

# What Should I Do When A Customer...

## What To Do With A Customer Who's Been "Buck-Passed" THE SITUATION - Customer Angry Because Of Being Given The Runaround

Customers who have talked to three or four people and not had any success getting help get angry and frustrated, because they feel employees are passing the buck. Unfortunately, they may aim their aggression at you, even though you don't have control over what other employees have done. What do you do?

### Techniques Used With Customer Who Has Been Given The Runaround

- Empathy Statements (1)
- Find Agreement Points (2)
- Voice Tone—Emphatic (3)
- Assurances of Effort (4)

### DIALOGUE

In this example, which could occur in person or on the phone, the customer is very upset because he's contacted or visited four government employees in three departments, only to find that none of them was the right person. What's worse is that each employee has referred him to the wrong person. This also happens frequently in other kinds of larger organizations.

**Customer:** *Someone in the waterworks department sent me here and told me you could help me get my water reconnected and my account fixed, and I'm telling you, this better be the last stop I have to make, because I've been sent from pillar to post and [starts going on and on].*

**Employee:** *I agree that this should never happen (2). You shouldn't have to spend all this time finding the right person to talk to, and I can understand how frustrated you must be (1).*

**Customer:** Yeah, well, so can you help me?

**Employee:** *Yes, I can (3). Here's what I can do for you (3). I'm not sure I can do everything you need, but I will contact anyone else who needs to be involved and get things moving before you leave this office. That's what I'm going to do my best to accomplish. I will help you get this done (4).*

### Why This Works

The employee responses can be used in situations where the employee knows that he or she can actually solve the customer's problem or if he or she cannot solve the entire problem. Notice that the employee commits to the customer by promising to get things moving. Also notice the employee's use of

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empathy up front (1) and the strong agreement sentence in (2). Pay attention to the use of an emphatic tone of voice (3). Saying, "Yes, I can help you" in a strong voice that promises commitment is going to be much more effective than a flat or indifferent tone of voice.

## Hints To Make This Work

Never make commitments that you may not be able to keep. In a buck-passing situation where you aren't the right person to help the customer, make the effort to find out who the customer needs to see. A lot of times buckpassing occurs because employees simply don't want to take the time to get an answer for the customer.

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Author: Robert Bacal

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