



THE PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANT SERVICE EXCELLENCE



MODULE 1: MAY 2015

Customer care: an introduction

Good customer service is all about one golden rule: **treat your customers as you would like to be treated**



OBJECTIVES

After studying this module, assistants will:

- Understand the importance of good customer service
- Be able to put the customer care pathway into practice.

Dealing with your customers is one of the most important parts of your job and, as you are often the first person they speak to, being enthusiastic and helpful will make all the difference. Remember, first impressions always count!

It is essential to engage with each and every customer, listen to their needs and

recommend an appropriate product, advice or guidance. The key to each customer interaction is effective communication.

And communication is not just about talking – it's about listening too. The best pharmacy staff spend 80 per cent of their time listening, not talking.



This module is suitable for all members of the pharmacy team who wish to increase their knowledge of communication skills and customer care. This module has been endorsed with the NPA's Training Seal as suitable for use by pharmacy teams as part of their ongoing learning. This module can also form part of your Team Tuesday training.

THE CUSTOMER CARE PATHWAY

Providing good customer service can appear to be straightforward, but that doesn't mean it comes naturally to everyone. Use this pathway to navigate your way through the golden rules of customer care and communication.

01 GREAT CUSTOMER SERVICE STARTS WITH YOU



- Welcome your customers and be courteous and patient
- Make subtle changes to your tone and approach depending on the customer's behaviour
- Be positive in your language and tone of voice to help put customers at ease. Know when to be sensitive too.

03 BUILD TRUST

- Use your customer's name if you know it and give them your full attention
- Use natural conversation to make sure you understand your customer's needs. Showing that you care about them and are working hard to make the best recommendation for their needs will all help to build trust.

02 ASK QUESTIONS

- Use open-ended questions (e.g. Can you describe your symptoms? Tell me more about...) and try to meet all of the customer's needs
- If the customer is purchasing a product, use the WWHAM questions as the basis of the conversation, but try to do so as part of the natural conversation
- If the customer is "just looking", don't force a conversation, but be discreetly nearby – for example, checking dates of products or stock levels. Being within earshot or eyeshot allows you to pick up on when a customer looks unsure or may be embarrassed to ask for help.



DID YOU KNOW?...

In England, 1.6 million people visit a pharmacy each day

04

LISTEN

- Listen carefully to what your customer says initially, as this will give you some of the answers you will need to help them
- Ask the WWHAM questions to fill in any gaps or to check your understanding. Repeat back the key points and ask if they're correct. This will help you to confirm all of the information.



PRACTICE POINT

Get together as a team and create a list of your top customer service tips, and explain how they help. Keep this list to hand at the pharmacy counter as a reminder.

07

BE UP TO DATE

- Your healthcare and product knowledge must be up to date
- Take part in any training your pharmacy offers and use the accompanying part of The Professional Assistant programme (found in the middle of *TM* each month) to keep your category knowledge updated
- Use pack information and patient information leaflets in-store.

06

PERFECT YOUR BODY LANGUAGE

- Adopt an open and friendly stance, smile and try not to cross your arms
- Try to mirror the customer's own body language, as this will indicate that you're listening and are interested in what they are saying.

05

SOMETIMES IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS THAT MATTER

- Small gestures that anticipate customers' needs or attend to their comfort – such as offering them a seat while you find a product for them, or taking them to the requested product range rather than just directing them to it – go a long way towards winning them over
- Always try to help your customer – whether that's by making suitable product recommendations, giving advice to help improve their lifestyle or manage their condition, suggesting a pharmacy service that may benefit them, or signposting them to someone who can help
- Encourage customers to return to the pharmacy to let you know how they got on with the product and advice, and remember to acknowledge them when they do.





DID YOU KNOW?...

It takes 12 positive experiences to make up for one negative unresolved experience.

IN ACTION

Learning the tools required to provide excellent customer service may seem simple enough. But being confident enough to use them in every customer interaction can be difficult

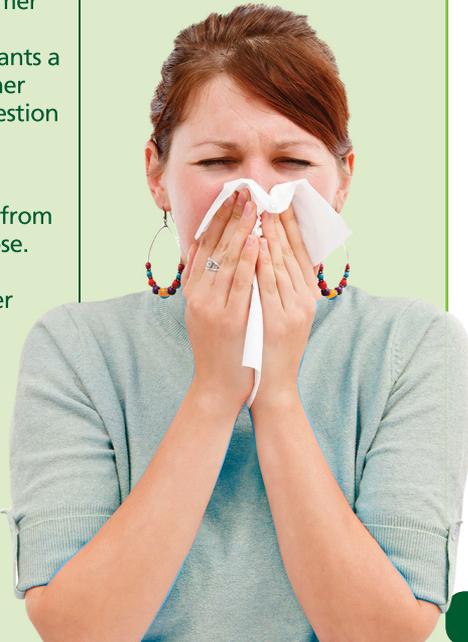
To help put the customer care pathway into action, think about a customer who asks for a nasal spray to help ease her hayfever symptoms. She has used it before, but has forgotten the name.

By listening to the customer you have established straightaway that she wants a nasal spray and it is for her own use, so the next question will be to confirm her symptoms.

It seems that she suffers from sneezing and a stuffy nose. Next, check if the nasal spray has helped ease her symptoms in the past.

From her annoyed tone and crossed arms, you can tell she is dissatisfied. This could be a cue for you to investigate further and not just sell this customer the product again, as it clearly not

working for her. If you are in any doubt at all during the conversation with the customer, politely inform her that you need to seek the opinion of the pharmacist to make sure the product is right for her.



You should:

1 **Positively reassure this customer that there are other products available to help ease her hayfever symptoms.**

Tell her about the different hayfever products available, such as antihistamine tablets, as well as natural options to relieve nasal congestion such as a spray containing sea water. Use the pack information on the different products to point out the features and the benefits of each. Explain how the product will help ease her symptoms, remembering to avoid using medical jargon, and how she should use it.

This will allow the customer to decide which product(s) are suitable for her. It will also demonstrate your knowledge and build the customer's trust in you.

2 **Consider suggesting other products that will help the customer to manage her symptoms.**

This could include a barrier gel or spray that stops pollen from entering her nose. Remember to explain why you are recommending these products, so the customer does not just think you're trying to get her to spend more money.

3 **Finally, think about the extra advice that you can offer,** such as checking the pollen count on websites (perhaps signposting her to these) or local weather reports, keeping doors and windows shut, and avoiding walking through grassy areas.

This adds value to the customer's visit and will help them to manage their condition going forward. It's all part of great customer care.

Next month: Making the most out of WWHAM.