

dcm

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Event

Member Webinar

Handling Complaints

2pm–3pm
23rd June 2025

Rachel Owens

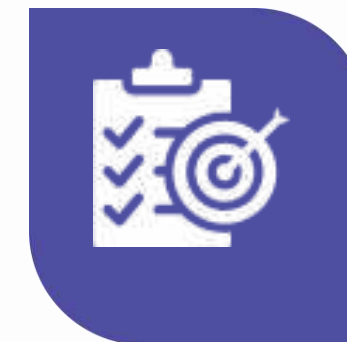


Goals

By the end of this session you will . . .



Understand why people complain and how we can resolve issues through de-escalation strategies



Use key communication skills to manage difficult customers and colleagues



Feel confident and ready to deal with complaints and effective feedback



What We Will Cover

- ☐ Why we complain
- ☐ Customer Service Excellence
- ☐ Dealing with Customer Complaints
- ☐ Effective Communication Skills
- ☐ Dealing with Chronic Complainers in the Workplace





Rachel Owens

DCM Trainer

- Leadership & Management
- Communication Skills
- Training & Facilitation
- Conflict Management
- Soft skills!

Industry Knowledge

- Public Sector
- Life Science
- Hospitality

Roles & Experience

PA & Administration

Marketing

Leadership/Management



Why do People Complain?

People complain for a variety of reasons

- ❑ Express dissatisfaction
- ❑ Seek validation
- ❑ Vent frustrations
- ❑ Social bonding

Complaining can be a way to seek change, address problems, or simply a habitual behaviour.



Expressing Dissatisfaction & Seeking Change

Addressing Problems: Complaining can be a way to bring attention to issues and potentially lead to improvements or solving problems

Seeking Validation: To get attention or support from others

Releasing Stress & Frustration: Complaining can provide a temporary sense of relief when feeling overwhelmed or stressed



Expressing Dissatisfaction & Seeking Change

Negative Experiences: Feeling dissatisfied with a situation, service or product can trigger complaints

Gap between expectations and reality: When our expectations aren't met

Lack of control: Feeling powerless or unable to control a situation can lead to complaining



Psychological & Emotional Factors

Negative Bias: The brain tends to focus more in negative experiences than positive ones which can lead to more complaining

Personality Traits: Some people are more naturally prone to complain

Habitual Behaviour: Complaining can become a learned behaviour, even if it is not always intentional

Fear of Change: Complaining can be a way to avoid facing challenges or making changes



Social & Behavioural Factors

Social Bonding: Complaining can be a way to connect with others and create a sense of camaraderie

Expressing Emotion: Complaining can be a way to express negative emotions, even if it is not always productive

Ego Reinforcement: Some people complain to feel superior or to reinforce their own sense of self





Customer Focus Approach



Customer Service Excellence



Customer service is providing customers with assistance.

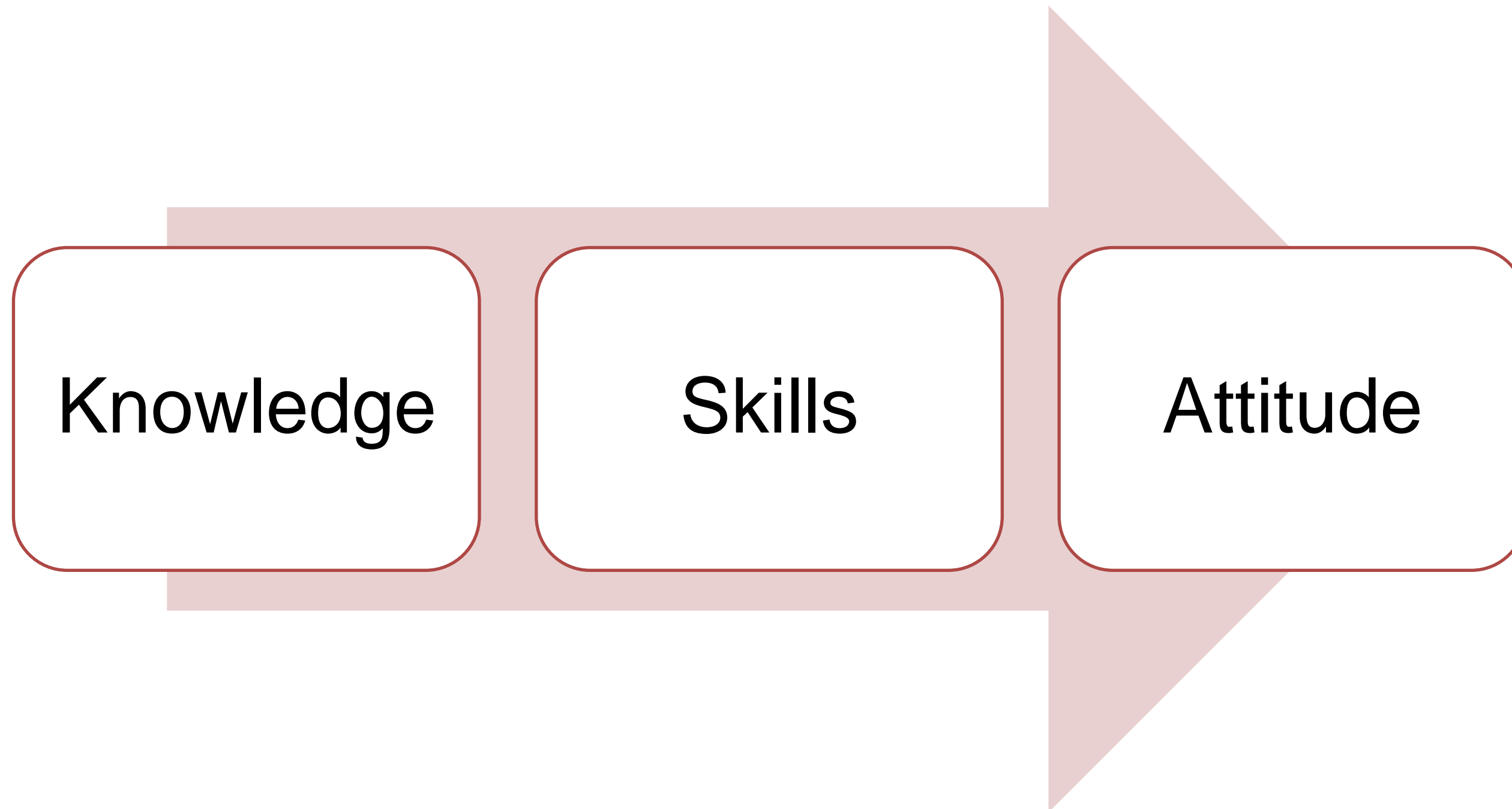
Customer service excellence is when you have a personalised, respectful, and smooth approach in that department.

With customer service excellence you will provide customers with all the assistance for perfect customer experience.

This approach needs to be applied before, during, and after the purchase.



What Customers Want



Warmth V Competence

A successful professional image is a fine blend of warmth and competence.

It's important to make a positive impression by cooperating and connecting with your customer.

People expect warmth even more than they expect competence.

People will excuse incompetence before they will excuse rudeness

If an individual is seen as warm and competent, they are often admired.

They are seen as trustworthy, carrying good intentions and able to achieve their desired results.



Customer Complaints

If you're a customer-centric business, then customer complaints are practically inevitable.

Something may go wrong, a mistake may be made, and customer expectations may not be met, resulting in a complaint.



Customer Complaints

It's more important than ever to handle customer complaints carefully, as customers have a lot of power in the digital world.

If a customer complaint isn't properly addressed, this could lead to the customer writing a negative review of your business online or posting about their negative experience on social media.

Once online, a customer's negative feedback can be seen by hundreds or thousands of potential customers, and this can drive away business and hurt your brand's reputation.



Customer Complaints

However, customer complaints don't have to be devastating for your business.

In fact, a customer complaint can provide an opportunity for you to showcase great customer service and win over a dissatisfied customer.

Being able to handle customer complaints effectively is essential if you want to maximise customer retention, maintain a good relationship with your target audience, and bolster your brand's reputation.



Customer Service Excellence

**I Trust
You**

**You Know
Me**

**You Make
it Easy**

**You Get
Me**

**You
Deliver on
Promises**

**You Fix
Things**

Dealing with Customer Complaints

- ☐ Stay Calm
- ☐ Give them your full attention
- ☐ Thank them
- ☐ Explain how you will solve the problem
- ☐ Follow up



Dealing with Customer Complaints

- ☐ Listen
- ☐ Empathise
- ☐ Apologise
- ☐ Ask thorough questions
- ☐ Loop in necessary parties
- ☐ Find a swift solution
- ☐ Follow up
- ☐ Create a record



The Power of Questions

- ☐ Shows you are listening
- ☐ Builds rapport
- ☐ Helps you to understand
- ☐ Can defuse anger and frustration
- ☐ Navigate the conversation to a solution to suit both parties



Open & Closed Questions



An open question is a question that starts with “how”, “what”, “when”, “where”, “who” or “why” and cannot be answered with a simple “yes” or “no”.

You will likely use open questions when:

- You want to help change the mindset of the customer
- You want to better understand the customer
- You want to show interest in what the customer has to say

Probing Questions

A probing question is a question that you ask to gain greater insight into what someone has just told you.

Asking probing questions in customer service can help you improve the overall experience by responding to a customer's actual needs instead of making assumptions. It can also help to improve First Contact Resolution rates.

Examples of Probing Questions

We have put together some sample probing questions – also known as probe questions – that can help gather more information and better understand customers' feelings:

- *"Just to make sure that I fully understand the problem, could you give me an example of what you mean by...?"*
- *"What impact has this had on your...?"*
- *"How long has this been an issue?"*



The Funnel Effect

Open Questions

01

Probing Questions

02

Closed
Questions

03

Flow With the Answers

The key to effective questioning is simply to listen!

By listening to your customer's answers (the whole answer), you have time to formulate what your next question will be.

This will also allow you to ensure that the line of questioning has a natural flow and doesn't sound like a scripted checklist of things you need to ask.

Control Silences

It is important to listen to your customers. It is equally important to let them answer!

If a customer isn't immediately forthcoming with an answer, don't rush in to fill the gap.

Control the silence by waiting for the customer to either answer or ask for clarification.



Verbal Communication

- ❑ Use positive words
- ❑ Use your voice to project professional confidence
- ❑ Speak calmly – mirroring
- ❑ Avoid jargon & generic phrases



Non – Verbal Communication

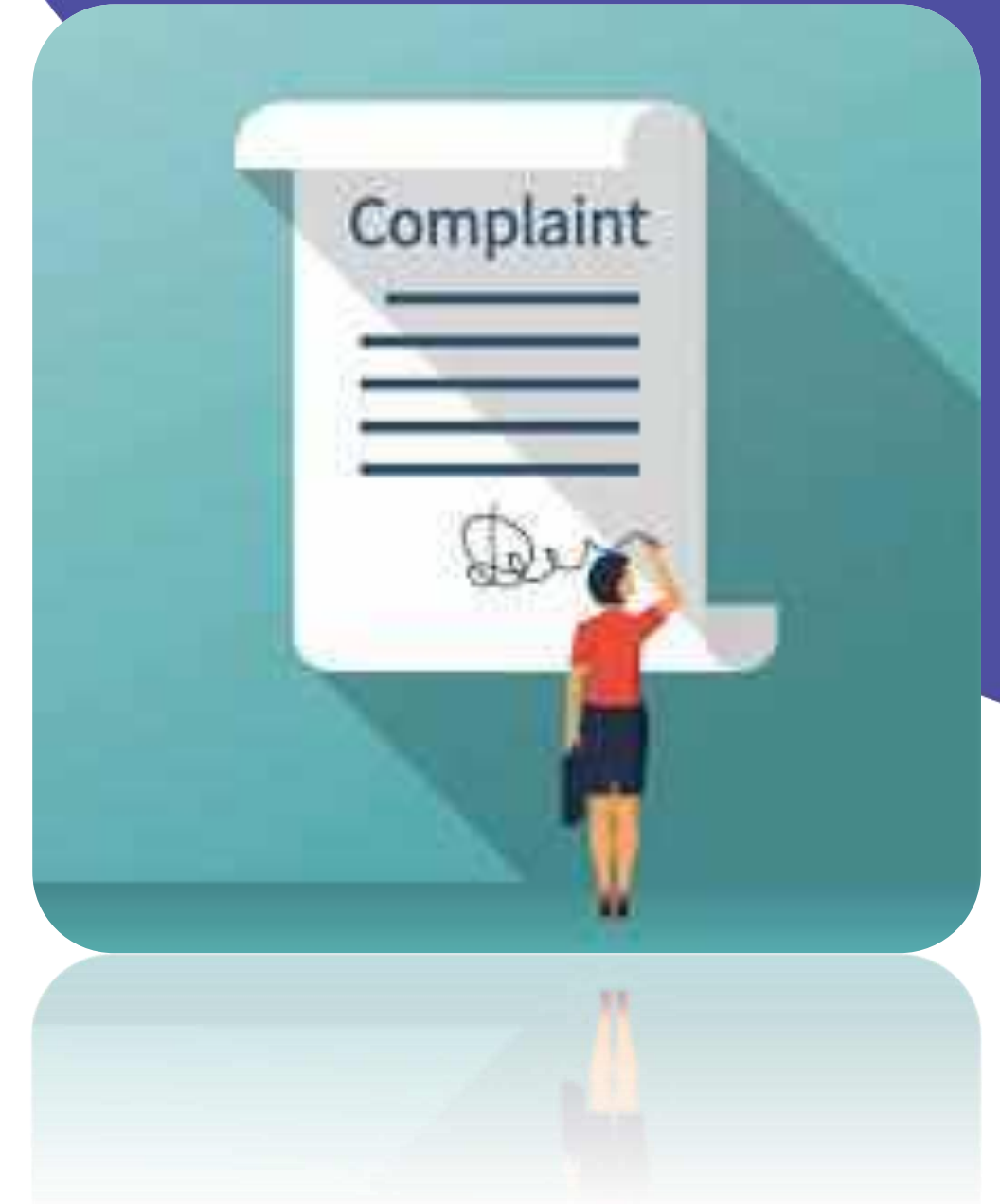
- ❑ 55% of how we communicate is through non-verbal communication
- ❑ Be aware of your body language and facial expressions. Make sure they match what you are saying to build trust and respect
- ❑ Non-Verbal still matters over the phone



Documenting Complaints

Documenting customer complaints involves creating a comprehensive and organised record of each complaint, including the date, time, nature of the issue, and actions taken to resolve it.

This documentation helps in tracking trends, improving customer service, and ensuring fairness in resolving disputes





Dealing with Complainers in the Workplace

Complaints and Workplace Culture

Dealing with complaining team members involves active listening, empathetic responses, and focusing on solutions rather than solely on the negativity.

It's important to create a culture where employees feel heard and supported while also managing the impact of negativity on team morale.

Try to view complaints by team members and colleagues as feedback.

Always be aware of the need to escalate or de-escalate!



Chronic Complainers

Complaining team members can negatively impact a team's morale, trust, and productivity.

Constant negativity creates a toxic environment, hindering collaboration and potentially leading to employee attrition.

Chronic complaining can also divert focus from problem-solving and solution-oriented discussions.

Chronic complainers are a product of their environment. They may be people who are prone to negativity, cynicism, and verbalizing their disagreements and misgivings, but above all, they are people who have not felt seen, heard, validated, and valued by the company



Steps to Avoid and Defuse Complaints

- ❑ Establish a culture of open communication
- ❑ Respond to complaints effectively
- ❑ Manage the impact of complaining on team morale
- ❑ Promote a solution orientated culture



Open Communication & Feedback Culture

Formal Grievance Procedures:

Ensure a clear and documented process for handling complaints, outlining how concerns will be addressed and what resources are available.

Encourage Open Dialogue:

Create a safe space for team members to voice concerns without fear of reprisal.

Transparency:

Be transparent about decisions and processes, explaining the reasoning behind them.

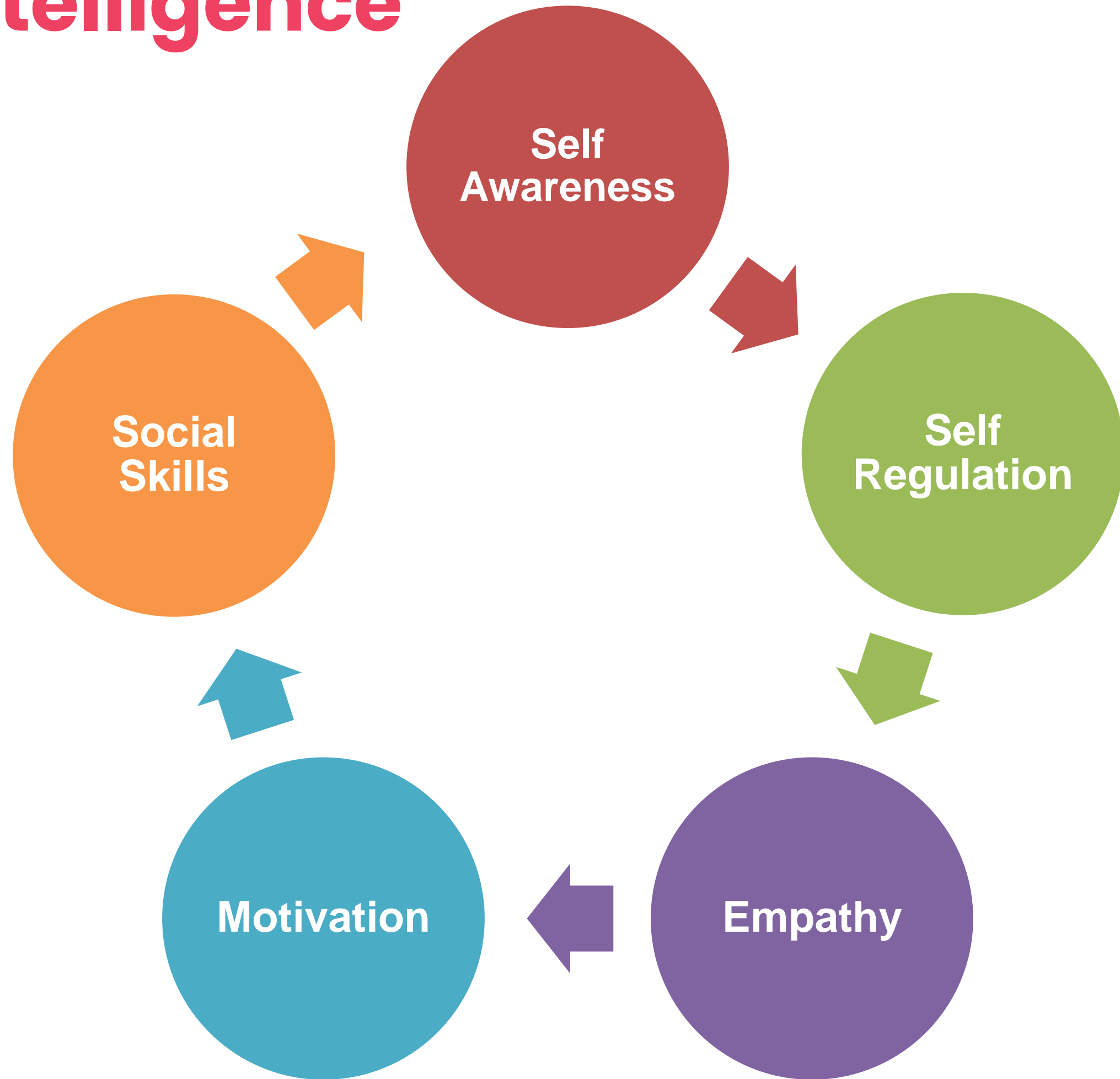




Open Communication & Feedback Culture

- ☐ Actively listen
- ☐ Validate their concerns
- ☐ Focus on solutions
- ☐ Set boundaries
- ☐ Consider the root cause
- ☐ Take action
- ☐ Positive reinforcement
- ☐ Focus on the future
- ☐ Offer support
- ☐ Empower employees
- ☐ Ask for input
- ☐ Set expectations
- ☐ Constructive communication

Emotional Intelligence



Recap

- ❑ People complain for a number of reasons, finding the root of their complaint and the nature of the issue will help resolve the problem quickly and empathetically.
- ❑ Customer Service excellence goes beyond providing a service or product. It seeks to create a positive connection and experience for the customer from start to finish
- ❑ Finding the correct balance between warmth and competence is key
- ❑ You can try to influence another persons behaviour through effective communication skills and interpersonal skills but you cannot control them , you an on the other hand control your behaviour and response.



Recap

- ❑ Questions are a powerful tool to empathise, get to the root of the complaint and navigate the conversation to the correct solution.
- ❑ Negative behaviour and complainers in the workplace have a negative impact on everyone and the organisation itself.
- ❑ Create a positive workplace environment that encourages open and constructive communication.





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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS?

Ask Away.

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