

**JobAssist “Better Employment Competences through Individualized e-training” Transfer of Innovation  
Project 2013-1-PL1-LEO05-37926**

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.

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	<b>Training Material</b> <b>Module “Client – orientated acting”</b>
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## **Basics of Client- Orientated acting Skills**

*“Il divario tra clienti soddisfatti e clienti insoddisfatti può far fallire un'azienda”*

*(Harvard Business Review)*

### **A. Introduction**

The social services sector in Italy, and in particular in the territory where the focus group took place, are slightly becoming an important field of work that offers employment opportunities. The Sicilian territory must increasingly deal with emergency situations related to immigrants arriving in Sicily off the Northern African's coasts.

The selection of participants (most of them were attending the fair, by promoting their organizations) has followed two main principles:

- 1) To select representatives from two main target groups (social sector and business services);
- 2) To select organizations with proven experience.

The tendencies related to the results were evident:

The 10 most important skills in the (ranking starts with the most important, highest average value)			
		Service Sector	Social Sector
No	Skills	Average Value	Average Value
1	1.15 English skills	5,3	4,7
2	1.6 Individual performance	4,9	4
3	1.7 Client- orientated acting	4,8	4
4	1.2 specific professional skills	4,6	4,6
5	1.10 Organizational skills	4,6	4,4
6	1.11 Interpersonal skills	4,5	4,6
7	1.14 Analytical Thinking	4,5	
8	1.13 Time management	4,3	
9	1.1 General service motivation and competences	4,2	
10	1.4 Conflict solving skills	4	4,2
	1.8 Intercultural skills		5
	1.3 Cooperation skills		4,8
	1.5 Communication skills		4,6

The main skill required is the “Intercultural skill”, followed by Cooperation and English skills (in this case we can also talk about “language” skills, as English is not the only language required).

It is important to take into consideration that, immediately after the “intercultural mediator”, the professional role of the “fundraiser” has been individualized.

Among the employment possibilities, related to the different fields, there are these three transversal characteristics to all the possible sectors:

- Language skills (not only English);
- Sales competencies / International market operators;
- Fundraising skills.

The skill that we are going to deepen in this form, named “Client-oriented acting”, is related to the “Sales competencies / International market operators”, very important especially inside the services sector.

This module will provide condensed information about what “Client-oriented acting” is, and it’s supposed to be considered for training, for a successful start into a new job and to reach and keep the success through the customer satisfaction. The topic is very interesting but so wide that we can only introduce general aspects about it.

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### ***B. Learning Objective***

This module will give the reader a basic knowledge about what is defined “Client-oriented acting”, about European standards, about the principles which rule the main aspects of the Client-oriented acting and, finally, about the needed strategies to make these principles work in order to satisfy the need of the customers, mainly important for the good exit of one’s work.

### ***C. The Market’s scenery***

The first of the eight principles that rule the ISO 9000 insists on the fact that the organizations must have this kind of orienteering towards the customers and they also have to catch in advance their present and future needs and expectations, respecting their characteristics and heading to overpass their specific expectations.

According to the rule UNI EN ISO 9000:2005, the customer is:

- a) Final user of the product;
- b) Person or organization who receives a finished product with the intention to resell it;
- c) Person or organization who consumes the product;
- d) Person or organization who receives a product;
- e) Person or organization who saddles to create a product.

The approach with Market from the organizations had followed different action lines in time:

- Production Orienteering (when the request was higher than the offer)
- Market Orienteering (when the request became lower than the offer)
- Client Orienteering (when the request became more and more exigent).

This last phase is the one we are in, and it is featured by the fact that in these last times the customer became more and more evolved, and he needs to be attracted by new concepts and better perspective from the enterprise to be “conquered”(he needs to be kept in the middle of the enterprise’s cares and attentions).

The answer to these new kinds of needs and requests from the customers, is a challenge for the organizations who are supposed to know more about the customer's personality, through a better analysis of the psychological profile, in order to create:

- Customized services;
- Customized products.

But how a customized product can be offered? First we have to say that it's not enough to give the customers just what they ask for, because they could not express all of the needs they may have. On the contrary, it is necessary that each employee had a good skill in observing and listening, and that he took on care to understand who's in front of him, trying to catch the more information he can, not only from what the customer says, but also from his behavior during the conversation, in order to land on the right field of his specific needs and to suggest him in advance what could be more interesting for him.

For instance, what could a guest ask for inside a hotel? It depends on some conditions. Of course a business traveler would have different needs and expectations than a family on vacation or than a sportive group of people, and though everybody would like to be the subject of the full attentions, naturally this cannot be possible for every customer: each one has different time settings, different habits, different ways to have meals, and various approaches to everything, which of course are also related to their purposes of travel.

Inside each one of the categories that distinguish the various types of guests, there are further differences, depending on the personal tastes and preferences, more than on one's role inside the society. To make an example, at the restaurant one person could choose to have a bloody steak, while another will ask for a well-cooked slice of meat: this kind of knowledge is what the waiter could mostly exploit to suggest customers the best solution among the courses, and sure helps him to give a better service.<sup>1</sup>

As a matter of fact, the customer's satisfaction is determined by the following factors:

- a) The ability to satisfy either the expressed or the hidden needs;
- b) The quality of the finished product;
- c) The perception the client has when his requests are filled;
- d) The completeness and promptness of the delivery;
- e) The kindness and the human approach with the provider.

To obtain a better harmony with the customers, and to keep their trust, is necessary to increase the general satisfaction level, which translates into a high grade of customers' fidelity. In other words, it's needed to know personally the clients, to understand their needs and their time

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.primetn.it/images/stories/pdf/oltreleaspettative.pdf>

settings, and to respond exactly to their communications. <sup>2</sup>

The personal who keeps in touch with the customers has a fundamental role since it is the first responsible for the customer's satisfaction and, for this reason, it has to own the following skills:

- Communicational and interpersonal skills;
- Problem solving;
- Assertiveness;
- Stress tolerance;
- Patience and empathy;
- Precision and attention for the details.

It's essential to build specific educational and development plans, as well as itineraries of growth and requalification, and replacing in the companies, so that the customer's experience can become heritage for the whole enterprise and not just for the personal of the front-line groups. The empowerment of this personal, its strengthening either for the individual workers or for the groups is the main theme about which the public and the private enterprises are differentiating their strategies.

#### ***D. Client-oriented acting - a basic competence with many facets***

The orienteering towards the client-user is the ability to catch the customers' demands, either internal or external, constantly modifying the basic enterprise's activities to meet their needs, in a logical line with the main standards and the organizational objectives.

The behavioral indicators for a good client-oriented action are:

- To recognize the proper internal and external clients (users, colleagues ...);
- To listen, to deepen and analyze the internal and external clients' needs;
- To put on top the customers-users' satisfaction guaranteeing the observance of the schedule and the quality of the results;
- To complement the organizational needs with the users' ones, composing the people's needs with the organizational limits;
- To consider the effects of the proper decisions and behavior on the process of work and on the final's product quality;
- To change the operative plans with regard to the needs of the user-client, in a sight of customer satisfaction;
- To cooperate without preconceptions interacting with new and different cultures.

According to Peter Drucker's statement "the main objective in marketing matter is to acquire a

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<sup>2</sup> Piva, A. (2013) La patente europea della Qualità – EQDL START – European Quality Driving Licence. MOD 1 Start: Concetti di base della qualità e della soddisfazione del cliente di Dr. Antonio Piva - <http://sole.dimi.uniud.it/~antonio.piva/files/eqdl-1b.pdf>

full knowledge and comprehension of the customer so that the product or the service could sell themselves. As a concept, **marketing should have as result a customer ready to buy**" (Drucker, 1978).<sup>3</sup>

What does it mean, in practice, to orient the business strategy to the client? It means to understand that the service dedicated to the client is not just a simple function inside the organization, but it represents a real virtue, fully agreed from the organization itself, and for which every one of the collaborators has his own responsibility. This new way of thinking, a sort of revolution, has been defined by Jan Carlzon (1991) with the name of "upside-down pyramid" and this theory puts on top the users and on bottom the top management.

The competition is finalized to be chosen by customers. The organizations are so strictly linked to their clients and it is also essential for them to correctly interpret their present and future needs, to satisfy them and to succeed in passing their expectations.

Also the UNI EN ISO 9001:2000 in several points talks about the necessity for the organizations to be oriented to the clients (5.1 Committance of the Administration, 5.2 Attention focused on the client, 5.5.2 Delegate of the Administration, 5.6.2 Incoming elements for the verify, 5.6.3 Outgoing elements from the verify, 6.1 Making resources available, 7.2.3 Communication with the client, 7.5.4 Property of the client) and in this sight, besides being a skill, it also is a wide-ranging of strategies and actions.

What is required to implement it:

- To understand who are our "clients" (are they just clients, or buyers, or final users, or agents, or distributors, or sellers, or people who give assistance or others?);
- To manage good relationships with clients in a systematic way;
- To identify and understand their needs and expectations;
- To take care about relationships with clients and to make systematic tests on their satisfaction in order to let it grow;
- To fix some mutual objectives following the customers' needs and to communicate them to the organization;
- To give a measure to the customers' satisfaction and to act starting from that results (managing the feedback to improve the system).

The main objectives for the ISO 9001 are the customer satisfaction and the continuous improvement of the efficacy.

The ISO 9004 extends the concept of satisfaction to all of the involved parts and introduces another concept, which treats about the efficiency of the organization, besides the efficacy.

The ISO 9001 insists in many points on the attention for the client among the business activities, and this because all of these activities are intent to work for the client itself.

## 1. Leadership

Following the norm, is the high management the first body who should give the employees the awareness of the importance to satisfy the customers. This should be a basic duty for the

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<sup>3</sup> Drucker, P. (1978) *Manuale di management*, Etas Libri, 1978.

business managers to pinpoint the product/service of which features are totally client/user-oriented, and to communicate it inside the organization. Making so, the collaborators can concentrate themselves on the most required features, reaching just the customer satisfaction<sup>4</sup>.

## **2. Making resources available**

As far as the resources management is concerned, the organization should put on availability adequate human, economic and infrastructural resources to reach a better quality management and, consequently, to meet the clients' requests, increasing their satisfaction.

## **3. Identification of the products' features**

In the creation of the product the client is more involved than during the other phases. It's due to the organization to fix the specific features the client may require, including the ones which treat about the delivery and the eventual assistance after purchasing; it also has to know what is not expressed by the client, which is equally necessary for the specific purpose. Before giving the final product to the customer, the supervisors should analyze and evaluate again its features: this is useful to understand if the product has exactly the features it was supposed to have and so, to find out if the enterprise is able to give the client the right product.

## **4. Communication with the client**

To complete the previous activity it's important to communicate with the customer; in this phase, the organization must create valid and stable models of communication, to know more about what are his expectations, about orders' management, about contracts and related modifications, and about the feedback of the client itself (including complaints).

## **5. Properties of the client**

The organization must take care about the properties of the client, when these are under control of the company, or anyway when the company exploits them. The organization must identify and test the clients' products to be used or assembled. The loss, the damaging or the unsuitableness of the given product must be immediately communicated to the same client and must be recorded. The clients' properties can also be represented by their intellectual faculties.

## **6. Customer's satisfaction**

The organization must monitor the information about the perception of the client on how the product satisfied his requests. The procedures to obtain and exploit these information are to be fixed by the organization: *"the action of monitoring the perception of the client can foresee the usage of different sources including investigations on customer satisfaction, feedbacks of the clients on the quality of the delivered product, surveys among the users, marketing loss analysis, approval expressions, pending guarantee requests and relations among the sellers"*

## **7. Reports analysis**

The last specified feature inside the ISO 9001 is represented by the measurements, by the various analysis and by the improvement. Also in this phase the client has a big importance.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.unitec.it/ita/tesi/sciarappa/cap2.1.html>

The organization must analyze the information related to the perception of the client about how much the product corresponds to the required characteristics; this is one of the measuring parameters for the performance of the quality management system. This must be a systematic activity, so it is needed to establish the criteria and the process to collect and use the information; all of these information, as a matter of fact, have to demonstrate the efficacy and the suitability of the quality management system, and they also have to allow the identification of the areas in which is worth to keep on improving the efficacy of the system itself. In particular, the information analysis has to supply data about the customer satisfaction and the compliance of the product to the expressed requests. After this analysis, it's useful to carry out some corrective actions to eliminate the non-suitability causes and to forbid that this can be repeated.

In other words, a support procedure must be set to make clear the features for the non-suitable analysis, including the client's complaints.

## E Activities

***In this section are illustrated some of the tools to make the measurement of the client-oriented strategy main aspects.***

### **E1 check list *My competencies***

1. Are you an independent person, with an enterprising spirit?  
yes      no
2. Are you able to take complex decisions by yourself?  
yes      no
3. Can you recognize when you need a help to complete your work?  
yes      no
4. Are you inclined to accept external help? Do you know where to find it?  
yes      no
5. Are you able to interact with people?  
yes      no
6. Are you a good trainer or communicator?  
yes      no
7. Can you delegate authority and responsibility to the others?  
yes      no
8. Can you admit you went wrong?  
yes      no
9. Do you have the clear idea about what is the professional profile of your clients?  
yes      no
10. Do people trust you?  
yes      no
11. Do people count on your help to carry out their work?  
yes      no
12. Do you have the technical skills to work in your professional field?  
yes      no
13. Do you know your weaknesses and your strengthens ?  
yes      no
14. Do you have any partner or consultant who could balance your weaknesses?  
yes      no

15. Did you do any deepened marketing research?

yes no

16. Are you a good listener?

yes no

## **E2 check list *Human resources - staff***

1. Did you make any plan for the selection of the human resources in your company?

yes no

2. Did you describe all of the tasks that each collaborator in your company has to carry out?

yes no

3. Did you fix the criteria to select the personal for your company?

yes no

4. Did you prepare a format to be filled by each candidate, which could help you getting the information you need about them ?

yes no

5. Did you prepare an assessment questionnaire to help yourself during the job interview to get the main information you need to know?

yes no

6. Did you fix a plan to constantly orient and breed your employees ?

yes no

7. Do you have an offsetting plan to motivate your employees?

yes no

8. Did you arrange an evaluation plan for your employees' performances?

yes no

9. Do you have any plan to collect information about your employees' tasks in the case you decided to lay-off them?

yes no

## **E3 check list *Features of the product***

1. Do your products or services get born by exclusive ideas?

yes no

2. Do you pander to your clients' needs or wishes?

yes no

3. Did you define the competitive advantages that your products or services may offer?  
yes      no
4. Do you know how much cost your products or services?  
yes      no
5. Did you establish what kind of “image” your products or services must have in the job market?  
yes      no
6. Can your competitors easily copy your products or services?  
yes      no
7. Did you choose the right suppliers who sell you whatever you need at a reasonable price?  
yes      no

#### **E4 check list *Properties of the customer***

1. Did you recognize the referring market for your company?  
yes      no
2. Did you make any research about your clients in order to understand what do they like and don't like, what do they want or need, and what do they prefer?  
yes      no
3. Do you have an idea about the satisfaction level that your clients have regarding your products or services?  
yes      no
4. Do you know how to create added value for your clients?  
yes      no
5. Do you know why your clients want to buy from your company?  
yes      no

#### **E5 check list *Communication with the client***

1. Did you develop a client-oriented marketing strategy?  
yes      no
2. Do you do anything to implement this strategy?  
yes      no
3. Did you develop a marketing strategy which produces good results for the customer?  
yes      no



3. Indicate on a range from 1 to 5 your opinion upon our services.  
(5 = Excellent, 4 = Good, 3 = Sufficient, 2 = Insufficient, 1 = Lacking)

	5	4	3	2	1
a) <i>General satisfaction</i> How do you judge in general the performance of our products?	<input type="radio"/>				
b) <i>Efficiency</i> How do you judge the efficiency of the given products or services?	<input type="radio"/>				
c) <i>Foreseen performances</i> How do you consider the performances according to your expectations?	<input type="radio"/>				
d) <i>Communication</i> How was for you the communication with our personal?	<input type="radio"/>				
e) <i>Services</i> How do you evaluate our services with regard to quality?	<input type="radio"/>				
f) <i>Professionalism</i> How do you consider the professionalism level of the personal?	<input type="radio"/>				
g) <i>Quality of the products</i> How do you judge the quality of our products?	<input type="radio"/>				
h) <i>Speed of intervention</i> How do you evaluate our times of intervention?	<input type="radio"/>				
i) <i>Documents</i> How do you find the given documents?	<input type="radio"/>				
l) <i>Future collaborations</i> Do you think you will purchase again our products in the future?	<input type="radio"/>				

4. Quality, Delivery and Costs

Give priority to the most important aspects in your opinion. (#1 very important, #2 quite, #3 few)

Quality	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>
Delivery	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>
Costs	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>

5. As before, indicate in your opinion how did you find the following features of our products:

	5	4	3	2	1	Not relevant
a. Rapidity in answering to your initial request	<input type="radio"/>					
b. Ease in availability of the personal	<input type="radio"/>					
c. Ability in satisfying requests	<input type="radio"/>					
d. Professional skill	<input type="radio"/>					
e. Speed in giving support	<input type="radio"/>					
f. Quality of the documents	<input type="radio"/>					
g. Upgrading of the products	<input type="radio"/>					
h. Correspondence to what was given and what was expected	<input type="radio"/>					
i. Support of the technical personal	<input type="radio"/>					
j. Availability of the support	<input type="radio"/>					
k. Payment times and methods	<input type="radio"/>					

I. Ease of the payment



6. From the previous factors, trace three of them which are more important for you

a  b  c  d  e  f  g  h  i  j  k  l

7. Claims

If something went wrong, and we really hope that it's not so, how was your problem solved?

**5 4 3 2 1**

a. Ease in contacting our personal to express the complaint

b. Paid attention to your claim

c. Rapidity used to solve the problem

d. Available tools to notify your complaint

8. Please, use the space below to report any further warning or suggestion you want to give us if you want to help us improving the quality of our services