

HOW TO DEAL SKILLFULLY WITH UPSET CUSTOMERS

- 1. Breathe.** Calm and center yourself first. Breathe deeply. This helps you diminish your stress, get your focus and back off from the situation emotionally so that you don't take things personally or get defensive.
- 2. Listen actively & let the customer vent.** Use verbal and non-verbal cues to let them know you're listening. If you're face to face with customers, nod your head and remain open. Say "Uh-huh, yes, mmm-hmmm," as appropriate as you listen to what's said between the lines. Be empathetic and compassionate, fully present as you accept what's being said and acknowledge the experience.
- 3. Apologize.** Continue to show empathy as you acknowledge the customer's story and feelings, and sincerely apologize. Make statements like, "I *can understand* how that might make you angry and why you'd be upset, Ms. Brown. I apologize. I'm sorry you've had such a hard time getting through to us. How may I help you now that we're connected?"
- 4. Maintain and build rapport.** Match the customer's voice tone, intensity and rate of speech (not the volume) to build rapport. E.g. if a customer is very agitated, talking fast and breathing rapidly, your response might be to quickly reply, "Yes, I can see why you'd be angry Mr. Jones. Waiting all afternoon for a repair technician who doesn't show up is frustrating. I'm going to find out what happened!" Once in rapport you can lead him or her to a calmer state, gradually and with respect.
- 5. Restate the problem.** Clarify and confirm the facts as you heard them to show you understand. "So if I understand you correctly.."
- 6. Solve the problem.** On the spot if possible. At the very least, take ownership for it - DO NOT pass the buck.
- 7. Offer something special *when appropriate*.** In some cases it's nice to offer a 'gift of atonement' that makes up for the inconvenience. The something special *can be* your undivided attention until the problem is taken care of.
- 8. End with agreement.** End the conversation on a positive note, always giving the customer the opportunity to agree with the solution you arrived at. "Mr. Jones, is it okay with you if we arrive at 7 a.m. tomorrow? Good. I'll be sure to let the technician know that this one's on us, okay?"
- 9. Set the follow-up process in motion.** In other words, keep your promises! If you say you're going to call...call. If you say you're sending a replacement today...send it today!

CONGRATULATE YOURSELF FOR A JOB WELL DONE!

For more ways to take care of your customers exquisitely join us at <http://customercarecoach.com>