

Handling Complaints

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It's not what you say, but what is heard.

It's not what you show, but what is seen.

It's not what you mean, but what is understood.

Perception is reality.

- Author Unknown

Service Comparison

- Residents and families do not compare the service they receive solely with what they have received from other health care providers. They also compare it with service they have received from other service industries.
- If hotels can serve more than 1,000 people at a banquet with food that is consistently fresh and hot, then why does a nursing home have difficulty delivering meals of the same quality?
- If UPS can deliver a package the next day, anywhere in the country, why are there delays in receiving communication from your facility?

Technical Assistance Research Programs, Inc. Study

1. The average business never hears from 96 percent of its unhappy customers. For every complaint received, the average company in fact has 26 customers with problems, 6 of which are "serious" problems.
2. Complainers are more likely than non-complainers to do business again with the company that upset them, even if the problem isn't satisfactorily resolved.
3. Of the customers who register a complaint, between 54 and 70 percent will do business again with the organization if their complaint is resolved. The figure goes up to a staggering 95 percent if the customer feels that the complain was resolved quickly.

Technical Assistance Research Programs, Inc. Study

4. The average customer who has had a problem with an organization tells 9 or 10 people about it. Thirteen percent of people who have a problem with an organization recount the incident to more than 20 people.
5. Customers who have complained to an organization and had their complaints satisfactorily resolved tell an average of five people about the treatment they received.

Impressions Are Important

- All contacts with a facility are a critical part of our perceptions and judgments about that facility.
- The quality of *people contacts*, however, are often the firmest and most lasting.
- Every time residents and families come in contact with a representative of your facility, they make a judgment about the quality of the care and service they receive.

**5 Attributes
of Service Evaluation**

1. Reliability
The ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.

2. Responsiveness
The willingness to help customers and provide prompt service.

**5 Attributes
of Service Evaluation**

3. Assurance, which includes:

- *Competence* – possession of the required skills and knowledge to perform the service
- *Courtesy* – politeness, respect, consideration, and friendliness of contact personnel
- *Credibility* – trustworthiness, believability, honesty of the service provider
- *Security* – freedom from danger, risk, or doubt

**5 Attributes
of Service Evaluation**

4. Empathy, which includes:

- *Access* – approachability and ease of contact
- *Communication* – keeping customers informed in language they can understand and listening to them
- *Understanding the customer* – knowing and understanding their needs

**5 Attributes
of Service Evaluation**

- 5. *Tangibles* - appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials

People Expect Value for Money

- When a problem occurs, the person who takes care of the resident/customer and then takes care of the problem will generate loyalty from that resident/customer.
- Consumer research has identified six criteria for complaint handling that meets the customer's psychological need for feeling valued as a customer .

Criteria for Complaint Handling

- It is easy to complain - staff on site can handle the problem and are readily available so that the customer is not transferred by the institution or department more than once.

Criteria for Complaint Handling

- One person assumes responsibility for investigating and resolving the problem.
- The resolution is fair – the customer is given options, the resolution is reasonable, and the staff follow through as promised.

Criteria for Complaint Handling

- The process is fast – the staff react to the problem and resolve it quickly, preferably within 1 day.
- The staff provide clear, consistent information, and all questions are answered to the resident/ customer's satisfaction.

Criteria for Complaint Handling

- The resident/customer is acknowledged as being important – the staff do not brush the resident/ customer off, the staff listen to the problem, and the resident/customer's perception is accepted as valid and taken seriously.

Stage One of Conflict

- Is ongoing and generally requires little action.
- Is characterized by day-to-day irritations. These irritations can be passed off, sometimes indefinitely. But an irritation can become a problem.
- The variable that causes irritation to become a problem is people. Different personalities, coping mechanisms and ever-changing life events make it impossible to predict when an individual has had enough.

Stage Two of Conflict

- Takes on the element of competition, typified by a “win-lose” attitude.
- Losses seem greater at this stage because people are tied to the problems.
- Self-interest and “how one looks” become very important. A “cover your own behind” attitude can also be observed.
- People keep track of verbal victories and record mistakes, witnesses take sides, and an imaginary debate develops with scores being tallied.
- At this stage the *people* are the problem!

Stage Three of Conflict

- Objective shifts from wanting to win toward wanting to hurt.
- Motivation is to “get rid” of the other party.
- People choose sides on “the issues that matter.”
- Leaders emerge from the group and act as spokespersons.
- Outsiders are enlisted toward the cause, giving little room for middle ground.
- Merits of an argument and the strength with which positions are held are greatly exaggerated at this stage.
- A loss of perspective is quite likely on the part of all participants.
- Individuals at this Stage will likely prolong the conflict, consumed by the event and the energy it provides.

**Service Recovery – How to do it?
Customer Contact**

Solicit the concern

- “How was your visit today?”
- “Did you have any questions or concerns I can help you with?”
- “Is there anything else we can do for you today?”

**Service Recovery – How to do it?
Customer Contact**

Listen attentively

- Use body language that indicates interest and concern.
- Continue eye contact, nod to show understanding, keep arms uncrossed, and take notes.
- Over the telephone, give the caller an opportunity to speak without interruption, but intersperse with comments, such as “I see” to let the caller know someone is still listening.

**Service Recovery – How to do it?
Customer Contact**

Ask questions

- After the customer’s explanation of the problem, ask questions to clarify the situation – who, what, when, where, why and how?

**Service Recovery – How to do it?
Customer Contact**

Empathize

- A single statement by the staff person that recognizes the resident/customer's perspective will do much to gain that person's trust and loyalty.
- Empathy is showing understanding and sensitivity to the situation, a recognition that the person is upset, regardless of the reason or the staff's perception of the validity of the complaint.

**Service Recovery – How to do it?
Customer Contact**

What does the resident/customer want?

- What does the resident/customer want as a resolution?
- The resident/customer who wants an apology is easily satisfied.
- The resident/customer who wants an employee fired for being rude or non-responsive will probably need more time and attention to satisfy.

**Service Recovery – How to do it?
Acknowledgement**

**Apologize for the
inconvenience/not meeting their
expectations**

- Some people believe that apologizing is an admission of guilt. It is not. It is simply a validation of the resident/customers' feelings and emotional reaction to a situation.

**Service Recovery – How to do it?
Acknowledgement**

Repeat the problem

- To ensure clarity and understanding of the issue.

**Service Recovery – How to do it?
Acknowledgement**

Resident/Customer chooses an option

- Give choices/options if possible.
- If none of the options are acceptable, explain what *can* be done.

**Service Recovery – How to do it?
Acknowledgement**

Agree on the next step

- The staff person describes in general terms what he or she will do next and tells the resident/customer when to expect a call back and from whom.
- The resident/customer should agree with the timeliness of the call back.

**Service Recovery – How to do it?
Problem Solving**

1. Consult with others – involve appropriate departments in resolution of complaint.
2. Consider options, exceptions, and education
3. Contact the resident/customer with a status report

**Service Recovery – How to do it?
Referral/Response**

1. Respond to the resident/customer with resolution.
2. Refer the problem to another staff person.
 - Contact the appropriate staff person and relay all the pertinent information and facts about the problem.
 - This staff person should assume responsibility for investigating, reviewing, and/or resolving the problem.

**Service Recovery – How to do it?
Referral/Response**

2. Refer the problem to another staff person.
 - Determine who will notify the resident/customer with the final resolution.
 - Advise the resident/customer of the next step, including who the key contact staff person is and how to reach him/her.
 - Document in writing the pertinent facts and the plan for resolution.

**Service Recovery – How to do it?
Follow-Up**

Bring the problem to closure - this last discussion confirms all agreements and brings closure to the problem-solving process.

- Review the outcome.
- Negotiate any additional follow-up.
- Give the staff person's name and phone number for complications or concerns that may arise from this issue.

**Service Recovery – How to do it?
Follow-Up**

- Thank the resident/customer
- Standards
If appropriate, share your facility's standards regarding responding to resident/family concerns.

**Service Recovery – How to do it?
Follow-Up**

Follow-up letter - such a letter might include:

- A one-sentence summary of the problem with enough specifics to let the resident/customer know it is a personalized letter.
- An apology for the feelings of dissatisfaction.

**Service Recovery – How to do it?
Follow-Up**

Follow-up letter - such a letter might include:

- A reiteration of the staff's interest in the resident/customer's satisfaction with care or service.
- 5. Document the concern

**Categorizing Complaints
NEUTRAL**

1. Problem is easily handled.
2. Resident/customer has no preconceived expectation for resolution.
3. Resident/customer is interested in problem-solving.
4. Resolution is not particularly time-sensitive.
5. Problem presents no risk to the facility/organization.
6. Staff are accustomed to hearing general comments or suggestions from this person.
7. Resident/customer is average (i.e., is not related to someone important, such as CEO, president of a major business, or leader in local community)

**Categorizing Complaints
ANNOYED**

1. Resident/customer is frustrated, is annoyed, and wants action.
2. Resident/customer is functional but needs anger diffusion before the staff can begin to problem-solve.
3. Problem is of moderate complexity; may involve multiple departments and/or individuals.
4. A monetary resolution may be expected by the resident/customer.
5. Specific intervention by the staff is required.
6. There is a moderate level of urgency in resolving the problem.
7. Resident/customer is average (i.e., is not related to someone important, either within the facility or local community).
8. Administration is accustomed to hearing complaints from this person.

Categorizing Complaints
VICTIMIZED

1. Resident/customer exhibits extreme behavior; is highly emotional and possibly out of control.
2. Resident/customer is unable to problem-solve.
3. Resident/customer is usually dysfunctional (may have known personality disorder).
4. Problem is of high complexity or the issue and/or expectations for resolution are ambiguous.
5. Resolution is time-sensitive and high urgency and may be needed the same day.
6. There is potential high risk for the organization, either litigation or bad press potential.
7. A regulatory agency may be involved or the resident/customer is related to someone important.
8. Resident/customer is not someone the staff recognize as a regular complainant.

5 Don'ts During Conflict - #1

- Don't get in a Power Struggle!*
Once a power struggle begins, three results are possible:
- *The other person is stopped or possibly killed.*
 - *The other person quits.*
 - *An ongoing jockeying for position begins.*
- To avoid Power Struggles:*
- *Don't argue unless you are prepared to waste time. Reason will NOT work.*
 - *Don't engage in a battle unless you are prepared to lose, because you already have.*
 - *Don't take on responsibility for others' emotions; share the responsibility.*

5 Don'ts During Conflict - #2

- Don't Become Detached from the Conflict:*
- ⚡ *Important to have a passionate concern for both the people and the problem.*
 - ⚡ *Concern is one motivation that drives us to find the opportunity in conflict.*
 - ⚡ *A "macho" image of detached leadership provides a distorted perspective. (Like Lee Iacocca or Donald Trump...)*
 - ⚡ *The tendency to imitate this macho image can deprive you of the natural passion for both your people and your product.*

5 Don'ts During Conflict - #3

Don't Let Conflict Establish your Agenda:

Perspective is the key. Often times we ignore important business matters in order to deal with the conflict.

- Don't spend all your time and energy on one issue.
- Watch time traps. Are there tasks that seem to consume your time before you're aware it's gone?
- Identify urgent issues, especially negative or conflict issues. If you notice one consistent time offender, manage that offender.

5 Don'ts During Conflict - #4

Don't Be Caught "AWFULIZING!"

"The tendency to escalate a situation into its worst possible conclusion..."

- People are rarely as benevolent as they perceive themselves to be.
- People are rarely as evil as their opponents perceive them to be.
- Individuals rarely spend as much time thinking about the issues as believed.
- The motivations of others are rarely as planned or thought out as presented.
- Every conflict has a history that extends beyond the present. The people and their previous patterns of relating taint the present perception.

5 Don'ts During Conflict - #5

Don't Be Fooled by Projection:

- Projection is an emotional release.
- Individuals unconsciously project their own flaws and weaknesses onto others.
- Notice the generalizations and accusations being made about others, especially comments about someone's motivations.
- We may understand others and we may be able to predict their actions accurately, but it is dangerous to believe anyone can read the minds of others.

7 Shabby Service Sins

1. **Apathy Adherents**
Their attitude says, "I'm doing my job because I'm here."
2. **Brush-off Barkers**
"Not my job/department."
3. **Shoulder Shruggers**
"You're the only one who complained."

7 Shabby Service Sins

4. **Condescending Clods**
"You know you used the wrong form and made lots of extra work for us..."
5. **Rigid Robots**
"Thank you. Have a nice day. Next!"

7 Shabby Service Sins

6. **Rabid Rule-Bookers**
"I agree with you and it makes sense, but our rules won't let us do it that way."

7 Shabby Service Sins

- 7. Rankling Runarounds**
 - a. "I'll contact you with B Wing."
 - b. "I don't know why they connected you with this wing, administration handles that."
 - c. "You'll have to talk with someone in the office about that."

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