

q covid: **BAD CUSTOMER SERVICE**

5 ways to deal with bad customer service during COVID

Do you recall the last experience you had as a customer that left you feeling frustrated, angry or disappointed? COVID-19 has impacted and, in some cases, disrupted service delivery which has led to cancellations, inability to receive a service as promised, product unavailability and in some cases, lengthy delays.

Being on the receiving end of poor service can often illicit a strong emotional response and leaves us wondering how to best respond. How we react to poor service, regardless of the circumstances can have a significant impact on the person we are dealing with, the organisation and the outcome. If a customer experiences poor service, they have every right to express their dissatisfaction and this feedback can prove to be invaluable for organisations. The following steps are recommended.

1. Be proactive in passing on your 'feedback' or 'complaint'

Giving feedback or making a complaint is something not all customers choose to do. For some customers, fear of confrontation or not wanting to make a fuss can inhibit people saying anything about a poor service experience. In some cases, you may choose to not say or do anything because it is such a minor issue. Severity of the issue will often determine whether a customer will advise the organisation of poor service.

You may choose to pass on your feedback or suggestions informally to a team member or manager or in some instances, poor service may warrant a complaint through the organisations formal channel.

Feedback regarding poor customer experiences should be always be welcomed. Every customer has a choice to either say something directly, or even worse, leave and never come back and tell their friends, family or share their dissatisfaction through social media.



2. Be calm, polite and empathetic

Poor customer experiences can happen for a number of reasons including poor processes, poor customer experience design, or product failures. The person managing the issue in many cases is not the cause of the problem. Be patient and demonstrate empathy and compassion towards the team member who is listening to your feedback.

In the words of Customer Service Author Shep Hyken, "The moral of the story is that as a customer, you can't get what you want by being unreasonable. If there is a problem, a level headed approach with reasonable suggestions will always win over confrontational arguments, negative attitudes and insulting remarks."

If someone treats you in a way that is rude, make a choice not to respond in the same manner, however this feedback should definitely be passed on.

3. Be clear about your what you expect as a resolution

If you have had a bad service experience, be clear about what you expect as a result of passing on your feedback or complaint. I recently had to make a formal complaint and part of the process was for me to document what I wanted as a resolution to my issue. This enabled me to think very clearly about what I was expecting as a result. In some cases, it may be to simply pass on feedback or to receive an apology, compensation or a product replaced. Clarity around what you expect to happen is useful for both you and the organisation in what steps to take next.

4. Escalate if you have not received a resolution

If you have given the organisation an opportunity to resolve a service issue and they have not responded in the timeframes they have stipulated, you have the right as a customer to any internal or external recourse that is available to you including formal escalation processes. You may also choose to reach out via social media channels (I always recommend privately first) particularly if you need an urgent response. This is where high levels of responsiveness are crucial for organisations to avoid unnecessary further escalations complaints.

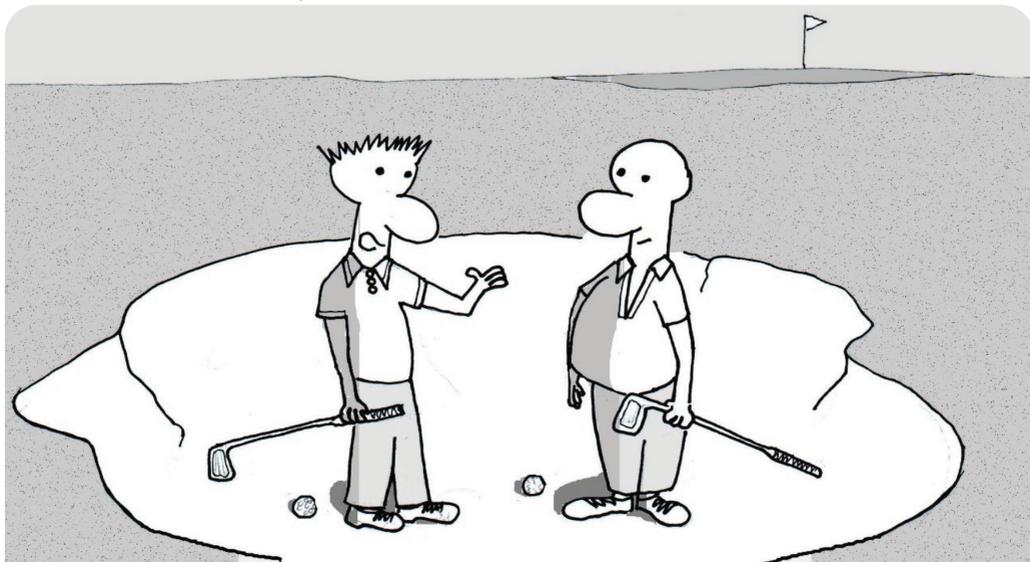
5. Choose to take your business elsewhere

Customer feedback should be valued and if you have given the organisation every chance to recover from the experience and they have failed to do anything, you may then make a choice to take your business elsewhere if that is an option. Service Recovery is essential in business, and there is nothing more frustrating for customers than taking the time to pass on feedback or make a complaint about poor service and hearing nothing back.

Unfortunately, in customer service there are things that go wrong, issues that should have never happened in the first place and in some cases, severe service failures that can significantly impact individuals. Your feedback and ability to let the organisation know should be a huge opportunity for the organisation to learn from and prevent poor service from occurring again in the future.

Monique Richardson is the author of 'Managing Difficult Customer Behaviour – A Practical Guide For Confident Conversations' and is one of Australia's leading experts in Service Leadership and Customer Service.

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"Sure, I could be out volunteering and helping the needy, but why? So they can get on their feet and waste their time chasing a golf ball like I do?"