

# 2

# Dealing with customers

## 2.1 About business The shopping experience

### Discussion

1 What can shops do to attract more customers? Think about the shops that you like to go to and discuss the questions with a partner.

- 1 What is your favourite shop and why?
- 2 How often do you go there?
- 3 What do you like to buy there?
- 4 Do you shop in department stores? Why? Why not?

### Vocabulary

2 Below are some of the customer services and benefits that shops can offer their customers. Put each one into the correct column below.

customer parking    money-off vouchers    childcare    alteration services  
 private fitting rooms    store card    beauty salon    special offers    gift wrapping  
 home delivery    refunds    hairdresser's

facilities	services	financial services & benefits
customer parking		

### Reading for detail

3 Scan the article about the German department store Breuninger to find answers to the questions.

- 1 Where does Breuninger have department stores?
- 2 Which departments in paragraph 2 would you go to if you wanted to find the following: soap and shampoo, coffee cups, a handbag, a yoga mat?
- 3 Which customer services and benefits from the lists in 2 can you find in the text? Put a tick (✓) next to them.
- 4 Find at least five more customer services and benefits in the text. Add them to the lists in 2.

4 Read the last paragraph about the luxury personal shopping service and answer the questions.

- 1 What things can customers do before they come to the store?
- 2 What two services can customers use whilst at the store?
- 3 What two services can customers use after they leave the store?
- 4 Do you think that Breuninger do everything possible to create a luxury shopping experience? Can you think of anything else they could do?

### Listening for detail

5 1:24 Listen to Rafael Fernandez, an expert on luxury customer services in retail and complete the sentences.

- 1 Luxury consumers want products that are high quality and \_\_\_\_\_.
- 2 Sales assistants have to give luxury consumers lots of \_\_\_\_\_.
- 3 Luxury consumers want to know the things they are buying are \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4 If luxury consumers are pleased with the service they receive they \_\_\_\_\_.

### Internet research

Search for the keywords *luxury retail* to learn more about this kind of shopping.

### Discussion

6 Work with a partner. You run the sports and leisurewear department in a successful department store. Your manager has told you that the department must improve its customer service and develop a luxury personal shopping service. Decide with your partner on six new services and benefits you are going to offer. Present these to the class.

# BREUNINGER

## The beautiful things in life

BREUNINGER is a chain of upmarket department stores in Germany, which are famous for their high standards of customer care. The company, founded in 1881 by Eduard Breuninger, now consists of a flagship store in Stuttgart and a further thirteen stores across Germany.

The stores offer gentlemen's and ladies' fashion, perfume and cosmetics, lingerie, shoes, accessories, sport and leisurewear, household goods and lifestyle products. They promise their customers a taste of 'the beautiful things in life.' The stores themselves are elegant and stylish and the goods on sale are luxury, top-of-the-range items from labels such as Burberry, Dior, Gucci and Yves Saint Laurent. Breuninger believes that it is the company's commitment to excellent customer service which makes the Breuninger shopping experience so special.

Breuninger have always had an eye for the comfort and convenience of their customers. They were the first department store in Germany to introduce lifts and escalators in the late 1940s and the first to provide customer parking a few years later. Heinz Breuninger, grandson of Eduard, brought back the idea of providing a car park for his customers from a trip to America in the 1950s. In 1959, Breuninger was the first German department store to offer a store card. This forward-thinking decision enabled the customers to pay without cash, long before it was normal to have a credit card. Today, over 700,000 customers own a Breuninger

store card. Card holders are addressed by their name at the cash desks; they receive special benefits, money-off vouchers and a present on their birthday.

Today, the stores have an exceptional range of additional facilities available for their customers. The Stuttgart store features a hairdresser's, fashion shows, cosmetic workshops, a café on each floor, live entertainment in the piano bar, and a children's room — where children can play and paint while their parents shop.

Another of these facilities is the Breuninger luxury shopping service. This service offers a unique shopping experience; the opportunity to buy the most luxurious items with personal attention from specially-trained consultants. To make this shopping experience as relaxing as possible, customers send their measurements and the colours and styles they like to the store before leaving home. The consultants then use this information to choose suitable clothes. When

a luxury customer arrives at the store they are guided to one of the VIP reserved parking spaces where one of the consultants meets them. At the private fitting rooms champagne or espresso are available while the customer chooses from the latest collections from famous designers. Breuninger also offer made-to-measure services, free tailoring and luxury shoppers can even take the clothes home to try them on. When all of the shopping is finished the clothes can be gift-wrapped and taken out to the car or Breuninger can deliver them to your home.

*... a taste of the beautiful things in life.*



women's underclothing

## 2.2 Vocabulary Telephoning and customer care

## Discussion

1 With a partner discuss the questions.

- 1 When was the last time you telephoned a company call centre? Why did you call – to solve a problem, make an enquiry, for another reason?
- 2 What was the result of the phone call? Were you happy with the service?



Customer: 'My mobile phone won't make outgoing calls.'

Helpline operator: 'Do you have the phone with you, sir?'

Customer: 'Yes, I'm using it now.'

Helpline operator: 'Well, the phone is working fine, sir. You just called me!'

## Reading and vocabulary

2 Read the article and complete the information about how to deal with customers on the phone. Use the words in the box to help you.

hang up    discount    answer  
lose your temper    agree on a solution  
exchange    deal with    call back  
put through    interrupt

## The Seven Steps to Customer Satisfaction



- 1 **GREET THE CUSTOMER.** When you (1) answer a call from a dissatisfied customer you need to greet them in a warm manner. Thank the customer for calling. Remember that when a customer calls to tell that something is wrong it is your opportunity to put it right.
- 2 **ASK WHAT THE PROBLEM IS.** You need to find out why they are calling. Simply ask what the problem is and let them explain. You may not be able to (2) deal with the problem. Don't say 'I'm sorry, I can't help,' instead explain to the customer that you cannot help them and ask for their telephone number so that somebody can (3) call them back. Sometimes the customer may want to wait while you (4) put them through to the correct department.
- 3 **LISTEN CAREFULLY.** Remember the customer may say a lot. You need to listen and try not to (5) lose it. An angry customer may take a long time to explain what the problem is and so it is very important that you stay calm and that you don't (6) lose your temper. It is a good idea to take notes so that you are 100% clear about all of the details. Ask questions if they are not telling you the information you need to know.
- 4 **DEFINE THE PROBLEM.** Once the customer has finished explaining the problem, use your notes to check you have understood the problem correctly.
- 5 **SUGGEST A SOLUTION.** Now that you know all of the details of the problem you can suggest a solution. Don't blame another department. Make an apology and suggest a solution. The customer may ask you to refund their money, they may ask for a (7) discount on their next order or they might ask to (8) exchange the goods that they bought for other items. You also must be realistic. Don't promise to deliver 10,000 new parts for next week if it cannot be done. The customer will be even angrier next week when the parts don't arrive.
- 6 **CONFIRM THE SOLUTION.** Once you and the customer (9) agreed on a solution, confirm it so that you both understand what has been decided. Make sure that the customer knows exactly what you are going to do and when you are going to do it.
- 7 **END THE CONVERSATION.** Now that the customer is happy you can end the conversation. Thank the customer again for calling. It is a good idea to let the customer (10) \_\_\_\_\_ first, as this gives them a final chance to add anything.

### Listening

**3** 1:25-1:27 Listen to three telephone conversations between customer service assistants and dissatisfied customers and answer the questions.

- 1 Why are each of the customers calling?
- 2 Which of the 'seven steps' from the article opposite do the customer service assistants forget when they answer the call?

### Telephone language

**4** Match the beginning with the correct ending to make questions about telephoning.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 What's the longest you've ever been put | a) on hold for?                                   |
| 2 Have you ever hung                      | b) through to the wrong person?                   |
| 3 Have you ever been put                  | c) long should it take them to answer the phone?  |
| 4 Do you always ask people to confirm     | d) your temper when you are talking on the phone? |
| 5 When you call a company, how            | e) up on somebody?                                |
| 6 Do you lose                             | f) arrangements that you make on the phone?       |

Work with a partner. Take it in turns to ask and answer the questions.

### Reading and discussion

**5** Read the advertisements below for customer service jobs.

A friendly, polite **telephone manner** is essential to this role, but you'll need good **listening skills** and the ability to be **reassuring**. You will be naturally **sympathetic** and be able to handle often sensitive conversations. Could you be there with the right answers?

For this role you need an **outgoing personality** and good **interpersonal skills**. You need the confidence to speak to existing and potential customers about our services and products and the ability to **persuade**. You are always ready to take the next call.

Which do you think is for a healthcare company and which for an insurance company?

**6** Match the words in **bold** in the advertisements to the definitions below.

- 1 to make someone agree to do something (v) *persuade*
- 2 relationships between you and other people (two words) *outgoing personality*
- 3 caring and open to understanding other people's problems (adj) *sympathetic*
- 4 the way you speak on the phone (two words) *telephone manner*
- 5 the ability to listen (two words) *listening skills*
- 6 making someone feel less worried (adj) *reassuring*
- 7 if you have this you are friendly and enjoy talking to people (two words) *interpersonal*

#### Internet research

Search for the keywords **customer service** to find more information about how to deal with customers.

**7** Work with a partner. You need to find someone for a job as a helpline operator for your school, university or workplace. They will be responsible for dealing with new customers and potential students. Decide what five essential skills and qualities they need to have and create a job advertisement. Compare your advertisement with another pair's.