

WHAT MORE DO YOU WANT?

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They call...they rant and rave...they complain. If they're really angry, they may call your mother names and threaten never to buy from you again! You told them what you could do. So why don't they seem happy with your solution? The answer is simple -- you offered your solution too early!

Let's stop for a moment and step into our own "customer shoes". Although we're "in the business" of customer care, some of us may forget that we are customers too – every day! We go out for lunch, stop to get gas, pick up our dry cleaning, buy a newspaper. And sometimes we receive less than ideal service. Next, think of the last time you were really angry about a problem you personally had with a product or service? Remember the occasion? Good. Now think about it in more detail. What did you *personally* want or expect from the employee supposedly handling your concern? Odds are you wanted more than just an answer or solution!

We have found that there are typically seven things most angry people want. Some people want more than these seven, some want less. But these are ones that appear most consistently.

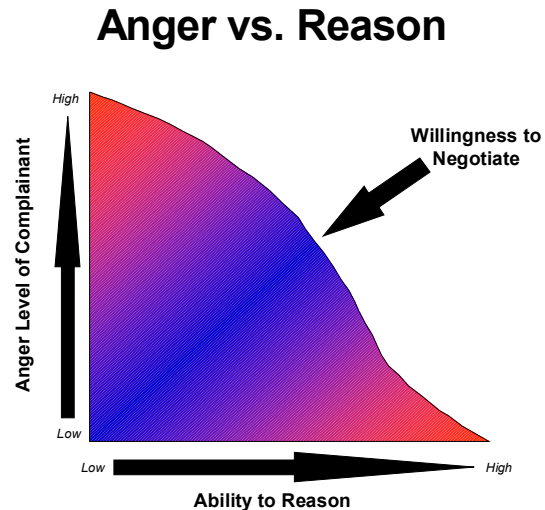
- Want 1. They want to be HEARD. They want you to listen to them. To know why they are unhappy. No interruptions. No attempting to take control of this conversation. They need to ventilate and blow off steam.
- Want 2. They want to be UNDERSTOOD. They want you to understand why they are unhappy. They expect empathy and concern. This requires listening with the "third" ear. The two on each side of your head are obvious. The third ear is your heart (and, hopefully, compassion).

- Want 3. They want to be RESPECTED. They want to be treated as the valuable customer they believe they are. They want to be respected as an individual – not treated as an account number or, worse, a nuisance.
- Want 4. They want an APOLOGY. They want someone to apologize for what happened to them. They want an apology that is sincere, specific to their situation, and offered at the appropriate time in the interaction.
- Want 5. They want to talk to an EMPOWERED AND KNOWLEDGEABLE staff member. They want someone who knows what they are talking about and who doesn't have to escalate or talk to a supervisor in order to assist them.
- Want 6. They want INFORMATION AND/OR AN EXPLANATION. They want to know why something occurred (or didn't as the case may be). They want an explanation that makes sense. And they don't want the explanation to be "it's our policy".
- Want 7. They want CORRECTIVE ACTION (ASAP). And, of course, they want you to correct their problem and they want you to do it immediately!

What often happens is that we offer that solution immediately and we don't take the time to address the other things they want and expect! In other words, we haven't *"fixed" them first*. We took control too early and jumped into problem solving when they weren't ready for it yet! If we would just take a few moments and remember the other wants, it could turn the entire conversation around!

Now, here's the most important thing to remember if we want to win back that caller's goodwill. Let's assume that we are not able to give them Want Number Seven (action, asap). Where we can "win", is by doing a good job of Want Number Six – Offering An Explanation! We need to explain to them why we aren't giving them the action they want. And the explanation you give must make sense! I don't have to *like* your explanation – I need to understand it. If I understand the

reason behind your decision, I may be more likely to give your company another chance!



As the above chart illustrates, there is an inverse relationship between anger (or emotion) and reason. It is extremely difficult to be reasonable and rational with someone who is being unreasonable and irrational. Additionally, it is next to impossible to negotiate or problem solve with someone who is in an emotional state of mind. Therefore, you must lower the emotional level of the caller before going any further.

You may have noticed that we've begun to shift the emphasis from anger to emotion in general. When we talk about defusing anger, we do tend to think of the highly volatile customer and forget that not everyone shows his or her anger in such a manner. There are basically three types of anger and let's look at each in more detail.

- **Passive Anger.** Often, it is difficult to identify this caller. One must listen carefully and completely to his or her statements. Passively angry people may apologize for calling. Or they start off by saying they don't often complain. Or, perhaps, they are joking themselves about their problem. Never make the mistake of joking back! And don't make the mistake of overlooking this customer in terms of the communication skills you use just because they aren't obviously upset to you. His or

her repurchase intention is just as powerful (if not more so than any others)!

- **Problem-Solving/Assertive Anger.** This caller is not difficult to recognize. S/he will let you know right away that they aren't the least bit happy with the situation. S/he will typically tell you what is expected in terms of resolution. This caller is usually the easiest to handle, and responds very well to your strong communication skills.
- **Aggressive Anger.** This is the caller who can ruin our day (if we let them). This is the caller who can scream and yell, use "colorful" language, and/or use every other method available to intimidate us. It is important to remember that this customer can, in fact, be "fixed" as well. We may need to use every communication technique we know, but the majority of these individuals can be brought down to a reasonable level. Noticed that we said the majority of these? That's right. There are some customers who cannot be reasoned with. The important thing to remember here is that they are the minority. Because when you are dealing with aggressive anger, it is important to remember that there are two types of aggressive people. We refer to them as:

"The Customer From Hell"
"The Customer In Hell"

Both of these individual may be exhibiting the exact same behavior. Which is the one who is impossible to help? Of course, it's the "Customer *From Hell*". This individual enjoys being difficult. S/he learned at an early age that they could get their needs met by being loud and obnoxious. The "Customer *In Hell*" either has a legitimate problem (which you may need to "dig" for) or has been given the runaround around enough that they are out of control. You should be able to tell the difference between these two types of anger by answering the following questions.

First, is the behavior chronic? Does this individual have files that are yards long? Do they complain about every thing and/or everyone all the time? Does everyone in your department know

this individual by name? If the answers are yes, then odds you are dealing with a difficult person.

Second, have you used every communication skills word track you know? Have you honestly tried to “fix them” and they refused to let you? Do you feel that you did the best you could with him or her and you never lost your professionalism? If the answers are yes, then let it go! No one can help them. In fact, let them go to your competitor because we’re willing to be that they don’t want them either!

So...the next time...

When they rant and rave...they complain. They’re really angry and call your mother names. They threaten never to buy from you again! Stay away from solving their problem yet. Try to first listen, understand, show respect, offer an apology, be empowered and knowledgeable, and then (only then!) provide information, explanations, and/or offer solutions! Simply put -- “fix the customer, then fix their problem”!