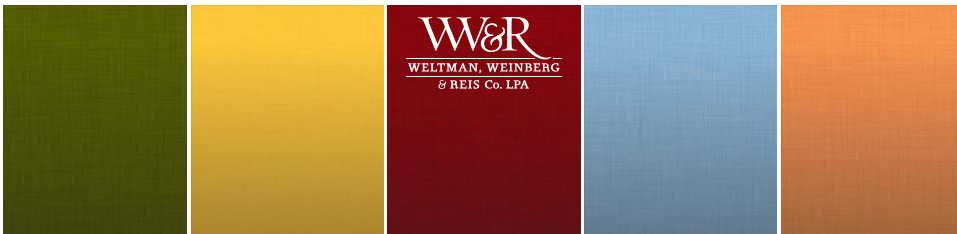

Diffusing the Situation

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Overview

- Difficult people do exist
- The level of a person's difficulty depends on the self-esteem, self-confidence, and professional courage displayed by all parties involved
- It's natural to lose motivation for working with this person
- "Sticking it out" requires a strategy for dealing with difficult people, self-restraint, and an ability to keep power in the relationship



Characteristics of Difficult People

- Angry
- Impatient
- Intimidating
- Talkative
- Demanding
- Indecisive



When Third Parties Try to Intimidate You

- Stay Calm
 - “What can we do to help?”
 - “How can we help?”
 - Focus on the discussion, not the problem
- Imagine others in the room
 - An audience changes emotional dynamic
- Wait to offer any solutions
 - Instead, encourage the third party to suggest some
 - Offer choices
 - “Would you prefer to speak to someone else?”
- Maintain self-control
 - Never argue if someone is angry, displeased, or complaining

How to React if a Third Party is *Angry*

- Be quiet
 - Stay alert, lower your voice, and talk slowly, but firmly
- Let them vent
 - When possible, use body language to show you're listening
- This strategy encourages the person to relax
 - Reinforces that there is no "emergency" - whatever they are demanding can be handled in a calm manner
- **Emotions are contagious!** If you get caught up in their emotional chaos, negotiation will not be productive



How to React if a Third Party is *Demanding*

- Do not be forceful
 - Be soft and do not talk over the person
- Let the person talk himself or herself out
 - Builds trust, empathy, and rapport
- Be aware of your body language
 - Stand, sit up straight, and uncross your arms
 - Use eye contact, positive body language and smaller verbal cues
- Show you care
 - Repeat or paraphrase some of what you hear
- **Recognize that anger comes from fear**



How to React if a Third Party is *Demanding*

- Don't place blame
 - Use an indirect approach
- Try to solve the problem, or get someone who can
- Go with the person's energy
- Surrender and grant agreement, even if you are right
 - Since it will be unexpected, the person will probably start defending you
 - Makes them more open to negotiation
- Don't take it personally
 - Make sure your attitude is always, "I'm here to help as best I can."



How to React if a Third Party is *Unsatisfied*

- Don't take it personally
 - This is a business issue
 - Guide the conversation back to the pressing issue, and how you intend to solve the problem
- Stick to the facts
- Know your emotions and have knowledge about emotions of others
 - Anger can be fear and fear uses anger to gain control
- Be calm, flexible, patient, and mindful



What To Do Once You Reach a Solution

- Take immediate action
 - Explain every step that will be taken to fix the problem
 - Provide your name and contact details if communicated by phone
- Follow up
 - Make sure the person is happy
 - Go above and beyond expectations
 - Send a gift certificate, offer a discount, send a hand-written apology, etc.
- Reduce the risk of a recurring problem
 - Identify how the problem started in the first place
 - Make sure the problem is fixed immediately
 - Manage complaints and feedback effectively so you can improve



Conclusion

- Difficult customers can be challenging, but if the situation is handled well, it may lead to an improved relationship and create further opportunities
- Actively listen to problems or complaints, and resist the urge to interrupt
 - Be empathic and understanding, and make sure that body language communicates this
- Not sure how to fix the situation?
 - Ask the customer what it will take to make them happy
 - If it's in your power, get it done as soon as possible
 - Follow up to make sure they are happy with the resolution



Scenario #1: When You Just Don't Know

- Don't beat yourself up for not knowing an answer
- Don't say "I don't know"
 - The person may be sympathetic that you don't know everything, but they're not interested in hearing about it
 - Instead, respond by saying *"Great question, let me find that out for you right now!"*
- Emphasize the customer's needs over yours
 - Lets them know you're going to do whatever you need to in order to find out for them



Scenario #2: When Something Isn't Available

- Use positive language
 - Avoid knee-jerk reactions
- Ex: Someone contacts you with interest in a particular product, but that product happens to be backordered

DON'T:

- "I can't get you that product until next month; it is back-ordered and unavailable at this time."

DO:

- "That product will actually be available next month. I can place the order for you right now and make sure it is sent to you as soon as it reaches our warehouse!"



Scenario #2 cont'd

- Positive language replaces negative phrases (“I can’t...”) and instead places emphasis on the solution, which is what the person actually cares about
- Try finding places in your response where a lot of negative language is present (“We don’t do that”) and see where positive language can be substituted



Scenario #3: Transferring a Call

- Help the customer understand *why* they are being transferred
 - Nobody likes to be transferred, so it’s better to assure them that it’s necessary to solve their current problem
 - Customers feel more confident knowing they are being transferred to the resident expert, and that the person transferring the call has their best interests in mind

DON'T:

- “Sir/ma’am, my apologies, but I’m going to have to transfer your call to Department XYZ.”

DO:

- “Hello Mr./Mrs. ____! Let’s get this problem resolved for you. I’m going to transfer you to our ____ specialist who is the best-suited person to answer your question.”



Scenario #4: Addressing Favors

- Most requests from customers are reasonable, and every effort should be made to make them happy
 - Even the smallest requests can leave a very positive impact
- Impossible favors - “Can’t you bend the rules just this once?!”
 - Ex.: A hotel’s policy is “no pets” and a guest checking in asks that an exception be made for a cat. The hotel employee cannot say “yes” since it may impact other guests with allergies.
 - An appropriate response would be: “As much as I like fulfilling our customers’ requests, I’m afraid that our “No Pets” policy is too important, as it deals with the safety and comfort of other customers. Can I perhaps call around for locations where your cat might be able to stay?”

Scenario #4 cont’d

- Remember the perception of your service quality is affected by how attentive, thoughtful and sincere you are
- Showcasing your empathy and a willingness to find an alternative is one of the best ways to lessen the sting of saying “No”

Scenario #5: Closing With a Third Party

- Always close a conversation
- A willingness to ensure that someone is leaving perfectly happy shows them three important things:
 - You care about getting it right
 - You're willing to keep going until you get it right
 - The outsider is the one who determines what “right” is
- Try ending your conversation with a phrase such as: “Excellent! I’m glad we were able to get that sorted out for you. Before you go, was there anything else I could assist you with today? I’m happy to help.”



Questions?

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