

**CUSTOMER SERVICE**

5 Steps to Handling a Customer Complaint

Your employees may be turning customers away. Teach them these simple steps to navigate through a customer service issue.



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Do you remember when the customer was king--when businesses lived by one simple credo: the customer is always right? These days customer service is suffering as less qualified individuals fill jobs out of necessity.

Don't believe me? Listen to this gem that happened this week. My wife was shopping in a local national discount retailer. She purchased several items but when she got to the car realized that the clerk had not given her the discounted price of 25% off as was indicated on

the yellow stickers on some of her items.

My wife returned to the store, patiently waited in line again, and when it was her turn politely explained to the clerk what had happened and simply asked that her card be credited for the discount that should have been included. To my wife's surprise the clerk looked at her and said the following:

"No. How do I know you did not just stick these yellow sales stickers on the items yourself?"

Without missing a beat my wife simply smiled and said "You're right, I'll return everything. Thank you."

Upon seeing this exchange at least one other customer waiting in line put down her items, and said audibly so that other customers could hear her "I don't need to be treated like that " and walked out of the store.

So aside from learning never mess with my wife, she always wins, what can we take away from this on a customer service level?

How you handle a customer complaint is a critical component in the longevity of your business. If you think about it, in one accusatory sentence the employee 1) failed to listen to a customer's concern, 2) insulted the customer by effectively calling her a thief, 3) lost the entire sale to that customer and at least one other customer, and 4) lost the entire future revenue stream from that customer as the Mrs. will never shop there again. Wow. All that in one misguided response.

So don't make a mistake that costs your business its business. Teach all your employees how to handle complaints like a pro:

1. Listen and Understand

First, always listen to the customer. They are concerned about an aspect of your services. Let go of the temptation to respond in any quick fashion. Take the time to listen and truly understand what is driving their concern.

2. Empathize

Once you have listened to their concern immediately empathize with their position to create a bond between you and the customer so that they know you have heard their concern and are going to work with them to resolve the issue.

3. Offer a Solution

Offer a solution to their problem. In this regard, always focus on what you can do as opposed to what you cannot. There is always a solution. It may not be exactly what they are asking for, but if you focus on what you can do versus denying them their requested remedy you have still offered a solution and often merely having another option is sufficient to

remedy the situation.

4. Execute the Solution

Solve their problem be it with their originally requested resolution or an alternative you have proposed.

5. Follow-Up

Once you have gone through the first four steps, make sure to follow-up with them to make sure that they are satisfied with the solution and that you have taken care of their concern.

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