

Psychology of The Angry Customer

Isn't Customer Service About "Respect" and Common Sense? Nope.

In a way, yes. Unfortunately it's not that simple. Here's why.

When "experts" talk about showing respect to customers, they assume that respect means the same thing to individuals. That's simply not the case.

For example, what constitutes respectful behavior is different for the person who lives in inner city Detroit, as compared to the thoughts of the farmer living in Fargo, North Dakota. Respect, and what it means, is a cultural idea. That is the behaviors we think are respectful differ considerably.

Another example: Compare the people in New York City to the people living in Omaha, Nebraska, and you'll find, by virtue of a different heritage and different cultures, that what works in Omaha is going to be different than in New York City.

In some ways, it's the height of arrogance to think that respectful behavior towards customers is the same all over. That extends to other issues. For example, to use the big city vs. small city example, you'll find that respectful behavior in a big city focuses more on SPEED of service than on courtesy and chattiness (friendliness). In smaller towns, the pace is slower, and expectations are different. What works in one place may not work in others.

Age differences also enter into it, as do all aspects of culture, including ethnicity, geographic location, etc.

The upshot is that if one wants to teach customer service representatives to offer better customer service, counselling them to be "respectful" or to use their common sense doesn't work. It's not specific enough.

Finally, the same can be said for using common sense. It's just not that common.

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