

THE **Customer Service Advantage**™

Q: *It doesn't happen often, but sometimes we get customers who are ready to blow a fuse. Are there any surefire ways to deal with customers who are that upset?*

A: Surefire? Nothing is surefire, but there are some reliable techniques that when practiced over time come easily and allow you to defuse the situation quickly and skillfully, says **JoAnna Brandi**, publisher of "Customer Care Coach," a weekly training program, and service consultant (www.customercarecoach.com).

Choose a "recovery strategy" and practice it often, like a fire drill, so when the real situation happens you are prepared in the steps necessary to defuse it fast.

And it's important to understand that getting defensive is never a part of the solution, says Brandi.

Some strategies that Brandi suggests:

- Breathe! Resist the urge to defend yourself or your company, and don't take the customer's sentiments personally. Breathe deeply.
- Listen actively, and let the customer vent. Use both verbal and non-verbal cues to let them know you're listening.
- Maintain and build rapport. Match customers' voice tone, intensity and rate of speech (not necessarily volume) to build and hold rapport.

Note: *Watch this page in the next issue of CSA for more of Brandi's tips on this subject.*

- *If you have a question you'd like to ask our panel of experts, please contact our editor at mmcgovern@pbp.com*