Customer Abuse

As much as we strive for 100% customer satisfaction, the reality is you cannot make everyone happy all of the time. Some people are simply unhappy. What’s worse is they feel they can vent their unhappiness onto you.

To be clear, you are not permitted to respond, retaliate, or attack a customer under any circumstances. The following are the appropriate responses to forms of customer abuse.

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| **Customer Abuse** | |
| **Form Of Abuse** | **Action To Take** |
| * Yelling, raised voice | * Verbalize you understand the customer is frustrated, but yelling will not help you solve the problem. |
| * Verbal abuse, name calling | * Verbalize you understand the customer is frustrated, but it is not appropriate for him/her to call you names. |
| * Racial or bigoted language | * Inform the customer that language will not be tolerated, and they will no longer be served, and instruct them to leave. |
| * Threatening gestures | * Ask the customer to stop the threatening gesture. If they continue, inform them that you will not continue to help them if they continue the gesture. If it occurs a third time, stop providing help and instruct them to leave. |
| * Throwing objects | * Inform the customer that behavior is not acceptable , they will no longer be helped, and instruct them to leave. |
| * Physical assault | * Run away; sequester yourself to a locked room if possible. If no other choice, fight back. As soon as possible call the police and inform the supervisor. |

In any of the above circumstances, the employee has the right to remove themselves from the situation and contact the supervisor. If at any time the employee feels physically threatened, there are instructed to remove themselves from the situation, lock themselves in a room, and contact the supervisor and call the police. If any customer refuses to leave when instructed to, the employee is instructed to call the police and inform the supervisor.

Informing customers of support measures provided by the company, phones numbers and emails for customer complaint administrators can help to quickly defuse a tense situation.

Defusing a situation involving an unhappy customer is important for 2 major reasons:

* It makes other customers uncomfortable to witness a scene. Most people will leave to avoid bearing witness to such an event. It can deter them from continuing to make a purchase or from returning to the store all together.
* The longer a customer does not have the need addressed, the more dissatisfied they become, the more difficult it becomes to diffuse the situation and resolve their issue.

Listen:

Most people who are dissatisfied, simply want to be heard. You can do more to resolve an issue by simply letting a customer vent their feeling without interrupting. Once the customer has stated what they felt they needed to, validating their feelings is the next most crucial step. Phrases such as, “I understand,” “That’s unfair,” “I can see how that has made you frustrated,” among others can immediately relay to the customer that they have been heard, validated, and something will not be done to resolve their issue.

Don’t Retaliate

Customer abuse is never appropriate. But more so, it is never about you. These people are more often not simply dissatisfied with a product or service, but unhappy in their lives. The product/service dissatisfaction is simply a vehicle to subconsciously express their own anger and frustrations within their own lives.

Understanding this, you should keep the following in mind:

* The customers’ attacks are never about you, don’t take them personally.
* Never verbally or physical attack a customer
* Never retaliate against a customer, this includes passive-aggressive behavior.
* When in doubt, call a supervisor. It is not your role to resolve the issue(s) of a hostile or abusive customer.
* If you find you cannot handle the situation, walk away.