



CUSTOMER SERVICE FOR MASSAGE THERAPISTS

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About Carrie Burgan

- B.A. Ethics, University of Michigan
- Small business owner, “Revolve Massage Therapy”
- Nationally Certified in Massage Therapy (NCTM) by NCBTMB
- Faculty Apprentice & Event Supervisor, Irene’s Myomassology Institute
- Massage Therapist, Farkas Spinal Aid, Ferndale, MI
- Background in Human Resources (Wayne State University, Detroit, MI)

Overview

- Your **customer service** can **make or break** your massage therapy business if you are a(n):
 - Small business owner
 - Large business owner
 - New business owner
 - Established business owner
 - Independent contractor
 - Employee



Stages of Customer Service

- Massage therapists should focus on their customer service:
 - ▣ Before a massage
 - ▣ During a massage
 - ▣ After a massage
- Massage therapists do not get to “take a break” from exemplary customer service.



Before “Before the Massage”

A note on “being your own boss”



Being Your Own Boss

Being “bossed”

- ❑ You are told what to accomplish via daily/monthly/yearly goals & objectives
- ❑ You are responsible for your part of the business' success
- ❑ Repercussions for underperforming include PIPs and/or dismissal

Being your own boss

- ❑ You tell yourself what to accomplish via daily/monthly/yearly goals & objectives
- ❑ You are responsible for the *entire* business' success
- ❑ Repercussions for underperforming include losing revenue or employees

Being Your Own Boss

- Important distinction for the self-employed:
 - ▣ Being your own boss —vs—
 - ▣ Not having a boss
- Not having a boss
 - ▣ The desire of those who become/hope to become self-employed to “escape” unruly or unfair bosses
 - ▣ This desire is usually *not enough* to establish a business *and* see it through

Being Your Own Boss

- Being your own boss
 - ▣ The art of managing yourself both as “boss” **and** “employee”
 - ▣ Seeing through all day-to-day affairs to the best of your ability
 - ▣ Ask yourself, “If my job at Company X was to start a successful massage business, would my boss have fired me by now?”
 - ▣ A successful “self boss” applies exemplary customer service unconditionally
 - Whether you are a small business owner or a massage employee... **choose to be your own boss!**

Before the Massage

“He who fails to plan, plans to fail.”

-Proverb



Before the Massage

- Customer service begins when you:
 - Get up
 - Sometimes getting out of bed and resolving to “make it happen” is all you need to have a happy, productive day.
 - Dress up
 - Your dress, hair, expressions, etc. convey who you are to those you meet. Exceed their expectations by proper grooming and attire, even when you have no massages scheduled that day.



Before the Massage

▣ Show up

- Be physically present (and on time) to your appointments
- Be mentally present for your clients. Check your “stuff” at the door.
 - If this is difficult, try a grounding exercise before you step into the massage room.

▣ Shut up

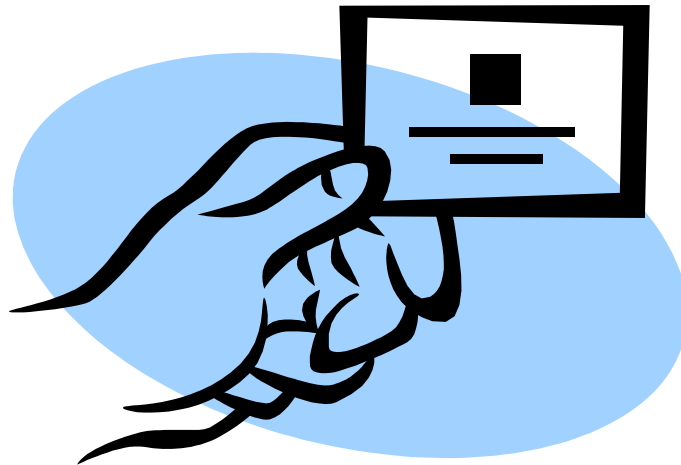
- Your business is really about your clients, not about you!
- Talk to them about their day, their health concerns, and their questions
 - Talk about yourself only when they ask
 - Be personable, not personal
- Utilize the highest level of ethics for customer health information
 - Even if not subject to laws like HIPPA, it should be treated as such

Before the Massage

- Organization and time management
 - ▣ Admit if you have troubles in this area. It's okay!
 - Use resources or take a class to hone this part of your business acumen
 - ▣ “Under promise and over deliver”
 - Rule of thumb: Things usually take at least 20% more time than you estimate
 - Tell them you will meet the commitment within “X” hours. Then do it... or exceed the initial expectation!
 - ▣ Consistency is key
 - Consistency sets expectations; your customers want to rely on you
 - Reliability leads to return clients and recommendations!

Before the Massage

- Marketing tools as customer service
 - ▣ This is customer service in that you are meeting your customer's communication needs
 - ▣ They should be **well-designed**, **simple**, **truthful**, and offer a **variety of ways to contact you**



Before the Massage

- Print marketing
 - Clean design, spell-checked, attractive, variety of contact methods (minimum telephone and e-mail)
- Website
 - Clean design, frequently updated, intuitively organized



Before the Massage



■ Social networking

- Rule of thumb: Don't mix personal and business accounts. If you use social networking for business and pleasure, "When in doubt, leave it out."
 - Do not post anything you wouldn't want your mom, grandmother, spouse, child, high school principal, client or neighbor to see.
- Interaction is key
 - Static (non-updated) social networking sites are ineffective. Don't just push information out... Interact with your friends and customers. It's called "social" and "networking" because it takes effort and back-and-forth communication.

Before the Massage

■ E-mail

- Use a professional e-mail. Either get an e-mail for your website domain or use a professional e-mail name for free services.
 - **GOOD:** name@yourdomain.net, your.name@mailprovider.com
 - **BAD:** XMotocrossXGirly69X@yahoo.com or HotHands4UrBod@massagetherapy.com
- Response time
 - 24 hours is business standard. You may want quicker turn-around for appointment scheduling
- Signature
 - Keep your signature brief, professional, and include relevant contact information

Before the Massage

■ Voicemail

■ Response time

- 24 hours is business standard. You may want quicker turn-around for appointment scheduling.

■ Consider voice-to-text

- If you check the computer more than your phone, consider a voice-to-text service from your phone carrier or another service like Google Voice. The number forwards voicemails to your e-mail or to a text message as well as leaving a voice message.

■ Verbal marketing

- You cannot expect potential clients to guess that you do massage. Talk to people and start customer service from minute one!
- Use the “Power of Three” Talk to three people about your business each day and, paired with great customer service, your business will grow.
 - That is 1,095 contacts each year, not including word-of-mouth referrals.

During the Massage

“God didn't come down and tell me; I had to find it out through many years of experience. The work came first; the inspiration came later.”

-Ida Rolf



During the Massage

- “Appearance is everything”
 - ▣ You need great massage skills, but people also remember how the **experience** made them feel.
 - Room
 - Clean, pleasant-smelling (no foul odors), appropriate temperature, pet-free, a proper place for the client’s clothes/belongings
 - Linens
 - Laundered, appropriate fabric weight and appropriate print/pattern for your profession
 - Music
 - Appropriate music for the modality being performed, reasonable sound level to the client’s preference

During the Massage

- Personal appearance & grooming
 - Neatly groomed hair (head and face if applicable), appropriate adornments if applicable, appropriate uniform/clothing, body odor and perfume-free, short nails, clean teeth, no gum
- Talking
 - Let the client gauge the level of talk: Answer appropriately asked questions and allow the client to talk
 - No talk about other clients
 - Your phone should be off or silent (not vibrate)
- Your home
 - If you massage in your home, ensure any client-inhabited areas are clean and free of clutter
 - Consider the outside of your home, bathroom(s) and the entrance to your massage space

During the Massage

- Consistency in applying policies
 - **Clients talk to each other!**
 - If Client A is consistently late and your policy is to dock table time, apply the policy the same to Client X.
 - In some cases, inconsistent policy application can be cause of lawsuits
 - Document policy enforcement with brief notes, separate from SOAP documents

After the Massage

“To be kind, to be, to do, and to depart gracefully.”

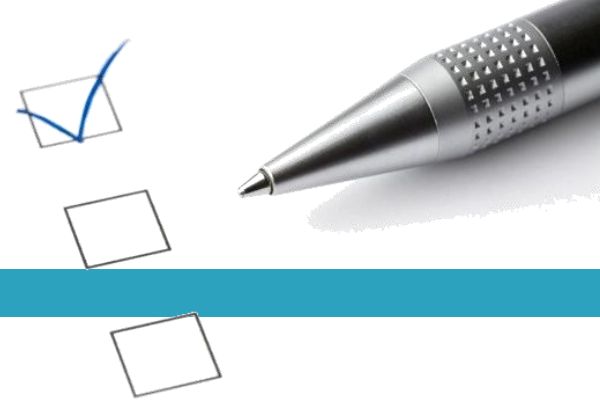
-Ashley Montagu



After the Massage

- Client follow-up
 - ▣ Thank your client when massage is concluded
 - ▣ Inquire about the client's thoughts post-massage
 - ▣ Follow through on following up
 - ▣ Quell post-massage chatting (“Personable, not personal”)
- Trust your gut
 - ▣ If you feel like it's wrong, it's probably wrong (same goes for “right”)
 - ▣ If your skills are lacking, be ready to refer to a trusted, appropriately trained colleague
 - ▣ If the client needs services out of your scope of practice, be ready to refer to a trusted professional

After the Massage



- Utilize the power of anonymity
 - Some customers will not tell you if they feel they've had a bad experience and you may lose them as a customer; Good customer service opens doors for them to express themselves
 - Consider e-surveys or postage-paid postcards to see what your business is doing right and what it could improve upon
 - Typical completion rates for surveys are less than 50%, sometimes as low as 20%; Consider incentives for people to complete the survey, like a small gift or gift card

Customer Service for Employees

“Our most productive investment remains our people. It is through the dedication, skills and initiative of our people that [this company] has prospered and will continue to move ahead.”

-Richard Pratt



Customer Service for Employees

- ***As long as we are employed (by ourselves or by someone else), we are employees.***
- Be proactive
 - Don't wait for someone to tell you what to do, unless specified as a course of action
 - Find areas for improvement in business processes or your own business development and improve them
 - Take helpful suggestions to your supervisor(s)
 - Angle is key: Bossy gets you nowhere. Mutual benefit gets you further!
 - Admit your breadth of knowledge and know your limitations
 - Equip yourself to go beyond them!

Customer Service for Employees

■ Customer delight

- Go beyond “service” and aim for customer delight.
 - *When is the last time you were delighted by someone’s service?*
- Promote your employer’s business
 - “One hand washes the other.”
 - This will lead to more income for you
 - Your employer will notice
- If you also work for another employer (including self-employment), employ strict business ethics by not poaching customers or promoting yourself on company time

■ Make sure your job is a good fit

- Do your motivation, goals and objectives match company GNOs?
- Is your boss running his/her business ethically?
- If you wouldn’t feel comfortable recommend a service or product they offer, should you be employed there?

Final Notes

“Good communication is just as stimulating as black coffee, and just as hard to sleep after.”

- Anne Morrow Lindbergh



Final Notes

□ Communication Notes

▣ Dealing with clients and co-workers

- Before speaking ask yourself: Is it kind? Is it true? Is it necessary?
- Communicate with class; strive to be beyond reproach
- Learn to say “no” in a professional way

▣ Communication with bosses and co-workers

- Difficult conversations are hard and don't always go well, but avoiding confrontation typically leads to harder consequences
 - Go first to the offender, not directly to the supervisor or HR
 - Often times it comes down to misunderstanding or miscommunication
 - “You know what they say when you ‘assume’!”
- Commit to a drama-free workplace
 - “Water cooler talk” can build bonds, but flat-out gossip can break them
 - Go to work to work

Final Notes

- Massage self-care
 - ▣ You cannot take care of others if you spend no time taking care of yourself:
 - Mentally
 - Physically
 - Spiritually
- Professional development
 - ▣ Moving on is okay
 - ▣ Never claim to be an expert... you've stopped learning

Resources

“My vision is to make touch a positive social value in our culture.”

-David Palmer



Resources

- Organization & Time Management
 - “Instapaper” Read articles later (instapaper.com)
 - “Google Voice” (voice.google.com)
 - “LeechBlock v. 0.5” Firefox browser extension (proginosko.com/leechblock.html)
 - *Unclutter Your Life In One Week* (Erin Doland)
 - Unclutterer.com
- Communication & Co-workers
 - “Drama-Free Workplace” by Kirsten Ross (focusforwardcoaching.com)
 - *The “E” Myth Revisited: Why Most Small Businesses Don’t Work and What to Do About It* (Michael E. Gerber)
 - *The No A\$\$hole Rule* (Robert I. Sutton)
- Personal & Professional Development
 - Carrie Burgan Massage Personal Development & Resources (carrieburganmassage.com)
 - Padgett-Thompson seminars (nationalseminarstraining.com)
- Ethics
 - *The Educated Heart* (Nina McIntosh)
 - Institute for Integrative Health Care Studies - Ethics home study courses for NCTM/NCTMB CEUs (integrative-healthcare.org)