
Customer Service Solutions

Session 2

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Customer Feelings

NOTES

*"Perform all the
aspects of courtesy."*
Dojo Wisdom

Dissatisfied Feelings

Satisfied Feelings

Saying “No” to Customers

- State what you CAN do
- Be positive and de-emphasize what you cannot do
- Give explanations/reasons
- Offer alternatives
- Offer future assistance

NOTES

*“Chamber your kick
high even when the
target is low.”*

Dojo Wisdom

How to Deny a Customer Demand

NOTES

1st Customer Demand:

Possible "No" Statement:

2nd Customer Demand:

Possible "No" Statement:

*"For the wise man looks
into space and he knows
there is no limited
dimensions."*

Lao-tse

What is Anger?

NOTES

"The centered self reacts to few distractions."

Dojo Wisdom

EMOTION:

An intense feeling of displeasure resulting from mistreatment, injury, opposition or a sense that one has been "wronged". Also, fear of being taken further advantage of.

ACTIONS:

Frustrations and hurts typically explode and the person's behavior becomes more aggressive. Communication of events is often garbled.

Note: Some people act as though they are very angry as a means of getting what they want. Although they are just "acting" angry, they should be treated the same.

PHYSICAL PHENOMENON:

Fight/Flight Response

When human beings feel threatened, changes take place within the body. Additional adrenaline is secreted in order to provide the individual with energy for either "fight" or "flight" (run away from) the threat.

CHARACTERISTICS:

Angry people tend to:

- Feel someone has taken advantage of them
- Act in a defensive fashion because they feel vulnerable
- Communicate their anger by leaning forward and "invading" your personal space
- Make personal attacks, focusing their anger on anyone who is convenient
- Exaggerate, using words such as "never" and "always"
- Engage in sarcasm
- Become irrational
- Mix together both **FACTUAL** and **FEELING** information (which is useful) with inappropriate remarks, assertions, comments and charges

Behaviors in the Extreme

*"The angry mind forgets
skill and discipline."*

Dojo Wisdom

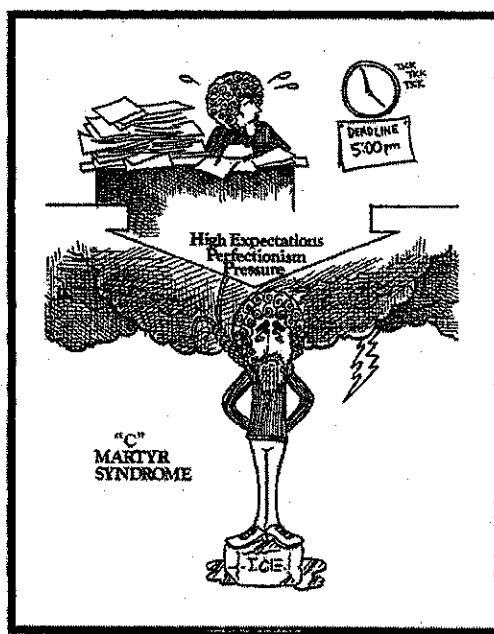
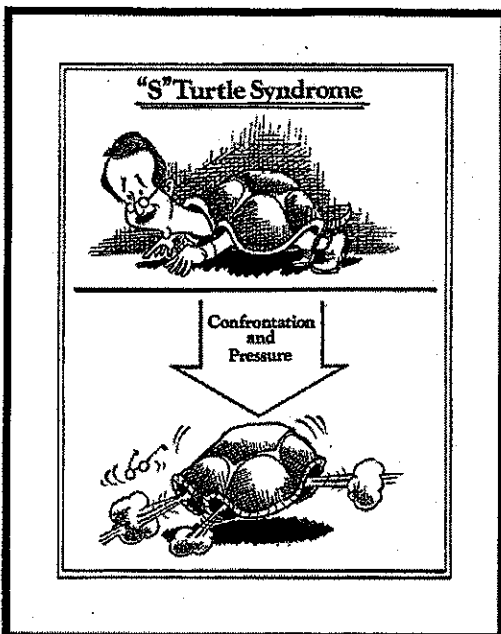
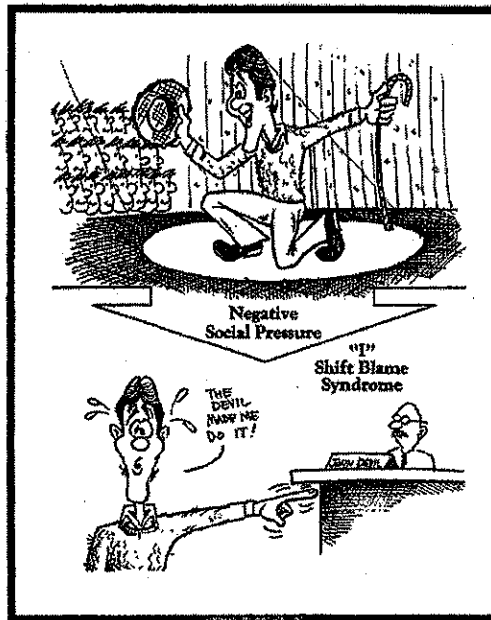
	In Normal Situations	Under Pressure	Extreme Behavior
D	In Charge & Deciding	Demanding	Leaves
i	Persuading & Enthusiastic	Over-sells	Gives Up or May Pout
S	Supporting & Friendly	Gives In	Acts Hurt & Accuses
C	Careful & Quiet	Can't Decide	Emotional & Attacks

Style Responses to Conflict

NOTES

"Strive to be the physical expression of the Way."

Dojo Wisdom

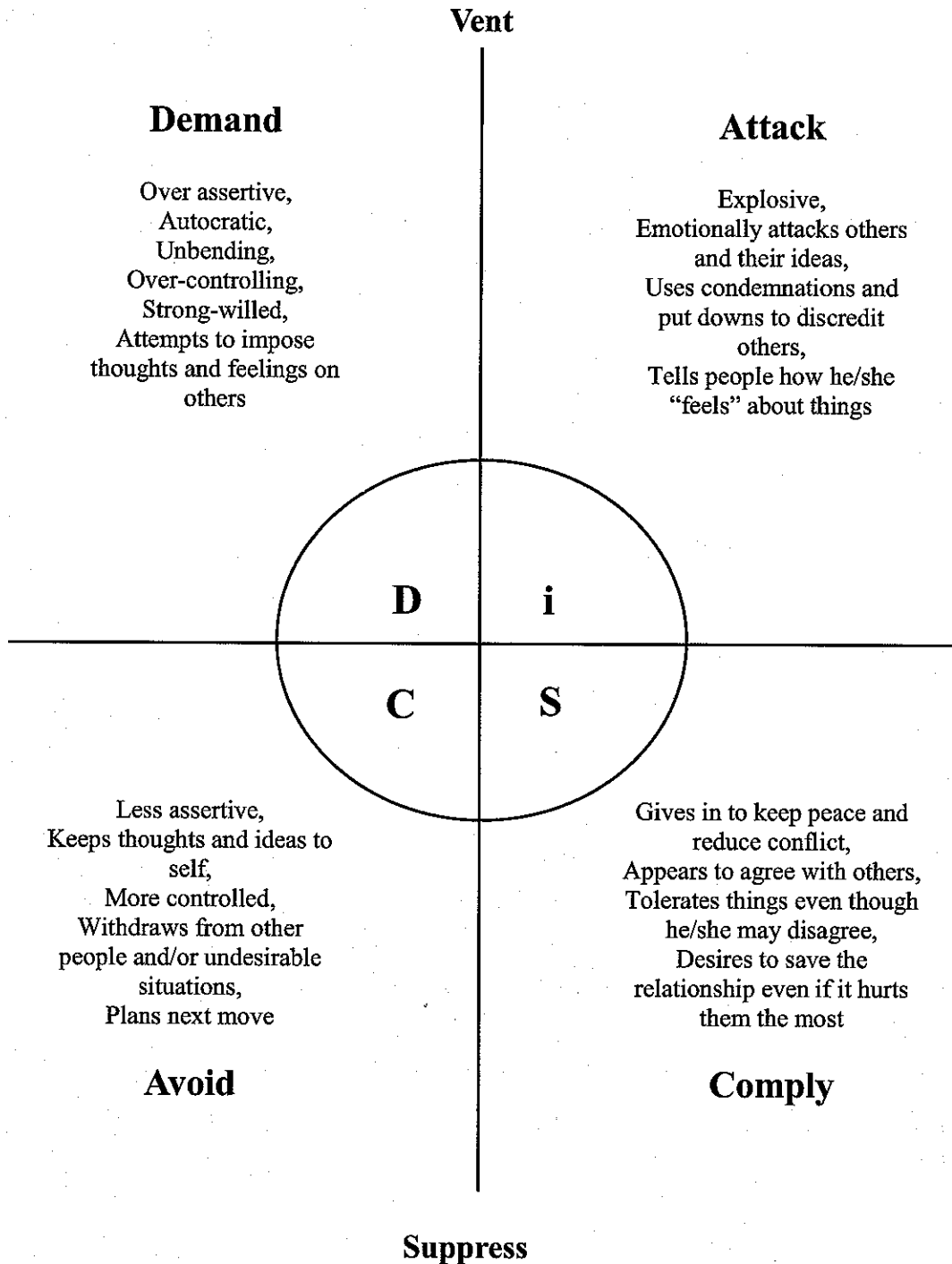


Four Responses to Conflict

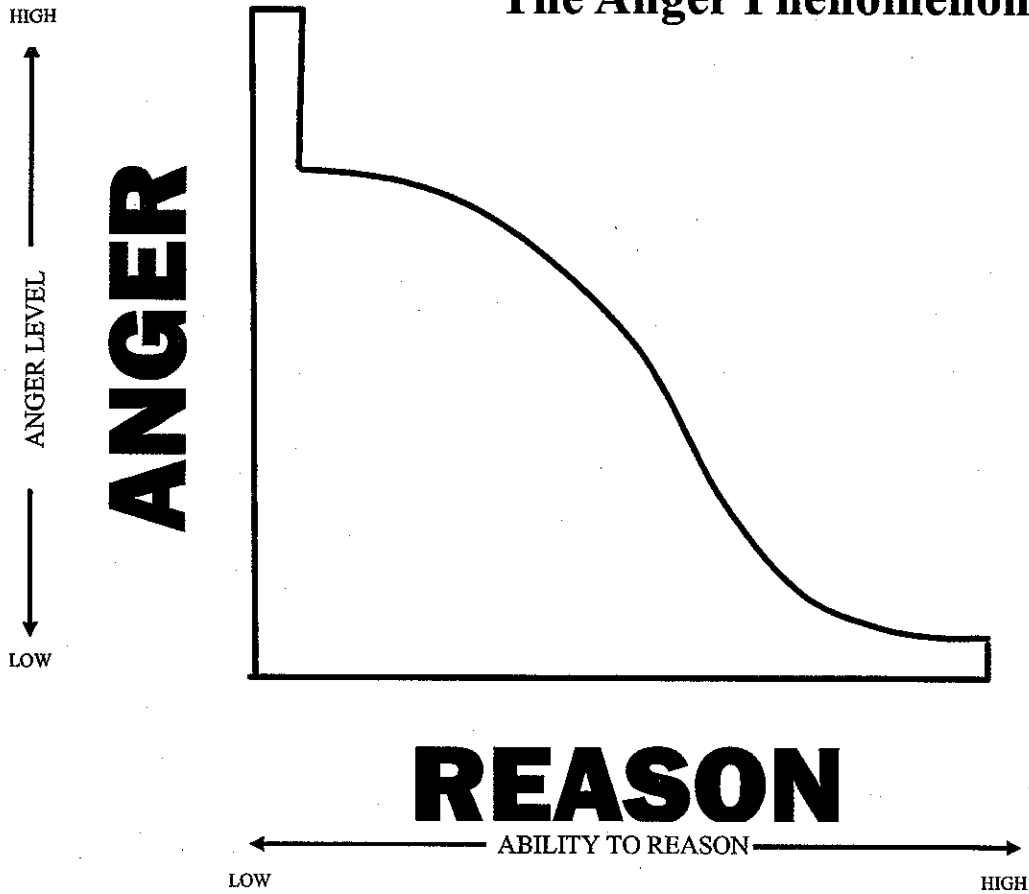
NOTES

*"When you get fatigued,
increase the pace."*

Dojo Wisdom



The Anger Phenomenon



NOTES

*"Develop aiki, or
impassive mind."
Dojo Wisdom*

The more angry a person becomes, the less that person can:

When working with angry customers it is important to:

By getting upset with someone else, you give VALUE to their opinion.

ANGER IS A CHOICE!

Handling Emotionally Charged Situations

How to Maintain Respect – Even When a Customer Gets Angry

“Act directly from will.”

Dojo Wisdom

The Real Test for Any Service Provider

Regardless of what business you are in, how great your commitment to customer service, or how golden your intentions, you have been around long enough to know that sooner or later you are going to have to look straight into the bulging eyes of a raging customer.

These are not pleasant situations for anyone involved. However, they do happen. Experience tells you that certain things you do are going to drastically increase the odds of avoiding these unpleasant “explosions.” So, how do you handle these awkward, possibly dangerous, situations?

An Ounce of Prevention is Worth a Pound of Cure

Let's start with the obvious. It is best to avoid circumstances that make people angry in the first place. This is typically done by eliminating “nasty surprises.” People hate feeling dependent on incompetent suppliers – those who get you in trouble by missing important dates or by not meeting quality standards.

But there is more. Not all of your attempts to avoid unpleasant situations will be successful. Something bad will happen and a customer will get angry. Sometimes the customer gets angry before you know what has happened. You look up from your workstation and see a red-faced person with pulsing forehead veins and you have to dodge the spittle flying your way with every irate sentence.

Common Land Mines

As you think about it, what are the times or circumstances when your customers are most likely to get angry. Where are your land mines? When are your customers most likely to “lose it”?

Knowing where the land mines lie helps us think about what to watch out for, but we are still left wondering, “What do we do if we step on one?” “What if people blow up?” Ideally, we would handle every situation with dignity and respect. We use our magic and the other person's anger disappears. Obviously this doesn't always happen – particularly if we do a mediocre to lousy job of handling the anger.

To help us think about what we should do we need to first take a look at the common mistakes we make that may create even more problems. As you watch these video clips, ask yourself how would you feel if you were the customer?

1. Becoming Defensive and Angry

When someone comes at you with an angry offensive, it is unnatural not to become defensive. When we are under attack, we tend to respond first by assuming a tense, defensive position. From this posture, we are not at all prepared to professionally deal with the anger. We are more prepared to strike back. We usually do so in two steps. First, we respond with moderately emotional, defensive counter arguments. This quite naturally further irritates the other person, who, in turn, comes back harder. From there we move to the offense, launching an attack of our own.

Of course, fighting fire with fire only leads to a bigger blaze. The two parties continue in a downward spiral of recrimination and abuse that eventually crashes and burns, leaving them in a tangled, smoldering mess.

Now, we all know this to be true. We know that getting angry back rarely, if ever, works. That is a given. But we do it anyway. Undoing the countless times we have programmed our habitual responses is not easy.

2. One-Upping the Problem

If the original attack isn't too threatening, it is common for people to come back with an "ain't it awful" response that can feel like one-upmanship. Unfortunately, saying that you have had the same problem, maybe even worse, is not what the customer is looking for. When you are angry, you want to be heard, and not forced into a contest of who has had the worst experience.

3. Looking for the Fault

To gain an upper hand in a battle, many people try to disprove part of the argument that is being thrown at them. This is usually pretty easy when it comes to anger. After all, an upset customer tends to present a one-sided or exaggerated case. Hyperbole rules.

In truth, clamping onto a minor detail and using it as a lever to argue about something where you have "truth on your side" is nothing more than a mutant form of getting defensive. That the angry person's argument is clouded by emotion and fraught with errors doesn't change the underlying problem. The person is angry, wants to be heard and wants action. This is not the time to trivialize the problem.

"Breakthroughs happen as the result of sustained effort."

Dojo Wisdom

4. Patronizing

When you talk down to an already angry customer, you are adding insult to injury. Even though you may not want to converse with someone who's foaming at the mouth, the "why don't you try deep breathing for a minute" routine is the worst thing you can do.

We only mention this because it happens a great deal. For example, when we ask people for their best shot at handling anger, the most common response is: "Go take a break and relax, then come back when your heart rate has dropped below 200." This "grow up" routine simply pours gas on the fire. It discounts the first problem and adds a whole new one – customers feel like you view them as children.

5. Giving a Controlled, Rational Response

This response is a close cousin to looking for the fault – only it is less defensive and gives the impression that at least your intentions are not entirely bad. The customer makes a statement, and you answer it as best you can. What else could the customer possibly want? The customer complains and you offer the answer. If school teaches us nothing else, we learn that giving a correct answer is a good thing.

But not in the face of anger. When people are upset, they eventually need to know the whole picture – but not straight out of the chute. First they need to know they have been heard and understood.

6. Turning into a Robot

When training was first designed, people were taught that responding in kind to anger was inappropriate. Fair enough. Unfortunately, somewhere along the line we began confusing anger with emotion. Emotions become the enemy. Professionals stay calm, cool and collected. Professionals have no emotions.

What a crock!

The result of this unfortunate transmutation was predictable. A person would become angry, and the employee would come back with a robot-like, detached, clinical response – and this to a person who wants someone to show some concern. We swung the pendulum too far.

A customer service agent who stands up and matches an angry customer blow for blow is certainly not acceptable; but, by the same token, acting like a human android is just as insulting. People want you to care when they are shouting at you. People want you to be in tune with their emotions. Looking like you are on Valium doesn't do it.

"If you act with integrity, everything you do will be powerful."

Dojo Wisdom

"The Path is sometimes straight and sometimes circular."

Dojo Wisdom

Reprogram the circuits

Earlier we talked about how humans respond with a defensive position when attacked. Doing this in the event of an attack from a wild boar or a barrage of incoming spears may be helpful. However, for customer service, a habitual fight or flight response does not help much. Instead, we have to reprogram the circuits to get us past instinct or habit. Rather than closing off and withdrawing inward or preparing for a counterattack, we have to open ourselves up.

The Skill

Opening yourself up physically and emotionally to the customer sets the stage for dignified and respectful communication. But knowing exactly how to proceed is not quite as simple as saying, "Be nice." Here is what it actually takes. You need to...

Assess

- Let the customer "tell the story"
- Practice active listening techniques

Acknowledge

- Offer feedback that indicates you understand the customer's point of view

Agree (to the extent you can)

Apologize

- Give sincere, **BLAMELESS** apologies

There are three messages you need to clearly communicate if you expect an angry person to cool down:

1. **That you Care**
2. **That you Understand and ...**
3. **You are going to Take Action**

Until you have done these things successfully, the person is likely to remain angry – doing his or her best to get your undivided attention and impress you with the need for action.

The Process of Managing Anger

NOTES

Assess

- Let the customer “tell the story”
- Practice active listening techniques

“Frequent encounters with fear make you strong.”

Dojo Wisdom

Acknowledge

- Offer feedback to indicate you understand the customer’s point of view

General

“I understand.”

“I see.”

“I know.”

Feeling

“I understand how frustrating this must be.”

Agree (to the extent you can)

General

“I agree.”

“Yes.”

“That’s true.”

Feelings

“I agree you have been inconvenienced.”

Apologize

- Give sincere, **BLAMELESS** apologies

General

“I’m sorry to hear that.”

“I’m sorry you’re having this trouble.”

“I’m sorry you’re not satisfied.”

Feelings

“I’m sorry you have been upset.”

“I’m sorry you feel frustrated.”

Acknowledge

NOTES

Situations

Customer 1: *"I was told this would be corrected, then I get another bill. What's the matter with you people?"*

Acknowledge: *"We need to get your account straightened out."*

Customer 2: *"You sent me to a different department and they sent me back to you. I don't care who's responsible! – I want this fixed!"*

Acknowledge: *"You need this fixed."*

"A thousand risks are not too many."

Dojo Wisdom

Write your own acknowledgements to the angry statements listed below.

"I am sick and tired of people not understanding my problems."

"Just let me talk to your supervisors. I have wasted enough time."

"I keep having the same problem over and over!"

Agree (to the extent you can)

Situations

Customer 1: *"The last person I talked with didn't have a clue about how to take care of this. Doesn't anyone understand that I need this fixed and I want you to take care of it now!"*

Agree: *"I agree. We need to get this fixed."*

Customer 2: *"Your package says this product is supposed to last for three weeks after the date printed here, but it's all spoiled."*

Agree: *"I agree, the product should be good for three weeks after the expiration date."*

Write an agreement statement to respond to these comments.

"All you people do is take my money! You don't care what happens!"

"You told me there would be no charge! You billed me anyway and I'm very upset!"

"I'm getting the runaround! I want service now!"

NOTES

"Protect and nurture the beginner."

Dojo Wisdom

Apologize

"A thousand risks are not too many."

Dojo Wisdom

Situations

Customer 1: *"I've been through this with three other people but no one will take care of my problem."*

Blameless Apology: *"I'm sorry you have not been helped yet."*

Customer 2: *"I want to talk to your manager. No one else seems to want to do anything at all about my problem."*

Blameless Apology: *"I'm sorry this has happened to you. I would like to help you."*

Write a blameless apology statement to respond to these comments.

"It's not fair that I have to pay for this!"

"I'm tired of jumping through hoops! You people are supposed to serve the public not the other way around!"

"Every time I call here I get a different story!"

Anger Defusion Techniques

"No one fails who keeps trying."

Dojo Wisdom

Following the video segment, develop:

- **An acknowledgement statement**
- **An agreement response**
- **A blameless apology**

Situation #1 – Mary Casillas

Acknowledgement:

Agreement:

Blameless Apology:

Situation #2 – Mike Pearson

Acknowledgement:

Agreement:

Blameless Apology:

Video:

How does the agent demonstrate:

That They Care?

That They Understand?

That They Will Take Action?

NOTES

"Don't always keep score."

Dojo Wisdom

10 Ways to Cool Off Hot Customers

NOTES

*"A kick must be repeated
10,000 times before you
know how to do it."*

Dojo Wisdom

I. Keep Cool Yourself

- **Breathe Deeply and Slowly**
While the customer is sounding off to you, listen to what is being said and allow yourself to breathe slowly and deeply to keep your own feelings from flaring up.
- **Focus on the Facts**
Concentrate on the problem that needs solving, not on the customer's tone, angry words and manner.
- **Empathize with the Angry Customer**
Put yourself in the customer's shoes. Perhaps you would be just as angry if the same problem occurred to you. When you think of the inconvenience and trouble the customer has experienced, it is easier to forgive and forget the tone they are using.
- **Predetermine Not to Get Angry**
Decide in advance that you won't let anyone – especially angry customers – deprive you of your good mood.
- **"Kill" Them with Kindness**
Angry customers want to upset you. Respond in a manner that is just the opposite of what the customer might expect. When a customer tries to intimidate you, stay calm and ask, "What can we do to help?" You will demonstrate that yelling is not the only way to get cooperation. Try hard to get an answer to your question, and keep your tone positive.
- **Do Not Take It Personally**
The best way to keep from getting upset is to remember that the customer is angry at their situation, not at you personally. Focus on helping solve the problem instead.
- **Avoid Caller-Spillover**
You have had a difficult call, and you don't want your emotions to carry over to the next call. Try the "shrug/smile" technique: A quick shrug of your shoulders or the tensing and relaxing of the neck serve as a physical separation from what you were doing last. Then smile before you make, or take, the next call.
- **Pressure Cooker**
Suppose a customer is in a hurry and says, "I need this taken care of now!" Do not be bullied into resolving the problem before you have obtained the information you need. Say, "I'm sorry, but I will have to study this and get back to you." That is always better than creating bigger problems by rushing.
- **Uniquely Yours**
Acknowledge that a problem is "different," even if it is commonplace. Customers often relax when they are convinced that you are personally interested in, and recognize, the circumstances of their problem.

10 Ways to Cool Off Hot Customers

NOTES

"Disharmony shatters focus."

Dojo Wisdom

II. Gain the Customer's Cooperation

- **Avoid Vagueness**

To make people have confidence in you, say "I will" rather than "I'll try" when you tell customers you will help resolve their problem. Customers may feel annoyed when they hear, "I'll try," because it sounds vague and indecisive.

- **Ask for the Customer's Help**

To avoid the irritation that people often feel when they hear, "You have to," instead ask, "Will you...?" This technique will help you get what you want without further upsetting an angry customer.

- **Convey a Sense of Calm**

Calm upset customers by being calm yourself. Use a warm and friendly tone of voice. If in response to their anger your voice becomes irritating or urgent, take a few seconds to breathe deeply and relax.

- **Explain the "Why"**

Upset customers are more likely to be cooperative if you explain why you need their assistance. Instead of saying, "I need your account number," say, "To help me correct this error as quickly as possible, I will need your account number..."

- **Avoid the Negative**

Most people respond more favorably to hearing what they can do than what they cannot do.

- **Be Accountable**

No matter how careful you are, mistakes can happen. If they do, maintain your integrity by being accountable.

- **Great Expectations**

According to the Research Institute of America, the top four needs customers have are:

Value for their money

Solutions for their problems

Concern for their needs

Answers to their questions

Be sure your words and actions reflect your desire to meet at least one of those needs.

10 Ways to Cool Off Hot Customers

NOTES

*"Acting with integrity
brings freedom."*

Dojo Wisdom

III. Turn Down The Volume

When customers have a problem, they want you to know it. And of course that often means they will be speaking to you in a loud voice.

But loud talkers can undermine your service efforts because you might stop listening when all you can concentrate on is the pain in your ears.

There can be a variety of reasons why people talk loudly. Some people just have strong voices. Some work in a loud environment, so they develop loud voices. Of course, if a customer is angry, chances are he or she is going to speak in a louder voice.

Bottom line: You can not help upset customers when they are shouting at you. Politely get them to lower the volume so you can begin helping them.

- **Talk Softly**

Some people will respond by quieting their own voices if you first quiet your voice.

- **Use the Direct Approach**

Your best approach is a direct one. Say something like, "Excuse me, our phone equipment is very sensitive. Could I please ask you to speak a little more quietly?" More often than not, this will elicit the response you seek.

- **Do Not Make It Worse**

Speak distinctly and at a moderate pace when helping solve customers' problems. You do not want a miscommunication to make matters worse.

- **Support Your Team**

Do not let an angry customer intimidate you to the point that you say something negative about your organization. Remain loyal; focus on listening to the customer and solving the problem. Do not blame a co-worker or another department.

- **Listen to Yourself**

Complaints often result from the tone of voice or manner in which you address the customer.

10 Ways to Cool Off Hot Customers

NOTES

*"The universe wants to
be in rhythm with you."
Dojo Wisdom*

IV. Hear the Customer Out

- **Find Out Exactly What the Complaint Is**
Do not assume anything. No matter how many times you have heard a similar problem or concern, it is important to listen to this customer as though you are hearing about it for the first time. Customers need to feel their problems are unique. They need to know that you are giving them the attention they deserve. Hearing them out is often more important than actually solving the problem because customers need the opportunity to vent. Once you fully understand what went wrong and why, make suggestions on what might work.
- **Find Out Exactly What the Customer Wants You To Do About It**
All some customers who complain want is for you to hear them out. If some customers demand more than your organization can give say: "Although I am not in a position to grant that request, I can offer you..."
- **Decide If the Complaint Is Valid and the Request Reasonable**
Unless you have good reason to think otherwise, consider the complaint valid. If the suggestion for rectifying the situation is reasonable, keep the customer happy and comply.
- **Tell the Customer Exactly What You Can and Cannot Do in Handling the Problem**
Offer to refer the complaint to a higher party if what you can do for the person is unacceptable.
- **It is Never Wrong to Apologize**
There is nothing wrong with saying "I'm sorry," even when the customer's request seems unreasonable. After conveying your refusal, let customers know you sincerely regret that you cannot do more. This shows that you empathize with their situation.

10 Ways to Cool Off Hot Customers

NOTES

"If you think you don't have enough, you will never have enough."

Dojo Wisdom

V. Be Patient

- **They Are Only Human**

It may be hard to believe at times, but customers are human beings like the rest of us, and they are subject to the innumerable problems and ills that influence actions and reactions all day. If things do not go smoothly for us, we can become brusque or irritable.

The key message to get across to impatient customers is that you are there for one purpose: to help them. It is difficult to remain irritable in the face of someone whose only desire is to be of assistance and service.

Although it is not always easy to determine exactly why a customer is impatient, the most effective antidote for impatience is patience. Ask questions that indicate your genuine interest and concern. Pinpoint the problem if possible; then show your willingness to help solve it.

- **OK, So Have a Rotten Day!**

A survey reported in Voice Processing magazine found that 61% of customers do not like to be told, "Have a nice day." Customers apparently hear the phrase too often, and familiarity breeds contempt in this case. Try a simple "Thank you."

- **"I am Important!"**

Mary Kay Ashe, who founded the ultra-successful Mary Kay Cosmetics line, told the Think and Grow Rich Newsletter that all her customer service reps are trained to imagine their clients wearing "make me feel important" signs on their chests. She reminds employees that no one likes assembly line, impersonal clerks who do not seem to care if you bring them business or not.

10 Ways to Cool Off Hot Customers

NOTES

"Don't telegraph your moves."

Dojo Wisdom

VI. Give Customers Your Undivided Attention

- **Forget Any Other Concern While Dealing with the Customer**
Other customers, phone calls, or even other employees may distract you. However, if you let distractions grab your attention, you will appear disinterested to the customer you are supposed to be helping.
- **See the Customer's Problem Through the Customer's Eyes**
However familiar the problem may sound to you, to the customer, it is unique and needs to be responded to that way. You are not really focusing on the customer until you see the problem the way the customer sees it.
- **Help the Customer Focus on Solving the Present Problem**
Many times customers get hung up on what happened to them and how offended, hurt and insulted they are. Hear them out and then lead the way to a solution.
- **Take It Seriously**
Even if a complaint seems minor, take it seriously. Remember that the customer considered it serious enough to write, call or visit you about it.
- **Encourage Complaints**
Yes, you read that correctly! For every person who complains, 26 do not because they feel it will not do any good. Make them feel at ease about complaining so you have a chance to win back their support.

10 Ways to Cool Off Hot Customers

NOTES

*"Consult your intuition
before taking action."*

Dojo Wisdom

VII. Try Silence

- **To Cool Off**

One of the best reactions to a sticky situation is to keep quiet. If a customer upsets you, you might exchange words in the heat of the moment that you (and the Bureau!) will later regret. Unfortunately, words cannot be taken back. If you wait a few moments, you get a chance to calm down.

- **To Separate Yourself**

Do not let others pressure you into saying something if you would rather not. For example, a good way to respond to a customer's affront is with attentive silence. It will keep you out of trouble and can spare hurt feelings.

- **Put Down Your Dukes!**

As the customer approaches and it is clear that they are angry, do not be on the defensive. Introduce yourself and extend your hand. Ask or use the customer's name. This gentle approach has an immediate calming affect on customers.

- **Words to Watch For**

Avoid lecturing customers when solving a problem or handling a complaint. You only make customers angrier with statements like, "You should have called sooner," or "Are you sure you mentioned it before?" Focus on solutions and not on placing blame.

- **Seal Those Lips**

Do not say anything about the problem or how you will solve it until you have let the customer speak his or her piece. Then restate the problem. Ask questions until you are able to see the problem through the customer's eyes.

10 Ways to Cool Off Hot Customers

NOTES

"The warrior must be single-minded."

Dojo Wisdom

VIII. Quiet Verbally Abusive Customers

- **They Are Not Mad at You**

The Bureau is the object of their anger. You just happen to be the representative of the firm. Never take a lambasting personally. If you do, they have got you at a disadvantage. Blank out the bad words. Some people cannot control themselves or their language. Gutter talk is used to shock and surprise people into reaction. Your reaction should be calm and reserved.

- **Sad But Glad**

Try a "sad, but glad" response: "I am sorry you have had a problem, but I am glad you are bringing it to our attention so we can do something about it."

- **Apologize**

An apology for the organization's oversight – whether real or imagined – can often cool the most volcanic outburst and disarm a vicious caller.

- **Agree With Them**

Repeat their concerns, but in your own words, then offer to fix what is wrong. If they are ranting because they have waited six weeks for a promised repair, agree with them: That is an unacceptable amount of time. Then promise to set things straight. Such action can derail the freight train of foul language.

- **Threaten to Hang Up**

*If the Bureau agrees with this policy, it can be effective. **But first make sure it is okay with your manager.** Calmly tell the caller that you want to help, but can not be effective due to the verbal abuse and that, if the abuse does not stop, you must end the call. That may startle the customer and calm him or her down. Make sure, however, you are cleared ahead of time and be sure to tell you manager when you have done it.*

10 Ways to Cool Off Hot Customers

NOTES

IX. Offer a Win-Win Solution

Offering the customer anything they want, of course, is the single best way to calm an angry customer. Realistically, however, you cannot always offer that type of solution. You have to consider the limitation set by your organization on what you can and cannot do.

That does not mean the end result is an unhappy customer. What you must do is negotiate a solution that is acceptable to both you and your customer.

This type of solution is called “win – win” because both parties are happy with the outcome.

To negotiate a win – win solution, start by assuring the customer you have his or her best interest in mind. Say something like, “I would like to find a solution that will make you happy and be acceptable to the Bureau.” Then:

- **Lay the Groundwork**

First, try to discover what the other person needs to accomplish to strike an agreement. Do not assume that you already know what another person’s main objectives are. You put yourself in a better position to negotiate if you know the other person’s position first.

- **Be Open-minded and Flexible**

Ask what you can do to satisfy the customer’s needs and what it will actually take to reach agreement.

- **Bargain in Good Faith**

Determine what you can temporarily sacrifice to reach an agreement.

- **Ask for a Deal**

Negotiation is a give-and-take proposition. If you have something, you should ask for something reasonable in return (future business, or example). That is what negotiation is all about. Always offer alternatives, never ultimatums.

- **Assume “Yes”**

When a customer makes a special request, do not jump to say “no.” Instead, ask yourself, “Is there any reason I can not do this for the customer?” Be in a mind-set that conveys that “no” is the exception, not the rule.

- **Explain Your “No”**

If a Bureau policy or procedure makes it necessary for you to say “No,” be able to explain to the customer the reason his or her request is being turned down.

- **Combating a Complainer**

When you know you can satisfy a disgruntled customer, offer your “make it right” plan immediately. Say: “Please allow me to make this right by...” That helps keep angry feelings from building momentum.

“Do not look back once the Path is chosen.”

Dojo Wisdom

10 Ways to Cool Off Hot Customers

NOTES

X. Prevent Future Flare-up's

The most practical way to handle difficult calls is to prevent them from happening in the first place.

Some customers simply cannot be pleased. But in many situations, you may be able to prevent a customer from becoming difficult. The secret is to create a good impression so your customers have no reason to become difficult. Here are some tips:

- **Always Answer the Phone Promptly**
A disgruntled caller gets angrier with each ring.
- **Apologize**
Do not hesitate to say, "I am sorry" if there has been a mistake. Not accepting responsibility for problems just adds fuel to the fire.
- **Do Not Waste the Customer's Time**
Prepare standardized responses to meet specific situations. A standardized response prevents you from being caught off-guard and giving a response that will elicit the customer's anger.
- **Keep It to Yourself**
No matter what you are feeling at the moment, do not pass your bad mood on to the customer. You sometimes have to put on an Academy Award-winning performance to sound your best, but if you do not, you are inviting the caller to create additional trouble for you.
- **Have a Pen and Paper Handy**
Customer's temperatures rise rapidly if they are forced to wait while you fumble around your desk. This also gives them the impression you are not interested or prepared.
- **Have a Backup Plan**
If customers ask for information you cannot provide, tell them you will get back to them with the answer. Either return the call yourself or have someone call who is more familiar with the subject than you. Make sure someone follows up.
- **Show Your Appreciation**
Even if callers are being difficult, thank them for calling. Even if they have shown absolutely no patience, thank them for their patience. "Thank you" are two words that can go a long way in deactivating a caller's short fuse.
- **Follow Up with a Customer who Experienced a Problem**
Call the customer to check that the solution put in place worked. Apologize again for their unpleasant experience. Let the customer know you value their past business and hope that they will give you an opportunity to win their confidence again in the future.

*"You are the kata, and
the kata is beautiful."
Dojo Wisdom*