

Case Study Exercise - Win/win without breaking policy!



In the US, the Residential Division for JBG manages more than 6,500 apartments for individuals living in the greater Washington DC area.

From upscale residences to affordable housing alternatives, JBG provides residents with homes and communities, not just buildings.

JBG encourages employees to “know when it’s OK to bend the rules a little bit and find a way to say ‘yes,’” says Duane Wooldridge, Vice President of Residential Operations at JBG.

“A big challenge for any apartment company is when we fall back on rules, policies, the lease or landlord-tenant law as a way to say, ‘no,’” explained Wooldridge. “At JBG we’re developing a training class to help employees think about how they can say ‘yes’ to tenants more often, without violating the law, the lease or a policy.”

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To help employees assimilate that type of behaviour, JBG employed a training company to design training for 175 employees. The training company shadowed employees and watched processes, from employees at all levels, and job types, such as maintenance technicians, bookkeepers, receptionists, the leadership team, the CEO, VP, and Property Managers, who all attended the training.

Then they developed a set of customer-centric guidelines

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Creating
a culture
of caring

A key part of the leaning was being able to connect with customers and with each employee. The culture needed to encompass how employees treated each other, not just the customer. It helped to create a culture of caring.

The leadership team realised that they had to find opportunities to fulfil the expressed and unexpressed wishes of their customers.

Woolridge explained a recent example of a potential renter looking at pictures of one of their apartments online. The renter liked what he saw and was ready to rent. But he made a comment about how he had never rented an apartment - a very important decision - sight unseen before. JPG's employee sensed the customer's hesitation and recalled the training about anticipating customer needs that aren't clearly stated, used his iPad to create a walk-through video tour of the apartment, including the wonderful view from the apartment, something not available on-line. He emailed the video to the gentleman, who immediately wanted to rent the apartment.

Woolridge concluded, "I believe that without the training, we would not have invested the extra 5 to 10 minutes to make the video. And I think the fact that the employee knew he had done something good, was probably even more impactful for him than it was for the new resident, who was thrilled."

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Granting permission to meet customers' needs

"It takes a lot to empower people," Wooldridge continued, "but the training company showed us how any associate can take charge and fix something that will affect a guest's stay."

As a result, JBG now encourages employees to pay special attention to tenants' needs, moods and day-to-day circumstances, without being too intrusive.

When an employee accidentally had an unregistered resident's car towed, the employee not only made sure the car was returned unharmed, he was also encouraged to present the tenant with a \$50 gift card so the owner could get the car registered for a permit.

Wooldridge said employees aren't always comfortable making that type of decision on their own. "They need permission to be customer oriented so we're encouraging them to understand the context of a situation and be creative in how to help."

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After reading this case study, answer the following questions.

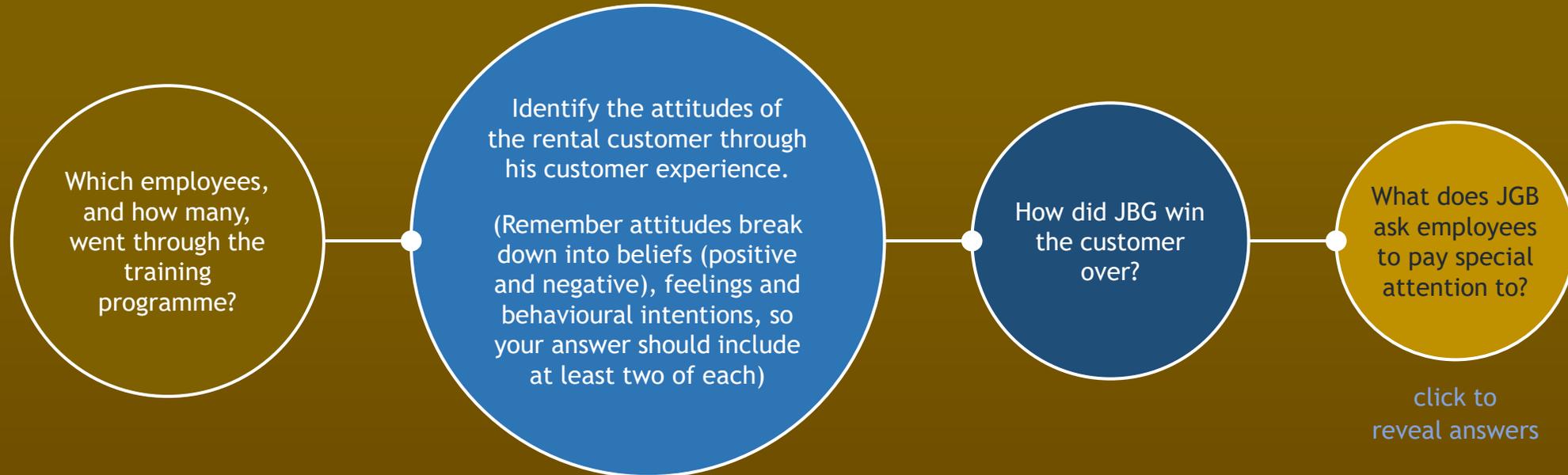
Allow around **40 minutes** to complete this exercise.

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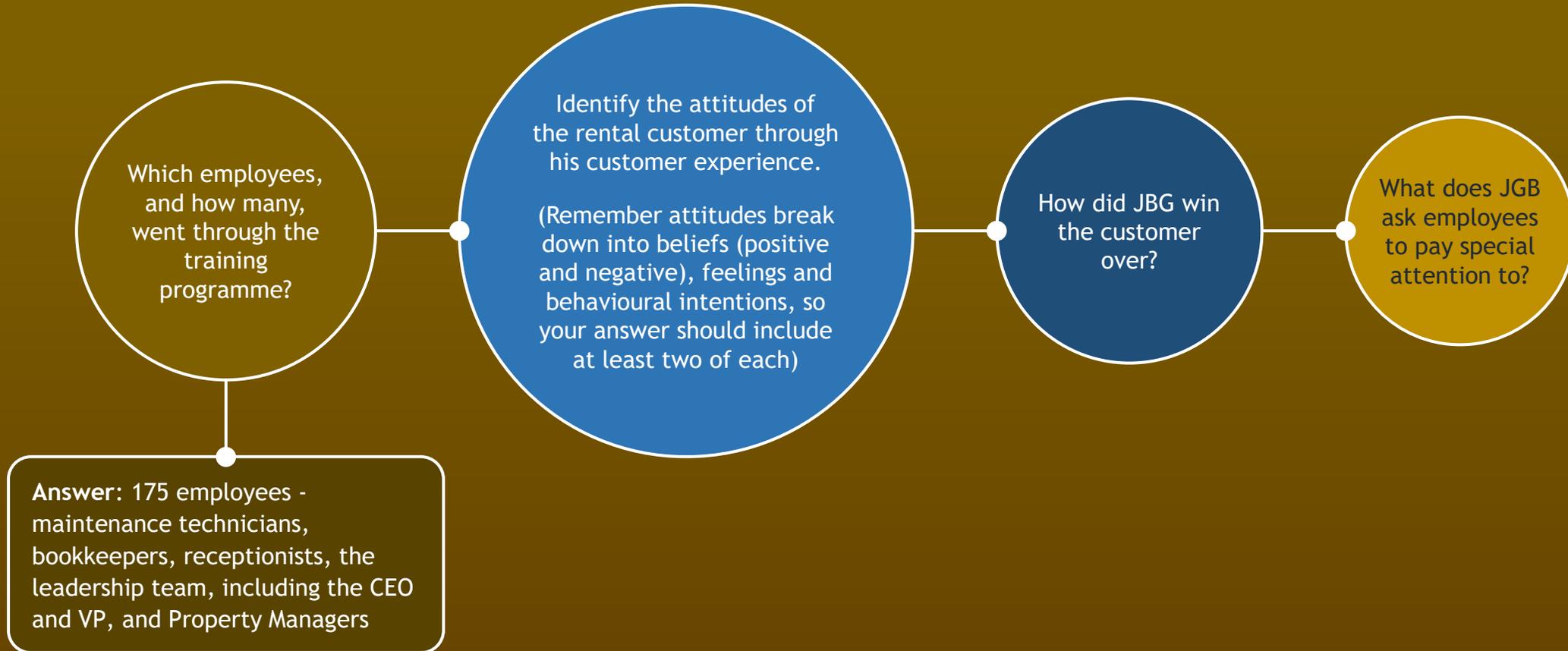


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Which employees, and how many, went through the training programme?

Identify the attitudes of the rental customer through his customer experience.

(Remember attitudes break down into beliefs (positive and negative), feelings and behavioural intentions, so your answer should include at least two of each)

Sample Answer:

Beliefs:

- I want this apartment, but will it look like this in reality?
- How can I rent an apartment I have not seen?
- Will the video really help me to make the decision to rent the apartment?
- The company is helpful
- The customer service is exceptional

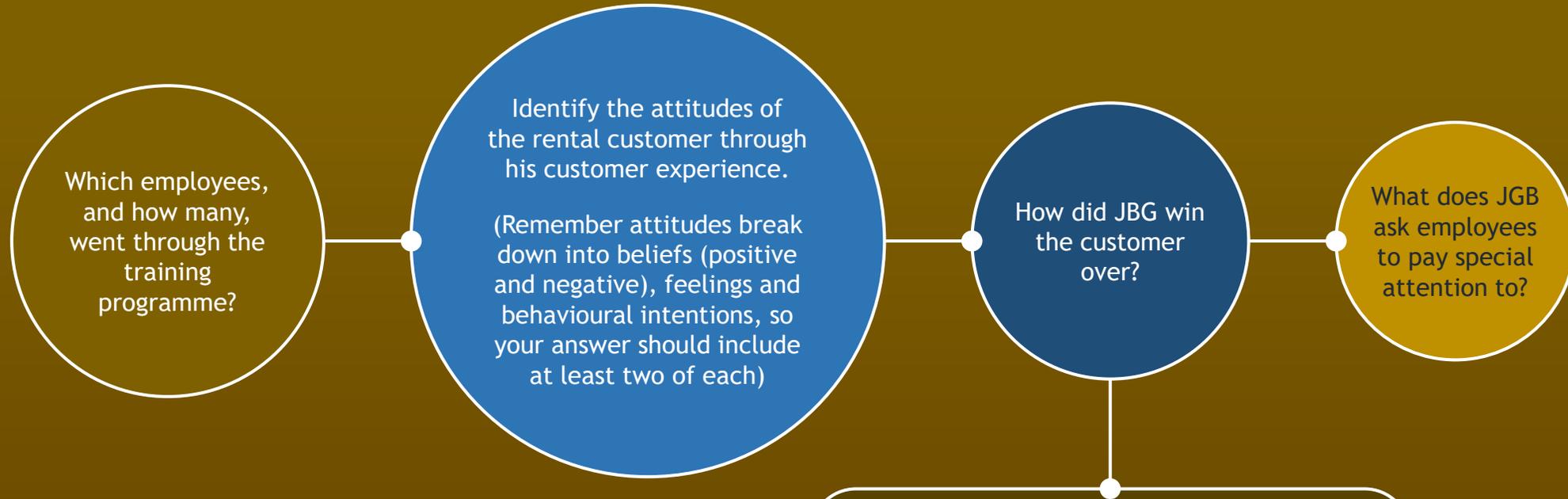
Feelings:

- Excitement: finding an apartment he liked
- Doubt: Never rented without viewing
- Anticipation: Prior to viewing the apartment on the iPad
- Satisfaction: He had made the right choice
- Delight: I'm so pleased I made this decision
- Trust: I trust RGB to look after my interests

Behavioural Intentions:

- I will rent this apartment after JGB took time out to send the video
- I will recommend JGB to people I know
- I will rent from them again

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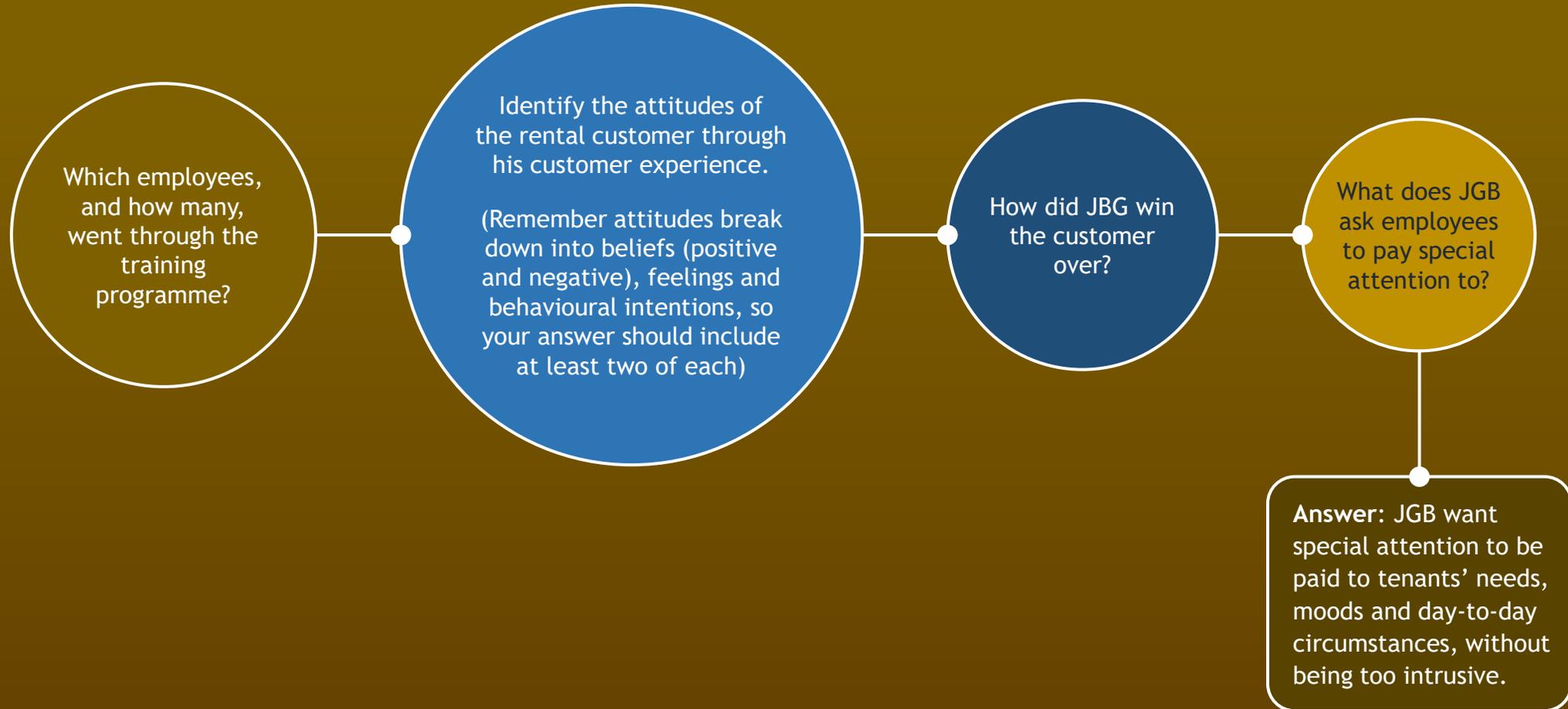


Sample Answer:

- Taking the time to understand his doubt
- Understanding his point of view
- Sending the email of the video over to address his concerns
- Being proactive and delivering excellent customer service
- Making him feel special by taking an individualised approach

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Activity: 7 Steps to Dealing with Customer Complaints

This activity looks at a seven step process to help people manage customers effectively, especially if there are complaints and they are upset, annoyed or frustrated.

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This is called
TACTICS

T

Thank you

A

Apologise

C

Collect information

T

Take action

I

I will put this right

C

Check that the customer is happy

S

Summary

click to continue

By working through the seven steps, you will gain an understanding of why each part of the process is valuable, and then you can practice and write your answers, or role-play with a partner if that works better for you.

click to continue

Activity: 7 Steps to Dealing with Customer Complaints

T

A

C

T

I

C

S

Thank you

You need to create immediate rapport with the customer and there is no better way than thanking a customer for bringing the issue to your attention. You are laying positive foundations for the rest of the conversation. Use your own words; it will appear more natural and not contrived. An alternative is to explain you did not know about the issue, but now you are aware.

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Apologise

By apologising you are communicating with the customer that you genuinely wish the situation had not happened to them. This instills confidence that you are prepared to do something to put it right. You are not taking responsibility for what has happened, but you are stating you are sorry it has happened!

click to continue

Activity: 7 Steps to Dealing with Customer Complaints

T

A

C

T

I

C

S

Collect the Information

You need the customer's help in gathering the relevant information.

Ask them only what is necessary. However, ensure that you ask for enough information or you will have to call back, or ask them to explain further, and this will delay the resolution.

The most important thing to do at this stage is to LISTEN to the customer! Customers will probably be giving you more information than you need to know so pay attention and listen.

The customer also may be EMOTIONAL.

Whatever you do or say, do not ask the customer to calm down, this will have the opposite effect and may even wind up the customer!

Ask a mix of open and closed questions

Take careful, legible notes. This lets the customer know you are taking the matter seriously and that you will have all the relevant information to hand. This also provides a written record, should you need to refer back to the situation at any time.

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Activity: 7 Steps to Dealing with Customer Complaints

T

Take action

Quite simply do whatever you need to do to put the situation right and promptly. A sense of urgency will be appreciated by the customer as it will let them know that you value them and are treating their complaint seriously.

Always tell the customer what action you propose to take.

Do not under-promise or over-deliver! Give timescales and be realistic.

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I will put this right

“I” is an extremely assertive word and subconsciously sends a message to the customer that everything is being taken care of. You should give the customer your name and telephone number in case they need to contact you in the future.

[click to continue](#)

A

C

T

I

C

S

Check that the customer is happy

Ask the customer directly if they are satisfied with what you did for them.

If you can call and ask them a few days later, this could reap huge dividends in relation to customer loyalty and reputation management. Remember that customers will spread the word about their negative experiences via Facebook pages, or on Twitter, causing an immediate awareness of the situation.

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To summarise:

- Ensure that the details are recorded
- Appropriate action is taken
- Compensation awarded if necessary, or issue is escalated to someone who can make that decision - but be clear that you will do that and explain the timescales
- Consider sending a letter or email to the customer confirming the next steps or the resolution decided
- Make the complaint known so that others can learn from it.

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Skills Practice Scenarios



Write your thoughts down

Write down what you would say/do in each of these scenarios.

Allow up to **50 minutes** for this exercise. You can also discuss this with a colleague if you'd prefer.

A worksheet is available for this exercise under Supporting Module Files.

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Exercise: Can't to Can/Will



Write your thoughts down

Take a look at the following examples of negative phrases and write your suggestions for alternative and positive statements in the “can do” column. Try to think of how a customer would react/say to your “can’t do” statement.

Spend up to **50 minutes** completing this exercise, or until you are satisfied you have completed this thoroughly.

A worksheet is available for this exercise under Supporting Module Files.

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It's not my job

We've never done it like this before

It's too complicated

I haven't got time

I haven't a clue what to do

You're just trying it on

There's no way that will work

It's just not possible

There's nothing wrong with it

You just want something for nothing

We've always done it like this

I'll try...

Other statements to avoid!

Hopefully...

I'll have to see...

[click to continue](#)

[click to continue](#)

Exercise: Can't to Can/Will

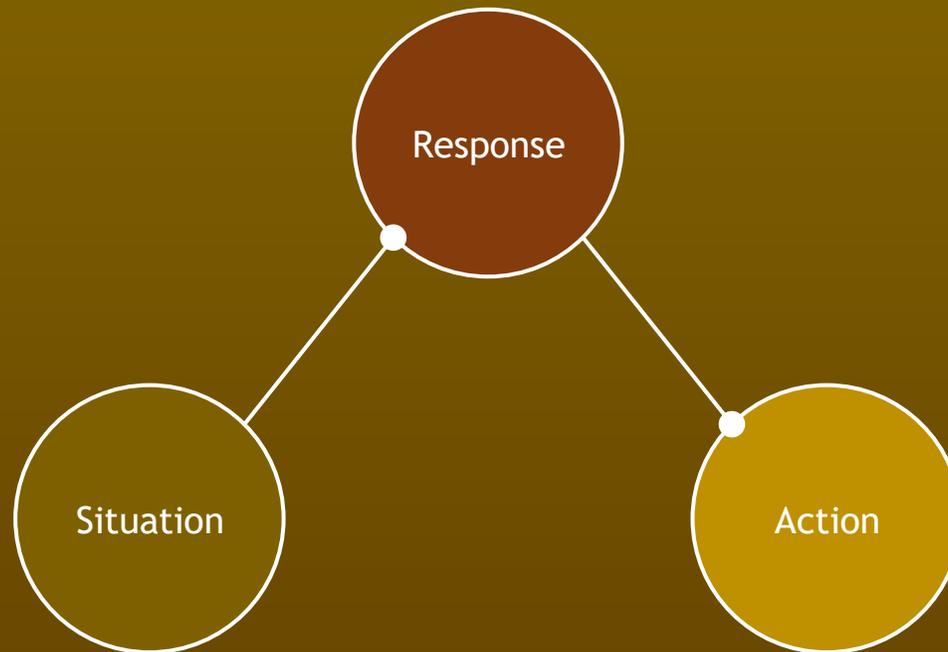


Write your thoughts down

If you genuinely feel that you personally can't resolve the situation, what would be the reason, and what would you do to ensure this is resolved?

Choose **three** example scenarios and write your answers for the following.

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