Professional Service & Communication for Code Officials

Delivering professional service in a regulatory environment requires more than technical expertise. For Code Officials, communication happens within a framework of legislation, bylaws, and adopted codes—where decisions must be clear, consistent, and defensible, and where outcomes can significantly impact safety, timelines, and costs.

This course is designed specifically for Building and Plumbing Officials and focuses on the practical communication skills needed to navigate these responsibilities effectively. It explores the unique challenges of working in a regulatory role, including balancing customer expectations with non-negotiable requirements, managing high-impact decisions, and maintaining fairness and consistency.

Participants will develop key competencies such as active listening, clear and concise communication, empathy without losing objectivity, and effective conflict resolution. The course also addresses real-world scenarios, including dealing with difficult customers, responding to complaints, and communicating decisions in high-pressure situations.

In addition to external interactions, the course highlights the importance of internal communication, working effectively with colleagues, supervisors, and other departments to support consistent and defensible decision-making.

Participants will complete a personalized skills assessment to identify strengths and areas for development, supporting continuous improvement in communication and professional practice.

This course takes approximately 6-8 hours to complete.

Module 1: Welcome to the Course

1.1 General Course Overview & Objectives

1.2 Exercise: Complete Your Customer Service Profile Assessment

Introduce yourself to the community!

Module 2: Roles And Responsibilities

2.1 The Code Official Context

Module 3: The Behaviours of Excellent Service

- 3.1 Basic Behavioural Expectations
- 3.2 Discussion: Your Customer Service Experience
- 3.3 Stop Work Order
- 3.4 Exercise: Behaviours of Good and Bad Service
- 3.5 Assertiveness - The Goldilocks Principle
- 3.6 Assertiveness in Professional Authority
- 3.6 Exercise: How Assertive are you?
- 3.7 Exercise – Assertiveness

Module 4: Customer Service Skills & Competencies

- 4.1 Overview of Skills

Module 5: Temperament / Disposition

- 5.1 Assessment Review: Temperament / Disposition
- 5.2 Why is this Skill Important?

Module 6: Attentive Listening Skills

- 6.1 Assessment Review: Attentive Listening
- 6.2 Can You Hear Me Now? Importance of Listening Skills
- 6.3 Discussion: Attentive Listening
- 6.4 Handout: Main Purpose of Communication & Appropriate Listening
- 6.5 Handout: Ten Commandments for Good Listening

Module 7: Defining Active Listening

- 7.1 What is Active Listening?

7.2 Becoming a Better Listener

7.3 Body Language Basics

Module 8: Attitude is Everything!

8.1 Empathy Without Losing Objectivity

8.2 Establishing a Frame of Reference

8.3 Being Genuine

8.4 Exercise: Demonstrating Active Listening

Module 9: Encouraging Conversation

9.1 What Is Said and What Is Heard

9.2 Asking Questions

9.3 Probing Techniques

9.4 Paraphrasing Techniques

Module 10: Building Relationships

10.1 Building Common Ground

10.2 NLP Tips & Tricks

10.3 Problem and Solutions

Module 11: Communicating Clearly

11.1 Assessment Review: Communicating Clearly

11.2 Communicating Clearly

11.3 Removing Barriers to Communication

11.4 Exercise: Common Questions

11.5 Handout: Body Language to Look Out For

11.6 Handout: Creating & Removing Barriers in Service Conversations

11.7 Handout: Effective Communication

Module 12: Written Communication Techniques

12.1 CLEAR: Say What You Mean

12.2 CONCISE: Shorter is Better

12.3 COMPLETE: Include Everything Needed for the Next Step

12.4 COURTEOUS: Be Helpful, Not Harsh

12.5 CONFIRM: Document Important Conversations and Decisions

Module 13: Resolving Conflict

13.1 Assessment Review: Resolving Conflict

13.2 Resolving Conflict

13.3 Conflict Resolution – Activity Poll

13.4 Supplemental Perspective: Remembering Your Role

13.5 Handout: Conflict Resolution

13.6 Responding to Accusations of Bias in Regulatory Roles

Module 14: Engaging in Joint Problem Solving

14.1 Assessment Review: Joint Problem Solving

14.2 Why is Joint Problem Solving Important in Customer Service?

14.3 Discussion: Case Study - Road Issues

14.4 Case Study: The Case of the Unhappy Employee

Module 15: Carefully Negotiating

15.1 Assessment Review: Carefully Negotiating

15.2 Why is Negotiation Important in Customer Service?

15.3 Exercise: What is Your Negotiation Style?

15.4 Why Do Negotiations Fail and What Can We Do?

15.5 Discussion: Negotiation

15.6 Handout: Quick Guide to Negotiation

Module 16: Building Warmth & Empathy

16.1 Assessment Review: Building Warmth & Empathy

16.2 Warmth & Empathy

16.3 The Role of Trust

16.4 Exercise: Empathy & Warmth

16.5 Discussion: Trust-building Behaviors for Customer Focused Teams

16.6 Handout: Book Summary - The Speed of Trust

Module 17: Dealing With Difficult Customers

17.1 What Frustrates our Customers?

17.2 Application for Code official - Dealing with Difficult Customers

17.3 Exercise: 3 Frustrations

17.4 Service Breakdowns

17.5 Application to Code official - Service Breakdowns

17.6 Exercise: How Do You Feel as a Customer?

17.7 Behaviors of Difficult Customers

17.8 Discussion: Customer Behaviours

17.9 Responding to Complaints

17.10 Handout: Handling Complaints

17.11 Stop Work Orders in Practice

17.12 Conflict Style Selector

17.13 Exercise: Conflict Style Selector

17.14 Defusing Conflict

17.15 Exercise: Choosing Your Reaction

Module 18: Common Breakdowns

18.1 Fixing & Preventing Common Breakdowns

18.2 Exercise: Choose the Fix

18.3 Frustrations with Rules & Delays

18.4 Exercise: Rules Impacting Your Department

18.5 When Enough is Enough

18.6 Exercise: Map Your Escalation Process

18.7 How & Why Should We Encourage Complaints?

Module 19: Wrap-Up

19.1 Wrap-up

19.2 Development Plan