Solving Customer Service Problems

Top tips

PRACTICAL TIPS TO HANDLE COMPLAINTS

Every complaint should be dealt with individually, and each organisation will have their own procedures for handling complaints. However, the following are simple steps and advice that can be used and adapted according to the situation:

- Use appropriate body language to show empathy with the customer.
- Use diplomatic phrases to calm angry customers; for example, “This is obviously an unsatisfactory situation” or “I’m sorry that you’re upset about this …so here’s what I’ll do…”
- Apologise for the fact that there has been a problem and show you are taking the customer seriously.
- Do not interrupt the customer.
- Use effective listening skills to get an overview of the problem so you know what action to take next.
- Clarify details by repeating what has been said; for example, “So you say that the delivery van turned up 5 hours late?”
- Make brief notes of the complaint - this will help you identify staff that you may want to talk with later or help if you need to pass the details of the complaint to a colleague.
- Be positive and encourage the customer so they do not feel embarrassed. For example, “Thank you for bringing this to my attention, hopefully I can sort out this situation.”
- Inform the customer of the action you intend to take.
- In serious cases, you will have to explain that you cannot just take the matter at face value and must investigate to confirm the allegations and to deal with the matter fully.

CALMING ANGRY CUSTOMERS

When customers are angry or upset, they usually want to:

- get the problem off their chest
- voice their opinions
- feel they are being listened to
- feel they are being taken seriously
- get the problem sorted out
- feel that their business is valued.

**TIPS FOR CALMING CUSTOMERS DOWN**

The following are some simple ways to calm an angry customer down:

- Listen
- Talk to them
- Show empathy
- Avoid being defensive
- Agree common ground
- Agree to solve their problem

**HANDLING DIFFICULTIES**

If you are in a difficult situation:

- Don’t take it personally
- Don’t argue
- Listen
- Keep your cool
- Ignore insults
- Don’t interrupt
- Get the facts
- Demonstrate concern