Indiana
Department of Local Government Finance

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# Customer Service and Public Relations

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**January 2011**

# Course Introduction

- Many thoughts and concepts shared in this session may seem obvious and “common sense” to most people

- Customer Service
- Media Relations
- General Points to Remember

# Customer Service 101

# Customer Service

- Body Language & Non-verbal Communication
  - The Eyes
  - The Face
  - The Body
- Meeting and Greeting
- Managing Interaction

# … without saying a word

# Body Language

- General non-verbal communication
- Communicating with your eyes, face, posture, etc.
- What not to do

# Non-verbal communication

# Non-verbal communication

- Has it ever occurred to you how much you are saying to people even when you are not speaking?

- Unless you are a master of disguise, you are constantly sending messages about your true thoughts and feelings – whether you are using words or not.

- Kind of scary, huh?

# Non-verbal communication

- Words account for only 7% of the messages we convey when describing feelings or attitudes –remaining 93% is non-verbal
  - 55% of non-verbal communication based on *what people see*
  - Other 38% is transmitted through *tone of voice*
  - A savvy observer can see and hear *what you are not saying*
  - If your body language doesn't match your words, you are most likely *damaging your message – or worse*

# The Eyes

# The Eyes

- The eyes are the most obvious form of non-verbal communication
- Looking at the other person while speaking shows interest and value
- Failing to look at the other person can indicate lack of interest/sincerity/importance
- “Experts” say you should look at the other person about 60% of the time in order to look interested, but not aggressive

# The Eyes

- Eyes are said to be a window to the soul
- The eyes can communicate volumes about what you are thinking and feeling before you ever utter a word
- For this reason, people will avoid eye contact with you when they don't want you to know what they are thinking or feeling (ex., a child telling a fib)
- According to the FBI, lack of eye contact is the #1 sign that someone is lying (though "expert" liars can still fool you!)

# The Eyes

- If possible, avoid wearing sunglasses when communicating outdoors, and get anti-reflective coating on glasses

- **Bottom line:** It may very difficult to hide something if you feel it deeply!

# The Face

# The Face

- Facial expressions are another very strong form of non-verbal communication
  - Smile – it always sends a warm and friendly message
  - Smiles put others at ease, while frowns can increase tension – many people do not realize how much they frown!
  - If you're a supervisor, try not to frown when a subordinate is sharing an idea or feeling (unless you intentionally want to show disapproval)

# The Face

*A natural smile can say a lot without saying a word*

# The Face

- Smiling (not sheepishly) communicates confidence
- An honest smile, even when upset or angry, can help reduce tension
- Be careful about smiling, though, when the tone of the conversation really does not warrant it (fake smiles)
- The mouth is also very expressive – pouting, pursed, or tight lips; tensed mouth; showing teeth or tongue; and twitches or twists – the mouth can say a lot without speaking!

# The Face

# The Face

- People can often discern our mood or thoughts by how we move our mouth
- To summarize, the face is extremely expressive
- Science shows that most facial expressions are inherited
- Ask a good friend or co-worked to give you valuable feedback on ineffective or inappropriate expressions

# The Body

# The Body: Positive Language

- Strong, firm handshake
- Lean forward, make eye contact, use hand gestures
- Speak with natural tone, volume, pitch and pace
- Make eye contact
- Alter facial expressions to match mood and content
- Feet on desk, hands behind head
- Relaxed upright posture, arms swinging naturally while walking
- Nodding

# The Body: Negative Language

- Limp, weak handshake
- Leaning in too close
- Weak, soft voice
- Clearing throat, saying “um, uh,” using overly complex sentences
- Dropping head and looking down
- Staring at other person during silences: Increases tension
- Maintaining eye contact too long (over 7 to 10 seconds)

# The Body: Negative Language

- Rigid, stooped posture, feet shuffling
- Folded arms, crossed legs, picking lint off clothing
- Twiddling thumbs, drumming fingers
- Clenching or wringing hands, playing with jewelry, sitting on edge of chair, jiggling foot
- Rubbing hair or back of neck
- Touching your face

# Meeting and Greeting

- First impressions are the longest lasting and often define the dynamic of any relationship … no pressure
  - Stand up when meeting someone
  - Smile
  - Make eye contact
  - Introduce yourself immediately
  - Include a short statement about who you are

# Meeting and Greeting

- Offer a firm handshake
  - Handshake should be neither bone-crushing nor weak
  - Shaking hands with women is now common business practice
  - When greeting someone of higher rank, wait for them to extend their hand first

# Meeting and Greeting Clients

- Know who the more important person is
- Pay attention to names
- Use first names only when given permission to do so

- Realize that your goal within the first few minutes is to make the other person as comfortable and at ease as possible

# Managing Interactions

**Step 1 – Professionally Greet the Customer/Client**

(Directors should determine what "professional" is for each functional work area)

A good greeting should answer the following questions for the customer/client:

1. Who am I talking to?
2. Am I talking to the right person/department?
3. Does this person "sound" ready to take care of my needs? (professional, appropriately courteous and energetic)

# Managing Interactions

**Step 2 – Understand the Customer's/Client's Needs**

This step involves using the following techniques:

1. Use appropriate question to transition into purpose of the call/visit
2. Use good active listening skills
3. The goal of communication is mutual understanding – work to ensure this happens by attempting to understand the situation from the client's point of view

# Managing Interactions

**Step 3 – Provide Options to Reach a Consensus/Decision**

This step involves using the following:

1. Transition: “I think I know enough to assist you”, “to help you”, “to know what to do”, “how to help fix the problem”, etc.
2. Offer any alternatives, options or suggestions for meeting the need or resolving the issue
3. Reach understanding on action to be taken
4. Offer to connect with other resources if you can’t assist

# Managing Interactions

**Step 4 – Summarize What Was Agreed Upon**

This step involves using the following:

1. Transition such as: “Before we close…” summarize the action, and the conclusion reached
2. Ask if the proposed solution makes sense, and if there is agreement on the course of action
3. Ask if they need any additional assistance
4. Repeat your name, if appropriate
5. Close contact professionally (thank them for the opportunity to work with them, if appropriate)

# Customer Service Summary

- 93% of communication is non-verbal
- What we're not saying can be very important to communicating effectively – we communicate with our eyes, face and body
- First impressions are the longest lasting
- Use the 4-step process to manage customer/client interactions

# General Points to Remember

# General Points to Remember

- Business Letters
- Business Phones
- Effective Voice Mail
- E-mail
- Cubicle Behavior

# Business Letters

- Sweat the small stuff
  - Double check all names and words you're uncertain about and use spell check
- Mark all correspondence accordingly (i.e., personal, confidential, etc.)
- Always reciprocate the same level of confidentiality
- Respond promptly
- Address all points and questions in the order presented

# Business Letters

- In general, avoid humor in business letters
- All correspondence should be signed
- Check, re-check and check again to confirm proper spelling, content and tone of voice
- It is often a good idea to have another set of eyes proof documents for you

# Business Phones

# Business Phones

- Remember the 4-Steps of covering all bases with a customer/client

- Effective customer/client service training is part of the ongoing process of changing our relationships – with the public and with each other

# Effective Voice Mail

## Example of Voice Mail Gone Wonderfully Wrong

# Effective Voice Mail

- What to say when their answering machine beeps:
  - If you have a mental block, hang up!
  - Speak clearly and more slowly than you think you should speak
  - Indentify yourself and greet the person by name
  - **Rule of thumb**: when leaving phone numbers, write them as you speak them so your speaking voice matches pace with writing ability (as a courtesy, repeat the number)

# Business Phones

- Concisely state the purpose of your call
- Never leave personal information in a message
- Avoid leaving a message when angry or upset
- Finally, close your message with instructions on how you desire them to respond:
  - Do you wish them to call back?
  - E-mail? What information? Who should be copied?
  - Action required? What needs to happen? When? How?
- Thank them for their help/attention to your call

# E-mail

- Some e-mail etiquette basics:
  - Tone – the vast majority of communication is not *what* is said, but *how* it is said
  - It is always important to review your tone in written communication, *especially in e-mail*.
  - It is important to remember that e-mail is not the only source of communicating with fellow employees.

# E-mail

**Top Ten e-mail tips to keep in mind:**

1. Be concise and to the point
2. Use proper spelling, grammar, punctuation and formatting
   - Use short paragraphs and return spaces between each paragraph. When making points, number or use bullets to separate each point.
   - Abbreviations in business emails are generally not appropriate. The recipient may not know your particular "lingo"
   - Emoticons, such as the smiley **:-)**, are generally not appropriate in business emails – if at all in doubt, don't use it
3. Answer swiftly
4. Do not attach unnecessary files

# E-mail

**Top Ten e-mail tips to keep in mind:**

5. Do not write in CAPITALS
6. Read the e-mail before you send it
7. Do not overuse “Reply to All”
8. Do not use e-mail to discuss confidential information
9. Use a meaningful subject
10. Use the high priority option, urgent, and important sparingly

# Cubicle Behavior

# Contact the Department

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