

10 Customer Service Activities To Supercharge Your Team



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About Jeff Toister

Jeff Toister helps leaders build customer-focused teams.

He is the bestselling author of four books, including *Getting Service Right: Overcoming the Hidden Obstacles to Outstanding Customer Service*.



The activities in this workbook are based on the book *Getting Service Right*. While the book is not required to use these exercises, it will enhance your understanding of each one. Learn more at www.servicerightbook.com

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Introduction

Customer service leaders face a number of challenges:

- What does it take to get employees to fully commit to providing service?
- How can employees better handle upset customers?
- Why did my employee just do that?!

This workbook contains ten customer service training activities to help answer these questions and more. These activities are designed to help employees identify and overcome hidden obstacles to outstanding service.

Additional Resources

These resources can help augment the exercises in this workbook.

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Customer Service Training Videos

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Helping Customers Be Right

Corresponds with Chapter Two in *Getting Service Right*

Overview

Customers can sometimes sabotage the service they receive. While customers are not always right, it should be our mission to help them **be** right.

The Exercise

This activity can help you identify ways to help customers be right.

1. Start by thinking of a situation where a customer made a mistake.
2. Make a list of factors about this situation that are out of your control.
3. Now, make a list of factors about this situation that you can control.
4. Focus on the factors that you can control and try to think of solutions to help the customer be right.

Example:

Many visitors got lost the first time they visited a college campus.

Can't Control	Can Control
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visitors are often in a hurry, which causes stress.• The parking restrictions in various garages can be confusing.• The best parking garage might not be the closest to your destination.• People don't remember verbal directions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Friendly parking ambassadors are stationed at various places on campus.• Other staff members (custodial, maintenance, etc.) are able to assist visitors on campus.• Maps are available to hand to people.

Solution:

- Train staff members to identify campus visitors who appear to be lost.
- Ask staff members to approach visitors and offer assistance.
- Provide staff with small maps to give to visitors to help guide them.

Road Trip

Corresponds with Chapter Three in *Getting Service Right*

Overview

Our jobs are so busy that it can sometimes be difficult to pause and think why we're serving customers. This activity can help participants realize how easy it is to be busy without purpose. A **minimum of six participants** is recommended.

The Exercise

This exercise is conducted in two rounds with a short debriefing after each round. The exercise works best with **a minimum of six participants**, and can be run with 10, 100, or even 1,000 people. You'll need a watch or a timer for this exercise.

Round 1

Tell participants you're going to give them one minute to brainstorm items they'd take with them on a road trip. They are encouraged to work together in small groups.

Quickly say, "Ready, go!" and start the exercise before anyone has a chance to ask questions.

Debrief 1

Start by asking how many items participants have on their list. Eventually, the key question will come up, "Where are we going?" For example, if someone has a map on their list, you can ask, "A map to where?"

Discuss the importance of having a destination.

Round 2

Repeat round 1, but give participants a destination this time. Select someplace that might be a realistic road trip destination based on your location.

Debrief 2

Discuss the differences between the lists from round 1 and 2. Typically, the lists are very similar, but there are a few key items on the round 2 list that are specific to the destination.

The key point is a destination influences important decisions.

Wrap-up the discussion by talking about the team's customer service destination.

Customer Complaints

Corresponds with Chapter Four in *Getting Service Right*

Overview

Employees might not always share the same goals as their employer.

Customer complaints provide a great example. The company can use a complaint to fix a problem, but research shows that most customers don't complain about small problems.

Even when they do complain, most complaints are directed to frontline employees. Employees might not want to share complaints if they're afraid of being blamed or feel that there's nothing they can do about it.

This exercise helps employees feel committed to identifying and resolving complaints.

The Exercise

There are two parts to this exercise. Both activities are best done in a team meeting.

Part 1: Identifying Complaints

Here is a list of reasons why customers might not readily share their feedback:

- It's too difficult to complain
- They feel their complaint won't be listened to or acted upon
- They don't want to get an employee into trouble
- They're afraid of retribution from an angry employee
- There's nothing to be gained by complaining

Considering this list, brainstorm ideas for encouraging customers to share their feedback directly so problems can be resolved.

Ask each person to commit to soliciting more customer feedback before the next team meeting.

Part 2: Categorizing Complaints

Part two should happen at the next team meeting.

1. Brainstorm examples of customer feedback received.
2. Make a list of the most common complaints.
3. Discuss solutions to the biggest problems.

Productivity vs. Quality

Corresponds with Chapter Five in *Getting Service Right*

Overview

There are some situations where employees are faced with conflicting priorities.

For example, on a busy day, you might struggle to provide each individual customer with personal and attentive service if you have a long line of people waiting for your assistance.

This exercise can help you explore the balance between productivity and quality. It works best in a team or group setting with a **minimum of six people**.

The Exercise

This exercise is done in two rounds with a short debriefing in between. You'll need a timer or stopwatch for this activity.

Round 1

Participants will have three minutes to introduce themselves to three people and learn three things:

- 1) The person's name
- 2) A hobby or interest outside of work
- 3) The person's customer service strength

Call time after three minutes and ensure everyone stops.

Debrief

Ask for volunteers to name all three people they spoke to and correctly list the three pieces of information for each person. Typically, only a few participants can do this.

Discussion questions:

- What made the exercise difficult?
- What strategies could you use to balance productivity and quality the next time?
- What can you learn from this exercise that applies to your work?

Round 2

Replay round 1, but ask participants to introduce themselves to three new people this time.

Check to see whether more people can successfully name the three people they met and correctly list the three pieces of information for each person.

Find the Iceberg

Corresponds with Chapter Six in *Getting Service Right*

Overview

Chronic problems can hurt employee morale. Some of these problems are like icebergs. You can see a little bit of it, but the part that's hidden from view is bigger and more dangerous.

The challenge is icebergs can seem like small problems. Perhaps the tip of the iceberg is an unusual complaint. It's easy to write it off as a fluke or a one-time occurrence. But what if it's just the first sign of a much bigger problem?

High-performing customer service teams obsess about finding icebergs.

The Exercise

Start by making a list of unusual complaints or problems. Unlike the "Customer Complaints" exercise, these don't necessarily have to be the most common customer complaints.

Answer the following questions for each problem:

1. Is it possible the same problem has happened before?
2. How likely is it that this problem will happen again?
3. Can similar problems exist in other places?
4. Who else might be affected by the problem?
5. What can we learn from this problem that can be applied to other issues?

The 10 and 5 Rule

Corresponds with Chapter Seven in *Getting Service Right*

Overview

Customer service employees often find it difficult to pay attention to the right things.

One technique to help with this is the 10 and 5 rule. It's a way of prioritizing customer service over other tasks by creating a "zone of hospitality" around yourself.

When a customer enters the zone of hospitality, they should take precedence over other assignments.

Exercise

Start the exercise with a discussion around top priorities. The goal is to make it clear that serving customers is a top priority.

Now, explain the 10 and 5 rule.

Imagine two circles around you.

- The edge of the first circle is 10 feet away.
- The edge of the second circle is 5 feet away.

Customers approaching the outer circle should receive a non-verbal greeting such as a smile or a wave.

Customers approaching the inner circle should receive a verbal greeting.

Practice:

Ask participants to stand and imagine their circles. Walk to various points around the room and ask participants to greet you based upon where you are in their "zone of hospitality."

Debrief:

Facilitate a discussion around the following questions:

- How can you use the 10 and 5 rule with your customers?
- How should you handle situations where more than one customer wants your attention? (Ex: the customer you are serving and a new customer approaching you.)

Attitude Anchors

Corresponds with Chapter Ten in *Getting Service Right*

Overview

Research shows that negative emotions can be contagious. A negative attitude might even sneak up on you before you're even away of it.

The Attitude Anchor concept is a technique you can use to anchor your attitude in a positive place.

The Exercise

The purpose of this exercise is to identify your own personal attitude anchors so you can use them on a regular basis to maintain a positive attitude when serving customers.

There are two types of attitude anchors:

- Maintenance anchors help you maintain a positive attitude
- Repair anchors help you fix a negative attitude

Make a list of the maintenance and repair anchors that work for you. A few examples have been provided for illustrative purposes, though these may or may not work for you.

Maintenance Anchors	Repair Anchors
<p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Getting a good night's sleep• Spending time with friends or family• Exercising <p><i>Your Maintenance Anchors:</i></p>	<p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Taking a walk• Enjoying a cup of coffee or tea• Talking to a friend or co-worker <p><i>Your Repair Anchors:</i></p>

