

# Using assertiveness with Difficult Customers

Difficult customers come in several varieties, including:

- Angry
- Impatient
- Intimidating
- Talkative
- Demanding
- Indecisive

## Dealing with everyone in the same professional way

First, realise you can't control anyone else's behaviour. You have control only over your own actions but you can influence how customers respond to you to some degree.

## Tips for handling tough customers:

- **Get Control of Yourself**

Never argue with a customer when they are angry, displeased or complaining. If you allow a customer to push your buttons and lose control of yourself, you've lost control of the situation.

- **Listen and Let the Customer Vent**

Tune in to the customer, the customer wants to be listened to, acknowledged and understood.

Maintain eye contact.

Show your attentiveness by standing or sitting up straight.

Uncross your arms -- this indicates you are listening with an open mind.

Let the customer speak, and pay close attention. Repeat or paraphrase some of what you hear.

- **Show the Customer You Care**

Show concern for the customer's feelings.

Maintain a concerned, sincere and interested facial expression.

Your voice, as well as your body language and expression, communicates your attitude.

## People respond more to how you say something than what you say

If a customer tries to intimidate you, stay calm and ask,

*'What can we do to help?'*

This kind of question can also help you get away faster from a chatty, finicky or confused customer who monopolises your time

- **Don't Blame the Customer or the Company**

When explaining a policy or trying to clarify what went wrong, use an indirect approach

*'There are a few questions I'd like to ask you before I respond directly to your point(s)/concerns'*

Use 'I' statements as much as possible to acknowledge that you are your company and want to help.

- **Try to Solve the Problem, or Get Someone Who Can**

Get all the facts you can, and then tell the customer how you can help.

Before you offer solutions, ask the customer how he would like the problem to be resolved.

Offer choices whenever possible.

Don't make promises you can't keep.

- **Don't Take It Personally**

We know that some customers will be difficult no matter what so don't take it personally.

Remember that helping customers is your job. Make sure your attitude always says  
*'I'm here to help as best I can'*

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