Customer Service Strategies for Covid 19

Illinois Association of Museums
Customer Service

DURING COVID

While customer service may be the prominent message for every business, there is always the potential to deal with angry, hostile, or other non-compliant behavior on any given day. Learning effective de-escalation techniques that can help us better deal with such disruptive behaviors—learning to effectively organize our thoughts, and responding with composure—therefore becomes essential to safe and successful resolutions.
Design a script for frontline staff

Craft language that works for your museum that they can use when speaking to guests. The same language should be on all outgoing communications.
Over Communicate before people visit your museum

Explain the “WHY” early and often.

Having an effective strategy in place before a situation occurs is more likely to be productive than those decisions made when on the receiving end of emotional outbursts.

Start with proper messaging about procedural changes on your website, social media, entryways, all public facing means of communication should be repetitive, clear and concise.
Once people arrive on site

Reminder in Parking Lot

Give them every possible opportunity to remember their mask.

Reminder at door

They should see several messages before arriving at the door about required masks, social distancing, etc. These may be more direct as one gets closer to the entrance.

Explain the “WHY”

CDC Guidelines recommend...
Our [county, city] mandates...
For the safety of all visitors...
What to do if someone is confrontational

Put the situation in context

- People are scared
- Looking for someone/something to blame
- No one likes to hear the word “No” and many limitations are being added to our lives right now.

Listen actively

- Reflect back what you hear
- People want to be heard and understood
- Sometimes all you have to do is listen.
Don’t contradict people

► When someone is upset, and you tell them they are wrong, you may be seen as questioning their integrity or intellect.

► Even if you know beyond all doubt that they’re incorrect, explaining that will not facilitate de-escalation.

► Don’t use clichés. The worst of these being, “Calm down.”

► Be consistent. Consistency is courtesy. Make sure all frontline staff are behaving equitably to all who visit.
Stay Calm

Be intently focused on them

- Give them your undivided attention
- Listen to make them feel validated and important
- Speak slowly, calmly, and in a lower timbre.
Avoid overreacting

- This is not personal.
- Remain calm, confident, rational, and professional
- You can’t control their behavior
- You can only control your response.
Preserve their dignity

▶ Respond in a respectful way.
▶ Acknowledge their frustration.
▶ Try to move the conversation out of public to save them embarrassment.

▶ Having an audience can fuel anger.
Ask Questions

Clarify their position
- Be curious
- Asking, rather than telling can be disarming
- Watch your tone.
- Don’t be argumentative

Show empathy
- Identify and align with their message if you can.
- Or
- Express that you understand their position.
Control your tone and body language

- Be mindful of your gestures, facial expressions, movements, and tone of voice.
- Respect personal space. Allowing personal space tends to decrease a person’s anxiety.
- Be non-defensive and don’t take anything personally.
- Although difficult, try to reframe their aggressiveness toward yourself as “They need a target for their anger and must view me as strong enough to take it.”
- Never condescend. Even if they’re behaving poorly, this will only escalate a situation.
Apologize when appropriate

- Accepting responsibility and sincerely apologizing for anything in the situation that is believed to be unjust can make a significant difference.
Focus on the Future

Asking what we can do better in the future, engages guest in a problem-solving activity rather than fault-finding.

This creates hope for a resolution and a positive outcome to the situation.
Seek to solve the problem together

Try to identify one reasonable next step; even if it is setting time for a meeting about their concern.

When indicated, accept responsibility for a mistake.

Taking a one-down position from a stance of strength can be very disarming.
Know your limits

Understand that it’s not always easy to solve problems alone.

Sometimes the most professional decision is to ask for help or let someone else take over, if that’s an option.
Be Safe

- Keep yourself and others safe. This should always remain our primary objective.
- Understanding basic de-escalation techniques that can help us better deal with such disruptive behaviors.
- Having the ability to effectively organize our thoughts and respond from a position of strength is essential to safer and more successful interactions.
- Improves customer service, promotes safety, and strengthens brands.
Collaborate with others!

- Align with other museums in your community
- Share training opportunities with other organizations
- Check with law enforcement for local guidelines
- Share language for guidelines so it's consistent in community
Take care of frontline staff.

- Step in when someone needs help
- Allow a staff member to take a break to recuperate after handling an unpleasant confrontation.
- Help staff calm down after a confrontation, this may mean giving them quiet time, or allowing them to talk about what happened.
- Make sure staff feel safe and supported.