

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1254 Customer Service Recovery: More

Yesterday, I related an experience where a server made a mistake which contributed to a less than ideal dinner, and what he did to turn the whole thing around into a win-win for me and the restaurant. I'm Jerry Roberts and today we have more on customer service recovery. That's next on The Extra Point.

I had gone to a restaurant for dinner before attending an event. Things didn't turn out so well. I had to send the meal back twice before it was right, and then I didn't have enough time to eat it. The server saved the day by not charging me for the meal, and then giving me a card for a free dinner for two.

That was important because it created a path for me to have a good experience and maybe become a regular customer. He turned a forgettable experience into a memorable one. Download transcript #1253 at guamtraining.com if you want the full story.

A customer service mistake can be an embarrassing and costly experience. It can damage relationships with customers and create negative opinions about your business.

When such things occur, you want staff to launch into what is called recovery mode. They take steps to rectify the problem and then turn things around into a positive. The idea is to salvage the relationship and end on a high note.

It all starts with a sense of accountability. The mindset has to be, "I am taking ownership of this situation and will engineer the best outcome possible."

After that, a sincere apology shows that you care about the customer's experience. Add that you're going to help or find the right person who will. Now, the customer can relax, knowing that the issue is being handled.

Sincerely apologizing also helps to rebuild trust and loyalty with the customer.

The second step is to listen to the customer. Ask questions to understand the situation from their perspective, and what they expect from you. This is where that all-important active listening takes place.

If you've listened for the single purpose of understanding and not because you're waiting on the customer to take a breath so you can respond, then you should have a clear picture of how to proceed and what action is needed, which is step three.

Let's focus on this action part for a moment. Guam has long been notorious for managers not letting frontline workers handle problems when money is involved. Too many workers don't have the authority to make things right. They have to wait for a manager to approve a change.

This isn't good. The customer has to wait. The worker feels he/she isn't trusted. And did I mention that the customer has to wait? Look, if you don't trust a worker to make the correct adjustment for 20 bucks, or 50 bucks, whatever, why are they on your payroll?

The fourth step is to follow up. Assuming it's not as simple as bringing a meal back from the kitchen in a restaurant, this could include an email, phone call, or other communication to ensure that the customer is satisfied with the resolution. If not, the work isn't done yet.

If the customer is satisfied, we move to the fifth step, which is to review and adjust the system and processes to prevent similar issues in the future.

Recovering from a customer service mistake can be challenging, but it provides us with an opportunity to shine. From a psychological perspective, recovering from a problem is an actual advantage over having never made a mistake. Why? Because it displays how we handle problems, builds confidence and trust. It doesn't get any better than that. (Con't.)

I'm not suggesting that we go out of our way to cause trouble. What I'm exposing is that golden opportunity to prove ourselves when it counts.

To do that, we train on accountability, active listening, decision-making, responsiveness, follow-up, and analyzing our system from top to bottom.

This prepares us to better handle anything that gets tossed at us. If you need help on putting all this together, give me a call.

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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For information on training and consulting services with Jerry Roberts, please click this link: guamtraining.com

