



Peter Christison & Associates Workplace Health Consultancy and Training

Promoting *healthy minds in the workplace at organisational
Managerial and employee levels*

Training: *Mental health subjects, stress, resilience, and health promotion*

Retaining and returning *the workforce suffering adverse stress
or mental ill health in the workplace*

UK wide: *Training Workshops Strategies Assessments Protocols.*

Author of 'Healthy Minds in the workplace' toolkit and training programme.

A Healthy Minds fact sheet

Handling distressing or distressed customers & resilience skills for staff Fact sheet

Angry or complex behaviour from your Customers?

How to manage this and Specific Resilience Skills Training for Call Centre Staff

*(Please ask for fact sheet 2 for in depth coverage of the topic
resilience skills training which is available separately)*

Background

Call to Samsung Electronics

Caller: *'Can you give me a telephone number for Jack?'*

Operator: *'I'm sorry, sir, I don't understand who you are talking about.'*

Caller: *'On page 1, section 5, of the user guide it clearly states that I need to unplug the fax machine from the AC wall socket and telephone Jack before cleaning. Now, can you give me the number for Jack?'*

Operator: *'I think you mean the telephone point on the wall'..*

A call to a Travel Centre

Customer: *'I've been ringing 0800 2100 for two days and can't get through to enquiries, can you help?'*

Operator: *'Where did you get that number from, sir?'*

Customer: *'It was on the door of the travel centre'*

Operator: *'Sir, they are our opening hours'.*

Amusing though these extracts of genuine calls are to call centres, organisations are facing more complex and difficult behaviour from their clients or customers, in particular those who seek a service by telephone. These are likely to increase in times of economic recession.

Anger in the UK has increased significantly and is now considered to be a significant public health issue as well a strong link with mind ill health; see Mental Health Foundation 'Cooling Down' Campaign, April 2008.

In addition angry callers often impair the cognitive function of staff leading to the inability to efficiently problem solve or handle the callers' enquiry.

Customer service staff can be faced with handling other difficult calls that they are untrained to deal with such as customers displaying depressive or suicidal behaviour, or loneliness.

Any one of these customer groups can prove to be very distressing and de-motivating for service staff leading to:

- ✚ High levels of attrition which is expensive and disruptive to an organisations function, particularly during economic recession.
- ✚ Corporate sickness culture and loss of profits
- ✚ Increased rates of illness in the staff, particularly common mind health problems, adverse stress, hypertension, and increased risk of coronary heart disease. It is estimated that the costs of sickness absence just due to common mind ill health in the UK costs business £1035 per employee per annum (SCMH December 2007).
- ✚ Higher risk of litigation against the organisation.

Why this specialist training?

It not only can provide customer service staff with the skills to understand, manage and work with these specific types of customers, but also give them sound resilience skills to cope with these experiences reducing or eliminating the issues in ' the background' section.

The training can be 'off the shelf' or tailor made to meet the needs of your particular organisation.

The time spent can be to meet your needs but in our experience no less than 4 hours and ideally 1 day. To maximise effectiveness the recommended training group size should be ideally no more than 20 per session; subject to conditions ' training for trainers' training can be provided.

What other services can come with this training?

Assessments

This is an optional service but in our experience it is beneficial to have:

- ✚ A good understanding of how your business operates
- ✚ To evaluate from randomised selected members of your staff, if possible including management, so that solutions to a range of problems can be developed, and or enhanced approaches to specific types of behaviour of the customer/caller can be included in the designed training.
- ✚ Enhance the resilience skills for your staff in your specific business.

Protocol development

You may have protocols in existence. Linking the existing ones to training is advantageous, and in some cases organisations may not have these; they can be developed as a result of the assessment and lead to recommendations from our training. Development of a protocol should ideally be made before the training, and if you wish this can be part of the training programme.

Example of what one companies' delegates say:

'Obviously has spent time thinking about the specific challenges that face our role within the company' Call centre Nutritionist adviser

'Open forum style very good and small groups allowed everyone to contribute. The course demonstrated good practice and refined peoples own methods' Kim Caldecott Call Centre Manager Higher Nature Ltd.

Course was very good had some good advice. The trainer was really good at explaining the issues we had problems with; made it look easy' Call centre sales Advisor Higher Nature Ltd.

'Good understanding of the subject , approachable good delivery' Jenny Bodenham
Nutritionist.

Example of Typical aims and objectives of our 'off the shelf' training

- ✚ To enable call handler staff to respond to: angry, lonely, depressed or suicidal callers' effectively, sensitively and efficiently to meet the business needs of the organisation.
- ✚ To enable all staff to both personally, and in a team support manner, to develop personal resilience and specific stress management techniques, to overcome the impact of receiving distressing calls.

Objectives

- ✚ Gain an overview of the techniques of assertiveness and empathy for use in handling difficult calls; put these techniques into practice.
- ✚ Gain a full understanding about anger and why callers may be angry; techniques how to manage this type of person, defusing their anger effectively.
- ✚ Learn specific stress eliminating physical relaxation exercises affecting this workforce group.
- ✚ Gain an insight into people with mind ill – health issues such as depression, suicidal, or who are lonely, and how to respond to this group of callers in a time efficient sensitive manner.
- ✚ Learn techniques to create personal resilience including: self discussion reinforcement, CBT style techniques, and stress and anxiety management created by the callers.
- ✚ Acquire techniques enabling the staff to handle all callers in a diplomatic and time efficient basis to meet the business needs of the organisation.
- ✚ (Optional) Facilitated solutions to problem solve various issues that staff encounters from these groups of callers.

You do not have to adopt all these aims and objectives. Equally if you have aims and objectives you wish to cover, our research and design service can provide these.

Details of my biography on request

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