



Sales Coach Series

First published in Infomatics

Working with angry customers

First published on 01/08/2001

The Dilemma

Customers sometimes experience problems with our service and are quite irate by the time they escalate them to me. How can I better manage these difficult situations?

The Coaching

Irate behaviour will provoke an emotional response in you. Often we act on this without thinking. Instead, take control and decide what to say based on rational assessment of the situation.

- Think 'win-win' - try to understand their point of view and work towards a solution that meets both your needs.
- Let them state their case - if you interrupt, disagree or defend yourself it has just become a debate or argument.
- Listen objectively, encourage them to explain the problem and look for the 'real' issues you need to attend to.
- Be empathic - reflect back that you understand how the situation is adversely affecting them.
- Don't take criticism personally but do take personal responsibility and ownership for resolving their problem - and do what you say you'll do!
- Don't pass the buck or blame others - we all know how infuriating that is! If you are at fault say so and apologise. Honesty such as this goes a long way towards diffusing a situation.
- Offer more than one option to resolve the problem if you can - and involve others if you need to.
- If you are not clear what they want you to do then ask - sometimes nothing can be done this time - the customer simply wants you to take action to prevent it recurring.

Finally, remember that problems aren't the problem - it's what you do about them that matters - and many customer relationships grow stronger as a result!