**Handling Complaints Training for Managers & Professionals**

**Might your need to be better at handling complaints  
be met by this management training course  
called *Skills with People*?**

**Yes if some of the following are true for you**

* I'd like to be able to turn customers' complaints into opportunities to build better relationships with customers. This would not only be very satisfying, it would also be very good for business.
* I'd like to be able to handle complaints about me or my performance, i.e., personal criticism, without becoming defensive, and to turn these situations into opportunities to build better relationships.
* But it's difficult handling complaints or criticism. What makes it difficult is the strong emotion that's always present. The complaining person often feels angry, let down, worried, frustrated. For my part I also feel worried, as well as guilty, attacked and sometimes resentful at the tone of the complaint.
* I feel out of my depth when people get emotional. And I try to hide my own emotion.
* So to be able to handle complaints confidently in a way that gets the best out of the situation I need to be better at handling emotion - my own as well as other people's.

**What you'll take away from this course on how to handle complaints**

This course will give you the skills and confidence to deal more successfully with emotionally difficult situations like handling complaints. In other words it will enable you to master the skills of emotional intelligence. With these skills you'll be able to turn complaints into opportunities to build better relationships with the people who are complaining.

**What this session will do for you**

In this session we'll aim to give you something practical you can use right away that'll help you handle a difficult situation more successfully at work. All you need do to **prepare for this session** is think about the kinds of situations you want to be able to handle more successfully.

**FAQs**

You'll find answers to many of your questions about the content and method of this course under **FAQs** (in the main menu above).

**How the skills you'll practise on this course  
will make you much more successful  
at handling complaints**

**Why handling complaints is so difficult**

There's one word for why handling complaints is so difficult, and that is *emotion*. As you know from personal experience, when emotions are aroused communication is difficult, relationships come under strain, people become irrational, and conflict and misunderstanding all too easily develops.

**Burried negative emotion is destructive, but talking about it openly makes it safe**

Because of their experiences many people have developed a fear that emotion is difficult,  dangerous and can eaily get out of control. So they try to avoid, suppress or ignore it. But this gets them into difficulties when handling complaints. What they don't realise is that it's only when you try to burry it that negative emotion is destructive. By admitting it and talking openly about it you let off steam, get it off your chest, and it blows over safely.

**How talking about feelings helps you handle complaints**

Let's look through the eyes of someone making a complaint.

Imagine you recently bought a product or service because it was crucial to you, but now you can't use it because something's gone wrong with it. Unless you contact the supplier and complain the problem won't be fixed. But you've got quite enough on your plate without this, and so as well as being worried because you can't use what you bought, you're also annoyed and frustrated at having put all this energy into making a complaint. So when you pick up the phone to make the complaint your blood pressure's high and rising.

**What does the complainer need from the person handling the complaint?**

* The very first thing they need is to be allowed to get their feelings off their chest so that they can let off steam and calm down. For this to happen they need to be taken seriously right away by someone who's listening to them with *empathy.* Your empathyallows them to express their feelings fully. It calms them down very fast. A lack of empathy from will wind them up and keep their blood pressure rising.
* Once they've calmed down the next thing they need is specific reassurance. When, how and by whom will the problem be fixed? Customer liaison people often fail to spell this out because they assume the customer already knows they mean to look after them well. But at this moment when they feel you've just been seriously let down this is probably the wrong assumption to be making.
* Then, of course, they need them to do what you've said you'll do. If you do, their confidence in you will probably be grater than it was before the problem arose.
* And finally, your relationship with them can only be further boosted if you check with them how satisfied they are with the way their complaint has been handled.

**What skills do you need for handling complaints?**

The two skills you need for handling complaints are *listening with empathy* and *speaking assertively*. They're the two crucial communication skills this course will help you master.

**Listen with empathy**

You need to be able to listen with empathy as your *very first response* when hearing a complaint. This response has several powerful advantages:

* It's a very effective way of calming people down and winning their trust.
* It enables you to be patient and receptive as you find out exactly what they're complaining about. It prevents you from jumping to false conclusions about what the problem is.
* It helps them be clear in their own mind exactly what their problem or concern is.

**Speak assertively**

Second you need to be able to speak assertively in order make them realise you're going to help them, and understand how you're going to do it.

Of course to handle complaints successfully, as well as dealing with the customer you'll probably also have to deal with the people within your organisation who need to be involved in fixing the problem. These two skills, assertiveness and empathy, will make you more successful and persuasive at handling these conversations, too.