

# Difficult customers essay



Difficult Customers The customer leaned across the counter. " You mean I spend thousands of dollars in here, and I can't return a defective tool? " he said. " Well, the tool isn't really defective," replied the counter salesperson. " So you're calling me a liar? " The customer now had everyone's attention. His loud voice and aggressive manner caused some of the other customers to look at one another and roll their eyes as if to convey the silent message, Oh, one of those difficult people. It was my first week at the counter, and I was leaning toward the customer's point of view. My colleague continued the fight. " No, I'm not calling you a liar.

This is simply normal wear of the tool. It's against the manufacturer's policy to refund for normal wear and tear. " I was now completely on the customer's side. The customer didn't reply immediately, and a silence fell across the room. He straightened up, slowly scanned the other customers, and said in a clear voice said, " People only come here as a last resort. " He turned on the heels of his work boots and marched out of the store. As soon as the door closed, you could feel the air come back into the room. People chuckled rather nervously. Someone said, " Guess it takes all kinds. " " That guy's always a pain," said my co-worker.

And that was the real issue. A different customer would have received a new tool, no questions asked, but because this particular customer wore the " difficult" label, it became his self-fulfilling prophecy to get bad customer service. Difficult customers Some people aren't happy unless they're unhappy. These are the volatile handful known as " difficult customers. " Constantly looking for a flaw in your service, they'll take advantage of your policies by making requests that sometimes border on the absurd. More

importantly, though, they will teach you how to deliver the customer service you promise.

You can learn more from the difficult customer than you could ever learn from your most loyal customers. Difficult customers tell you where it hurts. Listen closely and they will tell you what is missing from your business. They might even suggest what you can do about it. Their feedback can be the most brutal and the most honest gauge of your success. People only come here as a last resort. If you have an abundance of difficult customers, it isn't because you're unlucky. It's because you're doing something wrong. The sooner you figure out what it is and fix it, the sooner you will bring your business back from the precipice of disaster.

True, there will be an occasional customer who has no valid reason to complain but moans and groans anyway. Most of the time, you can resolve the legitimate complaint and the absurd demand. Handling difficult customers may be your biggest challenge in living up to the promise you make of great service. Having a procedure in place for all of your staff to follow is the most effective way to handle this challenge. Here is a four-step plan that may be helpful for dealing with the legitimate customer complaint and even the occasional difficult customer. 1. Never Argue.

This seems to be the toughest rule for distributor salespeople to accept, so let's repeat it, " Never argue. " Even if you win, you lose. Did the counter salesperson in the example win? The customer really did spend thousands of dollars in the store, and he never came back. Who won? 2. Listen Between the Lines. Is there an underlying message to your customer's complaint?

Does he feel cheated, ignored or unappreciated? Mentioning that he spent thousands of dollars probably indicated he felt under-appreciated. 3. Appeal to Your Customer's Sense of Fair Play. Let the customer know that you trust him enough to do what's fair and right.

A question you can use that takes the fire out of most irate customers is, "What would make this right?" If you appeal to a customer's nobler motives, most of the time he will live up to your expectation. What a different outcome it could've been if the counter salesperson had asked this question, instead of stating that the tool wasn't defective. 4. Tell the Customer what you can do. Never say, "That's against company policy." If someone in authority within your company tells you to say that, then you need to reconsider your career with that company. Most customers don't like rules.

Suggest alternatives. The counter salesperson could have been the hero if he'd said, "The manufacturer's policy states that they won't replace this tool. However, that's not our policy. Let me see what we can work out." Talk is cheap Most business owners promise great customer service, but how many actually live up to the talk? Your customers don't care what you have to say. They're watching to see what you do. The limiting factor for most of us is that we don't practice what we preach. Then, when a customer calls us on it, we group him into the "hard-to-please" bunch.

The truth is, no matter how good your customer service, there will always be someone who is unhappy about something. The more unhappy customers you turn into happy customers, the more word will spread that you deliver the great service you promise while others only talk about it. The best advice

ever given to me for dealing with a difficult customer was this: “ Keep your temper — and, above all, let your customer save face. ” [pic] Mike Dandridge is the founder of High Voltage Performance, a consulting firm that specializes in designing customer experiences for the industrial marketplace.

He has 25 years experience in electrical wholesale distribution. You can reach Dandridge at (254) 624-6299 or via e-mail at [email protected] com Visit his Web site at [www. highvoltageperformance. com](http://www.highvoltageperformance.com). How to Calm a Difficult Customer | When dealing with difficult customers, there are words that calm and words that tend to exacerbate unpleasant customer conflicts. | | Review this list, and try to remember to go the calming route when dealing with difficult customers. | | Avoid trigger words: | Use calming words: | | It’s not our policy. Here’s what we can do. | | Can’t. | Can. | | Sorry. | Thank you. | | I don’t know. | I will find out. | | But... | And... | | You should have... | I understand why you... | | The only thing I can do... | The best option, I think, is... |