EMPLOY101x RESOURCE 3.3.2

SEAL EXAMPLES

Example 1:

SITUATION: What was the new experience or challenge you faced and what happened to you?

I work part time in a busy café and I regularly have customers who request orders that we can’t fill, such as a particular coffee bean or bread variety that we don’t stock. When I am unable to honour their request, they react strongly. I know that the ‘customer is always right’ but I physically can’t do anything about providing what they’ve asked for. Also, I am not sure whether what I am saying appropriately conveys the café management’s stance.

EFFECT: What impact did it have on you and what were the consequences of this impact?

I am not sure how to handle this situation and I often feel personally attacked. When a customer is quite angry, I am not sure what to say and as a result, I don’t feel like I’m doing my job properly and this causes me stress during the shift which affects my performance on the job and makes me nervous about coming to work. I had been trying to deal with the situation for some time but didn’t feel like I was making progress so I knew I needed to seek advice.

ACTION: What action did you take to deal with the new situation and any challenges, and why did you do this?

Note: There are two challenges here – one is dealing with the difficult customer and the other is dealing with the effect of this on the student personally (stress, fear of coming to work, self-esteem).

Before a shift one day, I set aside some time to speak to my manager about how to handle the situation. I did this because I accepted that I needed advice from experienced people and because it’s largely a management issue.

My manager acknowledged that the café didn’t have a ‘policy’ for dealing with such situations so together we devised a strategy with appropriate wording to use. Having alerted my manager to the situation and having the backing of the café policy, I felt much better about having a plan for dealing with difficult customers in the future.

LEARNING: What did you learn from the experience and how will you apply this in the future?

The main learning that I took from the experience is being self-aware enough to recognise that I had a problem that was affecting my performance at work and my self-confidence generally. I had to make a judgement on which person to take the problem to and needed to develop the confidence to actually approach them and acknowledge the problem.
I learned that collaborating to create a shared approach to dealing with difficult customers meant that all staff would be on the same page and this gave me the confidence to put the policy into practice, knowing I had the backing of management. Having a ‘script’ provided me with a tool I could use to communicate my response to customers who were asking for menu items that we don’t have.

It also helped alleviate any uncertainty about my ability to deal with difficult customers. In the future when faced with a similar situation, I would step back and make a judgement on whether or not the problem needed to be taken further and who to take it to.

Example 2:

**SITUATION:** What was the new experience or challenge you faced and what happened to you?

While undertaking a research project as part of the summer research program, I was assigned the task of conducting phone surveys for data collection. I hadn’t done anything like this before so I found it challenging to initiate the calls and speak to people over the phone to ensure that I was obtaining the information I needed.

**EFFECT:** What impact did it have on you and what were the consequences of this impact?

I felt very nervous about making the calls and wasn’t convinced I would do a good job. I needed a way to deal with my nerves and address the problem I was having with knowing what to say and when.

**ACTION:** What action did you take to deal with the new situation and any challenges, and why did you do this?

I realised that my nerves would not be kept in check if I didn’t have something to guide my conversations with the research participants because I was not conducting the data collection interviews well. I realised that I needed something to refer to when speaking to people so that each phone call went more smoothly and I could obtain the data I needed.

So I devised a script that I could use to prompt the things I needed to ask the research participants not only for more effective data collection but to help my confidence in speaking to people in such situations.

**LEARNING:** What did you learn from the experience and how will you apply this in the future?

I learned that I sometimes have problems with nerves when communicating in stressful or new situations and that this may have an impact on how effectively I communicate. Planning out what I am going to say seems to help me settle those nerves and increase my confidence. I would use this strategy again in the future when preparing for important meetings or presentations.