CHAPTER 14

Communicating with Customers

14.1 Customer Service

14.2 Face-to-Face Communication

14.3 Telephone Communication
Customer Service at a Minimum

In her job as sales support associate, Toni helps six busy salespeople at a company that sells flooring, cabinets, and countertop materials for kitchens and bathrooms. The company, More Than Floors, has two locations in San Antonio.

All the salespeople have cubicles, though they spend most of their time making sales presentations in people's homes. Toni's job is to process the sales orders. When a problem—such as a back order—comes up, she puts paperwork back on the appropriate person's desk. Toni has not learned how to solve the problems, nor has anyone suggested that she do so. She sometimes runs out of things to do. When that happens, she waits in a cubicle until something comes up.

In the showroom, the receptionist, Elena, also has a cubicle. Elena answers all incoming calls. The phone rings 10 to 20 times per hour. Most calls are for the salespeople. Elena takes messages (usually just a name and number) for the absent salespeople. If showroom customers have a question, they often must wait until Elena is between phone calls. Sometimes, if a caller is not someone Elena knows, she puts the call on hold and answers a question with the phone resting on her shoulder.

Once in a while, customers in the showroom approach Toni with a question. Most of the time she just replies, “Sorry, I'm not a salesperson; I can't help you.” At other times, Toni tells them they will have to wait for Elena or make an appointment with one of the salespeople. The salespeople, however, do not have cell phones; and Elena does not schedule appointments for them.

Questions

1. How would you feel if you were a potential customer and had a question but could not get an answer?
2. What message does Toni's behavior send to customers? What message does Elena's behavior send to customers?
3. What could the company do to improve customer relations?
4. How could the company use technology more effectively?
Importance of Customer Service

The goal of a business is to make a profit. To make a profit, a company must have more income than expenses. A major source of income for many companies is the sale of products or services to customers. Without customers to buy products or services, many companies could not stay in business. Non-profit organizations also have customers. For example, the people who visit a non-profit museum are its customers.

Organizations use several strategies to attract customers. They advertise products and services, offer sales or discounts, and provide attractive product displays. However, according to marketing experts, “retaining your key customers is more cost-effective than trying to attract new ones.”

One way to retain customers is to offer quality customer service. Customer service is the performance of activities to ensure customer satisfaction. Satisfied customers are more likely to be repeat customers.

When you think of customers, you probably think about people who, for example, want to buy a car or have a roof repaired. Each of these is an example of an external customer. An external customer is someone from outside the organization who receives benefits or information or purchases a product or service. As an employee, you may or may not work with external customers. However, you will have internal customers. An internal customer is another employee who works for the same company as you do. You provide services to these internal customers. Thus, quality customer service should be of concern to all employees.

Consider an example of internal customer service. Suppose Lisa Morales from the Accounting Department approaches you and asks you to give her a rundown on a project budget. She is asking for a service and is your customer. Your job is to provide the information Lisa needs. You want her to walk away feeling confident that she can come to you for reliable information whenever she needs it. If she does so, you have provided quality service to an internal customer. Workers may have many or only a few internal customers depending on their job duties.

Key Point
One way to keep customers is to offer quality customer service.

OBJECTIVES
After completing Section 14.1, you should be able to:
1. Explain the importance of customer service.
2. Identify external and internal customers.
3. Describe effective strategies for dealing with customers.
4. Describe ways to deal with difficult customer situations.

Many companies provide training in customer service to help employees be successful in this vital area.

**Customer Service Culture**

Companies that make customer service a priority have a strong customer service culture. In such a culture, the company’s policies make it easy for employees to satisfy customers. Employees are allowed to use their own initiative in solving customer problems and are rewarded for doing so. Many companies provide training in customer service to help employees be successful in this vital area.

**Policies and Procedures**

Many companies have policies that govern how employees serve their customers. You should be aware of your company’s policies and act accordingly.

**Key Point**

Many companies provide training in customer service to help employees be successful in this vital area.
In some cases, a company’s policies may limit what you can do for a customer. For example, a customer service associate may not have the authority to offer a free replacement for a defective product. A sales associate may need a supervisor’s signature before accepting a large amount of cash from a customer. Some policies, as in the latter example, exist to protect the customer or the company from fraud.

**Customer Contact**

Customer contact is any meeting or communication you have with a customer. Talking with a customer in person and answering e-mail messages are examples of customer contact. With every contact, you make an impression on that customer. At every point of contact, you should provide courteous, professional service. Building trust with customers is important. If the customer trusts you, he or she is more likely to remain a customer.

**Be Accessible**

To provide good customer service, you need to be accessible to your customers. **Accessibility** is the ease with which customers can contact you. To make sure that you are accessible to your customers, give them at least two ways to reach you. For example, provide an office telephone number and an e-mail address. You may also wish to provide a cell phone number. Assure customers that you will respond to messages quickly and follow through on this promise.

**Give Knowledgeable Responses**

Knowing your product or service well makes it easy to give knowledgeable responses to customer inquiries. Do not guess when giving customers information. Verify prices, stock availability, size, or other data. You may need to simplify technical or complex issues so the customer can understand.

Sometimes you will not be able to answer a question. Do not be afraid to say, “I don’t know.” However, do not let the contact end there. Let that customer know you will find the answer and get in touch at some specific time in the near future.

During the initial contact, you should be clear about when the customer can expect something to happen. Indicate whether information will be given in a telephone call, in an e-mail message, or by mail. If the follow-up work takes longer than expected, contact the customer. In general, make the customer feel as if your answering the inquiry promptly and accurately matters to you. Figure 14-1 on page 533 shows how a poor customer service provider communicates with a client. A quality customer service provider, however, has much more contact with the customer.
Use E-mail Effectively

Many of your customers are likely to have access to e-mail. There is a tendency to be somewhat informal in e-mail, perhaps because many people use e-mail for personal messages. In e-mails to customers, your messages should be businesslike in tone and style. Follow the guidelines below to use e-mail effectively for customer service.

- When you receive an e-mail that requires a reply, respond promptly.
- Identify yourself and your company fully. Do not leave it for the customer to figure out from your e-mail address.
- State the purpose of your message clearly.
- State who will take the next action, what that action should be, and when it should occur. In other words, make it clear what the customer can expect.
- If you must transmit a lengthy document, send it as an attachment to an e-mail message rather than in the body of the message.
- Edit the message to make it clear, concise, correct, complete, and courteous. Ask yourself if you have covered the five Ws (who, what, where, when, and why) in the message.
- Key an e-mail message in standard format, using upper- and lowercase letters. Avoid sarcasm or humor that might be misunderstood in print.
- Proofread your message. As always, business correspondence should be error-free.

Figure 14-1 Two Views of Customer Service

<table>
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<tr>
<th>INADEQUATE CUSTOMER CONTACT</th>
<th>QUALITY CUSTOMER CONTACT</th>
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Respond to Web Site Visitors

Your company may provide customer service on a Web site. You should treat visitors to your Web site with the same care and respect as you would visitors to your office. Some guidelines for a customer-friendly Web site are listed below.

- Make the site visually appealing and easy to read.
- Post a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) along with complete, concise answers.
- Provide access to as much information as is practical. Everyone who visits the site should be able to find something useful.
- Organize information logically and effectively. Think about what visitors will want to know and how they will navigate the site.
- Provide current and accurate information on the Web site. Review the information on the Web site on a regular basis to verify that the information remains current or to update the information, if needed.
- Respond to e-mail messages from site visitors promptly. Follow the guidelines given earlier for effective e-mail correspondence with customers.
- If the site has a live chat feature, use it to help customers politely and efficiently, as you would in person.

Customer Interaction

Consider the following scenario. A customer walks into a store. Two salespeople lean on a counter at the back of the store. They are chatting and do not look up when the customer enters. The customer looks around for several minutes, then leaves. The customer did not speak to the salespeople, so she must not have needed any help.

This scenario is an example of customer interaction. In this case, the salespeople failed to interact. Perhaps they did not realize that customer interaction begins the moment the customer enters the store. If service providers do not make contact, customers will form their opinions and, more than likely, move on.
Truth on the Web

An unhappy customer will likely tell several people about a bad experience. A satisfied customer, on the other hand, might tell one other person. The effects of “bad press” become even more daunting as the Internet makes communicating easy.

Unhappy consumers can now post their stories on the Internet for thousands of readers to see. Many newsgroups and blogs allow posting of consumer stories. A newsgroup is an online discussion group that focuses on a specific topic. Readers can view comments posted by others and post replies. A blog is an online journal posted on a Web site. Some blogs allow readers to reply to postings on the site. On both newsgroups and blogs, some entries tell of good customer service. However, many postings tell of rip-offs, unfair practices, and poor customer service in general.

These Web forums raise the issue of credibility (being believable or trustworthy). On some sites, anyone can post a comment, and no one checks the truthfulness of it. What is to stop a company from planting false stories about competitors to ruin their business? Perhaps a company that wants to generate some “good press” may plant a false account of good customer service on one of these sites. How do site visitors know that what they are reading is true?

As long as the Web remains relatively unmonitored, the possibility exists that false stories will be posted. Consumers must exercise caution and good judgment when reading blogs and newsgroup postings. As with all information found on the Internet, consider the source. Is the person, company, or group posting the information reliable and unbiased? Is the information accurate and current? Answers to these questions should guide you in evaluating the postings you read.

Make a Good First Impression

First impressions do count. Job interviewers—and interviewees—know it. Salespeople and customers know it, too. Customers want to be favorably impressed from the moment of contact with a customer service provider. They want to be in pleasant surroundings. They want to feel welcome. Certain actions and behaviors can help make the first meeting with a customer a favorable one. Be ready to receive customers. Give them prompt attention and greet them cheerfully.
Give Customers Prompt Attention

Make sure that both you and the area for which you are responsible are ready for customers. Dress appropriately for work and pay attention to good grooming. Keep your work area neat and organized so it gives a good impression.

Customers come to get advice, receive help, or to make a purchase. If they do not receive prompt attention, they may take their business elsewhere. Your organization may have a policy for approaching external customers. For example, at some stores, salespeople are required to greet customers as they walk in the door. In other jobs, employees decide when to approach customers.

Some customers like to browse on their own. Others want attention right away. You should observe each customer carefully as he or she enters. Decide which customers want to be approached and which do not. Consider a policy of making eye contact with every customer and smiling pleasantly. By doing so, you show that the customer is welcome and that you are ready to be of help.

When you make contact with a customer, give the person your full attention. If you are sorting tools, for example, stop sorting and look directly at the customer. Setting your work aside and focusing on the customer gives the right impression—that the customer has your full attention.

Sometimes customers have to wait. The sales floor might be busy or the waiting room full. When service will be delayed, explain why if the reason is not obvious. “One of Dr. Malone’s patients had an emergency this morning, and that has pushed his appointments back. We are running about 30 minutes behind schedule.” If you can give customers an idea of when they will receive service, do so. If the time frame changes, keep customers informed. Be ready to make alternative arrangements for those who cannot wait.

Greet Customers Cheerfully

A pleasant, cheerful greeting goes a long way. Look at the customer, give him or her a real smile, and say something appropriate in a pleasant tone of voice.

“Good morning. May I help you?”

“Hodges Company. How may I direct your call?”

“Hi, Jess. What can I do for you?”

You probably have encountered people who do not look at customers. Perhaps they carry on a conversation with a coworker or friend while serving someone. They may seem bored or occupied with their own thoughts, and do not smile or even say hello. Be aware of the poor impression such employees convey and do not be one of them.
Provide Quality Service

Providing quality customer service means different things to different people. In every case, though, quality customer service involves courtesy, careful listening, and individualized treatment. The key is to combine these elements in every customer contact.

Be Courteous

You have the ability to set the tone of your customer contact. Think of your customers as guests, and treat them accordingly. For example, instead of saying, “I need those papers,” you can say, “May I have those papers, please?” Remember that what is considered courteous can vary from person to person and from culture to culture. As best you can, show courtesy and respect to your customers in the way that they understand.

If you are dealing with a dissatisfied or angry customer, try to remain calm. As a professional, you should provide friendly service, even if you are tired or the customer is being unpleasant. True professionals put forth their best effort with every customer, every time.

Listen Carefully

Listen carefully to everything the customer has to say. Do not assume that you know what he or she wants or needs. Consider the customer’s tone of voice and look for nonverbal cues. A client who leans back in a chair probably feels comfortable and relaxed. A client who clasps his or her hands or clutches the arms of the chair probably is nervous.

Diversity

Politeness and formality in business transactions are valued highly by people from many cultures. Make an effort to learn the codes of proper conduct if you interact with customers from different cultures.

Make eye contact and greet customers when they enter your area.
Show the customer that you are listening attentively. Maintain eye contact. As the customer speaks, nod, smile, or look concerned. Ask questions if you do not understand. An alternative is to say something like, “Let me make sure that I understand your concerns.” Then restate what you understood the customer to have said.

You may need to fill out a form or enter data on a computer while talking with a customer. If so, explain or ask politely before beginning. As you work, make sure the customer remains the focus of your activity.

**Make Sure the Customer Understands You**

Make sure the customer understands what you say. Speaking too rapidly, particularly on the telephone, is a common problem. When people are very busy, they tend to speak more quickly and try to hurry things along. Never convey that you are too busy for a customer or attempt to rush the customer through a transaction. Besides showing disrespect, speaking too quickly frequently results in repeated questions, wrong information, and misunderstanding.

**Determine the Customer’s Needs**

Remember that every customer is an individual with individual preferences and needs. Listen to customers carefully and try to identify their particular needs. Show respect by not attempting to sell them products or services that do not meet their needs.

For businesses that rely heavily on repeat customers, treating customers as individuals is especially important. Consider this scenario: Remi is a hair stylist. She and her partner, Jarrod, have a clientele that has stayed with them for many years. They frequently gain new customers through word-of-mouth referrals. Remi and Jarrod are experts at knowing their customers’ likes and dislikes. They make notes of personal preferences such as favorite hair treatments and styles. They ask about their customers’ children by name and cut their hair at a discount. They talk about work, pets, travel, books, or movies. They know which customers are usually in a hurry, which ones are often late, and which ones are likely to forget an appointment.

When asked what matters most in customer service, Remi replied, “Two things. First, treat every customer as your only customer. Second, although you are trying to get new customers, always remember your loyal customers.”

**Deal with Customers Ethically**

Be ethical in your dealings with internal and external customers. One way to gauge your own professional, ethical behavior is to ask yourself this question: Am I treating my customers as I would want to be treated? If the answer is no, then you need to change your behavior. Being fair and honest is a good
place to start. Make sure that you fully disclose all the information your customers need to make informed decisions. You can advise a customer, but make sure that your advice fits the customer’s needs, not your own.

Ethical business communication includes maintaining confidentiality. Carry out transactions with customers quietly and discreetly. This action is important whether you are a bank teller, a washing-machine salesperson, or an advertising consultant. The customer’s business is no one else’s business. When you use tact and discretion, your customers learn to trust you. If they trust you, they are more likely to keep coming back.

check point

1. What two things can you do to make a good first impression on customers?
2. List five things you can do to provide quality customer service.

Check your answers in Appendix C.

Managing Challenging Situations

Employees sometimes must deal with challenging customer situations. You may have to say no to a customer or respond to complaints. On other occasions, you may encounter difficult customers. Customers who are angry or upset may require your best communication skills. This part of the chapter offers guidelines for managing those situations.

Refuse Requests Gracefully

Employees cannot grant every customer request. A customer may ask for a cash refund for a CD player. However, your company does not allow cash refunds after 30 days. A supervisor may want you to finish a project by Friday, but there is too much work to complete in this time.

When you need to refuse a request, use an indirect approach. If appropriate, begin with an apology. Explain the reasons for the refusal and state or imply the refusal. Tell the customer what you can do, as shown in the following example. If you cannot do anything to help the customer, try to close the conversation in a positive way.

I’m sorry this player didn’t work out for you. We provide cash refunds for our products up to 30 days after purchase. Because the 30 days has passed, I can give you a store credit that you can use in any of our stores within the next year.

Key Point

When you need to say no to a customer, use the indirect approach. First, give reasons for the response and then give the negative response.
Key Point
When dealing with customer complaints, use positive words that show empathy.

Note that the first statement in the example is not an admission of fault. It merely expresses understanding of the customer’s situation. When you must refuse a customer request, use positive words that show empathy.

Say I can understand the problem you are having.
Instead of The software is not intended for that kind of use.

When you explain the reasons for the refusal, do not simply state company policy. The customer is not interested in your company’s policy. Instead, give a fair reason for the refusal.

Say For their safety, we require that small children remain in the play area or in the lobby if they are accompanied by a parent.
Instead of Our policy is not to allow small children in the gym.

When you need to refuse a coworker’s request and you can offer a solution, do so. When you cannot, admit it frankly and ask your coworker to help you problem-solve the situation.

The project has involved more work than we planned. With my current workload, I estimate I’ll need another ten days to finish. Could we push back the delivery date? If not, I know I could finish on time if you asked Ming or Vincent to do some of my regular duties.

Resolve Complaints Effectively

A young mother found her baby playing with a piece of plastic torn from his diaper. She wrote immediately to the manufacturer. The manufacturer was grateful. The woman had identified a dangerous problem with the product. The manufacturer recalled the diapers and redesigned them.

Legitimate complaints are welcomed by most companies. They view such complaints as ways of learning about problems with their products and services, as well as about customers’ wants and needs. Follow these steps to resolve a customer’s complaint:

1. Make sure you understand the complaint.
2. If an apology is in order, offer one.
3. If an error was made, assure the customer that you will correct the error and explain how.
4. If no error was made, try to close the conversation on a positive note.

Listen carefully when the customer explains the complaint. Ask questions and take notes if necessary. Disregard side issues and stick to the main point. While taking time to listen to the customer, move quickly to resolve the issue.
Mistakes happen in dealing with customers. When they do, acknowledge the mistake by apologizing. You need not accept personal blame, nor should you blame someone else. Apologizing is a way to get past the mistake and begin to rectify the situation. Always follow an apology with a statement that assures the customer that you will fix the mistake or correct the error. If someone else needs to address the problem, make sure it is brought to the attention of the appropriate person. An apology can be as simple as the following statements.

I’m sorry that happened, sir. Let me order a new product for you.
Thank you for bringing this to my attention. We’ll send you a corrected order tomorrow morning.

**Match the Solution to the Problem**

When customers make complaints, they sometimes ask for resolutions that are not reasonable. For example, a customer whose $30 sweater was lost by a dry cleaner might demand $100. Unreasonable requests may be prompted by anger over the problem or a disagreement about what is fair.

Even companies that follow the policy “the customer is always right” place reasonable limits on what a customer can receive. Know what you can and cannot do for customers. If you have the authority to make your own decisions in resolving problems, strive for a solution that is fair or a little more than fair to the customer. For example, if you worked at the dry cleaner, you might offer the customer $50 or $50 worth of free dry cleaning.

**Key Point**

When dealing with customer complaints, place reasonable limits on what you offer to do for the customer.
Deal Appropriately with Difficult Customers

Fortunately, truly difficult customers are rare. Often, an angry, irrational customer becomes calm and reasonable when he or she realizes that someone is serious about resolving the problem. Follow these guidelines when dealing with a difficult customer:

- Begin by trying to identify the problem.
- Use your best listening skills and show empathy and respect.
- Recognize that the customer may be emotional or irrational for reasons you know nothing about.
- Do not show anger. Remain professional and do not take the customer’s criticisms and attitude personally.

Some customers may be unwilling to accept a reasonable solution or explanation. Others may become abusive. If you find yourself losing your composure in such a case, ask a supervisor to assist you in resolving the problem.

1. What steps can you follow to resolve a customer’s complaint?
2. Describe actions you can take to deal with difficult customers.

Check your answers in Appendix C.
Section 14.1 Applications

A. Serving an Internal Customer
You are an associate in the Human Resources Department. An internal customer sent you the e-mail message shown below.

1. Read the message from your internal customer.
2. Open the Word file CH14 Policy from the student data files. Use the policy provided in the file to find the information the customer needs.
3. Send a reply e-mail providing the requested information. (Send the e-mail to your teacher or save and print the message but do not send it.)

TO: Human Resources Associate
FROM: Keiko Wong
DATE: June 12, 20--
SUBJECT: Drug Testing Policy

Please provide some information about the company’s drug testing policy.
1. Who is subject to drug testing by the company?
2. When may testing of these individuals be required?
3. Who will have access to the results of employee drug tests?

B. Customer Service Policies
1. Work with a classmate to complete this activity.
2. Use an Internet search engine to find the Web sites of several companies that sell products or services to consumers, such as Amazon.com, Overstock.com, Lands’ End, Allbrands.com, or Macy’s.
3. Visit the Web sites for several companies and read the returns policy.
4. Identify at least one company that you think has a returns policy that is favorable to customers. Give the company’s name, Web address, and types of products sold. Tell what makes the returns policy favorable.
5. Identify at least one company that you think has a returns policy that is unfavorable to customers. Give the company’s name, Web address, and types of products sold. Tell what makes the returns policy unfavorable.
Communication and Your Voice

Your voice qualities, as well as the words you choose, can have a big impact on how successful you are in communicating with others. For example, using an appropriate volume and pleasant tone can encourage people to listen to you.

Voice Qualities

The quality of the human voice varies in a number of ways. Though you may think otherwise, you can control how your voice sounds. In fact, you do it every day. Have you ever listened to yourself? Record your speaking voice and listen. You might be surprised at what you hear.

The pitch of your voice is its highness or lowness. Most of us prefer to listen to voices that are neither too high nor too low. Television and radio broadcasters are taught to speak with a somewhat low pitch. A voice that has a high pitch or a pitch that is too low can be unpleasant to hear.

In your everyday speech patterns, you change the pitch of your voice. For example, you raise the pitch of your voice at the end of a question. If you are talking confidentially to someone, you probably talk in a low, steady pitch. If you are excited or enthusiastic about something, your pitch may rise. A person who speaks in a monotone (having no variation in pitch) may be considered boring and may quickly lose the attention of the listener.

Another quality of your voice that you can control is its volume. Use an appropriate volume level for each situation. If you are addressing a dozen coworkers sitting around a conference table, speak loudly enough for everyone to hear. Your listeners will think you lack confidence if you speak too quietly. If you are talking to a customer, only you and the customer need to hear what you have to say. Keep your volume at a conversational level.

The tone of your voice may be the voice quality that customers remember the most. Tone is the attitude toward your listeners that is implied by your choice of words and pitch of your voice. When you say, “May I help you?” is your tone courteous or impatient? Do you sound bored or truly concerned when you say, “I understand” to a customer? Even if you feel bored or impatient, you can alter the tone of your voice to send a more positive message. Your success as a customer service provider may depend on it.

Key Point

Tone is the attitude toward your listeners that is implied by your choice of words and the pitch of your voice. The tone of your voice may be what customers remember the most.
Speech Clarity

Using proper enunciation and correct pronunciation will assure clarity of speech. **Enunciation** is the way in which you say each part of a word. Clear, correct enunciation makes your speech easy to understand. Poor enunciation makes your speech difficult to understand. For example, do not say *hafta* for *have to*, *gonna* for *going to*, and *workin’* for *working*. The speed at which you speak affects your ability to enunciate. It is important not to talk too fast, especially on the telephone or when leaving voice messages.

**Pronunciation** is the way a word is spoken. For example, a person might say very clearly, “Place the dirty dishes in the *zink*.” However, *zink* is a mispronunciation of the word *sink*. Incorrect pronunciation is distracting to your listeners. It is especially important to pronounce people’s names correctly. Do not be afraid to ask someone to repeat a name if you do not catch it the first time or if you simply are not sure how to pronounce it.

Most of us probably take our voices and speech patterns for granted. Keep in mind that your speech plays a large role in the impression you make on people. Pay attention to how you speak. Listen to others. What qualities do their voices have? Are they agreeable or unpleasant? Analyzing others’ vocal qualities, as well as your own, will help you speak with a voice that is easy and pleasant to listen to.
Parts of a Conversation

Face-to-face communication is sharing messages with someone in person. Talking to a friend over lunch, reporting on work to your boss, and giving information to a customer are examples of this type of communication. Sending messages through words and body language is critical to making yourself understood. In turn, you must interpret a speaker’s words and nonverbal cues to receive and understand messages.

Whether a conversation is brief or lengthy, it follows a pattern. Think of a conversation as a process that has a beginning, a middle, and an end. More precisely, it has these five parts, or stages: greeting, introduction, exchange, summary, and closing.

1. **Greeting.** Whether it is a nod of the head, a brief “Hi,” or a more formal “Good morning, Mr. Lopez,” a greeting begins every conversation. The tone of a greeting should match the nature of the conversation. For example, a cheerful greeting followed by the delivery of bad news would be inappropriate.

2. **Introduction.** Think of the introduction as a transition from the greeting to the topic of the conversation. An introduction may use a direct or indirect approach. Many workplace conversations use a direct introduction: “Are you ready to meet with me about that report now?” An employee who would like some help from a coworker might use an indirect approach. For example, she or he might say, “How’s your workload this week?” This question would then lead to the real purpose of the conversation, which takes place in the next stage.

3. **Exchange.** The exchange usually is the longest stage of a conversation. During the exchange, the parties give and receive information. Both speakers must use their oral communication skills as well as their listening skills effectively to make the conversation meaningful. Nonverbal cues, such as gestures, facial expressions, and posture, contribute to sharing information during the exchange stage.
Reading Aloud

In the workplace, there may be times when you need to read aloud. You learned in an earlier chapter that reading documents aloud helps with proofreading and editing. In this situation, the volume of your voice should be low so as not to disturb nearby coworkers. You should read slowly and give attention to each word.

Reading aloud to others requires that you consider the tone and volume of your voice and the rate at which you speak. For example, during a telephone call with a customer, you might need to read a product description to the customer. In a meeting, you might need to read the minutes from the last meeting.

When you read aloud to others, strive to pronounce words correctly and enunciate clearly. Use an appropriate volume—loud enough to be heard but not so loud as to be annoying. Your tone should convey interest in the topic and a desire to be helpful, especially when giving information to a customer. Be careful not to speak too fast. Use a moderate, relaxed rate of speech. When possible, read the document silently before you need to read it aloud to others.

Open the Word file CH14 Reading from the student data files. Follow the directions in the exercise to practice reading aloud.

4. **Summary.** During the summary, the sender and receiver may briefly restate what they have discussed. They may state an agreement they have come to, or they may just give a sign that the conversation is almost over. “That sounds good. Let’s do that,” is a summary that both indicates agreement and signals that the conversation is ending. If the summary reveals that the speakers do not have a common understanding, the speakers may need to go back to the exchange stage for further discussion.

5. **Closing.** The closing should be pleasant. Whether it is formal or informal depends on the relationship between the speakers. A handshake, a wave, or a pat on the shoulder may accompany a closing. A closing may also involve verifying what is to happen next, as in, “I’ll put that file on your desk. See you tomorrow.”
1. What are the five parts of a conversation?
2. In which part of a conversation are the main ideas shared?

Check your answers in Appendix C.

Guidelines for Success

Despite the use of electronic methods of communication, talking with customers in person is still an important form of customer contact. To create the impression you need for success, follow these guidelines for face-to-face communication:

- **Relax.** Though you need to be aware of the message you are sending, being too focused on how you speak can make you tense. Instead, relax and exhibit confidence. Focus on sharing information. If you are relaxed, the person you are talking to is more likely to relax.

- **Think before you speak.** Whether you are delivering good news or bad news, consider how the information will affect your listener and deliver the message accordingly. Speak in a way that your listener will understand. Choose your words carefully and moderate the speed and volume of your speech.
- **Listen carefully and actively.** Listening carefully sends the message that you care what the other person has to say. It also fosters a trusting relationship with the receiver. Watch the listener’s facial expressions and other body language to get the complete message. Your customer, Gloria, may say, “That’s fine,” but her body language may reveal that she is uncomfortable with the solution you have suggested. By recognizing the discomfort, you can provide more information that will put her at ease.

- **Use names.** Learn your coworkers’ and customers’ names, remember them, and use them. When you meet new customers, use their surnames, particularly if they are older than you. This sign of respect can go a long way toward building a relationship with a customer.

- **Make eye contact.** Making eye contact is one sign that you are paying attention to—and interested in—what a speaker is saying. It also helps you and the speaker focus on the conversation rather than on nearby distractions. Failing to make eye contact sends the message that you are nervous, uncomfortable, or perhaps untrustworthy. None of those messages will win customers.

- **Use a pleasant tone of voice.** Be pleasant and courteous in your speech, even in a hectic environment or even if a customer becomes unpleasant or hostile. Do not speak in a way that indicates you are bored, upset, or impatient.

- **Be honest and sincere.** Customers value honesty and sincerity. They do not want to feel that you might be hiding something from them. If they trust you—if they believe that you are being honest—they are more likely to listen to your ideas.

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**Check point 7**

1. List guidelines you can follow for successful face-to-face communication with customers and others.

2. Why is making eye contact important when talking with customers?

   Check your answers in Appendix C.

---

**Diversity**

The use of surnames and appropriate titles is especially important to people from other cultures. A business person from Germany or Japan, for example, might be offended if a business acquaintance used his or her first name.
Section 14.2 *Applications*

**A. Voice Qualities**
Indicate whether pitch, tone, enunciation, or pronunciation is creating a barrier to communication in each situation.

1. “I gotta check with my supervisor about that, sir,” said the clerk helpfully.
2. “Please hold, ma’am, while I verify your account number,” squeaked the telemarketer.
3. “Your ‘realitor’ can advise you about home inspections,” offered the loan officer.
4. “Who’s next? Please step up,” ordered the clerk at the returns desk, glancing at the clock.

**B. Customer Conversations**
Work with a partner to plan and role-play the following situations. The student who assumes the part of the customer service provider should model good customer service by using an appropriate tone of voice and making eye contact. In each situation, include the five parts of a conversation: greeting, introduction, exchange, summary, and closing.

1. A customer is opening a new account at a bank and is transferring a large sum of money from another bank to the new account. The customer, a senior citizen, is sitting across a desk from a bank officer who is entering information on a computer.

2. A sales associate is visiting a couple who claims that the floor they just had installed is defective. The sales associate can tell right away that the floor is indeed defective. She informs the customers that there must have been a manufacturer’s error. The couple is gratified to hear the news. However, they are still upset by the problem. The sales associate proceeds to reassure them and to tell them what will happen next.
Effective Telephone Communication

Although e-mail and Web sites are used increasingly to communicate with customers, telephone communication remains an important way to reach and help customers. Talking with customers by telephone is more personal than sending an e-mail message. A phone call can give customers instant feedback for their questions or concerns. Since most businesses and individuals have a telephone, almost everyone can be reached by phone.

A person working in a typical office may spend one or more hours a day on the telephone. For this reason, communicating effectively by telephone is important. Listening carefully, paying attention to nonverbal cues, speaking clearly, being courteous, and learning to handle difficult callers are strategies you can use for effective telephone communication.

Listen and Observe Verbal Cues

Telephone communication requires the same listening skills, attention to verbal cues, and preparation as does face-to-face communication. You cannot see the expression on the caller’s face. You are completely dependent
on what you hear. The caller is completely dependent on what he or she hears from you. Because you cannot see the person to whom you are speaking, you should be very careful about listening and attending to verbal cues.

**Speak Clearly**

Because your recipient must rely only on what he or she hears, speak clearly and perhaps a little more slowly on the telephone than you would in person. Your enunciation of words is especially critical on the telephone. Make sure you speak directly into the mouthpiece.

Use a pleasant, low pitch of voice. Your voice conveys your personality, even over the telephone. Talking in moderate pitch makes your listeners more comfortable than using very high or low pitch.

**Be Courteous**

Open and close conversations cordially. *Thank you* is always appropriate to say to a customer or other caller. If there will be further contact with the person, make sure that she or he knows when and how it will occur. Then close with something pleasant, such as, “Good-bye, Mr. Simms. Have a nice day.” Always let the caller hang up first.

Be aware of your surroundings and the volume of your voice when talking on the telephone. Do not speak so loudly that you disturb others or that confidential information may be overheard. When using a cell phone away from the office, try to find an area away from others to place and take calls. Set your cell phone to a silent alert and let it accept messages when you are meeting with customers or are in an area where calls may disturb others, such as in a theater or a seminar.

**Handle Difficult Callers**

As when dealing with customers in person, a customer may become angry or upset during a call. When dealing with a difficult caller, try to remain calm and professional. Often the caller is upset with your company’s actions, not with you personally. Follow these guidelines to deal with difficult callers:

- Speak with a friendly and courteous tone.
- Try to identify the reason that the caller is angry or upset.
- Tell the caller how you can help.
- Transfer the caller to someone else in the company who can provide help if appropriate.
- If the caller becomes abusive or uses profanity, end the call quickly. Offer to help the caller later when he or she has calmed down.
- Inform your supervisor or follow your company procedures regarding keeping a record of abusive calls.
Outgoing Calls

You will make outgoing calls to customers and coworkers as you complete your job duties. Planning and organization are important for successful outgoing calls.

Plan Calls

As with other types of messages, identify the objective of the communication. Decide whether a direct or indirect approach will work best to accomplish your objective. Consider the listener’s needs as well as his or her background, experience, and culture when planning a call. Before you dial, plan a list of points to cover during the call. Make sure you have all the information you need. You do not want to have to interrupt the call to get something from the other side of your office. If you are shuffling papers while you talk, the caller may think that you are disorganized or simply not paying attention.

Consider the time zone for the location you are calling. You may want to place an important call to a customer the first thing when you arrive at work at 9 a.m. However, if you work in New York and the customer is in Los Angeles, you are not likely to find the customer at work at this time. You can use a Web site, such as the one shown in Figure 14-2 on page 554 to find the time zone for a location.

Take Part in the Conversation

When your call is answered, you may need to ask a receptionist or someone else to connect you with the person to whom you wish to speak. When you have reached that person, greet her or him by name and identify yourself immediately. A greeting is the first step in a phone conversation just as it is in a face-to-face conversation.

After the greeting comes the introduction part of the conversation. Briefly state the purpose of your call. Ask whether this is a good time for the recipient to talk if the call will take more than a few minutes. If you have caught the
recipient at a bad time, arrange to speak later. Be sure to say whether you will call again or whether the recipient should call you.

If this is a convenient time for the recipient to talk, you are ready for the exchange part of the conversation. Have a document file open on your computer or a pen and paper at hand to take notes of important points discussed during the call. If the exchange is long or important commitments are made, summarize the main points of the conversation before ending the call. You may also consider sending a letter or e-mail message to summarize and document the call.

As in a face-to-face conversation, the closing should be pleasant. If further contact is needed, indicate what action will happen next. For example, you might send supporting documents by mail or arrange a time for a later call.

**Leave Effective Messages**

In Chapter 12, you learned about voice mail systems. This technology makes leaving messages convenient for callers. There is an art to leaving a message on an answering machine or voice mail. You may have received messages that were hard to understand. Callers sometimes speak too softly,
too quickly, or at such length that their messages are cut off. Figure 14-3 suggests what to say and how to say it when leaving voice mail messages.

Voice mail is best used to maintain contact or to provide brief answers to questions. Lengthy voice mail messages can be inconvenient and hard to understand. Recipients might have to listen to a long message several times to get all of the information. If your message is long, complicated, or confidential, do not provide the information on the phone. Instead, ask the recipient to return your call.

When leaving a message, remember to think of your audience and apply the principles of business communication. Messages should be brief, clear, and complete. They should focus on the receiver, not the sender.

**Figure 14-3 An effective voice mail message is courteous and provides the needed information.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GUIDELINES FOR AN EFFECTIVE MESSAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Message Steps</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greet the recipient.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify yourself. If you are calling someone outside your company, identify your company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briefly state your purpose for calling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain how the recipient may contact you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close the message in a friendly manner.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key Point**

Voice mail is best used to maintain contact or to provide brief answers—not for lengthy messages.

1. What activities are involved in planning an outgoing call?
2. What steps are involved in leaving an effective voice mail message?

Check your answers in Appendix C.
Incoming Calls

You will receive incoming calls from customers and coworkers. When answering calls, try to answer by the second ring. This sends the message that you want to talk to the caller and that you value the caller’s time. Identify yourself and your organization.

When you need to transfer a call, do so efficiently. Make sure you know how to transfer calls correctly. When doing so, tell the caller to whom you are transferring the call and why. Offer the caller your colleague’s number or extension, so that the caller can call that person directly next time.

Record Voice Mail Greetings

If you use voice mail, you will need to provide a greeting for callers who reach your voice mail recording. An effective greeting includes the following elements:

- Your name
- A statement explaining that you are not available to take the call
- Clear, specific instructions on how to leave a message
- A statement telling when the call may be returned

An example message is shown below:

Hello, this is Isabel Trevino. I will be out of the office on Wednesday, January 19, but will be checking my voice mail. Please leave your name, number, and a brief message at the tone. I will return your call later today.

If you think that callers may need to talk to someone else in your absence, your message should include contact information for that person.

The example explains that Ms. Trevino will be out of the office all day but that she will be checking voice mail periodically. Such specific information is very helpful to callers. It tells them why you are not available and when they may expect you to return their call. When possible, record personalized greetings that provide useful, current information for callers.

When you record your greeting, speak clearly and a little more slowly than you do in conversation. Play back your greeting and listen. Make sure it provides all the information callers need and can be understood easily.

Take Messages

You have learned how to record greetings and leave messages using a voice mail system. However, some companies do not have voice mail. Even when voice mail is available, some people prefer to leave a message with a person rather than record a message. There may be times when you need to refer
a caller to someone else who can provide the information needed. In cases such as these, you need to take a message for a coworker or supervisor. A telephone message should contain the following pieces of information:

- Name and organization of the caller
- Telephone number and extension of the caller
- Date and time of call
- An appropriate message
- Your initials or name as the message taker

Many companies provide paper forms on which to record messages. In other companies, employees send messages to coworkers by e-mail as shown in Figure 14-4.

**Screen Calls**

*Screening calls* is a procedure used to learn who is calling and sometimes the reason for the call. You may be asked to screen calls for a supervisor or a coworker. For example, your manager, Mr. Park, may be in an important meeting. He may be expecting a call related to the work of the meeting. He instructs you to let him know when that call comes in but to take messages from other callers.

---

**Figure 14-4 Telephone Message**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TO:</th>
<th>Robert Johns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FROM:</td>
<td>Mary Alexander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE:</td>
<td>June 12, 20--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUBJECT:</td>
<td>Phone Message</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Date and Time: June 12 at 1:35 p.m.

Caller: Mr. Al York of York Industries

Caller’s Telephone Number: 606-555-0124

Message: He wants to discuss changes to the project bid you submitted.

Action Required: Please return his call.

---

Diversity

Some companies thoughtfully provide an option to speak to a person on their voice mail systems. This option is helpful to people who are not comfortable leaving a recorded message.

**Key Point**

Be tactful, yet direct when screening calls to learn the caller’s name and the purpose of the call.
Be tactful, yet direct when screening calls. To learn the caller’s name, ask questions such as, “May I ask who is calling?” or “May I tell Ms. Perez who is calling, please?” Often, the caller will state his or her name and the name of the person to whom she or he wishes to speak.

You may also need to learn the purpose of the call. You can ask questions such as, “May I tell Ms. Perez why you are calling?” If a caller refuses to give a name or reason for calling, follow your company’s policy regarding how to handle such a situation. In some companies, callers who will not give a name or reason for calling are politely told that the company cannot help them without this information.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is the nation’s consumer protection agency. The FTC maintains a Web site with information on the National Do Not Call Registry and how to avoid telemarketing fraud. A link to this site is provided on the Web site for this book that is shown below. Go to the National Do Not Call Registry site. Click the link that provides information for consumers.

1. Why would a person want to register his or her telephone with the National Do Not Call Registry?
2. How long will a registered telephone number stay on the registry?

www.cengage.com/school/bcomm/buscomm

1. What elements are included in an effective voice mail greeting?
2. What information should you record when taking a telephone message for a manager or coworker?
3. What is the purpose of screening calls?

Check your answers in Appendix C.
Section 14.3 Applications

A. Voice Mail Greeting
You will be on vacation next week and will not be checking voice mail. Use the following information to compose an appropriate voice mail greeting for the time of your absence. Make up any needed details, such as the dates of your vacation.

• Your assistant, Grant Goff, will handle routine inquiries in your absence.
• Grant will telephone you if anything urgent arises.
• Grant’s extension is 229.

B. Voice Mail Message
Prepare a voice mail message for the members of your roofing crew. Include the following information and make up any needed details, such as your phone number.

• The crew will not be working at the Whitakers’ tomorrow.
• The crew should report at 9 a.m. to Ichiro Sako’s home at 1412 Overbrook Avenue.
• Crew members can call you if they need directions or have questions.

C. Cell Phone Etiquette
1. Work with a classmate to complete this activity.
2. Use the Internet or other sources to find and review articles regarding cell phone use.
3. Create a list of guidelines for considerate and professional use of cell phones.
4. Include an appropriate title and complete source information for the articles.
Chapter Summary

14.1 Customer Service

- Customer service is the performance of activities to ensure customer satisfaction. Satisfied customers are more likely to be repeat customers.
- Companies that make customer service a priority have a strong customer service culture. In such a culture, the company’s policies make it easy for employees to satisfy customers.
- Customer contact is any meeting or communication you have with a customer. At every point of contact, employees should provide courteous, professional service.

14.2 Face-to-Face Communication

- Your voice qualities, such as pitch, volume, and tone, can have a big impact on how successful you are in communicating with others.
- A conversation has these parts: greeting, introduction, exchange, summary, and closing.
- To create a favorable impression in face-to-face conversations, relax and think before you speak. Listen attentively, use names, and make eye contact. Use a pleasant tone of voice and be honest and sincere.

14.3 Telephone Communication

- Telephone communication is an important way to reach and help customers.
- Listening carefully, paying attention to nonverbal cues, speaking clearly, being courteous, and learning to handle difficult callers are strategies you can use for effective telephone communication.
- Planning and organization are important for successful outgoing calls.
- Using a proper greeting, taking accurate messages, and screening calls effectively are important for handling incoming calls.
**Vocabulary**

Open the Word file CH14 Vocabulary from the student data files. Complete the exercise to review the vocabulary terms from this chapter.

- accessibility
- blog
- credibility
- customer service
- enunciation
- external customer
- internal customer
- newsgroup
- pitch
- pronunciation
- screening calls
- tone

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**Critical Thinking Questions**

1. Why is providing good customer service important to the success of many businesses?
2. Is providing good customer service important to the success of non-profit organizations? Why or why not?
3. What is the most important thing you can do to help make your face-to-face communications successful?
4. Many people do not like to receive phone calls from sales associates. Given this fact, why would a person choose to be a telemarketer—someone who makes sales calls?
Chapter Applications

A. Customer Service Log
You may have contact with letter carriers, receptionists, bus drivers, telemarketers, coworkers, or any number of other types of service providers.

1. Keep a log of the experiences you have with customer service providers for one week. In a three-column table, identify the customer service provider in the first column. In the second, indicate whether your impression of each service provider was positive or negative. In the third column, note what the person did to create that impression.

2. Write a paragraph that describes your best or your worst customer service encounter during the week.

B. Rating Telephone Customer Service

1. Review items in a mail-order catalog, and find a product that you want to know more about. Perhaps you need to know its dimensions, or exactly what material it is made of.

2. Use the catalog’s toll-free number to call the company and make an inquiry about the product. Thank the customer service provider for his or her time. Take notes during the conversation.

3. Summarize your notes. Then rate the customer service provider’s response to your inquiry as excellent, good, or poor. Give specific reasons for your rating.

C. Role-Playing Conversations

At a home improvement store, a sign in the paint department claims that “WE CAN MIX OR MATCH ANY COLOR.” The sales associates who work at the paint desk have a computer they can use to match items that customers bring in. For example, a customer might bring in a pair of curtains or a pillow from a sofa. The only criterion is that the object whose color is being matched be at least one square inch.

One customer wants to match a narrow stripe in a piece of wallpaper. She says, “I’d like to match this color,” pointing to the quarter-inch-wide stripe. The young employee responds, “Can’t help you.” In fact, what the employee meant was that the wallpaper stripe was too small a sample to be able to use the computer to match the color. The customer, a bit surprised and put out by the employee’s lack of helpfulness, says, “Okay, I’ll go somewhere else,” and leaves the store.
Work with several classmates to develop the following role-plays in connection with this scenario.

1. Role-play the scene just as described.
2. Now suppose that the employee’s supervisor witnessed the exchange. Role-play a conversation in which the supervisor gives some constructive criticism to the employee.
3. Role-play the initial exchange between the employee and the customer as it should have occurred.

**D. Evaluating Telephone Communication**

Rate the following methods of telephone communication as good or poor. Consider the employees’ attitudes as well as what they say. For poor ratings, tell how the communication methods could be improved.

1. LaToya prides herself on her speedy customer service. She answers customers’ questions as briefly as possible, assuming that the customers just want to be done with their business quickly. She closes her telephone calls by saying, “Okay. Bye.”

2. Marly covers the phones whenever the company receptionist is away from her desk. She dislikes this part of her job and thinks that she is much too busy to be bothered with it. If her colleagues are not available to take their calls, she takes the caller’s name and number. She does not bother to record a message.

3. Sarin works at a bank. She answers customer inquiries about account balances, account statements, and various transactions. She hopes to become a bank loan officer in time. She always asks her customers, “Is there anything else I can do for you today?”

**Editing Activity**

Open the Word file CH14 Editing from the student data files. The file contains the body of an e-mail message from a conference organizer to a person who has registered for the conference. Edit and proofread the message. Correct all errors and use effective principles of communication.
**Case Study**

**Dealing Ethically with Customers**

The sales associates at an appliance store earn a salary plus commission. This means that they earn a certain percentage of the sale price of each item they sell. This amount is paid in addition to a base salary that remains the same each month.

Commissions vary depending on the price of each appliance. In general, the basic models of appliances cost less and give associates a lower commission than the more expensive models. For that reason, the sales associates convinced the sales manager not to display the most basic models. Technically, the basic appliances are still available to customers. However, the sales associates do not mention the basic models unless customers ask about them.

1. Do the sales associates at this store exhibit good customer service practices? Why or why not?

2. Is displaying only the more expensive models of appliances unethical? Why or why not?
Communication for Human Services

The Your Image salon is a well-established, full-service salon that caters to a steady client base. The owner, Jan Claymore, feels lucky that she has had very little staff turnover in the last two years. The cosmetologists, (more informally called stylists), four women and two men, all seem content with their jobs and with the atmosphere at the salon.

Jan’s newest stylist, Steve Edgerton, joined the salon about four months ago when Jan expanded her staff. Steve came well recommended. In addition, quite a number of his former clients followed him to Your Image. Jan is glad to have gotten both a good employee and some more steady clients. Steve seems to enjoy working with all types of customers, from the kids right on up to the older men and women. As a result, clients have been giving Jan good feedback about her newest stylist.

In the back room, however, where the stylists relax and take their breaks, Steve seems to do nothing but complain. Whether it is the weather, the clients, or the stale coffee, he seldom has anything good to say about anything. Some of the other stylists have begun to refer to Steve as “Bad News Steve.” They try to take their breaks while Steve is busy so they do not have to listen to his complaining in the break room.

Everyone has noticed that Steve’s attitude changes as soon as he is in the presence of a client. The employees all wish that the pleasant Steve would stay, and the “Bad News Steve” would not bother to come into the salon.

1. As Steve’s coworker, there are things you would like to say, but you are not comfortable speaking to him directly. You wish you could just leave a flyer in the break room from a “How to Be a Good Coworker” seminar. What would such a flyer say? Remember that you are trying to change someone’s behavior, not his personality.

2. As his employer, what should Jan do or say to make Steve aware that he needs to pay attention to his internal customers as well as to his external customers?
This page contains answers for this chapter only.

Chapter 14 Answers

Checkpoint 1
1. Providing quality customer service is important for businesses because it helps businesses retain customers. Without sales to customers, many companies could not stay in business.
2. External customers are people (or companies) outside the organization to whom products or services are provided. Internal customers are people inside the organization to whom products or services are provided.

Checkpoint 2
1. A company that has a strong customer service culture makes customer service a priority. The company’s policies make it easy for employees to satisfy customers. Employees are allowed to use their own initiative in solving customer problems and are rewarded for doing so.
2. A customer contact is any meeting or communication you have with a customer. Talking with a customer in person and answering e-mail messages are examples of customer contact.

Checkpoint 3
1. To make a good first impression on customers, give customers prompt attention and greet customers cheerfully.
2. Five things you can do to provide quality customer service are:
   - Be courteous.
   - Listen carefully to customers.
   - Make sure the customer understands you.
   - Determine the customer’s needs.
   - Deal with customers ethically.

Checkpoint 4
1. Follow these steps to resolve a customer’s complaint:
   a. Make sure you understand the complaint.
   b. If an apology is in order, offer one.
   c. If an error was made, assure the customer that you will correct the error and explain how.
   d. If no error was made, try to close the conversation on a positive note.
2. To deal with a difficult customer, begin by trying to identify the problem. Use your best listening skills and show empathy and respect. Recognize that the customer may be emotional or irrational for reasons you know nothing about. Do not show anger. Remain professional and do not take the customer’s criticisms and attitude personally.

Checkpoint 5
1. Pitch, volume, and tone are three voice qualities that can affect communication.
2. Saying “zink” instead of “sink” is an example of incorrect pronunciation. Saying “hafta” instead of “have to” is an example of poor enunciation.

Checkpoint 6
1. The five parts of a conversation are the greeting, introduction, exchange, summary, and closing.
2. The main ideas are shared in the exchange part of a conversation.

Checkpoint 7
1. Guidelines you can follow for successful face-to-face communication with customers and others include:
   - Relax.
   - Think before you speak.
   - Listen carefully and actively.
   - Use names.
   - Make eye contact.
   - Use a pleasant tone of voice.
   - Be honest and sincere.
2. Making eye contact is important because it shows that you are paying attention to what a speaker is saying. It also helps you and the speaker focus on the conversation rather than on nearby distractions.

Checkpoint 8
1. Listening carefully, paying attention to nonverbal cues, speaking clearly, being courteous, and learning to handle difficult callers are strategies you can use for effective telephone communication.
2. Follow these guidelines to deal with difficult callers:
   - Speak with a friendly and courteous tone.
   - Try to identify the reason that the caller is angry or upset.
   - Tell the caller how you can help remedy the situation if that is appropriate.
   - Transfer the caller to someone else in the company who can provide help if appropriate.
   - If the caller becomes abusive or uses profanity, end the call quickly. Offer to help the caller at a later time when he or she has calmed down.
   - Inform your supervisor or follow your company’s procedures regarding keeping a record of abusive calls.
Checkpoint 9
1. Planning an outgoing call involves these steps:
   • Identify the objective of the call.
   • Decide on a direct or indirect approach for the message.
   • Consider the needs, background, experience, and culture of the recipient.
   • Make a list of the points you want to discuss during the call.
   • Consider the time zone for the location you are calling.
2. These steps are involved in leaving an effective voice mail message:
   • Greet the recipient.
   • Identify yourself. If you are calling someone outside your company, identify your company.
   • Briefly state your purpose for calling.
   • Explain how the recipient may contact you.
   • Close the message in a friendly manner.

Checkpoint 10
1. An effective voice mail greeting includes the following elements:
   • Your name
   • A statement explaining that you are not available to take the call
   • Clear, specific instructions on how to leave a message
   • A statement telling when the call may be returned
2. A telephone message should contain the following pieces of information:
   • Name and organization of the caller
   • Telephone number and extension of the caller
   • Date and time of the call
   • An appropriate message
   • Your initials or name as the message taker
3. Screening incoming calls is a procedure used to learn who is calling and sometimes the reason for the call.