# Customer Service Skills Training Course: Service Standards, Difficult Conversations and Coaching

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Sharm El-Sheikh

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## Programme Summary

Customer service skills are the subject of this one-week training course for heads of service, branch managers and contact-centre managers, ending in a frontline service capability plan for one team. Frontline staff meet customers at moments that decide loyalty, yet standards, coaching and the handling of anger often rest on personal habit. The programme moves from service standards and moments of truth to difficult conversations, service recovery, coaching and measurement. Mars Training Centre UK delivers this programme on customer service skills to mixed-organisation cohorts.

## The Business Case

Banks, airlines, hospitals, retailers and public counters all depend on the people who speak to customers every day. When expectations are unwritten, each employee improvises, customers receive different answers and managers learn of problems only through complaints. Leaders who define standards, coach to them and read simple measures can reduce repeat contacts and keep experienced staff in demanding roles.

- Repeat Contacts: Fall when the first conversation resolves the issue and records it clearly.
- Complaint Escalations: Decline when staff are trained to calm and recover situations before a supervisor is needed.
- Staff Turnover: Eases when frontline employees receive regular coaching and a clear service standard.

## Principles and Evidence Base

- Moments of Truth: Treats each customer contact as a point where trust is gained or lost, applied in Sessions 1 and 2 to mapping and prioritising contacts.
- First Contact Resolution: Measures whether the customer's need is met without a second approach, applied in Sessions 4 and 5 to scorecards.
- Customer Effort Score: Measures how hard the customer had to work to resolve a request, applied in Session 4 to reading contact quality.
- ISO 10002: Gives guidelines for complaints handling, applied in Session 3 to the recovery route and authority limits.

## Intended Participants

- Heads of service who set the standard for customer conversations across several teams.
- Branch and outlet managers who supervise employees at the counter, on the floor or at the door.
- Contact-centre managers who coach advisers and review the quality of calls and messages.
- Learning and quality leaders who design the support that frontline employees receive.

Typical settings include banking, aviation, healthcare, retail and public service counters.

## Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to evaluate the customer contacts that most affect trust in their own service.
2. Participants will be able to construct written service standards that frontline employees can apply without supervision.
3. Participants will be able to diagnose the causes of customer anger and select a suitable response.
4. Participants will be able to design a service recovery route with clear authority limits.
5. Participants will be able to prioritise coaching topics from observed conversations and measures.
6. Participants will be able to justify a frontline service capability plan to a senior sponsor.

## Programme Structure

## Day 1: Customer Service Skills and Moments of Truth

Which customer contacts decide whether a customer returns?

- Customer Contact Inventory
- Moments of Truth Map
- Service Promise Statement
- Frontline Role Expectations Sheet
- Contact Priority Matrix

## Day 2: Frontline Service Standards

What does a good conversation look like, in words an employee can follow?

- Greeting and Opening Standard
- Active Listening Checklist
- Questioning and Confirming Guide
- Plain Language Response Bank
- Standards Observation Form

## Day 3: Difficult Conversations and Service Recovery

How does an employee calm a customer and put the problem right?

- Customer Anger Cause Analysis
- De-escalation Phrase Set
- Boundary Setting Script
- Service Recovery Route
- ISO 10002 Complaint Handling Check

## Day 4: Coaching and Measuring Frontline Teams

How does a manager improve conversations without waiting for complaints?

- Conversation Observation Method
- Feedback Conversation Structure
- Coaching Plan Template
- First Contact Resolution Scorecard
- Customer Effort Question Design

## Day 5: Frontline Service Capability Plan for One Team

Do the earlier tools combine into a plan that a sponsor can approve?

- Applying the Session 1 Moments of Truth Map
- Testing the Session 2 Standards Observation Form
- Rehearsing the Session 3 Service Recovery Route
- Checking the Session 4 Scorecard
- Completing the Frontline Service Capability Plan

## Methodology

The programme uses simulation supported by prepared cases from a retail bank and a regional airport. Participants play customers and employees, observe recorded exchanges, score them against written standards and give feedback to peers acting as team members. Managers practise the coaching conversation as often as the customer conversation.

- Suggested activity: Rewriting an unclear service reply so that a new employee can use it unchanged.
- Suggested activity: Role-playing an angry customer and agreeing which recovery steps lie within the employee's authority.
- Suggested activity: Scoring three sample calls and planning one coaching conversation from the results.

## Capstone Output

Each participant completes a frontline service capability plan for one team. It holds a moments of truth map, written service standards, a service recovery route, a coaching schedule and a scorecard. At work it guides the first quarter of team coaching and gives the sponsor a simple view of progress.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Is a customer service skills programme suitable for managers who have not coached before?

Yes. Customer service skills are taught through prepared cases, scripts and templates. The programme assumes responsibility for a frontline team, but no earlier experience of formal coaching or service measurement.

### Which standards and models do customer service skills rest on in this programme?

Customer service skills rest on moments of truth, first contact resolution, the customer effort score and ISO 10002 for complaints handling.

### How is the capability plan from customer service skills used at work?

You use the plan to brief a sponsor, introduce written standards, start regular coaching and track first contact resolution for one team.

### How do customer service skills differ from a programme on customer experience strategy?

Customer service skills concentrate on frontline conversations, standards, recovery and coaching, while customer experience strategy concentrates on journeys, brand promise and organisation-wide design.