

# Handle Difficult Customers in 5 EASY Steps.



## DEALING WITH DIFFICULT CUSTOMERS

5 BEST WAYS TO WIN

Be it Sales or Support or IT, when you are in Customer Service, One of the most challenging things to deal with, is handling difficult Customers.

When you're in business that directly involves serving customers, you'll likely encounter rude or angry individuals at one time or another. Customers get rude or angry for a variety of reasons—some justified, some not. Rude Customers can easily place a sales/ Customer Service person on defensive foot, making him or her much less effective in negotiations.

So, most of us think it's futile to handle or try retaining difficult, hard and unhappy customers, it takes a lot of effort after all. There are good business reasons to become adept in handling a difficult customer.

**90% OF DISSATISFIED CUSTOMERS DO NOT COMPLAIN, BUT MOVE TO YOUR COMPETITOR!**

Research indicates that customers who complain are likely to continue doing business with your company if they feel that they were treated properly. It's estimated that as many as 90% of customers who perceive themselves as having been wronged never complain,

they just take their business elsewhere. On the other hand, angry, complaining customers care enough to talk to you, so have not yet decided to take their business to the competition. They are customers worth saving (may not be all, but surprisingly most of them!)

Here are a few different types of angry customers and how to deal with them as a customer service representative.

## TYPES OF DIFFICULT CUSTOMERS

Difficult customers come in several varieties, including:

- Angry
- Rude / Impolite
- Impatient
- Intimidating
- Demanding
- Indecisive

Every Sales Person will have come across one or more of this kind. It can be a challenge staying calm instead of getting upset but, the fact is, every client is valuable. Losing your cool can lead to a loss of business and your or your Company's reputation.

## DEALING WITH DIFFICULT CUSTOMERS

First, realize you can't control other people's behavior, but you can control your responses. To some degree, you can influence how customers respond to you. However, remember that how you respond can make the difference between a customer who feels satisfied with the resolution and one who vows never to patronize your business again.

When a customer is never satisfied, Salesmen tend to lose motivation for working with the Customer. It requires immense self-restraint and an ability to keep power in the relationship despite the conflict or differences. The sales professional must learn when to be hard and when to be soft in conflict.

## FIVE BEST WAYS TO WIN OVER DIFFICULT CUSTOMERS

Being able to handle difficult customers makes you more confident in your own abilities. While any one can work with regular customers, it takes a real professional to be successful dealing with the difficult customers. Your confidence will grow, your poise will increase, and your self-esteem will intensify. On the other hand, if you mishandle it, and you'll watch the situation dissolve into lost business and upset people. You may find yourself upset for days.

Here are tips for coping with a tense situation and hopefully resolving it to everyone's satisfaction:

1. Remain Calm, don't lose perspective
2. Listen patiently, remember it's not personal
3. Show Empathy
4. Seek the truth in all things
5. Find a Solution, Follow up and follow through

Regardless how good you are, it is impossible to please everybody, all of the time. Hence, it is important to be prepared to deal with difficult customers.

## 1. REMAIN CALM, DON'T LOSE PERSPECTIVE

Never argue with customers when they are angry, displeased or complaining. When a customer starts yelling or being otherwise rude, nothing can be gained by responding in a similar manner. In fact, that will probably escalate hostilities. If you allow a customer to push your buttons and lose control of yourself, you've lost control of the situation. Remember, you can lose a good customer if you show boredom, irritation, disdain or displeasure.

If a customer is irate, the better way to handle is for the salesperson to be quiet amid this aggression. As the customer grows louder, the salesperson should be alert, lower his voice and talk slowly but firmly assuring that there's no emergency, the client can relax and whatever he or she is demanding can be handled efficiently.

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*LISTEN, and listen for the answers to these questions:*

*What happened to make them upset?*

*What do they want now?*

*What can you do to help?*

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If the sales professional doesn't demonstrate a sense of control, the customer will pick up on fear and go for the jugular. A salesperson has to keep in mind that emotions are contagious

and if he becomes caught up in a customer's emotional chaos, the negotiation will not be productive.

Therefore, the salesperson must be a passive yet demonstrate firm presence against the force used by the difficult customer. Angry people have the maturity of a 2-year-old, so the sales professional would be wise to remember the power in remaining calm, flexible, patient and mindful.

## 2. LISTEN PATIENTLY, REMEMBER IT'S NOT PERSONAL

THE FIRST THING AN ANGRY CUSTOMER WANTS IS TO VENT. TO DO SO, THEY NEED SOMEONE TO LISTEN—AND, FOR BETTER OR WORSE, YOU ARE THAT PERSON. LISTEN AND LET THE CUSTOMER VENT: TUNE IN TO THE CUSTOMER; DON'T LOOK FOR THE NEAREST EXIT. THE CUSTOMER WANTS TO BE LISTENED TO, ACKNOWLEDGED AND UNDERSTOOD.

Listening patiently can defuse a situation, as long as the customer feels acknowledged in his or her complaint. Hear them out. When they are done talking, summarize what you've heard and ask any questions to further clarify their complaint.

When dealing with an unsatisfied customer, a salesperson needs to remind himself that this is a business issue not a personal one. Remember, the customer is not angry with you, they are displeased with the performance of your or your Company's product or the quality of the service. Your personal feelings are beside the point.



PATIENCE IS NOT SIMPLY THE ABILITY TO  
WAIT – IT'S HOW WE BEHAVE WHILE WE  
ARE WAITING

Joyce Meyer

Also, remember, anger is a natural, self-defensive reaction to a perceived wrong. If there is a problem with your or your company's product or service, some frustration and disappointment is justified.

By pushing aside the anger element, the salesperson can identify and attend to core problem and not be misdirected by chaos of the surface emotion. Emotions are contagious, so this can be difficult. The salesperson has to understand that anger is an unintelligent emotion and train his mind stay calm and de-escalate the customer's confrontation. The greatest strategy for a salesperson is to know his or her own emotions as well as have knowledge about the emotions of others.

### 3. Show Empathy

Always show concern for the customer's feelings. Maintain a concerned, sincere and interested facial expression. Your voice, as well as your body language and expression, communicates your attitude. Remember, People respond more to how you say something than what you actually say.

By being empathetic and attuned, the salesperson sends a clear message that he understands customer's concerns. Do summarize what's being said so the customer can feel that he or she's being understood. Where required, express sympathy for their unpleasant customer experience. Respect and understanding go a long way toward smoothing things over.

Even if the customer's response seem to be out of proportion, there are ways to be apologetic without just saying 'sorry'. Whether the customer's complaint is legitimate or not is really irrelevant. If you want him or her to *stay a* customer, you need to express an apology for the problem they are having (or perceive to be having). A simple, straightforward statement is often all that's needed: "I'm sorry you're not happy with our product. Let's see what we can do to make things right."

Often, as the customer comes to realize that you really do care and that you are going to attempt to help him resolve the problem, the customer will calm down on his own, and begin to interact with you in a positive way.

#### FEW EMPATHY STATEMENTS

"I WOULD FEEL THE SAME IN YOUR SITUATION, BUT WE WILL SORT THIS OUT...."

"I KNOW HOW FRUSTRATING IT CAN BE – LET'S SEE HOW I CAN HELP YOU...."

*"I can see where the problem is, Sir/Madam what I'm currently doing to help you is..."*

*"I have experienced a similar problem recently, so I understand what you are saying. Let me see what I can do to help you out"*

#### 4. SEEK THE TRUTH IN ALL THINGS

You can't control the way an angry customer raises an issue. However, a perceptive Sales Professional quickly looks beyond that anger and listens to what the customer is saying. Buried in the complaint may be an issue that really *does* need your attention. In other words, just because a customer is rude does not necessarily mean that he or she is wrong.

Once you identify the problem, paraphrase / repeat it back to Customer, so you're sure that you're addressing the right issue. If you need to, ask questions to make sure that you've identified the problem correctly.

Repeating the problem shows the customer you were listening, which can help lower his anger and stress levels. Above all, it helps you agree on the problem that needs to be solved.

#### 5. FIND A SOLUTION, FOLLOW UP AND FOLLOW THROUGH

Once you understand why the customer is unhappy, it is time to offer a solution.

Ask him what he feels should be done or put forward your own fair and realistic answer to the problem. In most cases, that's all the customer is looking for—and may result in providing some degree of satisfaction.

Even if solving the customer's problem isn't among your job duties, never say this to the customer. Get all the facts you can, and then tell the customer how you can help. Sometimes, you won't be able to fix the problem perfectly, and may need more time. But it's critical to leave the irate customer with the understanding that your goal is to resolve the problem.

Then, the most critical part is to follow up with the customer and ensure the problem is resolved. Even if you don't have all the information you need, call when you said you would and let him know what you've done, what you're working on and what your next step will be. Let the customer know that you're working hard to get things fixed.

Finally, don't make promises you can't keep. Get help from someone who knows more, is calmer, or has more power and authority.

After the situation has been resolved and the customer is on her way, it's helpful for you to take your own "time-out." Even if you've handled the situation in the most professional way possible, it's still a stressful experience. Rather than let that stress linger inside you, take a short walk, treat yourself to a snack or find someone to talk to who makes you laugh. Then you'll be ready to once again engage with your customers.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Sirisha is the Author of Best Seller Sales Decoded Book. She is a Sales Leader with 12+ Years' experience in Sales Process Consulting. She specialized in running Sales Operations and possesses extensive experience in Customer Retention and Loyalty. She has handled clients from domestic and International markets.

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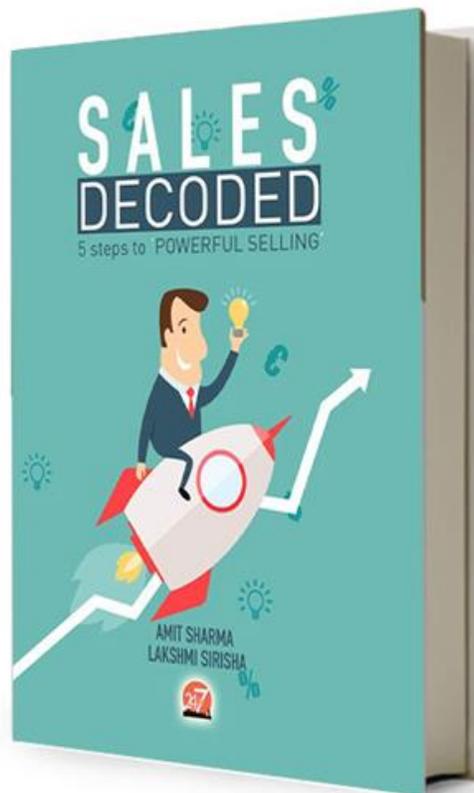
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