UNIT-7

Marketing and Customer Services

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Understand the importance of initial market research.
- ✓ Explain the marketing methods and resources for promoting events.
- ✓ Understand the role of communication at an event.
- ✓ Understand the equality of opportunity and its role at events.

Unit 7

Marketing and Customer Services

Marketing involves creating and maintaining a match between the needs and expectations of the target audience you intend to attract to the event by providing them with programmes of activities and supporting services. The programme of activities may include performances, shows, and parades, etc. Support services include providing food, drinks, medical care, and security, etc.

The following sequential steps should be followed when creating a matching process:

Key Steps In Event Marketing

- Identification of event target audience
- Creation and quantification of marketing objectives
- Planning events by incorporating items needed to meet the expectations of the target audience
- Devising adequate pricing structures for tickets as well as other services
- Finding cheaper means of getting information about ticket across to the target audience
- Finding the most suitable way of making tickets readily available
- Evaluating market activities
- Establishing a monitoring system for marketing expenditure
- Provision of fund for evaluating marketing activities as part of the budget make up
- Keeping systematic records of evaluation and lessons learned for planning future events

Event Marketing Mix

The service marketing mix comprises of the 7 "Ps". These include:

- Products
- Price
- Place
- Promotion
- People;

- Process
- Physical evidence

We will elaborate on these below:

Event Products

The event products should provide value to the guests. The product/s, however, does not necessarily have to be tangible but must be an improved version of an existing product or a totally new product.

Product Elements

These comprise of the main product and supplementary services that come along with it. It is important for event managers and marketing professional to highlight the benefit of the products to the target audience by comparing the performance with other rivals' products. Examples include transport, accommodation, food service, price of ticket etc.

Price

Pricing strategy should be such that it will be competitive and at the same time bring in a decent profit. To make this possible, event managers should find innovative ways to reduce costs associated with services and the stress associated with high costs which make for bad customer experience.

Place

This refers to the location where the customer goes to purchase event products. Places come in different shapes and sizes and may include outdoor or indoor settings which in turn could be either public or private in nature.

Promotion

Promotion involves communicating with target audience using the most effective means to provide essential information to them and convincing them about the benefits of the product you are offering for them to take a step to buy it. Service marketing (including event product marketing) requires educational content to highlight all of the benefits to gain, the place to obtain the service, the time and way to take part in the service process. Sales people, trainers, and the mass media, such as, TV, radio, websites, and print, may be used to communicate information on the service product to the public.

People

This encompasses everyone who participates in the event including customers, the management responsible for the event, and the event staff, etc. The quality of the people can determine how

reputable your brand will be. People's (i.e., your customers) perception about the quality of an event is usually based on how they measure or assess the performance of the event staff. To ensure that the staff knows how to deliver high quality services, organisations make every effort possible to recruit, train, and encourage their staff to interact with customers in a professional manner to leave a lasting good impression about their services and the event.

Process

Process is the method or sequence of procedures used to deliver a service to customers. To design and implement effective processes, one needs to understand the requirement of customers in terms of the type of services they appreciate, the time for providing the services and how to inform them about the services that are available.

A good process would avoid such undesirable experiences such as excessive bureaucracy and slow or delayed services. Having a good process would also increase the productivity of staff and ensure success. Conversely, a poor process will result in low productivity.

Physical (Evidence)

When promoting service events to potential customers, there is the need to provide some evidence about the nature of the product. Such evidence may be in the form of printed documents or leaflets such as brochures, pamphlets, or booklets with photos of the venue, the staff, facilities, vending places, equipment, and decorations, etc.; these serve as the physical evidence of the services to look forward to.

Whatever information is provided to the customers (guests) must be of the higher quality because customers' perception will be based on this information. Services having less tangible evidence rely on advertising with symbols depicting all services to be provided

Marketing Strategy

Market Research

Marketing research and analysis is a very important component of designing and marketing an event successfully. Marketing helps the organisers to understand the expectations and needs of the people who will attend the event. Research provides information on trends in society and helps the event organisers to adjust quickly to meet the need and to identify and deal with problems before they become crises. Marketing must keep up with changing population, lifestyles etc., using the media and other marketing tools to promote products and services to target audience. Research should be constant and consistent you want to remain competitive.

Quantitative and Qualitative Research

Research may be either quantitative or qualitative. These may be used before and after the event but qualitative may be exclusively deployed during the event itself. Quantitative research is the faster, cheaper and most direct of the two research methods. It does not require further interpretation since it involves obtaining information which can be quickly tabulated to produce instant results that reflect the attitudes and opinions of people. Qualitative research however, is more time-consuming and expensive and will require interpretation of results unlike the quantitative which is self-explanatory. Qualitative research requires extensive sampling of opinion, objectives, vision and the experiences of people. It is common to use both methods at the same time or separately for product marketing, planning strategies and evaluation o events.

Quantitative Research

Quantitative research is most useful for marketing and evaluation of events and the methods used are mostly objective and not subjective. This requires survey questionnaires to be designed and ratings given to responses. The survey may be sent via the internet applications, in paper form or alternative a telephone interview may be used to gather peoples thought on particular issues raised. For instance, customers may be asked to give their opinion on two different artists an event company is thinking of hiring to perform at an upcoming event. A rating of 1 to 10 is assigned to how strongly they feel about previous performance of any of the artist. A rating of 1 is the lowest and 10 the highest. Whoever gets the highest overall mark after compiling the results will be adjudged the best option to choose.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research involves asking probing questions to get more insight from people's opinion, interest and perceptions. Because the methods used in qualitative research are subjective, the results tend to be diverse and open to a wide range of interpretations. The quest of qualitative research to gather more extensive information means it is time-consuming and it requires more resources and hence more expensive compared to quantitative research. The interesting thing about qualitative research is that it leads you to new insights and concepts that you may not have been expecting: making it a very exciting experience.

Marketing Strategy

Development of a Strategic Marketing Plan of an Event

The process for developing a marketing plan for an event is very similar to that of event planning. It begins with understanding the missing statement, performing SWOT Analysis, and setting objectives to assist the process. Next, you need to find out about the nature of the target audience you want to attract. The SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threats) Analysis is a wonderful tool for

assessing current and potential market for the event. Factors which may impact a target market's ability to patronise the event can be determined using SWOT Analysis before decisions about going ahead with the event are made. An important practice in marketing involves obtaining the contract details of guests who attend events. The detail is intended to be used future marketing of events to those who details have been obtained but first, you need to get their consent before proceeding. Consent may be just a tick in a box by customers agreeing to the terms and conditions when using the internet or a computer or in the case of a written note, a signature appended to dotted line confirming the willingness to be placed on a mailing list and to receive product advertisement of future events from the organisers.

Setting Marketing Objective for the Event

You need to list specific objectives you would wish to achieve at the event in terms of the number of people you would want to be present, the revenue you wish to generate from ticket sales, security expectations, etc.

A typical list may look like the following items below:

- Overall target attendance level - 5,000
- Local attendees - 3,000
- Regional attendees (radius of 160kms from event) - 1,200
- Intrastate (non-regional) and interstate - 700
- Overseas – 100

Overall revenue from sponsorship, ticket, merchandise, food and beverage sales - £40,000

- Entry ticket sales - £20,000
- Merchandise - £5,000
- Food and beverage £5,000
- Sponsorship £10,000 approaches are needed to achieve the objectives

How to Put the Approaches into Effect

You may put you plan into action by considering four key areas:

- The 'ingredients' of the event programme
- pricing (if it is not a free event)
- Promotion
- Distribution (if the event is ticketed).

Event Ingredients

Event Ingredient

Everything that goes into organising the event has the potential to influence the people attending the event. Therefore, planning needs to take into account how each item will contribute to a positive experience for the attendees. This includes ensuring efficient services, provision of excellent facilities and maintaining a very high standard all around.
Event ingredients include transport services, entertainment, the venue for the event, the atmosphere, staff behaviour parking, food and drink, and security and medical care, etc. You may also promote the event by highlighting the quality of other building or site attractions close to the venue of the event to enhance the experience of the attendees.

Pricing

There are several factors that one has to consider when determining the prices of the event tickets. The event organisers first of all need to consider the purpose of the event; whether it has the potential to boost the local economy. The ticket should be priced to generate some profit. Other factors such as the nature of the audience (i.e. whether to charge children or allow them to attend for free) and the amount of funding provided by sponsors may also need to be considered.

Ticket Distribution

It is recommended that you pre-sell some ticket before the event begins to cover the cost of organising the event. The remaining ticket are subsequently sold on the day of the events to enable you get some profit. This is approach is recommended for all types of events whether small or large.
The number of people expected to attend the event need to be known in advance in order to cover the cost and to ensure the capacity of the venue will not be exceeded. Medium to large size events may require selling tickets to people far from the location of the venue. Unser such circumstance, you will need to:

- Engage tour operators to create packages comprising transport, ticket and accommodation
- Secure the services of ticket vending firms to sell the tickets
- Provide online platform for the event to sell tickets
- Using free phone codes (such as 1-800 numbers) to take booking for the event

Promotion

Marketing an event involves communicating with the target audience you wish to persuade to attend the event. The extent of promotional activities depends on the budget and the time available. If the event is of high impact and newsworthy, then you do not need to invest huge capital in promoting it on media platforms because the media houses would be willing report on it even for free since it is newsworthy.

You need to monitor and evaluate the success of the event to know which marketing tools are best for promoting a particular event. Frequent monitoring and evaluation of marketing and expenditure may be done by:

- Checking ticket sales/registrations/ number of enquiries received
- Comparing the expenditure against the budget
- Conducting surveys to sample people's opinions

How can we improve the Marketing of the Event?

Evaluation is important to improve how events are marketed. To achieve this, budget allocation for marketing should be considered during the planning phase and an expert assigned to the role of ensuring the evaluation is done after the event is over.

Marketing Planning

Different sources of literature are at pains to provide a common definition or strategy for marketing plan due to the range of factors that are at play on the marketing scene. Each literature tends to have its own unique definition, strategies, structures and processes for marketing planning.
Most literatures are also influenced by the size of the organisation they are researching, the organisation's market niche, and its unique culture.
In spite of the diversity of opinion out there, the AOSTC Method is commonly used to create marketing plans. This acronym stands for:

1. Analysis - relates of the environment
2. Objectives - based on **SMART** technique
3. Strategies –for segmentation and growth, targeting and positioning
4. Tactics – the marketing mix to adopt
5. Control –assessing and evaluating objectives

Communication and Customer Service

Communication

There needs to be an effective communication program in place if the event is going to run smoothly and successfully. The communication requirement of all participating companies and how they interact have to be assessed for their efficiency and effectiveness during all phases and aspects of the event. This includes ensuing that health and safety, security, operations and different organisations will be able to communicate well when an incident occurs or in the course of executing their normal operational duties. When dealing with communication issues, two key aspects that need to be considered include:

- Inter-professional communication
- Public information and communication

Inter-Professional Communication

This involves all communication activities in a network for information sharing during the event planning phase including:

- Intelligence gathering about the event characteristics, etc
- Liaison meetings
- Seeking appropriate licences
- Preparation of detailed plans for arrangements on and off site
- Commercial arrangements - ticketing policy, publicity, contracts, etc.

Decisions made at event planning meetings have to be accurately recorded in clear, unambiguous manner for onward transmission to other personnel involved in executing the event. Statement of intent documents must also be clear and unambiguous in defining roles and responsibilities of all workers and firms involved in the running of the event.

Preparation of key Support Documentation

As always, all communication framework documents must be crystal clear and unambiguous in wording to ensure reliability and accuracy in communicating information to readers. This precludes the use of jargons and acronyms or the need to minimise their usage. Glossary should be provided within the document if jargons and acronyms have been used in communication frameworks. All terminologies to be used must be agreed on when producing plans, documents and communication frameworks in terms of:

- Naming different control points and control workers
- Labelling different types of rendezvous and collection points
- Providing unique reference labels for key locations within and around the venue
- Clear naming conventions for categories of people involved on site
- Compatible terminology for assessing risks and grading levels of urgency;
- Clear contact protocols for establishing communication.

All plans need to specify skill of the person responsible for a particular task. In other words, every activity must have a corresponding qualified person(s). It is recommended that relevant maps and site plans, particularly gridded site plans for venues and the surrounding areas be provided to avoid confusion which can result from misdirected resources (delivery trucks, etc.) blocked communication channel and other unpleasant experiences that could occur in the absence of site plans and maps.

Labelling features and functions in documents should be carried out in consultation with key stakeholders. Some features in multiple locations will require each of them to be assigned a unique reference number. It is advisable to engage the services of a network co-ordinator who will be responsible for 'receiving, collating, cross-checking and broadcasting information about communication infrastructure arrangements such as phone lines, radio-channel frequency, camera points, contact lists etc.

A Framework for Handling the Event

Major incident plans must be compatible with emergency plans of local authority/emergency services and it should also ensure control rooms at remote locations will be furnished with the relevant information. All types of documents must be updated and personnel engaged in the planning process notified of all changes to the documents immediately. These documents (licences, approvals, technical diagrams etc.) are important for communication processes, authorizations or approvals.
The framework for effective communication should enhance communication within each organisation's internal departments, between different organisations and must have effective links between off-site and on-site to keep external organisations which may be affected by incidents at the site well-informed.

Communication Controls in Incident Control Rooms

When planning communication control in the incident control room, you need to ensure that separate power supply is provided for communication equipment together with adequate independent back-up power supply that can last up to the times the event is completed. You need to also test the power supplies for continuity of communication capability during switch over to back up supplies. The view

from the incident control room over the event area should be panoramic. The room should be easy to access and large enough to accommodate both equipment and operators.

Sufficient communication links should be provided to enable communication between prominent personnel, the security, emergency services, local authority etc. Communication controls for these units should ideally be located in the same room. Also ensure that communication exists between incident control room and critical locations and places where activities are being performed.

Regular policy and review meetings between organisations can be made possible provided adequate staff is available. Emergency situations may require facilities for radio controllers to override talk-through capability of radio communication onsite. To avoid fire or damages, cables may be connected through low risk areas only but you may also have on standby maintenance workers to perform repair duties when the need arises.

The provision of soundproof room and a headset would minimize disruptions due to noise intrusion into the control room. Documentation, stationery, Formica boards or flip charts for taking notes of incidents should also be available at the control room. You may also consider operating and maintaining an emergency communication from an alternative site.

Off-site Links

Ensure communication links between control room of each emergency service provider and the local HQ of all emergency services providers are available throughout the period of the event for emergency calls to go through. Also make provision for communication with external organisations such as the British Transport Police who may be affected by movement of people from event centres to off-site locations when an incident occurs.

Telephone Equipment

Dedicated telephone lines should be provided to link off-site emergency service control rooms with event control units. These lines must not be used for any other purpose save for emergency communication. Some venues like sports arenas may require internal telephone networks to connect on-site communication controls to other critical areas of the venue. Cell phones should not be overly relied upon for establishing critical links such as for emergency communication but they can act as alternative options to call on.

Closed Circuit Television (CCTV)

CCTV may be used to provide safety, security as well as to identify crowd problems and to manage the crowd. You need to consider the following before making decision on acquiring CCTV:

- Would CCTV ensure safety?
- Where should CCTV cameras be positioned
- What about lighting requirements?
- Selection of suitable person to control operation of CCTV camera
- Selection of person authorised to view recordings

Communication Procedures

Procedures for information flow should be prepared to enable people to understand what information to report, how and when to report it. Communication procedures involve:

- Protocols to control the use of radio
- Sending clear and unambiguous communication
- Short and accurate delivery of information
- Confirming the exact meaning of messages to avoid misinterpretation
- Keeping records of all communication
- Logging decisions and actions

Message Delivery and Acknowledgement

Messages may become distorted on transmission due to misinterpretation. Workers need to know how to communicate effectively to ensure that information is not distorted by following procedures for receiving messages and reading them back for clarification and confirmation.

Situation Reports

Forms for capturing information at the scene of an incident must be developed and procedure for note-taking established:

- The format used should make it easy to record essential details and have a familiar pattern for people to anticipate and recognise items to include
- Help the receiver of the information to quickly note down the details

Such situational reports must be universal for all incidents and should include the following:

A situation report format must work equally well for any type of incident. It is particularly Important to include the following items of information in such a report

- Identification: call signs, names of calling and called parties
- Location: exact details of where the incident scene can be found
- Incident: precise details of what happened
- Requirements: details of services, equipment and agencies required
- Key information stated above has to be received and understood before proceeding to provide additional secondary information

Other secondary but also important information to transmit include:

- Warnings: details of any hazards (present or potential)
- Access: providing information on the quickest route to the scene and any information on difficulty of accessing the scene of the incident
- Casualties: report details of injuries or sicknesses
- Control point: provide the contact details of personnel at the scene
- Other information: provide any other addition information that would be of assistance

Public Information and Communication

Types of Information

The public needs information to them that their safety, welfare and other needs have been considered and measure have been put in place to ensure these are guaranteed as much as circumstances would permit. Information required by the audience includes the location of the venue, transport arrangements, parking, ticketing, accommodation provisions, what to do during emergencies and other welfare arrangement including provision for catering services etc. This information should be provided well in advance to keep the audience well-informed and to reduce frustrations and disappointments. An effective communication program would provide them with the reason for having certain rules, regulation and restrictions at the event to enhance compliance than if no reason was given.

Communication Channels

These include:

- Publicity material and tickets
- Media (such as, press, radio, and TV)
- Route-marking
- Signs
- Notices, information displays, screens, and scoreboards

- Face-to-face contact
- Emergency public announcements
- PA systems

Alarms

Alarms are audible devices used to alert people about a risk, hazard or danger. They provide limited information about an emergency situation, so they must always be followed by messages informing people about what action to take. If it went off by accident then the audience need to be informed it is a false alarm.

PA Systems

Messages given over public address (PA) systems must be clear, unambiguous and understandable to all guests at the venue and in the surrounding areas. The announcer needs to have a good view of the entire venue and have a good communication link will all control points. Provision should be made for the PA system to override other sources of sound during a major incident.
Backup power supplies should be available always and the PZ system should be tested to ensure it will deliver when the need arises. All procedures for using PA system to communicate with the audience must be discussed and agreed on and included in the major incident plan. Communication with people outside the venue may be achieved using vehicle-mounted PA systems with enough power available to last the whole duration of the event, especially during evacuation.

Screens and Scoreboards

They can be used to deliver messages without interfering with performances. On other occasions, they may be used to reinforce announcement give over sound systems.

Loud Hailers

They are strategically located at different sections of the venue to provide backup to PA systems. They require well-trained staff to operate them and their batteries must always be charged to full capacity.

Staff (Face-to-face Contact)

This is a most-welcome and friendly approach to use especially to create a friendly and positive relationship with an audience when safety is at stake. Staff appointed to safety roles should be easy to identify by their high-visibility vest. They are also vital to pointing people in the right direction during emergency evacuations. Wearing high-visibility vest also helps CCTV operators and supervisors to pick

out staff when they need assistance at a particular trouble spot. Wearing reversible jacket is another option for safety personnel who do not need to be conspicuous but only during critical periods.

Emergency Public Announcements

The most important thing about making public announce during emergency is that it must be timely. Avoid delaying for whatever reason. Accurate estimate of evacuation time should include both the time it takes to comply and the time taken to completely move everyone out of the venue. According to various researches into previous incidents, offering timely and accurate information about incidents is important to avoiding a host of issues during evacuation. Delays only tend to put people in a stage of panic due to a feeling of not having sufficient time to escape. This is not ideal and would make the situation more dangerous. The choice of who make the announcement is important as the audience is more likely to respond to an authority figure or a reputable and familiar personality. The choice should be decided before the event begins and the procedures explained to whoever is assigned the role to announcer during emergence evacuation.

Deciding when an emergency announcement should be made, what to say, and who to make the announcement should be included in the major incident plan. Also messages must be carefully word ahead of time, especially during pre-plan discussion between key safety personnel.
Discretion should be maintained in the rum up to making the announcement. The stewards can be directed to take up positions according to prior arrangements before attracting the attention of the audience with a tow-tone chime and holding their attention before delivering the message. Messages need to be simple, clear and positive. Evacuation instructions should indicate route-markings, signs and other visible cues to guide the audience. Locations must be accurately referenced to avoid misinterpretations.

A combination of spoken, visual display and stewards giving direction may be required in serious cases. Use reinforcement and repetition to diffuse doubts about what to do. Inform the audience about the kind of messages that would be repeated as they make their way to safety to prevent people from stopping to enquire about missing information to ensure their free flow of out of the venue. Provide updated to the audience including providing messages that inform them that ‘the situation remains the same’ instead of not saying anything at all. Use pre-emptive broadcasting to avoid people making individual queries.

Also keep the audience informed about issues relating to postponements, rescheduling or readmission and other pertinent information such as how and when to fetch their vehicles from the parking area.

Customer Service

Customer satisfaction is the term used to describe how a customer feels (happy) about a service or product he has been provided. This state occurs whenever customers believe that they have had a food buying experience having made the effort to purchase a service or product and believing that all their expectations about the buying process has been met.
It is important to comprehensively understand the needs of the customers in order to:

- Retain their loyalty by providing exactly what the desire
- Tackle issues quickly to prevent them from going to rivals
- Win and keep new customers

Customer Service Skills Required In an Event Coordinator

All the glitter and glamour and high quality services that people encounter at events are a result of the painstaking efforts on the part of dedicated event coordinator and his team. To succeed as an event coordinator, you need to have a keen eye for excellence in delivery of services and pay close attention to details. You also need to have a good and pleasing personality, knowledge of how to work under pressure and good organisational skills.

Let us now elaborate a bit further on these skills.

Detail-oriented

The event coordinator, who should be detail-oriented, must keep an eye out on every single aspect of the event to make sure all things are going the way they are supposed to be going. He or she needs to gauge situations quickly and provide the right solution in good time. In-depth knowledge and experience are great assets to have for this important role.

Organised

Good organisational skills of event coordinators include having the contact details of important staff readily available and having the ability to use good judgement to pre-empt what needs to be done and maintaining confidence and knowledge about his role in the presence of clients.

Engaging Personality

Having a good personality and interpersonal skills is important to being an effective event coordinator. The event coordinator need to have an affable personality and possess good communication skills to ensure everybody is in good spirits.

Good Negotiator

This involves maintaining excellent relationships with suppliers and having understanding of the market to get competitive prices for products and services in the form of discounts and promotional offers.

Eye for Design

The event coordinator must also be creative in designing his event to grab the attention of the customer.

Energetic

Having a good rest and doing physical exercises will put you in a good shape and keep your energy level high to discharge your diverse duties efficiently as in high spirit. Clients tend not to appreciate event coordinators whose approach to rendering services appears to be lackadaisical or slow.

Solution-oriented

Customers may not be entirely patient when they encounter problems. They may also be uncertain what to do. This is where the event organiser needs to be at his very best to supply the right solution in a timely manner using his diverse range of skills at his disposal.

Motivated

The event coordinator has to have the motivation to work with diverse groups of people to be successful at organising events to a very high standard for his client.

Unflappable

The ability to withstand pressure or stress by keeping calm and functioning at a high level is important to the client and the success of the whole event. The event organiser needs to also know how to be composed during stressful times and not lose his temper under such trying circumstances.

Resilient

Ad-hoc alterations to the original event plan at the request of the client and other disappointing occurrences may be unwelcome experience to the event organiser. The event organiser needs to be able to bounce back when setbacks occur to tackle issues confidently to win the client's admiration.

Customer Service Tips

Tips for offering food customer service to guests, clients, and customers are explained below.

At the First Point-of-Contact

Give the customer your full attention by listening without interrupting to show respect to make them feel their views are important. You may need to ask for their name when you introduce yourself and make it a pint to address them by their names to indicate you value them.

Addressing Customer Requirements

You need to promptly consider problems experienced by customers and find the right solutions to their problems quickly to prevent them from becoming frustrated when time is wasted in solving their issues and solved to ensure they enjoy good customer satisfaction when you deal with their issues promptly and professionally, whether by phone, face-to-face, or via the internet.

Providing Professional Customer Service

You need to know the type of products and services you provide and their price structure to enable you to answer your client's queries accurately and quickly. This includes knowing about discounts, promotions, deadline dates, terms and conditions etc. In case you are unable to provide some needed information to your client or customers, you would have to reassure them that you will get back to them later with the answer as soon as possible, provided you are sure of where to find the answer. If not, then you do not need to promise them at all.

Understanding the Demanding Customer

When dealing with customers, especially difficult ones, you need to remember the golden rule of 'the customer is always right' and allow the customers to express their views without interrupting them. You need to show warmth and care when dealing with aggrieved customers to win their trust and confidence. Listen to what they have to say and try to understand their needs or concerns. Such actions demonstrate that you indeed have excellent customer services skills which make the customer to feel

highly valued. Find time to quickly resolve their problems to enhance their customer satisfaction and to win you repeat business and also to have them recommend you to others.

Dealing with Difficult Customers

Adequate training in dealing with difficult people must be provided to all staff managing events. Some tips for dealing with difficult people to calm them down when helping to resolve their problems include the following:

- Listening and taking interest in their concerns regardless of their misdemeanours whether they are swearing or making threats.
- Remaining quiet while they speak will calm them down and provide the opportunity to communicate with them.
- Writing down the customer's complaint while he speaks to show you really take them seriously has the effect of calming things down.
- Rendering an apology for an unfortunate incident and reassuring them of your commitment to resolve their issues would also do the trick.
- Making the effort to quickly resolve the issue will encourage repeat business and win their loyalty and respect.

Quality customer services should be based on equal opportunity and no discrimination.

Equal Opportunity

This requires treating all people equally regardless of their age, religion, ethnicity, gender, race, or disability, etc.

Discrimination

This is when individuals experience prejudicial treatment due to membership of a certain group of people. It revolves around exhibiting discriminatory behaviour towards a particular group of people which prevents the victimised group from enjoying the same opportunity available to another group either by excluding or restricting the victim.

Inclusive Planning for People with Disabilities

Planning Considerations

Planning should include the needs of all categories of people including people with disability. This is a legal obligation in the UK and must be adhered to. People with disability in the UK are not to be discriminated against in relation to:

- Access to premises and spaces used by the public
- Provision of goods, services and facilities
- Education

How to Plan For People with Disabilities

- Training staff so that they are well-equipped to offer the right service
- Making transport and accommodation arrangements
- Choosing specialist who have knowledge in planning events with the needs of people with disabilities in mind
- Distributing information on events
- Selecting venues, facilities, and services to provide the disabled

Using the Right Language

The choice of language when managing events which takes into account the needs of people with disabilities should be in accordance with accepted British wording provisions which requires customers with disabilities to be referred to as 'people with disabilities' – a phrase which highlights the person first and the 'disability' second. Facilities for people with disabilities are usually marked as 'accessible'.

Event Information

Use plain English and short sentences to communicate event information as this also caters for the language needs of people from 'non-English speaking background' as well as those with 'intellectual disabilities'. All event information would be required to include universal access symbols and contact details of people responsible for access-related matters.

Universal Access Symbol

Provision should be made for people with disabilities to identify their needs to event organisers for their need to be met during the event. Registration forms may be designed to capture such important information.

Staff Training

Training in disability awareness and how to provide the right services to people with disabilities should be given to staff and volunteers.

Venue/Site and Design

The suitability of venues should include provision for people with disabilities. Find out from the site owners and ensure such provisions are going to be adequate by testing the adequacy of the place by pushing a stroller around the venue and determining areas that could problems for the users. Outdoor venues must consider wheel chair accessibility in addition to other essential requirement such as toilets.

Facilities for People with Special Needs
Provision should be made for people with:

- Difficulty in walking;
- Mobility problems (including wheelchair users);
- Impaired vision and/or hearing.

The contact details for enquiring about site arrangements must be provided during publicity campaigns. Site layout should be such that it allows people with wheel chairs easy accessibility and unrestricted movement around the venue and surrounding areas. But the number of wheelchair users is limited by the layout or size of the venue. The acceptable width and depth for wheelchair is 0.9 metre and 1.4metre respectively, with more allowance to be available for electrically operated wheelchairs. Easy access to escape routes should also be available during emergencies.

Access

Parking should ideally be situated close to access pints to the venue with a wide space of 3.6 metre provided for unrestricted movement. Ramps and flat surfaces should be provided to connect parking areas or drop-off points to the venue.

Ramps

Ramps for wheelchairs should have gentle slops which should not exceed 1 in 12.

Viewing Areas

Seating areas for wheelchair users should be safe from any risk of surging from other guests. Areas for people with disabilities should provide for unrestricted view of the performers and be situated close to the mixing tower with the flooring made of non-slip materials leading to the exit.

Support

Support workers should be available to provide assistance to special needs people, should they require it.

People with Impaired Vision

The needs of some people with vision or colour perception problems have to be considered during the planning phase. Provision of good lighting and using colour contrasts may assist them immensely. Good positioning and unique attention-grabbing signs would go a long way to enhance the experience of people with visual impairment needs to find their way around the venue. Some events may allow guide dogs depending on certain conditions being fulfilled.

Evacuation

Major incident plans and contingency plans need to consider the diverse conditions of people with disabilities and the right facilities provided to aid their escape during evacuations. Some facilities such as electric displays are invaluable to people with hearing difficulties as are other useful facilities for other groups of people with different kinds of disabilities.

Further Reading:

- ✓ ***Relationship Marketing and Customer Relationship Management By Annekie Brink, Adele Berndt 2009***
- ✓ ***Services Marketing: Integrating Customer Focus across the Firm By ZEITHAML 2013***