

# Techniques For Defusing and Calming Down Angry Customers

## Can you explain the CARP Model in brief? (#custserv)

The CARP model is a four step model that was created to remind customer service staff of the sequence that should be used in defusing angry and emotional clients. It also provides a framework for the many defusing techniques available to use by helping people understand how the techniques, coupled together, become very powerful ways to calm angry customers, and get them to listen, interact, and problem solve, rather than to rant, or vent.

### Element 1: Control

The first element in the CARP model is C for Control. Without taking some control over the interaction, the employee is faced with an angry person who is emotional, and does not respond to questions, does not provide coherent information, and is so lost in his or her emotion that its impossible to have a constructive conversation. I defined control as being established when the customer starts to respond to questions and comments, rather than simply talking and talking and talking (and not listening). Clearly, unless both parties listen to each other, nothing good can come from the conversation.

Verbal self-defense techniques are, for the most parts means to establish this kind of control.

### Element 2: Acknowledgement

The A is for Acknowledgement which involve empathy and listening, and is both part of the way one can exert some control, and also a means of establishing rapport with an angry person. Acknowledgement techniques build bridges, and make it less likely that customers will target a customer service representative, at least when done properly.

### Element 3: Refocus

It's find to deal with the emotional state of the customer, in fact it's almost necessary, but customer service employees aren't counsellors, and must go beyond the emotions. At some point in the interaction, the conversation has to move back to the substantive issue the customer might have. The employee serving the customer needs to touch on the emotionals involved, but not linger, and thus, must refocus the conversation back to the substantive issue in order to be effective. Refocusing is the way to do that.

### Element 4: Problem Solving

By the time, the employee has established some control, has dealt with the emotions, to lessen their effect on the conversation, and then refocus back to the issue, the customer should be ready to problem-solve. That's the process of getting and giving information, answering questions, discussing alternatives, and courses of action, and weighing the best course of action.

## There's One Confusing Part - It's Not Lock-Step Linear

In developing the model, I wanted a model that set out the steps in order. First do ONE, then go

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on to TWO, and so forth. People grasp linear models well, because they are simple.

The problem was, and still is that human communication doesn't work that way. Very little in human communication is linear. We jump around. Sometimes our emotions control how we communicate, then the next minute we can be more logical only to move back to a more emotional response.

For that reason, the CARP model, while it indicates an approximate sequence, isn't strictly lock step. While you have to start with CONTROL, you may at the same time be ACKNOWLEDGING. You might move to PROBLEM-SOLVING, stay there for a brief time, and find the customer's emotions have ramped up and he's yelling, so you have to move back to using CONTROL tactics. So, it's important to note that you can't follow the model in sequence all the time. You have to jump around.

[Can you explain the origins of the CARP model for defusing hostile customers?](#) explains a bit more why it was necessary to invent the model

Unique solution ID: #1022

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Last update: 2014-03-17 20:42