



Customer Service

Tips for taking the best care of customers

Win back valuable customers with an effective recovery plan

When customers are upset—really upset—about some aspect of your company's products or services, are those customers lost to your company forever? Absolutely not—not if you use service recovery skills to win back their loyalty.

Here are eight steps you can take for successful service recovery:

- **Apologize sincerely.** Use a kind tone of voice and be sure to sound like you mean it. Don't just rattle off the words "I'm sorry" with a robotic tone. Customers will see through any insincerity. And if they sense that you really don't care, they'll become even more upset.

- **Ask customers what hap-**

pened. Tell them "I want to know exactly what went wrong so I can help you." Gather as many details as you can. Arming yourself with information puts you in a better position to solve the problem effectively.

- **Let customers have their say.** Encourage them to give you the full story by saying "Yes" and "I see" and "Go on" from time to time. When customers know you care enough to listen, their faith in your company will begin to be restored.

- **Let them know they have a friend in you.** Win their trust by saying: "You're in good hands. I'm going to do everything I can to make this right."

- **Ask them what they'd like.** Customers often have definite ideas about how to turn their unhappiness around. For example, they want a poor-quality product replaced or a full refund. Asking them what they want shows your concern for their needs and expectations.

- **Invite them to play a part in the solution.** If customers aren't sure what they want you to do for them, create a team feeling by saying "we" and giving them choices.

Example: "We have a couple

of options here. I could send you a new electric fan, give you a credit or refund your money. Which option would you prefer?" If the customer still isn't sure, you could say: "I can call you back this afternoon if you'd like to think this over. How does that sound?"

- **Deliver what you promise.** When you've identified the right solution, promise to follow through promptly—then do just that. Failing to fulfill your promise will destroy your service recovery efforts. You'll have built up customers' expectations only to smash them to smithereens.

And you can bet that those customers won't do business with your company again.

- **Follow up to ensure satisfaction.** One last step that will really win back customers' loyalty is to call them a few days after you've sent them a refund or a replacement product (or whatever solution you agreed on).

Tell them you want to make sure they're completely satisfied with the results. That's a powerful way to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that you care about customers' feelings and needs. □

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