

B2B: 5 Tips on Managing Your Customer's Complaints or the 5 'S' Rules

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We, brave client managers, are always keeping an eye on customer satisfaction. We communicate regularly, we clarify our goals, and we update our status and strive to maintain a high team spirit. Everything is done on and on to keep our customer happy.

But what if one happy spring morning your customers changed their tune and started calling your company with the idea that your service is not good enough and saying they are considering breaking the contract?

Here is my answer:

Smile. Smile is the first important point from the 5 "S" rules. Of course, the customer is always right (or almost always), and every time he expects top grade service, so you really should smile even if you do not want to. Moreover, scientists say even forcing yourself to smile can cheer you up and help to solve not only the customer's problems but yours as well. Just look into the mirror, smile and say: "I will be happy to help you" and you will be surprised to see the world more positively.

Show Sense — learn to hear your client. Very often, when communicating we listen but don't hear each other. Being stressed or obsessed with our own thoughts or inventing a smart answer to your interlocutor's nasty words, we fail to spot the key obstacles.

Focus on the customer's words, not on emotions. Put down the key points of his speech, his demands and hopes, not the number of his mistakes. Let him speak up. Chances are, after seeing that he's been listened to attentively, your customer will let you have a word and tell him your version of the story. The rules of active listening are simple: don't interfere, make him understand you are interested, give him back a response ("Yes, I see your point, I understand). Keep a pen and paper at hand to put down the main ideas of your discussion, so

you will easily keep up with it even a week later, or clarify a certain item after your interlocutor has spoken up, or report to your superior correctly without losing the point.

Specify and verify. Make sure you've understood your interlocutor's words correctly. In case there is an opportunity tell him what he wants in your own words: "If I got it right... If I'm not mistaken..." Sum up the essence of the discussion. Don't be afraid to ask questions — you won't make an impression of a simpleton but rather a reliable person interested in solving the problem.

In my opinion, the most important thing in a discussion with a client is not to fall into a "sandpit technique," as I call it because it reminds me of a children's quarrel in kindergarten: for each argument you give a counterargument "but I...", "but our rules...", "but other clients...". You will only exasperate your client this way. Don't try to impress him with your experience. If the customer has not believed in it, he wouldn't sign the contract with you.

Don't be afraid to waste your time having a long conversation. It's better to find out the entire question from the very beginning than to increase your customer's irritation by missing an important point. In this case it will be much more difficult to cope with the situation.

Satisfy — give the client this special feeling. Let the client know that you are with him and ready to help. Don't be afraid to repeat that you will be glad to be of service, happy to bring something to the table. Tell him what you are going to do, what measures you are going to take. Offer specific but various solutions. Don't let your customer get the impression that you just informed him. Let him decide which variant will be better for him. Let him or her feel involved. Try to use such phrases as "let's decide.., let's have a look together.., let's choose the best variant".

Say thank you. All's well that ends well. And this goes with the conversation with a client. Now the customer is nearly satisfied, so help him to stay in this mood. Thank him for calling, promise to get back with the news (and don't forget to do it later!). A joke or a compliment will also be appropriate. Believe me, your sociability, amiability and client-centeredness will serve the good turn and maybe save from flubs in the future.

And don't forget the first "S": smile!

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