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UNIT 1: RESOLVE CUSTOMER CONCERNS

Unit Objectives:

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

1. Explain various problems faced by customers in retail stores
2. Discuss the importance of listening to customers carefully
3. List various options to resolve customer problems
4. Describe the need of confirming the options with others to resolve customer problems

1.1 Identify and listen the Customer's Problems Carefully

1.1.1 Listening Carefully to Customers Problems

Customers might face problems with the customer service of a retail store. Some of these problems Are as follows:

Types of Problems	Reason of Problems that occurred
Unattended or ignored customers	Sales staff at the retail store is not attending to the customers or ignoring their presence in the retail store.
Customers are overcharged	Cashiers at the retail store have wrongly priced or overcharged the customer for the products purchased by him/her
Delays in product delivery	In case of home delivery from a retail store, the product has not reached at the right time or the right place as desired by the customer.
Defective products	The product provided by the retailer is defective or expired. Thus, the customer is not able to use the product. The customer can go for a replacement to the retailer, but it creates a negative image of the retailer in the customer's mind.
Unable to meet customer requirements	The sales staff at the retail store is unable to identify what a customer actually requires. In such cases, the customer

	gets frustrated and moves away from the store without buying any product and it is possible that he/ she will not visit the store next time.
Rude behaviour of retail store staff	The behaviour of the retail store staff is rude towards the customer

Table 1.1 Types of Customer Complaints

When a customer complains about the customer service, instead of getting defensive and pointing out the customer's mistake, a sales associate should listen to him and identify what the problem actually is. This helps the sales associate to understand the actual reason for the problem and provide a solution accordingly.

Let us understand, with the help of an example, how a sales associate should ask questions from the customers to increase his/her understanding about his problems with the service.

Example:

Asking customers about the problem to check your understanding

Mr. ABC is a sales associate at an electronics store. A customer, who purchased a washing machine, visits the store and complains about the bad customer service. So, Mr. ABC approaches the customer and asks the following questions to understand the actual problem:
- Has your call not been answered?
- Has the store staff not listened to you properly? Has no solution been provided to your problem?
- Did the store staff talk rudely with you?

STEPS

STEP 1: Analysing the customer service problem

STEP 2: Determining the actual cause of the problem

STEP 3: Identifying whether the solution desired by the customer for his/her problem falls under the organisation's policy

STEP 4: Determining the solution of the customer problem as per the organisation's policies

STEP 5: Identifying the solutions that are close to the desirable solution of the customer

1.1.2 Identifying Options to Resolve Customer Problems

After understanding the problem of the customer, a sales associate the options to resolve his problem. Is in a better position to identify the options to resolve his problem.

Some of the common options for solving customer service problems are shown in the following figure:
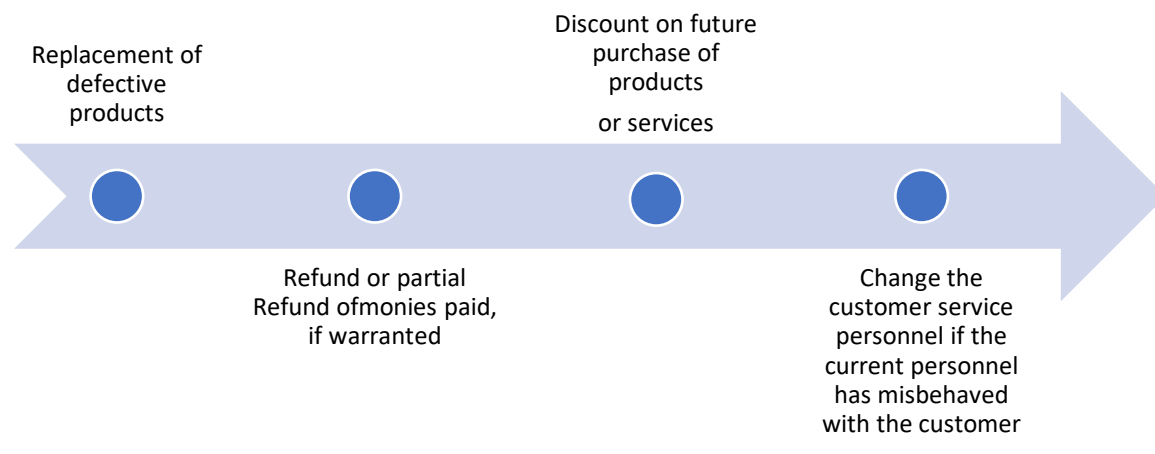

Fig 1.2 Options for Solving Customer Service Problems the customer

Let us understand how to identify the best solution to resolve a customer service problem with the help of an example.

Example:

Identify the options to resolve customer service problem

Mc Aakash needs to go for a 5-day office trip next morning. So, he buys a new travel bag from a retail store in a hurry. However, after he reaches home and starts packing his luggage in the new travel bag, he finds that the bag is defective and cannot be used for travelling. After coming back from his trip, he decides to go to the retailer for a refund. After 5 days, Mr. Aakash visits the retail store with the bag and asks for a refund. The sales associate, Reena, says that the amount can only be refunded within 3 days of purchase. This upsets Mr. Aakash, and he starts arguing with the sales associate. The sales associate understands the gravity of the matter and takes Mr. Aakash to a nearby table and asks him to sit and relax. She offers him a glass. Of cold water and assures him that a solution will be found. When Mr. Aakash is relaxed, the sales associate says, "I am sorry sir. We cannot

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refund your money, because it is against the company's policy. However, we have the following options to resolve your problem:

- Replacing the defective bag with a new bag
- Repairing the defective bag
- Purchasing another product falling in the same price range.
- Purchasing two or more than two products whose total price is equal to or more than the price of the bag

1.1.3 Confirming the Options with Others to Resolve Customer Problems

After a sales associate identifies the options to solve a customer service problem, he/she should talk to other members of the retail store staff (including other sales associates, sales manager, store manager, etc.) to determine whether the options are feasible enough to be implemented.

Activity
Visit a retail store and observe how a sales associate resolves customer service problems.

1.1.4 Determining the Merits and Demerits of Each Option

For identifying the merits and demerits of each option, the following activities need to be performed:
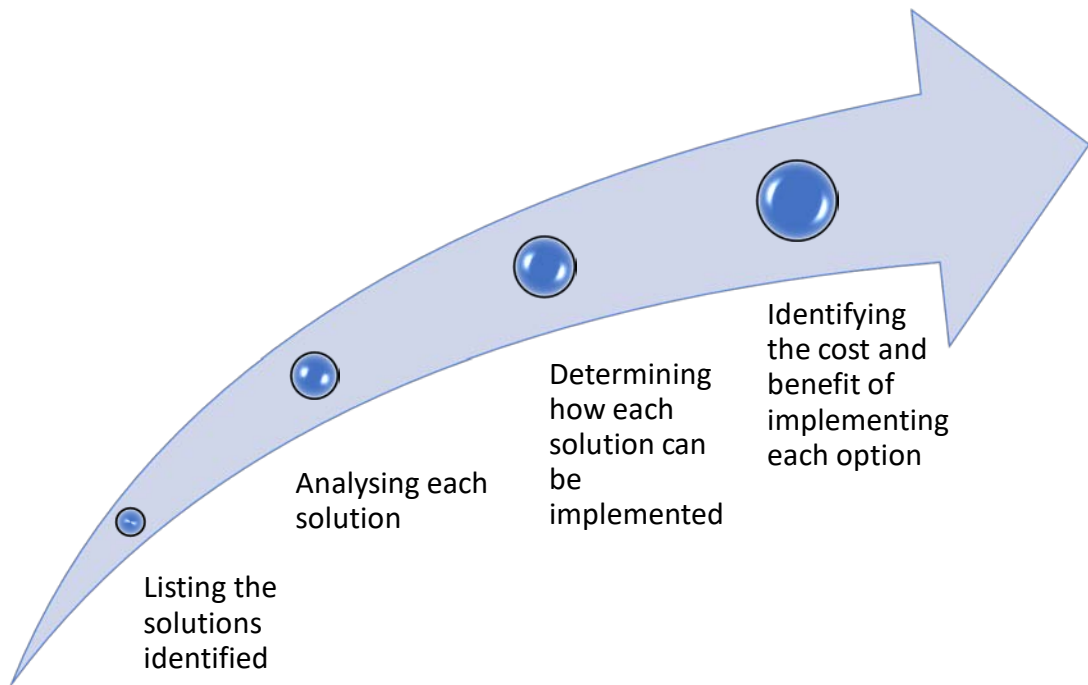
Fig 1.3 Merits and Demerits of Each Option

Activity

Let us understand how the advantages and disadvantages of each option are identified with the help of an activity.

Assume that you are a sales associate in a retail store. Discuss in the group and identify how you will determine the advantages and disadvantages of each option for the problem of defective products sold from your retail store.

1.1.5 Determining Solutions for Customer Service Issues

1.1.5.1 Identifying Alternatives to Solve Customer Problems a Sales Associate Cannot Help

There are certain customer service problems that are beyond the authority of a sales associate. Some of these problems are rude behaviour of other sales personnel, home delivery of products not on time, etc. For solving such problems, the sales associate can use the following alternatives:

Follow the organisation's policy or procedure

Contact the concerned authonty (or your supervisor), tell him/her about the customer's problem, the type of solution demanded by the customer, and ask him/her to talk with the Customer on an immediate basis if possible

Make the customer register his/her complaint in the complaint register, tell the customer the process of resolving the complaint this way, and also let him/her the know that he/she will be provided with updated information about problem resolution

Fig 1.4 Alternatives Used by Sales Associates to Solve Customer Problems

Let us understand, with the help of an example, how a sales associate can identify alternatives for solving a customer service problem when he/she is unable to help.

Example:

Identifying alternatives to solve the customer problems in case you are unable to help.

Mr. Deepika is a sales associate in a retail store. A customer approaches Mrs. Deepika and complains about the use of abusive language by the customer service representative of the retail store. In such case Mrs. Deepika has the following options:

- Following the organisation's pre-defined principles and policies for solving such problems
- Contacting the supervisor and telling him/her about the customer's problem
- Contacting the customer service department and handing over the issue to them

1.1.5.2 Discussing Options for Solving the Problem with the Customer

All the alternatives for solving customer service problems should be explained to customers in detail This helps customers to understand these alternatives and identify the most appropriate one to sort out his/her problem.

1.2 Organizational procedures to deal with Customer Problems

1.2.1 Selecting the Best Option for the Customers in an Organisation

A sales associate needs to check whether the alternative selected by the customer as an option for solving the problem is beneficial for the organisation or not. For example, if the customer wants a discount on his/her future purchase of products or services from the store, the sales associate should ensure that the discount is given as per the organisation's policy. To avoid any misunderstanding in this case, the sales associate either should not commit any fixed rate of discount to the customer or he/she is committing a fixed rate of discount, it should be the general rate of discount provided by the store on the purchase of a particular product.

Let us understand how a sales associate can select the best option for solving a customer service problem with the help of an example.

Example:

Selecting the best available option for customer and organisation

Mr. Aaditya Malhotra visits an apparel store. He wants to buy a suit for his wife but is unable to decide which one to buy. So, he looks for a sales associate, but he finds that everyone is busy with other customers. He gets irritated and decides to walk away from the store. Mr. Rahul Garg, a sales associate, who had been watching Mr. Malhotra for some time, but was unable to attend to him because he was busy with another customer. Suddenly, Mr. Garg walks up to Mr. Malhotra and interacts with him.

A part of the conversation between Mr. Aaditya Malhotra and Mr. Rahul Garg is as follows:

Rahul: Good Morning, Sir! How may I help you?

Aaditya (almost shouting): I do not want any help of yours. I am leaving the store.

Rahul: Sir, may I know what makes you so upset?
Aaditya: Do you people have anyone in the store to attend a customer? I have been waiting for such a long time, but no one has come up.

Rahul: Sir, I am extremely sorry for that. Now, I will be in your service till the time you are in the store and whenever you visit the store in future.

Aaditya: Ok, then show me some ladies suits. This is the best available solution for the customer as well as the organisation to resolve the problem, as the problem is resolved at the first instance without any escalation.

1.2.2 Taking Action for Implementing the Best Option as Agreed upon with Your Customer

For implementing any of the alternatives (mentioned in the earlier sections) to solve a customer service problem, the sales associate needs to take the first step. For example, the sales associate needs to first contact his/her supervisor and then start the process of replacement, refund, or repair of a defective product. The sales associate cannot directly replace, repair, or refund the product if the organisation's policy permits him.

1.2.3 Keeping Customers Informed about the Developments to Resolve a Problem

After selecting the best option to solve a customer service problem and implementing it, the sales associate should keep the customer informed about the progress in the process of resolving the problem through e-mails, telephone calls, or SMS. This assures the customer that his/her problem will be resolved.

1.3 Negotiate to Reassure customers

1.3.1 Working with Others for Ensuring Customers that the Promises Made with Respect to Problem Solving are Kept

A sales associate should keep a proper record of the complaint made by a customer and the solution selected to solve the problem. In addition, the sales associate should also keep a record of the promises made to the customer with respect to problem solving. To ensure this, the sales associate should take some steps which are shown in the following figure:
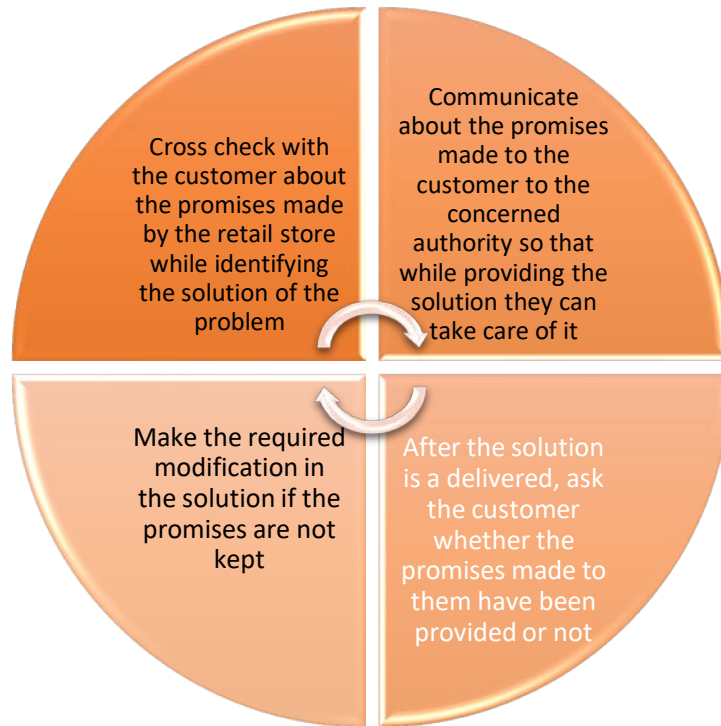
Fig 1.5 Maintaining Records of Promises Made to Customers

1.3.2 Contacting Customers to Ensure Proper Problem Resolution

After the solution is provided to the customer, the sales associate should contact the customer and ask whether his/her problem is completely solved or not. If the customer is satisfied, thank him/her for highlighting the problem, because this helps in improving the customer service of the retail store. However, if the customer is still not satisfied with the solution, take action to provides better solution.

1.3.3 Give Clear Reasons to Your Customer for Not Resolving his/her Problem Satisfactorily

There can be several reasons for not solving the customer service problem satisfactorily. Some of these reasons are as follows:

It may be against the organisation's policies and procedures. For example, if the warranty period of a product has expired, and the customer demands for a free service/replacement of the product, the retailer is unable to solve the problem.

If the demand of the customer is inappropriate. For example, a regular customer of a book store asks for a book but because the book is out of stock, the sales associate promises that the book will be available within two days. However, the customer reaches the store after a week and comes to know that the copy of the book saved for him has been sold. Now, the customer wants the sales associate, who sold the book, to be fired and the book to be given to him free of the cost. In such a case, it becomes difficult for the retailer to fulfil all the demands of the customer

Fig 1.6 Reasons for Not Solving a Customer Service Problem

A sales associate should provide clear reasons if the customer problem cannot be solved. This helps the customer to understand why the problem has not been solved. Hence, they do not get further imitated or frustrated, because they can see that the sales associate has done the best to solve the problem.

1.4 Dealing with Repeated Customer Service Problems and Actions to Avoid Repetition

1.4.1 Identifying Repeated Problems and Alerting Appropriate Authority

While providing a solution, a sales associate should ensure that the problem is completely solved. However, it is possible that after providing an appropriate solution another problem may arise. For example, in case of replacement of a defective product, the new product may also contain a type of defect, which gets identified by the customer after using the product. To avoid such problems, the sales associate should check the product before delivering it to the customer. The sales associate should keep a constant check on the solutions provided to the customer to identify the probability of the problem being repeated. In case there are chances that the problem is repeated, alert the concerned authority about it.

1.4.2 Sharing Customer Feedback with Others to Identify Potential Problems before They Happen

After solving a customer problem, the sales associate should take his feedback on the solution provided to him/her. The sales associate should share the customer feedback with his/her seniors or colleagues whether the feedback is positive or negative. This is done because of the reasons mentioned below:

+ If the feedback is positive	**ı** If the feedback is negative
The solution implemented can be used in future for solving similar problems	The potential problems that may occur due to such feedback, such as loss of royal customers and spreading of negative word-af-mouth, can be detected at an early stage and the required action can be taken.
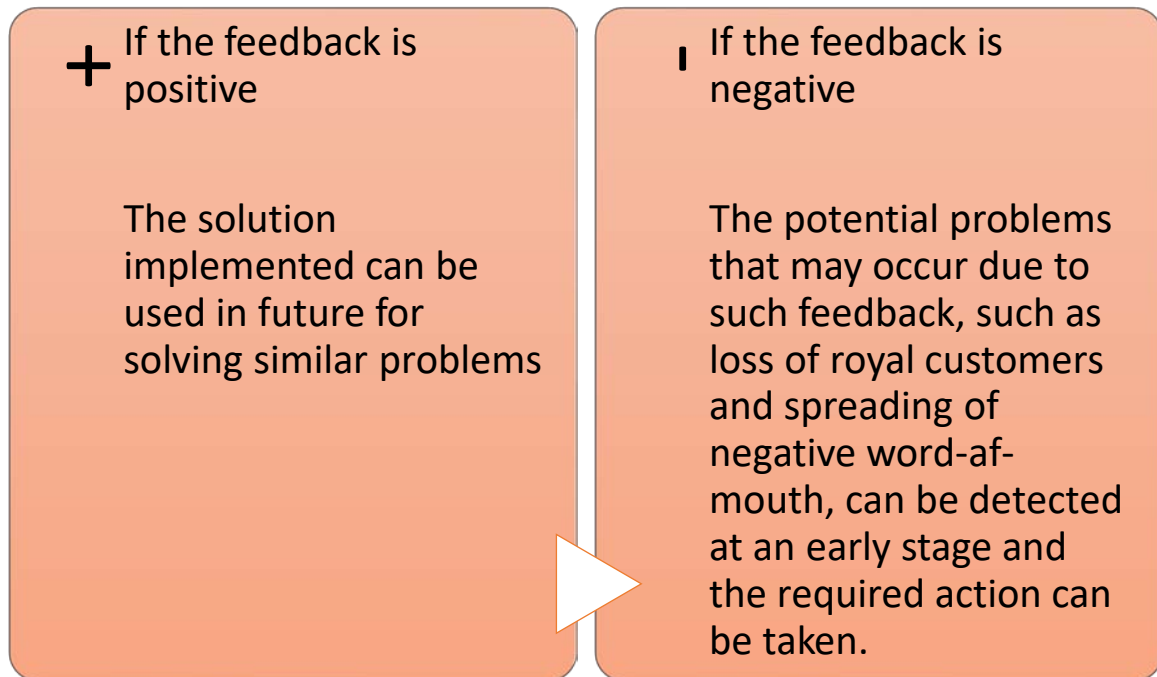
Fig. 1.7 Negative and Positive Feedback

1.4.3 Identifying Problems with Systems and Procedures before they Occur

The systems and procedures of retail stores sometimes refrain the sales associate from providing appropriate solutions to customer service problems. Some of these problems are very common and are faced by most customers. Examples of such problems are rude employees, lack of product knowledge due to insufficient training, etc. Such problems exist within the system and procedures of the organisation. So, these problems need to be identified and rectified before a customer recognises them

Tips

Always look for the customers' feedback to know their viewpoint about your business.

Exercise

1. Some common problems that may be faced by retail customers are (Tick the correct options):

(a) Inattentive or disinterested staff   (b) Delay in product delivery

(c) Defects in products   (d) Overcharging or hidden costs

(e) All the above

2. Which of the solutions can be offered to resolve customer issues? (Tick the correct options):

(a) Replacement of defective products   (b) Giving partial or full refund

(c) Giving discounts on future purchases   (d) All the above

3. Sometimes it may not be possible to resolve all customer problems due to which of these factors? (Tick the correct options):
   (a) Customer demand is beyond the organisation's policies and procedures
   (b) The customer's demand is inappropriate
   (c) Shortage of staff members
   (d) All the above

4. Match the following:

(a) Certain customer service problems are	i. the alternative selected by the customer as an option for solving the problem is beneficial for the organisation or not.
(b) The sales associate needs to check whether	ii. and then start the process of replacement, refund, or repair of a defective product.
(c) A sales associate should first contact his/her supervisor	iii. the complaint made by a customer and the solution selected to solve the problem.
(d) A sales associate should keep a proper record of	iv. beyond the authority of a sales associate

UNIT 2: DELIVERY OF RELIABLE SERVICE

Unit Objectives:

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

1. Explain the meaning of customer service delivery
2. Discuss various prerequisites of planning, preparing and organising service delivery
3. List various factors on which efficiency of the services rendered by a retailer depends
4. Discuss the need of a retailer to be transparent with its policies and portfolio

2.1 Procedure of Delivering Reliable Service

2.1.1 Overview of Customer Service Delivery

Service delivery refers to the mechanism by which an organisation provides a service to its customers. The product or service provided by the organisation or a retailer has to be delivered efficiently to the customer and has to be of acceptable quality.

Retailers need to recognise the requirements and expectations of their customers. Only then they will be able to deal with them successfully. The ability to provide a high level of customer service is of great importance to the customer as well as to the retail store. A retail store should

Design its service portfolio in such a manner that it reflects the store's focused commitment to the customers.

Show that the store has complete understanding of the needs of the customers

Serve its customers in a way that the customers do not feel the need to go anywhere else for their daily needs
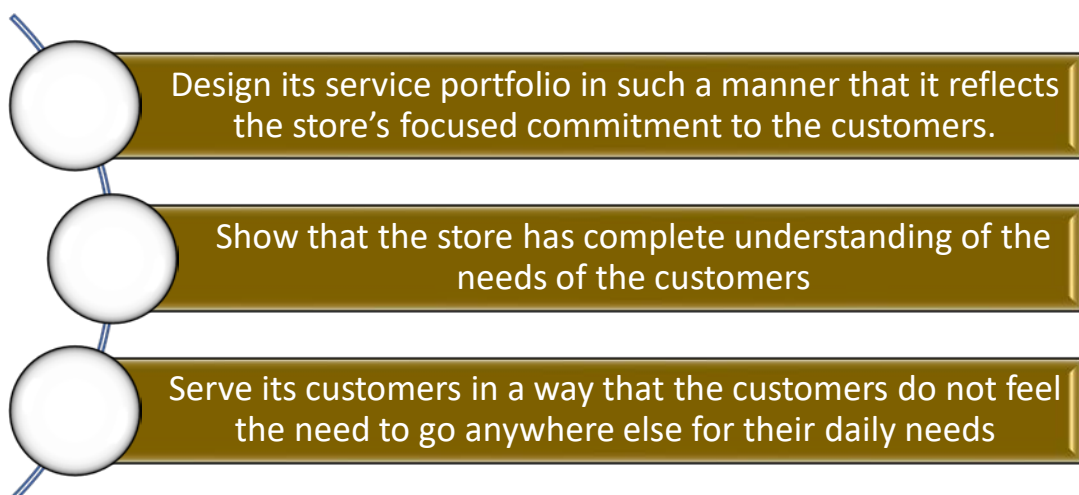
Fig 2.1 Customer Service Delivery

2.1.2 Planning, Preparing and Organising Prerequisites of Service Delivery

Customer service is a crucial performance indicator for a service provider. A retail store needs to plan the services it can give to its customers, and provide them to the customers in an efficient manner. For the service delivery to be effective and efficient, it has to be handled in an organised manner. There are several prerequisites for planning, preparing and organising service delivery. Some of these can be listed as follows:

- **Staff management:** The staff member of a retail store needs to be prepared to provide the services mentioned in the retail organisation's portfolio.
  - Time frame: A retail organisation must plan the pace at which it can offer services.
- **Service rendering:** A retail organisation must keep in mind that certain services have to be rendered on an urgent basis. Therefore, setting the priority of services is important. The efficiency of the services rendered by a retailer depends on certain factors. These factors are shown in the following figure:

Capacity to deliver

Accountability to the customer
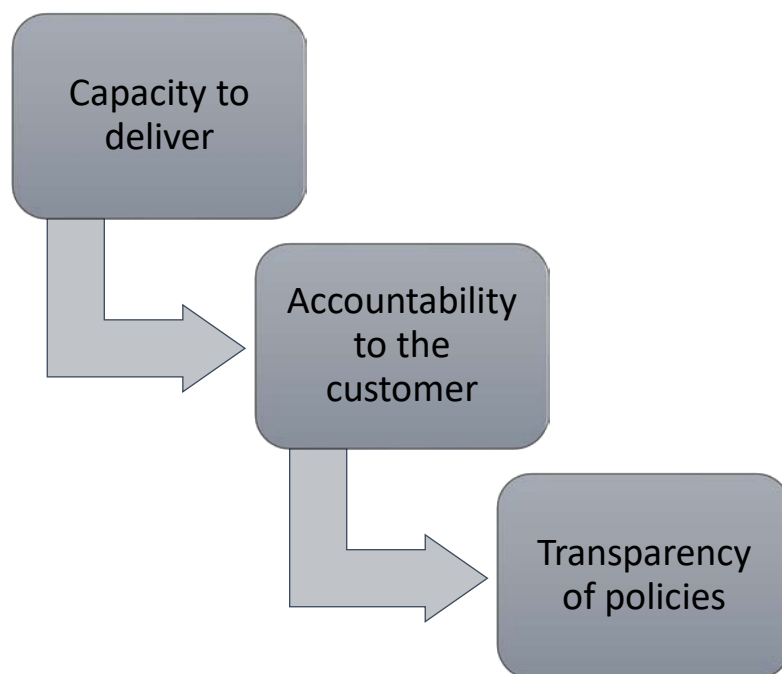
Transparency of policies

Fig. 2.2 Factors Related to the Efficiency of the Services

- **Transparency and Ethical Conduct:** A retailer must be transparent with the policies and portfolio. These define the type of services the retailer can deliver and the time it requires to be delivered them.

2.1.3 Responding to Customer Feedback

In retail business, it is important to learn to respond positively to any kind of feedback from customer. After all, any type of customer feedback helps you in improving your services and performing better. As an organisation in the retail sector, you should remember the following points with respect to customer feedback:

- Make sure that the customer support staff member is always available on phone and email.
- As an employee, you should quickly respond to customer queries/issues.
- Be patient and understand the customer's point of view.
- Be friendly.
- Come prepared with the customer's order history.

The following figure shows you the mechanism of customer feedback:

Fig. 2.3 Feedback Mechanism

Let us understand the role of communicating customer feedback with others through an example

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Example:

Communicating customer feedback with others

Neha is a sales associate in a supermarket that sells food products. She is responsible for collecting feedback from customers. She communicates the feedback to her reporting manager. The following is the conversation that takes place between Neha and her manager:

Neha: Madam, these are the feedback forms that I got filled from customers.

Manager: Great. How many feedback forms have you got? How many of them are positive and how many are negative?

Neha: There are 70 feedback forms in all. Of these, 50 are positive and 20 are negative!

Manager: Okay. So, we need to call those 20 unhappy customers immediately and resolve their issues

Neha: I will do that at once, Madam.

Manager: Let me know if you face any problem in this work.

Neha: Certainly, Madam.

2.1.4 Identifying Useful Customer Feedback

Customer feedback, whether on social networking platforms or through feedback forms, must be regularly monitored. This will help you to understand what your customers really think and feel. About the services you provide them. Such feedback should be taken seriously by retailers, and if there is a lot of negative feedback, remedial measures should be taken immediately. Products and services should be sold keeping the interests of customers in mind. However, it is only when t the customers use the products/services that their true effectiveness is known. By acting on the feedback promptly, a retailer is able to solve the issues of its customers and consequently show that it really cares about them. In addition, a positive customer feedback helps to improve the product or service of a retailer. Therefore, it is the retailer as well as its customers that benefit in the long run.

2.1.5 Organisational Procedures for Delivering Customer Service

For a retailer to deliver customer service, it should:

Always focus on serving the customers better.

Use the customer as a word-of-mouth marketing channel.

Measure the satisfaction level of the customers.

Encourage and give employees incentives to serve customers better.

Try to distinguish the brand from its competitors in terms of quality and service delivery.

Interact with the customers and be prompt in solving their problems.

Always keep in mind its corporate values and vision, and set up a mission to achieve the goal.

Be honest with its customers and be transparent in the service policies.

Listen to the problems of the customers and take corrective action promptly
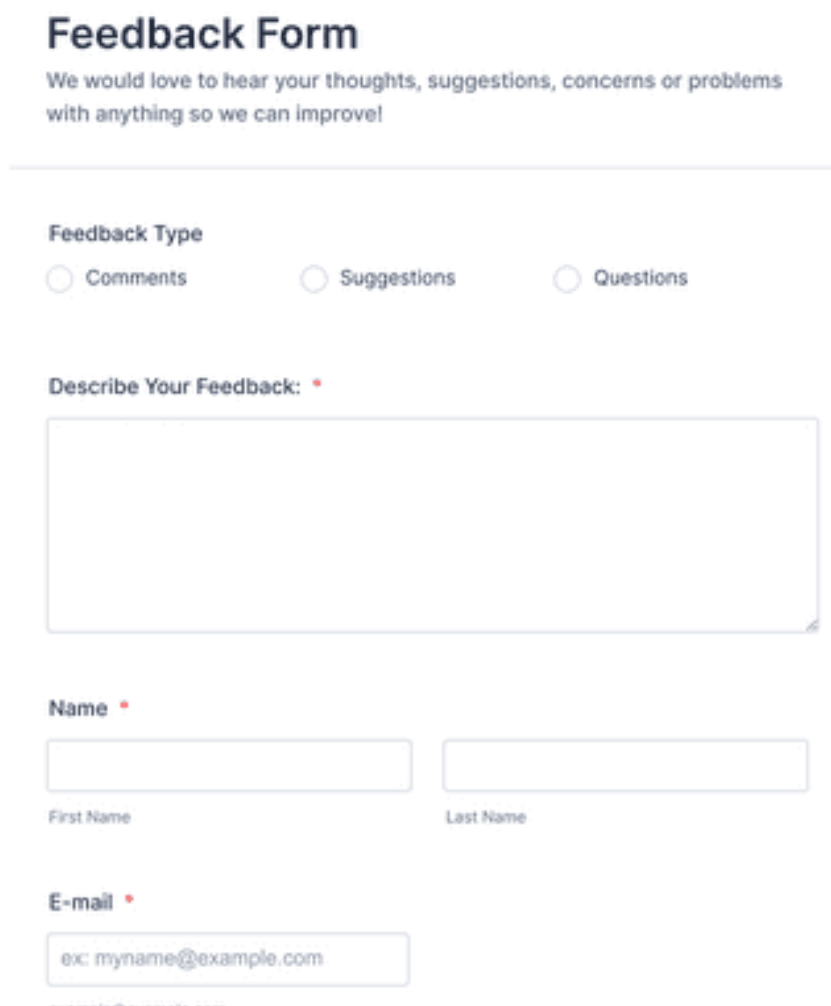
Fig 2.4 Procedure for Delivering Customer Service

A retail store or store chain must remember the 5 P's of customer service excellence – Process, Product, Presentation, Price and People. Of these 5 P's, People is the most important.

2.1.6 Locating Information to Solve Customer Query

The employees of a retail store must carry out routine feedback sessions with their customers. This gives a personal touch to the dealings and shows the customers that the store really cares for them. You are not only able to know the problems faced by the customers, but can also get an insight about their expectations.

To get customer information, a retailer can use feedback forms and get them filled by the customers for details. The feedback can be monitored and complaints must be resolved by the retailer. Retailers can also use email to obtain customer opinions on the services provided by them. The following figure shows a sample part of feedback form to collect customer information:

Feedback Form

We would love to hear your thoughts, suggestions, concerns or problems with anything so we can improve!

Feedback Type

○ Comments   ○ Suggestions   ○ Questions

Describe Your Feedback: *

Name *

First Name   Last Name

E-mail *

ex: myname@example.com

Fig 2.5 Sample Feedback Form

> **Activity**
>
> Assume that you work at a departmental store. Prepare a feedback form to incorporate important details of your customers.

2.2 Review and Maintain Customer Service Delivery

2.2.1 Maintaining Service Delivery during Busy and Quiet Periods

A busy period is basically a rush period in retail stores. In other words, it is the time when the demand of the products is high. The festive season sees the retail space abuzz with new offerings, discounts and deals that add to the charm of shopping. But, amidst the clutter the of being passed over is just as high. From inventory and workforce management to pricing and packaging. Retailers do everything to capture the consumer's attention. Retail stores experience busy rush hours in the festive season as they are loaded with exciting and attractive offerings which attract customers to shop more. Quiet period is basically off-season period. This period could be used in a positive – manner by getting the store fully prepared for next season and recharge employees. Preparation may include all the things starting from the cleaning of store, working out and making strategies and conducting sales training courses. This is done with the objective improve yourself and improve your business'.

Service delivery is an important aspect of any business. Retailers must ensure that the services provided by them are delivered on a timely basis. For this, the organisation needs an efficient staff and sufficient funds.

Similar to organisations, retailers should try to understand the requirements of their customers. This will help them to provide the customers with what they really want. Prompt customer service would help to keep the customers happy and satisfied. This would, in turn, benefit the retailer and present its positive image to the public.

The way the staff member of a retail store behaves with its customers is helpful in determining its popularity in the market. The staff should always be polite and courteous with the customers.

The following figure provides some point on how the staff of a retail store should behave with customers during busy and quiet business periods:
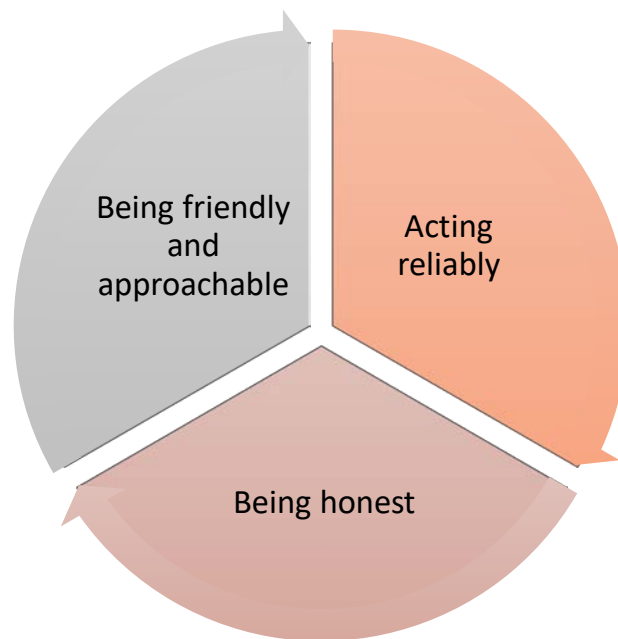
Fig 2.6 Behoving with Customers during Peak Hours

Let us, now, take an example to understand why meeting customer expectations is important for a retailer.

> **Example:**
>
> Meeting customer expectations
>
> While browsing the internet, a customer comes across an electronic camera that she/he wanted to buy for a long time. The website selling the gadget is a popular one and the price also seems to be reasonable. Moreover, she/he is offered a warranty for one year and an assurance that the product will be delivered to her within a week. She/He is excited by the offer and purchases the camera. The product arrives promptly within a few days. The camera has all the features that the website had specified and it also works without any problems. In short, she/he is very happy with the purchase and hopes to recommend the website to her/his friends. This example illustrates the importance of prompt service delivery, and keeping the customer satisfied by meeting his or her expectations.

2.2.2 Reorganising Work to Handle Unexpected Workload

Sometimes, a retailer may have to deal with a lot of queries and complaints from its customers. In addition, there may be the pressure of tight deadlines to be met. In such situations, as a sales associate, you may need to reorganise your work or set the priorities

according to importance. Organising your schedule this way will help you focus on important things and finish your work on time.

The following chart lists some ways by which a sales associate can perform his duties efficiently during busy periods:

Understand your organisation's strategy and policies and perform according

Create a list of your tasks along with the deadlines to meet them. While working in a team, you can be productive only if all the members have one goal in mind.

An organisation must ensure that it has competent and skill of full staff to perform the required tasks efficiently.

Once you have compiled a list of tasks to be performed, you need to prioritise them on the basis of their importance.

Proper communication is key to getting things done effectively. Keeping the customers informed is also very important.

Fig 2.7 Tips for Sales Associates

Let us now understand how to balance time between different customers with the help of an example.

Example:

Balancing time between different customers
Raghu is a sales associate in an electronics store that sells branded items and provides after-sales services for the brands. Two customers call Raghu on the phone and request him for details about two products-a refrigerator and a television set. Raghu asks them for a convenient time for a free demonstration of the products at their homes. The telephonic interaction between Raghu and the two customers goes as follows:

Customer-1

Raghu: Hi! Am I speaking to Mr. Ramesh?

Ramesh: Yes. May I know who I am talking to?

Raghu: Sir, I'm Raghu, an executive with XYZ electronics. We got your request to provide you a demonstration of one of our products.

Ramesh: Well, yes! When can you come over and demonstrate?

Raghu: Would 11 am tomorrow be fine with you, Sir?

Ramesh: That would be perfect. See you then.

Raghu: Thanks, Sir, I will be there.

Customer-2

Raghu: Hi, Am I speaking to Tiya?

Tiya: Yes. Who is this?

Raghu: Madam, I'm Raghu, an executive with XYZ Electronics. We got your request to provide you a demonstration of one of our products.

Tiya: Oh, yes. When can you come down and explain?

Raghu: Would 3 pm tomorrow be fine?

Tiya: I am sorry I have an important meeting at that time. Can't you come over in the first half at around 12 pm?

Raghu I am sorry, Madam. I have a prior engagement with a customer at that time.

Tiya: That is okay! Will 4 pm be alright?

Raghu: Yes, Madam. Thank you, Madam. I will be there.

Tiya: Okay. See you then. Bye.

Raghu: Bye, Madam. Have a nice day!

STEPS

Steps to improve the reliability customer service are as follows:

STEP 1: Welcoming Customers:
The sales associate can find out repeat customers, and address them by their names to show that it cares for them personally.
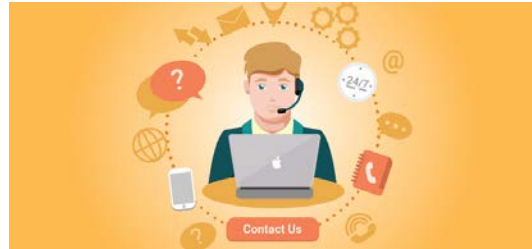
STEP 2: Answering Questions:
The sales associate can ensure reliable customer service by promptly attending to customer requests and queries.

STEP 3: Resolve Customer Conflict:
The ultimate goal is to provide a win-win solution by resolving the queries of customers quickly and avoiding any kind of conflict.

2.2.3 Taking Action to Improve the Reliability of Customer Service

A sales associate can take certain steps to improve the reliability of customer service. It includes the following:

1. Welcoming Customers : The sales associate can find out frequent customers and address them by their names to show that he/she cares for them personally.
2. Answering Questions : The sales associate can ensure reliable customer service by promptly attending to customer requests and queries.
3. Resolving Conflicts : The sales associate should give accurate replies to customer queries and ensures that they are satisfied.

The following example will help you understand the steps a retailer can take to improve the reliability of his organisation's customer services.

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Example:

Monitor the action taken by the retailer to know whether it has improved the service offered to customers

Assume that you are a retailer. You get a lot of negative feedback about customer service from the customers. Therefore, you decide to take effective action to address the feedback of customers and improve the customer service. You tell all the employees of the retail store to ensure the following tips while interacting with the customers:

- Be patient and understand the point of view of the customers.
- Be friendly and approachable.
- Be honest with the customers and tell them about the policies followed by the store in clear terms.
- Take genuine interest in the problems of the customers and try to resolve them as soon as possible.

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Tips

To monitor the effectiveness of the action taken to improve the customer service, a sales associate should:

- Analyse the footage of CCTV cameras on a regular basis so that he/she is aware of the ways which they interact with the customers.
- Ask the customers whether they face any problems while talking to the sales staff.

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2.3 Using Recording Systems to Maintain Reliable Customer Service

2.3.1 Recording and Storing Customer Service Information

Any customer information that a sales associate receives must be treated in accordance with the privacy laws of the retail store. In a retail store, there can be different methods used for collecting customer information. Some of the common methods are shown in the following figure:

Order Forms

Feedback
Forms

Enquiries

Reward
Programmes

Complaints

Warranty
Cards
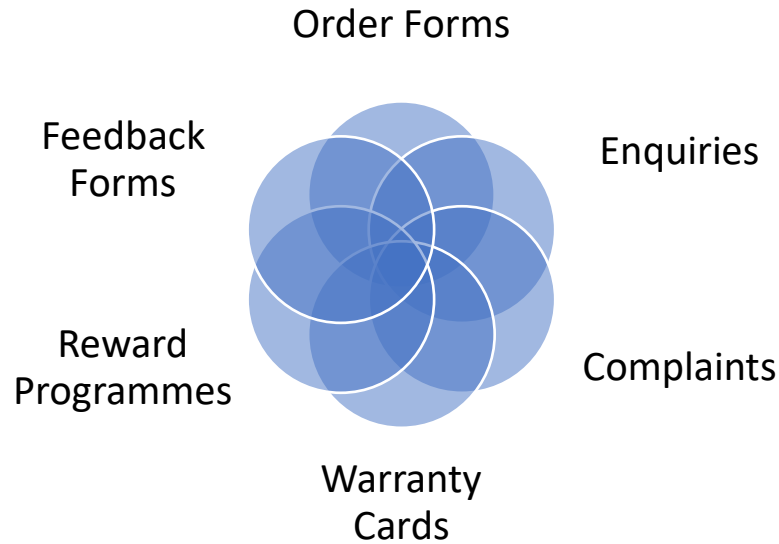
Fig 2.8 Methods Used for Collecting Customer information

Retailers regularly seek and gather information from their customers. They do this to know what the customers feel about their products and services. Retailers also use customer feedback as a means of improving their services. However, while seeking and storing such information, retailers are bound by certain legal and regulatory requirements that they have to adhere to.

The privacy policy for the use of customer data should be mentioned clearly in the retail organisation's portfolio. As name suggests, the privacy policy should be created to safeguard the privacy of the customer and ensure that private or personal information is not misused in any way. The policy includes the guidelines that a retailer should follow while using customer data.

The policy should cover the points shown in the following figure:

How does the organisation collect personally identifiable information and other information of customers?

How does the organisation make use of demographic/ profile data/ customer information?

How does the organisation share the personal information of customer?
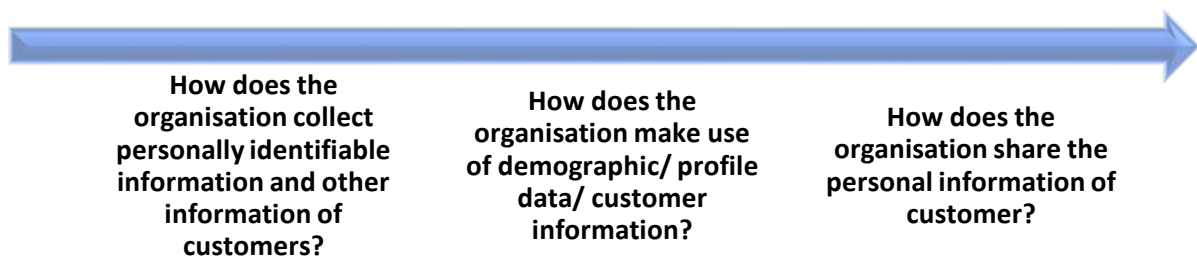
Fig 2.9 Points to be Covered in the Policy.

2.3.2 Selecting and Retrieving Relevant Customer Service Information

A retailer follows certain ways to select and retrieve information about a particular customer service. The different ways are listed in the following figure:
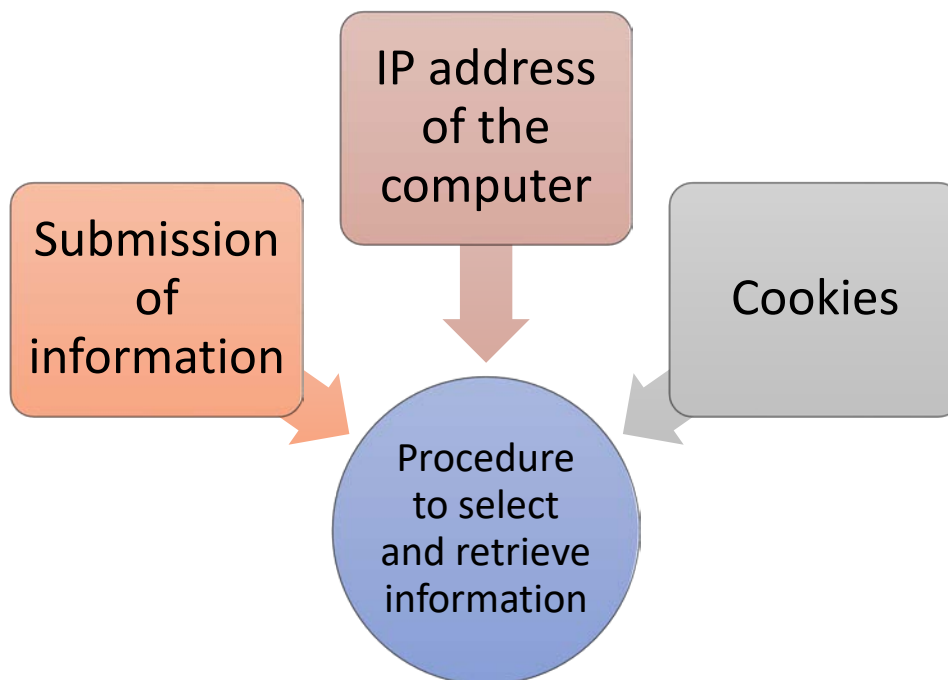
Fig 2.10 Ways of Selecting and Retrieving Information

Submission of Information: A customer will visit the store or browse the retail organisation's website for products or services of his/her interest if the customer finds what he/she is exactly looking for he/she will make the purchase. For this, the customer has to provide personal information. For example, the customer will need to give his/her home address if he/she wants the product to be delivered there.

IP Address of the Computer: A retail organisation may automatically track certain information about a user on the basis of his/her behaviour on the website. This information can be used for internal research to know the demographic profile of the users, including their interests and requirements. The idea behind this exercise is to understand the users so that the organisation can serve them better.

Cookies: An organisation in the retail sector may use data collection devices such as "cookies" on certain pages of the organisation's website. This helps the organisation in analysing the page flow of its website. It also serves as a means of gauging the effectiveness of the organisation's promotional activities.

In addition to this, a retailer can use customer relationship management (CRM) software to manage the organisation's interactions with customers. It can also use technology to organise and coordinate sales, customer service as well as technical support.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is a model used for managing interactions a retailer has with its existing and prospective customers. CRM software is used to organise, automate, and synchronise the different activities related to sales, marketing, customer support services, and technical support. Retailers often use CRM information gathered from different departments and analyse it to know the interests and buying behaviour of the customers.
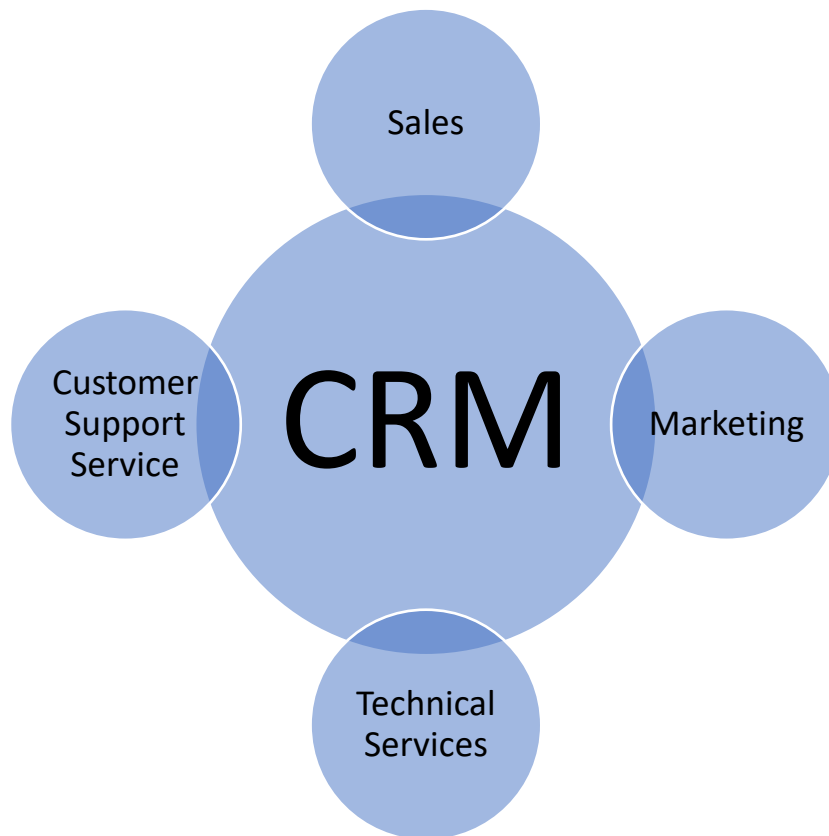
Fig 2.11 The CRM Model

The process of supplying accurate customer service information can be understood with the help of an example.

Example:

Supplying accurate customer service information

Assume that you are a retailer and want to know how the customers feel about a certain service that your organisation has started. The service has been in operation for over a month now, and you want to know whether the customers are benefiting from it. To know the opinion of the customers about the new service, you decide to take certain steps. These include:

- Getting the feedback forms filled by customers
- Getting the contact details of customers
- Getting references from customers

Activity

Discuss the importance and use of CRM in a retail organisation.

Tips

The procedures and systems that a retailer uses to store, retrieve, and supply customer information may include:

- Collection and storage of personal information provided by customers from time to time. The aim of this is to provide the customer a smooth and pleasant shopping experience.
- Use of personal information to resolve issues and provide reliable service.
- Use of personal information to keep the customer updated about new offers, products and services.
- Share personal information with other corporate entities and affiliates.

Ensure customers that the retailer has a strong security mechanism in place to prevent misuse of information.

Exercise

1. _____ refers to the mechanism by which an organisation provides a service to its customers.

2. _____ Is a crucial performance indicator for any service provider.

3. The 5 P's of customer service excellence are _____.

4. The employees of a retail store must carry out routine _____. with their customers.

5. Any customer information that a sales associate receives must be treated in accordance with the _____ of the retail store.

6. An organisation in the retail sector may use data-collection devices such as _____ on certain pages of the organisation's website.

Cookies; Privacy laws; Customer service; Feedback sessions; Service delivery; Process; Product; Presentation, Price and People.

---

7. The efficiency of the services rendered by a retailer depends on factors like (Tick the correct options):

a) Capacity to deliver   (b) Transparency in services
(c) Accountability to customers   (d) Ethical behaviour and conduct
(e) All of the above

8. Match the following:

(a) The product or service provided by the organisation or a retailer must be	(i) reorganise work or set the priorities according to importance.
(b) A retail organisation must also plan	(ii) delivered efficiently to the customer and has to be of acceptable quality. (iii) keeping the interests of the customers
(c) Products and services are always sold	(iii) Keeping the interest of the customers in mind.
(d) A sales associate may need to	(iv) The pace at which it can offer services.

UNIT 3: CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

1. Discuss the need of improving customer relations
2. List various ways of improving the organisation's image in front of customers
3. Identify the best communication method to be used
4. Explore the need of informing customers when their expectations are not met

3.1 Improve Communication and Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

3.1.1. Customer Relationship Management

It is a technology used to manage all relationships and interactions between your company and customers and potential customers. The goal is simple: improve business relationships. CRM systems can help companies keep in touch with customers, streamline processes, and increase profitability.

When people talk about CRM, they usually refer to the CRM system, which is a tool that helps with contact management, sales management, productivity, and more. The

CRM solution can help you focus on the relationship between your organization and individuals (including customers, service users, colleagues or suppliers) throughout your life cycle, including finding new customers, winning business, and providing additional support and services throughout the process relation.

Fig 3.1 Customer Relationship Management

3.1.2 Benefits of CRM

For those who use the CRM platform, it is difficult to imagine a world without it. If you like structure and organization, one of the benefits provided by CRM software is that you can put everything (data, notes, indicators, etc.) related to managing customer relationships in one place.

The CRM platform can help companies target different audiences, set scores and alerts based on individual prospects or customer activities, proactively cooperate with contacts and maintain relationships. Most importantly, the CRM system can be used across departments to ensure that all customer service teams have the correct data to create an amazing customer experience.

CRM benefits companies in many ways. Although the benefits vary by department or industry, the six advantages of a CRM platform that affects all users include:
- Reliable reports
- Dashboards that visualize data
- Automation to enhance messaging
- Proactive services
- Automation improves efficiency
- Simplifies collaboration

3.1.3 Process of CRM

The CRM process is a strategy to keep each customer interaction personalized and meaningful, including five main steps. The customer relationship management system (CRM system) provides the data and functions your team needs to execute this strategy and ultimately convert potential customers into customers.

The CRM process cycle

To understand the steps in the CRM process, you must understand the customer life cycle. This is one of the first concepts you learn as a sales representative to understand how a person becomes a loyal customer. The

CRM cycle includes marketing, customer service, and sales activities. It starts with reaching and acquiring customers, and ideally leads to customer loyalty. The

CRM cycle has five key stages:

- Reaching potential customers
- Customer acquisition
- Conversion
- Customer retention
- Customer loyalty

3.1.4 E-CRM

Electronic customer relationship management (e-CRM) involves the integration of Web channels into the overall enterprise CRM strategy with the goal of driving consistency within all channels relative to sales, customer service and support (CSS) and marketing initiatives.

3.1.5 Differentiate Between CRM and E-CRM

Basis	CRM	E-CRM
Customer Contact	Customer contact usually initiated through traditional means of retail store, telephone or fax	In addition to telephone, contact is also initiated through the Internet, e-mail, mobile etc.
System Interface	Works with the back-end applications through ERP systems.	Designed for front-end applications, which in turn works with the back-end applications through ERP systems, data warehouse etc.
System Overhead	Web-enabled application require a PC client to download	No such requirement, the browser is the customer's portal to eCRM.

(Client computers)	various applications. These applications would have to be rewritten for different platforms.	
Customization and Personalization of Information	Different audience require different views and types of information. Personalized views for different audience are not possible. Individual customization requires programming changes.	Highly individualized "dynamic" and personalized views based on purchases and preferences are possible. Each audience individually customizes the views.
System Focus	System is designed around products and job functions (for internal use).	System is designed around the customer's needs (for external use).
System Maintenance and Modifications	Implementation is longer and management is costly because the system is situated at various locations and on several servers.	Reduced time and cost. System implementation and expansion can be managed in one location and in one server.

3.1.5 Need of Improved Customer Relations

Attending your customers in an effective and efficient manner is an essential element to keep the business growing. However, paying special attention to your existing and active customer base also leads to a positive effect on the business as well as the customers. This phase of attending customers begins as soon as the customer enters the store and the follow-up begins immediately after the product is sold. In retail business, your customers must be aware of what you are doing for them. It can be conveyed through regular e-mails or newsletters or informally through calls. Whichever method you may implement, the aim is to indirectly inform the customer about the excellent services you are offering them. The following are a few ways in which you can improve your image in front of customers:
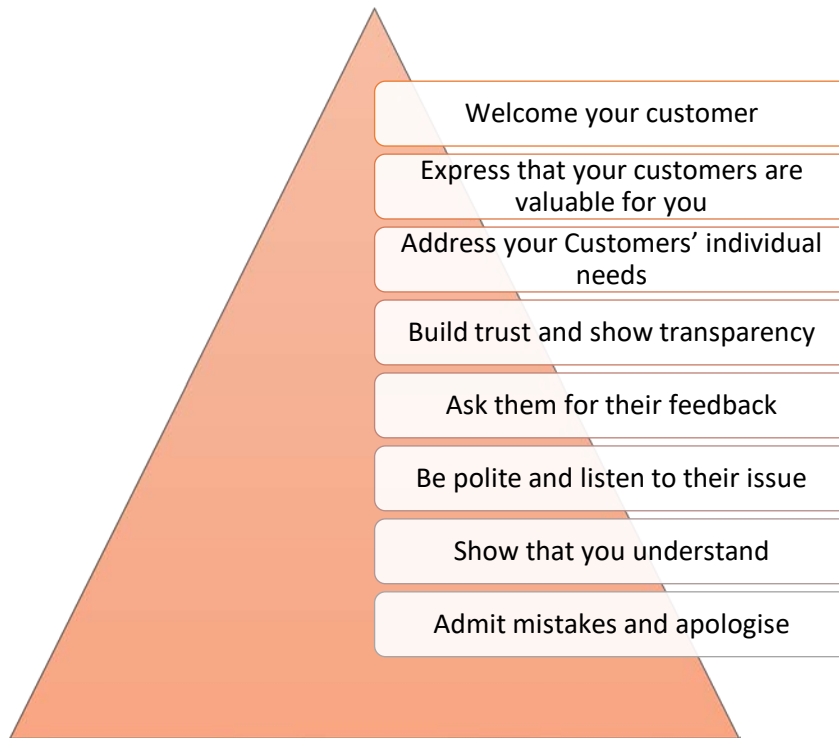
Fig 3.2 Improving Self-Image in Front of Customers

3.1.6 Selecting the Best Communication Method

Communication plays a vital role in a business where several parties are involved, like in retail business, there is an involvement of stakeholders, staff, and most importantly, the customers. Effective communication is important for a smooth functioning of a business. For effective communication, it is important to choose an appropriate method of communication based on your target audience and on what kind of information you wish to give to your audience. The following figure displays the three methods of communication:
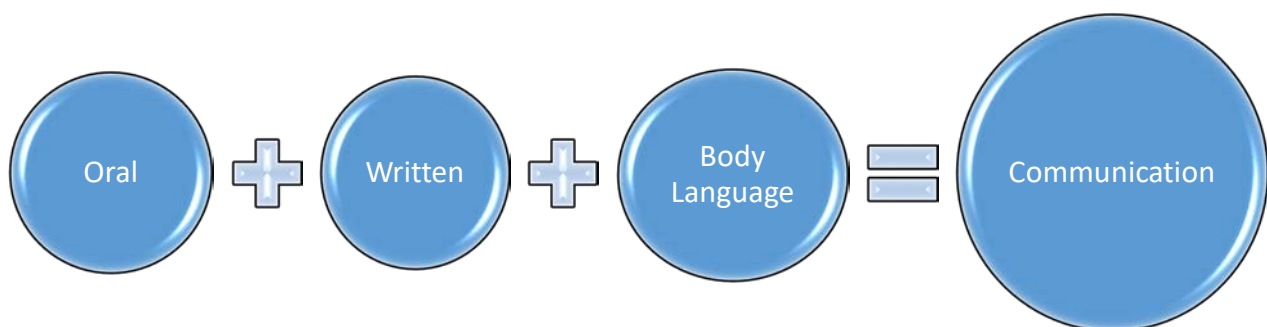
Fig 3.3 Three Methods of Communication

Let us understand how to choose the best method of communication for dealing with customers.

> **Example:**
>
> Choosing the best method of communication for dealing with customers
>
> If you wish to convey information about the running offers in your stores, you may use emails and newsletters as a medium to communicate with customers.

3.1.7 Informing Customers When Expectations Are Not Met

When a business fails to meet the expectations of customers, they would avail services from somewhere else, which means you would lose business. It is, therefore, important for an organisation to inform the customers if they are unable to fulfil their demands. This can be done in the following ways:

- ➢ Examine the customer's issue/concern
- ➢ Communicate effectively through the phone, emails, or in person
- ➢ Convey the reasons for not meeting the expectations to the customer
- ➢ Acquire more information, such as phone number or email address, to meet the customer's demand
- ➢ Offer substitutes to the customer

Let us understand this with the help of an example.

> **Example:**
>
> Contacting customers for getting more information
>
> Rajiv is a sales associate with Page 100 bookstore. A customer at his bookstore, Amit, was looking a title "How to Master the Art of Selling which unfortunately was unavailable. Rajiv, after having heard Amit's problem, assured him that he would get the book in two days and took his contact number. The conversation between them is as follows:
>
> Rajiv: Hi, am I speaking with Mr. Amit? Amit: Yes. May I know who is on the line?
>
> Rajiv: Sir, this is Rajiv, sales associate with Page 100 bookstore. Sir, you came to our bookstore looking

For How to Master the Art of Selling, and assured you that I would get the book for you.
Amit: Well, yes. Did you get the book?

Rajiv: Not yet. However, there are a few books available with a similar title with the distributor. Could you please share the author's name so that I may pick the correct book for you?

Amit: Of course. The author's name is Tom Hopkins.

Rajiv: Okay. Thank you, Sir. You visit our bookstore day-after-tomorrow, and pick your copy.
Amit: That's great. Thanks! I will be there.

While gathering information from the customer, a sales associate should ensure that he/she communicates as per the requirements of the customer.

Tips

To get in touch with customers for collecting their feedback, the steps would include the following:

- Ask when they can be contacted
- Do not ask questions that might offend them
- Apologise if there's any mistake on your part
- Assure the customer that you would try your best to resolve his/her issues

3.2 Balance the need of between Customer and Organisational Needs

3.2.1 Meeting Customer Expectations within the Organisation's Service Offer

A service offer is something that an organisation does for its customers, over and above the regular services given as per the policies. To meet customer expectations, a retail business needs to know their target audience and their demands. The following figure lists some ways to meet the customer

Fig. 3.4 Ways to Meet the Customers Expectations

3.2.2 Improving Customer Relationship

A customer is important for any business. Therefore, to keep a customer loyal to the organisation, he/she should be made to feel special by efficiently catering to his/her demands, solving his/her queries, and checking his/her satisfaction levels. A retailer can put in a bit of effort to improve customer relationship, the examples of which may be:

➢ Money back guarantee
➢ Problem assurance
➢ Benefits for new customers

Tips

Here are six tactics to assist you in building customer relationship:

- Communicate showing empathy
- Learn about your customer
- Stay in regular contact with customer
- Build trust with concern
- Practice inbound marketing

3.3 Exceed Customer Expectations to Develop Relationship

3.3.1 Recognising Opportunities to Exceed Customers' Expectations

Efficiently exceeding the customers' expectations is a challenge for any business. However, in order to do that, retailers can keep their costs low compared to their competitors and deliver quality service. A business progresses only by attaining a high level of customer satisfaction.

The following are some ways to exceed customers' satisfaction:

1	Understand why your customers call
2	Personalise your customer interactions
3	Speed up your problem-solving service
4	Make sure your agents sound human and not robots
5	Be proactive rather than reactive
6	Focus your time on your customers' real problems
7	Use accurate time frame to meet customer demands

Fig. 3.5 Ways to Exceed Customers Satisfaction

Let us understand how to exceed customers' expectations with the help of an example.

Example:

Getting others' help to exceed customers' expectations

Gauri is a sales associate with a multi-brand electronics store. She meets an unhappy customer, Sukesh, who came to drop a complaint. She tried talking about it with the customer but couldn't be of much help. Gauri then immediately reported the case to her reporting manager, Akash, who took charge of the situation. The conversation between Akash and the customer is as follows:

Akash: Hello Sir, I am Akash, this store's manager. Is there anything that I can do for you?

Sukesh: Hi Akash, I am very disappointed with the kind of service have got from your store.

Akash: We regret the inconvenience, Sir. May I know what is troubling you?
Sukesh: I purchased this mobile phone from your store a month back, and now, it has stopped functioning completely. Here is the bill. Your customer service staff is asking me to contact the company for this issue; however, at the time of purchase, I was assured that your store would provide me with after-sales service!

> Akash: I apologise on their part, Sir. I will personally make sure that your mobile handset issue gets resolved. You may handover your handset to me, and please wait for my calls. I shall give you a call by the next week. You can then come and collect your phone.
>
> Sukesh: Thanks a lot Akash. You are a great help. I will wait for your call.

Let us now understand how taking action can exceed customers' expectations with the help of another example.

> **Example:**
>
> Taking action to exceed customers' expectations
>
> When you receive a customer's negative feedback or a complaint, you must try to understand his/her issue and take immediate corrective measures. This helps in building the customer's faith in your organisation.

3.3.2 Identifying Alternative Solutions

In order to improve rapport with customers, a retailer needs to deliver reliable customer service. This effort of meeting customers' expectations and identifying alternate solutions to resolve their issues delights customers. The following chart shows the process to be followed by a customer support person at the time of problem resolution:

- ➢ Identify the problem
- ➢ Establish decision criteria
- ➢ Weigh decision criteria
- ➢ Generate alternatives
- ➢ Evaluate the alternatives
- ➢ Choose the best alternatives
- ➢ Implement the decision
- ➢ Evaluate the decision

The list of benefits of suggesting alternative solutions is as follows:

- Customers should not go empty handed
- They may pick the nearest substitute, which satisfies them
- Customers build trust in you
- You don't lose customers based on lack of options

Activity

You work at a departmental store as a sales associate in the food section. You often suggest buying alternate products to consumers. Prepare a list of ways in which suggesting alternatives for eatables helps in customer satisfaction, increasing business and saving losses for the store.

With the help of an example let us have a better view of how to assess the costs and benefits for your customer, and your organisation of any unusual agreement you make.

Example:

Assessing the costs and benefits for your customer and your organisation of any unusual agreement you make

Assume that you are a sales associate at a retail store, and it is your responsibility to assess the costs and benefits for your customer and your organisation of any agreement you make. If you suggest an alternative to a customer, it would be on the following basis:
- Lower costs
- Better features
- Longer life
- Warranty

This would benefit the organisation by:
- Building customer loyalty
- Getting satisfied customers
- Generating more sales
- Increasing profit

3.3.3 Negotiating Solutions

Negotiations in retailing provide a competitive edge over rivals by establishing a long-term relationship: with customers. It is an effective way of resolving customer issues and provides a solution that is beneficial for both the consumer and the retailer. It involves effectual human interaction, listening to the query or issue of the customer, and reaching a mutually advantageous solution.

Fig 3.6 Negotiation Skills Required by Sales Associates

Let us understand how negotiating with customers helps in building their trust in the retailer with the help of example given below.

Example:

Negotiating with customers

Roshni is a sales associate with a departmental store. Finding a confused customer, Roshni walks up to her to know what the matter is. The conversation between them goes as follows:

Roshni; Hello Madam, you seem to be looking for something Can I help you?

Customer. Yes, I am looking for the large pack of bonbon chocolates, which were here yesterday. However, I am not able to locate that today. Could you please help me out?

Roshni; I am afraid, Madam. The large packs of Bonbon chocolates got over yesterday. However, you can try these ABC chocolates. These are equally good, loved by many and are comparatively priced less. Why do not you taste them before buying? I shall arrange a smaller pack for you.

Customer: Well, it tastes good. I would pick its large pack. Thank you

Roshni: You are most welcome Madam. Do visit the store again.

3.3.4 Taking Action upon Agreed Solutions

Negotiation can be a situation where two different parties come face-to-face ending up with an agreement or compromise that is mutually beneficial. After reaching a common solution to an issue, the implementation or taking actions on the agreed solution is the next step. This is done only after evaluating the pros and cons of any solution. It helps in building trust in the retail organisation, and customers may come back in the hope of getting an effective solution.

Tips

Guidelines that retail staff should follow while attending customers in such a way that the customer relationship develops, and they become loyal to the organisation:

- Be aware of the alternative solutions
- Resolve customer issues in a polite and effective manner
- Assist customers as friends
- Be transparent in your dealings
- Do not sell anything as an alternative if the customer is unsure about it

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3.4 Communicate and Respond Effectively to Customers in Retail Store/ Mall

3.4.1 Understanding Organisational Procedures and Systems for Dealing with Customer Service Problems

There are several customers who have problems with the services provided by a retailer but they never complain to the retailer rather they switch to another retailer. The following figure illustrates why customers do not complain to the retailers:

- Customers feel that complaining about a problem is a waste of time as it will take a long time to get the solution for the complaint.
- Customers try to complain but there is no proper procedure for recording and resolving the complaint in the retail store.
- Customers dissatisfied to such an extent that they do not even want to complain about the poor customer service.

All the above mentioned problems are the result of a bad organisational procedure and system for handling customer service problems. Thus, it is necessary for a retailer to develop

an effective policy. Procedure, and a system for reporting and solving customer service problems. The following chart states some of the points that should be included in these policies, procedures, and systems:

- ➢ Make it easy for the customer to report his/her complaints
- ➢ State why your organisation welcomes complaints by listing the benefits the customer and organisation get through these complaints
- ➢ Delegate the responsibilities of resolving customer complaints among the tail store staff
- ➢ Commit quick, tar, and confidential complaint handling
- ➢ State the detailed procedure for recording and solving complaints
- ➢ Establish timelines for complaint handling and keeping customers informed
- ➢ List the acceptable ways to resolve complaints

Let us understand how a sales associate should respond to customer service problems according to the organisational guidelines with the help of an example.

Example:

Responding to customer service problems as per the organisational guidelines

A customer comes to a sales associate in a retail store and asks for the replacement of a defective product, which he/she had purchased a week ago. According to the policy of the retail store, a defective product can be replaced within five days of the purchase. Hence, the sales associate apologises to the customer and informs him that he/she will not be able to replace the product as it is against their organisational policy. However, the sales associate should also update the customer about repairs, if possible. This is how the sales associate should respond to a customer service problem as per the organisational guidelines.

3.4.2 Solving Customer Service Problems When You Have Sufficient Authority

Sales associates are able to solve only these problems for which they are authorised. It is necessary from the perspective of sales associates as well as customers. This is because if a sales associate even tries to solve a problem for which he/she is not authorised, he/she will not be able to provide a complete and accurate solution to the customer. For example, if a customer has a problem with the rude behaviour of a customer service personnel, the sales associate will neither be able to take any action against the customer service personnel nor he/she will be able to promise another customer service personnel to the customer.

3.4.3 Solving Customer Service Problems

Once a sales associate identifies the options to solve the customer service problem, he/she should talk to other members of the retail store staff (including other sales associates, sales manager, store manager, etc.) to determine whether the options are feasible enough to be implemented. For this purpose, the activities that need to be performed by the staff members are shown in the following figure:

Listing the solutions identified

Analysing each solution

Determining how each solution can be implemented

Identifying what will be the cost incurred in this implementation, and what will be the benefits of applying this solution
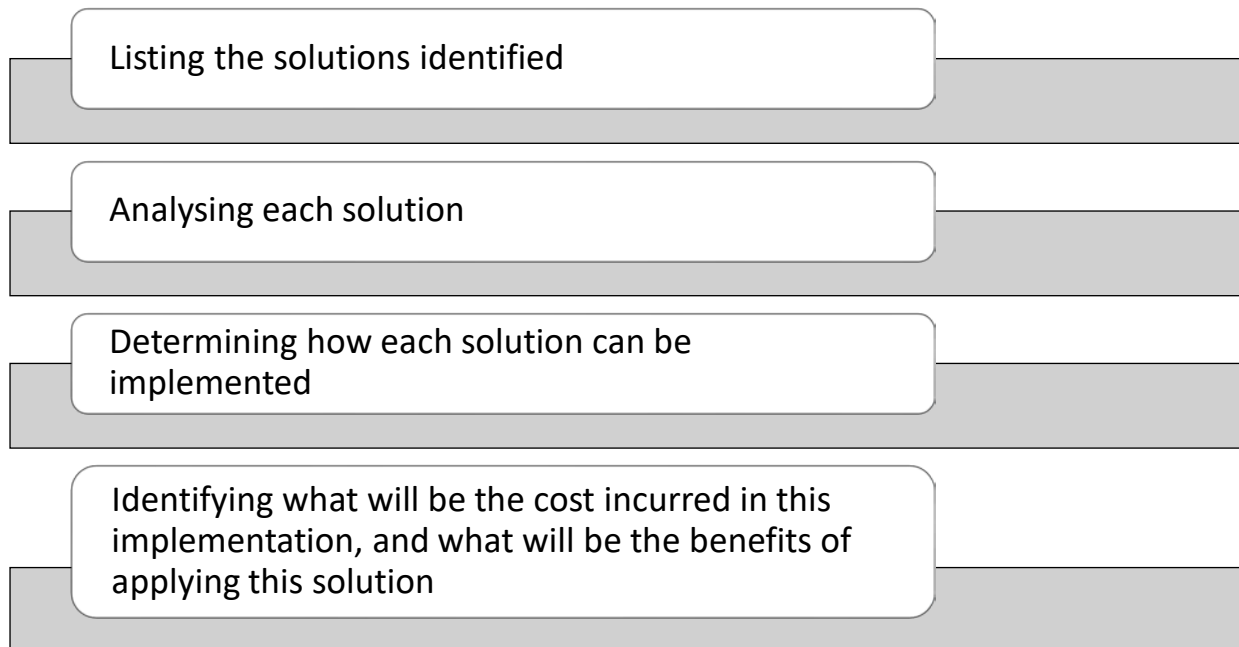
Fig. 3.7 Activities that Need to be Performed by the Stoff Members

Tips

A sales associate should follow the policies and procedures of his/her organisation. These procedures include confidential information about the products, information on how to handle customer complaints, policies on exchange of products, and knowledge about how to manage visitors in the premises. If any policy is not fulfilling the customer requirements, then management has to improve that policy and provide benefits to customers.

3.4.4 Negotiating and Reassuring Customers while their Problems are being Solved

STEPS

Steps for solving a customer service problem by a sales associate.

STEP 1:

Involve the customer in the problem-solving process

STEP 3:

Discuss the merits and demerits of each solution with the customer

STEP 2:

Identify the possible solutions of the problem along with the customer

STEP 4:

Check whether the solution finally selected is beneficial for both the parties (organisation as well as customer)

3.4.4 Executing Agreed upon Solution

For implementing any of the alternatives to solve a customer service problem, the sales associate needs to take the first step. For example, a sales associate needs to first contact his/her supervisor, and then start the process of replacement, refund, or repairing a defective product. However, in accordance with the organisation's policy and procedure, the sales associate can directly also replace, repair, or refund the product.

3.4.5 Solving Problems with Service Systems and Procedures Beforehand

The problems within the service system and procedure of an organisation sometimes bind the sales associate from providing an appropriate solution to customer service problems. These problems are very common and faced by most of the customers, such as rude employees, lack of product knowledge among sales associates due to insufficient training, etc. Such problems need to be identified and rectified before the customer recognises them. For solving such problems, a sales associate should contact the person with higher authority, such as sales manager or store manager, and tell them about the problem and solve it as per the instructions provided by them.

Tips

Here are some practical tips for effectively dealing with customer complaints:

- Actively listen to your customers and makes notes of the key facts and their concerns.
- Acknowledge the concerns of your customers and thank them for bringing such matter to your attention.
- Make an apology for the inconvenience caused. Required to
- Ask questions and summarise your understanding so that you can gather the facts know what has happened and to find out best solution to resolve it.
- Explain the actions which you will take as a result of their complaint.
- Ask your customers for their feedback for the next steps.
- Review actions in line with your company's procedures.

3.4.6 Informing Customers about the Status of the Actions Taken

After selecting the best option (in consensus with the customer) to solve the customer service problem and after implementing this option, the sales associate should keep informing the customer about the progress in the process of resolving the problem. Customer should be informed by emails telephone calls, or SMS. This will make the customer feel satisfied and convinced that his/her problem will be resolved Let us understand how to inform the customers in a positive and clear manner about the status of the action taken to solve their problems with the help of an example.

Example

Informing customers in a positive and clear manner about the status of the action taken to solve her problem

---

Mrs. Janvi Jain visited ABC retail store and asked for the replacement of a refrigerator, purchased six months back, because its cooling system had stopped working. The sales associate at the retail store denied replacing the product as it was against his/her organisation's policy. However, the sales associate suggested an alternative that he/she could get the refrigerator repaired by sending it to the company workshop, and would send it back to Mrs. Janvi Jain within one week. He/she also assured that Mrs Janvi would be informed about the status of the repair of her refrigerator. Mrs. Janvi agreed to this solution and the refrigerator was sent for repair.

After four days, the sales associate called Mrs. Janvi. A part of their conversation is as follows:

Sales Associate: Good morning Madam, I am calling from the ABC retail store.

Janvi: Good morning is it about the refrigerator that I have given to you for repair?

Sales Associate: Yes Madam, I want to inform you that your refrigerator will be completely repaired by tomorrow and we will be sending it to your place tomorrow itself.

Janvi: That sounds great. Thanks for the information.

Sales Associate: Welcome Madam. I will call you again before sending the refrigerator.

Janvi: Ok. Thanks again.

Sales Associate. Thank you Madam and have a nice day.

3.4.7 Checking Whether Customers are Comfortable with the Actions Taken

While providing a solution of a problem to a customer, the sales associate needs to ensure that the customer is comfortable with it. This is essential because while the sales associate may think that he/ she has provided the best solution, the customer may not be convinced with the solution. In such a case, the customer may not visit the store again and spread negative word-of-mouth about the store even after getting the solution.

For checking whether customers are comfortable with the solution provided to them, the sales associate should follow the points, as shown in the below figure:

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                         │
│   Interpret the verbal and nonverbal    │
│   responses of customer on providing    │
│        the solutions correctly          │
│                                         │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘

                    ▼

┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                         │
│   Ask the customer if he/she has any    │
│        doubt about the solution         │
│                                         │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
```
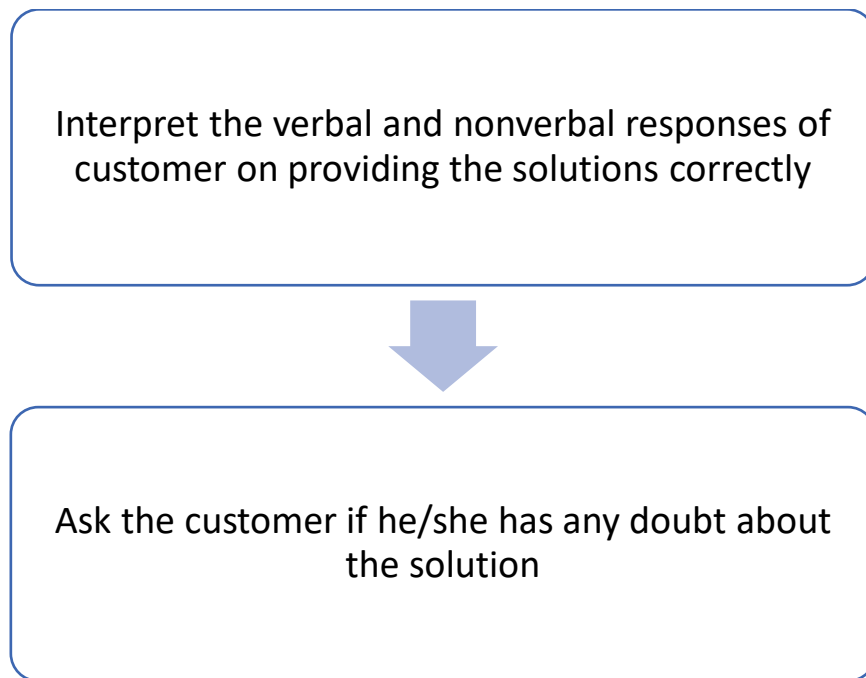
Fig 3.8 Checking o Customer's Response

In case, the customer has any doubt or problem with the solution provided, try to convince him/her that the solution is absolutely in his/her favour.

3.4.8 Informing Managers and Colleagues about the Steps Taken

When solution to a customer service problem is provided, the sales associate should inform the managers and his colleagues about the solution. This will help the retail store staff handle similar type of problems in the same way or in a better way in future. For this, the sales associate should make a document of each and every step he/she has taken to sort out the problem, and share the document with the managers and colleagues.

3.4.9 Identifying Repeated Customer Service Problems

While providing a solution to a problem, a sales associate should ensure that the problem is completely solved. However, it is possible that even after providing the appropriate solution, another problem arises. For example, in case of replacement of a defective product, the new product may also have some type of defect that is identified by the customer later. To avoid such problems, the sales associate should check the product before giving it to the customer. The sales associate should keep a constant check on the solutions provided to the customer to identify the probability of the occurrence of a repeated problem. In case there are chances of occurrence of repeated problems, the sales associate should alert the concerned authority about it so that they get solution of such a problem.

3.4.10 Identifying Options to Deal with Repeated Customer Service Problems

Some of the options for dealing with a repeated problem are shown in the following figure:

➢ Determine the root cause of the problem so that the problem can be prevented in future

➢ Identify the solution in consultation with the customer because if the customer agrees with the solution, he/she will not ask for any further clarification or raise any doubt or objection again

➢ Rectify the system or equipment (like computer or a software) if it acts as a hurdle in fixing the customer service problem

Also, for identifying the merits and demerits of each option, the following figure lists the activities that need to be performed:

➢ Identify whether the option has been applied earlier in the retail store or not

➢ Research on the results of implementation of this option in other retail stores dealing in the same product category

➢ Determine the profitability of implementing the option

3.4.11 Working with Others to Provide the best Option for Solving Repeated Customer Service Problems

After identifying a repeated problem, a sales associate should discuss the problem with his/her colleagues and managers in order to identify a solution to the problem. They should select an option that is beneficial for the customer as well as for the organisation. For ensuring this, the following activities can be performed:

➢ Check whether the selected solution is as per the organisational policy

➢ Check whether the cost involved in fixing the solution is equal or more than the

➢ Purchased price of the product

➢ Check whether the process followed for solving the problem comes under the organisational policy

➢ Check whether the customer problem will be completely solved by implementing the solution.

In case, the organisational guidelines need to be changed for fixing a customer service problem the sales associate should take approval from the concerned authority. Let us understand this with the help of an example.

Example:

Obtaining Approval from the Concerned Authority to Change Organisational Guidelines

A customer has a problem with the behaviour of the customer service personnel and he/she wants him/her to be replaced. In such a case, the sales associate should first contact the customer service department and take approval from the department to replace the customer service personnel who attended that customer. If the approval is granted, only then can the sales associate commit to the customer that his/her suggested solution will be implemented, otherwise the sales associate needs to identify some other option for solving the customer service problem.

Tips

Some of the general organisational procedures for identifying the repeated customer service problems are as follows:

- Prepare a report of the solution provided to the customer.
- Analyse the report for any loopholes
- Identify the options to fill up the identified loopholes
- Check whether the customer is satisfied with the given solution by contacting him/her after a regular interval of time

3.4.12 Monitoring Changes and Adjusting them if Required

After making changes in the organisational policies and systems, it is important that these changes are monitored on a regular basis. For this purpose, the activities as shown in the following figure should be performed:

Fig 3.9 Monitoring the Changes and Adjusting Them

In case, it is found that changes in the organisational policy have not been implemented or there are certain problems faced by the sales associate while implementing these changes, the sales associate informs his/her senior. After that, the sales associate along with the senior should identify the solution for these problems and make adjustments either in the changed organisational policy or the way in which the sales personnel are following that policy.

Customer satisfaction leads to customer loyalty. If a customer is satisfied with the product and services provided by a retailer, it may be possible that he/she will become loyal to the retailer. For satisfying a customer, important that his/her queries and complaints listened to and taken seriously, and required action should be taken within the stipulated time. This will not only satisfy and delight the external customer, but also develop a strong feeling of commitment and dedication among the internal customers (including retail store staff as well as suppliers) as all of them will benefit out of it.

Exercise

1. A _____ is something that an organisation does for its customers, over and above the regular services given as per the policies.

2. _____ in retailing provide a competitive edge over rivals by establishing a long-term relationship with customers.

3. A sales associate must choose the best method of _____ for dealing with customers.

4. It is important to establish _____ for complaint handling and keeping customers informed

5. Sometimes, _____ may need to be changed for fixing a customer service problem.

6. Customer _____ leads to customer loyalty.

Service offer; Communication, Negotiations; Organizational guidelines; Satisfaction, Timeliness

---

7. Customers may not complaint to a retailer due to factors such as (Tick the correct options):

a) Customers feel that complaining about a problem is a waste of time

b) Customers find that there is no proper procedure for recording and resolving the complaint

c) The staff behaviour is not welcoming or friendly

d) All of the above

8. Benefits of suggesting alternative solutions to customers are:

a) Customers don't go empty handed

b) They may pick the nearest substitute, which satisfies them

c) Customers build trust in you and you don't lose customers due to lack of options

d) All of the above

9. Match the following:

(a) Paying special attention to your existing and active customer base leads to	(i) where several parties are involved, like the retail business
(b) Communication plays a vital role in a business	(ii) your target audience and what kind of information you wish to give your audience
(c) It is important to choose an appropriate method of communication based on	(iii) two different parties come face to face ending up with an agreement or compromise that's mutually beneficial
(d) Efficiently exceeding customers' expectations	(iv) a positive effect on the business as well as the customers
(e) Negotiation can be a situation where	(v) is a challenge for any business
(f) Sales associates are able to solve	(vi) the customer is comfortable with the solution being given by the retail store
(g) When handling complaints, the sales associate has to check	(vii) bind the sales associate from providing an appropriate solution to customer service problems
(h) The problems within the service system and procedure of an organization sometimes	(viii) only those problems for which they are authorized
(i) The sales associate needs to ensure that	(ix) whether the organization is also benefitted from the solution or not

10. Sate whether these statements are True or False:
a) A business progresses only by attaining a high level of customer satisfaction
b) In order to improve rapport with customers, a retailer needs to deliver reliable customer service.

11. A sales associate in a retail store is trying to solve a customer service problem. Arrange in order the steps he/she should follow while solving the problem.
a) Check whether the solution finally selected is beneficial for both the parties (organization as well as customer)
b) Involve the customer in the problem-solving process
c) Identify the possible solutions of the problem along with the customer
d) Discuss the merits and demerits of each solution with the customer.

UNIT 4: CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN SERVICE

Unit Objectives:

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

1. Explain the importance of gathering customer feedback
2. Discuss the need of analysing and interpreting customer feedback
3. List various ways to identify opportunities and propose changes

4.1 Plan Improvements in Customer Service based on Customer Feedback

4.1.1 Gathering Customer Feedback to Identify Customer

Service Improvement Opportunities The customer is often said to be the backbone of the retail industry. Therefore, the feedback received from the customer is very important. This feedback helps the retailer identify the scope of improvement in the services provided by him or her. Organisations use different ways to gather customer feedback, such as questionnaires, face-to-face interactions, surveys, and usability tests.

A typical feedback form used in an organisation is shown in the following figure:

Fig 4.1 A Customer Feedback Form

4.1.2 Analysing and Interpreting Customer Feedback to Identify Opportunities and Propose Changes

After a retail organisation collects feedback from its customers, the feedback is analysed to identify the scope of improvement in the various services provided by the organisation. The areas of improvement or opportunity identification help the organisation to propose and plan changes to improve the services. Different organisations use different methods to analyse feedback data.

4.1.3 Need of Customer Service Improvement

A good salesperson can sell almost anything to anyone. However, for organisations a sales associate deals is much more than just selling products to customers. It is also about providing after sales services and retaining customers by keeping them happy and satisfied. As a retailer, you need to maintain your customers by continuously improving your services. In the same way, organisations must ensure that they improve their products and services on a regular basis. This will help the organisation in attracting new customers while retaining its loyal customer base. Therefore, for an organisation to have a competitive advantage in the market, it must continuously improve its products and services.

4.1.4 Influence of Service Delivery on Customer

The way an organisation delivers services affects customer experience in many ways. For example, suppose you buy a camera of a well-known brand from a retail store. You get a one-year warranty with the purchase. However, within a couple of days of using the camera, you notice that one of its features is not functioning properly. You decide to go back to the store and have the gadget replaced. However, when you talk to one of the salespersons in the store, you are surprised when he/she refuses to make the replacement. Instead, the salesperson argues that the camera was damaged due to misuse. You spend two hours trying to convince the salesperson that you were sold a defective product. The salesperson finally relents and replaces the camera, but the experience leaves you angry and disappointed.

This is an example of service delivery having a negative impact on the customer. Had the salesperson promptly replaced the camera, you would have been happy with the service and may have even recommended the store to your friends.

The example also emphasises upon the need for organisations to deal with customers appropriately and take customer feedback seriously. Customer opinions must be recorded and analysed by organisations. This will help the organisation know about any shortcomings in its services and take appropriate steps to improve them.

> **Example:**
>
> Evaluating the effect of proposed changes.
>
> A retail store recently made certain changes in the way it displayed its products. The store needs to find out how the new arrangement affects the customers. One way of doing this is by keeping track of the number of repeat customers. The store can also ask the customers about their opinion about the new arrangement, whether they now find it more convenient in terms of space, movement area, product segregation, and price tagging. The store can also assign staff to interact directly with the customers.

4.2 Mechanism for Implementation of Changes in Customer Service

4.2.1 Obtaining the Approval for Changes in Customer Service Systems from the Concerned Authority

A customer service system of an organisation is a set of processes that the organisation follows to provide service to its customers. These processes (ar systems) are regulated and monitored by the concerned authorities. The concerned authorities can be managers or heads of the departments, who generally have the power to take and approve decisions. After planning the strategies to introduce the proposed changes, approval from the concerned authorities should be taken.

4.2.2 Organising the Implementation of Authorised Changes

After the approval of a plan, the next step is its implementation. While implementing the proposed changes, care should be taken that only authorised changes are implemented. Authorised changes are those which are permitted or allowed by concerned authorities and are as per organisational norms and policies.

4.2.3 Informing the Concerned People about the Changes

Before implementing the proposed changes, the sales associate must inform the concerned people about it. These are the people who are affected by the change. They can be both internal and external, such as employees, vendors, customers, and stakeholders, as shown in the following figure:

```
INTERNAL                    EXTERNAL

  Employees                   Vendors

  Management                  Customers

                              Stakeholders
```
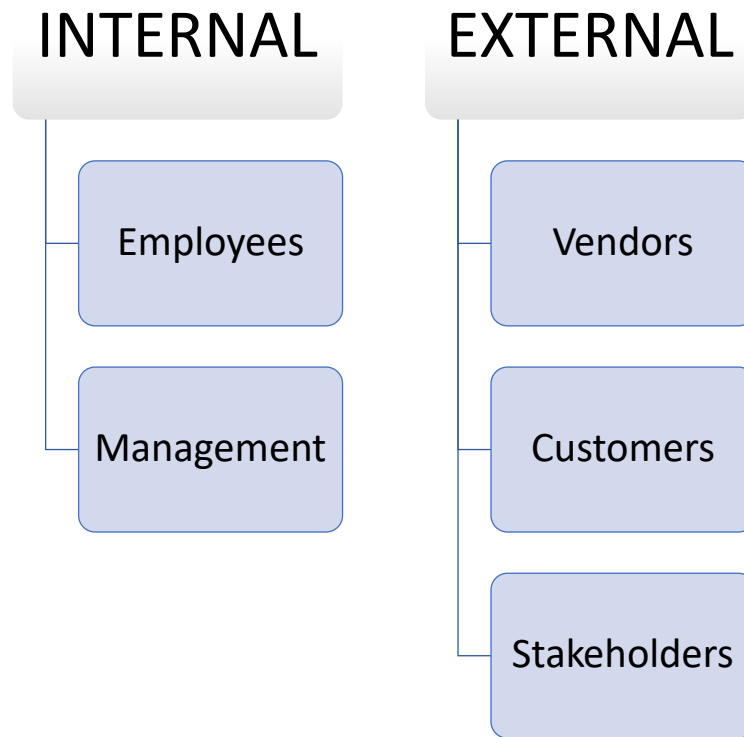
Fig 4.2 People Affected by Changes in Customer Service System Standards

4.2.4 Preparing a Business Case for the Proposed Changes in a Product or Service

Before making a change in a service or product, the sales associate of a retail store should prepare a business case to propose the changes to the sales manager. The sales associate should list the various ways in which the proposed changes will affect the organisation. A well-documented business case should give a virtual but clear insight into the possible benefits of the change.

The following points should be considered in order to implement changes according to organisational guidelines:

- Do not approach the customer personally.
- Always approach the customer during working hours.

- Do not use the data collected by someone outside the organisation unless permitted by that organisation.
- Do not use the data for personal use or disclose it to outsiders.

Let us now look at the example given below to understand how to monitor the early reactions to the changes made in an organisation.

Example:

Monitoring early reactions to change

Suppose the retail organisation you are working in is opening a new branch in another city in order to expand its reach. This step to improve services will be both welcomed and resisted within the organisation.

The early reactions will come as soon as the people learn about this change. In this particular case, the customers would be happy as they will get the facility in their city while certain employees and stakeholders may resist it, assuming that they would have to cope with transfers and increased investments, respectively. The management will have to consider these reactions carefully in order to successfully implement the change process.

Activity

Note down the points that should be followed to implement changes according to organisational guidelines.

4.2.5 Recording Feedback on the Effects of Changes

After the changes have been implemented in an organisation, it is important to review the changes by observing and recording the effect they have on the employees and processes in the organisation. This helps in understanding whether the changes are producing the desired results,

4.2.6 Advantages and Disadvantages of Change

Change is always difficult and comes with its own set of advantages and disadvantages. The figure below shows some of the main advantages and disadvantages of change:
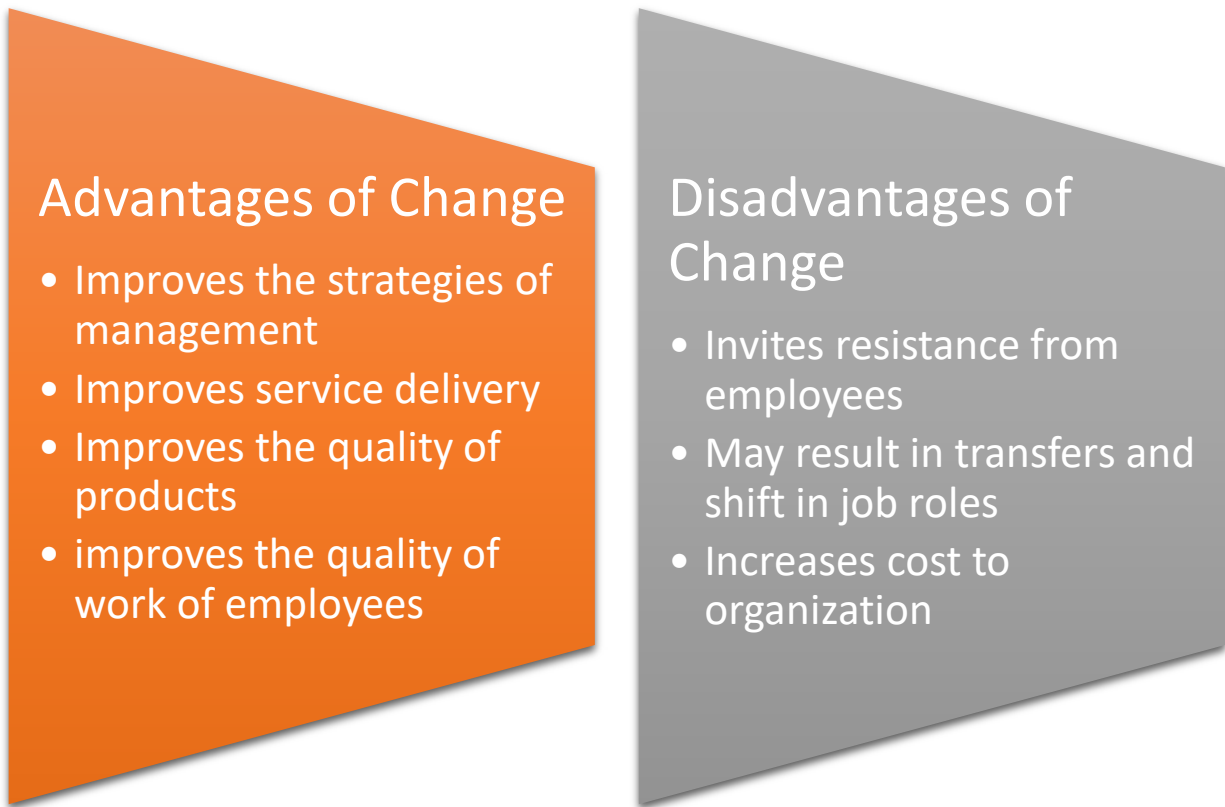
Fig 4.3 Advantages and Disadvantages of Change

Activity

Discuss with your classmates the different ways of analysing customer feedback and sharing the findings with others.

Tips

Customer feedback can be analysed and the findings shared with others by:

- Using various statistical instruments to analyse the feedback data depending on the type and length of the data

- Through internal circulation using e-mails, reports, notices, etc.

4.3 Review Changes to Promote Continuous Improvement in Customer Services

4.3.1 Using the Analysis and Interpretation of Implemented Changes in Customer Service Standards to Identify Further Opportunities for Improvement

When you do an analysis of change, various advantages and disadvantages are identified, which help in interpreting the change in terms of its success or failure. If the change succeeds in improving services, it means that the strategies used are correct and can also be followed in future. On the other hand, if the changes do not bring the expected improvements, then other ways should be identified to bring about the desired improvement.

4.3.2 Presenting Improvement Opportunities to the Concerned Authority for Implementation

When further opportunities of improvement are identified, they should be communicated to the concerned authorities. The feasibility and benefits of making the changes should be thoroughly investigated and presented to the authorities so that appropriate action can be taken.

4.3.2 Service Improvements Affecting the Balance between Overall Customer Satisfaction, Costs of Providing Service, and Regulatory Needs

When service improvement plans and strategies are implemented and become a part of the organisation, they sometimes tend to affect the balance between customer satisfaction, cost of providing services, and regulatory needs. The new plans and strategies may increase the cost of providing services, which may, in turn, disturb the budget. Employees may take some time to get used to the new system, reducing customer satisfaction. Though this imbalance is often temporary and the system soon adapts to the change, this period sometimes disturbs the regular functioning of the organisation.

4.4 Improving Changes in Services

4.4.1 Strategies to Help Improve Customer Service Standards

1
- Seek Customer Feedback

2
- Strength your Customer Service Team
- Hire and Train with right Skills
- Track performance of your customer service representative

3
- Use CRM platforms

4
- Leverage Multi-channel servicing
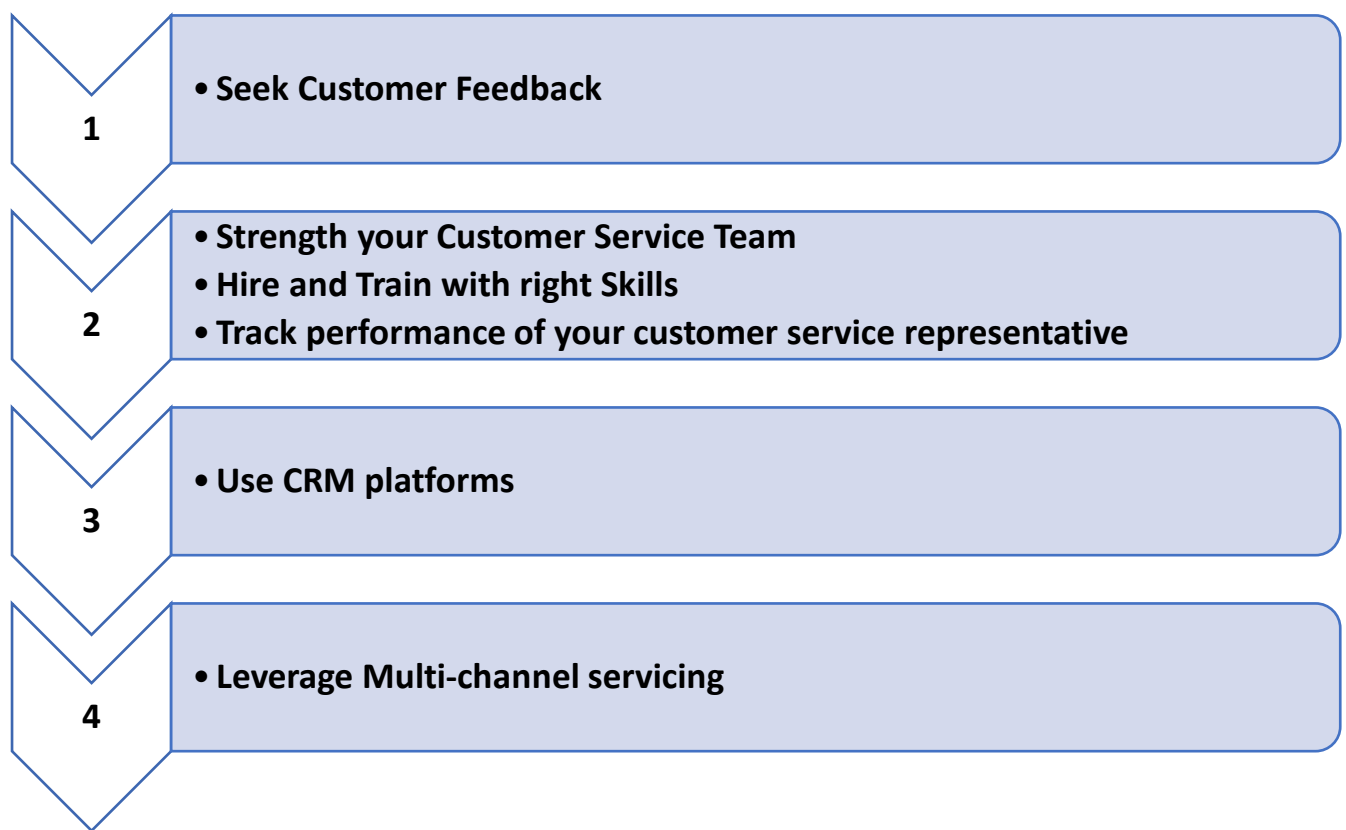
Fig 4.4 Changes to Improve Service

4.4.2 Impact of Changes in Service on Business

Providing good customer service to all of your customers is key to building your business. Customers who receive excellent service will improve the bottom line of your business by returning to you with repeat business.

- ➢ Good Publicity – a retail customer service key
- ➢ Higher profits – a happy customer leads to higher profits
- ➢ Consumer satisfaction
- ➢ Employee motivation and employee moral
- ➢ Increased responsibility
- ➢ Satisfied Stakeholders
- ➢ Reduced Risk of business failures
- ➢ Increased efficiency

Exercise

1. A customer is often said to be the _____ of the retail industry.

2. A sales associate is also involved in providing _____ and retaining customers by keeping them happy and satisfies.

3. A _____ of an organization is a set of processes that the organization follows to provide service to its customers.

After sales service; Customer service system; Backbone

---

4. Some of the different ways to collect, understand and present customer feedback are (Tick the correct options):

(a) Requesting customers to fill a questionnaire

(b) Keeping a suggestion booklet at the counters

(c) Using direct questioning technique

(d) All of the above

5. Match the following:

(a) After a retail organization collects feedback from its customers,	(i) using various statistical instruments depending on the type and length of the data
(b) The way an organization delivers services	(ii) it is analysed to identify the scope of improvement in the various services provided by the organization
(c) Customer feedback can be analysed by	(iii) which may in turn disturb the budget
(d) New service improvement plans and strategies may increase the costs of providing services,	(iv) affects customer experience in many ways

UNIT 5: WORK IN TEAM & ORGANIZATION

Unit Objectives:

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

1. Discuss the strategies to achieve effective teamwork
2. Express the importance of maintaining communication etiquette with colleagues
3. List the guidelines of maintaining etiquette with male/female colleagues
4. Outline the ways of maintaining etiquette with male/female colleagues
5. Explain the ways of building healthy relationship with colleagues
6. Recognise the importance of showing respect to colleagues and managers
7. List ways of working with colleagues to achieve targets
8. Understand the benefits of effective listening to colleagues
9. Justify the importance of working within job responsibilities
10. Illustrate the essentials of effective work instructions
11. List the points which help completing work according to requirements
12. Decide when to involve other colleagues to complete the work

5.1 Demonstrate the Organization Standards by Appearance and Behaviour

It must be remembered that satisfaction of consumer/ customer is the ultimate goal of all economic activity. Since any other activity e.g., production, exchange, distribution is meaningless if they are not able to provide satisfaction to the consumer.

The study of Organisational Behaviour involves understanding, prediction and control of human behaviour and the factors which influence the performance of people in an organisation. Organisational Behaviour is the study of human behaviour in organisations to make more active human performance to achieve organisational objectives as well as human objectives. Organisational Behaviour aims at finding out those ways in which people will contribute in best possible manner.

Standards of Behaviour are a set of official guidelines meant to govern employees' actions, speech, attitudes and more. How do Standards of Behaviour differ from typical organizational

policies and Codes of Conduct? Instead of being phrased in terms of corporate goals, desired outcomes, and general dos and don'ts, standards describe specific desired behaviour. They can cover any and all aspects of your workplace: from interactions with [clients] to phone etiquette to good manners (knocking on doors) to positive attitude markers (smiling or saying thank you).

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Standards of staff appearance in retail

All officers and staff have a personal responsibility to maintain the standard of appearance in an organization. Managers and supervisors are responsible for ensuring all personnel achieve standards of appearance set out in the form and they should give recommendation and guidance wherever necessary.

Standard of dressing and appearance perceive to offer a number of benefits to the organization, such as alignment of employee's appearance with the organization's brand, the professionalization of job role, creation of a sense of organizational identity and health and safety concerns.

5.1.2 Precautions for Appearance and Behaviour

Precautions to be taken by male staff

The total staff of the organization should be cautious of the appearance and behaviour.

- The prescribed uniform should be neat and clean and ironed.
- Hair must be short, clean and tidy.
- One is expected to have a clean-shaven look.
- Nails should be cut or trimmed neatly at regular intervals.
- Avoid earrings and bracelets during official hours.

Precautions to be taken by female staff

The precautions for female staff are as given below:

- Female staff with long hair should tie their hair at all times during official hours.
- No flowers hooked on the hair are desirable.
- Avoid dark colour nail paints and long nails.
- No heavy jewellery should be worn.
- Don't wear dangling earrings, noisy anklets and bangles on the floor.
- Apply light make-up

A satisfied customer contributes to the retail revenue for many years, by his/her purchases and recommendations and referrals to other customers. Now, let us try to understand various aspects of effective behaviour and dealing with client/customers.

5.1.3 Dealing with customer

When there is not much difference between your product and the product of your competitor, there needs to be a BIG difference in the quality of service you provide your customer. We have to hire people with good communicative skills.

5.1.3.1 Greeting customer: Always try to greet the customer as soon as they arrive your store.

The way you greet your customer goes a long way toward setting the tone for the customer's experience with you and your business. A warm, sincere greeting will make a positive first impression and dissipate the customer's apprehension. An effective greeting should also help to identify the customer's needs, which can set the stage for making a sale. A greeting should occur as soon as you are aware of the presence of the customer. If you make eye contact with the customer and look away, he may feel slighted and get the impression that you are not eager to help. If you are with another customer, you can still greet the customer and let him know you will be with him as soon as possible. Otherwise, the customer may think you are too busy for him and could decide to leave. In additional to welcoming the customer, an effective greeting also helps to uncover the customer's needs. For example, if you work in a shoe store, say, "What type of shoes are you looking for today?" If you don't recognize the customer, you could say, "Have you been here before?" If the answer is no, it gives you an opportunity to start a dialogue by telling the customer about the establishment and its products.

Identification

If you haven't met the customer before or know her by name, introduce yourself and offer a handshake. In many cases, the customer will offer her name in return. Use the customer's name frequently during your interaction, as this results in a more personal approach and makes the customer feel that you are concerned about her needs.

Warning

Avoid using "May I help you?" or "Can I help you find something?" when greeting the customer These phrases are very broad and do nothing to address the customer's needs. They also give the customer the opportunity to give the standard response of "No thanks, I'm just looking," which is really just a way of saying, "Leave me alone. I don't want your help."

Among greeting customers with a smile, a Sales person should do:

- **Make eye contact –** This creates a connection and also assures you they have seen you, as well.

- **Have friendly body language –** You should avoid slouching, turning your back to customers and approaching customers from behind. No one wants to be startled!

- **Take your time –** Don't immediately feel like you need to say hello when someone walks in your store. They should be in your store – not just walking through your door – before you say hello.

Additionally, consider what you will say – as well as what you won't say – once your customers are in your store. Simply saying "hello" is often the only thing you need to immediately say. Beyond this, however, you should offer an additional greeting that lends itself to getting to know your customer more.

Finally, customers will lead you to your next steps. Support then with genuine care and enthusiastic support. Be positive in your customer service, and avoid making them ever feel like a burden (yes, this actually happens sometimes). And in return? Enjoy more sales!

Fig 5.1 Greeting Customers

5.1.3.2 Communicate the customer about their value

Customer value is the perception of what a product or service is worth to a customer versus the possible alternatives. Worth means whether the customer feels s/he got benefits and services over what s/he paid.

What the customer pays is not only price but also non-price terms such as time, effort, energy and inconvenience.

Creating customer value increases customer satisfaction and the customer experience. (The reverse is also true. A good customer experience will create value for a customer.) Creating customer value (better benefits versus price) increases loyalty, market share, price, reduces errors and increases efficiency. Higher market share and better efficiency lead to higher profits

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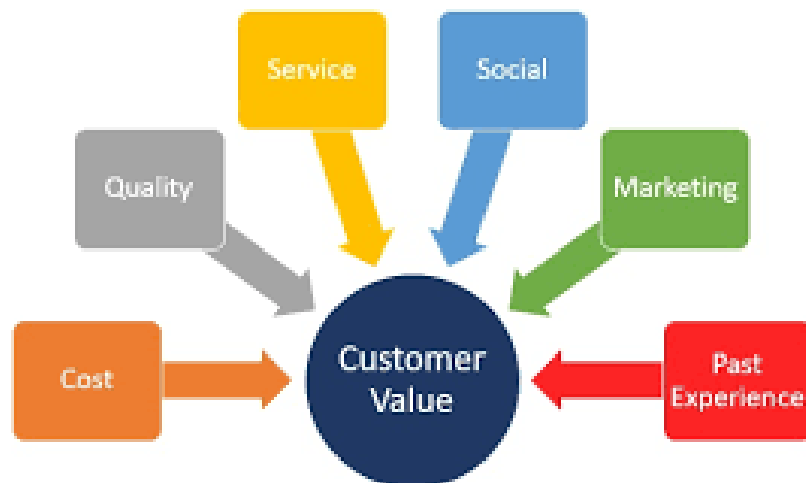
Fig 5.2 Customer Value

Communicate customer that they are valued customer

When your customers feel valued, they stay loyal to your business. Loyal customers also help you get new customers by sharing your business to their friends and co-workers. They do free word of mouth marketing for you and as a result, your business grows. Therefore, you need to value your customers and make them feel special. Below are five ways to do so.

1. **Say "thank you."**

Express your appreciation and thank your customers for doing business with you. You can thank them by sending a card on holidays or a coupon via email for their next purchases. Also, don't forget to celebrate your customers' birthdays or anniversary days if you have this

information. Doing business is not always about bringing in new customers but also about keeping the existing ones. Therefore, make your customers feel remembered.

2. **Pay attention.**

Pay attention to your customers' inquiries. Customers can use a variety of channels to communicate with you, you need to track all of them and be responsive. The thumb rule is to solve the customers' problems within 24 hours. Also, you always need to have a staff available during business hours to answer customers' calls, you can also take advantage of some automated tools to respond emails, chat messages or social media messages.

3. **Listen to feedback.**

Try to find out what your customers like and dislike by listening to their inquiries and feedback. If you can update your product or service according to your customers' needs, then, you can be a more successful business.

4. **Use CRM.**

Take advantage of the CRM tools and create a VIP list of customers. You can give these VIP customers special discounts or host an event just for them. Having a VIP list is a must for every business in order to thank the customers who give you the most business.

5. **Be presentable**

Always be presentable as a business. This means that your workspace and employees should be clean, neat and professional. If you have an online business, your website and mobile app should always be updated with the latest technology.

5.1.3.3 Identify customer expectation

Seeing the cut -throat competition in the market, the customer should be treated like a king in the present day. A retailer or shopkeeper should know the importance and value of customers.

Customer expectation are increasing day-by-day in the modern times Customer expectation is the total perceived value from the products or services. If the actual experience of customer with goods is more than the perceived value, the customer will be satisfied. If the actual experience of customer is less than the perceived value, the customer will be dissatisfied or disappointed. If the retailer is unable to fulfil the customer expectation, their existence will not stand for longer and their reputation will be tarnished. The expectation of customer changes with time and needs.

5.1.3.4 Treat customer courteously

Customer courtesy refers to all of the words and actions that customer service representatives use to show their customers recognition and respect, tone of voice, word choice, helpfulness, enthusiasm, respect etc. You show a customer courtesy by

acknowledging him and giving him attention quickly after he arrives. A warm, friendly smile and attitude when you approach are critical as well. Helping a new customer find the product or service he needs by listening and making a friendly recommendation may seal the deal on a sale.

Common Courtesy Practices

1. Show respect for others.
2. Always apologize when you do something wrong.
3. When someone is having a conversation, do not interrupt.
4. When you change your plans, let others know.
5. Respect the needs of others in public.
6. Never embarrass another person.
7. When refusing an invitation, be kind and honest.

5.1.3.5 Informed customer and reassured

According to the European Union, "Information is a deciding factor for consumers when making their choices and affects both consumer interests and their confidence in the products and services circulating within the market. Customer should be given assurance. Customer Assurance involves, when needed, real-time monitoring of a customer's purchased services and in analyzing this data to note trends, preferences, usage problems and eventually proactive assurance of customer-level or service-level issues.

5.2 Support Work Team

5.2.1 Working as a Team

When you work in a retail environment, you'll be part of a team. If you work in a small store, it may be a team with only a few members. In a larger store, however, there might be lots of teams that have to work with one another, such as the fruit and vegetables and meat departments of a supermarket Being part of a team doesn't mean you need to socialise with one another outside the work place also, although this often happens with good teams. However, you must:

- Support one another

- Communicate effectively

- Achieve results or goals

- Be able to resolve conflicts

Each member of the team is responsible for helping to achieve these things. So it is important that you know what a good team is, how it works and how you can help.

5.2.2 Sharing Information and Making Commitments with Colleagues

Information sharing can be defined as the exchange of information among employees for accomplishing tasks/goals. These tasks/goals further act as commitments made by a retailer. Sharing information and making commitments with colleagues helps in improving team work that in turn impacts the team's productivity.
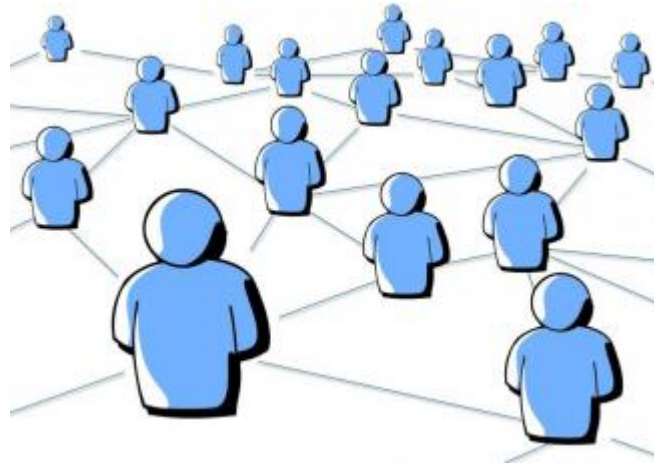
Fig 5.3 Sharing Information and Commitment

Information sharing within a team can happen in three situations:

- All team members are willing to share their ideas and concepts

- All team members have adequate information for sharing

- All embers are capable of taking decision independently

5.2.3 Sharing Work-related Information with Colleagues

In a retail store, work-related information can be shared in the form of data or files: Information sharing is very important among team members, and is considered as one of the most essential managerial tools.

Fig 5.4 Sharing Work related information

In a retail store, work-related information can be shared through various media, which are listed as follows:

- ➢ Departmental Meetings : It is one of the most effective for sharing information with colleagues. In departmental meetings, all participants get equal chance to share their ideas and address the issues related to a business process.
- ➢ Internet : Another very effective communication that helps employees to share work-related information very easily and quickly
- ➢ Bulletins : Written notices and bulletins are good tools for informing the employees regarding any changes in the business process or rules and policies of the organization.
- ➢ Stat Sheets : This communication is mainly used in the accounts department of any organization for sharing finance, quality and other significant reports

The different types of information that can be shared with colleagues are as follows:

- ➢ Confidential: The information that can be accessed only through strict security systems

- ➢ Public: The information that can be shared publicly and requires no authorisation

- ➢ Restricted: The information that can be accessed only by restricted users

Example:

Analysing the process of sharing information

Ms. Manisha Tiwari works as a site engineer with Mittal Constructions Ltd. She is currently working

On a new bridge construction project. One day. Mr. Ajay Sharma (contractor of the project) told Ms. Manisha that there is a shortage of cement supply at the site, and this has hindered the progress of the project Ms. Manisha passes on the information to the finance department of her company. And next day, the issue is resolved. What communication medium did Ms. Manisha use for conveying the information?

Analysis

Ms. Manisha used the Internet as the communication medium for sharing the required information. With the help of the Internet, she quickly sent a mail regarding the shortage of cement supply to the finance department. He also included all the important budget requirements of the project in the mail that helped the finance department to take proper actions immediately so that the issue can be resolved on priority basis.

5.2.4 Exchanging Opinion and Views with Colleagues

In all retail stores, every employee should have the right to exchange his/her views and opinions each other. Exchanging opinion and views with other colleagues helps in creating unity and a healthy work environment.

Exchange of opinions and views among colleagues directly impacts the company's output in the market.

5.2.5 Passing Important Information to Colleagues

Important information means the information that is very crucial and confidential for the retail. Store For sharing important information, a secured communication medium should be used. While sharing important information with colleagues, it is equally important to maintain the integrity of the information.

Fig 5.5 Secured Communication Medium

5.2.6 Seeking Clarification and Advice from Colleagues or Managers

For a smooth functioning of a retail store, it is important to seek clarifications and advice from colleagues and managers. It helps in maintaining good working relationships and assures the delivery of high-quality work on time.

The advantages of seeking clarifications and advice from colleagues and managers are as follows:

- Removes any flaws in the business processes
- Maintains good working environment at the work place
- Assures timely delivery of products and services
- Gives an impression of commitment and good character
- Enhances a team's productivity
- Avoids conflicts within a retail store

5.2.7 Making Commitment with Colleagues

In any retail store, it is essential for the management to make certain commitments with colleagues. These commitments impact the success of the retail store. The commitments should be made by adhering to the code of ethics of the retail store.

Fig 5.6 Team Commitment

The key commitments that should be shared with colleagues are listed as follows:

- Practising standard ethics in the organisation

- Giving greatest importance to the client's interest

- Delivering high quality of work to the clients

- Presenting rewards for delivering targets on time

- Resolving inter-personal issues on priority basis

5.2.8 Explaining Reasons for Not Fulfilling a Commitment

Every business process is set-up with a specific goal that has to be achieved within a defined time limit. Before assigning a project to a team, the employees must be made aware of the prior commitments made by the retail store.

Fig 5.7 Failure in Achieving a Goal

There are various reasons because of which employees fail to follow the commitment policies of a retail store. The key reasons are listed as follows:

- Lack of communication

- Poor team coordination

- Unclear project plan

- Undefined objectives

- Inflexible reporting structure

Explaining company's commitment policies towards the customers helps the employees in focusing on their goal. Apart from this, if the employees fail to achieve their goals, they must be aware of the reasons because of which the commitment could not be met on time.

Example:

Analysing the reasons for not fulfilling a commitment

APS Software Ltd. Is a software services provider company in New Delhi that has developed a high reputation in the IT market in terms of delivering its services on time. Mr. Aarav Verma works as the project manager of the PHP team, and his team has been recently assigned a new project.

Mr. Aarav organised a meeting with his team members to explain the scope and requirements of the project, which has a deadline of one week. He also explained the company's commitment towards delivering its services to the clients. However, even after the completion of one week, his team members were not able to deliver the project.

The team members' failure to achieve the goal on time affected the company's reputation. Mr. Aarav reorganised a meeting with his team members to know the causes for delay in the project. In the meeting, he identified that the key reason due to which the team failed to adhere to the company's commitment policies was lack of communication. Because of this the team members were not able to share their ideas and information with one another that might have helped them in achieving the goal on time.

To avoid such a situation in future, Mr. Aarav must encourage his team members to develop trust and cooperation within their team, He needs to apply the policy of open communication in his team that would motivate his team members to give suggestions and clarify queries. This policy will surely help the team to focus on its goal.

5.2.9 Responsibilities of a Sales Associate Working in a Team

In your role as a retail sales associate, you have responsibilities towards:

- Your manager/supervisor
- The customer
- Your colleagues

All these people rely on you to fulfil your responsibilities in different ways. If you do not, there will be consequences for them and for you. For example, if you do not turn up for work, you could leave your store short-staffed. This can cause inconvenience to:

- Your colleagues: because they may have to cope with extra work

- Customers: because they may have to wait longer to be served .

- Your supervisor: who may have to try to find someone to fill in for you at a short notice.

So, it is important that you should know your responsibilities and meet them every time you go to work.

Tips

While sharing important information with the colleagues, it is important to follow certain tips, which are listed as follows:

- The communication medium should be safe and secure

- The information must reflect its confidentiality and importance toward the organisation

- The information must be clear and goal-oriented

5.2.10 Developing Effective Work Habits

5.2.10.1 Developing Team Communication

Teams need to be effective in communication in three ways:

1. With one another - individuals rely on one another in a work team. They are one another's Internal customers.
2. With other teams - often, in larger stores, there are different departments and therefore different teams. These are internal customers too.
3. With customers - teams need to communicate directly with external customers

Most retail organisations that value effective teamwork will already have strategies in place to encourage this. If not, maybe your team could consider adopting some of these strategies.

5.2.10.2 Developing Effective Team Communication Strategies

- Regular team meetings: Teams should meet at a set time each week, fortnightly or monthly to talk about problems and successes. These team meetings should be seen as a priority event and should not be cancelled when something else comes up.

- Other opportunities for members to give their ideas: This might be in the form of a suggestion box or an employer contribution scheme.

- A variety of ways to be made available to team members to assert their ideas: A team is made up of many personalities and some may be more or less comfortable about making contributions publicly.

- Easy access to other team members: A network of communication, such as telephone, email. Or SMS should be used, especially if the team is in different locations.

- An environment that encourages open discussion: This can be useful if there is a problem among team members.

- Formal procedures for complaints: This is critical if the matter is not resolved even after an open discussion

- Training: To make sure all team members are aware of and agree to the communication strategies in place.

- Feedback: A method for telling all team members that their ideas have been received

Resolving Conflicts with Colleagues One of the most worrying situations at any work place is the conflict among colleagues. Conflicts at work place are common, but they have ill-effects on both the company's productivity and employee's efficiency.

Fig 5.8 Conflicts among Colleagues

The four main reasons for conflicts at work place are listed as follows:

- Conflicting Resources : Conflicts occur when two or more employees need to access the same resources at the same
- Conflicting Styles : Conflicts occur when working styles of different employees clash
- Unpredictable Policies : Conflicts occur when the policies are not clearly stated to the employees
- Conflicting Goals : Conflicts occur when the goal is not clearly defined by the managers

5.2.10.3 Discussing and Resolving Issues Mutually

When a conflict takes place among employees at a work place, reaching a positive resolution is always the ultimate goal. The resolution of conflicts at work place is very important for creating a healthy work environment for everyone.

Fig 5.9 Discussing and Resolving Issues

> **Example:**
>
> Identifying and resolving conflicts in a retail store
>
> TM is a renowned automobile manufacturing company in India. Ms. Anjana works as a human resource manager at the Jamshedpur plant of TM. One day, a conflict took place between Mr. Rahul (the supervisor) and Mr. Vinod (the labour union leader) because the labour union leader demanded a hike of 30 per cent in the workers' salary, Mr. Rahul reported this matter to Ms. Anjana. What steps should Ms. Anjana take to resolve the conflict?
>
> **Analysis**
>
> Ms. Anjana should organise a meeting with both Mr. Rahul and Mr. Vinod to analyse the situation and reasons for the conflict. Before finding the solution, Ms. Anjana must identify the consequences of the conflict on the company's productivity and share it with both, the supervisor and the labour union leader. After this, Ms. Anjana must find a solution that can prove beneficial for both, the company as well as the labourers: If Ms. Anjana thinks that the situation cannot be resolved by communication, she should consult her company lawyer for finding a suitable solution.

> **Tips**
>
> There are some essential tips that should be followed while resolving conflicts. These tips are listed as follows:
>
> - Communicate the cause of the conflict clearly
> - Invite the person involved in the conflict to state the situation clearly

- Try to resolve the conflict as soon as possible because it gets worse with time
- Identify the consequences of the conflict on the team's performance
- Consult a corporate lawyer, if the conflict is worsening with time

5.3 Work Effective in Organization

5.3.1 Supporting the Team in Working Effectively

Effective team work is necessary for achieving common goals on time. Task effectiveness helps the team to work positively towards achieving its task-related goals. In any retail store, effective team work always results in success and improved productivity.

Fig 5.10 Effective Team Work

Effective team work can be achieved by following certain strategies that are listed as follows:

Alignment of the team size and resources with the task

Development of a sense of mutual ownership of the task and joint accountability for its accomplishment

Synchronisation of effort by team members

Developmental team goals with a shared vision
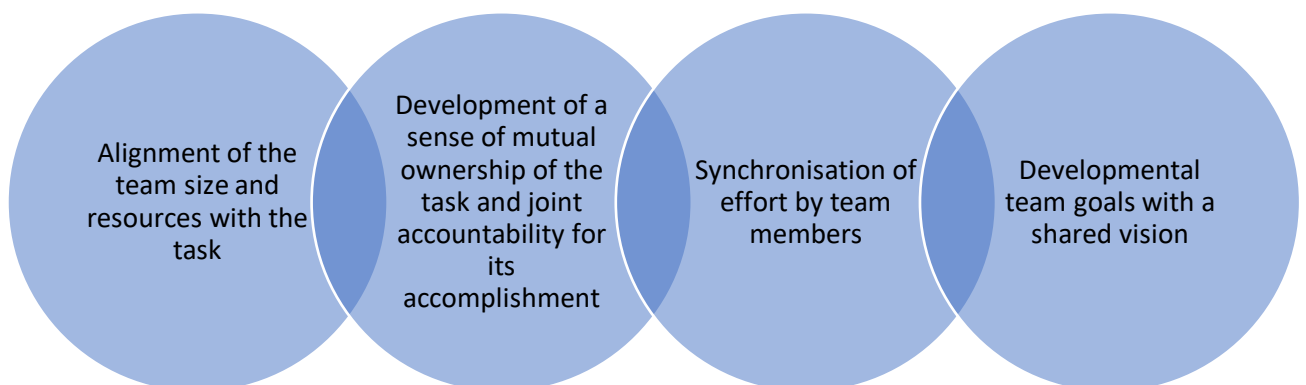
Fig. 5.11 Strategies for Effective Team Work

5.3.2 Communication Etiquette with Colleagues

Appropriate communication etiquette helps in smoothening business processes within a retail store. Both "Etiquette" and "Communication are called soft skills, and they are mandatory to be maintained in a retail store for its smooth functioning.

All employees should follow standard communication etiquette while talking or conveying information within a retail store. Maintaining communication etiquette helps in developing healthy relationships with colleagues, and this ultimately improves the work environment.

Fig 5.12 Communication Etiquette

Example:

Importance of communication etiquette

Mr. Raman Malhotra works as a Senior Operations Manager in TMR Communication Ltd. He is in charge of the video editing team. He speaks in a very rude manner with his team members. Owing to his egoistic attitude, most of his team members do not convey their ideas and his team's performance is below average. What is the reason behind the low performance of Mr. Raman Malhotra's team?

Analysis

Mr. Raman does not have proper communication etiquette to deal with his colleagues. Because of this, his team members feel uncomfortable sharing their ideas and concepts

5.3.3 Maintaining Etiquette with Male Colleagues

Maintaining communication etiquette with male colleagues in a retail store is an essential part of communication skills. For example, if a female colleague is interacting with a male colleague, she should speak in a formal but soft language to convey the information in a professional way.

Fig: 5.13 Maintaining Etiquette with Male Colleagues

There are certain tips that a female employee must follow while communicating with a male colleague. These tips are listed as follows:

- Maintain a reasonable physical distance

- Always with your colleague

- Talk in soft but formal language

- Speak clearly to convey come intonation

- Listen to your colleague with patience

- Do not talk about any personal issues unless you know him well

- Do not touch the person if you do not share a rapport with him

Example:

Evaluation of the significance of maintaining etiquette with male colleagues

Miss Puja Verma is the Editor-in-Chief of XYS News channel. She wants to broadcast the full coverage of the Phailin storm, which is about to hit Odisha, on her news channel. She calls her Senior Reporter Mr. Aryan Verma to convey the information.

Miss Puja: Good Morning, Mr. Aryan.

Mr. Aryan: Good Morning, Ma'am.

Miss Puja: I want to discuss some urgent topic with you.

Mr. Aryan: Sure Ma'am.

Miss Puja: Mr. Aryan, I want that our news channel broadcasts the complete coverage of the Phailin storm, which is about to hit Odisha in two days.

Mr. Aryan: Okay Ma'am.

Miss Puja: I want you to go there and take the full coverage of the storm and its effects.

Mr. Aryan: Sure Ma'am, I will definitely do that.

Miss Puja: Okay, I am organising a meeting in the conference room at 4 pm today. Mr. Deepak Bohra will join us for the meeting. We will discuss the requirements of the whole operation.

Mr. Aryan: Okay Ma'am, I will be there on time.

Miss Puja: Thanks, Mr. Aryan.

If a female employee follows these tips while communicating with her male colleagues, she will certainly be able to convey the information in a professional manner.

5.3.4 Maintaining Etiquette with Female Colleagues

In a retail store, a team can have both male and female employees. So, there is regular interaction between male and female employees. In such a scenario, male employees must maintain etiquette while communicating with their female colleagues.

There are certain tips that every male employee should follow while talking to or conveying information to their female colleagues. These tips are listed as follows:

➢ Always wish your female colleague

➢ Avoid personal conversations during professional meetings

➢ Speak in a smooth and clear language

➢ Communicate in an open but approachable manner.

5.3.5 Building Healthy Relationship with Colleagues

It is very essential to build healthy relationships with all colleagues at work place. It helps in reducing stress and creating a positive environment at work place. By emphasising on

developing positive relationships with your seniors and colleagues at your work place, you can create a healthy working environment.

There are various ways in which you can build a healthy relationship with all your colleagues at work place. These ways are listed as follows:

Share at Meetings	• Share your knowledge and proficiency with your colleagues
Speak Politely	• Speak in a soft language with your colleagues
Be Supportive	• Show concern and always help your colleagues
Collaborate	• Ask your colleagues to work in collaboration within a team
Be Appreciative	• Appreciate your colleagues for their productivity

Fig 5.14 Ways to Build a Healthy Relationship with Colleagues

Building and maintaining healthy work relationships not only improves the productivity of a retail store but also helps the employees in their career development.

5.3.6 Showing Respect to Colleagues and Managers

In every retail store, all employees should be courteous and respect their colleagues and managers.

Showing respect forms a good impression in front of others it is essential to identify and recognise the roles, concerns, and responsibilities of colleagues and managers in a retail store. Given below are some tips that will help you develop healthy relationships with your colleagues and managers:

➢ Treat everybody at you work place with courtesy kindness and politeness

➢ Take the feedback of your seniors positively

➢ Do not criticise any colleague things

➢ Do not force your decision on other colleagues

➢ Let others express their ideas freely

Example:

Importance of showing respect at your work place

Mr. Wendy is the Production head at MS Car Factory. One day, the labour union called for a strike. This hindered the production of cars in the factory. Mr. Wendy held a meeting with Mr. Ram (labour union leader) to know the reason for the strike. After the meeting, the labour union got back to work What technique did Mr. Wendy use to get the labour union back to work?

Analysis

In the meeting, Mr. Wendy used a very soft language while talking to Mr. Ram. She told Mr. Ram that he respects the demand of the labour union, and assured him that next month he will definitely distribute the bonus for the labour union along with a hike of 5 per cent in their salary. From this, it is clear that despite being the productions head, Mr. Wendy has respect for his labour union. This respect motivated the labour union to call off the strike and get back to work.

5.3.7 Working with Colleagues to Achieve Goals

All employees in a retail store should work in collaboration with their colleagues to achieve goals in time. Working in cooperation with colleagues helps create a healthy working environment. There are certain strategies that can be used while working with colleagues to achieve targets on time. These are listed as follows:

Fig. 5.15 Strategies to be Used While Working with Colleagues to Achieve Targets

Working as a team signifies that you are part of a shared body, where every member is working towards a mutual goal It also signifies that you need to understand and respect different points of view, working habits, and qualities of your team members

5.3.8 Benefits of Effective Listening to Colleagues

When you are listening to your colleagues, you are expressing respect towards their ideas and concepts. Thus, effective listening helps you in understanding their concerns better and in resolving the problems more efficiently. The benefits of effective listening are listed as follows:

- ➢ Provides a better understanding of problems
- ➢ Helps in earning respect of Colleagues
- ➢ Gives an impression of commitment and good character
- ➢ Enhances the prospect of career growth

- ➢ Shows professionalism
- ➢ Develops loyalty and trust

Tips

Etiquettes also cover personal presentation of employees. Personal presentation refers to many things, not just what you wear. Store policies about personal presentation may cover:

- Uniform or dress code – what to wear and when to wear it

- Makeup-how much, if any, is acceptable

- Jewellery-how much, if any, is acceptable

- Hair-length, style, neatness

- Personal hygiene- including clean nails, teeth, etc.

- Behaviour – how to behave while representing the organisation, including behaviour towards customers.

It's important to remember that one store's expectations for personal presentation may be quite different from the other. For example, what's acceptable in an alternative music store may be quite different to what's expected in a supermarket.

Also, different jobs may have specific requirements for comfort and hygiene reasons. For example, workers at hospitals may have to wear face masks for safety reasons.

5.4 Help in Planning of Own and Others

5.4.1 Working According to Company Guidelines

Company guidelines establish the rules of conduct within an organisation. Guidelines define the responsibilities of both the employees and the employer. Company policies and procedures are put in place to protect the rights of employees as well as the business interest of employers.

Employees, including managers and supervisors, are expected to uphold company policy and work according to it. The employees should complete their tasks accurately by being flexible and adapting to work plans and procedures as per the company policies

Fig. 5.16 Company Guidelines

5.4.2 Working within Job Responsibility

In order to improve effectiveness of employees, it is important that employees understand their roles and responsibilities. This will help them understand the job or task that they are required to perform as an individual within a team. An expected behaviour of an employee towards his/ her position in an organisation can be defined as a role. But when we speak of the job in a team to achieve desired outcome, it is known as responsibility. Responsibility is how accountable you are for the results produced by your role.

Fig 5.17 Job Description

If the role and responsibility is misunderstood, it can lead to:

- Miscommunication between employees
- Misunderstanding between employees
- Increased stress at workplace
- Undesirable outcomes

5.4.3 Understanding Work Requirements

The process of understanding work requirements comprises various tasks that determine the needs to meet the desired outcome. The organisation must consider the contradictory requirements of different employees while determining the needs.

The requirements for work should always be measurable, actionable, traceable, and related to recognised business needs and must be explained to all the employees.

Fig 5.18 Checklist of Requirements

The guidelines to be followed while analysing the work requirements are as follows:

- Gather important information related to the project

- Write down requirement specification

- Validate the requirement specification

- Maintain the requirement specification

5.4.4 Understanding Work-related Instructions

To perform a job or task efficiently, it is important to understand the job and its expected outcome. Usually, the job comes with a set of instructions that may include how to perform the job, the minimum acceptable quality, or the time of delivery. There are two types of job-related instructions: verbal or written. The ability to read and comprehend the written instructions is necessary for all jobs and is the key to performing the job well.

There are various strategies that can be implemented by the project managers and seniors to help the employees understand job-related instructions, for instance, keeping a written instruction very brief and direct, and using bullet points and simple language.

Fig 5.19 Providing Clear and Concise Instructions

The following are the four essentials of effective work instructions:

- Sincere
- Accessible
- Consistent
- Clear

As we have already discussed, planning and organising is important for completing a task on time and for achieving the pre-decided outcome. Typically, all the requirements including technical and non-technical resources are decided in the planning stage. Technical resources refer to what employees need in order to perform a task. Some standard examples of technical resources are information material and tools. However, it is very common that employees need some kind of help during the course of their work. In such scenarios, employees should inform their seniors or managers about the resource they need. The manager needs to provide the required resources when the need arises.

For example, employees may have to fix equipment that is newly installed in the factory or equipment whose repairing procedure they are not aware of. In this case, they can ask for the Help Manual of the equipment or seek help from a person, who is aware of the procedure.

5.4.5 Completing Work According to Requirements

Every task or assignment has its own requirements. These requirements are conveyed by the project manager or supervisor to an individual employee or to a team while assigning the task. The success of any assignment is measured on the basis of how the requirements are fulfilled. If the requirements are not met, the task is considered to be incomplete. Therefore, before starting a new task, establish and agree on requirements with the appropriate people.

Some of the common reasons of not fulfilling requirements include:

➢ Not understanding the requirements

➢ Assuming requirements

➢ Hesitating to ask

➢ Time constraints

➢ Ignoring requirements intentionally

There are several points that help you finish the task according to the requirements:

• Note down the requirements clearly during brief

• Clear any doubt with the project manager before starting the task

• Maintain a checklist of requirements while performing the task

• In-depth study of the requirement

• Check whether the requirements have been met before submitting the task

5.4.6 Showing Flexibility and Adapting to Work Plans

In many organisations, malls, or departmental stores, employees work in shifts due to long and continuous working schedule. Sometimes, change in working shift does make employees unhappy and they show resistance. As a good organisational behaviour and practice, one should show flexibility in adapting to new working shifts. If you show flexibility towards your organisation then organisation will also show flexibility in your times of need. Also, any change in work plan should be adopted without showing any discontent or complaint. Any rescheduling in work plan is done by managers or supervisors due to the arrival of some

urgent work or change in the priority of completion of the work, due to a pressure from customers.

5.4.7 Seeking Advice

Many times in our professional lives, the workload becomes unmanageable. Although this is a very common issue at a workplace, it still can cause a great deal of stress in our lives. We may need help on several factors, such as handling excessive workload, completing work that is beyond our scope, and or due to any personal problem. In such a scenario, seeking help from our colleagues or seniors provides a way out.

Fig 5.20 Asking for Help from Seniors

In general, we hesitate to ask for help, as we tend to think it creates a negative image of ourselves to others. In the initial days of joining at an organisation, colleagues, seniors, and managers used to offer general support, advice, and training to the employees. As we gradually learn about work process, we tend to get hesitant to ask for help, as we are expected to complete our jobs on our own. Organisations can create an atmosphere of coordinating work culture where such inhibitions can be reduced to a minimum.

Tips

The following points should be kept in mind while seeking help from a senior:

- Choose the person (manager or team leader) you want to ask for help

- Seek a suitable time from that person for the meeting

- Be courteous

- Share your problems without being negative

- Listen to what the person has to say

- Try and implement the solution, if you are satisfied

- Thank the person in any case

5.4.8 Demonstrating Problem-Solving Skills

Self-thinking or self-realisation is the best tool that paves the way in right decision-making. It helps in polishing and fine-tuning ideas that come from different sources through direct or indirect participation and interaction. A polished idea has a greater chance of success than a raw idea. Helping others at workplace helps the organisation to achieve its goals on time.

Fig 5.21 Self thinking for Decision Making

STEPS

Steps for solving a customer service problem by a sales associate.

STEP 1:
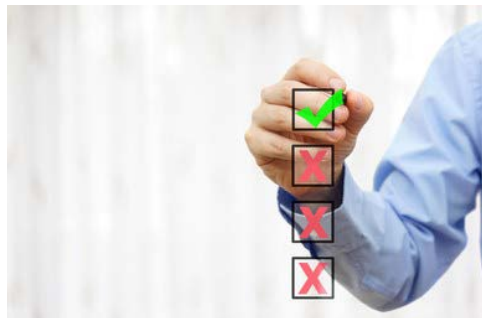Identifying the problem

STEP 2:
Interpreting the problem

STEP 3:

Analyzing the problem

STEP 4:

Finding alternative solutions

STEP 5:

Choosing the best solutions

Example:

To analyse a problem in order to find out the solution

In Indian toothpaste market, Cit' is the market leader. However, it has been found that the company has not achieved the desired revenue for the past few years. Considering the situation, the CEO has asked the market research team to prepare a report and present its views on the problem faced by the company. After reading the report, the CEO calls for a meeting with the management and the market research team to share the root cause of this issue, and find out a possible solution for it. Here is a part of conversation between the CEO and team members.

CEO: Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to share with all of you that as per the research report, the consumption of our product is lesser than our rival company. Note that we have the highest number of consumers. Can anyone understand how this is possible?

> Member 1: May be, the consumers of our rival company are consuming more in one take.
>
> Member 2: Impossible. We have much more consumers than our rival company and the consumption per person is calculated as an average.
>
> Member 3: Maybe we need to get the feedback of our retailers and distributers.
>
> CEO: Can I have two tubes of toothpaste, one from our company and other from our rival company?
>
> After sometime,
>
> CEO: Ok. I think I got it.
>
> Member 2: What have you got, Sir/Madam?
>
> CEO: The root cause of less consumption of our product.
>
> Member 1: Tell us about the cause, Sir/Madam. CEO: Look at these two tubes of the same weight. The opening of this tube (the one from rival company) is wider than the opening of our product. So, when the consumer presses this tube (the one from rival company), the toothpaste is likely to dispense more because of its wide opening. This is the very reason that they (rival company) have more consumption.
>
> Member 4: True and logical. We need to work on that.

5.4.9 Helping Other Colleagues in Solving a Problem

Roles and responsibilities of individuals are defined and explained by the organisation. But, sometimes, due to some specific reasons, it becomes impossible to deliver projects on time. Similar situations can affect the whole team, as they are expected to deliver the project within the deadline. In such situations, it is important that colleagues should help one another to complete the work on time. Helping colleagues at workplace benefits an organisation in many ways.

1. Helps in the learning process of employees
2. Builds team work
3. Information flow helps in understanding the exact objective of work
4. Helps in completing assignments quickly
5. Makes work fun and improves employee morale and productivity

5.4.10 Work on Developing Skills

As a sales associate, you need to have a personal agenda for self-development. A pleasant and confident personality will reflect in the way you handle a sale, and ultimately help you succeed. You can pick one or more than one of the following areas and work on them:
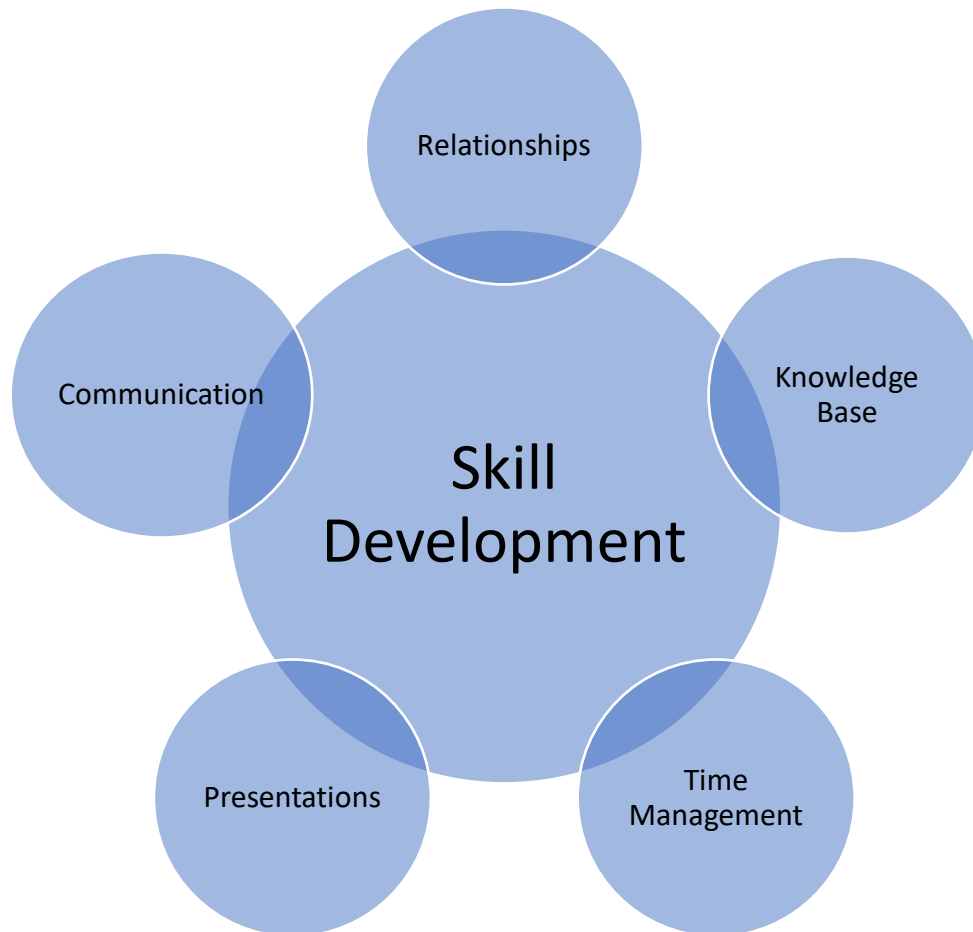

Fig 5.22 Developing Skills

Tips

Organisation and sales associates together can bring a big change. The following guidelines will help in skill development among the sales associates:

- Train employees for product promotions

- Help them to learn the techniques to enhance skills

- Provide the employees with job satisfaction

- Increase motivation among them to boost their confidence

- Reduce the stress factor

- Support employees by making them aware of new technologies

Exercise

1. _____ helps a team to work positively toward achieving its task-related goals.

2. Both 'Etiquette' and 'Communication' are considered as _____.

3. Building and maintaining healthy work relationships improves the _____ of the retail store employees.

4. Working as a team signifies that you are part of a shared body, where every meber is working towards a _____.

5. _____ can be defined as the exchange of information among employees for accomplishing tasks/goals.

6. In a retail store, work-related information can be shared in the form of _____ or _____.

7. For sharing important information, a _____ communication medium should be used.

Secured; Information sharing; Soft skills; Mutual goal; Productivity; Data; Files; Task effectiveness

8. Effective team work can be achieved by following certain strategies such as (Tick the correct options):

(a) Development of team goals with a shared vision

(b) Alignment of the team size and resources with the task

(c) Synchronization of effort by team members

(d) Development of a sense of mutual ownership of the task

(e) All of the above

9.   Which of the below will help build a healthy relationship with colleagues?
 (a) Appreciating colleagues for their productivity
 (b) Speaking in a soft language
 (c) Being supportive and showing concern
 (d) All of the above

10. Match the following:

(a) All employees, including managers and supervisors	(i) comprises various tasks that determine the needs to meet the desired outcome
(b) The process of understanding work requirements	(ii) keeping other colleagues and team members updated with the progress of work is quite essential
(c) When you work in an organization, alone or as a team member	(iii) are expected to uphold company policy and work according to it.