

Turn Customer Complaints Into More Sales

By Bob Leduc

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Customer complaints can cause you to lose future sales from customers and from everybody else who hears about their bad experience. Or you can turn customer complaints into more sales from these same customers and the people they influence. How you handle your customers' complaints determines which of these two results you get.

Here are 7 simple actions you can take to turn customer complaints into more sales.

1. PLAN FOR COMPLAINTS

You can never eliminate every customer complaint. Some mistakes happen regardless of how carefully you try to prevent them. Expect to get a few complaints periodically. It's part of operating a business.

Handle complaints with a positive attitude. Strive to preserve your relationship with the complaining customer instead of your immediate profit from them. Make your customer happy now and they will reward you later with more sales.

2. MAKE RESOLVING COMPLAINTS A PRIORITY

Surprise your customer with a quick response to their complaint. If you cannot solve the problem immediately, let them know you consider it a priority. Then do whatever you can to resolve the problem fast.

The longer a customer has to worry about getting their problem solved the less likely they will accept a satisfactory solution and remain your customer.

3. CONDUCT YOURSELF PROFESSIONALLY

Conduct yourself professionally even when a complaining customer does not. Complaining customers sometimes act hostile because they expect you to resist solving their problem. You can calm their hostility by letting them know you genuinely want to help them. Assure them you will do everything possible to solve their problem.

4. TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

Take responsibility for resolving your customer's complaint even if the problem was not your fault. Apologize for the inconvenience. Briefly explain the probable cause of the problem. Then tell your customer exactly what you will do to correct it.

Don't focus on blaming someone else for the problem. It sounds like an excuse. And never stretch the truth in your response to a complaint. Making excuses and explaining something the customer suspects is inaccurate can destroy your credibility.

5. COMPENSATE YOUR CUSTOMER FOR THE INCONVENIENCE

Complaining customers hope they can get a satisfactory solution to their problem. But they often expect to get something less.

Surprise them by solving their problem AND giving them something extra to compensate them for their inconvenience. This helps customers forget about the problem they had. Instead, they will remember the special attention you gave them.

6. FOLLOW UP TO CONFIRM SATISFACTION

After solving your customer's problem, follow up to confirm their satisfaction with the outcome. This reinforces your relationship with the customer.

TIP: Once you confirm the customer is pleased with the way you resolved their complaint, give them a special offer not generally available to other customers or prospects. Offer them a special discount on their next transaction. Or offer to include a special bonus item with their next order. This motivates them get back into the habit of buying from you.

7. TAKE ACTION TO PREVENT SIMILAR COMPLAINTS

After resolving a customer complaint, try to identify exactly what caused it. A complaint often reveals some

weaknesses in your business procedure. Many times this weakness is minor and you can easily correct it to avoid similar complaints in the future.

Customer complaints can cause you to lose future sales from customers and from everybody else who listens to their sad story. Don't let that happen to you. Use these 7 simple actions to turn your customers' complaints into more sales.

Bob Leduc is a Sales Consultant with 30 years experience in building successful businesses. He just released a revised and completely updated New Edition of his manual, "How To Build Your Small Business Fast With Simple Postcards", and several other publications to help small businesses grow and prosper. For more information:

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