

# What Should I Do When A Customer...

## How to handle a customer who interrupts my conversation with another customer?

### The Interrupting Customer Situation:

You may face a situation where you're helping one customer and a second customer rushes up and interrupts your conversation. It may appear that you're caught between a rock and a hard place, since if you serve the first customer, the second may become annoyed, and if you serve the second one, the first customer, quite justifiably, may feel you are not treating him or her as important. In this situation we'll describe a single technique—the “**Stop Sign–Nonverbal**” tactic.

### Techniques Used To Manage The Rude, Interrupting Customer

Stop Sign–Nonverbal (1)

#### Dialogue Example:

In a retail store, the employee has been talking with a primary customer for three or four minutes. All of a sudden, a second customer rushes up and interrupts the conversation.

**Second Customer:** *Excuse me, but can you tell me whom I need to talk to about returning some merchandise?*

**Employee:** [turns to the second customer, makes eye contact, and holds up hand at about a 45-degree angle toward the second customer] ***I can help you in just a moment, or you can go to the service desk.*** [The employee then breaks eye contact and returns to the first customer (1).]

### Explaining The Non-Verbal Management Of The Interrupting Customer

The first priority is always the customer with whom you're interacting. Limit your interaction with the interrupting customer, so it's as brief as possible. That's why the employee uses a very short sentence and then immediately returns his attention to the first customer, indicating this by shifting eye contact. Note also that the employee, in his short sentence with the second customer, offers an option—wait or go to the service desk.

#### Hints:

Generally, you should not address the needs of the interrupting customer even if you can address them quickly, because it sends a message that the first customer is less important. As an additional technique, if you feel you can address the second customer's concerns quickly, you have the

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option of asking the first customer for permission to do so as follows: "***Do you mind if I help this fellow out***

***while you look at the items you are interested in? It will only take 30 seconds or so.***"

**Do not make the mistake of rewarding bad customer behavior by serving the squeaky wheel first**

[\(Adapted from Perfect Phrases For Customer Service. For more scenarios and solutions this book is ideal. It presents, in brief, many tactics and methods to deal with difficult customer behavior.\)](#)

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