

DELIVERING GREAT CUSTOMER SERVICE

The American Association for Quality said, “Unless a customer is completely satisfied to the point of being positively delighted and willing to brag about the product or service received, there exists a great potential for market damage and future trouble for the provider of those products and services.”

The American Association for Quality conducted a large survey of customers throughout the country and came up with the following reasons why customers are lost.

Die	1%
Moved away	3%
Influenced by friends	5%
Lured away by the competition	9%
Dissatisfied with the product	14%
Turned away by an attitude of indifference on the part of the person serving them	68%

The problem we have is that only 4% of dissatisfied customers complain. The other 96% just quietly go away and never return. That represents a serious financial loss for the organisations whose people do not know how to treat customers, and a tremendous gain to those that do.

A typical dissatisfied customer will tell eight to ten people about the problem. One in five will tell twenty. It takes twelve positive service incidents to make up for one negative incident.

Seven out of ten complaining customers will do business with you again if you resolve the complaint in their favour. If you resolve it on the spot, 95% will do business with you again. On average, a satisfied complainer will tell five people about the problem and how it was satisfactorily resolved.

The average business spends six times more to attract new customers than it does to keep existing ones. Yet customer loyalty is in most cases worth ten times the price of a single purchase.

So what do you do when a customer complains?

1. Listen completely and carefully – don't interrupt, don't leap to the defence of your company – remember the complaint is customers perception
2. Get the facts – don't blame a computer, colleagues or the company
3. Apologise – Say, "I'm sorry" and take personal responsibility for fixing the problem
4. Offer assurance – tell the customer what you are going to do and when you will do it.
5. Explain the change – tell the customer what has been done to ensure this cannot occur again
6. Follow-up – Phone the customer in 1 week or 1 month etc to check on progress and see if there have been any other problems.

Those offering great customer service will learn from the complaints and use them to guide improvements. They are an opportunity to improve and to develop better relationships with your customers.