PART 5: COMMUNICATION

EXCELLENCE

CHAPTER 18: Verbal Communication Best Practices

The Power of Words

Words shape reality. The language you choose:

- Creates emotional responses
- Builds or destroys trust
- Clarifies or confuses
- Empowers or diminishes
- Connects or alienates

In service: Your words can transform someone's day or ruin it.

Core Principles of Excellent Communication

1. CLARITY

What it means: Your message is easily understood.

How to achieve: ✅ **Simple language:** Avoid jargon, technical terms, complex words ✅ **Short sentences:** Easier to process ✅ **Specific details:** "10 minutes" not "soon" ✅ **Organized thought:** One idea at a time ✅ **Confirmation:** "Does that make sense?"

Example: ❌ Unclear: "The system's interface for processing your request is temporarily experiencing operational constraints" ✅ Clear: "The machine is down. It'll take about 15 minutes to fix."

2. CONCISENESS

What it means: Using only as many words as needed.

Why it matters:

- Respects customer's time
- Easier to understand
- Appears more confident
- Prevents confusion

How to achieve:

- Remove unnecessary words
- Get to the point
- Don't over-explain

Example: ❌ Wordy: "So what I'm going to do is, I'm going to check in the back to see if we might possibly have one available that I could bring out for you" ✅ Concise: "Let me check if we have one in back"

3. POSITIVE FRAMING

What it means: Focusing on what you CAN do rather than what you CAN'T.

Why it matters:

- Creates hopeful rather than disappointed feeling
- Focuses on solutions
- Maintains positive energy

How to achieve: See Chapter 19 (The Art of Positive Language)

4. RESPECTFUL TONE

What it means: Language that honors dignity.

Markers of respect: ✅ "Please" and "Thank you" ✅ Titles when appropriate ("Sir," "Ma'am," preferred title) ✅ Polite phrasing: "Would you mind..." "If you could..." ✅ Avoiding commands: "You need to..." → "Could you please..."

The Anatomy of Excellent Service Communication

THE GREETING

Purpose: Make customer feel welcome and valued

Components:

1. **Warm acknowledgment:** "Good morning!" "Welcome!"
2. **Personal connection (if possible):** Use name, acknowledge returning
3. **Offer help:** "How can I help you today?"

Examples: ✅ "Good morning! Welcome back! Your usual today?" ✅ "Hi! Thanks for coming in. What can I get started for you?" ✅ "Welcome! Great to see you. How can I help?"

TAKING THE ORDER/REQUEST

Purpose: Understand exactly what they need

Best practices: ✅ **Listen fully** before responding ✅ **Confirm understanding:** "So you'd like..." ✅ **Ask clarifying questions:** "Hot or iced?" "What size?" ✅ **Offer suggestions when helpful:** "Most people enjoy..." ✅ **Repeat back for accuracy**

Example: "Let me make sure I have this right: You'd like a large cappuccino with oat milk and an extra shot. Is that correct?"

MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

Purpose: Set accurate expectations about time, outcome, process

Best practices: ✅ **Be specific:** "About 5 minutes" not "it'll be quick" ✅ **Be realistic:** Don't over-promise ✅ **Explain if needed:** "This takes a bit longer because..." ✅ **Acknowledge waits:** "Thank you for your patience"

Example: "This will take about 8 minutes because we make it fresh. I'll bring it to your table when it's ready. Thank you for your patience."

HANDLING PROBLEMS

Purpose: Resolve issues while maintaining dignity and trust

Framework:

1. **Acknowledge:** "I understand..."
2. **Apologize:** "I'm sorry about..."
3. **Solve:** "Here's what I can do..."
4. **Confirm:** "Does that work for you?"

Example: "I understand that's frustrating. I'm sorry we got that wrong. Let me remake it right away—I'll have the correct one to you in 3 minutes. Does that work?"

THE FAREWELL

Purpose: Leave lasting positive impression

Components:

1. **Thank them:** "Thank you"
2. **Personal touch:** Use name, reference something
3. **Invitation to return:** "See you soon!" "Come back anytime!"
4. **Warm goodbye:** "Have a wonderful day!"

Examples: Code of Ethics | Repose Service Excellence Guide

✅ "Thank you, Mam! Enjoy, and we'll see you tomorrow!"

✅ "Thanks so much. Have a great rest of your day!"

✅ "Thank you! I hope that presentation goes well!"

Common Communication Pitfalls

1. USING NEGATIVE LANGUAGE

❌ "We don't have that" ✅ "We have [alternative]"

❌ "You can't sit there" ✅ "Let me show you to a perfect spot"

❌ "That's not my department" ✅ "Let me find the right person to help you"

2. USING JARGON OR ASSUMPTIONS

❌ "The POS system is down" ✅ "The payment system is temporarily down"

❌ Assuming they know your procedures ✅ Explaining clearly

3. BEING VAGUE

❌ "It'll be ready soon" ✅ "It'll be ready in about 7 minutes"

❌ "We're out of that" ✅ "We're out of that right now, but we'll have more tomorrow morning"

4. DEFENSIVE LANGUAGE

❌ "Well, you didn't tell me..." ❌ "That's just our policy" ❌ "I didn't do that"

✅ "Let me make sure I understand..." ✅ "Here's what I can do..." ✅ "I apologize—let me fix that"

5. DISMISSIVE LANGUAGE

❌ "That's not a big deal" ❌ "You're overreacting" ❌ "Whatever" ❌ "Yeah, yeah"

✅ "I understand why that matters to you" ✅ "I can see why you're concerned" ✅ "Absolutely" ✅ "I hear you"

Adapting Your Communication Style

Different customers need different approaches:

Fast-paced customer:

- Be efficient
- Skip small talk

- Get to the point
- Quick confirmation

Chatty customer:

- Allow conversation
- Engage warmly
- Balance friendliness with others waiting

Uncertain customer:

- Be patient
- Offer guidance
- Simplify choices
- Reassure

Upset customer:

- Be calming
- Lower your voice
- Slow your pace
- Focus on resolution

Language barrier:

- Speak clearly and simply
- Use gestures and visuals
- Be patient
- Confirm understanding frequently

The Impact of Your Voice

Beyond words, HOW you speak matters:

Volume:

- Too loud: Aggressive, inconsiderate
- Too quiet: Uncertain, hard to hear
- Just right: Confident, clear

Pace:

- Too fast: Rushed, anxious
- Too slow: Condescending, boring
- Just right: Comfortable, matches customer

Pitch:

- Higher: Enthusiasm, energy (greetings)
- Lower: Calm, serious (problems)
- Varied: Engaging, natural

Tone:

- Warm: Welcome, friendly
- Flat: Bored, disinterested
- Sharp: Irritated, rude

Practice: Record yourself. How do you sound? Would you want to be served by someone who sounds like that?

CHAPTER 19: The Art of Positive Language

What is Positive Language?

Positive language focuses on what you CAN do, what IS available, and solutions rather than problems.

Why it matters:

- Shapes emotional response
- Creates hopeful rather than disappointed feeling
- Maintains positive energy
- Builds trust and cooperation
- Often achieves better outcomes

The principle: Frame everything to emphasize the positive.

The Positive Language Framework

For every negative statement, there's a positive alternative:

Negative (Focus on Problem)	Positive (Focus on Solution)
"We don't have that"	"We have [alternatives] available" or "We'll have that tomorrow"
"You can't do that"	"What you can do is..." or "Here's what's possible..."
"That's not my job"	"Let me connect you with who can help"

"I don't know"	"Great question! Let me find out for you"
"You'll have to wait"	"It'll be ready in 5 minutes" or "I'll have this ready for you shortly"
"That's impossible"	"Here's what we can do..."
"You should have..."	"Next time, this will make it easier..."
"That's wrong"	"Let me help clarify that" or "Here's how it actually works"
"We're out of that"	"That's been popular! We have [alternative] which people love"

Categories of Positive Language

1. CAPABILITY STATEMENTS

Focus on what you CAN do.

Examples: ✅ "I can have this ready by 3 PM" ✅ "What I can do is..." ✅ "We're able to offer..." ✅ "Let me see what's possible" ✅ "Here's what I can definitely do for you..."

2. SOLUTION-ORIENTED PHRASES

Move immediately to solving.

Examples: ✅ "Let me fix that right away" ✅ "Here's how we can make this work" ✅ "The best option would be..." ✅ "What would work best for you?" ✅ "Let's find a solution"

3. TIME-POSITIVE STATEMENTS

Frame time constructively.

Examples: Instead of "You'll have to wait 10 minutes": ✅ "This will be ready in 10 minutes" ✅ "I'll have this to you at 2:15" ✅ "It's only 10 minutes for made-to-order"

4. ALTERNATIVE-OFFERING PHRASES

When you can't provide exactly what they want.

Examples: ✅ "We don't have X, but we do have Y which is similar" ✅ "That's not available today, but it will be tomorrow" ✅ "Instead of X, what about Y?" ✅ "The closest thing we have is..." ✅ "People who like X usually also love Y"

5. EMPOWERMENT LANGUAGE

Give customer control and choice.

Examples: ✅ "You can choose between..." ✅ "What would you prefer?" ✅ "It's completely up to you" ✅ "You have the option to..." ✅ "Would you like me to...?"

6. APPRECIATION LANGUAGE

Thank rather than criticize.

Examples: Instead of "You need to..." ✅ "Thank you for..." ✅ "I appreciate your patience" ✅ "Thanks for understanding" ✅ "I'm grateful you brought this to my attention"

Positive Language in Difficult Situations

When You Have to Say No

Negative approach: "No, we can't do that. It's against policy."

Positive approach: "What I can do is [alternative]. Would that work for you?"

The technique:

1. Acknowledge request: "I understand you'd like..."
2. Explain briefly (if helpful): "The reason we can't is..."
3. Offer alternative: "What I can do instead is..."
4. Check acceptance: "Would that work?"

Example: Customer wants discount you can't give.

❌ "No, I can't give you a discount. That's not allowed."

✅ "I understand you're looking for a better price. I'm not able to discount this item, but what I can do is let you know about our loyalty program (like our loyalty punching cards will be implemented in the future)—you'd earn points toward free items. Would you like me to sign you up?"

When There's a Problem

Negative approach: "You ordered wrong" or "The system messed up"

Positive approach: "Let me fix that right away"

The technique:

1. Don't assign blame
2. Focus on solution
3. Take ownership of resolution

Example: Order is wrong.

❌ "You must have ordered wrong. That's what's in the system."

✅ "I want to make sure you get exactly what you want. Let me remake this correctly right now."

When You Need Them to Do Something

Negative approach: "You need to..." or "You have to..."

Positive approach: "If you could..." or "Would you mind..."

The technique: Frame as request, not command, with explanation of benefit.

Example: ❌ "You need to move your bag"

✅ "For safety, would you mind moving your bag? I don't want anyone to trip. Thank you!"

When Giving Instructions

Negative approach: "Don't do..." or "Never..."

Positive approach: "Please do..." or "The best way is..."

Example: ❌ "Don't leave this here" ✅ "Please place this over here"

❌ "Don't forget to..." ✅ "Remember to..." or "Make sure to..."

Power Words and Phrases

Words that create positive emotional responses:

Invitation words:

- "Welcome"
- "Please join us"
- "Feel free to..."
- "You're invited to..."

Assurance words:

- "Absolutely"
- "Certainly"
- "Definitely"
- "Of course"

- "Guaranteed"

Speed words:

- "Right away"
- "Immediately"
- "Quick"
- "Fast"
- "Prompt"

Value words:

- "Complimentary"
- "Bonus"
- "Extra"
- "Special"
- "Exclusive"

Service words:

- "Pleasure"
- "Happy to help"
- "My pleasure"
- "Delighted to"
- "Honor"

Words and Phrases to Avoid

Negative trigger words:

❌ "Problem" → ✅ "situation" or "challenge" ❌ "Complaint" → ✅ "feedback" or "concern" ❌ "Cheap" → ✅ "economical" or "budget-friendly" ❌ "You have to" → ✅ "You'll need to" or "If you could" ❌ "Actually" → (Often sounds condescending, use sparingly) ❌ "Honestly/To be honest" → (Implies other times you're not honest) ❌ "But" → (Negates everything before it) → ✅ "And" or just start new sentence

Practice Exercise: Reframing

Reframe these negative statements positively:

1. "We're out of that"
2. "You can't park there"
3. "That'll take forever"
4. "I don't know"
5. "That's not my department"
6. "You'll have to call back"
7. "We're too busy right now"
8. "That's the wrong way to do it"

9. "You should have called ahead"
10. "It's not ready yet"

Possible answers:

1. "That's been popular today! We have [alternative] or we'll have more tomorrow morning"
2. "The best parking is over there—let me show you"
3. "This will take about 15-20 minutes to prepare properly"
4. "Great question—let me find out for you right away"
5. "The team that handles that is [dept]—let me connect you"
6. "The best time to reach them is [time]—or I can take a message"
7. "We're serving many guests today—it'll be about 10 minutes. May I offer you [something while you wait]?"
8. "Let me show you the easiest way to do this"
9. "Calling ahead can help for next time, and I'm happy to help you now"
10. "This will be ready in about 5 minutes"

CHAPTER 20: Using Names and Personalization

The Power of a Name

Dale Carnegie said: **"A person's name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language."**

Why names matter:

- **Identity:** Your name is core to who you are
- **Recognition:** Hearing your name means you're seen as an individual
- **Connection:** Using someone's name creates instant personalization
- **Memory:** Names help people remember interactions positively
- **Respect:** Using someone's name correctly shows you care

Research shows:

- Hearing our name activates unique parts of our brain
- We respond more positively to requests that include our name
- Service that uses names increases satisfaction by 23%
- Tip amounts increase when servers use names

How to Get Names

Methods:

1. **Ask directly:**

- ○ "May I have a name for the order?" (Respect Saudi Islamic Culture accordingly)
- ○ "What name should I put this under?"
- ○ "And your name is...?"

2. **From loyalty program/app:**

- ○ Check their account
- ○ "Hi [Name], great to see you!"

3. **From payment card:**

- ○ Visible when processing payment
- ○ "Thank you, [Name]"

4. **They introduce themselves:**

- ○ Listen and remember

5. **From colleagues:**

- ○ "This is for Aziz"
- ○ Remember for next time

6. **Name badges/uniforms:**

- ○ If customer wears one
- ○ Use appropriately

How to Use Names

When to use: ✅ **Greeting:** "Good morning, Ahmed!" ✅ **During interaction:** "Mam, this is one of our most popular items" ✅ **Calling order:** "Large cappuccino for Maria!" ✅ **Delivery:** "Here you go, David. Enjoy!" ✅ **Farewell:** "Thank you, Jennifer. See you soon!"

How often:

- At beginning and end (minimum)
- 1-2 times during interaction (natural, not excessive)
- When getting their attention

How NOT to use: ❌ Every single sentence (feels manipulative) ❌ With obviously fake enthusiasm ❌ When mispronounced (fix it first) ❌ Inappropriately informal (without permission)

Getting Pronunciation Right

Names are deeply personal. Pronouncing them correctly matters enormously.

If unsure:

1. **Ask:** "I want to make sure I say your name correctly. Could you tell me how to pronounce it?"

2. **Repeat:** "Is it [pronunciation]?"
3. **Practice:** Say it a few times mentally
4. **Remember:** Make a mental note or write it down (discreetly)

If you get it wrong:

- Apologize sincerely
- Ask for correction
- Practice immediately
- Get it right next time

Never:

- Guess and get it wrong repeatedly
- Make jokes about "difficult" names
- Give up and use wrong pronunciation
- Ask "Do you have an easier name?"
- Anglicize names without permission

Cultural Considerations

Names vary significantly across cultures:

Given name vs. family name:

- In many Asian cultures, family name comes first
- In Western cultures, given name typically comes first
- When unsure: Ask "What would you like me to call you?"

Titles:

- Some cultures emphasize formal titles (Mr., Mrs., Dr., etc.)
- Others prefer first names
- When in doubt, err on side of formality with older customers

Nicknames:

- Don't assume nickname from formal name
- Use the name they give you
- Ask permission before using nicknames

Multiple names:

- Some cultures use multiple given names or compound family names
- Use what they provide

Beyond Names: Other Personalization

Remember Preferences

What to remember:

- Their usual order
- Preferences (extra hot, no ice, etc.)
- Dietary restrictions
- Likes/dislikes

How to remember:

- Mental notes for regulars
- Notes in customer system (if available)
- Discuss with colleagues

How to use: "Your usual today, or would you like to try something new?" "I remember you don't like cinnamon—I'll make sure there's none"

Remember Details

What they share:

- Job/profession
- Hobbies/interests
- Family members
- Upcoming events
- Challenges they mentioned

How to use: "How did your exam go?" "Is your sonfeeling better?" "Did you enjoy that concert you were going to?"

Caution:

- Don't be creepy (stalkerish)
- Don't remember things they'd expect you to forget
- If unsure, don't reference

Acknowledge Regulars

Special treatment for regulars: ✅ "Welcome back!" ✅ "Good to see you again!" ✅ "Been a while! Glad you're back!" ✅ Occasional surprise upgrade or extra

Why it matters:

- Rewards loyalty
- Makes them feel valued
- Strengthens relationship
- Increases retention

The Name Game: Building Your Memory

Techniques for remembering names:

1. **Repetition:**

    - Use it immediately: "Nice to meet you, Saeed"
    - Use it again during interaction
    - Use it at farewell
    - Say it silently a few times

2. **Association:**

    - Connect to someone you know with same name
    - Create mental image linking name to face
    - Connect to feature or characteristic (respectfully, mentally only)

3. **Write it down:**

    - On order pad
    - In phone/notebook after interaction
    - In customer system

4. **Focus:**

    - Pay full attention when they tell you
    - Don't think about other things
    - Really look at them while learning name

5. **Practice:**

    - Review names at end of shift
    - Quiz yourself on regulars
    - The more you practice, the better you get

When You Forget a Name

It happens. Handle gracefully:

If they've told you before:

- "I apologize—could you remind me of your name?"
- "I'm terrible with names—help me out?"
- Don't pretend you remember

If you should know (regular):

- Be honest: "I'm so sorry—I'm blanking on your name"
- Most people are understanding
- Make extra effort to remember next time

Don't:

- Avoid using name because you forgot
- Use wrong name

- Make up nickname
- Be defensive about forgetting

Privacy and Boundaries

Respect privacy: ❌ Don't use female customer names, and also men names in public social media posts without permission ❌ Don't share customer information with others inappropriately ❌ Don't use names from payment cards to look people up online ❌ Don't call customers by name in front of others if they seem to want privacy

Use common sense:

- Not everyone wants their name announced publicly
- Some situations call for discretion
- Read the room and the person