

MV BALMORAL – Excursions operated by White Funnel Limited

Customer Service Basics

Introduction

Passengers are vital to the success of MV BALMORAL – without them, the fares they pay and the money they spend on board – the operation cannot succeed. We need them to enjoy every aspect of their experience with us – from finding out about our sailings, buying their tickets, waiting to board BALMORAL, as well as the on-board experience, disembarking and going home. Not all these factors are within our control but they can still work against us.

We understand that:

- When customers receive **good service** they tell 10-12 people on average.
- When customers receive **poor service** they tell upwards of 20 people.
- There is an 82% chance customers will repurchase from a company where they were satisfied.
- There is a 91% chance that poor service will dissuade a customer from ever going back to a company.

First Impressions are important

Whatever our roles on board or ashore may be, we need to make a good FIRST IMPRESSION with our passengers. Impressions are often formed in the first 30 seconds of contact. This is why the first impression is extremely important and can set the tone for all future contact. Here are some ways of creating positive impressions:

- Find out what the person wants in as friendly a way as possible
- Give them confidence that you want to help them
- Be polite and courteous at all times - smile
- Find out the person's name and use it in conversation
- Be smartly dressed

Negative impressions can be created by

- Keeping people waiting
- Not saying please and thank you
- Speaking loudly or condescendingly to customers or colleagues
- Body language Making faces, frowning, acting distant, not smiling
- Looking as if you do not care about your appearance
- Focusing on another task while addressing or servicing a customer.

Remember, impressions stay with those you meet, especially customers, and once registered; negative impressions are difficult to overcome.

Customer Service

The two main tasks of successful customer relations are to communicate and develop relationships. They don't take a huge effort, but don't happen instantaneously either.

- Good customer service results in consumer satisfaction and return customers and growth in business. Volunteers need information about the ship, the operation and any problems on the day.
- Poor customer service generally results in consumer dissatisfaction, lack of returning customers and dwindling business. Those who have to answer, "I don't know" or "It is not my department" are demeaned and demoted in the mind of the customer. They can end up feeling hostile as well as unequipped. Customers want information, and they disrespect and distrust the person who is

- supposed to have information but does not.
- It is often not what you say but how it is presented.
- What you wear and how you express yourself has a lot to do with how what you say is received.

Phrases to try and avoid when speaking to passengers – because they frustrate and anger them!

No: Better to say “What I can do is...” and demonstrate that you care and want to provide quality service despite your current limitations.

I don’t know: Better to say, “I’ll find out” or “Let me look into this and get back to you ASAP.”

That’s not my job./That’s not my department: Better to say, “Let me find the person who can immediately help you with this problem.”

You’re right – that is bad: Do not make it worse by commiserating with him/her. Do not promise anything you cannot deliver Better to say, “I understand your frustration, let’s see how we can solve this problem.”

Calm down: Better to say, “I’m sorry.” This is one of the ideal phrases for customer service – it helps to placate the angriest of customers and allows you to begin the process of solving a customer complaint or request and “meet him/her half way.” Apologizing does not mean you agree with the customer but it is a means to empathize and move beyond the emotion of the moment and negative impact.

I’m busy right now: Asking a customer to be patient or politely asking them to wait is very different than putting them off and saying you are too busy to help. “Being too busy” is tantamount to saying that you do not care and they are not important. Let the customer know they are important and you are aware of their presence. Better to say, “I’ll be with you in one moment”

Come back later: Being proactive is part of good customer service.

That’s not my fault: If an angry customer accuses you of creating a problem, rightly or wrongly, the natural reaction is to defend oneself. However, this is not the best course of action. The customer has a problem that needs to be solved. By resisting the need to defend yourself, and focusing on the needs of the customer, you can resolve the problem faster and with less stress and confrontation. Better to say, “Let’s see what we can do about this problem.”

You Need to Talk to My Supervisor: Better to say, “Let me find that out for you.”

Helpful Reminders for Polite and Friendly Responses	
Wrong Approach	Polite and Friendly Alternative
“I don’t know.”	“I’ll find out.”
“No.”	“What I can do is...”
“That’s not my job.”	“Let me find the right person who can help you with ...”
“You’re right – this is bad.”	“I understand your frustrations.”
“That’s not my fault.”	“Let’s see what we can do about this.”
“You want it by when?”	“I’ll try my best.”
“Calm down.”	“I’m sorry.”
“I’m busy right now.”	“I’ll be with you in just a moment.”
“Call me back.”	“I will call you back, what is your telephone number.”

Communicating with the Dissatisfied Customer

Dealing well with dissatisfied passengers is an opportunity to provide good service and may make them into satisfied passengers who will tell their friends how well an awkward situation was dealt with.

If the person is unsatisfied (for just or unjust reasons), there are ways which may help you win their support and continued loyalty.

- **Listen:** It is of primary importance when dealing with an unsatisfied or complaining customer to listen attentively to his/her complaint, gripe, frustration or grievance. ***Be patient, attentive, and friendly.***
- **Express you are sorry:**
 - “We are sorry for this mistake/problem.”
 - “We are terribly sorry for this inconvenience.”
 - “How can we work to solve this problem together?”
 - “I can imagine how frustrated you are.”
- **Do not argue and do not interrupt:** This will only worsen the situation, especially if the customer is angry. Let him speak before you try to discuss with him what has happened.
- **Do not lose your self-control:** If you stay relaxed, customers will calm down.
- **Point out facts:** Listen carefully – and write everything down. Do not make any comments until the customer is finished talking.
- **Admit the problem:** If you can suggest a solution, do it. If not tell the customer what actions you will take and what actions will follow. Never make the mistake of promising something you are not able to do.
- **Involve the customer in problem solving:** Suggest the customer alternative solutions, if they exist. Customers appreciate the opportunity to choose the ways of problem solving. 15
- **Give the customer a “way back”:** Sometimes customers are wrong. You should let them leave with dignity, without feeling embarrassed.
- **Do not question the customer’s correctness:** From the very beginning you should believe that the customer may be right. Always be open minded toward the customer’s opinion, make them feel they deserve to be listened to.

Good Customer service characteristics for Volunteers

- Turn up for your rostered duties on time, every time
- Be fully prepared to carry out the duties you have agreed to undertake
- Go the extra mile for customers
- Express empathy to upset customers
- Treat passengers as the MOST important part of your job
- Treat co-workers as if they are customers
- Always wear your identification badge when on duty

Please remember that as volunteers we are often the first contact passengers, supporters (and these include staff in Tourist Information Centres and organisations who display our posters, pier staff etc) have with MV Balmoral. Please use these guidelines in your contacts with them – and also as you use the internet, social media etc. As ambassadors for MV BALMORAL we are never really “off duty” - please remember that as you seek to share your enthusiasm - and if there are problems please tell us.