

Illawarra Small Business Assistance

HELPFUL HINT – RESOLVING CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS

If you think your customer service standards are so good that you don't get complaints then you really need to think again!

It's inevitable that at some stage you will receive customer complaints.

Don't overlook the fact that such complaints may be passive in nature and result in your customers demonstrating their dissatisfaction by voting with their feet and going elsewhere. Also, think about the impact of how many others they may tell about the problem they have festered over – complaining customers of whatever nature generally spread the word to other existing or potential customers and in a very short space of time. Sadly, you may never hear a whisper about it or at least not until your business starts to become notorious for poor customer service.

Sure, if you have great service standards and follow-up systems the risks of such complaints being major is not high but you still need to recognize they may happen, how they may happen and how to be prepared if they do happen.

Some of the best strategies to avoid the passive complaint involve making it quite open and clear that you welcome feedback and prefer to have your customers tell you about any problems they may be experiencing rather than them spreading them around the marketplace.

Despite the inferred negative connotation of publicizing your approach to problem management, a positive attitude and approach combined with an effective system for handling complaints can become a competitive advantage and help to win you loyal lifetime customers. A major requirement is that regardless of the situation, it's essential that you do everything possible to resolve complaints as soon as they arise.

There are a number of recorded frameworks for dealing with complaints. The one that I have found most helpful is designed to **RESOLVE** problems as follows:

Remain calm and in control. Listen attentively and adopt an amiable approach

Empathy – put yourself in their shoes and see the situation from their perspective

Sympathise – let your customer know that they have your full attention.

- O** vercome the tension and stress by assuring the customer you want to address and improve the situation
- L** egitimate – prove your honest intentions by fixing the problem quickly
- V** erify that everything is clearly settled by following-up within an acceptable timeframe
- E** nsure your systems and procedures and policies are strengthened to ensure against a reoccurrence

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