

TIPS FOR DEALING WITH ANGRY CLIENTS

Clients and customers come in all shapes and sizes. But perhaps the most difficult for everyone is the angry customer. This is someone who feels that he or she has been wronged, and is upset and emotional about it. Here are 18 quick tips for dealing with an angry customer or client:

1. Manage your own emotions; say to yourself, "I will not lose control, I will respect this customer and steer the conversation toward facts and problem-solving."
2. Put yourself in the client's situation and let the client vent appropriately. Listen for the source of the frustration.
3. Use I-statements to show empathy; for example, "I hear you. It sounds like you are angry; I understand this must be frustrating for you. I want to help."
4. Express your feelings about the situation; say, "I am frustrated by this too."
5. Ask fact-based questions to understand their problem better and to find out what it will take to help them.
6. Listen without interrupting; use open, approachable body language.
7. Say "Thank you for telling me about this. Let's see what we can do to fix it."
8. Use a warm apology for a perceived error or problem, say "I apologize you are experiencing XYZ problem." Avoid pleading, "I am profoundly and eternally sorry for all of the problems we continue to cause you."
9. Agree with them if at all possible. Don't try to defend yourself or justify the situation or your actions; never argue or get angry.
10. Take notes and confirm back that everything has been covered and that they have said all they want/need to say.
11. Be an ambassador for your company and show personal accountability. Tell the client you will personally handle it.
12. Avoid blaming the customer in any way and avoid passing the buck. "Someone else handles that," is a response that is rarely acceptable to a client.
13. Respond immediately. When something is wrong, people want it fixed without delay.
14. Turn the problem into an opportunity; talk about what is possible; focus on strengths and paint "what if" scenarios.
15. Use humor if possible. Making people laugh puts them at ease.
16. Agree upon a solution. Give the client choices if possible. Confirm it and then do it.
17. Take personal responsibility for following up after the situation is resolved.
18. Business is all about relationships. Write a personalized follow-up letter to renew the client's loyalty. When possible, thank the customer or client for helping you to modify a process that was ineffective.

