

## DESIGN DOCUMENT

# Dealing with Negative Feedback

*A retail-sector eLearning module for floor staff*

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<b>Role</b>	Instructional Designer
<b>Audience</b>	Floor staff — all branches
<b>Format</b>	Asynchronous eLearning
<b>Authoring Tool</b>	Articulate Rise
<b>AI Assistance</b>	Course designed without AI but Claude AI (Anthropic) utilised for document creation & Observation Checklist deliverable
<b>Development Timeline</b>	Designed and built over 2 weeks while using the Articulate free month trial
<b>Video Tool</b>	Vyond
<b>Duration</b>	15-20 minutes
<b>Live URL</b>	<a href="https://basingfordtrainingmodule.netlify.app/">https://basingfordtrainingmodule.netlify.app/</a>

## 1. Context

### Problem Statement

A series of customer complaints identified a pattern of dissatisfaction with how negative feedback was being handled by floor staff across multiple branches. Customers reported feeling unheard and poorly attended to when raising concerns — a problem with real implications for customer retention and brand reputation.

Negative feedback represents a valuable opportunity for continuous improvement. Handled well, it builds customer loyalty; handled poorly, it compounds the original issue. The organisation required a consistent, scalable response to close this skills gap across a high-turnover workforce.

### Solution Rationale

An asynchronous eLearning module was identified as the most appropriate intervention for the following reasons:

- ▶ High staff turnover demands a fast, repeatable onboarding solution that does not depend on trainer availability.
- ▶ Asynchronous delivery ensures consistent messaging regardless of branch, shift pattern, or line manager.
- ▶ A short, self-contained module minimises disruption to trading hours.

- ▶ Rise's mobile-responsive output supports access from any device, including personal smartphones.

## 2. Learning Objectives

By the end of this module, learners will be able to:

1. **Prepare themselves mentally and physically** for a potentially challenging customer exchange.
2. **Respond calmly, professionally, and empathetically** to negative customer feedback.
3. **Apply active listening and ownership techniques** when handling a complaint in the moment.
4. **Identify the appropriate steps to resolve or escalate** a customer complaint based on its nature and complexity.
5. **Apply a three-stage personal strategy** to extract learning and professional growth from critical feedback.

## 3. Course Structure & Content

#	Lesson	Content	Interactions
1	<b>Introduction</b>	Hook quotation; learning objectives overview.	—
2	<b>Before the Complaint</b>	General preparation; mindset (calm, open, solution-focused); body language cues.	<b>Flashcards; hotspot image</b>
3	<b>Handling the Complaint</b>	Empathy phrases; active listening (video); taking ownership; comparison table.	<b>Vyond video; knowledge check (MCQ)</b>
4	<b>Resolving the Complaint</b>	Common resolvable issues (data-led); escalation scenarios; resolve vs escalate decision.	<b>Flashcards; drag &amp; drop activity</b>
5	<b>Learning from Feedback</b>	Three-stage personal strategy: Receive, Reflect, Set Goals.	<b>Stepped interactive carousel</b>
6	<b>Summary &amp; Assessment</b>	Two branching scenarios (return complaint; colleague complaint); further reading links.	<b>Scenario knowledge checks</b>

### Lesson Notes

Lesson 1 opens with a hook designed to create immediate relevance – the quotation from Bill Gates emphasises the positive learning opportunities which arise from complaints, justifying one of the central points of the module - using complaints as a means to improve.

Lesson 2 introduces three preparation strategies via an interactive flashcard activity, followed by a mindset section anchored by the memorable 'Cool as a Cucumber' framing. A dual-image hotspot activity contrasts positive and negative body language using illustrated character artwork, allowing learners to explore cues interactively.

Lesson 3 covers the three core handling skills: empathy (with practical phrase examples), active listening (supported by a Vyond video explainer), and taking ownership (demonstrated via a side-by-side dialogue comparison table). The 1:37 video uses graphics and On Screen Text to instruct learners on effective and active listening to clients. It includes a number of visual scenarios in which appropriate listening strategies are used to achieve a positive outcome. A knowledge check tests understanding of ownership application.

Lesson 4 grounds resolution guidance in real organisational data — the three most common complaint types, representing 72% of issues logged in the prior year — giving the content immediate credibility. A drag-and-drop sorting activity tests learners' ability to distinguish between scenarios they can resolve independently and those requiring escalation.

Lesson 5 introduces a personal three-stage growth strategy (Receive, Reflect, Set Goals), delivered via a stepped interactive carousel. This lesson addresses the attitudinal dimension of the learning challenge — shifting learners' relationship with criticism from defensive to growth-oriented.

Lesson 6 presents two branching scenario assessments set in a realistic retail environment, with character cutout visuals and blurred store backgrounds. Scenario 1 tests handling of a complex return situation involving a prior error by a colleague. The learner must draw on the active listening phrases from the module to calm the client before choosing an appropriate solution to the issue. The learner is coached through errors by feedback before being invited to try again in order to instill a deeper comprehension of the rationale behind the module content. Scenario 2 addresses the interpersonally sensitive situation of a complaint made against a colleague. The learner must first calm the client by using active listening phrases from the unit, before identifying the issue as one which requires a supervisor's input, and escalate it accordingly. Feedback is provided to correct and incorrect responses through the client's reactions, which is impactful as it creates the feeling of a real-world interaction. The module closes with curated further reading links so that motivated learners can go beyond the short, mandatory course, thus fostering self-directed learning.

## 4. Instructional Design Decisions

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The following design decisions reflect considered choices made in response to the audience profile, delivery constraints, and learning objectives.

### Interaction Variety

A deliberate range of interaction types was employed to maintain engagement across a short module and to match interaction to cognitive demand. Flashcards and hotspots are used for exploratory content where learner-paced discovery is appropriate. The drag-and-drop activity requires applied decision-making. Branching scenarios in the final lesson demand the highest level of integration — applying multiple skills simultaneously in a realistic context.

### Data-Led Content

The inclusion of real complaint frequency data in Lesson 4 (three complaint types representing 72% of logged issues) was an intentional choice to ground abstract guidance in organisational

reality. This approach increases perceived relevance and positions the training as evidence-based rather than generic.

## Illustrated vs Photographic Visuals

Lessons 2 and 6 use illustrated character artwork and photographic character cutouts respectively, rather than generic stock photography. This choice creates visual consistency within lessons while avoiding the disconnect that can arise when stock imagery does not reflect the learner's actual working environment.

## Scenario Complexity in Assessment

The two assessment scenarios were designed to test genuine judgement rather than simple recall. Scenario 1 layers complexity by introducing a prior error by a colleague, requiring the learner to manage a justified grievance. Scenario 2 addresses the most interpersonally difficult complaint type a floor staff member is likely to face. Both scenarios connect directly to lesson content while presenting novel applications of that content.

## 5. Evaluation Strategy

Evaluation is structured against the Kirkpatrick Four-Level Model.

Level	Focus	Method / Evidence
1	Reaction	Learner satisfaction questionnaire completed immediately on course completion. Captures perceived relevance, engagement, and confidence.
2	Learning	In-module knowledge checks (Lessons 3 and 4) and two branching scenario assessments (Lesson 6) test comprehension and applied decision-making. All checks require a correct answer to progress.
3	Behaviour	Line managers and supervisors observe and assess changes in floor staff practice in the weeks following course completion, using the observation checklist which is included in the deliverables.
4	Results	Managers collect store data in order to track complaint volume, repeat complaints, or escalation frequency before and after rollout. Although this data is influenced by a wide range of factors, and is therefore unable to be attached purely to this training course, a sharp change in the aforementioned metrics would point to success.

## 6. Performance Support Materials

A single-page job aid was produced as a companion deliverable to the eLearning module, available in both English and Spanish. It is designed to serve as an at-a-glance reference resource that learners can return to after completing the module — reinforcing key content at the point of performance rather than requiring them to revisit the full course.

## Design & Content

The job aid mirrors the three-phase structure of the module (Handling, Resolving, Learning), providing a coherent visual summary that reinforces the course architecture. Key content is distilled into three lanes:

- ▶ Handling — the three core behaviours: empathy, active listening, and taking ownership.
- ▶ Resolving — a clear decision guide distinguishing situations to solve independently from those requiring escalation, with specific examples drawn directly from the module content.
- ▶ Learning — the three-stage personal strategy (Be open to criticism, Reflect, Set personal targets) with actionable sub-points beneath each stage.

## Format & Accessibility

The job aid is produced as a single A4/letter-format page suitable for print or on-screen reference. A colour-coded visual hierarchy distinguishes the three phases clearly, with icons providing an additional non-text navigation cue. The bilingual production (English and Spanish) ensures accessibility across the full intended workforce.

## Role in the Learning Journey

Within the Kirkpatrick framework, the job aid supports Level 3 (Behaviour) by providing a tangible prompt that staff can keep accessible on the shop floor. Its presence acknowledges that learning transfer requires ongoing support beyond a single training event — a deliberate instructional design decision.

## 7. Tools & Technologies

Tool	Purpose / Notes
<b>Articulate Rise</b>	Primary authoring platform. Chosen for its responsive design output, speed of build, and native support for the interaction types required by this module.
<b>Vyond</b>	Animated video production for the active listening explainer (Lesson 3). Characters and style selected to reflect a professional retail environment.
<b>Canva</b>	Design and layout of the bilingual job aid (English and Spanish versions).
<b>Netlify</b>	Module hosted at <a href="https://basingfordtrainingmodule.netlify.app/">https://basingfordtrainingmodule.netlify.app/</a> for portfolio review and stakeholder sign-off.
<b>Claude AI (Anthropic)</b>	Design documentation, proofreading, and evaluation framework development.

## 8. Reflections

Working with Articulate Rise was a far faster and simpler process than build-from-scratch tools such as Storyline or Captivate. The templates for different tasks and built-in AI image generation made the process of creating each lesson highly intuitive, with knowledge checks being particularly straightforward. I can see the value of this tool for elearning courses, especially those which are time sensitive and linear. The design document for this project was drafted and proofread in collaboration with Claude AI (Anthropic), which significantly reduced the administrative workload and allowed more time to be spent on the instructional design itself.

The visual coherence of both font and colour palette afforded by Rise serves to reduce cognitive load on the learner and facilitates their learning experience, highlighting key passages or tasks in each lesson.

The learner profile of this course, namely new staff in a high turnover company who needed to be trained quickly and efficiently, required a brief module. As a result, I was concerned at the lack of opportunity for a deeper exploration of the subject. My solution to this potential shortcoming was to add links at the end of the course, to encourage self-motivated learning.

In future iterations of this project, I would look to strengthen the knowledge check design in Lesson 3, where some questions lean toward phrase recognition rather than genuine application.

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