



57 Phrases to De-escalate Any Angry Customer

A New Guide from Myra Golden

MyraGolden.com

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"I was very pleased with Myra's presentation. But even more so, I was left with a sense of new energy and desire to put her recommendations to use. I can't wait for Monday!"

— TIM O'LAUGHLIN, THE COCA-COLA COMPANY

Phrases for Acknowledging the Customer's Feelings

Let's start with some powerful phrases to move your customer out of the emotional right brain. Moving your customers out of the right brain calms them down faster and makes your job much easier!

01

"I realize how frustrating this must be for you."

02

"I can see why you're upset about this."

03

"It sounds like this has been a really challenging situation for you."

04

"I can see your point on that."

05

"I'm sorry to hear that you're feeling this way."

06

"Thank you for sharing that with me."

07

"I'd feel the same way in your shoes."

Phrases for When You Must Give the Customer Bad News

Often, when we give customers bad news, they escalate in intensity, so we need the best phrases for telling customers what they don't want to hear. Try these phrases when you have to give your customer bad news.

08

"Regrettably, it is not possible for us to fulfill your request in this instance because _____. (It's against FDA regulations/your warranty doesn't cover this, etc.)"

09

"I know this is not what you want to hear, but we cannot provide the solution you want."

10

"I understand that this is not the outcome you were hoping for, and I'm sorry for any inconvenience it may cause."

11

"While I wish we could do more, we cannot accommodate your request."

12

"I'm sorry to inform you that we cannot provide the assistance you're seeking."

Phrases for When the Customer is Cussing or Being Inappropriate

Sometimes, it may be necessary to set boundaries with the customer to maintain a respectful and productive conversation. This may include asking the customer to avoid using inappropriate language or speaking more respectfully. Here are some ways to set boundaries and expectations.

13

"I'm sorry. I can't help while listening to that language. If it stops, I can help."

14

"I'm trying to help you, but the language is getting in the way."

15

"If a few minutes help you calm down before continuing, that would be fine. You can certainly call us back."

16

Limit your responses to simple assurances, "I see" or "Um-hm."

17

"I'm trying to help you, but if you continue to yell (or swear/interrupt me), I will ask you to call back again."

18

"I understand you're upset, but I kindly ask that you refrain from using inappropriate language during our conversation."

19

"I am happy to help you, but I ask that you respectfully speak to me."

Phrases for Customers Who Want to Talk to Your Manager

Customers are quick to ask to talk to a supervisor, but you don't have to transfer the caller to your manager immediately. You can confidently offer one time to help. Here's what you can say:

20

"Will you first give me a chance to help you? That's why I'm here."

21

"I understand that you're requesting to speak with a manager. I'm confident in my ability to assist you, but if you would still like to speak with a manager, I will do my best to connect you. Do you mind if I try to help you first?"

Phrases for When You're Offering Your Customer Options

The more options your customer has, the more likely they will back down and accept your solution. So we've got to get great at presenting alternatives. Try these phrases.

22

Try the Feel, Felt, Found Method:

"I can relate to how you feel. My daughter has a walnut allergy, and like you, I have to know what's in the food my daughter eats. We've had other customers share your concern; they felt like you do. Here's what we found helped them. Our labels list all known allergens. While our other customers couldn't get the full ingredient list, they could spot the specific ingredients known to trigger an allergy because all labels list every ingredient with a known allergic reaction."

23

"Here's what we can do for you..."

24

"I have a few suggestions to help resolve this issue."

25

"Would you be open to exploring some alternative solutions?"

26

"We have a few options available to meet your needs."

27

"I'd like to present some potential solutions for your consideration."

Phrases to End a Circular Conversation with Your Customer

When you want to end a circular conversation with an upset customer, I want you to say:

"We realize this is frustrating for you."

{Then explain why you can't honor the request and offer the next steps.}

28

Example: "We realize this is frustrating for you, and I'd like to explain. Not only is an unplanned stop not feasible with scheduling, but regulation also doesn't allow it. We're regulated by the State of Washington and the Utility Transportation Commission and must abide by planned routes. What we can do is pick up your recycling on June 19th."

"We won't be able to _____."

29

Example: "We don't negotiate our fees. We won't be able to work together on this. I hope you find the perfect facilitator for your retreat and that the event is a complete success."

"I respect your opinion."

{Then explain why you can't honor the request.}

30

Example: "I respect your opinion. Our company policy is not to pay claims involving consumer error. We have a responsibility to the company to uphold the integrity of our products. As long as a product performs as expected and has no defects, we cannot accept responsibility and provide financial assistance."

Phrases to End a Circular Conversation with Your Customer

When you want to end a circular conversation with an upset customer, I want you to say:

31

"We cannot _____"
{Then explain why you can't honor the request.}

Example: "We cannot refill your expired contact lens prescription. The FDA regulates us, and the FDA does not allow us to refill expired contact lenses. To purchase contact lenses, you must see an optometrist annually. Can I schedule an appointment for you now, or do you prefer to call us back?"

32

"To prevent this from happening in the future, I'd like to _____:

Example: "To prevent this from happening in the future, I'd like to give you some tips on how to care for your Flex band. When we disconnect, I'll send you our care instructions."

33

"I agree _____, regrettably that's not possible because _____"

Example: "I agree that we need to get someone to look at your lawn as quickly as possible. Regrettably, all our Technicians and Managers are out serving other customers now, and the schedule for the remainder of the day is full. We can book a technician for you tomorrow at 8:00 am. Will that work?"

Phrases for Saying 'I'm Sorry' Without Admitting Fault

One of the easiest and quickest ways to diffuse anger and regain goodwill with unhappy customers is to say, "I'm sorry." You want to offer genuine regret, yet be careful not to throw the company under the bus or assume fault. Here are some safe ways to say "I'm sorry" to a customer.

34

"I'm sorry for any frustration this has caused you."

35

"I'm sorry you had to make this call today, yet I'm glad I was able to help."

36

"I'm sorry for any misunderstanding this has caused."

37

"I'm sorry we didn't deliver the level of service you expected and deserve."

Phrases for Managing Expectations

It's always a good idea to ensure your customer has a clear expectation of what you can do and what happens next. Assumptions and miscommunications will only make things with a difficult customer even harder. Manage expectations this way.

38

"I will do my best to help you, but I cannot guarantee a specific outcome."

39

"I will do everything I can to help you, but finding a resolution may take some time."

40

"Please understand that there may be limitations to what I can do in this situation."

41

"While I cannot promise a specific outcome, I assure you I will do my best to help you."

42

"I appreciate your patience as we work together to find a solution."

Phrases for Denying a Request Based on Policy

When saying no to a customer, it's important to do so in a way that is respectful and empathetic. One technique for saying no is to acknowledge the customer's request and explain why it is not possible to fulfill. Here are some great phrases I've written for clients on how to deny a request based on policy.

43

Acknowledge the denial's impact on the customer

"I'm sorry for any inconvenience this may cause you."

44

Be assertively clear

"Because your licensing requirements weren't followed, penalties have been assessed. TDI will not renew any license until all penalties are met and cleared."

45

Present options

"We realize this isn't what you wanted to hear, but we may have options for you."

46

Explain how the policy benefits the customer

"The FDA mandates our prescription process. We must see patients every 12 months before writing a prescription. This is to ensure the health of your eyes through regular examinations."

47

Uphold the policy

"It is our company policy that we cannot pay a claim that involves consumer error. We have a responsibility to the company to uphold the integrity of our products and accordingly cannot offer a refund or replacement."

Phrases for Showing Empathy to Unhappy Customers

Empathy conveys genuine concern and validates the customer's experience. Here are several empathy statements that validate customers when things have gone wrong.

48

"I realize this has to be frustrating for you." This statement acknowledges the customer's pain point outright.

Instead of saying, "I understand you're upset," or "I understand you're angry," I prefer to use the word "frustrate." It's not as emotionally charged and does not minimize the customer's feelings.

49

"I want to get to the bottom of this just as much as you do."

When you make this statement, you're putting yourself on the same side of the issue as your customer. This alignment helps you preempt an escalation.

50

"I can see why your point on that."

51

"I'm sorry about the wait. We're short-staffed, but still, I'm sorry."

52

"I'd be upset, too."

This acknowledgment instantly puts you on the customer's side!

Phrases for Showing Empathy to Unhappy Customers

Empathy conveys genuine concern and validates the customer's experience. Here are several empathy statements that validate customers when things have gone wrong.

53

"You deserved a lot better from us, and we let you down."

Use this statement when the company has clearly made a mistake.

54

"If I were in your position, I'd feel like you."

55

"I know you're anxious to see this completed."

56

"I know this isn't the same as having a perfect _____, but I hope it shows you how sorry we are."

This statement is ideal when offering a discount or credit after a problem.

57

"I'm sorry you've had to call multiple times about the same issue. - My goal is to get this resolved on this phone call."

These de-escalation phrases will work for you. Customers, even the most difficult among them, respect confident, assertive professionals who say what they mean, mean what they say, without being mean when they say it. The more you practice assertive communication, the easier setting boundaries and getting customers to accept your word as final gets. I can't wait to see your success in getting angry customers to back down and wrapping conversations faster!

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