



E XCELLING AT **CUSTOMER SERVICE**

As you've learned through watching the Roll Out the Red videos and in discussions with your supervisor and other student employees, customer service is important to Ball State. If you've had part-time or summer jobs, you've probably also seen how customer service was important to different kinds of employers.

All organizations are in some kind of business, whether selling products, offering services, or in some way meeting the needs of clients or customers. Providing high quality customer service helps ensure that clients keep coming back, no matter what business you're in.

The ten professional customer service behaviors you learned in Module 1 serve as a guide for handling customer interactions and getting the job done right the first time. By following these steps, you'll have more effective encounters and almost always ensure customer satisfaction. Think of these steps as a "blueprint" to help guide you through meetings with students, parents, faculty, and other customers.

When our students, parents, and faculty are treated fairly and with respect, they are usually more satisfied with the interaction and with the service we've provided. Because our various customers are the reason we exist, you'll want to give every indication that what they say and do is important to you.

Just as customers are unique, so too are their situations. The ten professional customer service behaviors help us recognize our clients as individuals so we can respond to their personal needs in a variety of settings. Now we

can pay attention to the customer's practical needs and how we can satisfy them.

- 1. Ask, "May I help you."*
- 2. Identify yourself by name.*
- 3. Address the customer by name when possible.*
- 4. Apologize for waits or interruptions.*
- 5. Provide accurate information.*
- 6. Be professional in dress, manner, and approach.*
- 7. Provide undivided attention—face the customer and make eye contact.*
- 8. Redirect if unable to answer question.*
- 9. Close with "May I help you with anything else?"*
- 10. Take initiative.*



Customer problems or unique situations can become extraordinary service opportunities for us. By meeting and exceeding customer expectations in these situations, we have the opportunity to make a lasting, positive impression. These customers typically are more loyal and spread the word to others about the great service they received from us.

The techniques you learned in Module 2 can help you provide the “above and beyond” customer service that sets Ball State ahead of the competition.

1. *Drill down—ask multiple questions to get to the root of the need.*
2. *Own the problem—glue yourself to the customer; stop the Ball State Bounce.*
3. *Analyze the situation and identify solutions.*
4. *Seek ways to improve service and responsiveness.*

Definition: The Ball State Bounce (n.)

The "bounce" students experience when transferred (on the phone or in person) from office to office to office.

B YOND BALL STATE

“So, customer service is important, but what’s in it for me?” you ask. Plenty!

As we mentioned, all organizations are in business to sell something. That means your future career (no matter in what field) will find you working with clients or customers.

Having learned and practiced customer service skills will set you apart from the hundreds of other applicants applying for the same internship or full-time job as you.

Each year, the National Association of Colleges and Employers asks employers to rate the importance of certain skills and qualities when hiring job candidates. For 2011, these skills included (in ranked order)

Communication skills (verbal)
Strong work ethic
Teamwork skills (working w/others)
Analytical skills
Initiative
Problem-solving skills
Communication skills (written)
Interpersonal skills (relating to others)
Computer skills
Flexibility & adaptability
Detail-oriented
Technical skills
Organizational skills
Leadership skills
Self-confidence
Tactfulness
Friendly & outgoing personality
Creativity
Strategic planning skills
Entrepreneurial skills
Sense of humor

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The highlighted attributes are ones you develop through interacting with customers and taking responsibility for customer satisfaction. Start now to develop these skills and gain experience that you can talk about during internship or job interviews.

Check with the Career Center for more assistance in identifying skill sets employers seek in job applicants.

RATE YOURSELF

Now, using the following questions, rate yourself on how well you provide customer service. What areas do you excel in? In what areas do you need more experience?

1. I have a strong commitment to provide customers with excellent service.

Yes	No	Needs improvement	
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2. I believe that customers are important to me, our department, and Ball State.

Yes	No	Needs improvement	
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3. I feel that I know and understand what excellent customer service is.

Yes	No	Needs improvement	
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4. I understand what our customers expect and require.

Yes	No	Needs improvement	
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5. I believe that my job providing customer service is very important, and I understand why.

Yes	No	Needs improvement	
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I feel that it is important for me to give customers an understanding that

6. I am the primary person who will be working with them to solve their problem or answer their questions.

Yes	No	Needs improvement	
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7. I am a member of a team that works together to help customers.

Yes	No	Needs improvement	
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8. I understand the process to follow if I don't have an answer or ready solution.

Yes	No	Needs improvement	
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9. I am responsible to see that customers' issues or problems are addressed whether or not I am the one with the answer.

Yes	No	Needs improvement	
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10. I want to address my customers' issues correctly the first time I deal with them.

Yes	No	Needs improvement	
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Personal Characteristics

11. I have patience with my customers, even when their actions are difficult to handle.

Yes	No	Needs improvement	
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12. I show respect for my customers and my coworkers.

Yes	No	Needs improvement	
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13. I have a positive attitude and outlook about my job, my department, and Ball State.

Yes	No	Needs improvement	
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14. I am confident in my abilities to do my job and in my interactions with customers and coworkers.

Yes	No	Needs improvement	
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15. I manage the stress of my job well, even when things get busy or tough.

Yes	No	Needs improvement	
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16. I am efficient in all aspects of my job and handle my time well.

Yes	No	Needs improvement	
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17. I apply high ethical standards as I perform my job duties and functions.

Yes	No	Needs improvement	
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Customer Service Challenges

18. I view every customer as a unique person with a need to fulfill, a problem to solve, or an issue to address.

Yes	No	Needs improvement	
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19. I effectively discover and try to understand my customer's point of view.

Yes	No	Needs improvement	
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20. I know how to recognize the signs of emotional communication (anger, fear, guilt, etc.).

Yes	No	Needs improvement	
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21. I know ways to diffuse a customer's emotional "charge" and move them into a problem-solving process.

Yes	No	Needs improvement	
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22. I don't add to an emotional situation by reacting emotionally myself.

Yes	No	Needs improvement	
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23. I know that some customers have difficulty with the issues or problems they present and I am prepared to handle the stress with tough interactions.

Yes	No	Needs improvement	
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24. I focus on results I can achieve by solving my customer's problems.

Yes	No	Needs improvement	
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25. I do not use judgmental or blaming behavior when interacting with customers experiencing difficulties.

Yes	No	Needs improvement	
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26. I recognize and know what to do when I encounter customers who create difficult circumstances, such as abusive behavior or verbal attacks.

Yes	No	Needs improvement	
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27. I know what to do when I encounter customers with special needs including people with disabilities, customers from different cultures, and people who speak English as a second language or who don't speak English at all.

Yes	No	Needs improvement	
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