How to Serve Angry or Difficult Customers - Part 2

Occasionally we encounter students or parents who require our special attention as we interact with them in person or over the telephone. This week’s focus is on **difficult customers** — those who require us to go above and beyond our “normal” service delivery routine to satisfy and retain them.

**Tips for Serving Three Types of Difficult Customers**

- **Unprepared / Unfamiliar / Inexperienced Customers**
  
  These customers have little or no knowledge of our processes or higher education practices in general. They often have difficulty completing required forms and following through. Some may have problems reading and understanding correspondence they have received.

  To serve them effectively, we must quickly bring unprepared customers up to speed. This may require taking extra time to go over procedures and regulations several times, or taking a hands-on approach to helping them complete forms. It is also useful to provide a simple hand-out that details the steps they must take to complete the task at hand.

- **Rude or Demanding Customers**
  
  These customers approach you with bad attitudes, and are often impatient, intimidating and/or loud. If you encounter a rude customer, first take into account that rude customers are rude usually because of their own insecurities or fears.

  The most effective way to serve rude customers is to kill them with kindness. Keep your tone of voice and body language upbeat and cheerful. Call the customer by name, and find a way to pay him or her a compliment. One compliment can immediately change the tone of the entire interaction.

- **“Chatty” Customers**
  
  These customers are some of the most pleasant to serve — unless you are pressed for time. The chatty customer craves conversation, and will seek to prolong the service interaction long after the business has been completed.

  Because you have other customers to serve, you should conclude the service interaction with the chatty customer within a reasonable time period without being rude or abrupt. It is usually effective to stand up if concluding a face-to-face interaction. This signals that you have something else you must do. If on the telephone with a chatty customer, you may tell him or her that someone is waiting to see you. Always be gracious and tell the customer that you enjoyed your talk.

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**Today’s Customer Service Quote**

Nothing is ever lost by courtesy. It is the cheapest of pleasures, costs nothing, and conveys much. It pleases him who gives and receives and thus, like mercy, is twice blessed.

- Erastus Wiman

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**Please encourage all students to take the**

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