjei, D. Etiquette for hospitality and services. 2018. MyJoyOnline.com Available at: <https://www.myjoyonline.com/opinion/2018/February-4th/etiquette-for-hospitality-and-services.php> [06-04-19]



courtesy.

*“Etiquette is the conduct or procedure required by good breeding or prescribed by authority to be observed in social or official life.”<sup>5</sup>*

*“Courtesy is behaviour marked by polished manners or respect for others: courteous behaviour.”<sup>6</sup>*

Here are some examples of behaviour to apply when interacting with guests and customers to demonstrate courtesy and to comply with the rules of etiquette.

### 1. Posture and speech in interaction with customers<sup>7</sup>

- Appear neat and tidy but never severe or harsh or strict to the guests
- Stay upright at ease keeping balance on both feet
- Maintain distance of at least 60 centimetres, don't lean against the counter
- Keep hands on the sides or behind your back, never folded or in your pockets
- Avoid unnecessary movements of hands and gestures
- Always greet guests and colleagues
- Always maintain eye contact and smile
- Maintain an interested and helpful expression
- Concentrate on the customer, don't get distracted
- Speak softly and clearly
- Listen to the guest attentively
- Try to use the guest's name during interaction
- Do not refer to the guest as “he/she to they” in their presence. For example:  
*Mrs Fletcher is waiting for her key* instead of *She is waiting for her key*.

### 2. Walking<sup>7</sup>

- Walk at an even pace in guest areas without the sound of footsteps
- If a guest is approaching, wait aside and give them first right of way
- If near a door, open the door for the guest to pass through
- If accompanying a guest, walk on his/her right hand

### 3. Anticipation<sup>7</sup>

- Anticipate guest need, such as:
  - Open the door for the guest
  - Hand him/her a pen if you see they need one
  - Ask them if you can help with their luggage

### 4. Whether the guests are around and not...<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Etiquette definition. Merriam-Webster. Available at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/etiquette> [06-04-19]

<sup>6</sup> Courtesy definition. Merriam-Webster. Available at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/courtesy> [06-04-19]

<sup>7</sup> Singh, H. Staff etiquette & manners in hospitality. 2014. Available at: <https://www.slideshare.net/HarrySingh46/staff-etiquette-manners-in-hospitality> [06-04-19]



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- Maintain your poise even if the guests are not around
- Don't huddle with other colleagues in groups
- Don't chat with your colleagues about not work-related issues
- Don't use your personal mobile phone
- Don't use slang or abusive language with your colleagues or on the phone, maintain the same finesse and politeness
- Do not hang around in guest areas when not in uniform (if applicable)

### 5. Absolute DON'Ts<sup>7</sup>

- Never speak poorly about the enterprise, your colleagues or other friends. It's highly unprofessional
- Don't hint or solicit tips
- Don't bite your nails, pick hair, nose or ear
- Don't yaw, sneeze or cough without covering your mouth



*Treat all guests with maximum respect, don't make differences and assumptions based on the class, spending power etc.*

*Don't get too familiar with the guests, even if they treat you in a friendly way. Remember that your relationship is professional. Be humoured and even-tempered*



During interaction with customers, a **polished presentation** is vital for success. Firstly, you should follow the dress code of your workplace and pay attention to your personal grooming. The physical appearance of the staff can make or break the impression of your facility. While grooming



requirements usually vary between men and women, it is important that both look clean, groomed and well-dressed.<sup>8</sup> Polished and professional presentation isn't important only for people working in front-desk operation, but for all staff in the front and back office including bell boys, waiters, chefs, housekeepers or maintenance staff.



### "Peer Observation" diary

This is a simple activity that can be done in any working environment where you need to follow the rules of etiquette and courtesy.

<sup>8</sup> Zoobi, W. & Adjei, D.. Etiquette for hospitality and services. 2018. MyJoyOnline.com Available at: <https://www.myjoyonline.com/opinion/2018/February-4th/etiquette-for-hospitality-and-services.php> [06-04-19]



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Employees-peers will work divided in couples. They will spend some days (4-7 days) observing each other at work and writing down at least 5 mistakes and 5 examples of excellent conduct of professional etiquette and courtesy. At the end each day they will confront each other with their observation and discuss it in order to improve the next day. At the end of the “observation period” a reflection session with supervisor or in-house trainer is recommended.

When observing your peer at work focus on:

- Greetings
- Speech
- Eye contact
- Smile
- Posture
- Movements
- General body language
- Personal grooming
- Other demonstrations of courtesy

Observe your colleague discreetly, don't invade the personal space of your colleague or the customers!



### Welcoming guests

The rules of etiquette and courtesy are to be applied when welcoming guests and customers.

You want that customers perceive your hotel or restaurant as a friendly place where they will be cared for. The first impression is essential and it's you who hold the key to ensuring a positive customer experience. To get it right, try this simple “I CARE” method<sup>9</sup>:

**I** – initiate a warm, personal greeting

- Greet at the moment of arrival and send the signal “*I'm here for you*”. You can say “*Good morning (Mr Johnson), welcome at Hotel Paradise. What can I do for you?*”

**C** – confirm their visit

- If you know why the customer is coming, make a reference. E. g. “*You're here to pick up your luggage.*” or “*You have a reservation for two.*”

**A** – answer their questions

- Answer any questions the customer may have. Provide any information necessary

<sup>9</sup> Marks, D. How to greet customers. 2013. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxxMFUk648o> [06-04-19]



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for the customer. For example, if the lift is out of order or if there will be any delay.

**R** – repeat their name

- Before concluding the interaction repeat the customer's name. You can say for example *"Thank you Mr Modric for your patience and enjoy your evening"*.

**E** – explain next steps

- Explain if there are any next steps. E. g. *"Please have a seat, I'll be right back with your luggage"*.



### The standard rules and procedures of customer care

Each workplace has its own rules and procedures. It's usually a set of written instructions that document a standard routine at your hotel. Such instructions help in maintaining consistency of service and standard.<sup>10</sup> Your manager should provide you with the rules and procedures at your workplace and explain all uncertainties. It is your responsibility to learn them perfectly and follow them at your daily work. Here we introduce to you some general rules and procedures of customer care in tourism and hospitality.

#### Examples for front-office operations - basic telephone etiquettes<sup>11</sup>:

- Phone should be answered within three rings
- Wish according to the time of the day (Good Morning, Afternoon or Evening), add the hotel name and your name.
- Ask *how may I help you?*
- Smile even though you are on the telephone.
- Use a low voice pitch
- Avoid extremes in volume
- Match your speaking rate to the caller's
- At the end of the phone call ask if there is anything else you can help with

#### Examples for food and beverage – order taking<sup>12</sup>:

- Ask if guests would like to order beverages no later than 5 minutes after guests are seated
- If needed, explain which beverages are available
- Take orders from women first, then men (this may be seen as conforming to

<sup>10</sup> How to define Standard operating procedures for Hotels | Resorts. SetupMyHotel.com Available at: <https://setupmyhotel.com/train-my-hotel-staff/how-to-define-sop-in-hotels.html> [06-04-19]

<sup>11</sup> SOP – Telephone Etiquette in hotels. SetupMyHotel.com Available at: <https://setupmyhotel.com/train-my-hotel-staff/how-to-define-sop-in-hotels/front-office-sop/186-sop-telephone-etiquette-in-hotels.html> [06-04-19]

<sup>12</sup> SOP – Banquet Beverage service and Order taking. SetupMyHotel.com Available at: <https://setupmyhotel.com/train-my-hotel-staff/how-to-define-sop-in-hotels/f-and-b-service-sop/238-bev-service-ordertaking.html> [06-04-19]



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	<p>traditional and stereotyped gender roles and restaurant etiquette, however, is seen as common practice in many countries. Therefore, taking orders from women first will of course depend on the social context / situation between you and your guests. Judge beforehand if this is appropriate)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to take orders clockwise around the table</li> <li>• Listen Carefully to each order</li> <li>• Write down the orders on the guest check according to how guests are seated</li> <li>• Repeat the order and any special requests.</li> <li>• Bring the ordered beverages within 10 minutes</li> </ul> <p><b>Examples for housekeeping – bed making<sup>13</sup>:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove soiled bed linen from the bed.</li> <li>• Always adjust the mattress with your leg and not with your back to avoid any injuries.</li> <li>• Get a clean mattress pad and linen and place it on the mattress.</li> <li>• Smooth out any wrinkles.</li> <li>• Place fresh sheets and inset the pillows into the new pillowcase and tuck in the loose ends.</li> <li>• Spread the 1<sup>st</sup> bed sheet and tuck the bottom side of the bed except for the four corners.</li> <li>• Take the loose end of the sheet, about a foot from the corner at the head of the bed and pull it straight out, foaming a flap. Pull up the flap so it is flat.</li> <li>• Tuck in the free part of the corner.</li> <li>• Put quilt over the sheet.</li> <li>• Tightly tuck the sheets under the mattress.</li> <li>• Place the pillow on the bed with the tucked edges facing the centre and the tucked flaps on the other side of the pillows.</li> <li>• Smooth the surface of the bed and align the pillows.</li> <li>• Report to the supervisor if you notice stains on the bedspread.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Synchronicity with the other internal operations and staff</b></p> <p>No matter in which position you work in, you should have at least some basic knowledge of the different roles at your workplace. It will help you to do your job better as you'll be able to address people with specific requests and thus provide a complex service to customers.</p> <p>You should be sure about who your direct supervisor is, what his/her competences</p>

<sup>13</sup> SOP – Housekeeping – Bed Making. SetUpMyHotel.com Available at: <https://setupmyhotel.com/train-my-hotel-staff/how-to-define-sop-in-hotels/housekeeping-sop/245-bed-making.html> [06-04-19]



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are and how you can contact them when you need their advice or support.



- Do you know with what issues your supervisor can help you with?
- Do you know how can you contact your supervisor?
- Do you know the competences, names and contacts of your colleagues?
- Who at your workplace is responsible for handling customer complaints?



### Review of the subunit 1: Customer service in tourism and hospitality

In the first subunit, you learnt that customer service is a crucial element of tourism and hospitality industry and that your work is essential for the success of your business. Then we presented the key principles of customer service – etiquette and courtesy – and some examples of behaviour to apply when interacting with guests and customers to comply with these rules. We also dealt with the topic of welcoming customers and we proposed the “I CARE” method to get it right. Finally, we introduced the standard rules and procedures of customer care which summarise instructions and explain standard routine at a workplace. Make sure you are well acquainted with this document at your workplace and that you know how to contact in case of any doubt.



### Self-assessment – Subunit 1: Customer service in tourism and hospitality

1. What the core of customer care is?

*One correct answer.*

- To leave customers with good impression and promote the company.
- To satisfy and exceed customers’ expectation.
- To sell the most of product and service.

2. Choose all the good examples of etiquette and courtesy.

*One correct answer.*

- Wearing expensive and colourful cloth.
- Maintain distance of at least 60 centimetres.
- Use many gestures to explain yourself when talking to foreign tourists.
- Greet customers every time, even if you see them more times a day.
- If near a door, open the door for the guest to pass through.
- If there’s a problem in company, tell the customers. They have right to know.
- Maintain polite eye contact and smile.



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3. ) "I CARE" method used in guest welcoming stands for:

*One correct answer.*

- a) I - initiate a warm, personal greeting, C - confirm their visit, A - answer their questions, R - repeat their name, E - explain next steps
- b) I – inform customers about news , C - confirm their visit, A - answer their questions, R - repeat their name, E - explain next steps
- c) I - initiate a warm, personal greeting, C - confirm their visit, A – allow them to sit down , R - repeat their name, E - explain next steps

4. Which statement about the standard rules and procedures of customer care is true?

*One correct answer.*

- a) The rules are identical to the rules of etiquette.
- b) The rules are part a part of the European law.
- c) Each workplace should have their own set of rules and instructions.



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## Subunit 2: Customer relations

To provide high-quality customer service all staff in tourism and hospitality need some competencies in customer relations. After studying this section, you'll improve your empathy and gain better understanding of customers' needs. This will help you apply the most appropriate way of communication and make connection with customers and subsequently build and maintain a good professional relationship with guests and use your knowledge to elevate their experience and enhance your performance. You'll also learn how to provide the best service and care to customers with additional needs.



### Positive and proactive attitude in customer services

#### Emotional intelligence

Research shows that emotion has a greater impact on customer loyalty than both resolution and effort.<sup>14</sup>

Emotional intelligence is defined as “the capability of a person to manage and control his or her emotions and possess the ability to control the emotions of others as well”<sup>15</sup>. Emotional intelligence is composed by several elements: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills.

A customer care service employee must:

1. be self-aware of his/her own emotions;
2. must self-regulate those emotions and tune the reaction to the context in which he/she is working;
3. be motivated to respond proactively to challenges and difficult situations
4. be empathic and understand other people's emotions and feelings;
5. have a good degree of social skills in order to communicate his/her opinion in the most appropriate way according to each situation.

In the hospitality sector it is vital to have all these five areas well developed for customer care purposes. Since it is likely that guests will come from different places, represent different cultures and so on, a key element of your proactive attitude towards customer service will be trying to understand them. When a customer comes up to you try to understand how to treat him/her in the best possible way. Be aware that each interaction with him/her is crucial to build trust in the customer, both towards you and the business you work for. A good way to do that could be small talk. Ask them questions, seem interested, listen and repeat what they say to make sure

<sup>14</sup> How to Build an Emotional Connection with Customers (2019). Available at: <https://www.callcentrehelper.com/how-to-improve-your-emotional-connection-with-customers-99570.htm> [06-04-19]

<sup>15</sup> The Economic Times. Definition of 'Emotional Intelligence'. Available at: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/definition/emotional-intelligence> [06-04-19]



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you understood correctly and pay attention to what they tell you.

### **How to demonstrate positivity**

Think about your customers as your guests. Greet them when they arrive, do not answer to their request with a straight “no sir I’m afraid that’s not possible”. Instead, try with a “I’ll see what I can do for you, sir” and then if their request is above what you can provide, offer alternatives as a way to show your efforts and the fact that you care for them and you took their request seriously.

### **How to be proactive**

Great service makes customers feel that you care about developing a long-term relationship that means more than just making a sale. It is not so straight forward to be proactive in customer service. Here are some tips that will help you understand what are the essential proactive behaviour that will help you show proactivity. Try to anticipate you customer needs and ask questions. Customers will feel cared for and provide useful information which will help you in providing a great service.



### **Exercise To Improve Emotional Intelligence – a role play<sup>16</sup>**

Sometimes, it can be difficult to empathise with the customer if you have never personally experienced the issue before. This role play exercise can help you understand your customers and with their needs better.

Split the team into groups of three. One member act as a customer, another as an employee (e.g. front-desk worker) and the final member acts as an observer.

Each group is given a different customer issue, specific to scenarios that suit your business. It can be something that actually happened at the workplace.

The customer and the employee act out the scenario. Then the observer tells what he/she noticed – general impression, pros and cons, result of the interaction.

All the three then discuss together whether or not they would have done anything differently and what they thought the employee did well.

<sup>16</sup> 9 Fun Customer Service Training Exercises (2019). Available at: <https://www.callcentrehelper.com/customer-service-training-exercises-135903.htm> [06-04-19]



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### Exercise to improve positive attitude “Attitude Anchors”<sup>17</sup>

This activity can help you maintain the positive attitude needed to be effective in customer service.

There are two attitude anchors:

- **maintenance anchors**, which help you maintain a positive attitude,
- **repair anchors**, which help you fix your bad moods.

Ask group of trainee/employees to think about and write down their maintenance anchors: it might be exercising or drinking tea for some. Then ask them to think about little things that help them elevate their moods if they are upset – repair anchors.

When everybody has completed the task, encourage sharing.

**Debriefing:** Encourage the participants to keep the sheet of paper with their anchors and use it when they have a bad day, feel demotivated or have to face a difficult situation. Often, people tend to wait for something to happen to change their mood, but if we proactively use an attitude anchor, we can improve it by ourselves.



### Relationships with clients and how to build it

#### Attentiveness

be focused on the customer goes beyond just listen to them and provide what they ask. It is an overall behavioural suit you should wear together with your work suit. Being attentive means being there for them at any time, show care and prevent their needs. Even though everything seems to be right, ask them how they are doing or if there is anything you could do for them.

#### Ability to read the customer – basic principles of behavioural psychology

each customer is an individual with his/her own character traits, attitude and way of seeing the world. To make sure you understand you customer personality will help you in choosing what kind of interaction he/she would perceive as positive or negative. For instance, while having a funny and light tone with a younger customer might help you, using the same word registry with a business man might instead make you seem disrespectful or trivial. Observe how your customer talks and moves around, try then to ground your behavioural response to that and tune it as long as the interaction

<sup>17</sup> Fun Customer Service Training Exercises (2019). Available at: <https://www.callcentrehelper.com/customer-service-training-exercises-135903.htm> [06-04-19]



proceeds. After all there are several ways to build up a positive relationship with your customer but choosing the right one depends mostly on the customer himself.

Every customer wants 3 things:<sup>18</sup>

- customers want to be heard, especially if they have a problem
- customers want to be understood – ask questions and repeat to make sure you understand
- customers want to be cared for – show concern and effort to meet their request or take care of their problem.

Essentials to excellent customer service

1. SEC – Smile – Eye contact – Comment

- a. Smiling is contagious, it's a great beginning of every interaction, it makes the customer feel that you are eager to interact with him/her and will also set the mood for your communication.
- b. Make eye contact in combination with a smile. This combination shows that you are glad of interacting with your customer and that you are paying full attention to him/her.
- c. Friendly comment or conversational question: How was your journey? What a nice day today eh? Don't get too personal though as some customers might get offended or creeped out. The point here is to make you interaction with the customer not only functional but also pleasant.

2. Listen – it is important to really listen, don't assume you know what they think. It is important to listen and to understand your customers. Some might say it is the most important thing because it will allow you to know what they need or want from you and what they expect from their stay. This information will help you to be proactive in your care.

3. Empathise with your customers. *"I understand how you feel"*. This is the basic of any customer care interaction. Let them know you understand them and their concerns, make sure they think you will sincerely do anything possible to help them out or at least that you will try your best to help them.

4. Create solutions for your customers.

5. Clarify the situation with the customer after the situation was resolved, make sure they are satisfied. Follow up, your reputation depends on your customers reviews.

At the end of their stay ask the guest if they enjoyed their stay. Ask for feedback via email (in hotels not after a dinner). Don't exaggerate, asking 4 times during a dinner if your customers are happy with the food, the drinks, the light etc. which can be rather annoying for guests.

<sup>18</sup> Brown Lee, D.. What is customer service ? The 7 Essentials To Excellent Customer Service. 2013. Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tn0veQ7\\_stI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tn0veQ7_stI) [06-04-19]



**Drip campaign** – “A drip campaign is a method used in direct marketing to acquire customers through lead nurture programs. It involves sending marketing information to prospects repeatedly over longer periods of time in order to nurture prospects or leads through the marketing funnel”<sup>19</sup>. Sending a follow-up email after the hotel stay for e.g. offering coupons or discounts for the future accommodation. This will increase the familiarity your customer has with your business and could lead to further purchases.

Exercise – make a list of the places you regularly return to (restaurants, hotels, bars, shops...) and think about the reason why. What do you like about them? Why do you regularly use these services?

### **Interaction with clients**

Scripted, insincere customer service is an ultimate turnoff for today’s customers, says Richard Branson. Today’s customers, including the important millennial demographic, demand a customer service style that feels authentic and unscripted, what I call an “eye level” or “peer to peer” style of customer service. They’re looking to be served by a fellow human being who speaks authentically rather than following a script.<sup>20</sup>

### **FIVE CRITICAL CUSTOMER SERVICE MISTAKES<sup>21</sup>**

1. It seems like we don’t care
2. We don’t listen
3. We let the customer upset us and we show that
4. We use the wrong words/attitude
5. We focus on ourselves instead of seeing the problem from the customer’s point of view

### **Dependability and respectfulness**

Dependability and respectfulness are two key attitudes that should be blatantly clear and reflected in any of your behaviour with and in front of your customers. They should know they can fully depend on you and that you will make sure they feel safe and cared for at any step of the service provision. In doing so they should also feel respected as individuals and as customer.

### **How to estimate and satisfy customers’ expectations**

Customer expectations are not so easy to estimate but more or less they at least meet

<sup>19</sup> Trackmaven.com: Drip Campaign. Available at: <https://trackmaven.com/marketing-dictionary/drip-campaign/> [06-04-19]

<sup>20</sup> Solomon, M. Three Customer Service Secrets Of The Hospitality Industry That You Should Borrow Today at Forbes.com. 2016. Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/micahsolomon/2016/11/07/three-customer-service-secrets-from-the-hospitality-industry-you-should-borrow-today/#3f914c6f6e58> [06-04-19]

<sup>21</sup> Crawley, D. Five Critical Customer Service Mistakes: Customer Service Training Video. 2014 Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4wcpaHHnwIM> [06-04-19]



what it is written on the hotel website or other commercial material e.g. brochures, leaflets, promotional vouchers (if your hotel is offering a room, with a beautiful view on the ocean and free Wi-Fi, you can start from this information to guess what they would expect from you once they arrive). Another thing that could give you a hint to what they would expect from you is your own experience as a customer. think of what you would expect from a hospitality sector business.

### **How to deliver quality services to guests with additional needs**

Guests with additional needs are a broad category since there are a wide range of disabilities and impairments. Some of them affect the movement sphere other the sight or the hearing faculties. Moreover, some disabilities are not so straightforward to be spotted immediately compared to others. There are several issues to pay attention to when dealing with customers with additional needs. Many people feel uncomfortable when interacting with people with disabilities. Unfamiliarity with people with disabilities might cause an afraid response as if one feels unable to do the right thing. Within the sector, it is important to strive to provide better and adequate support for people with additional needs and change the perception of disabled people for the improvement of tourism and hospitality services. Here are a few pieces of advice to help you feel more aware of the specific issues when dealing with customers with additional needs:

- **Don't assume all disabled people look the same:** There are a wide range of disabilities and impairments, therefore don't succumb to the stereotyped mindset that all disabled people should be grouped together. For example, you may encounter a guest that does not look stereotypically blind, therefore assume he/she can see perfectly well. For building relations with customers, it is important to broaden your understanding of what a disabled person may look like. Just as able-bodied people don't look the same don't assume all disabled people should look the same.
- **Before taking care of people with a disability, ask whether they actually need your help:** The fact that a person has a disability or impairment does not necessarily mean that he/she needs help. Do not hesitate to offer help, but do not give it automatically if the person does not need or requests it. When your customer needs help, ask how it should be given. Do not assume what kind of help they would need. People with disabilities know what they are capable of. Do not make that decision for them.
- **Be mindful in case of physical contact:** Unless requested/allowed to do so, do not touch his/her personal aids such as wheelchair, crutches or other aids. It could be perceived as an invasion of their own personal space. Also, you might want to help them by grabbing their arms, but it could actually make them lose their balance and make matters worse.
- **Communicate as you are accustomed to:** people with a disability want to be treated just like everybody else. Speak directly to them instead of addressing their assistant, friends or family members.
- **Be respectful:** show respect for the person and respect his/her privacy. Be careful



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and patient, try to understand the his/her problems and needs as you do in any other customer service situation.

### **How to give directions for destinations about extra services inside the enterprise**

In order to give the right visibility to all the services the enterprise offers, when interacting with customers for the first time it could be useful to mention these services. For instance, *breakfast is served every day from 6:30am to 9:30am. We also have a restaurant serving lunch from 1pm to 3pm and dinner from 7pm to 10pm. While you're enjoying your stay you also might want to stop by our sauna area which is (directions) or maybe you want to take advantage of our high-quality laundry service... and so forth.*

Knowing your customers' expectations is vital, so asking basic questions like: *Are you travelling for work or leisure?* might help you in mentioning those services that are the most appropriate for the customer. If he/she is a tourist, they might be interested in the guided tour of the local monuments that the hotel provides!

#### a) Offering and selling extra products and services

- Using the knowledge of customers and their preferences to offer a useful advice or suggestion
- To offer and sell additional products or services according to their preferences and needs

To meet customers' expectations



*The Accessible Tourism for VET Tourism Courses (TOUR4ALL) project <http://tour4all.org/> funded by ERASMUS+ Programme aimed to develop a module on Accessible Tourism for VET students, teachers and Tourism professionals.*

*Please visit the TOUR4ALL Training Platform at: <http://tour4all.org/training-platform/> to freely access the online training modules and complimentary resources that will provide you with the necessary skills and competences to provide a top-quality service in accessible tourism.*



### **Review of the subunit 2: Customer relations**

The second subunit was dedicated to relations with customers, how to build and maintain them. We talked about emotional intelligence, how to “put yourself in the customer’s shoes” and how to use this competence in interaction with customers,



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	demonstrate attentiveness and support good relationship with your guests. We also proposed an exercise to practice emotional intelligence and empathy. In this subunit you also learnt about providing customer service to customers with additional and special needs. We provided basic information about this topic and suggested further resources including reading and training materials.
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### Self-assessment – Subunit 2: Customer Relations

1. What “emotional intelligence” means?

*One correct answer.*

- a) Being sensible and sensitive.
- b) Being able to manage emotions.
- c) Being able to communicate with children.

2. What all customers want? (according to Brown, 2013)

*Multiple correct answers.*

- a) To be heard
- b) To receive a refund
- c) To be understood
- d) To be called by their name
- e) To be cared for
- f) To be offered extra products

3. The approach to excellent customer service “SEC” stands for:

*One correct answer.*

- a) See – Enter - Cancel
- b) Smile – Eye contact – Comment
- c) Select – Evaluate – Control

4. Which of the following are the most common mistakes in customer service? (According Crawley, 2014)

*Multiple correct answers.*

- a) we don’t listen
- b) we smile too much
- c) we talk too much
- d) we use wrong words
- e) we don’t see the problem from the customer’s point of view
- f) we don’t manage our emotions and get upset



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5. Which of the following statements about customer services to guests with additional needs is true?

*One correct answer.*

- a) We should help customers with additional needs - holding them and supporting them when walking.
- b) We should always ask whether the customer actually needs our help before helping them.
- c) We should make sure that customers with a disability have the best room available.



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## Subunit 3: Managing difficulties in customer service

When working in customer service, you will sometimes face difficulties in interaction with customers. Be ready, keep calm and you'll see you'll be able to handle any problem professionally.



### Typical challenging situations in the sector of tourism and hospitality

Below, we name some typical customer complaints. Being aware of possible problems will help you prevent and resolve them.

- Complaints about the attitude and behaviour of staff
- Refund requests
- Customers refusing to pay extra fees
- Complaints regarding the quality of product or service (e.g. the room doesn't look like it did on the website, dirty room, bad food)
- Wi-Fi or not working<sup>22</sup>



*Go through the situations named above and think how would you resolve them at your workplace. Think about the standard procedures at your job and the people you have to involve in the solution. How would you communicate with the customer? Practice the dialogue with your colleague.*



**Try to resolve this model situation:** a customer comes to you complaining that the Wi-fi connection isn't working in his/her room.

#### Hints to possible solution:

- Kindly apologise and inform the customer about the problem (reason, duration, possible solution).
- Call the maintenance to verify the problem and fix it.
- Suggest places where the connection works (lobby, restaurant etc.)
- If the malfunction persists, consider a refund or compensation. Inform the management.

<sup>22</sup> Top 5 Customer Complaints in the Tourism & Hospitality Industry — and how to handle them. Oxbridge Academy, 2015. Available at: <https://www.oxbridgeacademy.edu.za/blog/top-5-customer-complaints-tourism-hospitality-industry-handle/> [06-04-19]



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### How to deal with complaints, challenging situations and difficult customers

Complaints and conflicts are normal and also an important part of any business. Customers' complaints shouldn't be seen only as an inconvenience but as an opportunity to gain valuable feedback and learn more about your guests' experience. Don't avoid conflicts and don't hide negative comments! Customers' complaint must be always acknowledged and resolved to the customer's satisfaction. In the hospitality industry, you can't afford letting your guests leave with a negative experience they will share with others and may damage your reputation.



*Remember that people tend to spread negative news. In average we tell 3 people about an excellent experience and 11 people about a horrible experience.<sup>23</sup>*



### LAST approach in customer care

When dealing with a complaint following the LAST approach<sup>24</sup> can help you resolve any problem professionally and calm the customer.

#### L – listen

- Let the customer talk and explain the problem, ask questions.

*“What seems to be the problem?”*

*“How can I help you?”*

- Show you're listening

*“So what you're saying is...” “Let me get this right...” (repeat, summarize)*

- If the person is rude remain calm and show your interest in the situation. Stay polite, don't take it personally and emphasize you want to help them.

*“I really want to help you and to do so I need you to collaborate.”*

*“Please calm down, so we can solve the problem...”*

#### A – apologise

- Apologize in any case even if you don't see any real problem. Don't put the fault to anybody. Don't take the blame.

*“I'm sorry you had a bad experience.”*

#### S – solve

- If you know how to solve the problem, inform the customer about possible solution.

<sup>23</sup> Patrick Bet-David, How to Handle Customer Complaints Like a Pro. Valuetainment, 2017. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kx7-S9jvVXM> [06-04-19]

<sup>24</sup> How to give great customer service: The L.A.S.T. method. Learn English with Emma (engVid), 2016. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dnpMqQnt8WY> [06-04-19]



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*"Here's what we're going to do to help you."*

- Be honest if you don't know what to do. Don't make up solution and don't promise things you're not sure to be able to provide.

*"I'm not sure how to resolve this situation. Let me check with my manager/supervisor."*

### T – thank

- Thank people to take the time to critique your service or product. You want and need their feedback.

*"Thank you for letting us know about this situation."*



If you want to practice the correct English sentences to be used in customer complaint solving, try this test.



*How to give great customer service: The L.A.S.T. method<sup>25</sup>*



### Tips to dealing with customers' complaints<sup>26</sup>

Here are some other tips you should follow to provide effective and professional problem solving.

1. **Speed** – react immediately when handling complaints
2. Prefer **face-to-face** and phone interaction over email communication
3. Speak like a **human being**, not like a robot
4. **Hear the customer out**
5. Remain **calm** and don't get offended
6. Don't stop at resolving the problem with a customer – **fix the problem**



### How to deal with angry customer

#### Videos in English language

*Dealing with the Irate Customer<sup>27</sup>*

*Customer Service Counts: Dealing with an Angry Customer. 2<sup>28</sup>*

*CORPORATE VIDEO- Dealing with an Angry Customer Training<sup>29</sup>*

<sup>25</sup> Engvid.com, How to give great customer service: The L.A.S.T. method. 2016. Available at: <https://www.engvid.com/how-to-give-great-customer-service-the-last-method/> [06-04-19]

<sup>26</sup> Patrick Bet-David, How to Handle Customer Complaints Like a Pro. Valuetainment, 2017. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kx7-S9jvVXM> [06-04-19]

<sup>27</sup> Kantola Training Solutions, Dealing with an Angry Customer. 2012. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oQtArj5U5I4> [26-04-19]

<sup>28</sup> Kantola Training Solutions, Customer Service Counts: Dealing with an Angry Customer. 2. 2013. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vjSenw6PgrM> [26-04-19]



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*How to manage upset customers? Using the LAUGH Method to work with angry or frustrated guests.*<sup>30</sup>

### Videos in Italian language

*Cliente Arrabbiato? Sedalo in 5 mosse! (Angry Customer? Calm them in 5 steps!)*<sup>31</sup>

*Tre step per affrontare un cliente arrabbiato (Three steps to face an angry customer)*<sup>32</sup>



## How to manage stress, maintain self-control and patience

Working in customer services may be sometimes very stressful, especially when facing a complaining or an angry customer. For that reason, managing stress is an essential job skill for any customer service professional. The following stress-busting ideas can help you keep calm and maintain perspective.<sup>33</sup>

### 1. **Don't be a "sponge" for customer frustration.**

Their frustration has nothing to do with you, so don't take it personally. Ignore any personal attacks and exaggerations.

### 2. **Think about the angry customer as a nice person** who only had a bad experience.

Think of them normally reasonable, and in a good or neutral mood. When talking to them, remember there's a nice person and if you stay patient and work with them, you'll discover that nice customer again. Typically, they'll apologise and thank you profusely if you keep thinking they'll become nice.

### 3. **When customers are frustrated, their behaviour is a reaction to unmet expectations.** Uncovering their expectations will help defuse the emotion, help you keep cool, and keep the conversation focused on problem solving.

### 4. **Take good care of yourself and create positive rituals to improve your stress resilience.**

- At the beginning of each shift, make an agreement with yourself that you'll

<sup>29</sup> JMC Film Co., CORPORATE VIDEO- Dealing with an Angry Customer Training. 2014. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T20hV4ynU7o&t=16s> [26-04-19]

<sup>30</sup> Be a Better Guide - Free Tour Guide Training, How to manage upset customers? Using the LAUGH Method to work with angry or frustrated guests. 2016. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=atBdF7yhFYQ> [26-04-19]

<sup>31</sup> Comisso, L. Cliente Arrabbiato? Sedalo in 5 mosse! 2016. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SLuDmNIMzMs> [06-04-19]

<sup>32</sup> Edison Consulting. Tre step per affrontare un cliente arrabbiato. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5fcPtxxu94> [06-04-19]

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stay in control of your mood. When you're in control, the customer responds, and the conversation takes less time and is less emotional.

- After a conflict or demanding situation, take a break, regain your cool, and resolve that the rest of your shift you'll be in control.
- Find a way of rewarding yourself for staying in control of stress.
- Keep a healthy work/life balance. What is important to you in your personal life? Bring a representation of your personal interests to work as a reminder to maintain perspective.
- Eat well for mental alertness and low stress. Try declaring your workspace a no sugar zone. Many people find incorporating more protein in their diet keeps them positive. Try high-protein snacks like sunflower seeds, nuts etc. and see if you notice a difference. It's important to drink plenty of water. Feeling foggy and frustrated can indicate dehydration or insufficient protein.<sup>34</sup>
- Learn to Breathe. Breathing exercises can help you stay calm and focused in stressful situations. Controlled breathing can reduce stress. Rapid, shallow, erratic breathing is a common response to stress. On the other hand, slow, deep, regular breathing is a sign of relaxation. You can learn to control your respirations so they mimic relaxation; the effect, in fact, will be relaxing.<sup>35</sup>



This exercise<sup>36</sup> can help you put things back into perspective and dissolve some of the tension.

1. *Breathe in slowly and deeply, pushing your stomach out so that your diaphragm is put to maximal use.*
2. *Hold your breath briefly.*
3. *Exhale slowly, thinking "relax."*
4. *Repeat the entire sequence five to 10 times, concentrating on breathing deeply and slowly.*

<sup>34</sup> Earl, D.. Stress Management Tips for Customer Service Professionals. Donna Earl Training, 2005. Available at: <http://www.donnaearltraining.com/articles-quizzes/stress-management-tips-for-customer-service-professionals/> [06-04-19]

<sup>35</sup> Exercising to relax. Harvard Men's Health Watch, 2011. Available at: <https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/exercising-to-relax> [06-04-19]

<sup>36</sup> Exercising to relax. Harvard Men's Health Watch, 2011. Available at: <https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/exercising-to-relax> [06-04-19]



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Physical exercise is one of the best things to do for stress. Try taking just a few minutes out of your lunch break for a brisk to refresh you and dissipate some of that stress.<sup>37</sup>

*Exercise: Use your senses<sup>38</sup>*

*The 5-4-3-2-1 coping technique is a fantastic way to bring your mind away from stressful thoughts and back to the present moment. It's simple too, all you have to do is acknowledge:*

- **5 things you see:** could be a water feature in the lobby, chef in the kitchen or printer in the office. Just bring your mind back to your surroundings.
- **4 things you can touch:** maybe a desk in front of you, the brickwork of a wall, the frame of a picture.
- **3 things you can hear:** could be guests checking in, prep from the kitchen or phones ringing in the background.
- **2 things you can smell:** could be brewing coffee or lunch preparation.
- **1 thing you can taste:** could be gum you are chewing or a sweet from the welcome jar.

*Going through this process doesn't take time and helps your brain relax and refocus on the task at hand.*



You can learn more about services in hospitality and tourism from the learning materials developed as part of the “Virtual Vocational Education and Training – VIRTUS” project: <http://virtus-vet.eu>, funded by the Erasmus+ programme. The VIRTUS project has developed an innovative, virtual vocational education and training centre providing a modular certified course on Tourism and Hospitality Services. Modules include:

**Module 1: Main functions of tourism enterprises**

**Module 2: Digital Marketing Techniques for tourism enterprises**

**Module 3: Basic principles of Quality Client/Hospitality services**

**Module 4: Client Complaint/Feedback Management**



### Review of the subunit 3: Managing difficulties in customer service

The third subunit dealt with managing difficulties and problem solving. We explained that in customer service, problems or conflicts may emerge and you have to ready to handle them professionally. We introduced the LAST approach – 4 simple steps to deal with problems and complaints – and gave some useful tips and tricks. Then you learn how to manage your stress and maintain self-control. Don't forget to practice the

<sup>37</sup> Exercising to relax. Harvard Men's Health Watch, 2011. Available at: <https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/exercising-to-relax> [06-04-19]

<sup>38</sup> Donovan, L. 12 Tips for Stress Management In The Hospitality Industry. Hotel Magazine UK, 2017. Available at: <http://www.hotel-magazine.co.uk/12-tips-stress-management-hospitality-industry> [06-04-19]



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breathing exercise that can help you with that!



### Self-assessment – Subunit 3: Managing difficulties in customer service

1. People tend to spread negative news. In average they tell 3 people about an excellent experience and:

*One correct answer.*

- a) 5 people about a horrible experience.
- b) 8 people about a horrible experience.
- c) 11 people about a horrible experience.

2. “LAST” - an approach to dealing with complaints – stand for:

*One correct answer.*

- a) L -learn, A-apologise, S-solve, T-thank
- b) L -listen, A-apologise, S-solve, T-thank
- c) L -listen, A-answer, S-solve, T-thank

3. Which of the following statements about dealing with customers’ complaints are true?

*Multiple correct answers.*

- a) React immediately when handling complaints.
- b) Keep smiling even if the customers in very angry.
- c) If the customer is very angry, talk like a robot, keep repeating the phrases you learnt during a training course.
- d) Speak like a human being, adjust your reactions to the customer.
- e) Remain calm and don’t get offended.
- f) Always offer a refund. The customer must be satisfied.

4. Which of the following statements about managing stress are true:

*Multiple correct answers.*

- a) Don’t be a “sponge” for customer frustration.
- b) Don’t respond if the customer is not polite.
- c) Explain to the customer that it’s not your fault.
- d) After a conflict or difficult situation ask for a short break to calm down and breath.
- e) Take good care of yourself. If you feel good you can manage your stress better.



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## Final review



### Review of the module 1: Customer service

The first module is dedicated to customer care and intends to equip seasonal staff with the key competencies in this field. The module is divided in three subunits.

The first subunit explains the importance of high-quality customer service in tourism and hospitality and introduces the readers to the key principles of customer service – etiquette and courtesy. Other core principles of customer care including welcoming customers and standard rules and procedures follow.

The second subunit focuses on how to build and maintain good customer relations. The readers learn about emotional intelligence, attentiveness, proactive attitude and are encouraged to practice these skills. This unit also covers an important topic of providing customer service to customers with additional and special needs. Essential rules and information are part of the subunit, further resources including reading and training materials are suggested.

The third subunit is dedicated to managing difficulties in customer service including problem solving and dealing with complaints. Instructions, recommendations and practical tips to handle difficulties and issues with customers are included. The readers are also guided through techniques of stress management and self-control.

## Final activity for application

1. Think about 5 examples of how we can demonstrate courtesy and professionalism in customer service.
2. Think about the most important rules of delivering services to guests with additional needs. Give some examples.
3. What LAST approach means? Name and explain the four steps of this problem-solving method



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## Self-assessment tests – correct answers

### Subunit 1: Customer service in tourism and hospitality

1. b)
2. b), d), e), g)
3. a)
4. c)

### Subunit 2: Customer Relations

1. b)
2. a), c), e)
3. b)
4. a), d), e), f)
5. b)

### Subunit 3: Managing difficulties in customer service

1. c)
2. b)
3. a), d), e)
4. a), d), e)



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