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1.0 PROFESSIONALISM – INTRODUCTION

A holiday in the snow is without a doubt one of the more enjoyable leisure activities available. It is also not the cheapest. Expenses such as accommodation, trail passes, resort entry, lessons, equipment rental, transportation, food, drinks etc., quickly add up and accordingly the guests expect good value for their money. It is therefore the mission of every resort employee to do their utmost to make the guests' holiday truly memorable and the best experience they will have in the snow. If you do not, the guests may be lost to other holiday activities and destinations around Australia or overseas.

Snow sport instructors have the potential to impact favourably on the guests' holiday because they spend more time than most other resort employees do with the guests. Unfortunately the converse is also true and the consequences of treating guests poorly are dire, for you, the resort and the sport.

1.2 PROFESSIONALISM – ELEMENTS OF PROFESSIONALISM

The word "professionalism" is a realm in which instructors and all resort employees should excel at to ensure the guests' experience in the snow is a great one.

Professionalism for nordic ski instruction is made up of some or all the following elements:

Responsibility Priorities	Client Respect
The Ultimate aim	Collision Management
Customer service	Respect of other snow users
Communication Skills	Distraction Management
Selling the next lesson	Professional Preparedness
Appearance	General Conduct & Behaviour
Punctuality	Repeat Clientele
Language	Correct Terminology
Equipment	First Aid Training
Resort Area Relations	Promotion of Nordic Skiing
Snow Sports School/Employer product knowledge	Litigation Risk Management
Snow Sports School/Employer policy and procedure knowledge	Work Place Relations
Motivation to improve oneself in all areas of instruction	Local Area Knowledge
Multi-skilling	Navigation Skills
	Risk Management

1.3 PROFESSIONALISM – RESPONSIBILITY PRIORITIES

The priorities for responsible nordic ski instruction are as follows:

- Safety of Yourself
- Safety of Your Clients
- Safety of Others who may come in contact with either yourself or your clients
- Economic sustainability of:
 - Ski industry
 - Ski instructor industry
 - Your ski resort
 - Your ski school/organisation/employer

Customer Satisfaction

Customer needs

- Personal requirements (restrooms, fluids, food, physical and mental well-being)
- Safety perception

Customer wants

- Level of service
- Skills achievement/accomplishment
- Value for money
- Skills improvement
- Social contact
- Respect
- Relevant information
- 'Time-out' from busy lives

Every decision must be made in accordance with the descending order of priority. Compromising upper levels must be clearly reasoned.

1.4 PROFESSIONALISM – THE ULTIMATE AIM

The Ultimate aim of each lesson is to assist in the improvement of your clients' skiing skills. Client skiing improvement = Teaching and improving fundamental skills.

1.5 PROFESSIONALISM – CUSTOMER SERVICE

1.5.1 Customer Service – Introduction

There are two fundamental truths about customer service. One, there is more to it than simply being friendly to the guests. Friendliness is a crucial element, but if it is the extent of the service you provide you will NEVER be good at customer service. Two, a snow resort, or any company in the service industry for that matter cannot survive without a high standard of customer service from ALL its employees.

Understanding the ins and outs of customer service are not only one of the keys to giving your guests the best lesson they have ever had, it also teaches you skills that make you a better person. You will learn to interact more successfully with people by understanding how to:

- Treat people well
- Communicate effectively
- Read people
- Behave appropriately
- Deal with conflicts or misunderstandings
- Control outbursts of temper
- Learn from your own and other people's mistakes
- Give value for money

1.5.2 Customer Service – What is customer service?

The three fundamentals of customer service are:

- Finding out what your customers' needs (goals for the lesson) are, so that you can satisfy their needs in an exceptional manner.
- Understanding who your customers are.
- Adopting a friendly attitude.

1.5.3 Customer Service – Why is customer service so important?

One could dedicate several pages to answering this question. Let's try a couple of sentences:

Poor customer service means no customers, no customers mean no business and no business means no jobs. The customer is the reason we have a job and the better the service, the more loyal the customer. We live in a "service economy" where literally everyone is exposed to large amounts of service. Every customer has their own perception of what good service is and their expectations for good service run very high. Instructors who provide outstanding customer service will prosper. Those who provide adequate service might survive. Everyone else will not.

Customer surveys indicate the following interesting statistics:

- Customers will spend up to ten percent more for the same product with better service.
- Customers who receive good service will tell nine to twelve people on average, while customers who receive poor service will tell up to 20 people.
- Customers who receive good service will refer other guests to you and come to you instead of going to competitors.
- Customers who receive good service are easier to serve because they are cooperative and friendlier toward you.
- An 82 percent chance exists that customers will repurchase from a company if their complaint is handled quickly and pleasantly.

IF THE SERVICE IS REALLY POOR, 91 PERCENT OF THE CUSTOMERS WILL NOT RETURN.

(Tshohl, 1991, pg 105 and Leland & Bailey, 1999, pg 21)

1.5.4 Customer Service – Fundamentals

Finding out what your customers' needs (goals for the lesson) are, so that you can satisfy their needs in an exceptional manner.

You can give the best lesson in the world, but if it is not what the customer wanted you have provided appalling customer service. You will never see this person in your lesson again. It would be the same as walking into a shop to buy a certain item. The salesperson listens, but persuades you to buy something else because it is more expensive thereby increasing their commission. You would instantly think, "Forget it, they care little for my wishes, I won't be going there again."

In 1976 Horst Abraham wrote the book "Skiing Right". He suggested, for the first time, that the lesson should be student centred (focused on the student's goals) rather than instructor centred. The notion of tailoring a lesson to the needs of the student was controversial at first. How could the student possibly know what they want out of a lesson?

Believe it or not, almost a quarter of a century later we are recognising the need to provide a much higher level of customer service to our guests by focusing the lesson on their needs rather than ours.

The student's goals change throughout the lesson, which means you need to check constantly to ensure you are still on the right track. It is easy to get carried away with something you think you need to work on, when the student has long had enough and would rather move on to something else.

The guests do not always (initially) tell the truth about their goals. They may be uncomfortable revealing everything about their skiing and/or personal matters to the whole group. Take opportunities such as munchie and drink stops, chatting along the trail between activities and any other chance you get to ask questions about their goals.

A group lesson is more challenging than a lesson with one person because you are dealing with ten different people and ten different goals. It takes skilful questioning and active listening to find out everybody's needs and wishes and it is imperative that you use all your communication skills and great personality to create a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere within the group. This instantly puts your students at ease and promotes interaction with you and everybody else in the group, which is absolutely vital to creating a good learning environment.

1.5.5 Customer Service – Employment – Customer Link

Understanding the following concept linkages will ensure a deeper commitment to improved customer service.

- *Excellent Lessons* = repeat customers (ski industry, ski school, you personally)
- *Repeat Customers* = more money in ski industry and ski schools and more lessons
- *Repeat Customers* = word of mouth marketing for ski industry, ski school and you personally
- *More Lessons* = improved employment opportunities in ski instruction and the ski industry as a whole
- *More Lessons* = increased professional status and wage for instructors
- *Word of Mouth Marketing* = maintaining or increasing ski sport participation (new entrants or re-entrants into the sport of skiing)
- *Increased Ski Sport Participants* = more ski lessons = more ski employment, etc.

1.5.6 Customer Service – Open and Closed Client Questions

A closed question is one that limits the response to one or two words. This question is useful when you need some definite answers from your students without lengthy discussions. For example, have you skied before? What level are you? What sort of skier are you, aggressive or careful?

An open question is used to start a discussion and gain more general information about your students. For example, what are your goals for the lesson? Where have you skied before? Which do you prefer classical or skating, and why? At the meeting place, minutes before departure is not the ideal time for open questions.

1.5.7 Customer Service - Listening to Your Students

Listening intently, with your body and mind, is known as active listening. Active listening is a listening technique in which the listener works at paying attention to the whole message – that is the content and the feeling. It involves participating in the conversation with the other person. An active listener understands the situation from the other person's point of view. (Dwyer 1997, pg. 40) The greatest teachers spend much more time asking questions and actively listening to the students than talking themselves. This is the best way you can find out all the necessary information about your students as well as monitor their learning process.

1.5.8 Customer Service - Understanding who your customers are

Who exactly are your customers? The definition for the word customer in Webster's Third International Dictionary (1986) is:

- A person who buys.
- A person with whom one has to deal.

In other words, a customer is not only someone who comes for a holiday to the snow, but anyone who works in the snow resort. We categorise these two types of customers into external and internal customers.

1.5.9 Customer Service - The External Customer

These are the guests who come for a snow vacation to your resort. They are customers in the traditional sense of the word because without them, there would be no sales, no business and no pay cheques. Although you understand the importance of the external customer, if you regard this customer to be your only one, you are only seeing half the picture.

1.5.10 Customer Service - The Internal Customer

The internal customer is everyone who works inside the company and the resort. More directly, everyone who works for your employer.

The internal customer chain works both ways. Sometimes you are the customer and other times you are the service provider. For example, an instructor may ask you to take one of their students because your group's standard is more suitable. You provide good service by welcoming the student to your group. You provide terrible service by refusing to take the student, which poses a huge problem for the other instructor and their group.

During the season you will purchase various ski area products e.g. trail passes, food, drinks, resort entry passes. Now you are the customer. Remember, every time you interact with someone or their product, you are either giving or receiving service. **YOU CERTAINLY EXPECT THE BEST, SO YOU SHOULD ALSO GIVE THE BEST.**

1.5.11 Customer Service - Internal and External Customer Relationships

The relationship between internal customers and external customers is what forms the customer chain. Each interaction with an internal customer is an important link in a chain of events that always ends up with the external customer. For example, the instructors who provide a safe, fun and quality learning experience in a children's lesson plays a crucial role in the children's enjoyment of the day. Happy children are easier to teach, learn more and thereby keep the parents happy.

Quickly learn and use your customers' names. Not only is this a crucial customer service skill but it is also a very handy group management tool. Use the following tips to improve your name remembering skills: Be genuinely interested in each person. Find word connections and associations with their occupation, where they live, what they look like, etc. to match their face to their name.

- Concentrate on an outrageous visual and word association for each person.
- The fall back --"People and names are important to me. May I ask your name again?" (Hitchins).

1.5.12 Customer Service - Adopting a Friendly Attitude

One thing all companies and individuals that provide great service have in common is that they have a genuine customer-friendly attitude. That means viewing your customers as the most important part of your job and having a sincere appreciation that they choose to do business with you. It does not mean viewing your customer as a nuisance and pasting on a false smile. A genuine friendly approach towards your customer (both internal and external) creates a desire to deal or interact with you. A false or rude approach has the opposite effect, and instantly closes any desire to cooperate with the other person.

Adopting a friendly attitude relies on two crucial components:

- Understanding how to communicate.
- Establishing relationships.

1.5.13 Customer Service - Understanding How to Communicate

This is not only a key component of successful customer service; it is a key to being successful in life. Good parents communicate well with their children. A healthy marriage, relationship or friendship relies on good communication. Think back to your school years, the best teachers were the most interesting and fun to listen to, regardless of the subject. Asking your boss for a favour depends on how well you can “read” their mood and communicate your wish. Conducting business, selling yourself, persuading your students to come back for more lessons, and dealing with angry customers, all require skilful communication. As you can gather, communication is not just talking. There is far more to it.

1.5.14 Customer Service - Establishing Relationships

We are not referring to personal relationships but rather the process of connecting with another person to accomplish something. Otherwise known as internal networking. You have a relationship with your students, fellow instructors, supervisors/managers, and Snow Sports School Director.

You can communicate all you like with your students, but if you do not connect with them, in other words, understand what their needs and wishes are, your students will walk away thinking, “I never clicked with my instructor, they just didn’t seem to care about me.” The students instantly sense if there is a lack of genuine empathy. You know yourself how sensitive you are to the way you are treated by your trainer, supervisor or fellow instructors. Imagine walking into a store wanting to get some information, about a certain product. If the salesperson treats you with utter disdain because they know there is no chance of a sale, you (plus as many people as you can tell) will never go there again. If they go out of their way to find out your exact needs, provide you with the necessary information (even though they know you do not plan to buy anything) they have connected with you and delivered excellent customer service. You will always be comfortable returning to this store.

Explore clients’ background, experience and expectations to form relationships between every person in the class. Networking is a fulfilling part of the lesson for both clients and yourself. Expectations help fine-tune the planned lesson format and content.

The film “Patch Adams” delivers a poignant and relevant message. Patch, is a medical student who is desperately frustrated with his medical training. He, unlike his fellow students and professors, understands that being a doctor is all about treating the patient as a human being, treating the patient rather than the disease, and that humour helps make the patient’s predicament all the more bearable. It is inspiring to watch how he connects with the patients. The parallels with our profession are uncanny, watch the film with this in mind.

1.5.15 Customer Service - The First Impression

These connections are a moment of truth for your customer. No matter how busy you are, you only get one chance to make a first impression. The first impression, or moment of truth, lasts no longer than 20 seconds but has a lasting impact on your customers' perception of the service you offer. Imagine this: a guest comes up to you and asks, "Can you help me please, when and where is the next lesson?" You are hurrying to lunch and don't really care about this guest anyway, so you mutter something and point in the general direction as you dash off. After lunch you saunter over to the meeting place to meet your new class, and lo and behold, this same guest is standing by your sign. Guess what, it is too late, the negative impression you have created is unwittingly applied to the rest of the snow sports school. It may seem unfair but this is how customers think.

Now imagine the opposite scenario. The guest comes up to you, asks the same question and you reply, "Hello, yes of course I can help you, the next lesson starts at I suggest you be there about ten minutes before so that the instructor can organise the groups. The meeting place is over there by the big sign, do you see it?..... Do you have trail passes, etc.? Is there anything else I can help you with? Enjoy the lesson." The guest has just experienced a very positive moment of truth and will think very highly of you and the snow sports school.

Creating positive moments of truth is easier when you are not under pressure. However, in the midst of a hectic day after two weeks of school holidays with marginal snow conditions, it is easy to forget that the essence of your job is serving the customer. If you forget this principle, the customer becomes an interruption to the job. This attitude quickly leaves customers with the feeling that they are unimportant and the instructor has little or no regard for their needs. So long as you remember to create a customer-friendly attitude by viewing the customer as the job, the customer feels valued by your snow sports school.

1.5.16 Customer Service - Reputation Maintenance

It takes years to build a reputation, but only a second to destroy it. Sad but true. If you please a customer over and over again, they will keep coming back. Disappoint them now and then, and the loyalty begins to erode. Upset a customer or let them down and you will likely lose their business forever.

1.5.17 Customer Service - Customer Relationship Conclusion

You may now be thinking "I can't possibly create a relationship with all ten of the students in a group". This could not be further from the truth. Obviously you have to work harder than with a private lesson, but that is our job. It is infinitely more satisfying to work hard to connect with all your students and have ten delighted customers, than to go through the motions and in the end destroy your career.

1.5.18 Customer Service - How to Deal with Complaints & Conflicts

Unfortunately we make mistakes and encounter the occasional difficult customer. Most complainants generally want empathy and some promised or immediate action taken. (This is where the notepad and pen come in handy, it shows your seriousness to the situation.)

Here is a five-step process that will help you deal with complaints and difficult customers:

- Let the customer vent.
- Express empathy towards the customer. Repeat their concern or complaint.
- Begin active problem solving.
- Mutually agree on the solution.
- Follow up.

(Leland & Bailey, 1999 page 139)

In regard to customer conflict, the following techniques will assist a win-win result:

- The customer is not always right, but sometimes it is best to let them think that they are right.
- The difference between the customer perception and the instructor perception is the real problem, not who is right or wrong.
- Swallow the ego for five minutes and agree with the customer.
- Avoid contentious conversation issues such as the environment, other snow sports, resort management, land rights, etc. unless you're very prepared to give way on your views.
- There is more than one way to perform a nordic skill, but it may not be obvious right at the moment.
- Listen more – that is what your customer wants.
- Empathise with your customer's point of view.
- Observe other people's management skills for some handy customer management skills e.g. teachers, other snow sport instructors, restaurant wait staff, busy shop staff.

1.5.19 Customer Service - How to Deal with Complaints & Conflicts - Let the Customer Vent

When a customer is upset, they want two things: one, to express their feelings and two, to have the problem solved. Sometimes the customer's need to let off steam can be so strong that you have to let it happen without interrupting them, and only then are they ready to hear what you have to say.

The WORST thing you can do is tell the customer to calm down. You have to remain quiet and show the customer that you are listening by:

- Nodding your head frequently.
- Say uhh-huh from time to time.
- Maintain eye contact.

1.5.20 Customer Service - How to Deal with Complaints & Conflicts - Express Empathy

If you give the customer a chance to vent, they will eventually run out of steam and allow you to participate in the conversation. By letting the customer know that you understand why they are upset and that they have the right to make the request or statement, the customer will trust you to start solving the problem. Advise the customer that you understand the importance of their concerns.

Some phrases that express empathy to a customer include the following:

- I can see why you feel that way
- I see what you mean
- That must be very upsetting.
- I'm sorry about this.
- I believe I owe you an apology

1.5.21 Customer Service - How to Deal with Complaints & Conflicts - Begin Active Problem Solving

It is time to ask questions that help find out what the problem is. Be sure to listen to everything the customer says and refrain from jumping to conclusions. Sometimes it helps to write down a few key points. This has several advantages, it shows the customer that you really do care, it slows them down and you have the facts in writing for future reference.

Once you have heard all the facts, repeat them to the customer to confirm you have fully understood what the problem is.

1.5.22 Customer Service - How to Deal with Complaints & Conflicts - Mutually Agree on the Solution

Mutually agree on the solution if you are in a position to do so. Do not offer the customer something you are not authorised to provide as this may cause further aggravation. Most people go straight to a supervisor to complain. However, if they address you with a problem that you cannot deal with introduce them to either the appropriate supervisor or director.

Each snow sports employer will have their own policy for dealing with problems. Be honest and realistic when telling the customer what you will do.

1.5.23 Customer Service - Follow Up

Follow up with the customer to show that you genuinely care about their complaint and that the problem has indeed been solved. It may require further discussion with the customer. Remember that 82 percent of customers will return if the complaint was handled well.

Following up also means talking to the instructor and others involved in the incident. There is an important rule to remember when dealing with complaints and/or misunderstandings. No matter how convincing one side of the story sounds - THERE IS ALWAYS ANOTHER SIDE TO THE STORY.

If the customer has in fact uncovered a problem with the system, it needs to be addressed.

1.5.24 Customer Service - Giving Value for Money

One area that can create great difficulty is at what level do you pitch your lesson at to ensure everybody feels as they had their money's worth of instruction.

Depending on the professional, business and natural environment, a dynamic decision has to be made at where to pitch your lesson. The dynamic decision means that it is flexible according to its effectiveness in reaching its objectives with your clients.

- Lowest Common Denominator – good for the slow learners but what about the average and good skiers? They will become despondent, bored and disappointed with the service.
- Medium or average area – good for the average learners but the slow learners become frustrated and give up, while the high achievers still will become bored. Again, disappointment with the level of service to the majority will soon become noticeable.
- High achiever level – great for the quick learners but the slow and average learners are feeling left out and will become despondent with the sport and its professionalism very quickly.

The solution is to pitch your lesson at all levels. With ample practice time, individual and specific feedback with personal assistance can bring the slow learners up to speed quickly. Meanwhile give the high achievers some interesting tricks to practise or involve them in giving feedback to others. (An important learning style in itself) However, the solution does not come easy and requires substantial experience to get it right. The main thing is to keep trying – patience and perseverance.

1.6 PROFESSIONALISM - COMMUNICATION SKILLS

1.6.1 Communication Skills – Introduction

Communication is the sharing of ideas and feelings between people; it is what makes us human. It is also absolutely central to providing great customer service.

For our purpose communication can be broken down into three components - words, tone of voice, and body language. The odd thing is that words are a very small percentage of how we really communicate.

- 55 percent of what we learn from others comes from their body language.
- 38 percent comes from the tone of their voice.
- 7 percent comes from the words they say.

(Karr & Blohowiak 1997, page 60)

1.6.2 Communication Skills - Body Language

Our body language conveys messages that are more believable than what we say. Your ability to read your customer's body language and project your own is one of the most powerful skills you have. The main aspects of body language are:

Eye contact	Touching behaviour
Facial expressions	Physical distance and use of space
Body posture and movement	Vocal qualities
Hand gestures	

1.6.3 Communication Skills - Eye Contact

Eye contact is one of the most powerful of all the body language skills. It lets the customer know that you are interested and receptive to what they are saying. Eye contact allows you to listen to the customer's feelings as well as the words. Effective eye contact is achieved by putting a soft focus on a customer's face. As you meet a customer (for the first time), make immediate eye contact by focusing on the whole face, not just the eyes. As the conversation moves on, look away from time to time to avoid giving the impression that you are staring. If you are having a conversation with your customer, the customer receives one hundred percent of your attention. There is nothing more annoying for the customer if you look away and wave every time a friend walks or skis by. A similar error can occur at the meeting place where some instructors may be more interested in talking to each other and ignore a guest trying to get some information.

Research has shown that people stop making eye contact and look away the moment they sense that the other person will show emotion on their face. This desire not to be intrusive or embarrass the other person is misplaced when you deal with an upset customer. To give a positive impression that shows you really care, do not look away. Instead, maintain eye contact. Doing so gives the impression that you want to hear what the customer is saying. (Leland & Bailey, 1999 page 69)

1.6.4 Communication Skills - Facial Expressions

Your facial expression lets everyone know whether you are happy, sad, excited, etc. Be careful not to let the stresses of the day gather on your brow. As far as the customer is concerned your interaction with them is your first of the day. Your facial expression needs to set a positive tone before you even begin to speak. A relaxed facial expression is the best most of the time. However, when customers are concerned or upset, you need to adjust your facial expression to suit the issue and the customers' state of mind.

Always smile and the positive feeling will flow to your group, no matter what the conditions or situation.

1.6.5 Communication Skills - Body Posture and Movement

Body posture and movement shows your energy level and interest in what the customer is saying. To show that you are interested in the conversation, do the following:

- Nod
- Face the customer
- Lean forward, but not inside their intimate distance

You can tell when people are listening impatiently and want to end the conversation by the following clues:

- Leaning back or stepping away
- Turning their body away from you
- Looking at their watches repeatedly

Arms folded across the chest tend to indicate the person is closed, unreceptive or suspicious. A hand covering the mouth while you speak indicates a lack of confidence or belief in a solution.

1.6.6 Communication Skills - Hand Gestures

Using your hands when you talk is a natural way to express your feelings. It is very useful to use your hands and body to supplement your explanations. The key, to how much you use your hands is to be natural in your movements. They should not distract from the conversation however they can enhance a communication message in various ways.

1.6.7 Communication Skills - Touching

A handshake is the most common form of touching in an Australian work environment. In our profession we may have to touch the students to help them up, adjust their stance and position, or reassure them if they are timid. Be careful to remain completely tactful when adjusting the customer's position and ask them for permission before you do so. When you need to assist a student in danger by physically handling them, try to talk through what you are doing and why, so they have an understanding of what is happening.

1.6.8 Communication Skills - Physical Distance

Personal space is the distance that feels comfortable between you and another person. If another person approaches you and invades your personal space, you automatically move back without a thought. Three distances exist:

- Intimate (0 - half a metre) - This area is reserved for partners, family members, close friends, and children and allows for direct and close contact. Entering this area if you are not intimate is uncomfortable for the other person.
- Personal (0.5 – 1.5 metres) - Finding out relevant information about your guests when speaking with them on a one-on-one basis is done in this range.
- Social (1.5 metres and more) - When you are teaching a lesson, addressing the whole group to find out relevant information, is done in the social range. Just as you can get too close in the intimate distance, you can get too far for effective communication in the social distance.

1.6.9 Communication Skills - Voice Qualities

No matter what words you use, the tone of your voice reveals what you think and feel. For example:

- A monotone and flat voice says to the customer, "I'm bored and have no interest in what you're talking about."
- Slow speed and low pitch communicates the message, "I'm depressed and want to be left alone."
- A high pitched and definite voice says, "I like those turns you made."
- A very loud tone can mean, "I'm angry and not open to input!"

The four important elements of the tone of your voice are:

Inflection Volume Pace Intensity

1.6.10 Communication Skills – Voice Inflection

Inflection is the wave-like movement of highs and lows in your pitch. Without inflection your voice can sound monotone resulting in you portraying no interest in what the customer is saying. Furthermore your message to the customer may lose its impact.

You can improve your inflection by:

- Smiling while you speak. Smiling raises the soft palate at the back of your mouth and makes the sound waves more fluid.
- Changing the stress on the words. The feeling and meaning of a sentence can be changed by stressing different words in the sentence.
- Breathing while you talk. Under stress your breathing becomes shallower and quicker and your vocal cords tighten making your voice go up and sound strained.
- Taking long, slow, deep breaths relaxes your vocal cords calming the tone of your voice.

1.6.11 Communication Skills – Voice Volume

The volume needs to be sufficient to allow everyone in the group to hear you, especially if the weather conditions are inclement. Make sure that you position yourself and the group so that everybody can hear you easily. If you know your voice is naturally quieter you need to practise increasing the volume. As you address the group, confirm that everyone can hear you.

If a customer is angry and speaking loudly, refrain from yelling back. Instead keep your volume down so that the customer calms down.

1.6.12 Communication Skills – Voice Pace

Pacing is matching your customer’s rate of speech and intensity of feeling. It is a good way to build rapport with your customer by focusing on similarities between you and your customer. You have to pace the customer - not the other way around.

1.6.13 Communication Skills – Voice Intensity

Intensity is the strength of emotion that is projected along with the words you are saying. The level of intensity reflects the way the customer feels. If they are calm and relaxed, their level of intensity will probably be fairly low. If they are upset or angry, their level of intensity will rise. If a customer comes to you because their child has just gone missing, their level of intensity will be high. Initially you need to reply with equal intensity to show your concern and understanding for the seriousness of the situation. If you first reply with a low key, calm voice the customer’s state of panic will only be worsened. (Karr & Blohowiak, 1997, page 62).

1.6.14 Communication Skills – Approachability

Use your communication skills to effectively convey that you are approachable for problems, issues, wants and needs. This is an important point in building a quality relationship between you and every one of your students.

1.6.15 Communication Skills - The Words You Use

Although everybody uses their own words to convey ideas and explain concepts, there are a few principles that you need to abide by:

- Amount of words. It is easy to get caught using too many words or rambling on. The audience quickly switches off if the speaker rambles. As soon as the students start looking around, talking to each other, prodding the pole in the snow or sitting down (children) you know you need to talk less.
- Type of words. You need to choose words that are easily understood by your group, whether they are three to six year olds, teenagers or adults.
- Technical jargon. Technical terms are useful, but you must explain them to the group and use them when appropriate.
- Avoid the use of negative feedback words such as: out-of-time, sloppy, poor, wasteful and slow, etc; unless appropriate in context.
- Use the most appealing words that you would like people to describe you.
- Practise a new ‘positive’ word every day, use it in everyday conversation

Use positive adjectives and verbs such as those listed in the table:

accomplished	easy	legendary	satisfying
achieving	elegant	lively	sensational
adapting	enhanced	magical	significant
adjusting	enjoyable	magnificent	skilled
amazing	enlightening	marvellous	solid
appealing	entertaining	memorable	sophisticated
attractive	excellent	mystical	special
authentic	exceptional	natural	spectacular
awesome	exhilarating	original	splendid
best	experienced	outstanding	sporty

booming	exquisite	overwhelming	stimulating
breathtaking	extraordinary	passionate	strong
brilliant	fabulous	peaceful	stunning
captivating	fancy	perfect	stylish
challenging	fantastic	pleasant	suave
cheerful	fast	pleasurable	successful
classy	finest	potential	super
clear	first-rate	powerful	superb
comfortable	flair	practical	superior
colourful	flashy	prestigious	supreme
committed	flexible	prized	talented
compatible	fun	professional	terrific
complete	genuine	prominent	thorough
comprehensive	graceful	quality	thrilling
concise	great	quick	timely
confidence	hot	refined	total
cool	ideal	refreshing	tough
creative	improved	rhythmic	tremendous
dashing	incredible		unforgettable
dazzling	ingenious		unique
delightful	innovative		valuable
dependable	intelligent		versatile
distinctive	invaluable		vivid
dramatic	jolly		wonderful
dynamic			wow

There is a certain phrase or saying that can dramatically change the attitude of your customer and should be omitted from your vocabulary. "I can't" has to be replaced by "Let's see what we can do." In other words, you are letting the guest know that you are going to do your utmost to work something out. This demonstrates that you are genuine in your effort to provide excellent guest service and instantly creates a very positive impression in the eyes of your guest.

1.7 PROFESSIONALISM - SELLING THE NEXT LESSON

Why should you bend over backwards to convince the guests to come back for more lessons? Is it not merely a matter of delivering a great lesson and the guests will come back automatically? Unfortunately not. Even after a great lesson, guests are often undecided, and it requires a conscious effort on your part to invite them back for another lesson.

If you are uncomfortable with the concept of "selling yourself" or being a "salesperson", uncomfortable with the thought of asking the guests back for another lesson, or scared of being rejected if the guest says no for whatever reason, it is understandable. Not everybody is a born salesperson. Guess what though, you can, and have to learn to become one. Not a hard-selling second hand car salesperson but a skillful, tactful and pleasant communicator who understands the customer's needs.

A curious fact, even people who sell for a living forget to ask the most important question. Research shows that more than 70 percent of salespeople fail to “ask for the order” consistently. In our terms, invite the guest to come for another lesson.

1.7.1 Selling the Next Lesson – How

The hard sell is undesirable and ineffective. The soft sell is the correct approach. You invite the guest back for another lesson so that they have the opportunity to continue fulfilling their goals. A good way of broaching the subject is to ask the guest(s) what their plans are for the next day. Often their reply will be, “Do you think it is a good idea to have another lesson?” This is a perfect opportunity to explain the benefits, for example, “We can consolidate what we learned today”, “I can help you overcome the fear of steeper terrain”, “We can learn a different type of turn”, etc., depending on the goals of your students.

1.8 PROFESSIONALISM – APPEARANCE

Although the individual snow sports school sets their own standards for appearance, there is an important fact that you must be aware of. The students instantly make a correlation between your appearance and your ability to perform your job as a complete professional. Remember the “moment of truth”. We form an opinion of someone within 2. seconds, and this will be based almost totally on body language and more specifically your appearance. If your first contact with the customer is negative you may never be able to resurrect it. The guests will think, “They can barely look after themselves, how on earth are they going to care for us?” A professional appearance, on the other hand, instills a feeling of confidence in the instructor.

Appearance includes the following:

- Uniform - the uniform needs to be clean, tidy, unwrinkled and includes what is worn underneath the uniform (turtleneck, jumper, etc). Also, while you are in uniform, you are an ambassador for nordic ski instruction, nordic skiing, your employer and your ski resort. Your behaviour and skiing standards will be observed by those around you. Offer appropriate assistance to others where needed or requested. This promotes a caring and understanding perception of nordic ski instructors.
- Hair and facial hair (for men) - clean and tidy.
- Jewellery and Body Piercing - consider the effects of frostbite from metal piercing jewellery.
- Signs of Heavy Partying
-

1.9 PROFESSIONALISM – PUNCTUALITY

You simply have to be on time for your lessons, end of story. This, unfortunately, is the easy part. The hard part is timing your last lesson and its finishing location, travel between parts of the mountain and any other unforeseen delays so that you are on time for every lesson during the day. It is a constant effort to remain punctual. If you are not punctual you are not only doing your guests a disfavour but also, the snow sports school, the resort, and your future employment chances.

1.10 PROFESSIONALISM – LANGUAGE

When choosing your words be aware that everyone has different expectations and values and it is very important that you tread the line of “political correctness” at all times. The guests set the standard of language you are allowed to use, not you. Make sure that you choose words that are familiar and friendly to your students. Humour and jokes are an important element of creating a fun atmosphere but you need to be careful which ones you use and to whom, and you should refrain from becoming too familiar too quickly with the guests. Also be aware that some segments of our ski market may have different words with the same meaning, as follows:

Nordic = Langlauf (German), Cross Country (America, Canada, Australia), XC (Australia)

1.11 PROFESSIONALISM – EQUIPMENT

1.11.1 Equipment – General

Your equipment is an extension of your appearance and is a reflection of your level of professionalism. Keep your ski equipment clean, modern and in top working order. It is also sensible to carry a leather man type tool, some anti-balling spray wax or silicone and a plastic scraper.

111B Equipment - Care

Whether the equipment is owned or hired the same basic principles and tips are the same.

- Avoid leaning skis up against vehicles. (They can slide and scratch the car paintwork.)
- Avoid jamming skis upright into the snow. (Ski tail splitting.)
- Avoid placing skis in building walkways, near doorways, or where people may ski.
- Avoid placing skis horizontal on the ground when snowing heavily. (Lean on a tree or mark with upright pole.)
- Split the location of expensive skis in popular locations.
- Use ski locks in popular locations.
- Avoid skiing on or across roads unless absolutely necessary and with great care.
- Avoid skiing over or near rocks and stones.
- Avoid skiing over deep holes or into embankments. (Skis do break.)
- Avoid putting skis base down on a slope.
- Be very careful attaching skis and putting them on the ground above a slope, particularly an alpine skiing slope. (They have no arresting brakes and can become a very dangerous speeding missile within 1. metres, apply ski straps before putting boot into binding.)

1.12 PROFESSIONALISM - RESORT AREA RELATIONS

Your mission is to promote your resort, snow sports in Australia, other resorts in Australia, and yourself. All resort employees are in it together to keep the sport healthy and growing. References to other hospitality businesses, staff or resort management should reflect this mission. Each staff member and business on the mountain has a role to play in making the guest’s visit is memorable in a positive and gratifying way. Respect each player’s role will ensure help you understand a more holistic view of the industry and its impact upon the mountain’s economy.

1.13 PROFESSIONALISM - PROFESSIONAL RESPECT

Be careful not to criticise your guests' previous instructor. If you hear something odd from the guest, more than likely it is the guest who has misinterpreted what the instructor was saying. The guests will see straight through you if you try and enhance your own importance by refuting or belittling what the previous instructor taught. It is more tactful and appropriate to say something like "As I didn't hear the whole conversation, I'm not sure what they were trying to tell you either. Let's try this....together and see if it works for you."

Also try to refrain from derogatory remarks about ski area resort management and ski company/school management during or after class. The snow sport industry is certainly not perfect but you never know who may be overhearing your conversation. Consider more appropriate strategies to correct perceived problems.

During busy periods and areas check with other instructors and groups as to planned terrain use. Be friendly, courteous, co-operative and accommodating to other instructors, skiing groups and individuals.

1.14 PROFESSIONALISM - PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE

It is crucial that you have a good understanding of your school's different products, lesson times, meeting places, and prices for the main products. It is every instructor's responsibility to offer all resort guests assistance whenever necessary and possible.

CARRY A SNOW SPORTS SCHOOL CARD AND RESORT BROCHURE WITH YOU.

1.15 PROFESSIONALISM - EMPLOYER POLICY AND PROCEDURE KNOWLEDGE

It is vital that you have a thorough understanding of your employer's policies and procedures. This includes such things as lift riding policies, appearance, accidents and injuries, etc. Take the time to become familiar with all relevant information and ensure that you remain up-to-date with any changes that occur from season to season.

1.16 PROFESSIONALISM - MOTIVATION TO IMPROVE YOUR INSTRUCTION

It is a rather vicious cycle: as soon as you lose motivation, you lose interest to maintain and improve yourself, your passion is gone, your students sense your lack of interest, and the game is over.

This is not abnormal; everybody goes through a phase where you lose motivation. The important thing is, you must discover why. If it is time to move on to something else in your life, move on. If the job has become stale, discuss the problem with your colleagues and find something that will re-ignite your passion. Look at the reason why you did the job in the first place. Get out and work on your skiing, try a different discipline, attend clinics, read new literature, discuss with your director or employer avenues for promotion in the business, etc.

1.17 PROFESSIONALISM - MULTI-SKILLING

Nowadays it is no longer adequate to specialise in one discipline or area. You will increase your employment chances (in your school and all over the world) by becoming a specialist in many areas:

- Snowboarding
- Alpine (Downhill) Skiing
- Telemarking (XCD) Skiing
- Overnight Ski Touring
- Adults, Children
- Adaptive (Disabled snow sports)
- Special Equipment (ski-bike, snow tube, and other innovations).

1.18 PROFESSIONALISM - CLIENT RESPECT

You never know who may be listening to your comments or who your friends talk to. As such the use of derogatory terms like “punter” for clients is unacceptable either on or off the snow. You can use terms such as “customer”, “client”, “clientele”, “visitor”, etc.

Another area of client respect is that of their physical and mental limitations. Become aware of and respect their limitations by:

- Watching for signs and symptoms of information overload (practise more, explain less).
- Watching for tiredness, lethargy or boredom (time for a sheltered rest).
- As the instructor, you will usually be fitter than your clients will. If you are feeling physically tired, then your clients are probably passed their physical limit.

Also be aware of your own physical and mental limitations. Pushing yourself beyond your own limitations does not produce a high quality lesson.

1.19 PROFESSIONALISM - COLLISION MANAGEMENT

If an incident resulting in an injury occurs, try to gather names and addresses of any witnesses. Anger and frustration is unprofessional in the ski fields. Contain and adjust your response to an awkward situation. Obtaining a name or description of problem snow users and subsequent reporting to the authorities is the most professional and appropriate action.

1.20 PROFESSIONALISM - RESPECT OTHER SNOW USERS

Other users of the snow deserve the full respect as human beings. They are also potential clients for your next nordic ski lesson. Most snow walkers and tobogganists are unaware of the damage their footprints do to classic tracks and downhill snowplough surfaces. Education is more professional than confrontation and abuse.

*** Remember ***

NO CLIENTS=NO SKI LESSONS=NO NORDIC SKI INSTRUCTION WORK

1.21 PROFESSIONALISM – DISTRACTION MANAGEMENT

- Avoid busy areas or large groups - move to quieter locations.
- Monitor your favourite areas and check alternatives for your lesson.
- Refrain from 'chatting' with other instructors during the lesson. Your clients are focussing on you and are not impressed by paying for you to talk with your friends during a lesson. A cursory acknowledgment is more appropriate.
- Refrain from skiing up to a fellow instructor while they are obviously taking a lesson.
- Clients' mobile phones – advise to turn off at start of lesson.
- Clients' children not in lesson – move group away from child (advise parent where heading to next), let parent make the decision (away from the group) of whether to continue with lesson or deal with their child.
- Clients' children in the lesson – treat children as a normal paying client.
- Allow children to participate in snow play with an agreed time to start skiing again. Join in yourself!
- Turn off or down your radio equipment and/or mobile telephone during the lesson.

1.22 PROFESSIONALISM - PROFESSIONAL PREPARARATION

1.22.1 Professional Preparedness - Personal Preparedness

Include in your daily and lesson routine preparation checklist:

- Nametag
- Food packed
- Ski gloves dry
- Ski boots dried
- Business Cards
- Skis glide waxed
- Instructor jacket - dry
- First aid kit checked and packed
- Mobile Phone (turned off during lessons)
- Fluids (hot and/or cold)
- Small Notebook and Pen/Pencil (weather dependent)

A checklist placed where you live and one at your ski school or your locker will ensure you don't miss anything.

1.22.2 Professional Preparedness - Transport Preparedness

As a nordic instructor, part of your job may be to provide transport for your clients. Transport preparedness also applies to your own vehicle transport to and from work. Are you prepared with:

- Big torch
- Dry socks
- Hot drinks
- First Aid Kit
- Enough fuel
- Wheel chains
- Spare clothing
- Ski equipment
- Alpine diesel mix fuel, (if applicable)
- Snow shovel (long handled preferred with some silicon spray)
- Car rain/snow jacket (for those dirty jobs e.g. chain fitting, car pushing, etc.)

1.22.3 Weather Preparedness

Clients expect a high degree of knowledge in this area. "When is it going to snow?" Use the following resources to improve your weather preparedness:

- Local radio, television and newspaper reports.
- Understand weather synoptic charts.
- Be aware of potential local prediction theories (e.g. predicted high temperature in Melbourne of 15°C or less and precipitation means a 5.% chance of snow in Victorian ski resorts)
- Use the Internet
- General ~ www.bom.gov.au; ausweather.simplenet.com
- Clouds ~ www.bom.gov.au/info/clouds/
- Synoptic Charts
 - current – www.bom.gov.au/weather/national/charts/synoptic
 - 4 day forecast – www.bom.gov.au/products/IDG..V56.shtml
- Satellite Imagery
 - infrared – www.bom.gov.au/weather/national/satellite/IDE....5.latest.shtml
 - visual – www.bom.gov.au/weather/national/satellite/IDE....6.latest.shtml (look for speckled clouds from the west and prevailing weather direction in NSW)
- daily & weekly rain – www.bom.gov.au/weather/nsw/observations.shtml (check under Southern Tablelands for Thredbo)
- forecasts – www.bom.gov.au/nsw/forecasts.shtml (check under Snowy Mountains region)
- Victoria
- daily & weekly rain – www.bom.gov.au/weather/vic/observations.shtml (check under Upper Northeast)
- forecasts – www.bom.gov.au/vic/forecasts.shtml (check under Alpine)
- Weather Discussion Forum – www.ski.com.au
- SnowCams – www.ski.com.au
- Snofax (NSW snowfields) 19.2-935-379 – 4 day forecast
- Snowdepths faxback by Snowy Mountains Authority (weekly) 19.2-935-229

1.22.4 Trail Grooming

- Check grooming report and the trail groomer if possible
- Check with early morning skiers for good trails and potential problems
- Check Internet Resources – www.ski.com.au
- Ski around the area before your lessons to check for snow conditions and potential problems

1.23 GENERAL CONDUCT AND BEHAVIOUR

Conduct and behaviour unbecoming of a professional instructor both during and outside of lesson are:

- Illegal drug use or distribution
- Inappropriate smoking
- Over indulgence of alcohol (clients can easily identify an instructor with a hang-over)
- Stealing, scamming, looting, misrepresentation
- Obnoxious or disrespectful behaviour
- Fighting and brawling
- Uncooperative or inappropriate attitude

Clients may be visiting the same apres ski entertainment venues as you, or know your work associates. Your actions and discussions may be under scrutiny by potential, past or existing clients.

1.24 REPEAT CLIENTELE

- Utilise existing customers in on-going instructor marketing to value-add to both your ski school and your employment prospects. The cost of finding new customers is up to 1. times more than the effort and cost of repeat customers.
- Use business cards (ensures word of mouth marketing is directed towards you)
- Collect customer business cards and email addresses
- Build up a customer database list
- Thank you letter or email one week after lesson
- Summer reminder or Xmas Card to customer database via email or mail
- Start of ski season customer database follow-up
- Suggest a discount “bring a friend” campaign with ski school
- Build up relationships with other ski resort and industry service personnel. Their recommendation to their own clients can be highly regarded (e.g. ski rental, ski lodges, hotel staff, instructors of other disciplines, child carers, ski patrollers, etc.).

1.25 CORRECT TERMINOLOGY

The use of consistent terminology will reduce current client confusion. It is recommended to use the following terms:

- Nordic rather than cross country, XC or langlaufing.

(Ski touring can be defined as generally off track in Australia, cross country can therefore be defined as part on track and part off track as the name says “across country”, whereas primarily on groomed tracks within or near ski resort areas, can be defined as nordic skiing. These definitions are specific to Australia but could be applied to USA and Canada. It cannot be applied to Scandinavian countries because nordic skiing is not generally resort based but includes more inter-town and hut to hut touring.)

Use:

- Snowplough instead of wedge.
- Herringbone Skate rather than Diagonal Skate.
- Offset Skate rather than V1 or Two Skate Uphill. (Off set pole plant on one side, ski and two poles hit ground simultaneously at beginner/intermediate level.)
- Double Time rather than V2. (One double pole motion with each skate glide.)
- Single Time rather than V2 alternate. (One double pole motion with two skate glides.)
- Pattern Base rather than fish scale base.

See the APSI Nordic Manual for the currently used terminology for technique and gears, particularly skating.

1.26 FIRST AID TRAINING

It is expected that all professional Nordic instructors have some form of up-to-date formal first aid training and qualification. The preferred qualification level is the *Wilderness First Aid Course Certificate*, particularly for full day lessons/tours where you are further than 15 minutes from Ski Patroller assistance. All Nordic instructors should be qualified in formal First Aid with emphasis on currently used CPR skills, glycaemia attacks, asthma treatment and treatment for shock and signs of hypothermia.

1.27 NORDIC SKIING PROMOTION

Sell the sport to maintain and expand the client base. Use any or all of the following:

- Best fitness and aerobic activity using both arms and legs.
- Great family or school activity.
- Not limited to lift serviced areas.
- Go at your own pace.
- No lift queues or queuing hassles.
- Inexpensive compared with some other snow sports.
- No fear of getting hit by an out of control snowboarder or skier.
- Low injury rate.
- Low impact activity.
- Terrain selection is better for personal fitness level and individual interests.
- Safer alternative to lift serviced snow sports.
- Reach places that are closed or impassable to walkers and vehicles during winter.
- Beauty of the natural environment.

1.28 WORK PLACE RELATIONS

- Be aware of, and follow the work standard required from your supervisor/ski school director
- Be aware of your fellow workers' areas of expertise
- Assist your fellow work mates for the betterment of the sport, the ski instruction profession, your employer and your supervisor
- Be judiciously aware of the wants and needs of the workers you are supervising. Encourage innovation, brain storming and initiative within the company's and resort's guidelines. Ensure that initiatives can be properly explored, tested, cost and time analysed and included into work operations if appropriate. Your greatest assets are your co-workers and your senior instructors.
- Assist workplace relations by instigating regular feedback and brainstorming get-togethers. The provision of in-field small notebooks and pens can assist in identifying problems and opportunities at a later time.

1.29 LOCAL AREA KNOWLEDGE

As the ski instructor/guide, your clients will expect you to be familiar and knowledgeable about the local area such as:

- What mountain is that? (Topographic interpretation and the unique physical characteristics of prominent peaks.)
- In which direction is Mount Kosciusko from here?
- In which direction/how far to/how long to drive to ski resort from here?
- What river system does that valley flow into?
- What sort of bush is that?
- What sort of tree is that?
- How many kilometres of trails are there here?
- When are they going to groom the trails?
- Which is the easiest way back to the trailhead?
- Which pole line should I follow for a nice easy ski?
-

1.30 NAVIGATION SKILLS

130.1 Micro Navigation

- Know every "nook and cranny" of your ski area. (This will help you find those special instruction spots as well as short cuts around the area.)
- Visit different areas during free skiing, different snow conditions and depths. (Different areas may provide better weather conditions shelter, and different teaching opportunities with different snow conditions and wind directions.)

130.2 Medium Navigation

The knowledge of tracks, trails, huts, shelters, seats, toilets, creeks, cliffs, holes, etc. in your ski area is paramount to responsible nordic ski instruction.

Spend early season no snow conditions walking and perhaps mountain biking around the area.

Know the name and location of every trail in your ski area.

Practice map and compass exercises in and away from your area.

130.3 Macro Navigation

- Re-section navigation expertise is valuable on high peaks and viewpoints for quality customer service and emergency situations. (“What mountain is that?”)
- Knowledge of the general direction of North, and local towns.

1.31 ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

“People and nature can live in harmony” – John Sawhill, USA Nature Conservancy

The goal of the any ski instruction product is to encompass the safeguarding of the environment whilst not undermining the product itself. Some worthy actions to achieve this goal are:

- Encouraging your students to respect environmental values
- Removing all rubbish and any other rubbish around and dispose of appropriately
- Utilising any available public transport where possible or arrange car pooling
- Environmentally manage the group’s human wastes