

Glossary of key terms

Benefits – reasons why customers might buy a product or service. The word usually refers to the way products and services meet the customer's needs. In other words, why the customer cares what the product or service does.

Brand promise – the statement that identifies what customers should expect from the organisation's people, products and services. For example – Twitter's brand promise is 'To give everyone the power to create and share ideas and information instantly, without barriers'.

Challenges – tests of abilities or resources in a demanding situation.

Closed question – a simple question that can be responded to with a short answer, such as 'Yes' or 'No', or 'True' or 'False'. For example, 'Are you happy with the service you received?'

Code of conduct – the principles, values, standards or rules of behaviour that guide the decisions, procedures and systems of an organisation. Codes of conduct respect the rights of all those affected by an organisation's operations including customers, employees and the general public.

Code of practice – a set of guidelines and regulations that members of a profession, trade, occupation or organisation must follow. They do not normally have the force of law behind them.

Conflict – a state of disagreement between different people or groups.

Constructive feedback – feedback that is given to help you improve. The best constructive feedback is honest, clear, specific, action-orientated and respectful. Constructive feedback can be positive or negative. Positive constructive feedback tells you what you have done well and why it was good, so you know what to keep on doing. Negative constructive feedback tells you what you can do better and how to improve.

Core values – the basic features of how an organisation goes about its work, and the practices the organisation follows every day in everything they do. For example, BMW's core values are 'Integrity, Respect, Responsibility, Growth'.

Customer expectations – the benefits that a customer expects an organisation's products or services to deliver.

Customer focus – an organisational attitude in which all aspects of producing and delivering goods or services are informed by the best interests of the customers.

Customer needs – a customer need relates to the aspect of a product or service that will prompt customers to purchase it. For example, a customer needs a lamp to adequately light the area intended.

Customer service levels – a measure of the customer service performance within an organisation. Targets are set, and the service level gives the extent to which those targets should be met. For example, a customer service target might be that 85% of helpdesk calls be answered in less than a minute, but the acceptable service level could be 75%.

Customer wants – a customer want is something that would be 'nice to have' as part of a product or service, but it is not necessary for them to purchase it. For example, a customer might want to choose the colour of a lamp.

Deadline – a date by which something is due, or the latest time when something must be completed.

Destructive feedback – feedback that is hurtful and is not intended to help you improve. Destructive feedback is often accusatory, personal and subjective (as opposed to objective).

Digital media – content that can be transmitted over the internet or computer networks. This can include text, audio, video and graphics, or anything else that can be presented online.

Dress code – a set of rules specifying the correct manner of dress for work, or specifying what is prohibited. In some cases this might be a uniform, but in others it might just be more general guidelines on what is appropriate.

Equality laws – these are laws that try to ensure everyone is treated fairly and equally. Currently, the Equality Act 2010 is the main law that serves to legally protect people from discrimination as customers. It replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act, making the law easier to understand, and strengthening protection in some situations. The Act sets out the different ways in which it's unlawful to treat someone. Before the Equality Act 2010 came into force there were several pieces of legislation to cover discrimination, including the following:

- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Race Relations Act 1976
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995

Equipment – the resources or tools needed for a specific purpose or to complete a specific task. Equipment might be very basic (eg a pen and paper) or extremely sophisticated (eg a PC and software).

Ethical standards – moral principles that promote values such as trust, fairness and kindness.

Evaluation – the action of assessing the worth or value of something (eg a process) or someone.

External customer – someone outside the organisation who buys, or receives, their products or services. External customers, except customers of organisations in the public sector, often have a choice, and if they don't like your product or service they can take their business elsewhere.

Features – key characteristics of a product or service that delivers benefits to customers. Essentially, what a product or service does.

Formal feedback – input received through 'formal' means such as customer surveys and other specific research tools.

Goals – observable and measurable targets made up of one or more objectives that need to be achieved within a fixed timeframe.

Informal feedback – input received through 'informal' means such as casual conversations between staff and customers.

Internal customer – a colleague, another department or a distributor you provide products or services to, which are then used to create a deliverable for the external customer. Usually, internal customers don't have a choice of suppliers because they will be required to use the organisation's own products or services.

Learning log – a written record of what you have learned, how you put your learning into practice, and reflections on how it went and what you might change next time.

Legislation – a law, or group of laws, agreed by Parliament and enforced by the justice system.

Open question – a question that cannot be answered with 'Yes' or 'No', or 'True' or 'False', but requires a fuller answer. For example, 'How did that make you feel?'

Organisational culture – the way in which members of an organisation relate to each other, their work and the outside world in comparison to other organisations.

Personal Development Plan – a written document that is a record of the skill areas you need or want to develop (also known as goals) and how you are going to achieve them.

Positive language – language that is helpful and encouraging, and focuses on actions that can be carried out to help a situation. Positive language often includes suggestions for possible solutions and how these can be achieved in a timely and effective manner.

Prioritisation – the arrangement of items or tasks that need completing in order of relative importance. Tasks can move up or down in importance and priority as objectives and situations change.

Private sector – the part of a country's economic system that is run by individuals and companies, rather than the government. Most private sector organisations are run with the intention of making profit for the organisation and its shareholders.

Products – commercially distributed goods that are the result of a fabrication, manufacturing or production process. These goods are then sold to customers before being consumed or used.

Professional language – language that is appropriate for use in a business situation. This is language that is not too casual. For example, it doesn't use slang, jargon or, most importantly, any swear words.

Public sector – for instance the police, military, public roads, public transport, education and healthcare. These are usually financed by things such as income tax, VAT or council tax. The public sector provides services such as refuse collection, which benefit everyone rather than just the individual, and services that encourage equal opportunity.

Rapport – a close relationship, usually one of mutual trust or understanding.

Regulations – laws or rules agreed by any group in authority, such as a trade body or non-governmental organisation, which are usually used to regulate conduct.

Role profile – the most important responsibilities, tasks, performance outcomes, competencies and challenges you will need to consider as part of a role.

Self-assessment – an appraisal of your own progress and development needs. This is an important part of making your Personal Development Plan.

Service culture – a customer-centric approach to activities, in which customer needs are put first. Employees ensure customers have a positive experience. For example, the service culture of Four Seasons Hotels Ltd is that 'In all our interactions with our guests, customers, business associates and colleagues, we seek to deal with others as we would have them deal with us.'

Service level agreement (SLA) – a contract between a service provider and its internal or external customers that documents what services the provider will supply and the performance standards they are required to meet. For example, a sales department might have a service level agreement with the finance department that they will provide up-to-date sales figures by a certain date every month.

Services – intangibles such as accounting, banking, cleaning, consultancy, education, insurance, expertise, medical treatment or transport. No transfer of ownership takes place when services are sold, they cannot be stored or transported, and they come into existence at the moment they are bought and consumed.

Social media – online communication channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content sharing and collaboration. Some examples of social media include forums, blogs and micro-blogging, social networking sites and wikis.

Strengths and weaknesses – strengths are any relevant skills that you can perform well and can bring to your role. Weaknesses are areas where you need to improve or make changes in order to make a success of your role.

SWOT analysis – SWOT is an acronym for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Strengths and weaknesses are internal factors over which you have some measure of control. Opportunities and threats are external factors over which you have essentially no control.

Systems – organised or established methodical procedures. Systems can be simple or complex, and they can be electronic (eg a computer database) or manual (eg paperwork). Systems are used to increase efficiency and make sure tasks are completed correctly.

Team dynamics – the relationships between members of a group that are part of a team within the organisation. Teams may contain a large number of people, or as few as two. Team dynamics are usually affected by roles and responsibilities.

Technique – a systematic procedure, method or routine used to accomplish a task.

Technology – machinery, devices (eg software, computers) and scientific processes that are used to perform a certain task. Examples include customer relationship management (CRM) software, or telephones and computers that are used to take customer orders.



Third sector – for instance charities. These are a range of organisations that are neither public sector nor private sector, and are:

- independent of government
- motivated by the desire to achieve social goals
- sometimes called 'not-for-profit organisations'.

Tool – an item or implement used for a specific purpose. A tool could be a physical object or a technical item such as a web authoring tool or a software program.

Unique selling point – the positive features of a product that sets it apart from other similar products. Unique selling points (USPs) are used to persuade customers that one product is better than others. For example, unique features, lower price, more reliable, etc.

Unique service offer – the positive features of a service that sets it apart from other similar services. Unique service offers are used to persuade customers that one service is better than others.
