

The Hong Kong Association for Customer Service Excellence (“HKACE”) was formed in February 2000 to promote customer service excellence in Hong Kong. To this end, we have initiated a series of publications on various subjects in the field of customer service.

In October 2002, HKACE organised, in partnership with Dew Point International Ltd., five training workshops for its members with the objectives of developing high emotional intelligence (“EQ”) and enhancing effective communication with customers. The workshops were highly interactive, with participants coming from different service industries. An important by-product of the workshop is this document – “Developing High EQ for Effective Communication with Customers”, which summarises the theories and practices discussed. It is written to help readers appreciate the importance of EQ in communication and service delivery. It incorporates real case examples and is filled with practical suggestions on managing one’s own emotions.

We hope this publication will help readers build more fulfilling lives for themselves and apply the concepts in a meaningful way to their professional work in serving their customers and the community.

Allan Chiang
Chairman
Hong Kong Association for Customer Service Excellence

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Member Organizations

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I

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE QUIZ

What is your Emotional Intelligence Quotient?

Researchers find that a person's emotional intelligence (EQ) might be a greater predictor of success than his or her intellectual intelligence (IQ).

Emotional Intelligence is a person's ability to understand their own emotions, the emotions of others, and to act appropriately using these emotions. This quiz will help you measure your EQ.

Instruction: Each item describes a hypothetical situation. Select your best response in each of the following situations.

1. Situation: You trip on the MTR walkway and almost land flat on your face.

Your Response:

- a. You get mad at yourself and grumble afterwards.
- b. You pick yourself up and move on.
- c. You give an angry look to anyone who happens to stare at you.
- d. You feel embarrassed, put your head down and hope that no one saw it.

2. Situation: You have moved to a new working environment and your colleagues seem quite distant and unfriendly.

Your Response:

- a. You plan to ask your new colleagues to have lunch with you, even if you don't like eating in certain places.
- b. You start to think that there might be something wrong with you.
- c. You try to talk to your new colleagues and find out more about their interests and concerns.
- d. You join your old colleagues for lunch since you don't think your new colleagues would like to befriend with you.

3. Situation: Your boss has asked to develop a new business, which would help to secure your company's future.

Your Response:

- a. You spend the next few months working on the development of the new business on your own without telling anybody about it.
- b. You quickly pull your team together, brief them on the new business opportunity and get them involved immediately in developing the new business.
- c. You can hardly sleep in the evening since you have so much to think about it.
- d. You avoid dealing with it now since you can't concentrate on it.

4. Situation: Your teammate has a habit that annoys you more and more each day.

Your Response:

- a. You tell the person what annoys you and why.
- b. You try to give him some hints about it so he might stop.
- c. You tell him to stop it otherwise you will ask for a transfer.
- d. Bear with it! You cannot do anything about other people's habit.

5. Situation: You find out that the project you were hoping for was assigned to someone else.

Your Response:

- a. You do not want to think about it and tell yourself that you didn't want that kind of responsibility anyway.
- b. You call off your day earlier and do not feel like going back to work the next day.
- c. You keep thinking why you are being unfairly treated.
- d. You continue to do your best and prepare yourself for bigger assignment in the near future.

5. d

4. a

3. b

2. c

1. b

About these answers:

These answers reflect the concept of Emotional Intelligence (EQ). EQ is about being honest with oneself, accepting responsibility for your own feelings, having empathy for others, standing up for what you believe in without hurting the feelings of others, controlling your own impulses and managing your emotions. It is important to understand your emotions and the emotions of others, in order to act and react in the most appropriate manner according to your true belief.

Regardless of your score, keep in mind that your EQ can increase or decrease depending on your continuous learning whether you got a higher or lower EQ of yourself, and the effort you put into your personal improvement.

Since there is so much to learn about developing our EQ, we recommend you to move on to the next section where you will begin your EQ development journey and discover why EQ is important to your personal fulfillment and service role.

II

WHAT IS EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (EQ)?

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (EQ) IS YOUR EMOTIONAL MAKE-UP WHICH INCLUDES YOUR ABILITY TO:

- Gain self awareness and personal understanding:
Observing yourself and recognizing a feeling as it happens.
- Manage emotions in an effective way :
Handling feelings so that they are appropriate; realizing what is behind a feeling; finding ways to handle fears and anxieties, anger, and sadness.
- Motivate oneself:
Channeling emotions in the service of a goal
- Maintain self-discipline :
Controlling emotions of oneself
- Adopt a positive mental attitude:
Having an optimistic view of life and avoiding negative influence of oneself
- Deal with adversity in a constructive manner:
Facing challenges head on and strengthening oneself through the process
- Show empathy for others:
Expressing sensitivity to others' feelings and concerns and taking their perspective
- Manage interpersonal relationships effectively:
Managing emotions in others through increased social skills.

EQ is the power behind the throne of intellectual abilities.

III

THE IMPORTANCE OF EQ

IQ + EQ = Success

Positive emotional traits are usually not associated with intelligence. As Dr. Daniel Goleman, Author of Emotional Intelligence, says IQ accounts for only 20% of a person's success in life, the rest is attributed to other factors, including emotional intelligence.

Based on extensive new brain and behavioural research, he has discovered that :

- People skills
- The ability to identify and manage our own emotions as we are feeling them, and
- Being able to recognize and harmonize emotions of others are all prerequisites for personal success.

People work every day and many harbour negative emotions which will become a destructive force if they are not managed effectively. For example, they may suppress their negative feelings to the extent of over-controlling themselves. This may cause them to deny their right to feel emotions, or prevent them from dealing with their own emotions in a healthy manner.

For your emotional health, it is advisable to invest time in learning about EQ, know yourself and develop a high EQ. Please use this guidebook to help build a more fulfilling life for yourself as well as applying the concepts to your professional work in serving your customers and the community.

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IV

SERVICE WITH A HEART

Positive service behaviour



Happy customers



Positive feelings



More positive service mindset

The Way We Behave Is A Reflection Of Our Inner Core

The inner core is our

- Character
- Beliefs and values
- Emotions

How we feel about what we are doing would speak louder than the words. For example, if we do not believe that we can help our customers in benefiting from our product or service, we will be unable to focus on the needs of the customer and present our product or service to reflect its integrity or worth.

THE POWER OF BEHAVIOUR:

Behaviour breeds behaviour

- λ You can choose your behaviour
- λ You can use your behaviour to hinder or help a transaction, you can choose to
 - turn an opportunity into a CRISIS
 - turn a crisis into a **SERVICE OPPORTUNITY**

V

POSITIVE VERSUS NEGATIVE SERVICE

Service with a heart focuses on what makes us human. It gets to the core and allows us to concentrate on what we feel, what we do and the habits that form the foundation of our actions. It also helps us to take the time to understand other people and to care about their feelings.

Good service behaviour must come from a positive service mindset.

POSITIVE SERVICE MIND-SET

It is a reflection on your views of yourself, others and your job:

Your Self Belief:

- You believe you are worthy and play a major role
- You value & care about them
- You are important in relation to your customer
- You mean a lot to your customer

The true value of a Positive Mind-set lies in 4 key service behaviors, the 4 P's:

- 😊 Passionate
- 😊 Proactive
- 😊 Progressive
- 😊 Positive

NEGATIVE SERVICE MIND-SET

Some emotions are unproductive and harmful, they cause a negative chain reaction, undermine our ability to solve the problem & make personal improvement. For example, they are

- Stress/fears/worries
- Hatred/blames/angers
- Regrets/depression

Excessive negative emotions without control /management will lead to serious consequences or burnout.

Learn how to manage the negative feelings & remain positive when facing difficult situations in personal and work life.

VI

MANAGE OUR EMOTIONS

KEY STEPS

1. Understand What Causes Negative Feelings

Task

- Too much work
- Uncertainties/changes adversity
- Fear of new responsibilities challenges
- Failure or fear of failure

Interpersonal relationship

- Criticism
- Rejection
- Nasty response

2. Get Rid Of Negative Feelings

Change your environment

- Change jobs, quit meeting some people, drop some responsibilities

Change your internal attitude or perception

Manage your self-talk (Self-talk is what we say to ourselves about the things which are happening to us.)

3. Develop Positive Self-Talk

Examples of Positive Self-Talk:

"I learn from this experience and know what I can do in similar situation."

"I know I'm not perfect but I can always be better next time."

a. Stop the unproductive self-talk

Examples of Negative Self-Talk:

"I don't know how to handle these people because it is difficult for me to predict their feelings."

"I only work here. Why should I bother to do something extra?"

b. Take a deep breath to calm down yourself

c. Analyse the unproductive self-talk

- What is my objective?
- What is likely to happen if I act on the self-talk?
- Is it the only perspective? What are the other perspectives in this situation?

d. Focus on your objective

- What do you want to happen?
- What do you need to tell yourself so that you can achieve your objective?

4. Understand, Prevent And Control Emotional Outbursts

- “Emotional hijackings” means we lose control over ourselves and allow feelings to dictate the way in which we respond
- When under pressure, we tend to react instinctively without rational thinking. This quick action can be beneficial sometimes
- However, actions without thought and evaluation will often make you feel guilty and regretful afterwards

VII

DEVELOPING HIGH EQ FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS WITH CUSTOMERS

EQ Communication:

Misunderstandings can arise when we do not apply EQ Communication. Observe the following guidelines in your communication with your customers:

- Avoid using informal language and slang words
- Make sure that you are not using emotionally charged words
- Avoid misinterpretations when you hear or receive overstatements
- Ask for clarity prior to making a decision and listen well to the response
- Avoid using negative words
- Take time to think and feel before you make your response
- Plan, organise and deliver your communication to ensure your message is appropriate and sensitive towards your listener

Maintaining High EQ Towards Complaints & Difficult Customers:

- Expect some complaints/difficult customers
- Have a positive view on complaints/difficult customers
- See the complaint as a challenge and learning experience
- The customer is not personally attacking you; he is just very unhappy or under serious stress
- Determine what you can do to make the customer feel better

Applying EQ Communication In Handling Emotional Situations

Listen

- Face the customer in an “open body” position
- Give encouraging responses such as nodding the head, saying
“Yes....I see....” “Please tell me what’s bothering you” “I’ll try my best to sort this out”
- Listen for useful information to understand the problem clearly, listen for both facts and feelings to show your understanding
 - ♦ Reflect customer’s feelings
“You must be very nervous facing this situation”
 - ♦ Paraphrase to clarify your understanding correctly
“Let’s see if I understand your situation” (then sum up the key points the customer has said in your own words)

Show Empathy

- Show acceptance and respect for the customer's feelings, don't just say "I know how you feel", acknowledge his feeling & his situation e.g. *"I can see how you'd be upset about...."*
- Let the customer know that his feeling is understandable and that he is not wrong for feeling this way e.g. *"I appreciate your concern, others share your feeling, too"*
- Agree on legitimate criticism, it works best to defuse customer's anger, e.g. Customer says, *"I've been on hold for twenty minutes. I think that's really poor service"*
You can say, *"I agree, twenty minutes is a long time to wait."*

Making Interpretive Statements

- Make sure you understand the concern before you try to solve it
- Ask questions to clarify the situation
- Ask the customer what he wants in order to end the discussion satisfactorily
- Sum up the customer's situation and needs to confirm and show understanding

Ask

- Ask questions to clarify the situation
 - ♦ use open & closed questions appropriately
 - ♦ use prefacing questioning techniques:
"Maybe I misunderstood, do you mean..."
"To make sure we get the best solution, can I get more information?" - Ask probing questions to find details
"May I know why this information is so important to you?"
- Use the customer's name to get his attention

Solve

- Provide and agree on a solution
- Suggest alternatives. Provide at least more than two alternatives for the customer to choose from
- Use the 'Broken Record' technique
 - ♦ *"I'm sorry Sir. I do understand how frustrating this is for you, but I'll be glad to get one to you next week"*(Repeat calmly until you have been heard)
- Use 'feeling' statements if there is difficulty in reaching an agreement
 - ♦ *"That's the best I can do and I regret that it still does not meet your requirement. I'll appreciate it if you can consider all the alternative solutions offered instead"*
- Allow time to discern & accept

Manage Your Own Emotions

- Acknowledge that you cannot fully satisfy every customer for reasons beyond your control
- You are not personally responsible for the customer's feelings and responses
- Vent your frustration appropriately, and let go of the incidence
- Don't let it affect your service to the next customer
- Take a break
- Give yourself positive, stress-reducing messages

Complete this section with a case study in Appendix 3

EQ QUOTES

Importance of EQ

"Emotions prioritize thinking by directing us to important information."

John Mayer and Peter Salovey

"Business is now so complex and difficult, the survival of firms so hazardous in an environment increasingly unpredictable, competitive and fraught with danger, that their continued existence depends on the day-to-day mobilization of every ounce of intelligence".

Konosuke Matsushita, Founder, Matsushita Electric Ltd.

Emotional Honesty

When pure sincerity forms within, it is outwardly realized in other people's hearts.

Lao Tzu, Understanding the Mysteries, Sixth Century BC

We lie loudest when we lie to ourselves.

Eric Hoffer, American Sociologist

Taking Responsibility For Our Feelings

"When we experience our unwanted feelings, they pass out of us and diminish naturally. With wanted feelings the opposite occurs: they grow within us to strengthen us."

Nathaniel Branden

"Most executives have a notoriously underdeveloped capacity for understanding and dealing with emotions."

Manfred F. R. Kets de Vries, INSEAD, France

On Approval Seeking

"46% of those who quit their jobs last year did so because they felt unappreciated."

US Department of Labor

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Emotional Energy

"Fatigue makes cowards of us all."

Vince Lombardi, US Championship Coach, GreenBay Packers

EQ Communication

"There's a big difference between showing interest and really taking interest."

Michael P. Nichols, The Lost Art of Listening

"I am not always bound to win but I am bound to be true. I am not always bound to succeed but I am bound to live up to what light I have."

Abraham Lincoln, 1809-65, 16th President of the USA

"Without credible communication, and a lot of it, the hearts and minds of others are never captured."

John P. Kotter, Harvard Business School

"You may be deceived if you trust too much, but you will live in torment if you don't trust enough."

Frank Crane, historian and sociologist

Resilience & Renewal

"We rise to great heights by a winding staircase."

Sir Francis Bacon, 1561-1626

"No one can make you feel inferior without your consent."

Eleanor Roosevelt, 1884-1962, US diplomat and wife of Franklin D. Roosevelt

"Success is 99 per cent failure."

Soichiro Honda, founder of the Honda Motor Company

"To make a living is no longer enough. Work also has to make a life."

Peter F. Drucker, preeminent management scholar, USA

Unique Purpose

“Clarity of purpose exposes the foundation of the inner heart.”

M.H. McKee, Forbes

Commitment

“Courage...is nothing less than the power to overcome danger, misfortune, fear, injustice, while continuing to affirm inwardly that life with all its sorrows is good; that everything is meaningful even if in a sense beyond our understanding; and that there is always tomorrow.”

Dorothy Thompson, 1894-1961, US journalist

“Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.”

Wilson Churchill

“Wisdom is knowing what to do, virtue is doing it.”

David Starr Jordan, Forbes

“Every human being has work to do and influence to exert, which are peculiarly his, and which no conscience but his own can teach him to attend.”

William Ellery Channing, nineteenth-century social reformer and author

Integrity

“What has no shadow has no strength to live.”

Czeslaw Milosz, Nobel laureate

Influencing Others

“You can buy people’s time; you can buy their physical presence at a given place; you can buy a measured number of muscular motions per hour. But you cannot buy enthusiasm...you cannot buy loyalty...you cannot buy the devotion of their hearts. This you must earn.”

Clarence Francis, Fortune

“Caring for persons, the more able and the less able serving each other, is the rock upon which a good society is built.”

Robert K. Greenleaf, Harvard Business School

Humour

“The compulsion to take ourselves seriously is in inverse proportion to our creative capacity.”

Eric Hoffer, American sociologist

“It is always fun to do the impossible.”

Walt Disney

1. You must cultivate self-esteem and avoid self-defeating behaviour
2. You must have an aim/purpose in life but they must be objective and specific
3. You must have perseverance
4. Have a positive attitude. Our self-talk makes a difference on how you react to put-downs from others
5. Try to understand what emotions may be holding you back. Learn to let go of your negative emotions or decide how to deal with the problem
6. Learn to control your impulses. Learn to express the emotions in a more positive manner
7. Understand the impact your words or actions may have on others
8. Learn to show empathy for others. Recognise and respond to how customers feel, and attune yourself to their needs rather than to your own needs
9. A better way to deal with anger is to:
 - Recognise that you are angry
 - Get away from the object of your anger to allow yourself time to cool off
 - Do something that diverts your attention away from your concern
 - Look at the situation from the other person's perspective
10. Our character speaks louder than words

IX

EQ Development Checklist

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X

YOUR ROADMAP FOR DEVELOPING HIGH EQ – PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

MY PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

1. What do you find most valuable from this guidebook?
2. What areas in EQ and EQ Communication that you will apply in your daily customer service functions?
3. What specific action steps you will take to help you to improve your emotional intelligence and communication in your service role?

Appendix II - Checklist for Counselling Performance Problems

1. Content of the meeting

- Starting the meeting
 - Create the right atmosphere
 - Explain the purpose
- Discussing the problems
 - State the problem
 - Stress the implications
 - Get the staff's viewpoints & agreement on the problem
 - Explore solutions
 - Get commitment on specific action to be taken & the date for review
 - Explain the consequence of no improvement
- Concluding the meeting
 - Clarify if there is any questions
 - Reaffirm that you have confidence in the staff's ability to improve

2. The communication

- Observe your nonverbal communication
- Ask questions
- Use silence
- Actively listen, reflect feeling, paraphrase
- Show empathy