



# **Customer Focus and Interaction: Building Relationships**

Self-Directed  
Study Guide



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## How To Use This Workbook

The purpose of this workbook series is to provide you with knowledge, skill and ability on a wide range of subjects related to your produce department. To ensure success, you will want to identify who your manager will be for this program. Please identify who your mentor will be for this program and your start date below:

Manager Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

If you have more than one mentor or trainer, please list them all below. Any one of these individuals is capable of signing-off on your work. Refer to the individual directly responsible for your training for more information.

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You will need to complete all of the exercises and work activities and have your manager sign and date the designated areas of the workbook. This way, you and your manager will know that you have successfully completed all of the learning exercises and have achieved the desired level of understanding, skill and ability to execute tasks needed to do your job well.

# What You Will Learn



This course is geared toward providing you with the essential skills to successfully interact with customers and provide excellent customer service. After completing the readings and exercises in this workbook, you will be able to do the following:

## **Describe the importance of providing excellent customer service and retaining customers.**

Today's customers have a lot of supermarkets from which to choose, but every customer takes notice when store clerks take the time to interact with them and provide excellent service.



## **Differentiate between good and poor customer service.**

It's important to understand what good customer service means and what will help your store stand out to the customer.

## **Describe what it takes to Wow your customers.**

You will learn how the little things you do can make a big difference in the customer's perception of the products and service they receive at your store.



## What You Will Learn



### **Use effective techniques for building relationships with customers.**

You'll learn how to greet customers, get to know them by name and provide service that is unique to their individual needs.



### **Explain how to read customers' body language and respond appropriately.**

It's important to be able to read customers' body language so that you know how to approach them and what messages they might be communicating.



### **Explain how to use the techniques of up-selling and suggestive selling with customers.**

You will learn techniques that will not only increase the store's sales but also assist customers by making suggestions that will benefit them.



# Introduction



## Your Impact on Customers

You may not realize it, but how you interact with customers greatly influences their perception of your store and their decision to keep coming back.



### A recent study by PMA revealed:

Almost 6 out of 10 consumers (57%) say that they have changed supermarkets based on liking the produce department in one store better than another. Take a look on the next page to see what some of our customers have to say.

That means that the majority of customers are looking for more than an average experience. So what separates the average store experience from a one-of-a-kind experience? Take a look on the next page to see what some of our customers have to say.



# Introduction



## **Acknowledge me.**

I want to know that you see me. Make eye contact and tell me hello when we cross paths.



## **Help me.**

That means looking around while you stock, being aware of your surroundings so that you notice me when I approach. Don't wait for me to ask you for help, because I may not.



## **Build a relationship with me.**

I want to trust you and your store. I will come back here instead of other stores if you're kind to me and make the effort to get to know me and learn my name.

# Introduction



Today's customer has many stores from which to choose – and from the customer's perspective, most of them look pretty much the same. The fact is, there are a lot of stores out there that sell a wide variety of quality food in a clean environment. However, every customer takes notice when the store clerks take the time to do the little things to build a *personal relationship*.



## One manager told us:

Our company spends a lot of money on newspaper advertising, signage and commercials, all to get customers in the door. But it's up to our clerks to win them over once they're here. That means it's up to me and my team to be dynamic, energetic and hospitable so that each customer says, *Aha! Now this is what was missing at the store down the street.*

When customers see something in us that is missing at all of the other pretty good stores, they will say, *I am doing my shopping here and I'm going to tell my friends!*





# Introduction

## Why Relationships Matter

In today's highly competitive marketplace merely satisfying our customers is not enough to earn a return visit or their continued loyalty. Many companies focus the majority of their efforts on trying to acquire new customers, yet neglect to build lasting connections with the customers they already have.

We need to:

- Delight our customers
- Wow them
- Be innovative
- Impress them with our produce, service and friendliness
- Aim to exceed their expectations

On a more personal level, you need to get to know your customers and their needs. In short, we earn our customers' loyalty by building relationships with them.

What's the difference between merely satisfying a customer and building a relationship with that customer?

**They will come back more often!**



## Activity: Satisfying or Building Relationships?

**Instructions:** Read each of the following items and determine whether it is an example of something that satisfies a customer or builds a relationship with them. Place a check mark in the box in the appropriate column.

	Satisfies Customer	Builds Relationship
Having good signage.		
Remembering customers names.		
Making sure all products are stocked.		
Seeking out first-timers and getting to know them.		
Greeting the kids and coming up with ways to make their visit more fun.		
Ensuring fresh produce.		
Making sure there is a clean floor and clean bins.		
Apologizing for being out of a particular product and letting the customer know when you have restocked the item.		

# Introduction

You might be thinking that everything under the *building a relationship* column takes more time. One manager said:

*Building a relationship does take more time, but it's an investment that is absolutely necessary.*



Another manager said:

*I tripled my customer count over two years by starting with one customer at a time. Soon my customers were bringing their friends in. It took me being on the floor, talking to customers and coaching my staff.*

So we have to earn our customers' loyalty if we're going to grow our business. A loyal customer is someone who knows they will get great products and great service every time.

# Customer Service



## Impacting the customer

To understand the impact of good customer service on the success of the business, it helps to understand the impact bad customer service can have.

## Getting it Wrong

Here are some examples of poor customer focus and interaction:

- Looking at the customer and then looking away without any acknowledgement. This tells customers that they are on their own in your department.
- Complaining in front of a customer. Instead of creating a positive shopping atmosphere, this creates a tense and stressful experience.
- Making the customer look elsewhere for help when a customer has asked you for help.
- Not taking ownership of customer issues or complaints. Customers don't care whose fault it is or the reason a certain item is not where it should be. They just want the situation resolved.



The bottom line is –most customers stop coming into a store because of the employees. Most stores have similar items and prices, so it is the service that helps shoppers decide where to spend their money.

# Customer Service



## Getting it Right

What can you do to let customers know that they have come to the right store?

- Make eye contact and smile.
- Say hello to every customer who crosses your path.
- Introduce yourself and get to know your customers by name.
- If a customer asks a question you can't answer, immediately find someone who can.

### **Good customer service is up to you.**

You set the tone with your words and actions. It is within your power to set a tone that communicates to our customers that we value them and are glad they have chosen to shop with us!



# Customer Service



## Preparing to Wow Your Customers

The following are things you can do to ensure you are prepared to wow your customers.

### Be aware of your appearance.

How do you look? Your appearance means more to the customer than you think. How do you feel when you go into an establishment and the employees look sloppy or worse, dirty?

Customers associate your appearance with the cleanliness, quality and service offered in the produce department and the entire store.



### Know your produce.

Know what items are at the peak of flavor right now and which items your department is promoting that day, week and month. Talk to your manager or senior clerk about what's been popular recently, what new deliveries have come in, and what has changed since your last shift.

It's also important to know why things have changed so that you can provide details that are important to your customers. For example, you might be able to say, *We don't have any strawberries on display right now because they received too much rain in the growing region, which prevented any strawberries from being picked.*



### Respond to the customer's questions clearly and confidently.

Remember, you are the expert about your store, but never be tempted to make up an answer to a question. If a customer asks a question to which you don't know the answer, quickly find someone who does know. And don't forget to tell the customer that you are going to get the answer for them.

You could say something like, *I'm sorry, Sir. I don't know the answer to that question. Do you mind waiting here for one minute while I ask my manager?*





# Customer Service

## Interview Your Manager

In order to learn more about customer service at your store, interview your manager by asking the following questions.

Q: What is the best example of customer service you've seen in our department? How did this impact the customer?

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Q: Do you have any advice for how I can get to know our customers better? How do you typically introduce yourself and get to know someone's name?

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Q: What types of produce have been popular recently? What do I need to know about these items that will help me provide better information and service for our customers?

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Q: What can I do to prepare to wow our customers?

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# Effective Customer Communication



## Greetings

Sometimes when the store gets busy, it is possible to become so focused on your individual job duties that you lose focus on the entire reason you're there – your customers!

Instead of taking the time to build a connection with your customers, if you are under a time crunch, it is easy to rush through your interactions with them so that you can get back to your real job. In this case, your greeting won't sound very real, sincere or professional.

Friendly, professional greetings make a big difference in the way your customers perceive you. Even if you're busy, it's important to take the extra few seconds to give a friendly greeting to your customers.

### When to greet.

Always use the **Five Foot Rule**. If you come within five feet of a customer, make eye contact and say hello. Then wait for the customer to reply. Most customers will smile and say hello back to you.



# Effective Customer Communication



## What to Say

As you become more comfortable interacting with customers, you'll see that talking to them isn't much different from talking to guests or visitors in your home. The key is to be respectful. Here is an example of what you might say:

Clerk:	Hi, how are you today?
Customer:	Fine, thank you.
Clerk:	I noticed you were looking at the tomatoes. Tomatoes are in season right now and they are very sweet and juicy!
Customer:	Oh, thanks for the information.
Clerk:	You're welcome. My name is Chris. Be sure to look for me next time you are in and I'll give you the latest information on the produce.
Customer:	Well, that's very nice of you to offer.
Clerk:	My pleasure.

# Effective Customer Communication



## Learning Names

Learning names may seem difficult or uncomfortable at first, but just learning three names a day can add up over the course of a year. You will actually enjoy seeing customers that you have met before and they will seek you out for help. Here is an example of how to learn someones name.



Clerk:	It's nice to see you again.
Customer:	Oh, hi.
Clerk:	How were those tomatoes you bought last week?
Customer:	Oh, they were terrific. I made a great salad with them.
Clerk:	That sounds delicious. By the way, my name is Gail. May I ask your name?
Customer:	Hi Gail, I'm Sandy. Nice to meet you.
Clerk:	Nice to meet you, too Sandy. I work every day but Sunday and Monday, so if you ever need anything, just ask for me.
Customer:	I will. Thank you, Gail.



# Effective Customer Communication

As you can see, it's easy to learn a customer's name. You just have to ask. When the customer meets you, they know that there is someone they can rely on each time they come to the store. This is the type of thing that will make a customer want to come back and shop at your store again.



As a summary, remember to:

- Always use the *Five Foot Rule*.
- Treat your customers like you would guests or visitors in your own home – with respect.
- Try to learn names.
- Start slow and build on your progress.

## HELPFUL HINTS

If you're not used to interacting with customers, the key is to start slowly. Make it a goal to approach one person the first day, and then increase your goal each day.

You can also set a goal to learn at least one new thing about a produce item each day. Soon it will be easy to interact with customers because you'll have more experience and more information to share.

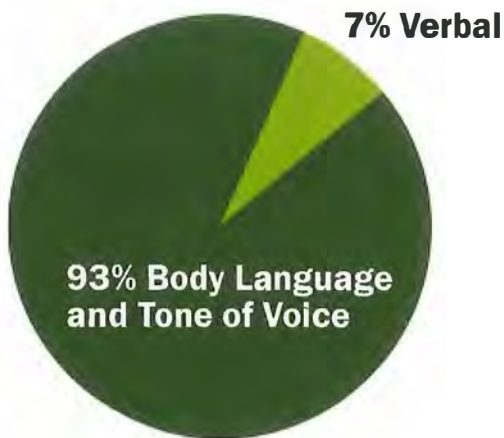
# Effective Customer Communication



## Body Language

Another part of effective communication is understanding the importance of body language. Did you know that we communicate more through our body language and tone of voice than with the words we speak?

In fact, research has shown that as much as 93% of our communication is done through body language and tone of voice, and as little as 7% is communicated verbally.



So, paying attention and being able to interpret non-verbal signals is critical to effective communication. Whenever you are interacting with a customer, you need to pay close attention to non-verbal signals and decide what the customer might be thinking.

# Effective Customer Communication

## Activity: What is the Person Communicating?

**Part 1 Instructions:** Look at each customer picture closely and determine what emotion they are expressing. How would you describe their expression? (Is it sad, surprised, happy, etc.?) Write your response in the space provided.



Customer 1

### Customer 1

Emotion: \_\_\_\_\_



Customer 2

### Customer 2

Emotion: \_\_\_\_\_



Customer 3

### Customer 3

Emotion: \_\_\_\_\_

# Effective Customer Communication



## Activity: What is the Person Communicating?

(continued)

**Part 2 Instructions:** Look at each produce clerk picture closely and determine what the clerk is communicating to the customer. What is their body language saying? (For example, *Don't ask me any questions*, or *I'm busy*.) Record your response in the space provided.

### Clerk 1

Message:

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Clerk 1

### Clerk 2

Message:

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Clerk 2

# Effective Customer Communication

## Activity: What is the Person Communicating?

(continued)



Clerk 3

### Clerk 3

Message:

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Remember:

It's important to get in the habit of paying attention to the non-verbal signals sent by your customers and co-workers, because this will help you determine how they are really feeling. Keep in mind that not every customer will tell you verbally when they have a problem.

It's also important to be aware of your own body language and what message you're sending to the customer.



# Effective Customer Communication



## Interview Your Manager

In order to gain more insight into how you can effectively communicate with your customers, interview your manager by asking the following questions.

Q: How do you typically go about striking up a conversation or introducing yourself to customers? Can you give an example?

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Q: Do we have some special promotions coming up, or some information I can share with customers about our products to help break the ice and start a conversation?

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# Effective Customer Communication



## On-the-Job Learning Exercise: Interacting with Customers

Your goal is to greet four different customers and have a conversation. You can do this during one shift, or several shifts. Make it a point to introduce yourself and learn something about the customer if you can. Use the form below to record your interactions.

### Customer 1

- How did you greet the customer? What did you say to strike up a conversation?
- What message, if any, did their body language communicate to you?
- Did you learn their name? If so, what is their name?
- Were you able to provide the customer with any information?  
Did they ask any questions?
- How might you build on this conversation the next time you see this customer?

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### Customer 2

- How did you greet the customer? What did you say to strike up a conversation?
- What message, if any, did their body language communicate to you?
- Did you learn their name? If so, what is their name?
- Were you able to provide the customer with any information?  
Did they ask any questions?
- How might you build on this conversation the next time you see this customer?

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# Effective Customer Communication



## On-the-Job Learning Exercise: Interacting with Customers (continued)



### Customer 3

- How did you greet the customer? What did you say to strike up a conversation?
- What message, if any, did their body language communicate to you?
- Did you learn their name? If so, what is their name?
- Were you able to provide the customer with any information?  
Did they ask any questions?
- How might you build on this conversation the next time you see this customer?

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### Customer 4

- How did you greet the customer? What did you say to strike up a conversation?
- What message, if any, did their body language communicate to you?
- Did you learn their name? If so, what is their name?
- Were you able to provide the customer with any information?  
Did they ask any questions?
- How might you build on this conversation the next time you see this customer?

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# Enhancing the Customers Experience

There are two advanced customer interaction techniques you can use to enhance your customers' experience:

- Up-selling
- Suggestive selling



## Up-Selling

Up-selling occurs when you and your customer help each other. You listen to what they are looking for and help them meet their needs completely. Up-selling increases sales because when you help your customers in this way, the result is that they usually buy a more expensive or upgraded item that they didn't think or know about before talking to you.

You are not tricking the customer. Instead, you are using your knowledge of the store to enhance their shopping (and eventual eating) experience.

An example of up-selling is if you see a customer that is looking to buy broccoli and you ask the customer if they would be interested in trying fresh broccoli that has been specially selected, cleaned and cut and is ready to put right into salads, soups or a steamer.

# Enhancing the Customers Experience



## Suggestive Selling

Suggestive selling refers to – adding on – items to the final purchase that will result in a more profitable sale. Just like up-selling, to do this successfully, you must be knowledgeable about your products so that you can make good recommendations. Your manager can help you learn how to suggest great combinations of produce items.

For example, you might say, *I've noticed you were looking at the tomatoes. Pairing them with some fresh basil can enhance their flavor even further.*

And who knows? By talking to your customers, you may learn a few suggestive selling tips from them. For example, they might say, *That's a good suggestion. I usually pair my tomatoes with garlic and parsley.*



### To use these techniques effectively you need to:

- Be knowledgeable about your products.
- Understand the customers likes, wants or needs.





# Enhancing the Customers Experience

## Interview Your Manager

In order to learn more about what you can do to enhance the customers experience at your store, interview your manager by asking the following questions.

Q: What are some opportunities you've had in the past to up-sell products?  
How were you able to help the customer by making these suggestions?

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Q: Can you share some advice on ways in which I can up-sell to customers?  
Are there specific produce items I can suggest?

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Q: What are some opportunities you've had in the past to suggestively  
sell items to customers?

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Q: What are some good combinations of produce items that I might  
suggest to customers?

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# Enhancing the Customers Experience



## On-the-Job Learning Exercise: Up-selling and Suggestive Selling

Use the form on the next two pages to complete this activity. During your shift, look for opportunities to up-sell and suggestive sell. Practice using these skills during conversations with customers. Record two examples of when you used each skill during a customer interaction.

It might take several days for you to complete this exercise and have the opportunity to try out your new skills. Record your attempts, even if the customer does not take your advice.



# Enhancing the Customers Experience



## Using the Skills Form

**Instructions:** Use this form to record information about your customer interactions.

### Up-Selling

#### Opportunity 1

Describe the situation. What did the customer say or do that indicated to you that you could be of some assistance and make a suggestion?

What did you offer or suggest to the customer? How did the customer respond?

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#### Opportunity 2

Describe the situation. What did the customer say or do that indicated to you that you could be of some assistance and make a suggestion?

What did you offer or suggest to the customer? How did the customer respond?

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# Enhancing the Customers Experience



## Using the Skills Form (continued)



### Suggestive Selling

#### Opportunity 1

Describe the situation. What did the customer say or do that indicated to you that you could be of some assistance and make a suggestion?

What did you offer or suggest to the customer? How did the customer respond?

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#### Opportunity 2

Describe the situation. What did the customer say or do that indicated to you that you could be of some assistance and make a suggestion?

What did you offer or suggest to the customer? How did the customer respond?

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# Customer Interaction Tips and Practice

## Tips

Good customer service comes down to this: You want to make sure your customers know that your greatest desire is that they are happy with their experience at your store and that they are impressed with your products and level of service.

Here are some tips for making the most out of the time you have with your customers.

### Learn customers names

Try to meet one new customer a day. Learn their name and at least one thing about them. We all like to hear our names spoken, especially our customers. So make an effort to learn each customer's name. It's easy to do, and it communicates that you care about them and hope to see them again.



### Ask if you can be of assistance

Often, customers will wander around the store for 5 - 10 minutes trying to find an item when you can immediately point them in the right direction. If you see a customer who looks like they're searching for an item, approach them and ask if you can help. You will make them happier and they will be grateful to you.

### Talk to the kids, too

Talk to everyone – kids included. After all, children are customers too and often they are the ones who ultimately decide if something goes into the cart or not. When interacting with parents and children, remember – don't offer samples to children without asking the parents first. Always offer to the parents so they can let you know if it is okay for their child to have a sample.

# Customer Interaction Tips and Practice



## Don't interrupt

When a customer is talking, listen carefully and completely before you reply, even if you have an answer before the customer is finished speaking.

## Have a delighted look

When you recognize the customers who are back, show your delight and say, *Hi, thanks for coming back*. If you remember past conversations you might use them to strike up a new conversation.



## KEEP IN MIND

You'll begin to earn customers' trust when they feel like you have their best interest at heart.



# Customer Interaction Tips and Practice

## Activity: What Would You Say?

**Instructions:** This exercise gives you practice in putting together the skills you've learned. Read each opportunity to interact with a customer and then determine what you would say to that customer. Write the actual dialog or words you would say.



### Opportunity 1

You see a gentleman about to walk by you. What would you say?

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### Opportunity 2

You see a gentleman looking around. You think he may be searching for a particular product. What would you say?

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# Customer Interaction Tips and Practice



## Activity: What Would You Say? (continued)

### Opportunity 3

You see a gentleman looking carefully at some strawberries and you know they are in season. What would you say?

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### Opportunity 4

You see a woman searching the produce department who looks upset. You are not sure why. What would you say?

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# Customer Interaction Tips and Practice

## Activity: What Would You Say? (continued)



### Opportunity 5

You just helped someone and they are happy with the information you provided. What would you say?

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### Opportunity 6

You have seen this gentleman a couple of times before and you spoke to him about seasonal products. You think it is a good time to learn his name. What would you say?

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# Customer Interaction Tips and Practice



## You Make a Difference

You have a big impact on our customers decision to shop with us. Your kind words, warm attitude, and good suggestions help to set us apart from our competitors.

It's true that we meet our customers' needs by providing top-quality product, but we exceed them by taking the extra time to get to know our customers and build a lasting relationship with them. It is this relationship of trust that will earn our customers continued loyalty and will help our store continue to thrive.

## Action Plan

On the following page is a Customer Interaction Action Plan. Now that you've learned some key skills and guidelines for successfully interacting with customers, you can plan how you will use (or continue to use) what you've learned on the job.

# Customer Interaction Action Plan

**Instructions:** Complete this action plan by identifying the key actions you will focus on in your job. Some examples have been provided to help get you started.

Customer Interaction Skills	Action to Take
Greet the customer and get to know them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow the 5-foot rule.</li> <li>• Learn 3 customer names a day.</li> </ul>
Know your products.	
Respond to customer questions clearly and confidently.	
Up-sell.	
Use suggestive selling techniques.	

# Activity Completion and Sign-off



The purpose of the module was to provide you with some hands-on experience with interacting with customers. Specifically, you should feel confident in your ability to greet customers, get to know them, offer assistance, and make sure they have a great customer service experience at your store.

## Activities to Complete

On-the-Job Learning Exercises	Trainer Initials	Trainee Initials
Interacting with Customers (page 23)		
Up-selling and Suggestive Selling (page 28)		
Manager Interviews	Trainer Initials	Trainee Initials
Customer Service (page 13)		
Effective Customer Communication (page 22)		
Enhancing the Customers Experience (page 27)		

_____ Trainee Signature	_____ Manager Signature
_____ Date	_____ Date





# Future Learning and Development Plan

Naturally, there are bound to be some tasks related to customer focus and interaction that you are more confident in than others, as learning is a continual process based on experience and practice. Your manager will provide you with specific development goals based on your performance throughout this program. You and your manager will take these ideas and create a development plan together (see page 41).

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Trainee Signature

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Manager Signature

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Date

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Date





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