

Building a natural and genuine rapport with guests can be the most positive and memorable part of their dining experience. Whilst the food and the environment can be remarkable by itself, making a customer feel that they are more than just a table number, has a far wider reach in terms of spreading positive word-of-mouth.

Hospitality teams are often young and transient. As soon as they get to grips with the basics of taking orders and running a section, they are off! The implications are that they never reach the point where they feel they have the time or the knowledge to chat easily with customers.

Guests are delighted when a team member takes a genuine interest in them by simply asking a few open questions and taking the time to listen and respond. However, teams need to learn how to initiate appropriate conversations and genuine responses.

## Produce

Read out the first paragraph on the top of this sheet. From your Silent Customer feedback, read out all the positive comments associated with the engagement questions in previous reviews. Do not mention the comments where a team member has lost a point. We focus on learning from positive behaviours.

## Explore

Ask for examples of what they think an 'appropriate conversation' could be about. Don't be tempted to jump in before someone has spoken up. It may feel like an uncomfortable silence to you, but they will be processing your question.

Never tell someone they are wrong, as you will put others off from making suggestions. Just say, "Thank you" and ask, "Anyone else?"

If they struggle, ask them; "What conversations should be avoided?" Discuss what they could talk about in the time they have and how they could initiate a little banter and chit chat. Ask for examples of what constitutes 'genuine interest', as well as what may not. Discuss the impact and implications of coming across as disingenuous. Discuss the outcomes of asking an open and a closed question.

## Practise

- **Learn at least one interesting fact from, or about, one of your customers that you can tell us about after the shift.**
- **Aim to glean at least one positive online review mentioning your name and the day of this exercise.**

Ask your team to each commit to one or two conversation openers and responses that they feel confident about.

### Here are some open question examples of initiating conversations:

**Compliment** – "I really like your dress, shirt, bag; where did you get it from?"

Response – "My friend has one similar, it suits you..."

**Statement** – "The weather is horrid; did you have to come far today?"

Response – "It's getting better next week, at least you're in the warm now"

**Enquiry** – "How has your day been so far?"

Response – "Let's see how I can make the rest of your day enjoyable..."

Use the methods under 'Explore' to generate other suggestions.

They will need to mention their name to the customer and politely ask them to write a review.

At the end of the shift, ask the teams to share their experiences. Make sure you thank them and tell them what a great job they did. We are always more willing to go the extra mile when we feel like our efforts are appreciated.



# SILENT CUSTOMER P.E.P TALK TOOL KIT ENGAGING CONVERSATIONS

Date:

List the names of the participants and any online mentions onto this sheet and keep on your training records. Ensure those with online mentions are recognised with something tangible such as a voucher.

**Participants:**

**Notes/Comments:**