

Customer Service



Independent Cat Society

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COMMITTED TO PROMOTING THE WELFARE OF ANIMALS SINCE 1977

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The Purpose and Benefit of this Booklet

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Getting Started

First, this booklet's purpose is not to tell you EXACTLY what to do when it comes to adoption counseling and customer service. It is merely supposed to serve as a reference and provide

recommendations for how to interact with each and every person that walks through the doors of the shelter or rings the telephone.

"Your continued dedication is admirable."

With the understanding that every situation is different, and each and every person that walks through the door has different backgrounds, experiences, and questions, there may be a situation that this booklet does not cover. But, that is okay! We all grow from our own experiences. This booklet, though, will provide many techniques, skills, and resources that will assist you in your interactions with prospective adoptees. The largest goal of this booklet is to provide you with the best tools in order to get as many of our wonderful animals adopted as possible.

Finally, feel free to use this booklet as you please. Read it front to back, or look for the section that you feel benefits you most. Help one another out. Research new techniques and skills in the area of customer service (there is a LOT out there). Most of all, use the booklet as you need, and do not be afraid of not knowing everything! What you do with the animals is already an amazing feat, and your continued dedication is admirable.

Positive Customer Relations

POSITIVE CUSTOMER RELATIONS DO'S & DON'T'S

DO:	DON'T:
-Have a positive attitude	Use the following phrases:
-Remember to thank people	-You must
-Give people the benefit of a doubt	-You have to
-Admit and apologize for errors/delays	-Do you understand?
-Get your facts straight	-It's policy or the policy is
-React to ideas not the person	-Vague words - very, later, ASAP
-Control your emotions	-It's not my fault
-Project genuine, active attention	-Argue mentally
-Hear others out	-Jump to conclusions
-Limit you own talking	-Interrupt
-Think like the customer	-Rush the customer
-Encourage the customer to talk	-Be inconsiderate
-Be truly interested	-Mumble
-Identify yourself	-Engage in side comments/discussions
*Keep things out of your mouth	*Talk too much
*Be enthusiastic, yet sincere	*Say "I don't know"
*Smile, speak clearly	*Interrogate

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What Kind of Attitude Do You Have?

We have all heard the old adage, "Treat others the way you want to be treated." This may be very simplistic and obvious, but how many times have you had to deal with a difficult customer? When you feel like you have done everything you can to be polite and help the customer and they are still difficult, it can be very hard to remain calm and nice. Did you know, though, that your voice is not the only thing that is conveying your message? Your body language accounts for over half of how your message is given across! The following tips are designed to assist you in providing a positive experience for both the customer and your fellow shelter employees.

Positive Attitude and Communication; The Attitude You Send Out is Usually the Attitude You Get Back!

You Never Get a Second Chance to Create a Positive First Impression!

Body Language: Did you know that body language can account for more than half of the message you communicate?

Body Language Tips:

- Maintain eye contact when talking and listening to others
- Maintain a natural and comfortable smile
- Be relaxed and natural when you speak

Voice: The tone of your voice, or how you say something, is often more important than the words you use.

Voice and Language Tips:

- Use vocal variety
- Use appropriate and clear language with pauses and no non-words
- Maintain an active interest and involvement with each client
- Use humor

Attitude: Both positive and negative attitudes travel quickly in the workplace. A single negative attitude can turn a harmonious atmosphere sour.

Beware:

- A supervisor with a negative attitude puts a damper on the entire operation
- A small group of negative workers can split a department into camps
- An office or department can often overcome a negative attitude from one member – but it takes work!

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Conflict Management

Conflict Management

FACT:

*WHEN TWO PEOPLE INTERACT, THE POTENTIAL FOR
CONFLICT IS INEVITABLE.*

CUSTOMERS NEED TO:

Be Understood

Customers need to feel they are communicating effectively.

Feel Welcome

Customers need to feel you are happy to see them and willing to take care of them.

Feel Important

Anything you can do to make a customer feel special is a step in the

right direction.

Use their name, compliment them.

Be Comfortable

A place to wait, rest or talk. Also psychological comfort — not being judged.

HANDLING COMPLAINTS:

- Listen carefully to the complaint.
 - Repeat the complaint back and get acknowledgment you heard it correctly.
 - Apologize.
 - Acknowledge the customer's feelings (anger, frustration, disappointment).
 - Explain what action you will take to correct the problem.
 - Thank the customer for bringing the problem to your attention.
-

CONFLICT RESOLUTION:

Treat the other person with respect.

An irate person wants to know that:

- Someone is listening
- They are understood
- They are important and appreciated
- They are going to be helped
- They are talking to the right person

You cannot win by being irate also. The one who stays calm has control.

- Don't take things personally.
- Focus on the problem, not the person.
- If you must say NO:
 - Give an explanation
 - Express your feelings
 - Provide an alternative — be helpful

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Basic Telephone Skills

Although companies differ, it is not unusual to have more than 80 percent of customer contact provided by telephone.

The success of a company depends on customers. These customers will not return unless they are treated professionally and courteously.

Top Complaints

- Rude or uncommunicative person
- Lost on hold
- Unprofessional manner
- Being switched from person to person
- Hurried — rushing caller
- Not giving company or personal name
- Talking too much
- Not being knowledgeable

Do's

- Answer calls promptly
- Give your name when you receive a directed call
- Ask before putting person on hold and WAIT for an answer

Don't's

- Speak in a monotone

Answering the Phone:

- Greet the caller
- State your organization (department)
- Introduce yourself
- Offer your help
- *“Good morning. XYZ Animal Shelter, Laura Brown speaking. How may I help you?”*

If Necessary to Interrupt:

- Excuse me, I need to interrupt because I'm not the person to answer your question.
- Excuse me, will you wait a moment, I have another incoming call.

When Leaving the Line — Explain:

- Will you please wait while I check?
- Always use the hold button — never leave the line open

Managing the Angry Caller:

- Listen — so you will understand the problem or concern
- Relate — apologize in a general way or in a broad sense
- Propose an action plan — that will solve the problem

Managing the Talkative Caller:

- Ask closed questions — that elicit yes or no answer

“Did you? Do you? Will you? May I do that?”

- Use space control
- Provide little space between your statements
- Provide minimal responses
- Do not invite unnecessary conversation

Closing the Conversation:

- Thank the customer for calling
- Let the customer know you appreciate his/her business
- Let the customer hang up first

Tips:

- Avoid side conversations. Your party deserves your full attention.
- Never eat or drink while talking.
- If you have several callers on hold, remember the priority of each call.
- If necessary, make notes of who is holding and on which line
- Thank the caller for being patient

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Ask Adopters Follow-Up Questions

You should not feel that your job is done as soon as the adopter walks out the door. In order to keep a positive rapport and increase the likelihood that the adopter will send others to the shelter, you should implement follow-up calls. The purpose of the follow-up calls should be to connect with the adopter and see how everything is going with their new friend.

Use the following follow-up questions as guidelines or examples for follow-up questions at ICS.

- Have you had any problem or concerns that we may help you with? Have you had any problems with (insert name) using the litter box?
- Has there been any adjustment issues that you have noticed (such as the cat being withdrawn, hissing, biting or scratching, etc)?
- Is there anything that may concern you about (insert name), or is there anything that you want to ask about (insert name) – no matter how minor you think it may sound?
- If the adopter has any children or pets, ask how their new cat is getting along with them.
- If your family wanted another pet, would you adopt again from ICS? Would you recommend us to friends and family?
- If the adopter only has one cat, ask if they would ever consider adopting another cat to keep the first company. If they say yes, potentially follow up in six months.
- Would they mind sending a picture of their pet?
**Keeping a wall of pictures of cats that have been adopted will help develop positive rapport with adopters.

Extra Resources

www.animalsheltering.org

www.shelterskills.com

www.maddiesfund.org

www.aspca.org

www.humansociety.org