

The Golden Method

The Psychology of Anger



1. Anger precludes rationality

Angry customers simply cannot rationalize. This is because they are so wrapped up in the emotion of anger that everything you say is filtered through their emotions. Anger is an emotion and emotions are experienced in the right side of the brain. Rationalizing, problem solving, listening, and negotiating are all left-brain activities and your angry customer is stuck in the right side of the brain, and therefore cannot be expected to rationalize with you.

Research has shown that an approach to problem solving that emphasizes anger diffusion first results in a lesser payout by the company.

Warning:

Do not attempt to problem-solve or even offer a concrete solution —such as a credit or a gift card— to an angry customer. Certainly, you don't want to negotiate with an angry customer. If you do try to problem-solve or negotiate with an emotional customer, you will almost always have to offer more than you would, had you first diffused anger. . . your first task with an angry customer is to diffuse anger and create calm. You will be far more successful if you first create calm.

2. Anger must be acknowledged

It's not productive for you to ignore anger or tip-toe around it. There is something known as the communication chain. When people communicate, they expect the person or persons they are communicating with to respond or react. . . this response or reaction is a link in the communication chain. A failure to respond to communication leaves the communication chain unlinked.

For example, If I walk into my office and say... "Hello Sherry, how are you?"and she says absolutely nothing, she's broken the communication chain. And that leaves me feeling awkward, perhaps embarrassed.

If a customer expresses anger and we fail to respond to it, the communication chain is broken and the customer feels like they are not getting through, that you are not listening.

So, the customer may speak louder to make his or her point. They might become even angrier and more difficult; as they are resorting to whatever it takes to feel heard and understood.

You can keep your angry customers from getting angrier by acknowledging their anger and responding to it. You can respond to anger with a statement like,

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“Clearly you’re upset and I want you to know that getting to the bottom of this is just as important to me as it is to you.”

This statement directly and professionally addresses anger –without- making the customer even angrier. Now that the anger has been acknowledged, you have completed the communication chain.

3. The issue is not the issue.

In conflict situations, the issue at hand is not usually the real issue. The way the issue is handled becomes the real issue. What really matters to customers is not the \$2 overcharge or the fact their order for cranberry red paint is actually holly berry red. What does matter is how the company responds and resolves the issue. That becomes the real issue.

Always work hard to offer a solution that demonstrates a sense of urgency, is laced with empathy, includes a sincere apology, and clearly conveys that the getting to the bottom of the problem is as important to you as it is to the customer. When you do this, not only will you solve the problem the customer experienced, but you will create calm and regain customer goodwill.

4. Ventilation is crucial.

An Angry customer can be compared to an erupting volcano. When a volcano is erupting, there is nothing you can do about it. You can’t speed up the eruption, you can’t put a lid on it, and you cannot direct or redirect it. . it must erupt. When a customer is angry, they must experience and express their anger. . through venting. We should not interrupt them or tell them to calm down. This would be as futile as trying to tame a volcano. A volcano erupts and eventually subsides. Your angry customer will vent and eventually calm down.

Always let anger customers vent. In most cases, your customer will only need to vent for fifteen to thirty-five seconds.

Now that you know that anger precludes rationality and that anger has to be responded to, make sure you don’t ignore the customer’s expression of anger and that you always work to diffuse anger and create calm before beginning the problem resolution process.

When you do this, you’ll quickly find yourself responding to anger with much more ease and confidence.

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