

Tips on Handling Customer Complaints

by Louis De Rose, CMC

Problems are not unexpected by buyers. The larger the purchase, the more both buyer and seller expect problems to occur. But customers do expect salespeople to extend themselves personally when following up on the sale and be honest about the problem. Success in doing so is an important measure of the salesperson's credibility. And it can create opportunities to increase your sales.

- **Hear it out. Listen.** Getting the complaint "off their chest" relieves some of the distress or ill feelings clients may have. And the more they talk, the more you will learn about their concern and how to deal with it.
- **Avoid an argument.** The complaint may be groundless, but don't make an issue of it. Complaints are not resolved to mutual satisfaction in a controversial climate.
- **Avoid meaningless excuses.** These do nothing to resolve the situation. If the complaint is valid and the fault is yours, admit it — with no alibis. Assure the customer you'll get the facts and do your best to resolve the matter satisfactorily.
- **Don't let complaints linger.** The longer they remain unresolved, the more they become a source of friction and are apt to become serious.
- **Remember, you're still selling.** Any solution you propose must re-establish the sense of value customers originally perceive. It must satisfy their needs and re-establish their confidence in you.

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