Video Transcript
How to Deal with Angry Customers by Userlike

Customers get angry for many reasons like when they're facing unexpected costs or when their product breaks within a week. If you're working in customer service, you'll probably cross paths with an angry customer at some point in your career. But if you're not prepared for this situation, it can be costly in several ways.

For even the most sound of people, dealing with angry customers on a regular basis is tough on your well-being. It can even lead to burnout. Angry customers also put your company at risk. Unresolved issues can quickly escalate into a public disaster. Sometimes all it takes is just one tweet. But damage control isn't just for managing public relations. Most unsatisfied customers won't even bother to complain or leave a bad review. They just head for the exit without saying a word. So, the customers you do face are just the tip of the iceberg. This is important to realize: dealing with angry customers is actually healthier for your business because it gives you a chance to learn and make things right.

Here are our 8 tips for dealing with angry customers.

1. Number one: Keep your cool. I know that being told to "just stay calm" is easier said than done. But it's definitely worth practicing. In many cases, it's not the actual event or angry customer that's causing us stress. It's the fear of not being able to fix the situation and find a happy ending. If you frequently find yourself in stressful situations, try to practice the "art of letting go". Ask yourself, "how important will this be to me in six months?" You'll find that some things aren't as important as they may seem in the heat of the moment. Realize that you did all you could to the best of your ability. By giving the situation less power over you, you let go of the fear and the stress.

2. Number two: Calm a customer by asking questions. To help an angry customer, you need to understand what anger is. It's a stress reaction that pushes people into fight-or-flight mode. When someone attacks, humans are naturally wired to go into defense. That's why arguing with the customer about why they're wrong is not the way to go. It will only make them feel like you're not understanding their view or taking them seriously. Instead, calming the customer down should be your first priority. Focus on handling the person first and then the issue. The questioning technique is a good way to do this. Here's how it works. The next time you speak to an unhappy customer, ask them to explain their issue in detail without casting judgment. Then ask follow-up questions to make sure you understand the situation. For example, "I'd like to help you find a solution, can you tell me when this problem first started?" or, "I appreciate your

feedback, may I ask you some questions to make sure I understand all the details?" This simple technique achieves two things. First, actively listening to the customer will show that you care. Usually they're not just looking for a solution to their problem but also some sort of recognition. Second, talking and explaining will help a customer communicate more rationally. It's tough trying to explain yourself when you're all riled up. As things become clearer, your customer is more likely to start calming down. Customers are also more likely to open up if you make them feel good about themselves. Try speaking to them in a way that shows you value their feedback. You could say, "Thank you for letting us know about this issue. We appreciate customers who do this because these types of things can go unnoticed by us and affect other customers. You're helping us create a better experience for everyone. A little tactical ego caressing can go a long way and help ease the tension.

3. Number three: Use the because justification. Sometimes, you just have to give bad news. However, studies found that offering an explanation will help soften the blow. In customer service, make sure you have a "logical" because. It's frustrating to just be told "Those are the rules." Because if the rules don't make sense, there's no point in sticking around. This means your agents need to be well informed about your product, rules, philosophy and ethics. For example, Userlike customers often ask why we don't provide video chat. We tell them, "Thank you for the feature proposal. This is a hot topic for our product team. However, research showed that people prefer text over video because it takes pressure off the service interaction." A service team that can speak confidently about your culture and reasoning has a better chance of calming down the customer.

4. Number four: Show compassion. It feels good to know that the person you're talking to can relate to your struggle. So, the next time you talk to an angry customer, try empathizing with their issue. You might be worried about exhausting yourself if you connect with every customer like that. So, instead of showing blind customer empathy, try using rational compassion, which is the wish for everyone to do well without being affected by their emotions. Think of doctors. If they felt every patients pain, they would have trouble doing their job.

5. Number five: Apologize. When you work the frontline of customer service, you may get customers who are angry at you for reasons beyond your control. You can't help but think, "This isn't my fault!" But as a customer service agent, you represent the company. So, whether or not you were directly involved in the customers issue is beside the point. So, does that mean that you should apologize to every angry customer? Yes, but with an important side note. If a customer is angry because your company made a mistake, it's best to apologize. But sometimes the customer's anger is greatly misplaced. Say a customer is furious because their new phone didn't survive an accidental trip through the washing machine. This is clearly not the company's fault but you could still say

something like "I'm sorry your phone stopped working. I understand that this is very frustrating for you." This lets you apologize for the situation and show compassion but not take any of the blame.

6. Number six: React with politeness. Kindness is disarming. Rudeness only breeds rudeness. So being polite breaks an angry person's behavioral pattern. Angry customers can justify their attitude if you're rude back to them even if they started it. But if you stay polite throughout the conversation, no matter what curveballs come your way, then this may help defuse a situation.

7. Number seven: Don't take it personally. Taking an issue to heart makes you more vulnerable to acting out of emotion. But all this does is escalate the problem. There are a couple of things you can do to avoid taking things personally depending on your mode of communication. If you offer face-to-face or phone support, try changing your body to change your mind. This means slowing down your movements, lowering your voice and taking on a cool composure. This not only helps you relax but sets a presence of calmness for the customer. In live chat or email support, practice cognitive distancing. The idea is to delay your response by closing your eyes, taking deep breaths and turning away from the screen for 30 seconds. This will give you a little break from a tense situation.

8. Number eight: Beware ambiguity. Sometimes we perceive angry behavior that's not actually there. This usually stems from miscommunication. For example, brevity isn't necessarily a sign of disrespect. When a customer is in a rush and can only send one-word responses, you may read that as rude. But that's normal. Our brains have a built-in negativity bias that causes us to focus on the bad things. We've talked about how to conquer this in an earlier video which you can find in the top right corner.

You won't be able to regain every customer. Some people just can't be pleased or they're carrying baggage from past bad experiences. No combination of words or pleasantries will be able to turn things around. But good communication is essential to preventing anger from rising. An easy way to do that in support is by offering an easy, convenient channel for customers to reach you on. We recommend live chat and messaging which you can try out with our solution. Check out Userlike and get closer to your customers.

Thanks for watching and happy chatting!