

## Rescuing A Customer Relationship



We have likely all dealt with an upset or unhappy customer. Special skills are required to rescue the relationship and with the right approach, a raving mad customer can be turned into a raving fan. But it takes effort and some key skills to salvage the situation.

**STEP 1: PREPARE yourself.** Hearing an unhappy customer's story is never easy, so prepare yourself to listen and hear what the customer has experienced. A good level of self awareness and mental preparation is helpful. Listening requires you to be silent. It requires you

to hear what your customer has to say and restrain yourself from immediately defending yourself, your employees or your company. Be prepared.

**STEP 2: LISTEN to the customer's story.** When you begin the conversation with your customer, treat them with respect. Ask them what hasn't worked out and allow them to tell their story. St Francis of Assisi prayed a prayer that said "grant that I may seek first to understand before I seek to be understood."

**STEP 3: VALIDATE your understanding.** Once you have heard some of what has irritated your customer, paraphrase what you have heard. Exp. "Mrs. Jones, what bothered you is that when our Mechanic came to repair your furnace, he was 90 minutes late, is that correct?" This validation tends to slow things down for your customer and shows them that you are hearing. It also allows them to clarify what else has disappointed them about the service.

**STEP 4: APOLOGIZE.** There may be a good reason why your mechanic was late but don't be concerned about that for now. Apologize to Mrs. Jones that she had to wait 90 minutes and ask what else about the service didn't work out. This will show that you want to hear more and get to the heart of the matter. It allows Mrs. Jones to talk about anything else that needs to be better. It also gives you ideas as to how you can improve your service/product.

**STEP 5: SOLVE the customer's problem.** Once you have a good understanding of what disappointed Mrs. Jones ask her how her issue could be resolved. Their initial solution may not be workable for your organization but keep the conversation going, listening, validating and seeking to find a solution together that will work for both parties. Sometimes it is best just to replace or return the product to restore the relationship.

**STEP 6: THANK your customer for their feedback.** Thank them for the opportunity this has provided for the company to improve its product/service. This turns the dynamic around so that the customer feels vindicated, validated, valued and....helpful!

As Shep Hyken says, a complaining customer can be your best opportunity to show how good you are...and to create a customer evangelist. (source: callcentrehelper.com)

If you are interested in hearing more about customer relationships Client Insight Inc. has rescued [contact us](#)



Client Insight Inc. **Listen - Measure - Improve**, it's a profitability strategy for your company.