**The Customer is Always Right?**

Practice the answers to tough questions and elevate your team’s sales game with this realistic customer role-play training.

| Type | Workshop |
| --- | --- |
| Purpose | Training and Development |
| Topics | Fun, collaboration, brainstorming, team building, challenging assumptions, communication, sales |
| Audience | Salespeople |

## **About this activity**

According to the Corporate Executive Board, salespeople who engage in role-play training are more likely to meet or exceed their sales targets. The American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) agrees, and has reported that companies with comprehensive training programs, including role-play, have a 218% higher income per employee than those with less comprehensive training. There is a strong business case for role-play as a foundational element of sales training.

In this dynamic and interactive workshop session, participants will engage in realistic role-play scenarios where they will practice active listening, empathetic communication, and effective problem-solving while addressing various customer needs and concerns. Through constructive feedback and the sharing of best practices, participants will improve their customer engagement skills and boost sales performance.

The Customer is Always Right? is an activity for salespeople that works best in pairs, up to 24 total participants, in an in-person setting.

#### Important details

| Best for groups of | 4-24 |
| --- | --- |
| Preparation time | 15 minutes |
| Duration | 90 minutes |
| Required materials | * Blank paper * Timer * Customer Role Play Scenarios * Scissors * Hat or container for drawing slips of paper * Pen/Pencil |
| Required location | * Indoors |
| Noise level | Medium |

## **How it works**

#### Instructions

Before conducting the activity (10 minutes):

The facilitator will read the instructions and become familiar with the activity instructions. The facilitator should ensure there is a pen and paper at each seat for the icebreaker game. The facilitator should print and cut out the role-play scenarios and put them into a hat or drawing container.

Conducting the training:

Introduction and Quick Icebreaker Game (15 minutes):

The facilitator will inform participants that they will be working together to role-play common types of interactions they may encounter when working with their customers.

The facilitator should tell participants that list-making is a good activity to fire up the brain for role-play and that participants should find a partner and take two minutes to brainstorm items they’ll need for a road trip and write them down. The facilitator should immediately say “Go!” and start timing before participants can ask follow-up questions.

Once the timer expires, the facilitator will ask each pair how many items they have on their packing list and what types of items they would pack. If the pair gives a generic answer such as “shoes,” the facilitator should clarify what type of shoes they should bring - sandals, tennis shoes, hiking boots, etc. Eventually, someone will raise the issue of destination, and at that point, the facilitator will emphasize the importance of knowing the destination to ensure proper planning.

The facilitator will then initiate a second round and inform the pairs that they will have 2 minutes to make a packing list for a trip to Alaska. After time runs out, the facilitator should ask participants to note and discuss the differences between the first and second lists. The facilitator will note that it is easier to make a packing list when the destination is known. In the same way, it is easier for salespeople to develop strong customer relationships when they make a plan for interacting with customers with the end goal in mind - even when customers derail their best-laid plans!

Role Play (45-60 minutes):

The facilitator will ask participants to pair up with a different partner for an exercise in which they will practice their responses to a variety of customer situations. Each person will draw a scenario from the hat and play the role of the salesperson for their given scenario, while their partner will play the role of the customer. After both participants have taken their turn, the pair should give each other feedback and prepare to role-play their scenarios in front of the group.

Once all participants have finished practicing their scenarios with their partners, the facilitator will call on each pair to present their role-plays for all participants, who will be given the opportunity to provide feedback or to share their own best practices for how they would handle this scenario.

Before allowing the participants to draw, the facilitator should offer a few reminders for participants to keep in mind when crafting their customer responses:

* Remember to practice active listening and to avoid interrupting the customer.
* Put yourself in the customer’s shoes as you try to understand their perspective.
* Ask open-ended questions when needed to gather more information about the customer’s needs or concerns, or close-ended questions when you need to confirm specific details.
* If a problem cannot be immediately resolved, communicate a clear plan of action and timeframe for resolution.
* Address objections calmly and professionally. Avoid arguing or becoming defensive.
* Keep interactions efficient without rushing the customer.
* Summarize the main discussion points, if needed.
* Thank the customer for their business or for reaching out.

If the group is small, the facilitator may opt to repeat the exercise for a second or third round as time allows.

Wrap-Up (10-15 minutes):

The facilitator should ask the following questions and allow for responses as time permits.

1. Does role-play and practice lessen the fear of not knowing what to say when faced with an unfamiliar or difficult customer situation?
2. What is the best practice you have learned today that you will use in your future customer interactions?

Rules

None

#### Example

How to respond to a customer who requests a product or service that you don't offer:

"Thank you for your interest. Unfortunately, we currently do not offer that product as it is not something we typically see requests for. However, we do have alternatives that might meet your needs. Would you like to explore those options?"

[If the customer says no]

- "If our alternatives don't quite align with what you're looking for, I can provide recommendations for other providers or businesses that might carry that product. Would that be OK?”

“Thanks for thinking of us and reaching out. Please keep us in mind for any future needs you might have."

## **Materials**

#### For facilitator

Timer

Customer Role Play Scenarios

Scissors

Hat or container for drawing slips of paper

#### For attendee

Blank paper

Pen/Pencil