

Instructions

Chapter Objectives

In this chapter, you will learn about:

- The importance of strong relationships and good communication and interpersonal skills
- Reasons support agents must listen and read carefully, build and communicate understanding, and use verbal and nonverbal communication effectively
- How to develop a personal communication style
- How to support agents develop an incident management strategy
- Strategies support agents use for voice and web-based communications
- Strategies support agents use for working with difficult clients and incidents and for resolving conflicts
- How developing an understanding of different personality types and work styles can help an agent
- How to provide excellent customer service

Additional Resources

1. Listening skills exercises
<http://ezinearticles.com/?2-Easy-Exercises-to-Improve-Listening-Skills&id=845402>
2. Myers-Briggs Type Indicator website:
www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/mbti-basics/
3. Customer service ethics:
http://www.ehow.com/about_6815572_customer-service-ethics.html

Key Terms

- **Blog**—A website feature where a writer posts messages or short articles and invites members of a user community to comment on them.
- **Conflict**—A disagreement that can occur when end-users and user support staff have differing opinions about problem-solving steps, product and service

evaluations, or needs assessment project recommendations. Resolving conflicts involves recognizing barriers to resolution as well as tools designed to resolve interpersonal and team dynamics problems.

- **Customer-service ethic**—An organization-wide commitment, shared by everyone from top management to operational staff, that client relations and client satisfaction are the most important aspects of a business.
- **Difficult client**—A user who requires special handling strategies because they are angry, uncommunicative, rude, or abusive, or exhibits other hard-to-handle behaviors.
- **Empathy**—An understanding of and identification with a user's problem situation, thoughts, and feelings. A support agent who can empathize with a user is able to understand the problem or question from the client's perspective and why it is important to the client.
- **Greeting**—The first few sentences in a support incident that introduce an agent, form the basis for the first impression of the support service by the user, and gets the incident-resolution process started on a positive note.
- **Incident management strategy**—A collection of tools, techniques, and strategies that support agents use during an incident to move effectively and efficiently from the initial greeting to the conclusion of the incident.
- **Mediator**—A lead participant on a conflict resolution situation, usually filled by someone with expertise in training activities and negotiation; a mediator should also have excellent listening skills, an ability to “see both sides”, and an ability to remain neutral.
- **Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)**—A personality analysis commonly used in business and industry to identify worker personality and work style preferences.
- **Nonverbal behavior**—The facial expressions, body language, tone, and style used in the communication process. Nonverbal communication behavior may be more important than the specific words used in communication.
- **Personal communication style**—The result of a series of decisions an individual makes about how he or she communicates with end-users.

- **Power-user**—A user who is technically knowledgeable (or believes that they are), or who may have a relationship with an organization that they feel warrants special attention to their incident.
- **Script**—A prepared sequence of questions and statements that support agents can use to handle parts of an incident; a script may include decision points and branches to handle different situations.
- **Self-reliance**—A goal of support service providers that seek to increase user self-sufficiency and reduce a user's dependence on support services.
- **Support website**—A website devoted to providing clients with product information, software downloads, support staff contacts, and a sales channel. A support website is a cost-effective method to communicate with users but should be designed to be client-friendly.
- **Thread**—Commentary on a single topic posted on a web forum to which several members may contribute comments; usually organized by date with the oldest messages first.
- **User forum**—A website feature that allows for online discussions among members of a user community. User forums emphasize the collaborative nature of the web as a way to encourage interaction and collaboration among users.
- **Web 2.0**—The development of technologies and web applications that emphasize the social networking aspects of collaboration and communication among users. Web 2.0 emphasizes the interactive use of the web.