TURNING CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS INTO CUSTOMER COMPLIMENTS

It’s not fun to be around unhappy, angry, or complaining people, but it will happen. Whether it’s your spouse, coworker, or customer, you will encounter many situations where people will dump their problems on you.

There’s good news, however. If you know what to do and how to respond, you can turn people around. Here’s what you do.

*Listen without interruption.* Don’t fight back. When a customer is allowed to tell his story, his anger dissipates.

*Remain mentally detached.* Just remember, the customer is attacking a situation and not you personally.

*Show you are sorry.* You are not admitting error, just letting the customer know you regret the situation, no matter what the reason or where the fault lies.

*Demonstrate your empathy.* Once the customer has calmed down a bit, let her know you understand how she must feel. Say something like “I can see how disappointing it must have been to get home and find out the product didn’t work.”

*Call the customer by name.* At first chance, ask the customer her name and write it down. Use her name during your conversation. Names focus people on the present, not the past situation that originally upset her.

*Get more information.* Ask non-threatening, non-defensive questions to break the customer’s tirade. He will have to stop, think, calm down, and answer. At the same time, you’re getting
the information you need to understand the scope and nature of the problem. And be sure to repeat back the information conveyed to you to make sure you understand.

*Ask her what she wants.* Ask the customer what you can do to make the situation right. Sometimes a customer just wants to blow off steam but doesn’t expect anything to be done. In that case, you have helped by listening and understanding the dissatisfaction. If the customer wants something more, be sure you understand exactly what she is asking for.

*Give him what he wants.* In most cases it’s possible to give the customer what he wants. And if you do so, studies show that 95% of your customers will buy again if you resolve the problem immediately. If the customer’s request is impossible, explain what you can and cannot do. Offer alternative solutions.

*Set up a plan and do it.* Once an alternative is decided upon, set up a course of action that is agreeable to the customer. Be specific about what will occur and when: “I will talk to the service department this afternoon and get your refund in tomorrow’s mail.” Act promptly to carry out your promise before other work gets in the way and distracts you.

*Provide a touch point.* Apologize again. Let the customer know you are truly sorry the situation occurred. Offer your name and telephone number so your customer has a “personal contact” should there be additional questions about this or any other situation.

*Check back with the customer.* Whenever possible, follow-up with the customer to see that the solution has been satisfactory. Let the customer know you appreciated the opportunity to make things right and that you appreciate the continued business.
There’s no bigger drain on energy and profits than unhappy family members, coworkers or customers. But you don’t have to feel helpless, beat up, bewildered or defensive if you follow the process I’ve outlined.

In fact, if you want to get really good at handling difficult situations, book one of my programs for your organization. They’re excellent. The results have always been extremely positive. Give me a call.