

# *Client-orientation: working for and with clients*

In addition to good prices and high-quality products, successful relationships with clients are created around the service that your company provides to them. Service is about people. You play a key role in the perception and expectations that your clients have of this service. In order to win clients and keep them, you and your clients need to:

*give top priority to*

- *Client satisfaction (including internal clients)*
- *Providing service and help*

*and then act accordingly.*

This collection translates this basic client-oriented thinking and doing into practical tips about how to behave. It gives you insight into familiar situations with clients and how you can influence these. So that both you and your clients are satisfied about this two-sided relationship, get pleasure from it and trust in it.

# *Basic client-oriented attitude*

There are all sorts of clients: internal, external, direct, indirect, etc. In order to have a good relationship with them you need to know:

- How you would like to be treated as a client
- The value of clients for your company
- That clients turn bad experiences into bad advertising
- Your company's vision
- Your company departments and their tasks and responsibilities
- Who your clients are, both direct and indirect
- Not to hide behind the faults of your colleagues
- That suppliers are also clients
- Client-orientation is a prerequisite of quality.

*How do you do this?*

- By reacting quickly and appropriately to queries, requests and complaints from internal and external clients
- Coming up with opportunities (from the interests and situation of the client) to be of service
- Investing in long-term relationships with clients
- Considering colleagues as internal clients and treating them accordingly.

# General front office

If you work in the front office (counter, reception, telephone) you act as your company's visiting card. If you are friendly towards clients and if you do everything possible to help them, you will improve the confidence that they have in your company. The first impression that your company makes is very important when clients are making their choices, or in how the relationship with your company develops.

*The first impression that a client gets at the counter depends on:*

- The way you look at and talk to the client
- Appearances such as your clothes and your work environment, the tone of your voice and the clarity of what you say
- Your ability to listen and to ask questions.

Remember: always remain businesslike. Don't take what the client says personally. Remember that not everyone is the same, and this also applies to clients. They come to you for different reasons and they do that in different ways. The degree to which you succeed in getting along with your clients will reflect the professionalism and the impression that they have of the company.

# Counters and receptions

## *Tips for providing a warm welcome*

- Make sure the way you dress is representative and your work environment is tidy.
- Do not eat or drink behind the counter.
- Sit straight and give your client a friendly smile.
- Show your client that you have seen them through eye contact.
- Finish anything else you are busy with as quickly as possible.
- Greet your client and ask how you can help.
- Ask open questions in order to obtain more information (start questions with *what, when, how*).
- Summarise and ask more questions if you don't understand the client clearly.
- Say what you are going to do (look something up, call someone).
- Don't use jargon.
- Point out where the client can wait.
- Look for alternative solutions.
- Offer the client something to drink.

*Top 10 complaints about receptions*

1. No eye contact with receptionists
2. Having to wait too long unnecessarily
3. Receptionists who are too busy with other things
4. Left to their own devices
5. Nothing to pass the time while waiting
6. Impersonal treatment
7. Lack of clarity
8. Impolite
9. Unattractive waiting area
10. Not enough chairs.

# Telephone

## *Telephone manners and other tips*

- Pick up the phone as quickly as possible. After three rings (15 seconds) clients start to feel that they are waiting. If you are busy doing other things and don't want to be disturbed by the phone, agree to switch the calls through to a colleague.
- Pick up the phone with your non-writing hand. You can then take notes while having the conversation.
- Be relaxed and sit upright. If you are slouched or in a crumpled position this will affect your voice.
- Stop whatever else you are doing when you pick up the phone.
- Be aware of your voice: be audible, calm, clear and friendly, of course.
- Address the client personally: 'Good morning, this is (company/department/name). How can I help you?'
- Do not call people by their first name unless invited to do so.
- Change your opening sentences regularly. If you always use the same one it can start sounding automatic and impersonal.

- Listen and show the caller you are listening by saying mmm, yes, OK, ... every now and again.
- Note down details neatly, summarise client details before you react or put the call through. This way you can repeat the details and it gives your client the impression that you have been listening.
- Don't just ask for a number or a postcode. Explain what you are going to do and why you need certain pieces of information: 'I want to enter your details in our system, may I have your postal code?', 'I am going to put you through to the ... department.' 'Could you just hold the line a moment?'
- Don't leave clients waiting too long. If you think there will be a long wait, take them off hold and ask if they want to continue waiting or prefer to be called back later.
- When you put the call through, give the client's details to your colleague so that the client doesn't have to repeat it all again.
- Ask if the client has any further questions.
- When taking leave repeat the name of the client and be the last one to hang up.
- Do not drink or eat while on the phone.