



London Museum Development Volunteer Training Bank: **Customer Care Handouts**

These handouts were written by Lynne Gillett (lgconsultancy@yahoo.co.uk) on behalf of the London Museum Development Team. Lynne is a freelance trainer, consultant and writer specialising in volunteer management issues.

Lynne has produced the 'Customer Care Handouts' to be used in conjunction with the 'Customer Care Presentation,' 'Customer Care Exercises,' and the 'Customer Care Training Plan' available on the London Museum Development Team's Volunteer Training Bank (www.museumoflondon.org.uk/supporting-london-museums/resources/training-bank).

For more information on how to use these resources to support you to train your volunteers, please read the 'How to use the Training Bank' and the 'Train the Trainer Guide' documents available here: www.museumoflondon.org.uk/supporting-london-museums/resources/training-bank

This half day 'Customer Care' training session can be tailored to represent a specific gallery or museum's volunteer roles and issues in customer care.

The 'Customer Care Handouts' provides the handouts to give to delegates throughout the training session.



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Handout 4: Example of a Customer Care Charter

With thanks to the Horniman Museum

Our Promise to You

- We pursue a reputation of excellence for our exhibitions, facilities and services and ensure that they are accessible to all our visitors, both physically and intellectually.
- We consult with our visitors about our services, and listen to what they have to say.
- We operate a simple and effective complaints procedure, designed to resolve problems, prevent them re occurring, and improve our services. Complaints will be given a high priority for investigation and will receive a written response.
- We publicise and market our exhibitions and facilities to the widest possible audience.
- We will provide accurate information, and promotional material about our exhibitions, activities, events, and facilities.
- We provide clearly displayed information signage regarding access to the museum, gardens and nature trail, ticketing charges, special events, gallery closures and equipment failure.
- Our staff offer high standards of courtesy, helpfulness and knowledge, are identifiable to our visitors, and will deal efficiently and courteously with all enquiries.
- We encourage comments and feedback from all our users and visitors, and provide comments cards for this purpose, which are located at our Information and Reception Desks, and in our galleries.
- We will monitor our standards of service through evaluation of visitor comments and complaints, and regular visitor surveys.
- Telephone calls will be answered within 6 rings or where possible, be received by an accurate voicemail message.
- All general enquiries to the Museum by e-mail, letter and telephone will be responded to within 5 working days.
- We will publish through the web, and on site, clearly displayed information



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Handout 2: Customer Care Issues – Specific Volunteers Roles



Working with younger visitors / families:

- If there is an accompanying adult/teacher, get them on-side before you start, to help you and to make clear any potential issues
- Try not to assume all younger people have limited knowledge – generally much appreciate being treated as adults
- If some do behave inappropriately, do not single them out unless absolutely necessary, and help them understand what is good museum etiquette and why
- Not all young people will be keen to be there – are there any other (safe!) activities that they could enjoy whilst adults in their group look around? Giving them a simple responsibility can also keep them happy!



Working with groups:

- Try not to let one member of a group monopolise you – if possible involve everyone in some way
- Tempting as it may be, try not to “herd” people or treat them like a group of schoolchildren (unless they are!) – try to engage them as a collection of individuals
- If you are worried about the safety of objects because of space/the size of the group, do explain what these issues are at the beginning and remind everyone as a whole group rather than singling someone out if there is a problem
- Keep an eye out for individual needs but try not to divert the whole groups’ attention towards someone if there is a specific support issue – eg if one is struggling with stairs etc., see if you can quietly have a word to see if they need help.
- If possible, try to split the group if there is going to be a mad dash for a small shop/cafe at the end – perhaps direct them to these at the same time as pointing out the garden access/toilets/visitors book etc.!



Phone work:

- Remember callers don't know the situation at your end – nor you theirs, so if it is interrupting other work explain what is happening, and perhaps offer to call them back (take their number if so!) No-one likes being instantly put on hold
- If you are calling someone back introduce yourself and ask if it is a convenient time.
- Make notes
- Use the person's name
- Close by asking if you can help them with anything else.



Shop / Cafe work:

- If the shop/cafe is quiet, take time to talk – ask about how they found their visit.
- If the shop/cafe is busy, also try to make each exchange feel personal - perhaps prepare some quick but “closed” things to say
- Make sure prices are clearly displayed, and if possible highlight cheaper as well as luxury items so that everyone feels there is something for them
- Know your merchandise – have you tasted the food? Personal recommendations are always stronger
- Do make a note of any comments to feed back into choosing future menus/merchandise for the museum. Don't be afraid to make recommendations – if customers are constantly asking for something you don't have, the museum should want to know
- Do allow people to browse without interruption – follow their body language – but if they are going to walk out without purchasing, try to get their interest with an “opener” question
- Sales are best made by making people feel you are paying them special attention – if you have time talk to them about what they have chosen and don't be scared to point out other items they might be interested in when they bring you their purchase
- Do thank them after each purchase.



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Handout 3: Ethnic Diversity in Museum Customer Care

Visitors come to museums from all over the world, and from all UK ethnic groups. Their interests are as broad as any visitor, but displays sometimes do not represent the views of their background.

Tips:

- Be sensitive to social/historical/race issues that may be raised by displays and by descriptions of items
- There are many different views of any historical or cultural event. Hearing other views can enrich the collection and future visitors' experiences, so do invite other perspectives, and feed them back to other museum staff
- Don't make assumptions about visitors' interests. Be cautious of pointing someone towards an item you feel they would have a connection with based on their ethnicity
- When talking to people with English as a second language, it is helpful to slow down your speech slightly, but do not increase your volume! Try to simplify the construction of your sentences a little as well as avoiding jargon / slang
- There are many different etiquettes around the world. Take your lead from observing the visitor's own body language, and respect their physical space
- Some visitors may not understand the unspoken "etiquette" of museums here – rather than saying what visitors mustn't do, guidance may be appreciated.

MLA Traineeship Project:

The following is an extract from an MLA traineeship project, describing the experiences of trainees from ethnic minority backgrounds coming into the museums world:

"Some people don't even think about museums or the staff behind them – you're just invisible, whether you're black or Chinese or white."

All trainees acknowledge that they are appointed with a much wider remit, and that their organisations have already developed an understanding of issues of representation and diversity. However, they acknowledge that their presence alone has had an impact. Several have also addressed issues of representation through their work – both directly and indirectly.

For example, one trainee drew attention to a label for 'Oriental coins' which she found offensive and is now re-labelling this and another display. Another trainee is gaining



experience with the curator of Eastern Art and the outreach service in providing a more diverse programme using the collections. A third has gained experience with education staff through developing events during Diwali.

A trainee observes that the host museum does not fully represent the significant contribution of a minority community within the histories it portrays, and hopes to address this within the period of the traineeship.

One trainee is attached to a substantial project to raise the profile of non-Western collections through an exhibition contextualising them with different interpretations. The trainee came in at the early stages of the project, when a cross-curatorial team had been formed to explore the idea. She has researched and developed the exhibition proposal. The exhibition will take place after her traineeship has ended, but the project is already having an impact:

“The exhibition draws attention to non-Western collections which are important and overlooked. It’s introducing new ways of thinking for the curatorial staff. It widens the audience to the Gallery. It changes visitors’ perceptions of objects and of museums – it broadens the concept of museums – for core visitors as well as new visitors.”

A trainee who came to Britain from Africa five years ago is particularly interested in how oral cultures can be represented and preserved in museums. He is a poet and performer and is using his skills and interests to increase knowledge of collections and to interpret them in new ways. He is keen to empower others:

“I would like to do more research so that when we look at these objects, we have something to say about them and we involve others too. We cannot talk for other people, they can only talk for themselves, so I would like to empower them to stand up and say this or that, ‘these are our views.’”

(From *Diversify! - The impact of Positive Action Traineeship*, MLA, 2004)



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Handout 4: Dealing with Complaints

Listening to the Complaint:

- Get all the information
- Listen!
- Look at the customer
- Do not talk
- Do not argue
- Take notes
- Maintain your temper and composure
- Devote all of your attention to the customer. Do not take other calls. Do not have other discussions. Do not do other work
- Establish a relationship.

Taking Action:

- Reiterate the critical issue or problem
- Maintain a professional position
- Do not agree or disagree but identify all issues
- Clarify their needs and wants – sometimes just an apology may be enough, but if action is needed be clear what action will be taken
- Offer a resolution that is acceptable to both the museum and the visitor
- Thank the visitor for bringing an important issue to the museum's attention.

Complaints can be positive:

- One of the best ways to help make unhappy customers feel better is to listen
- This shows that you care about your visitors and helps to keep the situation calm.
- Volunteers receiving customer complaints should always be friendly, polite, and helpful; and try their best to resolve the problem if they can
- Even if a problem cannot be totally solved, the fact that you did everything you could to help will make the visitor feel much less negative, hopefully enough that they will remain positive about the museum when speaking to others, and will want to return themselves
- Sometimes it can be difficult to feel like helping an angry visitor, particularly if the problem is not your fault; however it is crucial that you remain polite and helpful at all times



- Try not to feel that it is a personal attack – sometimes it is just the mood someone came with today.

Body Language:

- Remember that body language is a large part of communication, so do give the person your full attention
- If someone does have their complaint taken seriously and feels supported they may actually leave feeling happier than someone who didn't complain!
- A museum can learn from every situation, so do feed issues that arise back to staff.