

## The easy way to win over difficult customers

There is one simple method of dealing with a difficult customer interaction. It is called the L.A.S.T method. You know the sort of day. You seem to be getting every cranky customer making a bee line for you. Just when you don't think you can take anymore, the child of satan and Beelzebub makes his way to your counter and demands that you fix his problem now. The first thing is to ensure that you 'check your baggage'. This isn't about 'you', it's about the situation. Remember that, and everything will be easier.

### **Listen**

Really listen – give the customer the chance to vent without interruptions - You need to find out exactly what they expected and why they are disappointed – is it product, price, or service. If you interrupt them you won't learn what you have to do to solve their problem. Don't fake, don't personalise, don't give advice. Just listen.

### **Apologise/Acknowledge**

This is the hard step – because often you have done nothing wrong, the customer is being rude and sometimes you just don't feel like it.

An apology is not about taking blame or admitting guilt – it's an expression that you are personally sorry your guest is disappointed. If they're rude be a pro – don't take it personally – try and think why they are so upset. Look for a way to show empathy.

Finally there will be days when you don't feel like apologising, there will be days when you don't feel like smiling – that's when your baggage shows and you need to be able to leave it at the door – choose a positive attitude each and every day

### **Solve**

Let them know that 'we are in this together' – use sentences that emphasise words like 'I, me, You, We' – the key to solving is to have the courage to do what it takes to make things right – they don't care about systems or processes, or suppliers they just want to know what you are going to do to fix their problem. Give possible solutions and alternatives. If applicable, ask them what they would like to see happen. Explain what you can do and the action you will take, gain their agreement and then make sure you follow through on your commitments promptly. Never over promise, or under deliver.

### **Thank**

Thank them for being a customer – for bringing it to your attention – for being so 'understanding' about it. Follow up to ensure the customer is happy with the outcome.

### **Sources:**

- Steven Schiffman 'The 25 Habits of highly effective sales people'
- Steven Lundin, *et al*, 'FISH'