


# Providing Effective Front-line Customer Service

NEWWA

Pam Kristan

The background of the slide is a solid blue color. In the lower right quadrant, there are several faint, concentric circular ripples, resembling water droplets or raindrops, which add a subtle decorative element to the design.

# Workshop Objectives

- Examine the importance of providing effective customer service -- benefits and risks
  - Learn customer service delivery skills
  - Develop a personalized tool box of customer service strategies to apply at your utility
- 

# Workshop Agenda

- Introductions and overview
- What is customer service? Why is it important? How to add value
- Customer Service Delivery Skills:
  - Communicating
  - Managing conflict
  - Solving problems
- Applying your skills

# Introductions

- Your name, where you work, what you do
- How do you interact with customers?
- An example of a customer service interaction you find challenging

# Customer Service

- Who are our customers?
- What do they want?
- How do they want it?



***Your great customer service  
encounter***

# Customer service is important because ...?

- Benefits of providing good service
  - Risks of not providing good service
- 
- The background of the slide features several concentric, light blue circular ripples that resemble water droplets hitting a surface, scattered across the lower half of the frame.

# Continuum of Customer Service

*How do our customers perceive value?*

Unanticipated



Desired



Expected



Basic





# Communicating



What do you see?



What do you mean?



# The Power of Assumptions

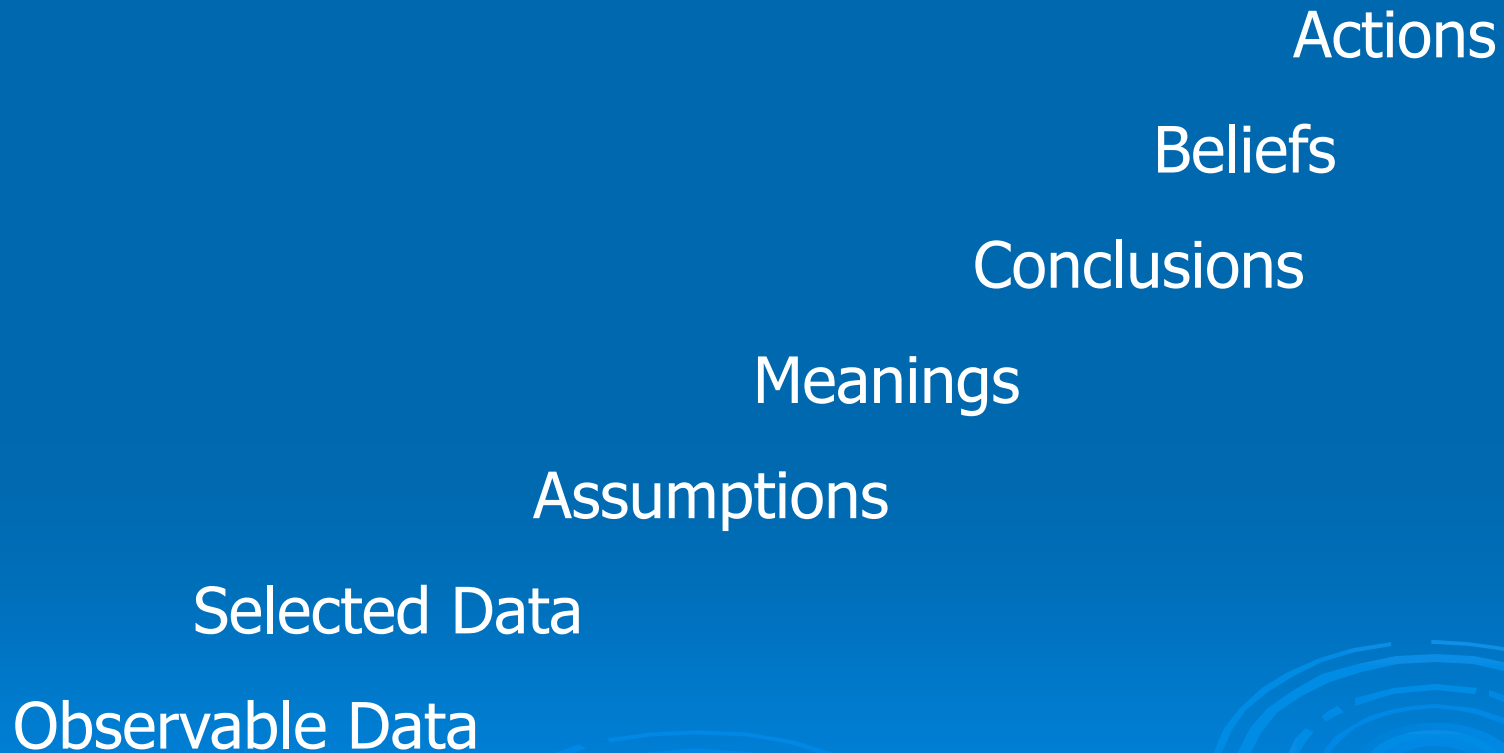
## Assumptions

- are human nature
- reflect *our* values, beliefs and experiences; they support our need to be right
- provide clues about others

# What are your underlying assumptions?

- Is that resident here again?
- What have you done with that permit?
- When are you going to make that phone call?
- Do I have to complete two copies of the form?

# Ladder of Inference





# Listening and Speaking




# Guidelines for Effective Listening

- Be ready to listen to the entire message
- Maintain eye contact; use a warm, calm tone of voice
- Take notes; ask questions; paraphrase; clarify; recognize biases and inferences, but don't react to them
- Respond professionally



# Guidelines for Effective Speaking

- Set the context; give facts
  - State the conclusions as you see them
  - Give examples to support the facts and the conclusions
  - Check for understanding
- 

# Communication Modes

- Telephone, voice mail
- Cell phone, radio, pager
- Email
- Printed matter
- Handwritten notes
- Face-to-face: informal visits, scheduled meetings

# Managing conflict



# Sources of Conflict

- Competition
- Differences in
  - roles
  - information
  - methods
  - values and beliefs
  - basic personality
- Poor communication skills

# Thomas Kilman Conflict Mode Assessment

*What is your response to conflict?*

The background of the slide is a solid blue color. In the lower half, there are several faint, concentric circles of varying sizes, resembling ripples in water, scattered across the bottom right area.

# De-fuse anger

- Apologize. Acknowledge the customer's feelings. Assure them that you care about their concern. Thank them for bringing the matter to your attention.
- State the steps to be taken calmly and clearly. Refer to policies, procedures, regulations. Enlist management support when necessary.

*continued*

# Move towards resolution

- Enlist the customer's help in resolution.
- Follow through to ensure the matter is resolved; follow up with the customer.

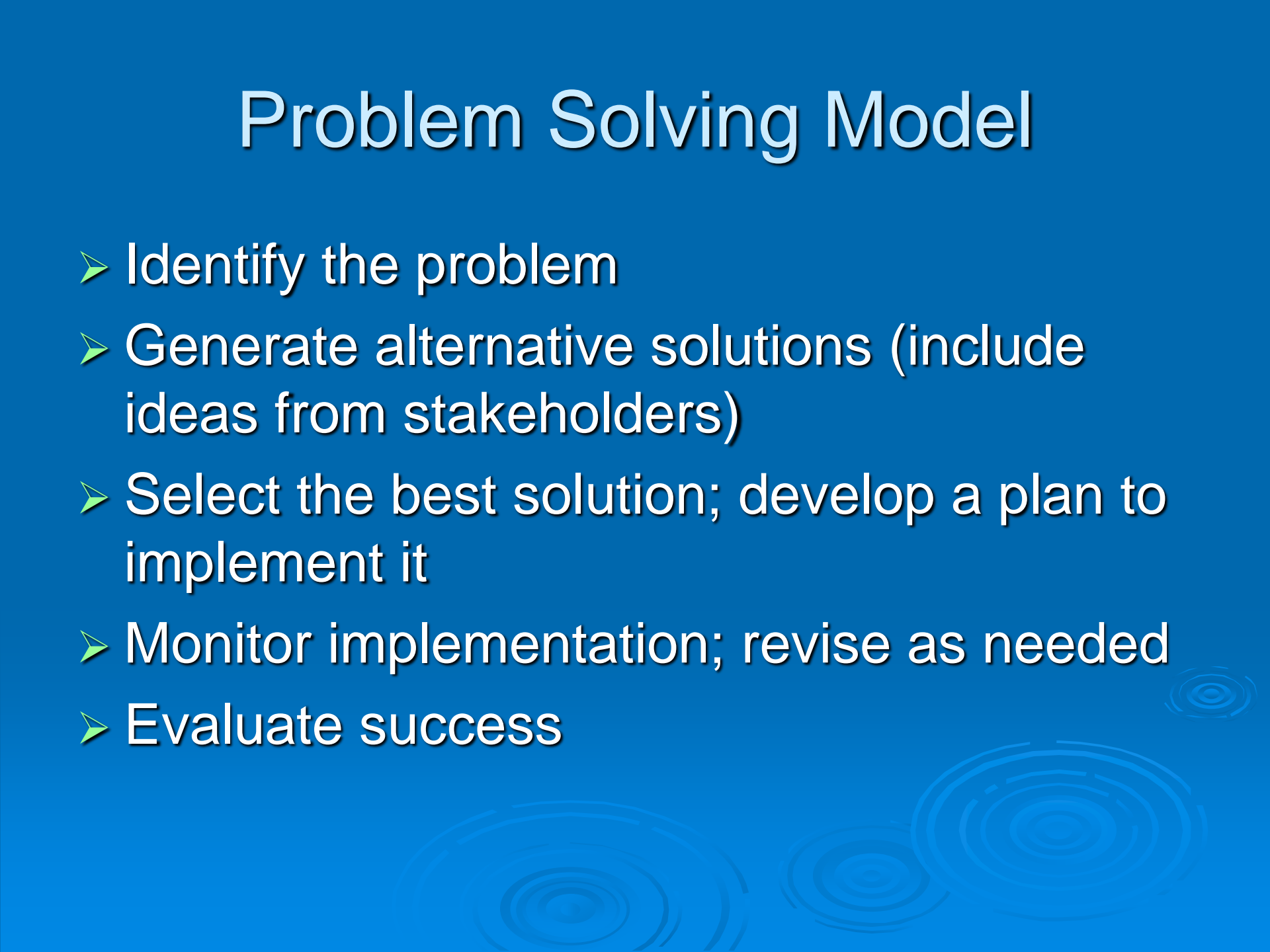


# Solving problems





# Problem Solving Model

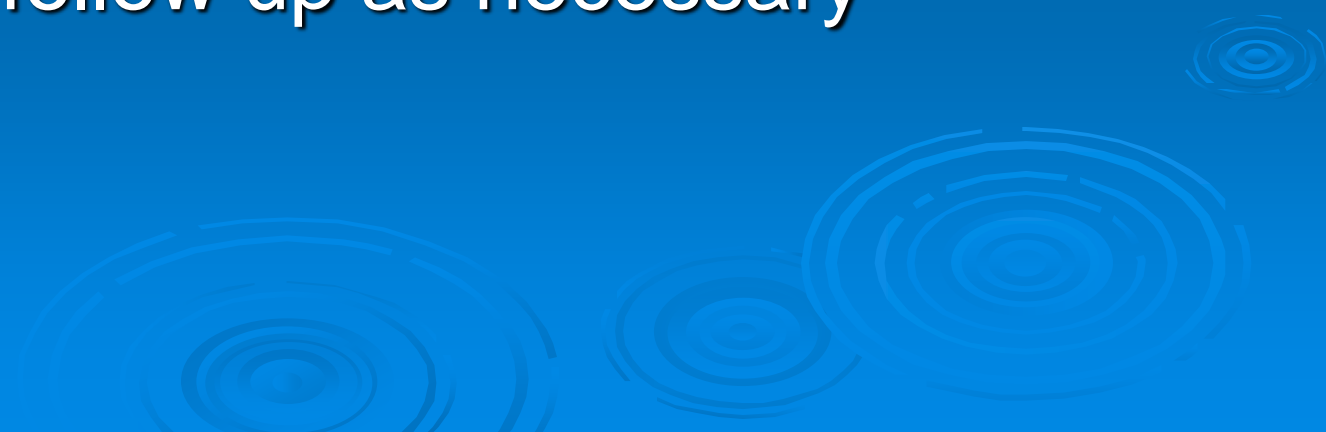
- Identify the problem
  - Generate alternative solutions (include ideas from stakeholders)
  - Select the best solution; develop a plan to implement it
  - Monitor implementation; revise as needed
  - Evaluate success
- 

# Collaborative Problem Solving in a Customer Service Situation

- Greet the customer and listen to their concern
- Restate their concern in your own words; ask the right questions
- Accept responsibility where appropriate
- Identify possible solutions; enlist their help in resolving the concern

*continued*

# Customer Service Problem-Solving continued...

- Restate the proposed resolution; check for understanding
  - Close the conversation on a positive note
  - Follow through to assure resolution is achieved; follow up as necessary
- 
- The background of the slide features a blue gradient with several faint, concentric circular ripples that resemble water droplets, scattered across the lower half of the page.


# Tool Box of Strategies

What's in your tool box?



# Communicating for positive results

## *Strategies*

- Be aware of assumptions – yours and theirs
  - Acknowledge differences – in what we see, what we say, and how we say it
  - Listen to your internal dialogue
  - Practice good listening and speaking skills
- 

# Managing conflict

## *Strategies*

- Be aware of different styles of dealing with conflict
- Practice conflict resolution skills
- Ask for support and help

# Collaborative problem solving *Strategies*

- Respond to the problem rather than the symptoms
- Acknowledge the customer's needs
- Collaborate with the customer



# Organizational Support

## *Strategies*

- Formal policies and procedures
- Informal interactions
- Gain support all the way up the line



# Applying Customer Service Delivery Skills at your Utility

*Action Plan*

The background of the slide is a solid blue color. In the lower right quadrant, there are several decorative elements consisting of concentric circles, resembling ripples in water. These circles are light blue and vary in size and opacity, creating a subtle pattern.

# Wrap up

- Review your Good Ideas. Pick one to share with the group.
  - Take and score the self-test
  - Complete the evaluation form
  - Initial the sign-in sheet
  - Collect CEU certificate
- 