CHAPTER SIX

Customer Service and Behavior

From the Frontline Interview

Jason Grimard is a nutritional fitness specialist who states that his customer service career is rooted in his need to interact with the public. He has worked in customer service at restaurants, retail in the health, fitness and nutritional sales and service areas, and at an athletic franchise facility.

1 What has been some of your most pleasurable experiences related to dealing with customers? Why?

I learned several years ago that I cannot have a profession where I am "behind closed doors." I have tried jobs which did not require direct customer contact and did not like them. Early on, it became clear to me that I did not like my profession at all. The realization set in that I was much happier when I was dealing with the public. Thus, I sought jobs interacting with the public in positions that required tasks such as funds transaction and quality control (dealing with complaints and problems). All of my jobs have demanded a high customer-service-oriented attitude.

Some of my most pleasurable experiences have come when I was helping someone with their needs, no matter how significant or insignificant their need. The reason this is so enjoyable to me is that I have to put myself on both sides of the fence where I know how it feels to be the customer and the relief of being assisted by someone who cares. When you realize that you are truly helping someone’s personal needs it becomes more than your job and turns into a pleasure.

2 What are some of the biggest challenges that you have faced in dealing with customer behavior? Why?

My biggest challenges have involved nonresponsive, close-minded customers. This occurs when I have already used all the training tips related to helping the customer, but I am now in a corner where I cannot consult someone for further advice and am forced to go beyond training to study the customer to find a resolution. This is done in steps. First, I read the customer’s emotional state. If it seems unstable, I try to calm them down. Then, I try to relate to the customer so that he or she will feel that I understand his or her needs. Then I can tell if the customer is becoming responsive. Finally, I agree with the person in order to show understanding. The goal of all this is for the customer to be more responsive and explain his or her needs. I must get the person to listen to suggestions from me as a trusted friend.

3 What are some of the typical mistakes you see others make when they are dealing with customer behavior in negative situations?

I see others make a number of mistakes. First, they lose their compassion for their customers, adopting an "I don’t care attitude." Second, they lose their temper when dealing with
Chapter Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, you will be able to:

- Recognize four key behavioral styles and the roles they play in customer service.
- Use techniques outlined to interact with various customer behavioral styles.
- Develop strategies for communicating effectively with customers.
- Interpret customer nonverbal cues effectively on the basis of behavioral styles.
- Respond to customer problems effectively.

When dealing with nonresponsive customers, this is done in an emotional way. Then, I feel that I person in the face of the other, and from my own

4 What techniques or strategies do you use to get customers to cooperate and not cause problems when you interact with them?

I try to gain cooperation by first addressing their needs in an attempt to understand exactly what they require. I do this to try to identify their emotional state to see whether they are angry, depressed, or happy. This can give me the upper hand by not provoking an argument and gaining cooperation. A good technique in studying someone is to look into his or her eyes. Another strategy is to watch body language for signs of anxiety, nervousness, or any kind of tension. All of those mental states are unpredictable, but easily addressed if done properly. Dealing with an angry customer is somewhat of an art that can help ensure that I get to provide service to the person in the future.

To deal with an angry customer you must keep smiling, and not fake a "my job depends on it" smile. It must be a compassionate, sincere smile. If you lose your temper you are doomed. You have to find out exactly why a customer is angry. It may not even be with you or your company. After you have found what the customer is angry about, you must comfort his or her displeasure and continue to be kind and compassionate. This will show that you actually do care and that he or she is not just another person to you. Kindness, comfort, and compassion will defuse anger when used properly. Next, you should try to relate to the customer in order to gain friendship. You do this to promote further business with the customer in the future. The result of all this is that you can successfully overcome a customer's anger, gain a professional friendship, and secure continued business.

5 What advice would you give other service providers regarding ways to be more effective in dealing with customer behavior?

To be more effective in dealing with customer behavior you must always, I mean always, stay positive. Being positive can uplift a customer's day. Never bring your personal life to the job. Be compassionate. This is essential. The minute a customer feels you are not compassionate, that automatically translates into "you don't care one bit about me." People have a tendency to jump to negativity; do not give them an option. Try to understand how they display their emotions. This will be essential for dealing with a difficult customer service situation.

Critical Thinking

According to what Jason has said, what role does the use of a "second sense" to determine someone's emotional state play in delivering quality customer service? What are some of the key tools for doing this based on his comments?
Quick Preview

Before reviewing the chapter content, respond to the following questions by placing a “T” for true or an “F” for false on the rules. Use any questions you miss as a checklist of material to which you will pay particular attention as you read through the chapter. For those you get right, congratulate yourself, but review the sections they address in order to learn additional details about the topic.

1. Understanding behavioral styles can aid in establishing and maintaining positive customer relationships.

2. You should treat others as individuals, not as members of a category.

3. People whose primary behavioral style category is “E” focus their energy on working with people.

4. People whose primary behavioral style category is “D” focus their energy on tasks or getting the job done.

5. Some behavioral styles are better than others.

6. People who exhibit the “D” style often tend to move slowly and speak in a low-key manner.

7. People who exhibit the “E” style often tend to be highly animated in using gestures and speaking.

8. People who exhibit the “R” style often tend to be very impatient.

9. People who exhibit the “I” style often tend to express their emotions easily.

10. You should attempt to determine a customer’s behavioral style and then tailor your communication accordingly.

11. To deliver total customer satisfaction, you need to make your customers feel special.

12. When you say no to a customer, it is important to let him or her know what you cannot do and why.

13. Service to your customers should be seamless; customers should not have to see or deal with problems or process breakdowns.

14. Perceptions are based on education, experiences, events, and interpersonal contacts, as well as a person’s intelligence level.

15. Once you’ve made a perception, you should evaluate its accuracy.

Answers to Quick Preview can be found at the end of the chapter.

1 Why Be Concerned With Behavioral Styles?

Concept: Behavioral styles are observable tendencies. An awareness of your own style can lead you to understand customers and improve your relationships with customers.

As a customer service professional, you need to understand human behavioral style characteristics. The more proficient you become at identifying your own behavioral characteristics and those of others, the better you will be at establishing and maintaining positive relationships with customers. Self-knowledge is the starting point. To help in this effort, we will examine some common behavior that you exhibit and that you may observe in various other people.

A key to successfully dealing with others is recognizing your own style. Too often we try to impose our beliefs, values, attitudes, and needs on others. This can lead to
Chapter 6  Customer Service and Behavior  

2  What Are Behavioral Styles?

Concept: Behavioral styles are actions exhibited when you and others deal with tasks or people. As a customer service professional, you need to be aware that everyone is not the same.

Behavioral styles are observable tendencies (actions that you can see or experience) that you and other people exhibit when dealing with tasks or people. As you grow from infancy, your personality forms, based on your experiences and your environment. For example, if you had a lot of interaction with others as a child and were exposed to “people-based” activities, you likely will relate well to others in the workplace as an adult. On the other hand, if your childhood was a lonely one, as an adult you may have difficulties interacting with people.

For thousands of years, people have devised systems in an attempt to better understand why people do what they do and how they accomplish what they do—and to categorize behavioral styles. Many of these systems are still in use today. For example, early astrologers grouped the 12 signs into the four categories Earth, Air, Fire, and Water. Hippocrates, and other ancient physicians and philosophers, observed and categorized people (for example, sanguine, phlegmatic, melancholy, and choleric). Modern researchers have examined behavior from a variety of perspectives.

Have you ever come into contact with someone with whom you simply did not feel comfortable or someone with whom you felt an immediate bond? If so, you were possibly experiencing and reacting to the impact of behavioral style. As a customer service professional, you need to be aware that everyone is not the same, or behaviorally just like you. For this reason, you should strive to provide service in a manner that addresses others’ needs and desires, not the ones you prefer.

Because you have certain behavioral preferences, you may want to impose them on others. This type of action from a service provider may cause a customer to become angry, withdrawn, or even disruptive. You will be better informed about yourself if you learn your own behavior preferences. The next section addresses how to do that.

3  Identifying Behavioral Styles

Concept: Each contact in a customer service environment has the potential for contributing to your success. Each person should be valued for his or her strengths and not belittled for what you perceive as shortcomings.

Through an assessment questionnaire you can discover your own behavioral tendencies in a variety of situations. An awareness of your own style preferences can
6.1 LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

Supervisors have to take a lead in preparing service employees to deal with a multitude of personalities and human behavior. An easy way to accomplish this is by personally becoming aware of various aspects of human behavior. This can be accomplished through self-assessment surveys, reading on the topic, and attending training classes or seminars.

Once knowledge has been gained, it should be freely shared with employees so that they too can benefit. Additionally, by sending employees to training on behavioral styles and other aspects of diversity, they can gain new insights about themselves and others. This can lead to a reduction in misunderstandings with others and to enhanced customer service.

then lead you to a better understanding of customers, since they also possess style preferences. By understanding these characteristics, you can improve communication, build stronger relationships, and offer better service to the customer.

Many self-assessment questionnaires and research related to behavioral styles are based on the work begun by psychiatrist Carl Jung and others in the earlier part of the twentieth century. Jung explored human personality and behavior. He divided behavior into two “attitudes” (introvert and extrovert) and four “functions” (thinking, feeling, sensing, and intuitive). These attitudes and functions can intermingle to form eight psychological types, a knowledge of which is useful in defining and describing human behavioral characteristics.

From Jung’s complex research have come many variations, additional studies, and a variety of behavioral style self-assessment questionnaires and models for explaining personal behavior. Examples of these questionnaires are the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), the Personal Profile System (DiSC), and the Social Styles Profile (SSP).

Although everyone typically has a primary behavior pattern (the way a person acts or reacts under certain circumstances) to which he/she reverts in stressful situations, people also have other characteristics in common and regularly demonstrate some of the other behavioral patterns. Identifying your own style preferences helps you identify similar ones in others.

To informally identify some of your own behavioral styles preferences, complete Work It Out 6.1.

Note: Keep in mind that this is only a quick indicator. A more thorough assessment, using a formal instrument (questionnaire), will be better at predicting your style preferences. For more information or to obtain written or computer-based surveys and reports, write the author at the address shown in the author information section of this book.

You should be aware that you should not try to use behavioral characteristics and cues as absolute indicators of the type of person you are dealing with. (This is similar to the situation with nonverbal cues.) Human behavior is complex and often unpredictable. You have some of the characteristics listed for all four style categories; you simply have learned through years of experience which behavior you are most comfortable with and when adaptation is helpful or necessary. Generally, most people are adaptable and can shift style categories or exhibit different characteristics based on the situation. For example, a person who is normally very personable and amiable can revert to more directive behavior, if necessary, to manage an activity or process for which he or she will be held accountable. Similarly, a person who normally exhibits controlling or task-oriented behavior can socialize and react positively in “people” situations. People are adaptable.
To determine your behavioral style preference, make a copy of this page and then complete the following survey.

**Step 1** Read the following list of words and phrases and rate yourself by placing a number (from 1 to 5) next to each item. A 5 means that the word is an accurate description of yourself in most situations, a 3 indicates a balanced agreement about the word's application, and a 1 means that you do not feel that the word describes your behavior well. Before you begin, refer to the sample assessment in Figure 6.1.

- Relaxed
- Logical
- Decisive
- Talkative
- Consistent
- Nonaggressive (avoids conflict)
- Calculating
- Fun-loving
- Loyal
- Quality-focused
- Competitive
- Enthusiastic
- Sincere
- Accurate
- Pragmatic (practical)
- Popular
- Patient
- Detail-oriented
- Objective
- Optimistic

**TOTAL**  
R = I = D = E =

**Step 2** Once you have rated each word or phrase, start with the first word, **Relaxed**, and put the letter "R" to the right of it. Place an "I" to the right of the second words, an "D" to the right of the third word, and an "E" to the right of the fourth word. Then start over with the fifth word and repeat the RIDE pattern until all words have a letter at their right.

**Step 3** Next, go through the list and count point values for all words that have an "R" beside them. Put the total at the bottom of the grid next to "R = " Do the same for the other letters.

Once you have finished, one letter will probably have the highest total score. This is your natural style tendency. For example, if "R" has the highest score, your primary style is Rational. If "I" has the highest score, you exhibit more Inquisitive behavior. "D" indicates Decisive, and "E" is an Expressive style preference.

If two or more of your scores have the same high totals, you probably generally put forth similar amounts of effort in both these style areas.

An important point to remember is that there is no "right" or "wrong" style. Each person should be valued for his or her strengths and not belittled because of what you perceive as shortcomings. In a customer environment, each contact has the potential for contributing to your success and that of your organization. By appreciating the behavioral characteristics of people with whom you interact, you can avoid bias or prejudice and better serve your customer.
### FIGURE 6.1
Sample Completed Self-Assessment

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Relaxed</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Logical</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Decisive</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Talkative</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Consistent</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Nonaggressive (avoids conflict)</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Calculating</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Fun-loving</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Loyal</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Quality-focused</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Competitive</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Enthusiastic</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sincere</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Accurate</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Pragmatic (practical)</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Popular</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Patient</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Detail-oriented</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Optimistic</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL R = 25  I = 10  D = 13  E = 11

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### 4 Style Tendencies

**Concept:** A person may demonstrate strong tendencies toward one style preference or another. By being familiar with these styles and their general characteristics, you can adapt to various behaviors your customers may exhibit.

How can a person who demonstrates one of the four styles be described? How might this person act, react, or interact? Some generalizations about behavior are listed in this section. Keep in mind that even though people have a primary style, they demonstrate other style behaviors too. By becoming familiar with these style characteristics, and observing how others display them, you can begin to learn how to better adapt to various behaviors.

**R: Rational**

People who have a preference for the **rational style** may tend to:

- Be very patient.
- Wait or stand in one place for periods of time without complaining, although they may be irritated about a breakdown in the system or lack of organization.
- Exhibit congenial eye contact and facial expressions.
- Prefer one-on-one or small-group interactions over solitary or large-group ones.
- Seek specific or complete explanations to questions (e.g., “That’s our policy” does not work well with an “R” customer).
- Dislike calling attention to themselves or a situation.
- Avoid conflict and anger.
- Often wear subdued colors and informal, conservative, or conventional clothing styles.
- Ask questions rather than state their opinion.
• Listen and observe more than they talk (especially in groups).
• Communicate more in writing and like the use of notes, birthday, or thank-you cards just to stay in touch.
• Like to be on a first-name basis with others.
• Have intermittent eye contact with brief, businesslike handshake.
• Have informal, comfortable office spaces, possibly with pictures of family in view.
• Like leisure activities that involve people (often family).

I: Inquisitive
People who have a preference for the inquisitive style may tend to:
• Rarely volunteer feelings freely.
• Ask specific, pertinent questions rather than making statements of their feelings.
• Rely heavily on facts, times, dates, and practical information to make their point.
• Prefer to interact in writing rather than in person or on the phone.
• Prefer formality and distance in interactions. They often lean back when talking, even when emphasizing key points.
• Use formal titles and last names as opposed to first names. They may also stress the use of full names, not nicknames (e.g., Cynthia instead of Cindy or Charles instead of Chuck).
• Use cool, brief handshakes, often without a smile. If they do smile, it may appear forced.
• Wear conservative clothing although their accessories are matched well.
• Be impeccable in their grooming but may differ in their choice of styles from those around them (e.g., hair and makeup).
• Be very punctual and time-conscious.
• Carry on lengthy conversations, especially when trying to get answers to questions.
• Be diplomatic with others.
• Prefer solitary leisure activities (e.g., reading or listening to relaxing music).
• Keep their personal life separate from business.

D: Decisive
People who have a preference for the decisive style may tend to:
• Move quickly.
• Seek immediate gratification of needs or results.
• Work proactively toward a solution to a problem.
• Be forceful and assertive in their approach (sometimes overly so).
• Project a competitive nature.
• Display a confident, possibly arrogant demeanor.
• Ask specific, direct questions and give short, straight answers.
• Discuss rather than write about something (e.g., call or come in rather than write about a complaint).
• Talk and interrupt more than listen.
• Display symbols of power to demonstrate their own importance (e.g., expensive jewelry, clothes, cars, power colors in business attire such as navy blue or charcoal gray).
• Be solemn and use closed, nonverbal body cues.
• Have firm handshakes and strong, direct eye contact.
• Have functionally decorated offices (all items have a purpose and are not there to make the environment more attractive).
• Prefer active, competitive leisure activities.

E: Expressive

People who have a preference for the **expressive style** may tend to:

• Look for opportunities to socialize or talk with others (e.g., checkout lines at stores, bus stops, waiting areas).
• Project a friendly, positive attitude.
• Be enthusiastic, even animated when talking, using wide, free-flowing gestures.
• Use direct eye contact and enthusiastic, warm (often two-handed) handshake.
• Smile and use open body language.
• Get close or touch when speaking to someone.
• Talk rather than write about something (e.g., call or come in with a complaint rather than writing to complain).
• Initiate projects.
• Wear bright, modern, or unusual clothes and jewelry because it gets them noticed or fits their mood.
• Dislike routine.
• Share feelings and express opinions or ideas easily and readily.
• Get distracted in conversations and start discussing other issues.
• Prefer informal use of names and like first-name communication.
• Not be time conscious and may often be late for appointments.
• Speak loudly and expressively with a wide range of inflection.
• Like action-oriented, people-centered leisure activities.

5 Communicating With Each Style

Concept: Each behavior style features various indicators of this style in practice. Remember, these cues are indicators, not absolutes, as you begin to use them to interact appropriately with others.

Once you recognize people’s style tendencies, you can improve your relationships and chances of success by tailoring your communication strategies. As you examine Figure 6.2, think about how you can use these strategies with people you know in each style category. Keep in mind that these and other characteristics outlined in this chapter are only general in nature. Everyone is a mixture of all four styles and can change to a different style to address a variety of situations. Use these examples as indicators of style and not as absolutes. Also, be careful not to label a person as being one style (for example, Toni is a high “R”), since people use all four styles.
### FIGURE 6.2
Communicating With Different Personality Styles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Behaviors</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>RATIONAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>Nonverbal Cues</strong>&lt;br&gt;Gentle handshake, flowing, non-dramatic gestures.&lt;br&gt;Feeling eye contact.</td>
<td>Return firm, brief handshake; avoid aggressive gestures.&lt;br&gt;Make intermittent (3 to 5 seconds) eye contact.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Verbal Cues</strong>&lt;br&gt;Steady, even delivery.&lt;br&gt;Subdued volume.&lt;br&gt;Slower rate of speech.</td>
<td>Mirror their style somewhat.&lt;br&gt;Relax your message delivery.&lt;br&gt;Slow your rate if necessary; be patient.&lt;br&gt;Ask open-ended questions to draw out information. Use structured approach in communications.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Keeps communication brief.</strong>&lt;br&gt;Communication follows a logical pattern (e.g., Step 1, Step 2).&lt;br&gt;<strong>Additional Cues</strong>&lt;br&gt;Avoids confrontation.</td>
<td>Attempt to solve problems without creating a situation in which they feel challenged or obliged to defend themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INQUISITIVE</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Nonverbal Cues</strong>&lt;br&gt;Deliberate body movements.&lt;br&gt;Uses little physical contact.&lt;br&gt;Correspondence is formal and includes many details.</td>
<td>Use careful, restrained body cues.&lt;br&gt;Avoid touching.&lt;br&gt;Respond similarly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Verbal Cues</strong>&lt;br&gt;Quiet, slow-paced speech (especially in groups).&lt;br&gt;Minimal vocal variety.&lt;br&gt;<strong>Additional Cues</strong>&lt;br&gt;Values concise communication.&lt;br&gt;Uses details to make points.</td>
<td>Use subdued tone and volume. Provide brief, accurate statements.&lt;br&gt;Provide background information and data.&lt;br&gt;Respond in writing and provide adequate background information.&lt;br&gt;Address them by title and last name unless told otherwise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Prefers confirmation and backup in writing.&lt;br&gt;Uses formal names instead of nicknames.</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Additional Cues</strong>&lt;br&gt;Sharing of personal information is minimal.</td>
<td>Communicate on business level unless they initiate personal conversation.&lt;br&gt;Organize thoughts before responding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DECISIVE</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Nonverbal Cues</strong>&lt;br&gt;Steady, direct eye contact.</td>
<td>Return eye contact (3 to 5 seconds) and smile.&lt;br&gt;Respond in similar fashion; minimize small talk and details.&lt;br&gt;Stand your ground without antagonizing.&lt;br&gt;Maintain a professional demeanor.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Writing tends to be short and specific.</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Gestures tend to be authoritative (e.g., pointing fingers or hands on hips).</strong></td>
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</table>
### EXPRESSIVE

**Verbal Cues**
- Forceful tone.
- Speaks in statements.
- Direct and challenging (short, abrupt).
- Fast rate of speech.

**Additional Cues**
- Short attention span when listening.
- Very direct and decisive.

**Nonverbal Cues**
- Enthusiasm and inflection in voice.
- Active body language.
- Enthusiastic, possibly two-handed handshake.
- Uses touch to emphasize points.
- Very intense, dramatic.

**Writing Tends**
- Tends to be flowery and includes many details.

**Verbal Cues**
- Excessive details when describing something.
- Fast rate of speech.

**Emphasizes**
- Storytelling and fun.

**Additional Cues**
- Inattentive to details in tasks.
- Shares personal information and virtually anything else freely.

**Don't react defensively or in a retaliatory manner.**
- Use facts and logic and avoid unnecessary details.
- Listen rather than defend.

**Match rate somewhat.**
- Keep sentences and communication brief.
- Support opinions, ideas, and vision.

**Listen and respond enthusiastically.**
- Use open, positive body language and smile easily.
- Return firm, professional one-handed shake.
- Acknowledge but use caution in returning touch (this action could be misinterpreted by them or others).
- Show interest and ask pertinent questions.
- When writing, use a friendly reader-focused style.

**Ask specific open-ended questions to help them refocus.**
- Mirror or match their rate and excitement where appropriate.
- Relax, listen, and respond appropriately.

**Ask questions to involve them.**
- Reciprocate if you are comfortable doing so; however, stay focused on task at hand.
To practice matching behavior with styles, try this activity. Make four or five copies of Worksheet 6-1 (see website http://www.mhhe.com/lucas05). Select four or five friends or coworkers whom you see and interact with regularly. Write one of their names at the top of each worksheet copy. Covertly (without their knowledge) observe these people for a week or so and make notes about their behavior under each category listed on the worksheet. Focus specifically on the following areas:

- Writing pattern or style
- Interpersonal communication style (e.g., direct, indirect, specific or nonspecific questions, good or poor listener)
- Body movements and other nonverbal gestures
- Dress style (e.g., flashy, conservative, formal, informal)
- Surroundings (e.g., office decorations or organization, car, home)
- Personality (e.g., activities and interactions preferred—solitary, group, active, passive)

At the end of the week, decide which primary and/or secondary style of behavior each person exhibits most often. Then ask these people to assist you in an experiment that will involve them completing the quick style assessment that you did earlier (Work It Out 6.1).

After they have rated themselves, explain that you have been observing them for the past week.

Compare their ratings to the characteristics described in this chapter, and to your own assessment. Were you able to predict their primary or, at least, their secondary style?

# 6 Building Stronger Relationships by Problem Solving

**Concept:** Sometimes building stronger customer relationships means that you discover customer needs, seek opportunities for service, and respond appropriately to customers' behavioral styles. Occasionally you will need to de-emphasize a no and say it as positively as you can.

Recognizing and relating to customers' behavioral styles is just the first step in providing better service (see Figures 6.2 and 6.3). To deliver total customer satisfaction, you will need to make the customer feel special, which often entails **problem solving**. Whether a situation involves simply answering a question, guiding someone to a desired product or location, or performing a service, customers should leave the interaction feeling good about what they experienced. Providing this feeling is not only good business sense on your part but also helps guarantee the customers return or favorable word-of-mouth advertising. There are many ways of partnering with either internal or external customers to solve problems and produce a **win-win situation** (one in which the customer and you and your organization succeed). Whatever you do to achieve this result, your customers should realize that you are their advocate and are acting in their best interests to solve their problems (see problem-solving model on pages 194–198). Some suggestions for building stronger customer relationships follow.

**Discover Customer Needs**

Using the communication skills addressed in earlier chapters, engage customers in a dialogue that allows them to identify what they really want or need. If you can determine a customer's behavioral style, you can tailor your communication strategy to that style. Keep in mind that some customer needs may not be expressed aloud. In these instances, you should attempt to validate your impressions or suspicions.
Figure 6.3 provides some strategies to use when responding to customer complaints and solving problems involving people who demonstrate the four behavioral styles you have learned about. By tailoring customer service strategies to individual style preferences, you address the customer’s specific needs. As you read in Chapter 5, active listening is a key skill in any service situation. As you review these strategies, think of other things you might do to better serve each behavioral type.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Behaviors</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RATIONAL</td>
<td>Seeks systematic resolution to the situation.</td>
<td>Stress resolution and security of the issue.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoids conflict or disagreement.</td>
<td>Smile, when appropriate.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strives for acceptance of ideas.</td>
<td>Provide references or resources.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Intermittent eye contact.</td>
<td>Listen actively; make eye contact.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uses hand and subdued body movements and speech to emphasize key points.</td>
<td>Focus on personal movements to convey your feelings about the incident (e.g.,</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“How do you feel we can best resolve this problem?”).</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Focus on the problem, not the person.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Have details and facts available.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Approach in non-threatening manner.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Listen actively, make eye contact, and focus on the situation.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Be specific in outlining actions to be taken by everyone.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Follow through on commitments.</td>
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<td>Offer guarantees of resolution if possible.</td>
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<td>Give facts and pros and cons of suggestions.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Use low-pitched, unemotional speech; be patient; listen.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Be patient; listen empathetically.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Don’t internalize; they are angry with the product or service, not necessarily you.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Be brief; tell them what you can do; offer solutions.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Be formal, businesslike.</td>
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<td>Don’t take a happy-go-lucky or flippant approach.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Be time-conscious; time is money to a “D.”</td>
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<td>Project competence; find the best person to solve problem.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ask questions that focus on what they need or want (e.g.,</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“What do you think is a reasonable solution?”).</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reassure; say what you can do.</td>
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<td>INQUISITIVE</td>
<td>Listens to explanations.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Demands specifics.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mild demeanor.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Intermittent eye contact.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Gives list of issues, in chronological order.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Exhibits patience.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Seeks reassurance.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Focuses on facts.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Seeks to avoid conflict; just wants resolution.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Loud voice.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Finger pointing or aggressive body gestures.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Firm, active handshake.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Directly places blame on service provider.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Direct eye contact.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sarcasm.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Impatient.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Demanding verbage (e.g., “You’d better fix this”;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I want to see the manager now!”).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Irrational assertions (e.g., “You people never or always . . .”)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Threats (e.g., “If you can’t help, I’ll go to a company that can.”)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DECISIVE</td>
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</table>
by asking questions or requesting feedback. Gather information about a customer from observing vocal qualities, phrasing, nonverbal expressions and movements, and emotional state. For example, while providing service to Mr. Delgado, you told him that the product he was ordering would not arrive for three weeks. You noticed that he grimaced and made a concerned sound of “Um.” At this point, a perception check would have been appropriate. You could have said, “Mr. Delgado, you looked concerned or disappointed when I mentioned the delivery date. Is that a problem for you?” You might have discovered that he needed the item sooner but resigned himself to the delay and didn’t ask about other options. In effect, he was exhibiting “I” or possibly “R” behavior (silence and low-key reaction). Rather than have a confrontation, he accepted the situation without voicing disappointment or concern. He might then have gone to a competitor. By reacting positively to his nonverbal signals, you could identify and address a concern and thus prevent a dissatisfied and/or lost customer.

### Say “Yes”

If you must decline a request or cannot provide a product or service, do so in a positive manner. De-emphasizing what you cannot do and providing an alternative puts the customer in a power position. That is, even though she may not get her first request, she is once again in control because she can say yes or no to the alternative you have offered, or she can decide on the next step. For example, when a customer requests a brand or product not stocked by your organization, you could offer alternatives. You might counter with, “Mrs. Hanslik, although we don’t stock that brand, we do have a comparable product which has been rated higher by Consumer’s Report than the one you requested. Let me show you.” This approach not only serves the customer but also (sometimes) results in a sale.

### Seek Opportunities for Service

View complaints as a chance to create a favorable impression by solving a problem. Watch the behavioral characteristics being exhibited by your customer. Based on what you see and hear, take appropriate action to adapt to the customer’s personality needs and solve the problem professionally. For example, Mrs. Minga...
complained loudly to you that the service woman who installed her new washing machine tracked oil onto the dining room carpet. As she is speaking, Mrs. Minga is pointing her finger and threatening to go to the manager if you do not handle this situation immediately. You can take the opportunity to solve the problem and strengthen the relationship at the same time. You might try the following. Make direct eye contact (no staring), smile, and empathize by saying, “Mrs. Minga, I’m terribly sorry about your carpet. I know that it must be very upsetting. If you’ll allow me to, I’ll arrange to have your dining room carpet cleaned, and for your inconvenience, while they’re at it we’ll have them clean all the carpets in your house at no cost to you. How does that sound?” In reacting this way, you have professionally and assertively taken control of the situation. This is important because Mrs. Minga is exhibiting high “D” behavior. Responding in a less decisive manner might result in an escalation of her emotions and a demand to see someone in authority.

The process just described, which involves an attempt at righting a wrong and compensating for inconvenience, is called service recovery. The concept will be addressed in detail in Chapter 13.

**Focus on Process Improvement**

Customers generally do not like being kept waiting when your system is not functioning properly. They rightfully view their time as valuable. To expect them to patiently wait while a new cashier tries to figure out the register codes, someone gets a price check because the product was coded incorrectly, you have to call the office for information or approvals, and so on, is unfair and unreasonable. Defects or delays should be handled when the customer is not present. Service should be seamless to customers. This means that they should get great service and never have to worry about your problems or breakdowns. When breakdowns do occur, they should be fixed quickly, and the customer relationship smoothed over. In addition, it is important to recognize that customers with different behavioral styles will react differently to such breakdowns. “R” style customers are likely to complain in an offensive manner and may even smile but may also seek out a supervisor. Those with “T” styles may seem to be patient and not say anything or cause a confrontation but will possibly request directions to the supervisor’s office and/or later send a detailed letter of complaint. Someone who exhibits “D” behavior may get loud, aggressive, and vocal and demand a supervisor after only a brief delay. The “E” types may get upset but will often make the best of their time complaining to other customers and comparing notes on similar past experiences. No matter what style the customer exhibits, you should strive to reduce or eliminate customer inconvenience and distress.

In all cases, after a delay you may want to compensate the customer for the inconvenience. At the least, such a situation warrants a sincere apology. Such an occurrence might be handled in the following manner. “Mr. Westgate, I am sorry for the delay. We’ve been experiencing computer problems all day. I’d like to make up for your inconvenience by giving you a 10 percent discount off your meal check. Would that be acceptable?” Although this is not a significant offering, your intention is to show remorse and to placate the customer so that he or she will continue to use your products and/or services. You will read more about this technique in Chapter 13.

After you have dealt with the situation, your next concern should be to personally fix the process that caused the breakdown or make a recommendation to your supervisor or other appropriate person. Quality and process improvement are the responsibility of all employees.
Make Customers Feel Special

No matter which style tendencies a customer has, everyone likes to feel appreciated. By taking the time to recognize customers' value and by communicating effectively, you can bolster their self-esteem. When customers feel good about themselves as a result of something you did or said, they are likely to better appreciate what you and your organization can offer them. For example, as appreciation for long-term patronage, you may want to recognize a customer as follows: "Mr. and Mrs. Hoffmeister, we really appreciate your loyalty. Our records indicate that you’ve been a customer for over 20 years. In recognition, on behalf of X, I’d like to present you with a complimentary weekend stay at Y and two tickets to see the opening night of Z, along with a coupon for $50 toward dinner for two at Z. Please accept these with our compliments." This type of strategy goes a long way in guaranteeing customer loyalty.

Be Culturally Aware

The reality of a multicultural customer service environment further challenges your ability to deal with behaviors. This is because in today’s multicultural business environment, it is likely that you will come into contact with someone of a different background, belief system, or culture. Many problems that develop in these encounters are a result of diversity ignorance. Even after you master the concepts of behavioral styles, you must remember that because values and beliefs vary from one culture to another, behavior is also likely to vary. For example, in many countries or cultures, the nonverbal gestures that Americans use have completely different meanings. Also, the reactions to such gestures will differ based on the recipient’s personality style. Variations of symbols such as joining the thumb and index finger to form an O, signaling "Okay," have sexual connotations in several countries (e.g., Germany, Czeckoslovakia, Malta, Greece, Turkey, Russia, the Middle East, and parts of South America). Likewise, variations of the V symbolizing "victory" or "peace" to many people in Western cultures have negative connotations in some parts of the world (e.g., British Isles and parts of Malta).

Symbols and gestures, therefore, might anger or offend some customers. Also, seemingly innocent behaviors such as crossing your legs so that the sole of your shoe points toward someone or putting a small child on the top of his or her head may cause offense. The sole of the foot is the lowest part of the body and touches the ground. In some parts of the world, pointing the sole of the foot toward a person implies that the person is lowly. Males from a Western culture, and specifically males who have "D," "I," and "R" styles and tend to adopt a formal posture when seated, should be aware of the effect of crossing their legs might have on certain customers. ("E" style people tend to be more relaxed and sprawling in their posture.) As for the head, many countries (e.g., in the Far East, especially Thailand) view it as a sacred part of the body. Patting a child on the head is sometimes considered to invite evil spirits or bad omens. This action might easily be taken by people who have high "E" behavioral tendencies, for they tend to be touchy-feely.

Some books listed in the Bibliography address these kinds of issues. Also, we will explore other culturally related subjects in Chapter 8.

2. ibid., p. 142.
To help send a positive message to customers from other cultures, you can do simple things that might have major impacts. For example, if you work in a restaurant and want to show appreciation for the large numbers of customers from another country who patronize the restaurant, you might recommend to your boss that a special dish from that area of the world be added to the menu. This offering could be promoted through flyers or advertisements. Such a strategy shows appreciation of the customers and their culture while encouraging them to eat at your establishment. However, be sure that the special dish is correctly prepared and uses the correct ingredients. Otherwise, you might offend rather than please the customer.

All these strategies, combined with a heightened knowledge of behavioral styles, can better prepare you to serve a wide variety of customers.

**Know Your Products and Services**

Customers expect that you will be able to identify and describe the products and services offered by your company. Depending on the behavioral style of the customer, the type of questions will vary. For example, an “R” personality may want to know who uses your services and products and ask to see the instructions, an “I” may ask many questions related to options, testing, rebates, and similar detailed technical information, a person with a strong “D” behavioral tendency may want to know the “bottom line” of using your service or product, and an “E” may want to talk about uses, colors, and sizes. If you cannot answer their questions, frustration, complaints, and/or loss of a customer may result.

Service providers need to know the products they are offering so that they can provide the best customer service possible. For example, when a new product line is introduced, orientation classes for employees can be arranged. In the classes, the features, benefits, and operation of the new items can be explained and demonstrated. Taking this approach increases knowledge of products and helps ensure better customer service.

**Continue to Learn About People**

To better prepare yourself for serving others, read whatever you can get your hands on related to customer service and take classes on how to interact and communicate with a variety of different types of people. Courses in psychology, sociology, and interpersonal communication are invaluable for providing a basis of understanding why people act as they do. Focus on issues of differences and similarities between men and women, cultural diversity, behavioral styles, and any other topic that will expand and round out your knowledge of people.

Of course, each person is unique, but the more you know about human behavior in general, the more successful you will be in dealing with the individuals you serve.

**Prepare Yourself**

Before you come into contact with customers, take a minute to review your appearance. Ask yourself, “What image do I project?” Think about how well your appearance is in tune with that of your typical customer. Evaluate your knowledge of your job and of the products and services offered by your organization. Are you ready and able to describe them to people regardless of their style preference? If not, start getting ready by learning as much as you can and practicing your message delivery by reviewing and implementing some of the strategies related to each style preference discussed earlier in this chapter.
Read the following descriptions and then determine which behavioral style you are dealing with. Keep in mind that each person can switch behavioral styles depending on the situation. To help you determine styles, refer to the style tendencies described in previous sections of this chapter. Suggested answers are given below the situation.

Situation 1

You are a salesperson at a jewelry counter and observe a professionally dressed female customer waiting in line for several minutes. She is checking her watch frequently, anxiously looking around, and sighing often. When she arrives at the counter, she makes direct eye contact with you and without smiling states, “I want to buy a 16-inch 14-karat gold twisted-link necklace like the one advertised in today’s paper. I also want a small gold heart pendant and would like these to cost no more than $125. Can you help me? Oh yes, almost forgot. Wrap that in birthday paper. This gift is for my daughter’s birthday.”

Situation 2

You stop by the office of a director of a department that provides data you use to prepare your end-of-month reports. As you look around, you see a photograph of his family. Your coworker smiles weekly and asks you to have a seat. As you begin to state your purpose by saying, “Thanks for taking the time to see me Mr. Cohen,” he interrupts and says, “Call me Lenny, please.”

Situation 3

As a customer service representative for an automobile dealer, you return a phone message from Cynthia McGregor. When the phone is answered, you say, “Good morning, may I speak with Cindy McGregor?” The curt response is, “This is Cynthia McGregor. How may I help you?” During the conversation, Ms. McGregor asks a variety of very specific questions about an automotive recall. Even though it seems obvious that the recall does not apply to her car, she asks very detailed follow-up questions such as why the recall was necessary, who was affected, and what was being done. Throughout the conversation, she is very focused on facts, times, dates, and technical aspects of the recall.

Situation 4

You are a teller in a bank. Mrs. Vitelli, one of the customers, comes into your branch several times a week. You know that she has just become a grandmother because she has brought along photos of her grandson. She has shared them, and all the details of her daughter’s pregnancy, in a loud, exuberant manner with several of your coworkers. As she speaks, you have noticed that she has a beautiful smile, and that throughout conversations she is very animated, using gestures and often reaching over to lightly touch others as they speak.
LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

Supervisors can use information provided in the previous section to raise employee consciousness of the need to prepare for and deal with varied customer behaviors. This can be accomplished by using each subsection of information as a basis for group discussions and planning to serve.

7 Dealing With Perceptions

Concept: Often there are many different perceptions of an event. Our perceptions are often influenced by many factors such as physical qualities, social roles and behaviors, psychological qualities, and group affiliations.

Everyone has perceptions about the people and events he or she encounters. A person’s background, based on education, experiences, events, and interpersonal contacts, influences how he or she view the world. In effect, there are sometimes as many different perceptions of an event as there are people involved.

Factors Affecting Perceptions

How are our perceptions shaped within a customer service framework? In essence, there are five categories that form the basis of many perceptions. We tend to base our perceptions of others and categorize people by thinking about the following:

- **Physical qualities.** What does a person look like? What gender? What body shape? Color of skin? Physical characteristics (hair color or type, facial features, height or weight)?
- **Social roles.** What is a person’s position in society? Job title? Honors received? Involvement in social or volunteer organizations?
- **Social behaviors.** How does this person act, based on the behavioral style characteristics? What social skills does he or she exhibit in social and business settings? How well does he or she interact with people (peers, customers, seniors, subordinates, and people of other races, gender, or backgrounds)?
- **Psychological qualities.** How does he or she process information mentally? Is this person confident? Stressed out? Insecure? Curious? Paranoid?
- **Group affiliations.** Does this person belong to a recognizable religious, ethnic, or political group? What kinds of qualities are associated with each group? Does he or she assume leadership roles and demonstrate competence in such roles?

Perceptions and Stereotypes

People’s perceptions of events vary greatly, as do their perceptions of each other. As a customer service provider, you should be aware of how you perceive your customers and, in turn, how they perceive you.

In some cases, you may stereotype people and, in doing so, adversely affect delivery of services. For example, your perception of older customers may be that they are all slow, hard of hearing, cranky, and politically conservative. This perception may be based on past experiences or from what you’ve heard or seen on television. This view might cause you to treat most older people in the same way, rather than treating each person as unique. However, you are basing your behavior on a
Stereotyping people affects our relationships with customers. For this reason, you should consciously guard against stereotyping when you interact with others. If you pigeonhole people right away because of preconceptions, you may negatively affect future interactions. For example, suppose you use your new knowledge about behavioral styles to walk up to a coworker and say something like, “I figured out what your problem is when dealing with people. You’re a ‘D.’” Could this create a confrontational situation? Might this person react negatively? What impact might your behavior have on your relationship with your coworker (and possibly others)? Based on what you have read regarding communication in earlier chapters, several things are wrong with such an approach. First of all, no one is always a “D.” Although a person might exhibit this behavior a lot, he or she draws from all four styles, just as you do. Second, exhibiting any particular style is not a “problem.” As you have seen in this chapter, “D” behavior can provide some valuable input to any situation. And finally, although a behavioral style may contribute to a person’s actions, many other factors come into play (communication ability, timing, location, situation, etc.).

To avoid categorizing people, spend time observing them, listen to them objectively, and respond based on each situation and person. Doing this can lead to better relationships and improved customer service.

Concept: Being aware of the possible behavioral styles of others can help you determine which strategies for success will be most useful to you.

Now that you have a better understanding about behavioral style(s), you can improve your chances of building successful relationships with others. In order to successfully deal with customers, try focusing on the following strategies:
Rational
People who demonstrate the “R” behavioral style often want to maintain peace and group stability. To help them accomplish this:

- Focus on their need for security and amiable relationships.
- Show a sincere interest in them and their views.
- Organize your information in a logical sequence and provide background data, if necessary.
- Take a slow, low-key approach in recommending products or services.
- Use open-ended questions to obtain information.
- Explain how your product or service can help simplify and support their relationships and systems.
- Stress low risk and benefits to them.
- Encourage them to verify facts, and so on, with others whose opinions they value.
- When change occurs, explain the need for the change and allow time for them to adjust.
- Provide information on available warranties, guarantees, and support systems.

Inquisitive
People whose style is “I” often desire quality, efficiency, and precision. To help them attain these things:

- Focus on their need for accuracy and efficiency by methodically outlining steps, processes, or details related to a product or service.
- Tie communication into facts, not feelings.
- Prepare information in advance and be thoroughly familiar with it.
- Approach encounters in a direct, businesslike, low-key manner.
- Avoid small talk and speaking about yourself.
- Ask specific open-ended questions about their background or experiences related to the product or service.
- Present solutions in a sequential fashion, stressing advantages, value, quality, reliability, and price. Also, be prepared to point out and discuss disadvantages.
- Have documentation available to substantiate your claims.
- Don’t pressure their decisions.
- Follow through on promises.

Decisive
People whose style is “D” often want to save time and money. To help them accomplish this:

- Focus on their need for control by finding out what they wish to do, what they want or need, or what motivates them.
- Provide direct, concise, and factual answers to their questions.
- Keep explanations brief and provide solutions, not excuses.
- Avoid trying to “get to know them.” They often perceive this as a waste of time, and they may distrust your motives.
- Be conscious of time, by making your point and then concluding the interaction appropriately.
Refer to Work It Out 6.1 (Describing Your Behavior). Select four to eight friends or coworkers and ask them to rate themselves using Work It Out 6.1. Next, ask each person to answer the following questions:

What do I look for when I shop?
What is my main reason for shopping?
What do I do when I need to buy or replace something?
What is the most important thing to me when I'm looking to replace something?

Once everyone has finished, gather in a group to compare and discuss answers. Focus on the fact that each person and each style is unique but that we all have common characteristics and needs. Discuss how this knowledge of common needs or drives can be used to provide customer service more effectively.

- Provide opportunities for the customer to talk by alternately providing small bits of information and asking specific questions aimed at solving the problem and serving the customer.
- Be prepared with information, necessary forms, details, warranties, and so on, before they arrive.
- When appropriate, provide options supported by evidence and focus on how the solution will affect their time, effort, and money.
- Focus on new, innovative products or services, emphasizing especially those that are environmentally sensitive or responsive.

Expressive
People exhibiting the "E" style are typically people-oriented and want to be around people. To help them succeed in this goal:

- Focus on their need to be liked and accepted by appealing to their emotions.
- Give positive feedback, acknowledging their ideas.
- Listen to their stories and share humorous ones about yourself.
- Use an open-ended, friendly approach.
- Ask questions such as "What attracted you to this product or service?"
- Keep product details to a minimum unless they ask for them.
- Describe how your product or service can help them get closer to their goals or to fulfilling their needs.
- Explain solutions or suggestions in terms of the impact on them and their relationships with others.
- If appropriate, provide incentives to encourage a decision.

Chapter Summary

Everything a customer experiences from the time he or she makes contact with an organization, in person, on the phone, or through other means, affects that customer's perception of the organization and its employees. To positively influence the customer's opinion, customer service professionals must be constantly alert for opportunities to provide excellent service. Making a little extra effort can often mean the difference between total customer satisfaction and service breakdown.
As you have seen in this chapter, people are varied and have different behavioral styles. Recognizing the differences and dealing with customers on a case-by-case basis is the foundation of solid customer service. By examining individual behavioral tendencies, actions, communication styles, and needs, you can better determine a course of action for each customer. The test of your effectiveness is whether your customers return and what they tell their friends about you and your organization.

**SERVICE IN ACTION**

[Image of Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company]

**CHAPTER 6**

http://www.ritzcarlton.com

When asked what they think is the finest luxury hotel, many people would name the Ritz-Carlton, even though most have likely never stayed there or known anyone who has. Yet, the reputation of this top-of-the-line travel venue often sets the limit for competitors to reach. As an indication of its success, the Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company earned the highest ranking in the luxury segment of the J. D. Power and Associates 2003 North America Hotel Guest Satisfaction Index Study. This marks the first time Ritz-Carlton has received highest category honors in this study.

To determine the award winner, J. D. Power surveyed over 13,000 business and leisure guests who stayed at major hotel chains in the United States during a 12-month period. The Ritz-Carlton was awarded the highest scores in not only overall “Guest Satisfaction” but in every factor in the luxury segment, including prearrival, guestroom, food and beverage, hotel services, and departure. In addition to the Power’s ranking, the Ritz-Carlton has twice won the prestigious Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award given by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

The fact that the Ritz-Carlton has received these highly coveted awards is a telling accomplishment since the hotel has only 54 properties worldwide. It employs over 23,000 employees worldwide to deliver exemplary service.

So, what does this 20-year-old hotel chain do that sets it apart from the competition? In a word—SERVICE. Not just ordinary service but the type that legends are made of. Nothing is left to chance in a Ritz hotel. Minute details and an atmosphere that includes such amenities as lighter fabrics in the guest rooms to allow for more thorough washing, white tie and apron uniforms for the wait staff, black tie for the maitre d’ and morning suits for all other staff, conducive to a formal, professional appearance, extensive fresh flowers throughout the public areas, and a la carte dining, providing choices for diners.

The Ritz-Carlton motto of “we are ladies and gentlemen serving ladies and gentlemen” coupled with its credo, help set the standards by which every employee functions.

**THE RITZ-CARLTON CREDO**

“The Ritz-Carlton is a place where the genuine care and comfort of our guests is our highest mission. We pledge to provide the finest personal service and facilities for our guests who will always enjoy a warm, relaxed yet refined ambiance. The Ritz-Carlton experience awakens the senses, instills well-being, and fulfills even the unexpressed wishes and needs of our guests.”

**Key Terms and Concepts**

- behavioral styles
- decisive style
- expressive style
- inquisitive style
- perceptions
- primary behavior pattern
- problem solving
- process improvement
- rational style
- stereotype
- win-win situation

**Quick Preview Answers**

2. T 7. T 12. F
5. F 10. T 15. T
Chapter Review Questions

1. What are behavioral styles?
2. What are the four behavioral style categories discussed in this chapter?
3. What are some of the characteristics that can help you identify a person who has the following style preferences: R, I, D, E?
4. When communicating with someone who has an “R” preference, what can you do to improve your effectiveness?
5. When communicating with someone who has an “I” preference, what can you do to improve your effectiveness?
6. When communicating with someone who has a “D” preference, what can you do to improve your effectiveness?
7. When communicating with someone who has an “E” preference, what can you do to improve your effectiveness?
8. What are some strategies for eliminating service barriers by using your knowledge of behavioral styles?
9. What are perceptions?
10. How can perceptions affect customer relations?

Search for Behavioral Styles on the Internet

Log onto the Internet and look for information and research data on behavioral styles. Specifically look for the various theories and surveys that describe and categorize behavior. Also try to find information about some of the people who have done research on behavior:

- Sigmund Freud
- Carl Jung
- Alfred Adler
- Abraham Maslow
- William Moulton Marston
- Ivan Pavlov
- B. F. Skinner

Be prepared to present some of your findings at the next scheduled class.

Note: A listing for additional research on specific URLs is provided on the Customer Service website at <http://www.mhhe.com/Lucas05>.

Collaborative Learning Activity

Observing and Analyzing Behavioral Styles

With a partner or team, go to a public place (park, mall, airport, train or bus station, or restaurant) to observe three different people. Using the Worksheet 6-5 on the McGraw-Hill website shown above, note the specific behaviors each person exhibits. After you have finished this part of the activity, take a guess at each person’s behavioral style preference based on behaviors you saw. Compare notes with your teammates and discuss similarities and differences among findings. Also, discuss how this information can be helpful in your workplace to deliver better customer service.
Working Through Technology and People Problems at Child's Play Toy Company

Background
Since opening its newest store in Princeton, New Jersey, Child's Play Toy Company of Minneapolis, Minnesota, has been getting mixed customer reviews. Designed to be state-of-the-art, open, and customer-friendly, the store includes an attended activity area where small children can play while parents shop. In addition, an innovative system makes it possible for local customers to order products from catalogs or from the company's website and then go to a drive-up window to pick up their purchases without leaving their cars. Another creative feature involves interactive television monitors in the store—where customers can see a customer service representative at the same time the representative sees them. To reduce staffing costs, the customer service representatives are at a Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, location and are remotely connected via satellite and computer to all new stores. This system is used for special ordering, billing questions, and complaint resolution. Customers can use a computer keyboard to enter data.

In recent months, the number of customer complaints has been rising. Many people complain about not getting the product that they ordered over the system, they are uncomfortable using the computer keyboard, they dislike the lack of personal touch and the fact that they have to answer a series of standard questions asked by a "talking head" on the screen, they have encountered system or computer breakdowns, and they cannot get timely service or resolution of problems.

Your Role
As a customer service representative and cashier at the store, you are responsible for operating a cash register when all lines are operational and more than two customers are in each line. You are also responsible for supervising other cashiers on your shift and dealing with customer questions, complaints, or problems. You report directly to the assistant store manager, Meg Finochio. Prior to coming to this store, you worked in two other New Jersey branches during the five preceding years.

This afternoon, Mrs. Sakuro, a regular customer, came to you. She was obviously frustrated and pointed her finger at you as she shouted, "You people are stupid!" She also demanded to speak with the manager and threatened that, "If you people do not want my business, I will go to another store!" Apparently, a doll that Mrs. Sakuro had ordered two weeks ago over the in-store system had not arrived. The doll was to be for her daughter's birthday, which is in two days. Although Mrs. Sakuro has a heavy accent, you understood that she had been directed by a cashier to check with a customer service representative via the monitor to determine the status of the orders. When she did this, she was informed that there was a problem with the order. The representative who took the order wrote the credit card number incorrectly, and the order was not processed. When Mrs. Sakuro asked the customer service representative why someone hadn't called her, the representative said that the customer service department was in another state and that long-distance calls were not allowed. She was told that the local store is responsible for verifying order status and handling problems.

Mrs. Sakuro's behavior and attitude are upsetting to you.
Critical Thinking Questions

1. Based on the behavioral style information in this chapter and other subjects discussed in this book, what do you think is causing the complaints being made?
2. What system changes would you suggest for Child's Play? Why?
3. What can you do at this point to solve the problem?
4. What primary behavioral style is Mrs. Sakuro exhibiting? What specific strategies should you use to address her behavior?

In order to ensure that you are prepared to provide premium service to your customers, take some time to think about typical customer situations in which you were personally involved or witnessed. Answer the following questions based on situations recalled.

1. What types of behaviors do the average customer exhibit?
2. Based on what you learned about behavioral styles in general, and your preferred style, what service strategies could you use if you were involved with the behaviors identified in question 1?
3. In difficult or emotional service situations, what behaviors often manifest themselves?
4. What strategies might help you in dealing with such customer behaviors?