**Customer Service – Activities**

**Chapter Eight: Customer Service in a Diverse World**

**Work it Out**

Encountering Diversity: Take a few minutes to ask yourself what diversity is and what it means to you.

Write your own definition of diversity.

During the past week, in what situations have you encountered someone from a different culture, group, or background in the workplace or at school (someone whose values or beliefs differed from yours or who looked or dressed differently from you or your group)? Make a list of the diverse people that you met (i.e. where they were from, why they were different from you, and how they were similar to you) and the situations encountered.

Once you have created your responses, form a small group, share your responses, and discuss the implications of providing quality service to customers who are different from you.

Many organizations and employees have realized the importance of creating a fair and equal environment in which everyone feels respected and valued.

This is especially important in a service environment where employees encounter customers who have different characteristics daily.

To ensure that you are ready for potential situations in which you will be serving people of different ages, genders, abilities, cultural and religious backgrounds, and numerous other diversity factors, consider participating in the following initiatives:

* Objectively evaluate your own biases toward people from a given group and develop some strategies for overcoming them.
* Visit a restaurant that serves ethnic foods other than that of your native culture.
* Share your own story with someone from a different group (i.e. age, gender, ethnicity, religion) and see how their life experiences compare or differ from yours.
* Identify at least one resource for diversity information and visit it each month.
* Take a language course to learn a new language.
* Visit a religious institution, museum, or historical monument of a culture different from your own.
* Volunteer to work with people whose race, gender, or cultural backgrounds are different from your own.

**Collaborative Learning Activities**

Interview a variety of people: from different cultures, from various age groups, with disabilities, male or female (opposite of your sex), or gay or lesbian. Find out whether they have preferences in the type of customer service they receive or in the kind of language used to refer to their group. Also, ask about ways you can better communicate with and understand them and people from their group.

Suggest to your supervisor, team leader, or workgroup peers that employees meet as a group to discuss situations in which all of you have encountered people from different cultures or groups. Exchange ideas on how to better serve such people in the future. Report the results of your efforts to your class members at the next scheduled meeting.

Working in teams assigned by your instructor, set up an appointment to visit a local advocacy group for people with disabilities or aging, or contact a national group (i.e. the National Society to Prevent Blindness, World Federation of the Deaf, National Information Center on Deafness, National Eye Institute, National Institute on Aging). Focus on gathering information that will help you understand various disabilities and develop strategies for effectively communicating with and serving people who have disabilities. Write a brief summary of your experience and report back to your peers.

**Planning to Serve**

Identifying Your Biases

We sometimes have biases that interfere with our interactions with others. Typically, these biases are learned behavior (something we have personally experienced or have been taught by others). By thinking of your biases and bringing them to a conscious level, you can better control or eliminate them in dealing with your customers and others.

Think about the qualities of other people or groups that you do not like or prefer to avoid. List them, along with the basis (why you believe them to be true) for each.

Share your list with other students and discuss their potential impact on service.