Servicing Irate Customers
Objectives

- Identify and understand customer anger
- Apply the ability to diffuse anger
- Create rapport
- Handle irate calls efficiently
Why are They Calling?

- Customer called for a reason, don’t lose sight of “why”
- Keep control of the call
- Re-direct the caller from getting off-topic
Why are They Irate?

- Long hold time in queue
- Account is past due
- Has a problem
- Don’t like their options
- Want what they want
- Don’t understand
- Don’t want to understand
- Life happens!
Introducing “The Four A’s!”
Wait...what are The Four A’s?
The Four A’s

- Accept
- Acknowledge/Address
- Apologize
- Assist

Benefits

✓ Flexible guideline
✓ Balanced method
Accept
Accept

- Let the customer have their say.
- Don’t interrupt!
- Listen with the intent of understanding.
- Think of solutions as they are describing their problem/issue.
- Multi-task! Use the time to research their account and arm yourself.
Accept (cont.)

- Refer to the caller by name.
- Get information by asking specific questions.
Acknowledge/Address
Acknowledge/Address

- Acknowledge the customer’s anger so they know they’ve gotten through to us.
  - **Example:** “I understand you’re upset, Mr. Johnson, and I want you to know that getting to the bottom of this matter is important to me too.”
- Don’t take their anger personally.
- Don’t react emotionally.
- Let them vent *without* losing control.
Acknowledge/Address (cont.)

- Steer the conversation in a constructive direction.
- Try to de-escalate the call:
  - If you can’t give them exactly what they want, tell them what you can do.
  - Remember to show empathy.
  - Avoid needless transfers or hold time.
Apologize
Do it, no matter who is at fault.

67% of problems that customers experience are actually their own fault. (But don’t judge.)

The customer needs to feel the company cares about them.

**FACT:**

Apologizing can result in *fewer* escalated calls and *less* talk time!
Apologize (cont.)

- *Natural* response for customer service professionals.

  “Ms. Sanchez, I apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused you.”

  “We’re sorry you feel that way, Mr. Watson.”
Apologize (cont.)

- **Benefits**
  - Establishes rapport and trust
  - Helps settle problems
  - Creates calm and reduces stress
  - Minimizes talk time

*Do it sincerely and **without** delay!*
Assist
Assist

- Steven Covey is right: Understand, then be understood!
- Seek to first understand the customer and diagnose the problems, before attempting to prescribe a solution.
- Make confirmation statements to ensure you have all the information you need.
- Be knowledgeable about your product so you can respond quickly and accurately the first time.
- Stay up-to-date regarding any recent changes.
- Be specific about the information you are requesting.
- Ask close-ended questions to get precise answers.
So, The Four A’s really work?
Positive Results!

- Difficult calls go quicker and more easily.
- Customer Service Professional feels they have efficiently completed the task and call.
- Quick control of the call ensures the real issue was handled properly in minimal time.
- Customer may have been educated.
- Customer feels their voice was heard, which helps create rapport and loyalty.
Positive Results! (cont.)

- Avoiding escalation calls means the issue won’t come back again.
- Customer satisfaction is positively affected due to the Customer Service Professionals ability to handle more calls.
- Helps ensure further business with the customer.