

TOPIC ONE: WORKING WITH PEOPLE

The aims and objectives of this topic are to:

- Discuss the principles of communication
- Establish guidelines for effective information exchange
- Develop good telephone techniques to improve service quality
- Demonstrate some methods of dealing with angry callers
- Explore how to determine client wants and needs
- Discuss how value systems affect our relationships with others
- Promote active listening skills to improve the way we communicate
- Discuss solutions to dealing with challenging behaviour
- Establish proven ways of minimising and resolving conflict

Suggested reading:

Wilson, Angela *The Medical Office. Chapter One.* Croydon, Vic: Tertiary Press, 2001.



Conflict resolution Network: *Conflict resolution kit* (in reader)

Research assigned:

If you are working, investigate if your organisation has any guidelines on the following:



- The rules for personal conduct in communication
- Telephone etiquette
- Guidelines for dealing with difficult situations
- Workplace violence and Code Black
- Conflict resolution strategies
- Telephone etiquette

If you are not working, ask your training provider, or a job network agency, if they have any examples of these.

The internet can also provide examples of company policies and procedures as many organisations now publish their policies and procedures on their web sites so that staff or job applicants can access them.

Put together an information folder of documents and guidelines you have found that might help you improve your skills in working with people.



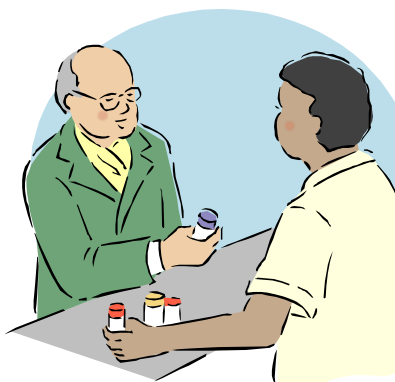
Assessment:

Details of your assessment tasks are given in the Assessment Manual.



CHOOSING THE RIGHT MEDIUM FOR COMMUNICATION

There are many ways we can choose to exchange ideas and information, and you may be familiar with some, but not all:



- personal interactions
- telephone calls, SMS and teleconferencing
- formal and informal meetings
- seminars and training sessions
- letters, forms, faxes and emails
- notices, bulletins and reports
- text messages from mobiles
- answering machines
- personal podcasts
- organizational intranets
- videocams or videoconferencing

All of these media have one thing in common: they are designed to provide links between people. Looking after the needs of people is the reason you chose this profession. However, people come in all shapes, sizes and dispositions.

When they walk in the door, you do not know if they are going to be 'nasty or nice' to deal with, but you have to make sure that everyone gets the same quality of service, no matter who or how they are.

You will often be the first person they see when they enter the building and they see you as 'the company'. However you deal with them; that will be perceived as how the company operates.

This means that you have total responsibility for presenting the corporate image and ethos. This is a 'big ask' but is vital to maintain the goodwill on which all business flourishes.

Each means of verbal, written or technical communication has its own protocols and conventions. Your organisation may also give out specific instructions on:

- manners and etiquette in interpersonal communications
- use of personal mobile phones during work hours
- sending and receiving personal emails or text messages at work
- using the Internet and Netiquette
- using company intranet (server) for communication
- house styles for letters and emails
- confidentiality and privacy issues
- the rules for slang, jargon or colloquialisms
- compliance with legislation

In this topic we will deal with the 'people interface' of working with clients.

In Topic Two we will explore working with colleagues and team members.

The technical and written communication media are dealt with in Topic Three.

GETTING YOUR MESSAGE ACROSS

Your clients and customers rely on you for information, advice and instructions. If you don't get your message across accurately, then things can go wrong.

Not being understood can make both you and them angry. It can also lead to arguments and the breakdown of associations. What went wrong? Who is at fault here, you or *Them*?

Think about how telephone interactions work and you will understand the communications principles and process.

The principles of Communication:



Think of all the things that must happen before the connection works:

- The *transmitter* (the other person) must be there and operating.
- The *medium* (system) must be available and operating at both ends and all points in between.
- The *message* must be able to be conducted by the technology available and the *receiver* (you) must be ready

Guidelines for effective information exchange:

- You must have a common understanding of the subject. Your knowledge of what is under discussion may not be equal. You must have the right to exchange questions and get answers.
- You must be talking the same language or have access to a translation service. This applies to cultural language differences, technical languages, philosophical viewpoints and the level of language you use.
- Both parties must be good listeners. The Chinese word *listen* is made up of pictograms of 'ear', 'eye', 'undivided attention' and 'heart'. These are all the elements that must be working together if messages are to be heard and understood.
- Good listeners learn to use *the language of the customer* in order to get their message over. Using the *language of the customer* is an art we all have to work at if we want to become a good *people person*.
- You must be able to hear and the speaker must be able to speak. If there are any barriers to this (such as deafness or speech impediments), you may have to use some other method.
- Nonverbal language is also important and assists interaction. Both parties must be able to see and interpret it. We can increase our understanding of other people by studying the gestures and signals they use.
- Mutual sensitivity to cultural differences is also important. What is acceptable in one group may be offensive in another. The interpretation has to be right.
- The giver of the message should not take on trust that the other person automatically understands it. Always check that the message has been understood by active questioning.
- Get the other person to relay back their understanding of what you have just told them. This reinforces the message and ensures that nothing is left out.

Making the process work more effectively:

- You have to show some respect for the other person, even if you do not share their point of view or the message isn't interesting to you. They value it and come to value your viewpoint in exchange. Thank or reward the person in some way for sharing their ideas with you, even if you do not agree with them
- Both people must be paying attention. Making mental notes of the most interesting points and using these for comments or questions is important if you need to understand the message to be able to carry out some actions.
- An argument may be interesting if it is not conducted as a conflict but as an exchange of ideas without intention to control. People can be convinced to change preferences and affiliations, but the only belief systems you can change are your own. Understanding this is crucial to making any relationship work.
- You can never win any argument based on value systems. You literally have to lead by example and hope that your role modelling will encourage them to make an attitude shift. Trying to force an issue only leads to resentment.

Company policies and procedures:

Every company has its own set of rules about how their staff must conduct themselves in client interactions. The extract on page 9 comes from a policy and procedure.

Sometimes they put this in formal procedures, induction or instruction manuals and at other times they give people training on what ethical and customer service practices they expect their staff to follow. Whatever their rules, the same considerations are always discussed:

- Courtesy and respect
- Customer service
- Ethics
- Confidentiality
- Telephone etiquette
- Dress and behaviour codes

Responding to instructions or enquiries:

We give and receive information many times every day.

Instructions come to us in many forms and they can be written or verbal instructions. Written instructions are preferable for standard procedures, because they set clear guidelines for what has to be done and by whom.

However, you will receive many instructions from supervisors, work colleagues or other professionals you work with.

- Firstly, you need to make sure that you understand what is being asked of you
- If you are not sure what the instruction means or how to carry out the task, you must ask. We only learn by asking questions.
- Ask how long the task should take and what to do if it takes longer than expected because of interruptions or unexpected events
- It is a good idea to summarise the instructions and repeat them back to the giver: *"Now let me check if I have got this right, I am to..."*

You follow the same type of process when handling an enquiry. The important thing is to make sure that both parties understand and agree on the process and outcomes.

ASSESSMENT RECORD

Student Name:

Student Number:

Postcode:

e-mail:

Assessor/Trainer:

Telephone:

e-mail:

Assessment for topic:	Assessments	Date	CA	NYC
One: Working with people	1. Establishing client needs and wants			
	2. Providing a quality service			
	3. Case study – Two client calls			
	4. Listeners quiz			
	5. Body Language			
	6. Value systems*			
	7. Dealing with devaluing behaviour*			
	8. Case study			

Note: These assessments are also included in the Occupational Health and Safety and Introduction to Work modules. You only need complete these assessments once and they are then credited against whichever module you take second. Please alert your trainer if you have already satisfactorily completed these assessments in prior studies.

Assessor's comments:

Assessor Signature: _____

Student Signature: _____

Sign-off date: _____

Assessment One: Establishing client wants and needs

Thinking about your own clinic, and the type of information your clients may want and need:

1. What is the difference between a want and a need?

2. Why is it necessary to gather specific information about client wants and needs before booking appointments or starting a procedure?

3. Write down three closed questions you might ask your clients:

4. Write down three open questions you might ask your clients:

5. Write down a complex question you might ask a client to gain clarification on a point:

6. Write down a simple script that you might use to explain the benefits and purpose of a specific therapy or procedure to a client:
