

# Customer Service: Dealing with Difficult People

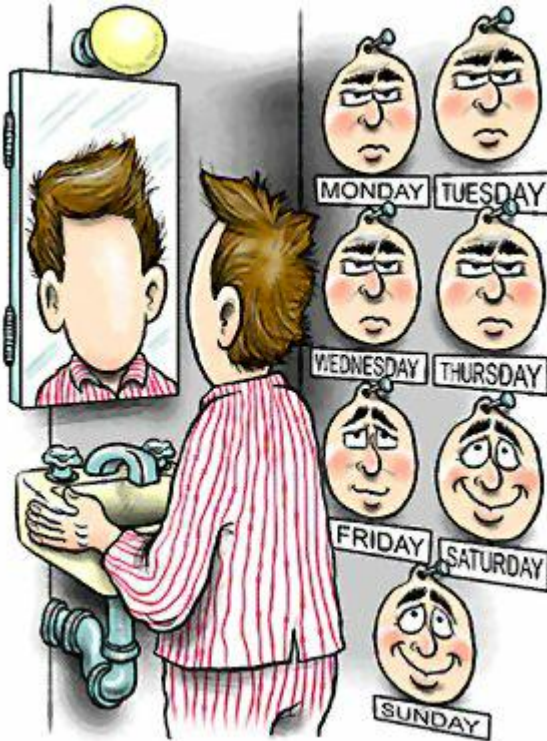
**“Some cause happiness wherever  
they go; others whenever they go”**

**- Oscar Wilde**

“Mirror, mirror on the wall...”



# Maintaining good character is as important as hygiene



- Organize/review your tasks (work & personal)
- Get plenty of sleep
- Set your mood
  - breakfast
  - exercise
  - meditation/prayer
  - music
- Take breaks throughout the day
- Study and be prepared



the **BIG**  
**BANG**  
**THEORY**

< Tweet 🔍 ✍️

 **Kunal Nayyar** ✓  
@kunalnayyar

If you can forgive people even before they hurt you, you will forever be bulletproof.

10/5/13, 4:12 AM

# Influences of Behavior

- Motivations
- Needs
- Fears
- Experiences
- Communication Styles

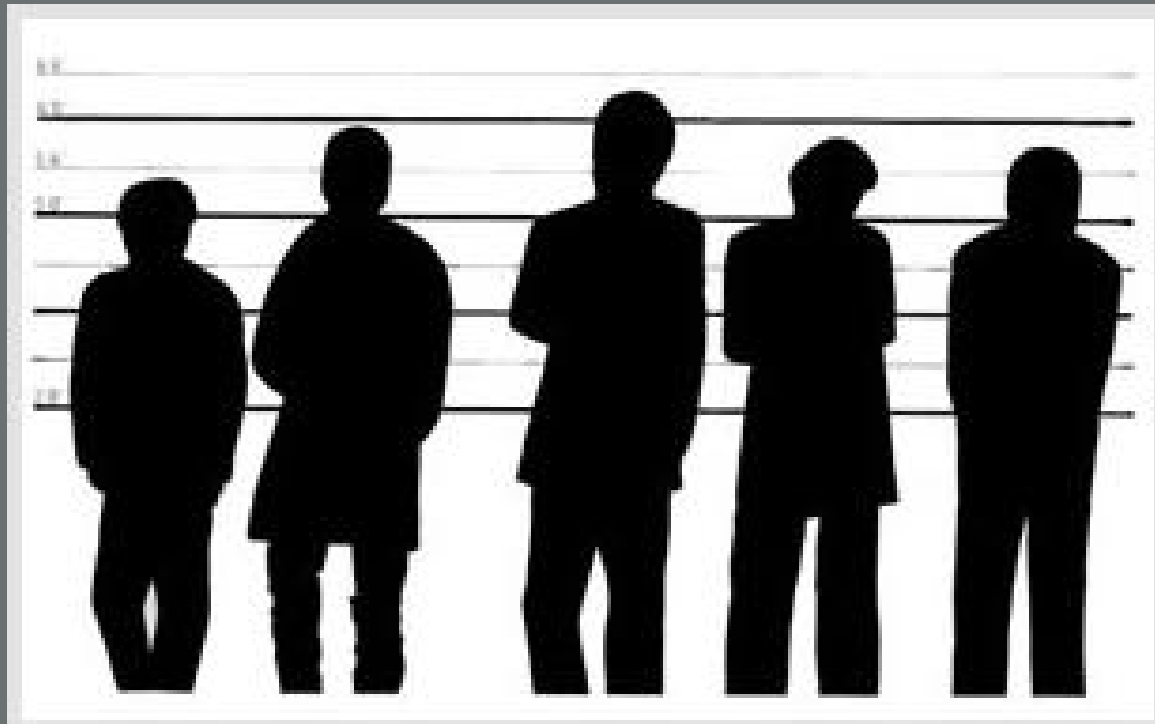


# Who Are Your Customers?

- External Customers
  - Students/Parents
- Internal Customers
  - Co-workers
  - Other office staff
  - Executive management



# Usual Suspects





# Personality and Behavior Types

- “The Sherman Tank”
- “The Exploder”
- “The Complainer”
- “The Clam”
- “The Wet Blanket”
- “The Know-It-All”
- “The Staller”



# The Sherman Tank



- Attacks
- Abusive
- Intimidating
- Overpowering
- Contemptuous manner
- Something to prove

# Dealing with “The Sherman Tank”

- Stand up to them but don't argue
- Give them time to run down
- Get your point across any reasonable way you can
- Get them to sit down and discuss the problem
- Maintain eye contact
- State your opinions forcefully and without apology
- Don't try to cut them down
- Be ready to be friendly and receptive to negotiation

# The Exploder



- Temper tantrums
- Outbursts of rage
- Lack of self-control
- Violent

# Dealing with “The Exploder”

- Get them to wind down/switch to problem solving mode
- Give them time to run down and gain self-control
- If they don't, use a neutral phrase such as “Stop” or “Quiet, please!”
- Show that you take them and their concerns seriously
- Active listening
- If necessary, suggest moving to private setting for further discussion

# The Complainer



- Finds fault with everything
- Complaint follows complaint
- “Someone do something!”

# Dealing with “The Complainer”

- Insist that issues be handled in a problem solving manner
- Listen to their complaints even if you feel guilty or impatient
- Acknowledge, paraphrase to ensure perceptions are correct
- Don't agree with or apologize for their complaints
- Avoid the accusation-defense-re-accusation pattern
- State the facts without comment
- problem solving mode: specific questions, fact-finding tasks, or ask for complaints in writing
- Ask “How do you want the discussion to end?”

# The Clam



- Silent type
- Only replies with “Yes”, “No”, “Maybe”
- Non-committal



# Dealing with “The Clam”

- Get them to open up; discuss what they want or what the issue is
- Ask open-ended questions (and repeat)
- Wait for a response
- Do not fill the silence with chatter
- Plan for extra time
- Comment on what is happening in the interaction
- Eye contact

# The Wet Blanket

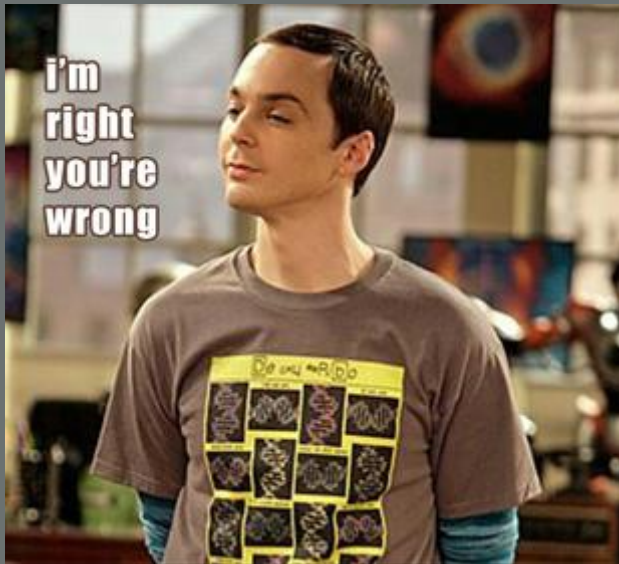


- Condescending
- Always negative
- “That will never work”

# Dealing with “The Wet Blanket”

- Rational problem solving by avoiding negativism or pessimism
- Make optimistic but realistic statements about past successes in handling similar problems
- Don't try to argue out of their pessimism
- Hold solutions until problem's thoroughly discussed
- When alternatives are being discussed, raise questions—offer consequences or outcomes
- Be prepared to take action on your own – develop plan

# The Know-It-All



- The “expert” in all matters
- Fact driven
- Often reacts with irritation
- Needs control
- Impatient

# Dealing with “The Know-It-All”

- Get them to consider alternatives without directly challenging their alleged expertise
- Do your homework - they want details
- Listen and paraphrase
- Don't be dogmatic or over-generalize
- Be tentative in any disagreements
- Ask and raise exploratory questions
- Beware of your own “know-it-all” responses
- As a last resort, choose to give in, in order to avoid protracted conflict and build a relationship

# The Staller



- Procrastinates
- Habitually indecisive
- Accepts responsibility without follow through
- Doesn't respond

# Dealing with “The Staller”

- Recognize that this is their preferred method of problem solving
- Attempt to engage them in problem solving
- Don't take on their problems yourself
- Listen for issues and create problem solving solutions
- If reservations involve you, acknowledge past problem and proceed with problem solving
- Concentrate on examining the facts of the situation
- Give support for any decision they can offer
- Delineate who is responsible for what in resolving problem

The background features a solid green color with several decorative white and light green lines. A prominent white line starts from the left, goes down, then right, then down again, ending in a curve. Other lines are horizontal or slightly curved, in shades of white and light green.

- **Managing the Moment**



# Managing the Moment Model



Based on:

- Deliberate acts or choices
- Maintaining a sense of integrity
- Conscious
- Time allowed to reflect on behavior

# 6 Practical Application Tools

1. Remove the emotion and stick with the facts
  - a) Facts are objective observations
  - b) Facts do not create defensiveness (interpretations can)
  - c) Facts establish logical connections (facts -> interpretations)

# 6 Practical Application Tools

1. Remove the emotion and stick with the facts
2. Take out judgment and assumptions
3. Be clear and specific
4. Self-Control
5. Stance
6. Communication

# Vocal Qualities

- Tone of voice
- Inflection in the voice
- Rate of speech
- Intensity



# Matching Intensity – Not Always

If the customer is...

- Natural
- Angry
- In a panic
- Friendly
- Overburdened
- Frustrated

Then you are...

- Natural
- Calm
- Calm
- Friendly
- Empathetic
- Understanding

# What Keeps Us from Listening

- Being preoccupied
- Trying to multi-task
- Being interrupted
- Thinking about your response before the customer finishes talking
- Jumping to conclusions based on personal beliefs



# 6 Practical Application Tools

1. Remove the emotion and stick with the facts
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# Methods for Reducing Conflict

- Withdrawal
- Smoothing
- Forcing
- Compromise
- Collaboration





# Withdrawal

- Neither the goal nor the relationship are important
- You withdraw from interaction

## **What happens when used:**

- Attempt to solve problem by denying its existence

## **Appropriate to use when:**

- Issue is relatively unimportant; timing is wrong; cooling off is needed

## **Inappropriate to use when:**

- Issue is important; when issue will not disappear but build

# Smoothing

- The relationship is more important than the goal
- You want to be liked and accepted

## What happens when used:

- Differences are played down; surface harmony exists. Results in win/lose resentment situation

## Appropriate to use when:

- Issue relatively unimportant, also when preservation of the relationship is more important at the moment

## Inappropriate to use when:

- Reluctance to deal with conflict lead to evasion of an important issue; when others are ready and willing to deal with issue

# Forcing

- The goal is important but not the relationship.
- Use all your energy to get the job done

## What happens when used:

- One's authority, position, majority rule, or a persuasive minority settles the conflict. Results in win/lose if the dominated party see no hope for self

## Appropriate to use when:

- When power comes with position of authority; when this method has been agreed upon

## Inappropriate to use when:

- Losers have no way to express needs; could result in future disruptions

# Compromise

- Both goals and relationships are important
- You both gain and lose something

## **What happens when used:**

- Each party gives up something in order to midway. Results in win/lose if differences aren't recognized

## **Appropriate to use when:**

- Both parties have enough leeway to give; resources are limited; when win/lose stance is undesirable

## **Inappropriate to use when:**

- Original inflated position is unrealistic; solution is watered down to be effective; commitment is doubted by parties involved

# Collaboration

- Goals and relationships are equally important
- You define the conflict as a problem solving situation

## What happens when used:

- Abilities, values, and expertise of all are recognized; each person's position is clear but emphasis is on group solution. Results in win/win for all

## Appropriate to use when:

- Time is available to complete the process; parties are committed and trained in use of the process

## Inappropriate to use when:

- The conditions of time, abilities, and commitment are not present

**“Watch your thoughts; they become words.  
Watch your words; they become actions.  
Watch your actions; they become habits.  
Watch your habits; they become character.  
Watch your character; it becomes your destiny.”  
– Author Unknown**

# Thank you!

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