

## Module: Achieving Outstanding Customer Service

### Session: Have You Smelled Yourself Lately?

Hi! Welcome back to Daily Learning. Today's session is from the Achieving Outstanding Customer Service module and is called "Have You Smelled Yourself Lately?"

You may be laughing at the title but nothing turns people off faster than being in the presence of someone who stinks. Unfortunately, the law of personal odor is that you rarely can smell yourself so you may not even know when you have a problem. Your goal is to have a neutral odor when you are serving customers. In this lesson, we'll open your eyes... and maybe your nose!... to some of the ways that odor can be a problem at work and how to deal with it.

Customers see employees as a reflection of the company. A bad smelling employee can make them feel uncomfortable, offended or disgusted. They may wonder about the cleanliness and professionalism of the organization. Your customers aren't going to tell you if you smell bad. They will just avoid you or never come back. And when they think twice about doing business with your company it can be a real obstacle to success for both you *and* your employer.

Have you ever met a person who had a smell that was offensive to you? Maybe they had bad breath, smelly body odor or perhaps they were wearing really rank perfume. Whatever the smell was, you probably couldn't concentrate on much else about them and it's quite likely that you were relieved to get away. Chances are they had no idea they smelled bad.

Test that theory right now. Go on, take a whiff of yourself. No one is looking! What do you smell? Probably not much. Most people can't smell themselves. So the point is you might smell bad and there's no way you can tell on your own. We'll explore how to *find out* if you are smelly in a minute, but first let's look at *where* bad aromas might come from.

One common area for smelliness is your breath. Poor dental hygiene and meals containing garlic and other pungent food can cause breath that ranges from mildly stinky to downright nauseating. Never assume your breath is ok. Your dentist gives good advice – you must brush and floss to keep your mouth clean. You should also have a toothbrush and toothpaste on hand for bad breath emergencies. Add mouthwash to the mix if necessary.

Body odor or unwashed hair is another killer odor. Customers really question the judgment of someone who doesn't appear to have good grooming standards. Waking up too late for a shower and trying to cover up with deodorant or cologne doesn't cut it either. It's easy to smell right through those artificial masks. You have to actually *be* clean to smell clean. Make time for good hygiene every day, no excuses.

Smoking is a double whammy – it causes bad breath *and* an offensive smell that lingers on your skin and clothing. The obvious solution is to quit smoking but in the meantime, try to minimize the odor by smoking outside instead of in enclosed places like your car. If your coat is smoky smelling, hang it away from where you interact with customers. Your toothbrush comes in handy here too - it can be a smoker's best friend!

Sometimes the problem is that too much of a good thing is a bad thing. We've all been stuck in an elevator with someone who bathed in aftershave or wore gallons of cheap perfume. Your eyes probably watered and your nose felt like it was burning! Fragrances are a problem because not everyone has the same taste and some people are really sensitive, or even allergic, to certain scents. If you have ever been complimented on your cologne or perfume in the afternoon, then you were wearing *way* too much in the morning. Be very conservative with fragrances or save them for non-work occasions.

We've looked at some of the problem areas and you are aware that you can't count on your own judgment... so what to do? It may seem drastic but your first step should be to just assume the worst – that you aren't neutral to the nose right now. Make a plan to buy some new deodorant and soap and get clean. Invest in a travel set of toothpaste and toothbrush to carry with you.

The other important step is simply to ask someone trustworthy how you smell. It may feel uncomfortable, but you can keep it light by joking about it. Say you want to make sure you aren't broadcasting in Smell-o-vision or that its time for your public service sniff test. A little joke can take the pressure off but still result in some honest feedback.

The critical question to ask when you are standing a few feet away is “Can you smell me from there?” Having someone dependable who will give you a heads up before you face customers will help avoid embarrassment and potential lost business.

You can start taking action as soon as this Daily Training is over by asking a trusted friend or co-worker to honestly tell you how you measure up. Find out if they can smell your perfume or the last thing you ate or whether your bathing skills need to be enhanced.

No matter what your smell-tester has to say, remember:

1. Start with a clean slate – take a shower before work
2. Brush your teeth regularly and always after pungent meals
3. Do what you can to minimize odor if you smoke, and finally....
4. Apply perfume and cologne very lightly or not at all.

#### **Q & A**

**Q1. True or false? Cologne and perfume are not an acceptable way to cover up body odor or cigarette smoke.**

**A1. TRUE**

**Q2. True or false? Customers aren't likely to blame a company if one of its employees smells offensive.**

**A2. FALSE**

## Module: Achieving Outstanding Customer Service

### Session: The Key to Becoming a Great Conversationalist and How to Use it to Your Benefit

**Lesson Description:** Are you skilled at conversing with your customers? Or are you guilty of just discussing the weather and the business transaction with them? Good conversations can add to customer loyalty – in this lesson we will look at ways to improve your customer relationships with brief conversations.

Hi, welcome back to Daily Training! Today's lesson is from the Achieving Outstanding Customer Service Module and is titled The Key to Becoming a Great Conversationalist and How to Use it to Your Benefit.

Most people aren't born with the ability to converse well. It's something that has to be developed. But the good news is, you can learn and improve upon your ability to converse well. In this lesson, you will learn some techniques you can begin using today to improve your conversation skills.

By holding a light hearted and engaging conversation with your customers, you will make their business experience much better. If you talk about things other than the details of the service transaction, it can result in a deeper connection with your customers and in turn create greater loyalty.

Outside of work, good conversation skills are incredibly useful in every day life. There are plenty of social and personal situations where you can apply your ability as a skilled conversationalist.

A conversation is defined as information exchanged between two parties. Both parties will learn something about each other. When a brief conversation occurs during a customer transaction, the relationship can progress to a higher level and lead to an easier, more comfortable service exchange.

Most dialogue with customers is short and to the point and is usually only about the transaction at hand. Sometimes the customer may offer something... maybe a comment about the weather. This kind of banter can be pleasant but it does little to improve the customer relationship.

The key to becoming a good conversationalist is to express an interest in some aspect of the other person. The weather and the business at hand is isn't show-stopping conversation, but something about the customer's personal life that relates to the transaction is. How do you accomplish this? The best way to start is by asking a question!

Asking your customer a question concerning their experience or opinion as it relates to the service or business at hand will open the doorway of communication with them. You'll want to listen to their answer with genuine interest. And when you follow up with further questions and comments, you are having a conversation!

The key to a good conversation starter is not to ask random questions or questions that can be answered with a "yes" or "no", but rather questions that allow your customer to open up. This technique is called probing because it requires more detailed information to be exchanged.

An example in a retail setting... a customer might be purchasing a suit. The sales person could ask if the clothing is for a special occasion and mention that it is a great color. In a banking setting, a customer may be depositing funds from a real estate transaction. The conversation starter may be to ask if the person what their favorite part of the real estate business is.

No matter what your industry focus is, you can come up with good probing questions that will be appropriate for your customers. This is something you can start doing right away – even before you serve a customer today, you can brainstorm some hypothetical conversation starters that will work for your business. Think of past customers you might have had a better conversation with. What kind of questions could you have asked to improve your relationship with them? It is especially effective if you have regular customers. This is a good time to plan for taking their relationship with you to the next level.

Once your customer has opened up a little, you'll have the opportunity to interject your own opinions or relate your own experiences in order to warm up the conversation. Of course, you'll want keep your personal information to a minimum and the focus on your customer. Even shy people love talking about themselves; most people will be flattered and usually regard the conversation in a better light if the focus remains on them.

Remember to keep your comments and opinions positive and refrain from getting too personal. It is also important to pay attention to any cues or body language your customer may give as you talk with them. Make sure they are comfortable conversing with you!

When you get the hang of friendly banter, you can actually keep a conversation going for quite some time. However, don't forget that your customers also want to get on their way, and you'll likely have other customers to serve so keep conversations brief. You can begin chatting with your customers today and set the stage for a rewarding relationship with your customers.

The real magic from the conversation happens when your customer returns to your business. If you can commit some of the basics of your conversations to memory, you'll be able to mention these items again. Maybe the customer who bought a suit was going to a wedding... a great time to ask how the occasion went. Or for the person handling real estate transactions... perhaps ask how business is going.

People may like talking about themselves but you'll see that they really love it when someone remembers details from a previous conversation. When you can pull off these small acts of kindness, you'll show the patrons of your company that you care. Your interest in their lives outside the mechanics of your business transactions will reflect well upon your organization.

Light, friendly conversations in the business world do so much for good customer relationships that it's a mistake not to work on improving your skills. Take the steps today to become a better conversationalist!

1. Brainstorm some potential probing questions to ask your customers based on your specific industry and service or products.
2. Keep the focus on your customers as you begin conversing with them; add your own experience and comments sparingly in order to warm up the conversation.
3. Have a genuine interest in your patrons and commit to remembering the details so you can strike up a conversation again when they return!

#### Q& A

Q1. Which of the following is a good conversation starter for a customer shopping in an electronics retailer?

- a. "Crazy weather we're having, huh? Will you be using your credit card today?"
- b. "This is a great piece of software, what kind of graphic design do you do?"
- c. "Oh! I bet you're a graphic designer! I like to do some design work as well. I have this software on my own PC."
- d. "This is awesome software. Are you a graphic designer?"

A1. B

Q2. Which of the following statements is NOT true about customer conversations?

- a. Sometimes customers seem shy, so it's ok to talk more about your own opinions and experiences in these cases.
- b. People, in general, love to talk about themselves and also like it when others remember the things they've discussed.
- c. It's important to pay attention to your customers' body language and watch for any discomfort when you are chatting.
- d. Always keep conversation topics and comments on a positive note.

A2. A

#### Follow Up Script:

Hi there, just checking in from Daily Training. How did you do today? Were you able to strike up some conversations with your customers? Keep working on appropriate questions, keep the banter positive and you're sure to build some enduring relationships with your customers!

## Module: Achieving Outstanding Customer Service

### Session: Perfecting the Art of the Handshake

**Lesson Description: A handshake is an important part of business communication. How do you think yours rates? In this lesson we will look at good and bad handshakes as well as shaking etiquette.**

#### **Script:**

**Hi! Welcome back to Daily Learning. Today's session is from the Achieving Outstanding Customer Service Module and its title is Perfecting the Art of the Handshake.**

**The handshake is an important part of physical communication in the business world – it is used as a greeting and as a goodbye. In this lesson, we will look at using the proper handshake technique. You can start putting the technique into play today – by practicing with your coworkers and with your customers, where appropriate.**

**Businesses want to be perceived as respectable and professional. Employee behavior is the clearest expression of this perception. Having employees that use the proper and appropriate communication skills and techniques is an important reflection on the business.**

**While a handshake can communicate a lot about your current employer it is also an important factor in your personal life. You will find many opportunities throughout your life where making a good impression on others through physical communication is critical.**

**Shaking hands is a universal communication tool in the world of business. It may seem like one small detail that takes less than a minute but it is a huge part of the overall impression during an interaction. Everyone has their own handshake style but unfortunately many people just plain do it wrong.**

**The handshake is part of our body language... along with words and tone it makes up the whole package of the way we communicate when we meet someone professionally. The handshake can tell the other person something great about your personality but it can also betray you if you aren't careful. You may have a pleasant attitude, a big smile and a fantastic greeting but all that gets ruined if you have a lousy handshake.**

**There are lots of ways to perform a bad handshake but before we look at those, let see what a good handshake entails. First look the other person in the eye, smile and extend your hand away from your body. Then grab the other person's hand with a firm grip, give three to four pumps and let go. That's it. Pretty simple, huh? There's actually a lot that can go wrong! Let's look at a few things that can ruin a handshake.**

**The most common handshake error is a grip that is too weak or too firm. When your handshake is weak and wimpy people will think you have no confidence. Plus, no one likes to shake a limp noodle hand! On the other end of the spectrum is the bone crushing grip. Don't try to be a tough guy and break someone's fingers... that doesn't communicate anything good either. The key is to find a happy medium. A grip that is firm enough to show you are confident but gentle enough that you don't cause pain.**

**Another cardinal sin of shaking hands is the missed grip. This is where you end up grasping the other person's fingers instead of making palm to palm contact. You can avoid this by stretching your hand out away from your body as you move forward to meet someone. This gives them time to get their hand out too and clearly indicates that you are going to shake hands. But if you do end up missing, you can just readjust your grip.**

**Clean hands are obviously a necessity when you shake hands. Slimy, sweaty or dirty palms are an absolute no-no. Keep your hands clean if you are apt to shake in your job. If you tend to have clammy hands or are nervous, discreetly wipe your hands if you think a handshake is imminent.**

**An important element to shaking is the etiquette of the handshake. For instance, a handshake where you add your other hand on top as you shake is considerably more personal. The same goes for touching the other person on the shoulder or arm as you shake. You should avoid this type of handshake in business situations and reserve it for personal friends and family.**

Back in the old days it was considered bad etiquette for a man to shake hands with a woman. This is no longer the case. These days, our workplaces are considered gender neutral and men may shake hands with women as well as the other way around.

A final consideration in the etiquette of the handshake is whether or not your business interactions are appropriate for shaking hands. If you are a cashier, work in food service or in a clothing store you probably won't shake hands with your customers. But you might if you work in banking or for a high end retailer. You should use common sense and take a cue from your industry when deciding whether to shake or not.

Of course, no matter what business you are in, you will always have opportunities to shake hands with your superiors. You can set yourself apart when meeting with your boss or upper management if you have an award winning handshake!

Regardless of whether your business requires handshakes, you can start practicing right away with a friend or coworker. If you don't currently shake hands much, and it is appropriate for your business, you may want to try introducing it as part of your customer interaction today.

1. Recognize that you may not have a great handshake. Even a good handshake can be improved.
2. Try different kinds of handshakes. Get some feedback from someone you trust on whether those handshakes are lousy or great!
3. Start by looking the person in the eye, smiling and extending your hand. Make sure your grip is firm but not bone crushing.

#### Q& A

Q1. Which of the following is considered a good handshake?

- a. A firm grip, palm to palm, a few pumps
- b. A gentle grip of the fingers, a few pumps
- c. A strong grip, no pumps

A2. A

Q2. Which of the following groups of jobs might regularly shake hands with their customers?

- a. Waiters, waitresses, cooks
- b. Finance industry employees, bankers, real estate agents
- c. Service desk personnel, delivery drivers, cashiers
- d. None of the above

A2. B

#### Follow Up Script:

Hi there, just touching base from Daily Learning. Have you practiced shaking hands with someone today? If any of those people were customers, how did the interaction go? It should have shown them that you are confident and professional. Don't stop there, keep building your handshake proficiency!