

Six Ways To Calm An Angry Customer



An irate customer can hurt your business and the morale of your employees. So instead of reacting to confrontation, John Tschohl, founder and president of the [Service Quality Institute in Minneapolis](#), advises travel professionals to dig deeper into a customer's motivations. They may simply be trying to express one or more of a range of feelings, including hurt, perhaps being ignored or disrespected, unappreciated, or unloved.

"It's easy to get flustered or upset when you're confronted with an angry customer; and, if you don't know how to respond, you can easily make the situation worse," said Tschohl, who has written several books on customer service, including "Moving Up."

"It's important to know how to deal with angry/irate customers. When you respond calmly and with empathy, you can stay in control, and you can defuse the situation in a professional, courteous way," he said.

He advises agents to:

1. Listen

Responding to their needs calmly and emphatically can serve as the key to getting more cooperation from emotionally agitated people. In tough situations, the issue at hand isn't usually the actual issue; it's all about how the issue is handled.

2. Acknowledge their anger

Empathy is powerful. If customers express anger and you fail to react to it, they feel like they aren't getting through, that you're not listening. Think about how you would feel in a similar situation. Acknowledge their anger as well as responding to it. You can use a statement like, *"Obviously you're annoyed and I would like you to know that getting to the bottom of this is just as important to me as it is to you."* Or, *"I think I understand what is going on here, but feel free to correct me."*

3. Ask questions

Do not assign any blame or argue. Once you have an understanding of the situation, try to avoid making excuses or defending your actions (or those of your team or organization). Defensiveness can make others feel even angrier than they are already. Instead, ask what you can do to resolve the situation and make things right. You need to show the customer that, as an employee and as the face of your organization, you are invested in solving the problem.

4. Suggest alternatives

Solicit what the irate customer wants from you. You want to keep moving the situation along in a productive way. After the person expresses what he or she wants, decide what you're able to do and say so. Think outside the box. You can stay within your organization's guidelines and still come up with an alternative. The customer will view it as a sign of respect and an indication that you are listening to the specific concerns.

5. Apologize

Say "I'm sorry." Even if it is not your fault. Apologizing without laying blame will better position you to act in a manner that customers perceive to be in their best interest.

6. Solve the problem

Take everything you have learned about the situation in preparation for this final step. At this time both you and your customer share a strong desire to find a solution. If you need help while you are solving the problem, find it. Regardless of how a problem is solved, getting it done quickly is necessary in bringing this irate customer around. Then, provide the customer your contact information to call with any questions or lingering problems.