

**Block****3****SKILLS FOR THE WORKPLACE-I**

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# BLOCK INTRODUCTION

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In this block we have concentrated on three very important aspects of business:

**Unit 9 - Etiquette, cultural awareness and gender perceptions**

**Units 10 and 11 – Understanding customers and customer service**

**Unit 12 – Work Ethics**

Businesses are no longer highly localized entities, but part of a global village. It, therefore, becomes essential to understand the basic business etiquette that is followed at any workplace. Moreover, it is also important to be sensitized about other cultures and people especially the gender perceptions that may vary from one culture to another. The most important aspect of any business is the service to the customer. If the customers are happy, the business prospers. In this block we have dealt with different types of customers that you may encounter in your workplace. It is important to build rapport with them, handle their complaints with sympathy and sensitivity. In this block we have tried to make you understand the means of retaining your old customers as well as getting new customers. The final unit of this Block is on Work Ethics. Eventually, in whatever we do, we must be honest and upright. Remember, it is always good people who achieve great things professionally in the true sense of the word.

The information is couched in reading, writing, speaking and listening activities. Please complete these activities and we assure you that your communication skills will considerably improve. We request you to spend time on all the activities in each unit. This will enhance both your fluency as well as accuracy in the language. While performing the listening tasks, please take notes as you listen. This will aid your comprehension as well as concentration.

For the entire activities look at the answers after you have attempted them. If you answer incorrectly, try to analyze why; if not consult the teacher at the study center.

Do write to us if you have any problem.

Good luck with the block.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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# UNIT 9 ETIQUETTE, CULTURAL AWARENESS AND GENDER PERCEPTIONS

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## Structure

- 9.0 Objectives
- 9.1 Warm Up
- 9.2 Reading: Etiquette
- 9.3 Vocabulary
- 9.4 Listening: Understanding Cultural Differences
- 9.5 Grammar: Articles
- 9.6 Speaking: Expressing Opinion About Workplace Etiquette
- 9.7 Writing
- 9.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 9.9 Answers

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## 9.0 OBJECTIVES

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This Unit will focus on the importance of etiquette and cultural awareness as well as gender perceptions at the workplace. Here you will learn:

- What workplace etiquette means
- The importance of etiquette in a competitive job market
- The importance of body language in etiquette
- What constitutes bad manners at work/what is not appropriate
- The importance of cultural awareness in a multicultural workplace
- Common gender perceptions

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## 9.1 WARM UP

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- Do some people put you off by the way they talk?
- Why do you think this happens?
- Why do you think you find some people more pleasant than others?
- Are you as comfortable working with people of another culture as you are with people with whom you have cultural similarity?
- Do you think men and women are treated the same in your office?

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## 9.2 READING: ETIQUETTE

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Read the following passage and answer the questions given:

### What is Etiquette?

The Oxford dictionary defines etiquette as ‘the customary code of polite behavior

in society or among members of a particular professional group'. Adhering to a behavior code at work helps to create a work environment that is conducive to positive interaction among employees; this makes for a productive and efficient workforce.

What is this code of polite behavior that we speak about? The list of things that constitute good workplace etiquette could go on and on. We can broadly classify this into: (i) professional appearance, (ii) behavior code or office etiquette.

### **Professional appearance:**

When you step into the job market, your first impression is created by your appearance at the interview. At the workplace too, your appearance plays an important part in how you are perceived as a professional. Good grooming, which includes maintaining good personal hygiene, is fundamental to a professional appearance. It shows that you care about the image of the organization you represent, and that cleanliness and neatness are important to you. Here are some fundamentals that you need to bear in mind:

- Choose a wardrobe suitable to your workplace. Some offices specify a dress code – abide by it, footwear included.
- It is not necessary to have hair styled according to current trends, but ensure that hair is well groomed at all times.
- Never appear sloppy.
- Keep nails clean and neatly clipped.
- Take care of your dental hygiene. Bad breath isn't just unhealthy for you; it is very bad manners to subject others to it.
- Use fragrance or deodorant to get rid of fowl body odor, but do not overdo the fragrance.
- See that footwear is polished and clean always.
- Wear a pleasant expression instead of a frowning one.

### **Behavior code:**

In addition to your professional appearance, there is a way of conducting yourself at work which we refer to as office etiquette. Here are some features of office etiquette that you need to bear in mind and practise at work:

- Say 'Good morning' to colleagues when you enter office.
- Say 'thank you' when someone offers help or does something for you.
- Remember to speak softly instead of shouting and disturbing others.
- Listen patiently while others are speaking instead of interrupting them.
- Respect others' opinions even if you don't agree with them.
- Remember to return things you have borrowed from colleagues.
- Keep your office table/cubicle neat, especially if you are sharing it with someone.
- Avoid gossiping about colleagues to other office workers.
- Avoid using fowl language, however angry you are.

- Limit personal phone calls during office hours to emergency situations only.
- Avoid surfing on the net/checking your Facebook posts or Whatsapp messages during work hours.

### How does etiquette benefit you?

Etiquette differentiates you from others in a competitive job market. Good social skills, of which etiquette is a large part, help you make a great first impression in the job market. However skilled you are professionally, if you do not create the impression of being well groomed, well mannered and polite, and someone who other office workers could easily get along with, your chances of getting a good job are reduced drastically. Furthermore, workplace etiquette helps you create and perpetuate a comfortable, warm and friendly work relationship with your colleagues.

### Check Your Progress 1

You have read many examples of what constitutes professional etiquette. Here are more examples of what we commonly see in offices. Some of them constitute acceptable and some unacceptable office behavior. Classify each of these as 'acceptable' or unacceptable'.

- 1) Arriving late for meetings.
- 2) Cleaning up after using the office kitchen or snack area.
- 3) Talking while someone is making her/his presentation.
- 4) Offering to help when a new colleague is in need.
- 5) Making promises to help but not really keeping them.
- 6) Talking about personal problems with colleagues at work.
- 7) Talking about personal problems with colleagues after work hours.
- 8) Gossiping to other office workers about a colleague's problems with handling his/her work.
- 9) Offering a colleague help with work that is new to him/her.
- 10) Flirting with co-workers.
- 11) Coming to a colleague's work station while they are working and start chatting.
- 12) Speaking so loudly on the phone that others cannot focus on their work.

### Check Your Progress 2

Now answer these questions based on the reading passage:

- 1) What does your appearance say about your professional attitude?

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2) Why is it important to follow a behavior code?

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## 9.3 VOCABULARY

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We are sometimes rude or disrespectful to others or may just embarrass them without meaning to do so because of the use of inappropriate language/body language. Hence, it is important to be conscious of what we say and the manner in which we communicate our thoughts and feelings to others at the workplace.

### Check Your Progress 3

Here are some examples of inappropriate language/body language use. Change them and give an alternative that you think will not be rude, offensive or embarrassing to the listener.

#### A) Something people said that was unacceptable:

- 1) Meena: Shut up, Madhuri. You're disturbing me with your loud chatter.
- 2) Mohit: Hi Geeta. You're looking really hot today.
- 3) Lalit: Prem, give me Rs. 500/-.
- 4) Madhuri: Prem, throw that paper cup in the dustbin. I hate your habit of littering the office.
- 5) Amit: Mohit, the boss wants you in his office. You're in for some fireworks because he's very angry with your stupid mistakes.

#### B) Some things people did that were unacceptable. Offer acceptable alternatives.

- 6) Mohit wanted some help from Geeta in understanding a document. He went up to her table and bent so close to her while speaking that it made her uncomfortable.
- 7) Prem forgot to bring lunch from home, but he was so hungry he ate up most of Mohan's food.
- 8) Hemant's colleagues gifted him a perfume for his birthday. They then told him loudly to use lots of it every day.
- 9) Hemant burst out laughing when Reena made a mistake in her presentation.
- 10) Rakesh cracked a joke about women that embarrassed all his female colleagues.



- 11) Just after lunch, Prem put his finger in his mouth to dislodge some food stuck between his teeth.
- 12) Jatin takes too many breaks and goes to his colleagues and starts chatting with them and distracting them from their work.

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## 9.4 LISTENING: UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

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**Listen to a talk on cultural differences and the necessity to understand them. Answer the questions that follow.**

### Check Your Progress 4

**Based on the lecture on cultural awareness that you just heard, term these statements as true or false.**

- 1) A person's culture affects their managerial style.
- 2) We need to understand other people's culture, but we should not try to adapt their practices.
- 3) It would be rude to talk to colleagues about their cultural practices.
- 4) Just because people do things differently from you does not mean that they are wrong.
- 5) Koreans think it is disrespectful to give somebody something with one hand.
- 6) Japanese people bow in greeting.
- 7) In the Middle East people lightly hug each other in greeting.
- 8) Kissing on the cheek is a formal way of greeting in France.
- 9) In Britain it is accepted for friends to ask each other personal questions.
- 10) If a man addresses his boss by his first name, chances are they are in USA.

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## 9.5 GRAMMAR: ARTICLES

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**You have already studied Articles *a/an, the*. Let us revise them with this exercise.**

### Check Your Progress 5

Fill in the blanks using suitable articles:

I had ..... strange dream last night. I saw myself sailing in ..... boat, in the middle of ..... Atlantic Ocean. .... alien landed on my boat. It made ..... strange sound and my boat began to fly. I think we were moving towards ..... moon when suddenly ..... unusual looking eagle hit against the boat. The boat fell back into the ocean and I fell with ..... thump—not into the ocean but onto the floor!

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## 9.6 SPEAKING: EXPRESSING OPINION ABOUT WORKPLACE ETIQUETTE

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We often need to speak out when things get unpleasant. But we must convey our feelings with tact, taking care not to cause offence. Let us practice the scenarios given below.

**Check Your Progress 6**

Presented below are two scenarios where a few employees have made the workplace atmosphere unpleasant for others. Write and speak out solutions for these situations.

Scenario 1

The official language of this organization is English. However, a few employees who speak a language other than English often communicate with one another in that language. Some employees think there is no problem with this and it is none of their business. Other employees feel uncomfortable and left out when in the presence of these coworkers. What is your opinion? Do you believe that workplace etiquette demands that employees should always speak in a language that everyone can understand?

Scenario 2

This office has provided its employees with a spacious, well equipped kitchen with a refrigerator, a microwave oven, and a coffee maker. While most employees clean up after using these services and do not leave stale food in the refrigerator or the kitchen counter, throw used disposables in the trash can and keep the microwave clean, a few employees are careless. The behavior of these careless coworkers has led to both resentment among their tidier coworkers and annoyance that everyone else has to clean up their trash. What do you think can be done to improve this situation?

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**9.7 WRITING**

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Read the following paragraphs and attempt the task given below.

**Gender and the workplace**

Although economic roles between men and women have become more similar over time, sex differences are still prevalent and tensions still exist in the workplace.

Organizations across countries are increasingly implementing nondiscriminatory hiring practices where women are given opportunities equal to men. We do find that there are certain types of jobs such as those of police officers, fire fighters, truck drivers, etc., which are generally preferred by men, and there are other occupations like nursing, teaching, etc., which are preferred by women. These are personal preferences which may be dictated by nature or the way boys and girls are nurtured. However it is the duty of organizations to give equal opportunities to people of both sexes, based only on a person's credentials.

Although the number of women in all types of work fields has been steadily rising, there is still a gap between women and men regarding compensation for producing similar work in many fields. Also since women are the primary care givers at home, the entire workforce needs to be sensitized to certain needs that may arise from time to time as a result of the dual role they are necessitated to play throughout life. Additionally, their vulnerability where personal security is concerned needs to be understood and taken care of.

What is your opinion about the kind of challenges women face at the workplace and how do you think their organizations can help them in overcoming these challenges?

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## **9.8 LET US SUM UP**

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We have learnt in this unit that etiquette plays a major role in our professional lives. We have also studied what constitutes this polite behavior code that we call etiquette. We have studied several examples of acceptable and unacceptable behavior at work. In addition we have learnt the importance of cross cultural awareness in today's shrinking world where we need to work with people from all over the globe. We have also familiarized ourselves with several differences in cultural practices. This unit has also helped us understand gender perceptions and the importance of an equal opportunity at the workplace.

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## **9.9 ANSWERS**

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### **Check Your Progress 1**

#### **Acceptable or unacceptable**

- 1) Arriving late for meetings. **Unacceptable**
- 2) Cleaning up after using the office kitchen or snack area. **Acceptable**
- 3) Talking while someone is making her/his presentation. **Unacceptable**
- 4) Offering to help when a new colleague is in need. **Acceptable**
- 5) Making promises to help but not really keeping them. **Unacceptable**
- 6) Talking about personal problems with colleagues at work. **Unacceptable**
- 7) Talking about personal problems with colleagues after work hours. **Acceptable**
- 8) Gossiping to other office workers about a colleague's problems with handling his/her work. **Unacceptable**
- 9) Offering a colleague help with work that is new to him/her. **Acceptable**
- 10) Flirting with co-workers. **Unacceptable**
- 11) Coming to a colleague's work station while they are working and start chatting. **Unacceptable**
- 12) Speaking so loudly on the phone that others cannot focus on their work. **Unacceptable**

**Check Your Progress 2**

- 1) Appearance plays an important part in how you are perceived as a professional. Your first impression, at the interview, or as the representative of your organization, is created by your professional appearance and approach. Good grooming, which includes maintaining good personal hygiene, is an important part of professional appearance. It shows that you care about the image of the organization you represent, and that cleanliness and neatness is important to you.
- 2) Your behavior code or how you conduct yourself at work, plays a big role in enhancing your career. However skilled you are professionally, if you do not create the impression of being well groomed, well mannered and polite and someone who other office workers could easily get along with, your chances of getting a good job are reduced drastically. Furthermore, workplace etiquette helps you create and perpetuate a comfortable, warm and friendly work relationship with your colleagues.

**Check Your Progress 3****A) Something people said that was unacceptable:**

- 1) Meena: Shut up, Madhuri. You're disturbing me with your loud chatter.

**Meena: Madhuri, would you mind speaking softly? I'm getting a little distracted.**

- 2) Mohit: Hi Geeta. You're looking really hot today.

**Mohit: Hi, Geeta. You're looking lovely/beautiful.**

- 3) Lalit: Prem, give me Rs. 500/-.

**Lalit: Prem, could you lend me Rs. 500/-please?**

- 4) Madhuri: Prem, throw that paper cup in the dustbin. I hate your habit of littering the office.

**Madhuri: Prem, please throw your used paper cup in the dustbin. Let's try to keep the office clean.**

- 5) Amit: Mohit, the boss wants you in his office. You're in for some fireworks because he's very angry with your stupid mistakes.

**Amit: Mohit, the boss wants you in his office. Take care; I think he's a little upset with you about something.**

**B) Some things people did that were unacceptable. Offer acceptable alternatives.**

- 6) Mohit wanted some help from Geeta in understanding a document. He went up to her table and bent so close to her while speaking that it made her uncomfortable.

**Mohit should have taken a chair and sat at a polite distance from her. Sitting too close makes people uncomfortable.**

- 7) Prem forgot to bring lunch from home, but he was so hungry he ate up most of Mohan's food.

**Prem could have shared Mohan's food, but he should not have eaten a lot of it. He should have arranged for some food from elsewhere.**

- 8) Hemant's colleagues gifted him a perfume for his birthday. They then told him loudly to use lots of it every day.

**If Hemant's colleagues thought that he needed a perfume because he had bad body odor, they should just have gifted it to him without those taunting remarks.**

- 9) Hemant burst out laughing when Reena made a mistake in her presentation.

**Everybody makes mistakes. It was ill mannered of Hemant to laugh when Reena did. Instead, he should have said some words of encouragement to her.**

- 10) Rakesh cracked a joke about women that embarrassed all his female colleagues.

**It is very bad manners to crack sexist jokes in office. Rakesh should not have done it.**

- 11) Just after lunch, Prem put his finger in his mouth to dislodge some food stuck between his teeth.

**Rakesh should have used a toothpick to clean his mouth. If he could not find one, he should have gone to the rest room and rinsed his mouth.**

- 12) Jatin takes too many breaks and goes to his colleagues and starts chatting with them and distracting them from their work.

**Jatin should not chat with his colleagues while they are working. This way he wastes not only his own time but also theirs.**

### **Text for audio**

### **Cultural awareness in a multicultural workplace**

The nature of our workplaces has changed over the last several years. We now have colleagues at work from all over the world. This new multicultural workplace has brought differences in cultures which in turn bring differences in areas such as communication styles, managerial styles, workplace etiquette, approach to time and a plethora of other cross cultural differences.

To maximize potential at work and to maintain a comfortable work atmosphere, cross-cultural awareness is essential.

Cultural differences at the workplace may be due to differences in people's country of origin, race, religion or ethnic background. The best way to have an integrated workforce is for workers to understand each other's culture and benefit from the strengths of each culture.

### **How do we build cultural awareness?**

Try and learn a bit more about other cultures and countries. Information is easily found on the internet and in books. You can also ask your colleagues. Then try to

use that knowledge to understand socio-cultural habits of people from other cultures and how they react to situations. If you learn something interesting about a coworker's culture, ask about it or mention it in a relevant situation. Hearing about it from them will clarify it to you even better. Try to avoid jumping to conclusions about people, if they do things differently from you. One of the first rules of cultural awareness is refraining from assuming one way is wrong and the other is right.

Here are some common differences in people from different nationalities.

The length of pleasantries before getting down to business varies from country to country. In the eastern part of the world i.e. in countries like India, you would traditionally greet someone with folded hands or even touch the feet of elders, whereas in the west you would do so with a handshake. In Japan and Korea, bowing to greet someone is a common sight. The Koreans also think it disrespectful to hand something over to another person with one hand. They use both their hands to do so. The French greet formally with a handshake and informally by lightly kissing the cheek or 'air kissing'. In the Middle East people hold each other lightly by the shoulder and hug. If you get somebody flowers in France, buy them in odd numbers, but not 13. The French always believe that gifts should be opened when they are given, in front of the giver.

In India you may easily ask somebody where they are from. But if you asked the same question in Britain, it may be viewed as an attempt to "place" the person on the social or class scale. In Britain, even close friends do not ask pointedly personal questions relating to professions or relationships whereas in India, it is considered a sign of closeness for us to take an interest in our friends' personal lives.

In England, seniors at the workplace are generally addressed formally whereas in USA, first names are common. Cultural differences also dictate the dress codes in organizations in different countries, with some being much more formal than others.

#### **Check Your Progress 4**

**True or false.**

- 1) A person's culture affects their managerial style. **True**
- 2) We need to understand other people's culture, but we should not try to adapt their practices. **False**
- 3) It would be rude to talk to colleagues about their cultural practices. **False**
- 4) Just because people do things differently from you does not mean that they are wrong. **True**
- 5) Koreans think it is disrespectful to give somebody something with one hand. **True**
- 6) Japanese people bow in greeting. **True**
- 7) In the Middle East people lightly hug each other in greeting. **True**
- 8) Kissing on the cheek is a formal way of greeting in France. **False**
- 9) In Britain it is accepted for friends to ask each other personal questions. **False**

- 10) If a man addresses his boss by his first name, chances are they are in USA.  
**True**

### **Check your progress 5**

a, a, the, an, a, the, an, a

### **Check your progress 6**

#### Scenario 1

#### **Possible solution**

This is a common issue, especially in India where there are many regional languages. One solution is to establish a code of conduct that requires you to use only official language at work, whether in writing or while speaking. In spite of this if some people persist in using another language, they should be gently but firmly dissuaded from doing so. It should be explained to them that this isolates their colleagues and would also not be good for their own image at work.

#### Scenario 2

#### **Possible solution**

There will generally be a few people in office who need to be given lessons in cleanliness and tidiness. They may not mean to be messy, but perhaps have never learnt or been taught the importance of being neat and clean. There is no harm in enforcing a strict code of conduct. If they still do not learn their lesson, daily or weekly duties may be assigned to keep the kitchen clean. This way the culprits will not be able to ignore their duties towards keeping the place clean.

### **Check your progress 7**

In my opinion, women face several challenges at the workplace especially in the Indian context. In many places, women have to face verbal and behavioral discrimination from their male colleagues who make snide comments on their looks as well as manner of functioning. For instance, women are denied lead roles in projects that involve high risk-taking or travelling. Women are even subjected to sexual harassment with men asking for sexual favors from women who are ambitious and eager to move up the career ladder. Some women also face “gender pay gap” where they are offered lower salary than men though their designation or position is the same. Another significant problem that women face is that many of them are forced to quit their jobs or denied promotions when they are pregnant.

Organizations can play an important and active role in overcoming such challenges. The companies must ensure parity in working conditions and make all rules and regulations transparent. Companies must introduce women-friendly policies such as offering maternity and child-care leave to women. Last but not the least, employees must be gender sensitized for better functioning and workplace congeniality.

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## UNIT 10 UNDERSTANDING CUSTOMERS

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### Structure

- 10.0 Objectives
- 10.1 Warm Up
- 10.2 Reading
- 10.3 Language Focus
- 10.4 Listening: Types of Customer
- 10.5 Writing
- 10.6 Speaking and Writing
- 10.7 Grammar: Relative Clauses
- 10.8 Pronunciation: Stress and Rhythm in Connected Speech I: Content Words and Structure Words
- 10.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 10.10 Answers

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### 10.0 OBJECTIVES

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This Unit deals in detail with the various types of customer you are likely to deal with at work. Here you will learn about:

The difference between a telephone and face-to-face business conversation

- Types of customer
- What to expect from each customer type
- How to handle each customer type
- The importance of using the right tone of voice for each customer type
- The importance of being patient in dealing with difficult customers
- Phrases to use in handling customers

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### 10.1 WARM UP

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#### Activity 1

Think of all the times you have gone to a store and have been confronted with a salesman whose attitude you found unpleasant. Did you find his/her tone of voice offensive, or was it his/her words that caused you to lose your temper? And were there occasions when, just because the sales person was pleasantly coaxing, you ended up buying something when you had actually only gone window shopping?

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### 10.2 READING

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As human beings we all display different characteristics, especially when under stress. In face-to-face situations, the body language and facial expressions of the person you are speaking to tells you how they are feeling, thus making it easier



for you to give appropriate responses. However, on the telephone you need to be able to recognize different types of people purely from their choice of words and their tone of voice. This is even more important for those of us who deal with customers over the telephone on a day-to-day basis.

Most customers have a specific type of product or service in mind when they make contact with an organization. They respond well to your offer to help if you do so in a positive, pleasant, and professional manner. There are others who, because of their outlook on life, their attitude, personal habits or background, may cause you frustration and require additional efforts on your part to handle them. It is this group of difficult customers that we will learn about in greater detail in this unit.

There are different kinds of difficult customers. They could be negative, rude, inconsiderate, aggressive, unreasonably demanding or too talkative. While it is not an easy task to deal with such customers, it is important to treat each one as an individual and avoid stereotyping them. Remember to stay calm and focused and not lose control of the situation.

It is also important to recognize the kind of person you are dealing with as early in the conversation as possible, as this will help you in providing an adequate response with positive results.

### Types of customer



**Indecisive customers:** These are people who will spend hours deciding what to buy. They want to know more, but are difficult to convince, and will find excuses to avoid making a decision. Consequently, they take up a lot of your time. The way to deal with them would be to use a firm tone of voice while emphasizing the qualities of the brand you are offering. Ask a lot of open-ended questions to know exactly what their needs are so that you can offer the best possible solutions.



**Reluctant customers:** These, unlike the above, will listen to everything but are unwilling to make the final decision. They will even stop you from approaching the final step of buying the product or closing the call. Their typical response would be “Why don’t I get back to you on this?” or “I don’t have the time right now.” Such customers need to be driven into making a decision.

You need to make them aware of the need to buy at the opportune time by drawing their attention to the extra benefits, and special features of the product or service without being aggressive.



**Demanding customers:** The demanding customer generally feels the need to be in control. Such customers may raise their voice, find fault with everything, and make unreasonable demands on you. They will push you to commit to a response of their choice. They could throw tantrums and demand that their needs be met, and even accuse you of neglecting them.

The important thing is to stay calm and patient and not allow their behaviour to provoke you. Be firm and assertive and focus on the customer’s needs. Be flexible and willing to listen to requests, and talk about what you can

do, not about what you cannot do. Prepare to negotiate if you are thoroughly familiar with your organization's policies and procedures. Bear in mind that your ultimate goal is customer satisfaction, so provide an alternative where possible.



**Rude and inconsiderate customers:** They will go out of their way to be offensive. They will raise their voice, demand to see or speak to the superior, use abusive language, and snap at you. Though outwardly they seem confident and self-assured, they are often insecure and defensive, and are just trying to get attention. In dealing with them, be calm, assertive and in control of the situation. Keep an even tone of voice, and if they interrupt you while you are dealing with another customer, make direct eye contact, smile and tell them firmly that you will be with them as soon as you have finished with the present customer.



**Talkative customers:** Such customers are friendly, chatty and expressive, and love to connect with people. They ask lots of questions. This may be because they are generally talkative, or are lonely and looking for someone to listen to them. Stay warm and friendly, ask open-ended questions to determine what they need, then switch to closed-ended questions to control the situation and limit the opportunity for the customer to continue talking. When you find the conversation slipping, ask back-on-track questions that relate to the product or service. But make sure your tone remains friendly so that you don't sound patronizing or condescending.



**Passive customers:** These customers listen patiently, but do not voice their own opinions, state their concerns or work towards a decision. You cannot understand or anticipate their thoughts; hence handling them is difficult since you do not know what their needs are. Their responses to what you say are usually "Ok, I see" or "Uhhhh". To understand their requirement you need to get them as involved in the conversation, and assist them to come out with their query or problem. Ask closed-ended questions to reconfirm understanding or to ask for an opinion, and also learn to read between the lines. You may also give references of other customers who were satisfied with similar solutions so that they feel confident about their decisions.



**Dissatisfied customers:** You will often encounter dissatisfied customers. No matter what you try to do for them, they will complain, and feel annoyed and victimized. They feel that their situation is the most important in the world. In fact these are the customers who are likely to tell the maximum number of people that they are unhappy with the way you do business. Give them uninterrupted attention while they speak – their immediate need is to know that someone is willing to attend to their problems. Do not make excuses; a dissatisfied customer does not want to hear why he did not get the service or product he wanted. It is also best to not cover the mistake, try to correct it. Empathize with him, do not patronize him. Ask open-ended questions and paraphrase the customer's responses to

acknowledge that you have understood the problem correctly, and then take appropriate action to suit his/her needs.



**Irate customers:** Customers can be angry for various reasons. They may be unhappy with the service, or feel they have been cheated. These customers feel the need to show anger to be taken seriously and will use their anger to intimidate you. What they really want is for you to take notice of them, give them special attention and appreciate the reason for their anger. They are also looking for explanations and solutions. The anger helps them to

feel that they are the ones in control. What they do not want from you are denials, justifications, arguments, and excuses, or a condescending tone of voice and strong words.

You need to be at your professional best. Remain calm and confident. If the customer raises his/her voice or uses abusive language, take a deep breath and count to ten before responding. Remember that irate customers are angry with the organization, product, or service that you represent, not with you. Remain objective and focused on getting the information out of them that can help you sort out the problem. Following these steps will help you to tackle difficult situations with angry customers:

First of all, acknowledge their feelings and let them express themselves, then go beyond the anger and try to find the reasons for it.

- Listen actively without interrupting. Do not say anything that will further add to their anger and frustration.
- Empathize with them and reassure them that you understand why they are angry and that you want to solve their problem.
- Negotiate a solution by involving them in finding it and implement their solution if it is feasible. If not, suggest one closest to it.
- Go further and request for a written complaint via email.
- Later, conduct a follow up and ensure that everything goes well. This may require making a personal call after a period of time. Remember that the thumb rule is to under-promise but over-deliver.

Remember that a key factor that determines your success is your ability to handle various types of customer. This is where all your virtues of patience, tact, understanding and ability to use appropriate language are tested to the hilt.

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Look at the statements below and write down the type of customer that you would associate each statement with.
  - i) I've only got a few minutes, so I need you to attend to me immediately.
  - ii) Oh, you sound a lot like a friend of mine from Pune. Have you ever been to Pune?
  - iii) Why don't we take this up another time?
  - iv) Can't you understand when someone tells you something once?

- v) I don't think this will work.
  - vi) Never again will I ever use the services of your organization.
  - vii) It's working better now, but still not as I expected.
  - viii) Hmmm, perhaps.
- 2) Read the statements/phrases below and mark which you think are appropriate and which are inappropriate to use while dealing with difficult customers.
- i) We could not furnish the details you asked for as we were short on staff.
  - ii) You will have to wait two days to get this information.
  - iii) I understand your concern.....
  - iv) That's not possible.....
  - v) I'll certainly mail it to you by tomorrow.
  - vi) However, what I can do is.....
  - vii) Our policy doesn't permit.....
  - viii) That's not right....
  - ix) I can assure you that.....
  - x) I can see you are upset....
  - xi) I'm sorry you had to deal with this billing problem. I'll do whatever I can to help you.
  - xii) I really want to help you solve this problem with your order
  - xiii) I'm not sure we can do that...
  - xiv) That must have been very difficult for you
  - xv) I think you should....

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## 10.3 LANGUAGE FOCUS

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The right language is a very powerful tool while tackling difficult situations. Especially while dealing with customers who tend to get emotionally charged and lose their temper, you need to choose your words with utmost care. Here are some example phrases that can escalate, and some that can defuse the tension in such situations.

### **Avoid using phrases such as these that fuel emotion**

- Why didn't you...
- You should have...
- You never...
- You always...
- There is nothing I can do...
- Our policy does not permit...
- That's impossible...

- You don't realize...
- Calm down...
- I've got problems too...
- You're not the only one in a hurry...
- I've already told you a hundred times....

Instead, start your sentences with phrases like these that help to defuse anger. These are especially useful while handling irate customers.

### **Useful phrases such as these defuse tension**

- May I explain?
- So what you would like me to do is...
- Here's what I can do...
- I'll be happy to check...
- Would you be interested in seeing...
- I understand what you're saying.../why you ...
- Some people have found it helpful to...
- It's important that...
- In order for me to assist you better...
- What would you suggest...../How would you suggest we deal with....
- May I suggest.....

### **Check Your Progress 2**

Now make statements for the following situations using the appropriate phrase from the examples above.

- i) You want some additional information to be able to solve a problem.
- ii) You want to offer the customer something new.
- iii) You want to make an important point.
- iv) You are offering to go into further detail.
- v) You are offering to verify something.
- vi) You want to paraphrase something to show your understanding of it.
- vii) You want to give the example of another satisfied customer.
- viii) You want to involve the customer in finding a solution to the problem.
- ix) You want to assure your customer you empathize with him.
- x) You want to offer a solution.

**You will have noticed that there are certain typical phrases that form the base for formal telephone conversations. The 'do you want' is replaced by 'would you like', and 'could' and 'may' are used a lot.**

### **Activity 2**

Rewrite the following sentences using phrases from the box below, to make them sound more appropriate for handling your customers. You may be able to use more than one option in some cases.

- i) What did you say?
- ii) When did you last call us?
- iii) Can you give me your order number?
- iv) What's your name?
- v) I'll see what I can do.
- vi) That's something I cannot do.
- vii) The manager is not available at the moment.
- viii) I'll call you tomorrow.
- ix) I know you are not satisfied.
- x) Is 2.30 p.m. on Friday okay?

Could you tell me.....	I assure you .....
I would like.....	Could you give.....
May I .....	I beg.....
I would like you .....	Please.....
I'm afraid.....	Would it be.....
Would.....	Could.....

## 10.4 LISTENING: TYPES OF CUSTOMER

### Listen to a talk about 'Types of Customer'.

Some of these customer types may be different from those in the reading section, but knowing as many of them as possible will help you deal with them better. After listening to the audio answer the following questions.

### Check Your Progress 3

As you have learnt from the talk on types of customer, you need to adopt a certain type of attitude and tonal quality while dealing with different customers. Match these, numbered i-ix, to the types of customer, marked (A) - (I). Some tonal qualities may be suited to more than one customer type.

- i) Be prepared with facts and figures
  - ii) Be encouraging and make them feel comfortable
  - iii) Be friendly, but restrict getting side tracked
  - iv) Count to ten and stay cool
  - v) Admit lack of awareness where necessary, and seek assistance
  - vi) Be patient as you may need to ask many questions to get some information
  - vii) Be firm to defend what is logically worth defending
  - viii) Be assertive, but use a calm, soothing tone of voice
  - ix) Use voice and words to speak with conviction
- A) Aggressive  
B) Extroverts

- C) Analytical
- D) Technically aware
- E) Shy
- F) Skeptical
- G) Passive
- H) Chronic complainers
- I) Irrate

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## 10.5 WRITING

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### Activity 3

Look at the situations given below. Make sentences in response to the situations. Note the situations pertain to 'telephoning'.

- i) Answering the telephone.
- ii) Offering to take a message.
- iii) Saying who you are.
- iv) Asking to speak to Mrs. Jones.
- v) Asking the caller for more information about the call.
- vi) Saying someone is unavailable.
- vii) Asking for the caller's name.
- viii) Asking the caller to repeat something.

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## 10.6 SPEAKING AND WRITING

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**Below are situations in which you have to make calls to a customer.** With a partner, make these conversations in writing and practice them, one person playing the executive and the other the customer. Remember to use the tonal quality based on what type of customer you are, and as the executive, the tone of voice you need to take to deal with a particular type of customer. You can use the help of the phrases in the box to make the dialogue. Switch roles and practice again.

I'm positive you have not been charged...

Sorry I don't mean to inconvenience you...

Let me talk to your supervisor....

I agree that it is an inconvenience for you....

Are you certain you have the figures and dates right?

Would it be possible for you to...

I can see that this is upsetting for you...

### Activity 4

- 1) You call a customer to collect an outstanding invoice, the amount outstanding is Rs.200, and he has defaulted on payment. The customer disputes the amount and is not willing to pay. He is also the aggressive sort.

- 2) A customer calls in to make a payment of Rs. 8,000 and you see that there is still Rs. 3,000 due. You need to convince her to make the additional payment as well. Being an irate customer, she loses her temper and does not want to pay the extra amount.
- 3) You call a customer for payment of Rs. 11,000, the customer says that he has a query on the account and refuses to pay till that is sorted out. Find out the details and collect information on the account. You have an irate customer.
- 4) You call up a customer to collect a payment that is due. The customer is unable to pay now due to financial problems. Your customer is shy and hesitant.

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## 10.7 GRAMMAR: RELATIVE CLAUSES

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Read the sentences given below:

- 1) Indecisive customers are those who will spend hours deciding what to buy.
- 2) Especially while dealing with customers who tend to get emotionally charged and lose their temper, you need to choose your words with utmost care.
- 3) The computers which/that the company bought were very expensive.
- 4) The candidate whom they selected had extensive experience of computer industry.
- 5) We are looking for an assistant whose typing speed is excellent.
- 6) The lady to whom I spoke in your office was very helpful.

The underlined sentences are all examples of Relative Clauses or adjectival clauses. We use a relative clause beginning with who, that, which to describe or define a person or a thing. Who is used to refer to a person, and which or that to describe or define a person.

The relative pronoun whose is used to show possession.

In formal or written language, we may insert to, from, about, on in front of whom, which and whose.

### Activity 5

- 1) Complete the sentences with who, whom, which, that and to whom.
  - i) The receptionist at the desk ..... I spoke was very helpful.
  - ii) The hotel has a large conference hall in ..... workshops can be held.
  - iii) I can give you the name of the HR Manager ..... I deal with.
  - iv) We drew a short list of candidates ..... CVs were very good.



- v) We've got a machine ..... prints in colour.
  - vi) Yesterday I met someone ..... brother works in your office.
  - vii) Our client manufacturers clothing ..... is distributed in the popular retail stores.
  - viii) We are looking for someone ..... has a proven track record of excellence.
- 2) Complete the following sentences about yourself and your work, using relative clauses.

I work for a company that does event management.

- i) I'm in a division .....
- ii) I have a boss .....
- iii) As part of my work, I deal with people .....
- iv) I sometimes have to do jobs .....
- v) In my free time, I enjoy doing things.....

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## 10.8 PRONUNCIATION: STRESS AND RHYTHM IN CONNECTED SPEECH I: CONTENT WORDS AND STRUCTURE WORDS

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In Connected Speech we put words together to form phrases and sentences. For example, 'rice and curd' is a phrase and 'I am a student' is a sentence. When we put words together to form phrases and sentences in English, how do we say them? Do we give equal importance to all the words that form a phrase or a sentence? In other words, do we stress all the words in a phrase or sentence? No, we don't. In a phrase or sentence (or in a longer piece of connected speech) we stress some of the words and leave the **others** unstressed. For example, in the phrase 'rice and curd' we stress the words 'rice' and 'curd' and leave the word 'and' unstressed. In the sentence 'I am a student' we stress only the word 'student' and leave the other words unstressed. The phrase and the sentence given above are reproduced below, this time with the stressed words marked with the vertical bar ( ' ).

### 10.8.1 Words to be Stressed in Connected Speech

'Rice and 'curd.

I am a 'student.

In the two examples given above we stressed certain words and left others unstressed. Are there any rules regarding which words we should stress in a piece of connected speech? Yes, there are. In fact, the meaning of the phrase or the sentence decides this. We stress those words in a phrase or sentence that are important for the meaning of the phrase or sentence.

### 10.8.2 Content Words and Grammatical Words

We said above that we stress those words that are important for the meaning. Let us illustrate this. In the sentence 'I love you' if the speaker wants to tell the person that he loves only the referred to person as 'you' and no one else, he will

stress the word 'you'. If, on the other hand, the speaker wants to state that he (and no one else) loves that person, he will stress the word 'I'. Look at the same sentence repeated twice below.

I love 'you' (The speaker loves that person 'referred to as 'you' and none else)  
'I' love you (The speaker, and none else, loves the person referred to as 'you')

What if the meaning doesn't require any particular words in an utterance to be stressed? Then the speaker will stress the **content words** in an utterance and leave the **grammatical words** unstressed, e.g. I 'love you. Now what are content and grammatical words?

**Nouns, main verbs, adjectives, adverbs, question words and demonstrative** are **content words**, that is, they have independent meanings of their own, and **articles, pronouns, prepositions, auxiliary verbs, and conjunctions** are **grammatical words**, that is, their main function is to show the grammatical relations among words. A few examples are given below, in which only the content words are stressed and the grammatical words are left unstressed. The stressed words are marked with the vertical bar.

I 'gave him 'ten 'books.

I 'love my 'friends.

I 'love to 'live in 'Delhi.

There are 'ten 'boys and 'five 'girls in our 'class.

My 'son is a 'good 'driver.

I 'ate some 'rice and 'curd.

We have a 'grey 'cat in our 'house.

'Give me 'six 'eggs, 'please.

In the examples given before, most of the content words are monosyllabic. What happens when a content word has more than one syllable? If a content word that has more than one syllable occurs in a piece of connected speech, we stress only that syllable in it which we stress if we were to say the word by itself. Here are a few examples in which the content words have more than one syllable each.

The 'coffee was 'excellent.

It was an 'excellent a'chievement.

I've made a mis'take

They have de'clared a 'holiday to'day.

Do you re'quire any as'sistance?

I will 'never for'get you.

We 'visited 'London last 'summer.

Is'lām is the re'ligion of 'Muslims.

I have an im'portant exami'nation to'morrow.

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## 10.9 LET US SUM UP

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This unit has introduced you to the types of customer you are likely to come across in your line of work. It has then gone on to tell you how best to deal with them, with a special focus on irate customers.

It has also given you many examples of phrases you should not use while handling customers and alternative phrases to replace these.

You have had the opportunity, in this unit, of extensive practice in the use of this type of language with plenty of exercises for practice. You have also learnt the use of modals, and their importance in questioning and in formal telephone conversation.

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## 10.10 ANSWERS

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### Check your progress 1

- 1)
  - i) I've only got a few minutes, so I need you to attend to me immediately. **Demanding**
  - ii) Oh, you sound a lot like a friend of mine from Pune. Have you ever been to Pune? **Talkative**
  - iii) Why don't we take this up another time? **Indecisive**
  - iv) Can't you understand when someone tells you something once? **Rude**
  - v) I don't think this will work. **Reluctant**
  - vi) Never again will I ever use the services of your organization. **Irate**
  - vii) It's working better now, but still not as I expected. **Dissatisfied**
  - viii) Hmmm, perhaps. **Passive**
- 2)
  - i) We could not furnish the details you asked for as we were short on staff. **Inappropriate**
  - ii) You will have to wait two days to get this information. **Inappropriate**
  - iii) I understand your concern..... **Appropriate**
  - iv) That's not possible..... **Inappropriate**
  - v) I'll certainly mail it to you by tomorrow. **Appropriate**
  - vi) However, what I can do is..... **Appropriate**
  - vii) Our policy doesn't permit..... **Inappropriate**
  - viii) That's not right.... **Inappropriate**
  - ix) I can assure you that..... **Appropriate**
  - x) I can see you are upset.... **Appropriate**
  - xi) I'm sorry you had to deal with this billing problem. I'll do whatever I can to help you. **Appropriate**
  - xii) I really want to help you solve this problem with your order **Appropriate**
  - xiii) I'm not sure we can do that. **Inappropriate**
  - xiv) That must have been very difficult for you **Appropriate**
  - xv) I think you should.... **Inappropriate**

**Check your progress 2**

The answers are given in **bold**.

- i) You want some additional information to be able to solve a problem.  
**In order for me to assist you better I would need you to give me some more details.**
- ii) You want to offer the customer something new.  
**Would you be interested in seeing another version of this?**
- iii) You want to make an important point.  
**It's important that you familiarize yourself with the terms of the contract.**
- iv) You are offering to go into further detail.  
**May I explain this to you in greater detail?**
- v) You are offering to verify something.  
**I'll be happy to check it out for you.**
- vi) You want to paraphrase something to show your understanding of it.  
**So what you would like me to do is to waive the delivery charges.**
- vii) You want to give the example of another satisfied customer.  
**Some people have found this payment option helpful.**
- viii) You want to involve the customer in finding a solution to the problem.  
**How would you suggest we deal with this development?**
- ix) You want to assure your customer you empathize with him/her.  
**I understand why you feel this way.**
- x) You want to offer a solution  
**Here's what I can do. May I suggest an alternative?**

**Activity 2**

Answers are given in **bold**.

- i) What did you say?  
**I beg your pardon? / Could you repeat that?**
- ii) When did you last call us?  
**May I know/Would you happen to remember when you last called us?**
- iii) Can you give me your order number?  
**Could you give me/May I have your order number?**
- iv) What's your name?  
**May I have your name, please?**
- v) I'll see what I can do.  
**I assure you I'll do my best to help you in this matter.**

vi) That's something I cannot do.

**I'll tell you what I can do.**

vii) The manager is not available at the moment.

**I'm afraid the manager is not available at the moment. Why don't I ask him to call you as soon as he gets in?**

viii) I'll call you tomorrow.

**May I call you tomorrow? / Would it be alright if I called you tomorrow?**

ix) I know you are not satisfied.

**I can understand why you feel this way.**

x) Is 2.30 p.m. on Friday okay?

**Would 2.30 p.m. on Friday be okay?**

### **Text for Audio**

#### **Types of Customer**

There are as many types of customer as there are types of people. Also different customers have different sets of expectations from the products and services that they want to buy, or have bought. Both of these together determine the types of customer you are likely to deal with on a day-to-day basis.

Loud and aggressive customers can be very demanding and find it difficult to understand an opinion different from theirs. They are more than likely to make unreasonable requests, and the sooner they are pacified, the less is the danger of the exchange escalating to unpleasant heights. Use a calm and soothing tone of voice, and pacifying words like "Please", "I understand", and "I agree". Be assertive, but make sure nothing you say sounds remotely rude or aggressive.

Then there are the analytical, questioning types. They will carefully evaluate the pros and cons before making a decision, and ask a volley of questions, some relevant, some not so. See that you stick to logic, and make sure there are no loopholes in any solutions you offer. State facts and figures with care and precision. If in doubt, offer to transfer the call to somebody who can supply the more technical details.

The skeptical types are those who have a hard time trusting anything you say. Be prepared to buttress your points with all the data at your disposal, speak with conviction, choose your words with care, reassure them of full future support (and see that you provide it).

Be careful how you deal with the shy, timid ones. They tend to sound apologetic and unsure, and can be easily intimidated, so the first thing you need to do is make them feel comfortable. Probe gently for their needs, use an encouraging tone of voice, and assure them of your intentions with words like 'I'll be happy to do that for you'.

You also need to be especially careful with the technically aware customers. They tend to be somewhat impatient. These are straightforward people who need you to be honest about the advantages and disadvantages of what you are about

to offer, and have no patience with ambiguity or vagueness. Acknowledge the fact that they are technically well versed, but maintain a quietly assertive tone, for they can be a little overbearing. If unsure about some details, be candid and seek assistance immediately.

You will be pleased to come across the extroverts. They are talkative and friendly, and happy to part with any information you seek. Reciprocate the friendliness, but just be careful not to get side-tracked by too much chatter.

Then there are certain personal traits that make different people respond in varied ways. You will need to coax information out of the passive customers, a little like with the shy ones. With the chronic complainers you play the balancing act, admitting they are right where you need to and gently putting your foot down where they are unreasonable. The irate customer's temper is ready to explode, so be patient but firm. Those who constantly try to interrupt need to be told firmly that listening once in a while isn't a bad idea.

### Check your progress 3

- i) Be prepared with facts and figures – **Analytical, also Technically aware**
- ii) Be encouraging and make them feel comfortable – **Shy, Introvert**
- iii) Be friendly, but restrict getting side tracked - **Extroverts**
- iv) Count to ten and stay cool – **Irate, also sometimes Aggressive**
- v) Admit lack of awareness where necessary, and seek assistance - **Technically aware**
- vi) Be patient as you may need to ask many questions to get some information – **Passive**
- vii) Be firm to defend what is logically worth defending – **Chronic complainers**
- viii) Be assertive, but use a calm, soothing tone of voice - **Aggressive**
- ix) Use voice and words to speak with conviction - **Skeptical**

### Activity 3

- i) Good morning. How may I help you?
- ii) Would you like to leave a message?
- iii) This is Brinda Patel.
- iv) May I speak to Mrs. Jones, please?
- v) May I know what this is about?
- vi) I'm afraid he's busy at the moment. / I'm afraid he isn't in office right now.
- vii) Could/May I have your name, please?
- viii) Could you repeat that, please?

### Activity 4

**Situation 1:** This is only a sample conversation; yours could be different, but try to use the relevant phrases from the box in the Speaking section and/or from the Language Focus section.

- Customer: Hello.
- Executive: Good afternoon, Sir. This is Raman from XYZ Connections. I've called about an outstanding bill of yours.
- Customer: As far as I can remember, there is no outstanding bill I need to pay. Please don't disturb me with these false bills.
- Executive: I'm afraid there is. The outstanding amount is Rs.200, and it has been due for the last two months.
- Customer: Can't you understand when someone tells you something once?
- Executive: I understand what you are saying, but according to our records, a payment of Rs.200 is outstanding against your bill for the month of May.
- Customer: Well, this is a late payment charge that I had been told would be waived when I spoke to your executive last month.
- Executive: I'm afraid there is no such record of the waiver. However, here's what I can do. I'll.....

**Situation 4:** This is only a sample conversation; yours could be different, but try to use the relevant phrases from the box in the Speaking section and/or from the Language Focus section. Remember that you are speaking with a shy customer.

- Customer: Hello?
- Executive: Good afternoon. This is Manish, from Welcome Appliances. May I speak with Ms. Amrita Singh?
- Customer: Yes. Err... This is she. Errr...errr... What is this about?
- Executive: I hope I'm not disturbing you, but I need to remind you of a payment that is due. It's your installment for the month of March for the computer you bought in January.
- Customer: So..... ummm..... Err.... When is this due?
- Executive: I'm afraid it is already overdue by almost a month. And your next installment will be due too in another week.
- Customer: Oh. Actually.....I don't know...(sounds embarrassed)
- Executive: (Senses the hesitation) If you find this payment scheme inconvenient, may I make a suggestion....?
- Customer: Yes.....okay.
- Executive: What I can do is, I can split the payment.....

### Activity 5

- 1) Completed sentences with *who*, *whom*, *which*, *that* and *to whom*.
  - i) The receptionist at the desk **to whom** I spoke was very helpful.

- ii) The hotel has a large conference hall in **which** workshops can be held.
  - iii) I can give you the name of the HR Manager **who/that** I deal with.
  - iv) We drew a shortlist of candidates **whose** CVs were very good.
  - v) We've got a machine **which/that** prints in colour.
  - vi) Yesterday I met someone **whose** brother works in your office.
  - vii) Our client manufacturers clothing **which** is distributed in the popular retail stores.
  - viii) We are looking for someone **who** has a proven track record of excellence.
- 2) Completed sentences using relative clauses.
- i) I'm in a division **that handles the publicity**.
  - ii) I have a boss **who is very creative**.
  - iii) As part of my work, I deal with people **who are very talented**.
  - iv) I sometimes have to do jobs **that require me to work late into the night**.
  - v) In my free time, I enjoy doing things **that help me relax**.



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# UNIT 11 ESSENTIALS OF CUSTOMER SERVICE

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## Structure

- 11.0 Objectives
- 11.1 Warm Up
- 11.2 Listening: Customer Service
- 11.3 Vocabulary
- 11.4 Reading - I: Good Customer Service Made Simple
- 11.5 Reading - II: Moments of Truth
- 11.6 Speaking
- 11.7 Writing
- 11.8 Grammar: Linkers
- 11.9 Pronunciation: Stress and Rhythm in Connected Speech - II: Weak Forms
- 11.10 Let Us Sum Up
- 11.11 Answers

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## 11.0 OBJECTIVES

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This Unit will familiarize you with the essentials of customer service. Here you will learn:

- What is customer service
- The importance of good customer service
- How we can make our customer service exceptional
- The importance of word-of-mouth publicity
- The importance of customer loyalty
- Qualities of a good customer service executive

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## 11.1 WARM UP

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Think of all the times you have gone to a store and have been confronted with a salesman whose attitude you found helpful and encouraging, and another whose attitude you found rude and unfriendly, or listless to the point of being discouraging. Which of these are you likely to pay a repeat visit to? Would the same logic apply whether the executive you were dealing with was speaking to you over the telephone?

### Activity 1

Now think of all the qualities you would like a good sales person or customer service executive to have.

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## 11.2 LISTENING: CUSTOMER SERVICE

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Listen to a talk on customer service and then answer the questions in the exercise below.

**Check your progress 1**

1) How would you define good customer service?

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2) Is good customer service dependent on the salesperson alone?

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3) Why is it essential to build a relationship with your customer?

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4) What is the likely fallout of a bad experience of a customer?

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- 5) What, according to the text, is the one thing that is essential for a business to run profitably?

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## 11.3 VOCABULARY

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### Activity 2

Following are words describing character traits a person can have. List these as positive or negative for a customer service executive.

- 1) soft-spoken
- 2) gently persuasive
- 3) encouraging
- 4) aggressive
- 5) loud
- 6) a good listener
- 7) talkative
- 8) pushy
- 9) defensive
- 10) offensive
- 11) attentive
- 12) well informed about the product
- 13) one who interrupts
- 14) well mannered
- 15) politely firm
- 16) rigid
- 17) pleasant
- 18) disinterested
- 19) markets aggressively
- 20) speaks clearly

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## 11.4 READING - I: GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE MADE SIMPLE

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How do you go about forming a relationship with your customers? By remembering the one true secret of good customer service and acting accordingly;

“You will be judged by what you do, not what you say.”

If you truly want to have good customer service, all you have to do is ensure that your business consistently does these things:

**1) Answer your phone**

Get call forwarding or an answering service. Hire staff if you need to. But make sure that someone is picking up the phone when someone calls your business. (Notice I say “someone”. People who call want to talk to a live person, not a “fake recorded message”.)

**2) Don’t make promises unless you will keep them**

Reliability is one of the keys to any good relationship, and good customer service is no exception. If you say, “Your new bedroom furniture will be delivered on Tuesday”, make sure it is delivered on Tuesday. Otherwise, don’t say it. The same rule applies to client appointments, deadlines, etc. Think before you give any promise – because nothing annoys customers more than a broken one.

**3) Listen to your customers**

Is there anything more exasperating than telling someone what you want or what your problem is and then discovering that that person hasn’t been paying attention and needs to have it explained again? From a customer’s point of view, I doubt it. Let your customer talk and show him/her that you are listening by making the appropriate responses, such as suggesting how to solve the problem.

**4) Deal with complaints**

No one likes hearing complaints, and many of us have developed a reflex shrug, saying, “You can’t please all the people all the time”. Maybe not, but if you give the complaint your attention, you may be able to please this one person this one time - and position your business to reap the benefits of good customer service.

**5) Be helpful - even if there’s no immediate profit in it**

The other day I went into a local watch shop because I had lost the small piece that clips the pieces of my watch band together. When I explained the problem, the proprietor said that he thought he might have one lying around. He found it, attached it to my watch band – and charged me nothing! Where do you think I’ll go when I need a new watch band or even a new watch? And how many people do you think I’ve told this story to?

**6) Take the extra step**

For instance, if someone walks into your store and asks you to help them find something, don’t just say, “It’s in the left hand shelf.” Lead the customer to the item. Better yet, wait and see if he has questions about it, or further needs. Whatever the extra step may be, if you want to provide good customer service, take it. They may not say so to you, but people notice when people make an extra effort and will tell other people.

**7) Throw in something extra**

Whether it’s a coupon for a future discount, additional information on how to use the product, or a genuine smile, people love to get more than they thought

they were getting. And don't think that a gesture has to be large to be effective. The local photographer that we use gives a small photo album with the set of pictures he prints. A small thing, but so appreciated.

If you apply these simple rules consistently, your business will become known for its good customer service. And the best part? The irony of good customer service is that over time it will bring in more new customers than promotions and price slashing ever did!

*by Susan Ward, About.com*

**Link:**     <http://sbinfocanada.about.com/od/customerservice/a/custservrules.htm>

### **Check your progress 2**

Mark the following statements as true or false, according to the author of the text above.

- i)     People prefer speaking to a 'live' person rather than a recorded voice.
- ii)    You should try to keep the promise you made to your client.
- iii)   When a customer talks, you should only listen, and make no sound.
- iv)    Don't let the customer's complaint worry you because you cannot please all of them.
- v)     Give some help free of charge; this will encourage the customer to come back to you.
- vi)    Customers don't like it if you walk with them and try to explain everything about the product they show an interest in.
- vii)   It is a good idea to give customers information of attractive offers for the future.
- viii)  Overall, cutting down prices and having promotion drives brings in more new customers.

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## **11.5 READING - II: MOMENTS OF TRUTH**

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A "moment of truth" is that point in time when the customer comes in contact with an aspect of your organization and forms an impression, positive or negative, about the quality of service you provide. This is why the "Moment of Truth" is also an opportunity for you to create a lasting positive impression in your customer's mind.

Take, for example, the time you went to a restaurant with your two-year old and the waiter ushered you to a table and immediately fetched a high chair for your child. Or when you were peering at the menu he appeared with a pair of reading glasses. Both of these are moments of truth you are going to carry with you.

Yet it is not as if there is one such moment with each customer. In fact the relationship you build with customers is actually laid brick by brick by several such moments at different stages in your interaction with them. These moments may come via phone calls, in-person contacts, letters, email, brochures/fliers, web sites, advertising, etc. But each one is equally important. For instance in the

example of the restaurant, you may have another moment where you are served the wrong order and the waiter takes it away but without an apology. That's your negative "Moment of Truth" that has every chance of wiping out the good impression that the previous moments created. A customer doesn't say, "Well, I have had five contacts with the company. Two were bad but three have been good, so they must be all right." Most customers are influenced by the most recent contact. If it was bad, they feel negatively about your company, no matter how many positive moments they may have experienced before it. Hence every contact you have with a customer is as much an opportunity to undo all the good that previous contacts have built up and maybe lose the customer, as it is to undo the bad impression that the customer may have of the company, and regain his trust.

Remember that customers don't read your company's customer service policy statement, or look at its balance sheets to decide whether it is customer oriented. They do this purely on the basis of the contacts they have had with it. These contacts may be at different moments in time, and each of these "moments" determines their impression of the company.

### **Managing Moments of Truth**

So what can you do to ensure that these moments make a positive impact on customers? To manage a Moment of Truth favourably, you need to exhibit care and concern at all times to prove to customers that you personally value their business and that you are prepared to put yourself out for them, by sorting out complicated arrangements on their behalf, for example. Additionally, if you are well informed about the policies of your organization, and about what liberties you can take to make on-the-spot decisions, you are less likely to tell a customer that you will get back after consulting your superior – a reaction no customer relishes. Customers always want problems resolved quickly and efficiently. While handling a problem, see that there is no passing the buck, making excuses, or any attempt to ignore even a part of the problem – all of these can make the "Moment of Truth" go horribly wrong.

To ensure that each one of your "Moments" goes off favourably, "own the problem" and regard it as your personal responsibility to see that consumers or customers are satisfied.

### **Your action plan**

Your actions:

- Crisis management
- Authority levels
- Initiative
- Recommendations to your manager

### **How to Handle Moments of Truth**

Companies that handle Moments of Truth well will tend to have the following five characteristics:

- 1) Performance at every contact point is assessed against the consumers' criteria. This includes, for example, first impressions of the company building / shop / lounge etc., mailings, standard letters and so on.

- 2) Staff who “own the problem” and regard it as their personal responsibility to see that consumers or customers are satisfied.
- 3) They have clearly defined and well understood crisis management procedures so that staff knows how to handle problems in such a way that the problem is taken from the consumer and replaced with a solution. As one insurance company puts it, if you give them your business they will never make a drama out of a crisis.
- 4) Authority levels facilitate spontaneity and recovery.
- 5) The management style and methods of control encourage staff to use their initiative to serve the company well.

### Moments of Truth – Conclusions

- Consumer service survival requires you not to retreat and distance yourself from the customer.
- You have to get even more sincere and authentic than you normally are. The customer wants someone to really listen to him and appreciate his predicament.
- The customer wants you to do battle for them not against them. That’s the basis for long term successful consumer service: *Building the Relationship*.
- **First impressions:** First impressions are made in 30 seconds – about the place, about the people
  - *about the place...* you may notice: cleanliness, orderliness, spaciousness, lighting, sound, pleasant or unpleasant odours, furnishings...
  - *about the people...* you may notice: if they are smiling, if they seem harried, how they are dressed, if they seem to be working together or apart from one another...

All of these put together make a strong first (and sometimes lasting) impression.

### Difficult Customer Behaviour

- We all have personal triggers. It’s important to realize what a customer might do that could cause us to “turn off” or not handle an encounter well.
- Behaviours many people find hard to deal with include: yelling, profanity, finger pointing, name calling, body odour, peculiar dress, name dropping, etc.

Think of a few behaviours you might find annoying or difficult to handle; write down how you would manage that behaviour positively.

Our example...

**Behaviour:** A customer yells at me.

**Response:** I tell the person in a calm voice that her raised voice upsets me and I will be able to help her more effectively, if she doesn’t raise her voice.

Check your progress 3

Now note down how you would respond to customer behaviour in the following situations:

- 1) **Customer behaviour:** A customer shows impatience and demands your immediate attention

**Your response:**

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- 2) **Customer behaviour:** At a restaurant, a customer is annoyed that s/he has been served the wrong order.

**Your response:**

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- 3) **Customer behaviour:** At a restaurant, a customer is unhappy with his table.

**Your response:**

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- 4) **Customer behaviour:** A customer is keen on chatting, but you need to disconnect the phone.

**Your response:**

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- 5) **Customer behaviour:** A customer is annoyed that a product hasn't been delivered by the promised date.

**Your response:**

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## 11.6 SPEAKING

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### Activity 3

An impatient customer is waiting to be attended to at a car showroom. His temper is building.

Complete the following dialogue between the customer and the sales representative and then enact it with a partner.

Customer: (Impatiently) Excuse me, I'd like to know when somebody is going to attend to us!

Executive: Just a moment, Sir.

Customer: What! I've already been .....



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For further speaking practice, you could make up dialogues for the situations in **Check your progress 3** and enact them with a partner.

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## 11.7 WRITING

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### Activity 4

Write down the points about further improving your customer service, particularly focusing on what you can do after having sold your service/ product. Now take a look at the answer key and see how many of these match with yours and how many are new to you. Discuss these with the others around you.

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## 11.8 GRAMMAR: LINKERS

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Linkers, as you may already know, are also called connectives, and they illustrate how parts of a text relate to each other. They help to link clauses, sentences, paragraphs and ideas together to show the logical development of what the writer or speaker wants to say.

They are used for adding information to the main point, contrasting ideas, expressing cause and effect, expressing purpose and opinion, in sequencing, listing examples, making conclusions and giving emphasis. **You will find several examples in the listening audio script.**

Tabled below are some of the functions which linking words fulfill.

FUNCTION	LINKING WORDS/CONNECTIVES
a) For addition	and, as well as, besides, moreover, furthermore, what is more, in addition, not only .... but also, another point is that, additionally

b) For contrasting	but, however, although, despite, in spite of, nevertheless, on the contrary, on the one hand, on the other hand, whereas, while, in contrast, neither...nor
c) For expressing cause or reason	because, as, since, this is why, because of, due to, owing to, for this reason,
d) For expressing result	hence, therefore, thus, consequently, as a result
e) For expressing opinion	I would say that, in my opinion, I think (that), I believe (that), personally, apparently
f) For expressing purpose	to, so as to, in order that, so that
g) In sequencing	first (of all), at first, in the beginning, to begin with, then, next, secondly, before, after, after that, afterwards, when, soon, prior to, immediately, once, suddenly, as soon as, no sooner....than, hardly...when, finally, eventually, at the end, in the end, at last, until, lastly
h) For summing up/concluding	all in all, overall, generally, in conclusion, on the whole, in the main, to sum up
i) For emphasis	especially, particularly, naturally, exactly because, above all, whatever, whenever
j) For giving examples	for example, for instance, for one thing, this includes, such as, e.g. (for example), i.e. (that is)

#### Check Your Progress 4

- 1) Now go back to the audio script of the Listening section, and with your partner find the connectives for addition and those for contrasting in it.

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- 2) Complete the following paragraph by inserting the right linking device in each blank space.

..... online commerce has become quite popular over the years, many people still like to go out shopping. What gives them satisfaction is the entire process of making the shopping list, getting ready for the outing, and the shopping itself. .... fulfilling their need to buy things, it also serves as an outing.

....., many are of the opinion that they want to see and touch products to get a better feel and idea of them before making their decision to buy. ...., if one wants to buy new upholstery for the sofas, or even a pair of trousers, how can one get the feel of the fabric without physically touching it?

....., there are others who believe that online shopping is a blessing. .... their busy work life, they have neither time nor energy to go out shopping. .... is it convenient, ..... saves time and effort.

....., it's each one to his own. So either way, happy shopping!

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## 11.9 PRONUNCIATION: STRESS AND RHYTHM IN CONNECTED SPEECH II: WEAK FORMS

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Rhythm refers to the recurrence of an event at regular periods of time. The rhythm of English speech depends on the stressed syllables occurring at regular intervals of time. This is easy in a sentence like:

'Go and 'post this 'card.

because in this sentence there is one stressed syllable, then one unstressed syllable, and then one stressed syllable, and so on. Let us take another sentence.

The 'boy you 'met on 'Monday 'came to 'see you.

Once again, in this sentence, stressed syllables occur regularly, one after every weak syllable, but there is a slight pause after 'Monday'. In the sentence that we use in our everyday speech, the stressed syllables may not occur so regularly. Take the sentence

He is a pro'fessor of Mathe'matics at the Uni'versity of 'Delhi.

There are four stressed syllables (which have been marked). There are four unstressed syllables before the first stressed syllable, four unstressed syllables between the first and the second stressed syllables, five unstressed syllables between the second and the third stressed syllables, and three unstressed syllables between the last two stressed syllables. Given below is another example.

'John's 'friend 'Ram / 'visited him on the o'ccasion of his 'birthday.

In the sentence given above, four stressed syllables occur together without any unstressed syllable between them but there is a slight pause after 'Ram'. Between the fourth and the fifth stressed syllables, there are six unstressed syllables, and between the fifth and the sixth stressed syllables, there are three unstressed syllables.

How can we make the stressed syllables occur at regular intervals of time, if they don't occur regularly in an utterance, as the two sentences given above illustrate?

When there are too many unstressed syllables between two stressed syllables, we have to say them quickly and use the *reduced* or *weak forms* of some of the words. In weak syllables the vowels generally used are /ə/, /ɪ/ and /ʊ/. Sometimes we also leave out certain sounds – don't pronounce them at all.

Given below is a list of the weak forms of some common English words. The strong form is used when the word is said in isolation or is stressed. In the case of verbs and prepositions, the strong form is also used when the word comes at the end of the sentence. **You can listen to all the examples of weak forms on the audio recording.**

Word Class	Word	Strong form	Weak Form	Examples of a phrase or a sentence with the weak form
Articles	a	/eɪ/	/ ə /	It's a 'book.
	an	/æn/	/ ən /	He 'ate an 'apple.
	the	/ði: /	/ ðɪ / (before vowels)	The 'eighth of 'June.
			/ ðə / (before consonants)	The 'book's 'here.
Auxiliary or helping verbs (and linking or connecting verbs)	am	/æm/	/m/	I'm 'going to 'Delhi.  I'm a 'teacher.
	are	/ɑ:/	/ə/	They're 'going.
	can	/ kæn /	/ kən /	Can I 'go 'now?
Prepositions	at	/æt/	/ət/	I 'met him at the 'Post 'Office.
	for	/fɔ:/	/fə(r)/	I 'did it for my 'mother.
Conjunctions	and	/ænd/	/ənd/ (before vowels)  /ən/ (before consonants)	'Over and a'bove  'Butter and 'jam
	as	/æz/	/əz/	As 'soon as I 'can.
Pronouns	he	/hi:/	/hɪ/ (after pause or vowels),  /ɪ/ (after consonants)	He 'told me.  Is he 'here?
	her	/hɜ:/	/hə(r)/ (possessive)	Her 'aunt's come.

A very important point to remember is that the weak forms of prepositions and auxiliary and linking verbs are **not** used when they occur at the end of a sentence. The sentence:

Where are you from?

cannot end with the weak form / frəm /. It has to end with the strong form /frɒm/.

Similarly, 'Who's coming?' /hu:z kʌmɪŋ/ 'I am' /aɪ æm /. (Note the strong form of *am*)

### Check Your Progress 5

Mark the stressed syllables in the following sentences. In some cases you may have to divide the sentence into groups. Check your answers with those given at the end of this unit. After you have checked your answers, say the sentences with the correct stress patterns. You can also listen to these sentences on the audio recording.

- 1) He's a good painter.
- 2) She's a nice girl.
- 3) Jack and Jill went to get some water.
- 4) It's a very beautiful building.
- 5) The Prime Minister of France is quite dynamic.
- 6) Can I see you at ten?
- 7) I'm afraid I'm very late today.
- 8) My father is a retired engineer.
- 9) The plane to London is delayed by two hours.
- 10) Can you get me a cup of tea?
- 11) He's extremely honest.
- 12) Honesty is the best policy.
- 13) He's a Professor of Physics.
- 14) Can a cobra swim?
- 15) My neighbour has an imported car.
- 16) Have you ever travelled by plane?
- 17) I worked in the States for two years.
- 18) Jackals are very cunning animals.
- 19) I have a working knowledge of Arabic.
- 20) It's impossible to please everybody.
- 21) What an enormous man!
- 22) She has a very pleasant personality.
- 23) Uncle Robert visited us yesterday.
- 24) Please bring me a chair.
- 25) Would you like anything to drink?

## 11.10 LET US SUM UP

We have learnt in this unit that customer service is a very important component of any business – for the client as well as the organization. For the client it brings greater satisfaction, trust in the organization, and a sense of loyalty that encourages him to come back.

For the business, a satisfied customer means good word-of-mouth publicity that will bring in new customers and repeated business from the same clients, both of which are cost-free promotions.

We have learnt also that good customer service involves every department of the business, not just face-to-face or telephonic contact with the customer.

## 11.11 ANSWERS

### Audio text on Customer Service

What is customer service? Is it the ability to communicate to your customers all that your company can provide them, or is it something more than that? If it is something more, then what is that something?

In simple terms, customer service is an organization's ability to fulfill their customers' needs. But what makes an organization's customer service exceptional? Superior customer service is that which exceeds your customers' expectations and makes your business stand out from that of your competitors. What this essentially means is that every aspect of your business has an impact on what you finally deliver to your customer. Good customer service is not just limited to face-to-face customer contact with the person availing of your services, or telephonic conversation you may have with her/him while providing the service or product. From the moment a customer thinks of purchasing a product or service from you, then through the sales process, and the service you render thereafter, at every stage there are opportunities for an organization to add customer service to the product.

Although it's true that a good salesperson can sell anything to anyone once, you have to remember that good customer service is all about bringing the customer back. This s/he will do only if s/he goes away satisfied the first time, in which case you also hope that s/he will pass positive feedback about your business to others, who may then try the product or service you offer for themselves and in their turn become repeat customers. Word-of-mouth referral is the most effective form of promotion. It costs nothing and carries a lot of credibility as it is based on personal experience. On the other hand, a customer who has had a bad experience is likely to tell ten other people about it, who in all probability will pass on the information to as many more. It is not difficult to imagine how much damage bad publicity of this sort can do to a business. Additionally, it's important to remember that finding new customers is more expensive than retaining existing ones; and a lost customer is also lost revenue, not to mention the damage he will do to your reputation. So essentially, it will be your approach and attitude that determines whether a customer is ever likely to come back to you for something else. You need to win over your customer in a manner that builds a relationship with him/her – a relationship that an individual customer is comfortable with,

and feels that s/he would like to pursue. The bottom-line really is – you may slash prices, do sales promotions, or whatever else you can think of to bring in new customers – but the only way for your business to stay profitable is to bring back some of those customers.

### Check your progress 1

- 1) Good customer service is that which exceeds your customers' expectations and makes your business stand out from that of your competitors.
- 2) No, it isn't. Every aspect of the business has an impact on customer service. Good customer service is not just limited to face-to-face customer contact with the person availing of your services, or telephonic conversation you may have with him/her while providing the service or product. From the moment a customer thinks of purchasing a product or service from you, then through the sales process, and the service you render thereafter, at every stage there are opportunities for an organization to add customer service to the product.
- 3) Building a relationship with the customer gives him/her a feeling of comfort and confidence, which in turn will in all probability result in him/her coming back for further business and recommending it to others.
- 4) A customer who has had a bad experience is likely to tell ten other people about it, who in all probability will pass on the information to as many more. This negative publicity cannot be good for any business.
- 5) One very important thing for a business to run successfully is for customers to come back to it for more.

### Activity 2

POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
soft-spoken	aggressive
gently persuasive	loud
couraging	talkative
a good listener	pushy
attentive	defensive
well informed about the product	offensive
well mannered	one who interrupts
politely firm	rigid
pleasant	disinterested
speaks clearly	markets aggressively

### Check your progress 2

- i) People prefer speaking to a 'live' person rather than a recorded voice. **True.**
- ii) You should try to keep the promise you made to your client. **False You must keep the promise you made to your client.**



- iii) When a customer talks, you should only listen, and make no sound. **False.**  
**Listen keenly, but show him that you are listening by making the appropriate responses, such as suggesting how to solve the problem.**
- iv) Don't let the customer's complaint worry you because you cannot please all of them. **False**  
**Try to address the complaint. Even if you can please one customer with your handling of complaints, your business will reap the benefits of good customer service.**
- v) Give some help free of charge; this will encourage the customer to come back to you. **True**
- vi) Customers don't like it if you walk with them and try to explain everything about the product they show an interest in. **False Customers like attentive staff.**
- vii) It is a good idea to give customers information of attractive offers for the future. **True**
- viii) Overall, cutting down prices and having promotion drives brings in more new customers. **False**  
**In the long run, good customer service brings in more new customers than either of these.**

### Check your progress 3

These are sample responses. Yours could be different, but they must be aimed at creating a positive impression on the customer.

- 1) **Your response:** In a calm voice, you tell the customer you understand that he is in a hurry, and will be with him as soon as you finish with the one you are dealing with, as he too has been waiting for some time. Meanwhile, you offer him a refreshment/seat.
- 2) **Your response:** You apologize for the mistake and immediately replace his order, and offer a free side dish.
- 3) **Your response:** You express understanding and change his table. If there is no empty table, you express your regret at not being able to do so, and try to understand what is causing him discomfort, and address the problem.
- 4) **Your response:** You tell him that what he is talking about sounds really interesting, but you need to carry on with your job.
- 5) **Your response:** You express your regret and apologize, and assure him that it will be done at the earliest. Offer an additional free service to make up for the inconvenience.

### Activity 3

This is one way you could develop the dialogue. Yours could be different.

Customer: (Impatiently) Excuse me, I'd like to know when somebody is going to attend to us!

- Executive: Just a moment, Sir.
- Customer: What! I've already been waiting for twenty minutes.
- Executive: My apologies. Please give me a minute. I'll get somebody to attend to you.
- Customer: Oh! Somebody else told me that five minutes ago.
- Executive: Here, Sir. Take a look at these brochures and I'll join you as soon as I get done with this billing. And I apologize again for the inconvenience. Meanwhile, could I offer you something to drink?
- Customer: (Satisfied) Thank you, young man.

#### Activity 4

These are only sample answers; yours could be different.

- 1) Make follow-up calls to the customers to see if the service/product is working well.
- 2) Ensure that all free services in future are delivered on time.
- 3) Provide feedback forms for your customers to complete.
- 4) Pay special attention to negative feedback.
- 5) Keep a list of customer complaints to identify any patterns and the cause of dissatisfaction.
- 6) Take effective steps to address common complaints in the list.
- 7) Take testimonials of good service from satisfied customers.

#### Check your progress 4

- 2) Completed paragraph with linkers:

**Although** online commerce has become quite popular over the years, many people still like to go out shopping. What gives them satisfaction is the entire process of making the shopping list, getting ready for the outing, and the shopping itself. **Besides/Other than** fulfilling their need to buy things, it also serves as an outing.

**Additionally/Furthermore**, many are of the opinion that they want to see and touch products to get a better feel and idea of them before making their decision to buy. **Especially, for instance/for example**, if one wants to buy new upholstery for the sofas, or even a pair of trousers, how can one get the feel of the fabric without physically touching it?

**On the other hand/However**, there are others who believe that online shopping is a blessing. **Owing to/Because of** their busy work life, they have neither time nor energy to go out shopping. **Not only** is it convenient, **but also** saves time and effort.

**At the end**, it's each one to his own. So either way, happy shopping!

#### Check Your Progress 5

Stress mark

- 1) He's a 'good 'painter.

- 2) She's a 'nice 'girl.
- 3) 'Jack and 'Jill / 'went to 'get some 'water. (division into groups shown by/ )
- 4) It's a 'very 'beautiful 'building.
- 5) The 'Prime 'Minister of 'France / is 'quite dy'namic.
- 6) Can I 'see you at 'ten?
- 7) I'm a'fraid I'm 'very 'late to 'day.
- 8) My 'father is a re'tired engi'neer.
- 9) The 'plane to 'London / is de'layed by 'two hours.
- 10) Can you 'get me a 'cup of 'tea?
- 11) He is ex'tremely 'honest.
- 12) 'Honesty is the 'best 'policy.
- 13) He is a pro'fessor of 'Physics.
- 14) Can a 'cobra 'swim?
- 15) My 'neighbour has an im'ported 'car.
- 16) Have you 'ever 'traveled by 'plane?
- 17) I 'worked in the 'States for 'two 'years.
- 18) 'Jackals are 'very 'cunning 'animals.
- 19) I have a 'working 'knowledge of 'Arabic.
- 20) It's im'possible to 'please 'everybody.
- 21) 'What an e'normous 'man!
- 22) She has a 'very 'pleasant perso'nality.
- 23) 'Uncle 'Robert 'visited us 'yesterday.
- 24) 'Please 'bring me a 'chair.
- 25) Would you 'like 'anything to 'drink?

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## UNIT 12 WORK ETHICS

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### Structure

- 12.0 Objectives
- 12.1 Warm Up
- 12.2 Reading Comprehension: Characteristics of Work Ethics
- 12.3 Vocabulary: Positive Qualities
- 12.4 Listening: Case History
- 12.5 Speaking: A Short Welcome Speech
- 12.6 Grammar: Verbal Phrases, Modals
- 12.7 Writing: Filling up an Inventory of Occupational Work Ethics
- 12.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 12.9 Answers

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### 12.0 OBJECTIVES

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This unit will help you to:

- Understand what work ethics is
- Develop the right attitude towards your work
- Develop vocabulary related to work ethics
- Understand the main points of a case study in work ethics
- Develop the ability to welcome new recruits and describe the behaviour expected of them
- Learn and practise language structures that are related to work ethics
- Be able to complete an inventory on work ethics

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### 12.1 WARM UP

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You have been appointed in a company or organization, and you are going to join the new workplace soon. You have the right qualifications and the right experience. But there is something more you need to have in order to stay on in the job and get promotions.

Think of the qualities you need to have and write them here.

.....

.....

---

### 12.2 READING COMPREHENSION: CHARACTERISTICS OF WORK ETHICS

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#### Definition

A simple definition of ‘ethics’ would be a set of moral principles. The word derives from the Greek concept of ‘ethos’, which means ‘the characteristic spirit

or attitudes of a community, people or system'. Work ethics would thus mean morality at work.

Work ethics is a universal norm, which makes us feel personally accountable and responsible for the work that we do. Basically, work ethics is usually associated with people who work hard and do a good job.

We can summarize the characteristics of work ethics under three major heads — *interpersonal skills*, *initiative*, and *being dependable*.

### **Interpersonal Skills**

Interpersonal skills include our habits, attitudes, manners, appearance, and behaviour we use around other people. This affects how we get along with other people. Our interpersonal skills begin to develop early in our lives. Our family, friends and our observation of our immediate world influence our attitudes and interpersonal skills. Television and movies also have a role to play in shaping our interpersonal skills. Some of the interpersonal skills are also inherited as our appearance and our genes largely influence our personalities.

In order to improve our interpersonal skills we need to know how people look at us. We may have habits or actions that we are unaware of but which may not be appropriate. Once we become aware of them, we can make a conscious effort to change and this would positively influence our relationship with people.

As adults we have the responsibility of improving our own interpersonal skills because these greatly influence our opportunities and success. This is because people make judgments about one another based on their relationships and interpersonal skills.

### **Initiative**

Initiative is a very important characteristic in modern times. It means the ability to act or take charge before others do. Direct supervision is often not a feature of the modern workplace. Without initiative, we may delay things and miss opportunities, which can cause problems for us. And if our performance is poor, we may lose our job and may not get another chance to prove our worth.

This ability is most important for those who work out of a home office or have a small business. Initiative helps in growing your own business by understanding what factors, risks, decisions and options are good for your own business. It reduces your dependence on others, who may not value your business the same way you do. Lack of initiative may lead to losses or reduced success.

Drive and effort are both components of initiative. Even if we are gifted, unless we work harder, longer and more efficiently than others we will never be the best. The amount of drive and effort we put forth in any of our professional or even leisure activities like sports makes the difference between average performance and high performance. In order to excel, we need to have the right attitude, skill and the initiative to perform better than the others or better than before.

**Being dependable**

Being dependable is a highly valued quality in the modern workplace. This concept includes honesty, reliability, and being on time. People who are not dependable can cause extra expenditure, emergencies and wastage of time, not take initiative, and not utilize resources well. Sometimes lack of dependability can have serious consequences like losses of different kinds, even loss of life.

When asked to list the most important skills and characteristics they look for while hiring new employees, many employers have listed good communication skills, positive attitude, and the ability to be dependable, punctual, and responsible. In addition to these characteristics we also need some personal characteristics, which include dressing properly, being polite, and displaying self-confidence.

**Check Your Progress 1**

Now answer these questions:

- 1) i) How would you describe ‘work ethics’?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- ii) Which kind of employee would you say has good work ethics?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- iii) Which are the three major characteristics of work ethics?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

iv) Does our family or environment influence our interpersonal skills?  
How?

.....

.....

.....

.....

v) Why do you think interpersonal skills are important at the place of work?

.....

.....

.....

.....

vi) How can we improve our interpersonal skills?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

vii) Do we have direct supervision in the modern workplace? What do we need to have in the absence of direct supervision?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

viii) Is being gifted enough for a person to perform well and excel in his / her field? Why/why not?

.....

.....

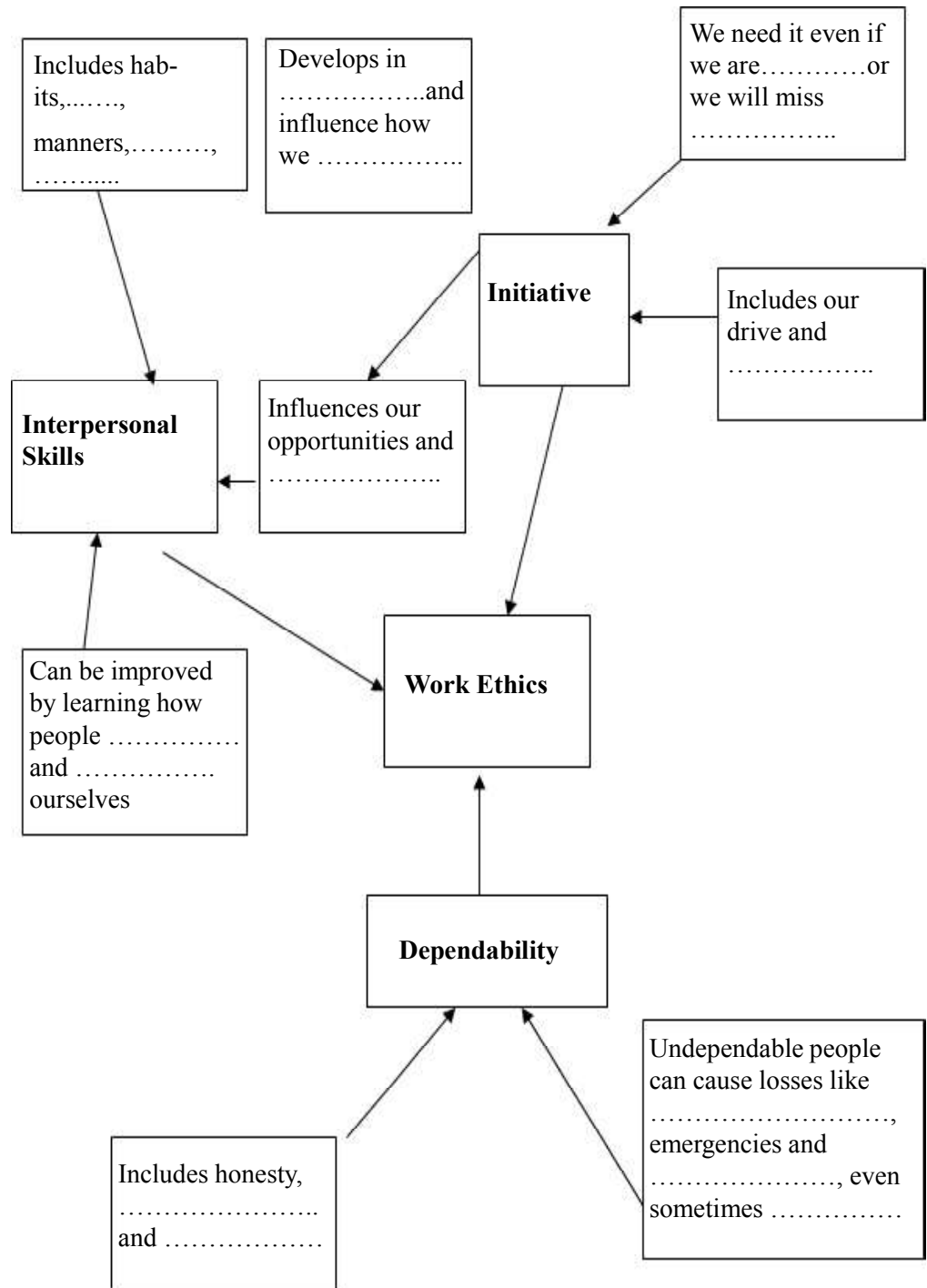
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## 2. Complete the web chart about 'Work Ethics'.



## 12.3 VOCABULARY: POSITIVE QUALITIES

### Check Your Progress 2

Given below are some good work habits of some people. Match them with the words in the box.

self-confidence	hard work and effort	punctuality and regularity
suitable appearance	good interpersonal skills	right attitude
initiative	dependable	

- i) Rama gets on well with the others in her office.  
.....



- ii) You can give Tamanna any work and you can rest assured that it will be done.....
- iii) Sameer takes a lot of interest to take on interesting projects and work on them. No one needs to tell him what to do next. ....
- iv) Saloni always comes on time. She is never missing from office. ....
- v) Bob always tries to listen to the other person's point of view. Then he gently makes his point.....
- vi) Pavan may not be very bright but he works hard and sincerely at whatever job he has at hand. ....
- vii) Ajmal comes very decently and smartly dressed to office. He looks so prim and proper.....
- viii) We all like the way Tasleen carries herself and interacts with people. She surely makes an impression. ....

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## 12.4 LISTENING: CASE HISTORY

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Listen to this recording by a management consultant and answer these questions by ticking the right option.

### Check Your Progress 3

Complete the sentences using the right option.

- i) Organizational ethics falls between two things. They are .....
  - law and personal abilities
  - law and personal beliefs
  - law and technology
- ii) People in the corporate world need to .....
  - work towards individual goals of their own.
  - work together towards goals different from the management.
  - work towards a common goal which benefits all.
- iii) Code of conduct is actually.....
  - the behaviour that is prohibited.
  - the behaviour that is favoured.
  - the behaviour that is favoured or prohibited.
- iv) Trust, loyalty and commitment are.....
  - new values.
  - traditional values.
  - exceptional values.

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## 12.5 SPEAKING: A SHORT WELCOME SPEECH

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### Check Your Progress 4

Imagine you are the team leader of a unit. A new recruit has joined your team. Introduce the person to the others and welcome the new recruit. Your speech

should help the new person feel comfortable and reassured in the new workplace.

Here are some hints:

- Greetings and expressing why you are gathered there
- New recruit's name and previous experience/position
- A few words in appreciation of the new recruit saying how valuable he/she will be to the organization
- Welcoming the new recruit
- Putting the recruit under someone's charge
- Offering to be available and ready to help in case of need
- Expressing hope in the growth of the company or unit with a new hand with diverse experience.

Write your speech here.

.....  
 .....

Now play the role of the team leader in turns in small groups.

---

## 12.6 GRAMMAR: VERBAL PHRASES, MODALS

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You have learnt the use of some modals in your previous units. Now look at these sentences.

- 1) I think you **should** inform Mr. Faisal about this new development. (It is inappropriate not to inform Mr. Faisal, not doing it would not be right.)
- 2) You **must** check every piece of the consignment before shipping it. (It is necessary to check every piece so that no defective piece is shipped by mistake.)
- 3) Everyone **needs** to be computer literate nowadays. (Without being computer literate, work may be difficult.)
- 4) You **ought** not to use office stationary or telephone for personal purposes.
- 5) **Should** you require any more information, you can give me a call anytime between 9 and 6.

The words 'should', 'must', 'need' and 'ought' are **modals**.

- 1) We use 'should' to show what is appropriate especially when criticizing somebody's actions. It is also used for asking or giving advice. It is also used to refer to a possible event as in sentence 5.
- 2) 'Must' is used to say that something is necessary or important - sometimes involving rules or law.
- 3) The modals 'need' and 'need not' are used to state that something is/was necessary or not necessary.
- 4) We use 'ought to' to say what the right thing to do is. It is also used to say what you advise or recommend.

Complete the sentences given below using appropriate modals.

should                  must                  need                  ought to/ought not to

- i) ..... I carry my certificates for the first informal meeting?  
I think you..... You never know they may like you and would like to know more about you.
- ii) We .....be hasty in coming to conclusions about people.
- iii) Employees .....be at their work stations by 9 o'clock.
- iv) I think this matter is serious. You .....report it to the Director immediately.
- v) .....he want to see last month's account he can access this file from my folder.
- vi) You .....to get an identity card or a pass made as soon as possible. The gateman will not let you in without it.
- vii) I think you .....stop worrying and concentrate on your new project.
- viii) We .....go through the contract carefully before signing it.

---

## **12.7 WRITING: FILLING UP AN INVENTORY OF OCCUPATIONAL WORK ETHICS**

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You have learnt about various desirable qualities that come under work ethics in your reading and listening passages.

### **Check Your Progress 6**

- 1) Given below are the major heads under work ethics. Complete the inventory.

#### **Work Ethics**

- i) Interpersonal skills
  - .....
  - .....
  - .....
- ii) Initiative
  - .....
  - .....
  - .....
- iii) Dependability
  - .....
  - .....
  - .....
- iv) Positive traditional values
  - .....

- .....
  - .....
  - .....
- v) Positive new values
- .....
  - .....
  - .....
- 2) Below is a list of some qualities or skills that are important work ethics in the 21st century. Match them with the correct explanation.
- | S. No | Qualities/Skills    | Explanation  |
|-------|---------------------|--|
| i)    | Adaptability        | the ability to use one's time effectively  |
| ii)   | Cultural competence | the capacity and willingness to organize, develop and manage a business venture  |
| iii)  | Imagination         | the quality of being able to adjust to new conditions or situations  |
| iv)   | Time Management     | the ability to successfully exchange or understand information/ideas   |
| v)    | Communication       | the ability to understand the differences in the background of people and not doing or saying things that might be inappropriate |
| vi)   | Entrepreneurship    | the ability to think of new ideas or ways  |

---

## 12.8 LET US SUM UP

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Young people are being added to the work force every day. These new recruits need to have some concept of work ethics so that they may be accepted as good workers. It is important to value and respect the code of conduct, work and opinions of others if one wishes to improve one's chances and opportunities for success and growth. In this unit we have empowered you with the language required to deal with this topic.

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## 12.9 ANSWERS

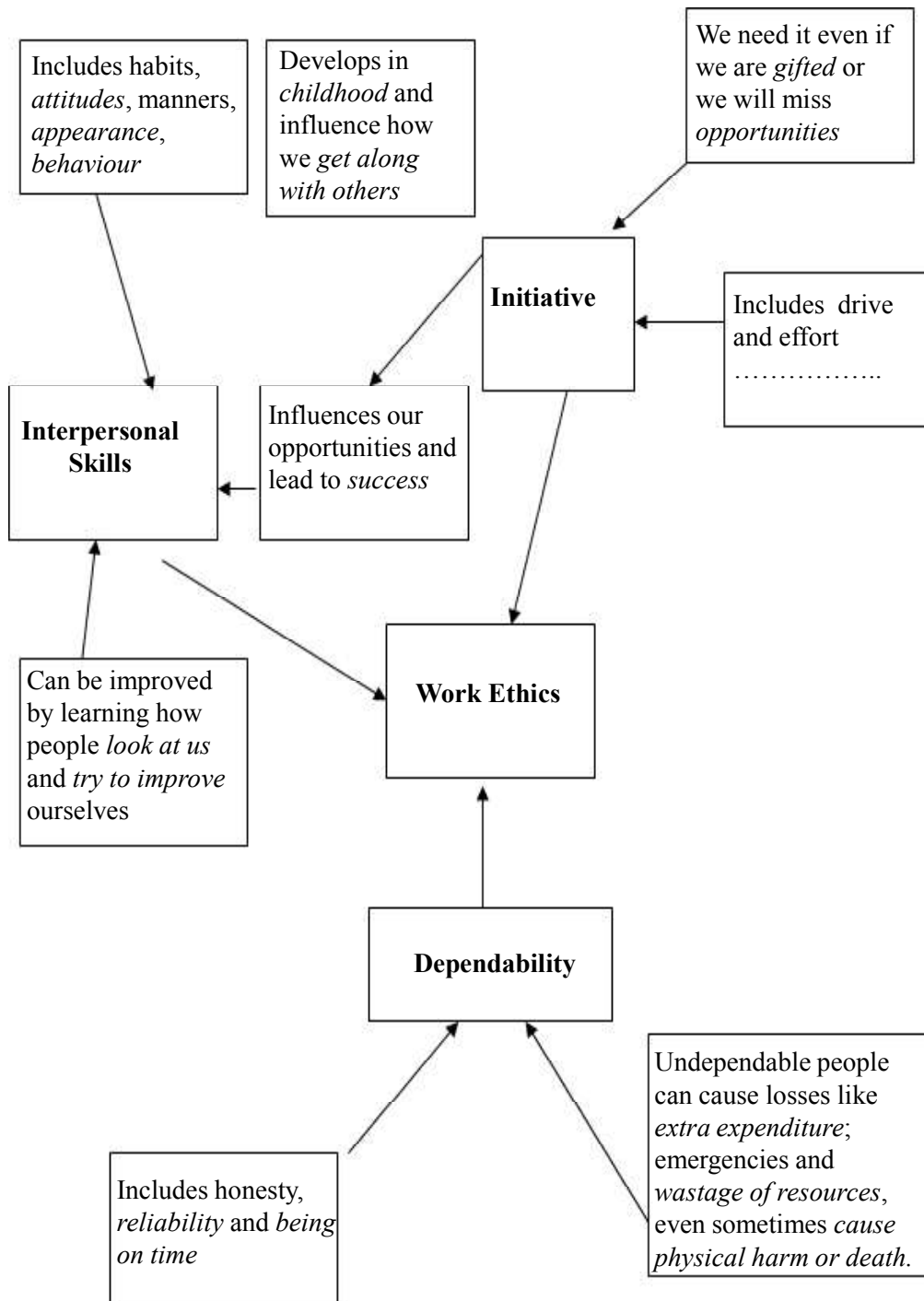
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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) i) Work ethics means morality at work. It includes the right spirit and the right attitude. It makes us responsible and accountable for what we do at the work place.
- ii) A person who is good at his/her job, has good relations with colleagues and is honest and reliable is known to have good work ethics.
- iii) The three major characteristics of work ethics are interpersonal skills, initiative and dependability.
- iv) Yes, our family and immediate environment influence our interpersonal skills. This begins very early in our life. Our attitudes are shaped by our relationships and our early childhood experiences. Some qualities are also inherited.

- v) Our interpersonal skills affect the way we get along with people. If we have poor interpersonal skills then we would have more conflicts and our functioning will not be smooth.
- vi) Often we have habits that we are unaware of. It is a good idea to try to become aware of how others look at us. If we knew that we have any inadequacy we would make a conscious attempt to change ourselves.
- vii) In the modern workplace there is no direct supervision and hence we would have to depend on our own drive and initiative to be able to perform well and make the best use of opportunities.
- viii) Being gifted is a good thing but this alone is not enough. We need to work harder, better and longer than the others to become the best. Only then we can excel in our field.

2) Completed web chart about 'Work Ethics'.



**Check Your Progress 2**

- i) Rama gets on well with the others in her office. *Good interpersonal skills*
- ii) You can give Tamanna any work and you can rest assured that it will be done. *Dependable*
- iii) Sameer takes a lot of interest to take on interesting projects and work on them. No one needs to tell him what to do next. *Initiative*
- iv) Saloni always comes on time. She is never missing from office. *Punctuality and regularity*
- v) Bob always tries to listen to the other person's point of view. Then he gently makes his point. *Right attitude*
- vi) Pavan may not be very bright but he works hard and sincerely at whatever job he has at hand. *Hard work and effort*
- vii) Ajmal comes very decently and smartly dressed to office. He looks so prim and proper. *Suitable appearance*
- viii) We all like the way Tasleen carries herself and interacts with people. She surely makes an impression. *Self-confidence*

**Audio text**

*(Based on a presentation to shareholders of a Europe-based international industrial enterprise, 1999 by Cornelius von Bayer)*

I am a management consultant specializing in workplace ethics, what people like to call 'business ethics'. I am now going to talk to you about certain aspects of business ethics.

**Between law and religion**

I describe my work as filling a middle ground. On the one hand, there is the law, which deals with crime and punishment. On the other, there is religion, which deals with virtue and sin. Organizational ethics sits in between — it goes well beyond the law, and links to the personal beliefs of the employees, but its focus is the corporation or association. Such groups of people must work together to achieve common goals, while also striving to do the right thing in a complex, diverse world.

My brand of organizational ethics actually deals much more with creating and maintaining a healthy corporate culture than with exploring philosophical ethics applied to business.

**Codes**

Let me describe some of my activities. I help organizations to develop codes of various sorts. Ethic codes generally deal with corporate values and guiding principles, and codes of conduct generally deal with actual behaviour that is favoured or prohibited. However, there is no firm line between different kinds of codes. Codes cover many subjects — each organization needs some but not others at any given time in its history.

**Values**

Organizational values often include such traditional virtues as trust, loyalty and commitment, honesty and respect for one another, and avoiding conflicts of interest. Values may also include newer elements such as innovation, teamwork, customer focus and continuous improvement.

**Check Your Progress 3**

- 1) Completed sentences:
  - i) Organizational ethics falls between two things. They are **law and personal beliefs**.
  - ii) People in the corporate world need to **work towards a common goal which benefits all**.
  - iii) Code of conduct is actually **the behaviour that is favoured or prohibited**.
  - iv) Trust, loyalty and commitment are **traditional values**.

**Check Your Progress 4**

## Speech

A very good morning to all my friends here. Today we have gathered here to welcome Mr/Ms.....who has joined us today in the capacity of ..... He/she has a lot of experience as a .....in .....company. I am sure we shall find his/her experience and expertise valuable in this organization.

..... (Name of person) we welcome you to ..... (name of organization). You will be placed in the department of ...../unit.....

..... (Name) will be your team leader and your mentor as well. He will help you get used to the working system here and give you guidance as and when necessary. He will help you feel comfortable in your new workplace.

In case you need any other assistance or guidance you are welcome to contact me. I shall certainly find time to discuss any matter with you.

..... (Name) I am sure the company will grow further with your inputs and your expertise and skills. Friends kindly join us for a cup of tea.

**Check Your Progress 5**

- i) **Need** I carry my certificates for the first informal meeting? I think you **must**. You never know they may like you and would like to know more about you.
- ii) We **ought not to** be hasty in coming to conclusions about people.
- iii) The employees **must** be at their work stations by 9 o'clock.
- iv) I think this matter is serious. You **should** report it to the Director immediately.
- v) **Should** he want to see last month's account he can access this file from my folder.
- vi) You **need** to get an identity card or a pass made as soon as possible. The gateman will not let you in without it.
- vii) I think you **should** stop worrying and concentrate on your new project.

viii) We **must** go through the contract carefully before signing it.

## Activity 6

### 1) Work Ethics

- i) Interpersonal skills
  - *Right habits and attitude*
  - *Pleasing manners and behaviour*
  - *Right appearance*
- ii) Initiative
  - *Self-discipline*
  - *Drive*
  - *Effort*
- iii) Dependability
  - *Responsibility*
  - *Honesty*
  - *Reliability*
- iv) Positive traditional values
  - *Trust*
  - *Loyalty*
  - *Commitment*
  - *Respect for one another*
- v) Positive new values
  - *Innovativeness*
  - *Team work*
  - *Continuous improvement*

2

S. No.	Qualities/Skills
1)	Adaptability: the quality of being able to adjust to new conditions or situations
2)	Cultural competence: the ability to understand the differences in the background of people and not doing or saying things that might be inappropriate
3)	Imagination: the ability to think of new ideas or ways
4)	Time Management: the ability to use one's time effectively
5)	Communication: the ability to successfully exchange or understand information/ideas
6)	Entrepreneurship: the capacity and willingness to organize, develop and manage a business venture