



How to Handle a Customer's Complaint

Better Business Bureau Community Mediation Center • 615.250.4239

A customer with a problem may be angry or irrational. Don't take it personally. Take control and be professional in all dealings with the public. Follow these steps to keep customers happy and keep them coming back!

Respond Professionally

In Short, this sentence means one thing - Solve the Problem. Apologize for the inconvenience and get on your way to resolving the problem. What matters to the customer is that you are willing and able to handle the problem presented to you. Don't make the company look bad... Make everyone look great by being productive and proactive. If a situation warrants further investigation or action, that is another matter, don't bring the customer into it.

Sympathize

A customer with a complaint may be angry and can expect resistance. By sympathizing you can defuse the situation. Statements such as "I understand how you feel," or "I can see how you are upset by this" are often great phrases. Acknowledge the customer's feelings without agreeing with their position. A friendly, open, non-defensive attitude lets the customer know how important they are to you.

Apologize

Be sincere in expressing regrets that the customer has been inconvenienced or disappointed. Now state the company position. Ask questions to find out if the customer understands company policy. If adjustments are in order, make them quickly, and cheerfully. If no adjustment is due, explain the company policy to the customer. If the company is at fault, admit it quickly and show your willingness to correct the error. If the error is the customer's, allow him to save face. Remember, the purpose is to bring them back.

Reassure

The customer has expected resistance and is afraid you'll do nothing about the problem. Fear must be eliminated before they can speak reasonably with you. "Mr. Customer, I am sure we can fix this for you," or "Mr. Customer, we'll do all we can."

Get the Facts

People with complaints often generalize. They may start off saying that everything was bad, when in fact, only part of the transaction may have caused the problem. Ask questions, listen without interruption or argument, restate your understanding by paraphrasing what you just heard. See the customer's point of view.

Rebuild Our Reputation

After apology, remind the customer that our company successfully deals with hundreds (thousands) of customers every year. Remind them that we have built a good reputation based on service and dedication to our customers. Let them know we appreciate them and are able to correct the problem.

Thank the Customer

Make the customer feel good. By now they're a little embarrassed that they've created such a fuss. If they go away feeling that they've made a mountain out of a molehill, they may never come back. Be sure that you take the opportunity to thank them for the constructive criticism and allow them to save face.

Be sincere and SMILE!