

The ABCs of Service Recovery **©copyright by Robert (Bob) W. Lucas**

Customer loyalty is a cherished thing in days of global competition, better educated consumers and easy access through the Internet to products and services. One way to help ensure that you gain it from your customers is to consistently look for ways to better deliver service and to meet the needs of your customers. Additionally, when things do not go as expected, such as a product or delivery failure or defect, you should immediately try to remedy the situation. You can do this by “making your customer whole” again. In other words by not only giving them what you promised or advertised but also going beyond and compensating them for their loss or inconvenience. Such efforts are termed service recovery and there are many ways to accomplish it depending on the nature and size of your business or organization.

The following ABCs of service recovery may help when things go wrong when dealing with customers.

Ask customers what you can do to remedy the problem or situation.

Be willing to spend extra time, effort and money to compensate customers.

Check to make sure that what you are offering satisfies their needs before ending the interaction.

Deliver more than what you promise to customers – under promise and over deliver!

Examine the cause of the breakdown and immediately fix it so that the problem is not repeated with other customers.

Find ways to make your service exceptional and better than competitors.

Give customers the benefit of the doubt and do not argue when they bring something to your attention.

Have a number of preplanned strategies or information pieces available to use with customers.

Implement a strategy of thinking like your customers and try to view products and services from their standpoint to identify things that need improvement.

Join with other employees in striving to send a message of *Customers are Our Most Important Goal*.

Keep a log of issues resolved so that you and others can learn from mistakes.

Learn to spot potential problems before they occur and correct them without being told by a supervisor or customer.

Manage all customer situations through the use of positive interpersonal communication and body language.

Nurture each customer as you would anything precious to you.

Offer to compensate a customer who has suffered from a service breakdown before they have to ask “What are you going to do about this?”

Practice service recovery techniques periodically with your co-workers through role play.

Quit looking for “can’t dos” and focus on “can dos” when explaining things to customers.

Remember that customers are your reason for being there.

Start each day with an affirmation that you will do whatever it takes to satisfy your customers.

Take time to relax and distress after any unpleasant customer interaction.

Use information and non-verbal cues sent by customers to help determine the impact of recovery efforts when you interact with an emotional customer.

Verify that you have a good understanding of a problem before you launch into recovery efforts.

Watch for opportunities to reassure the customer that the issue will be taken care of by you (or whoever is the appropriate service provider).

“**X**plain” exactly what you will do and when you will do it to remedy a problem.

Yield to the customer if they interrupt you to add additional information that might help you better understand the problem and reduce their emotional level.

Zest for quality service and customer satisfaction is crucial for your success and that of your organization – display it regularly!

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