



Problem Solving in Customer Service

Bob Davis-Mayo

Davis-Mayo

Associates, LLC

The heart of customer service is caring problem-solving.

We believe excellent service providers know how to be balanced, caring problem-solvers who bring options to their customers' dilemmas and needs. Many models have been offered. We offer these powerful basics.

1. Listen by asking open-ended questions to identify the customer's perception of the problem.

- Ask questions to identify both the facts of the situation and the feelings of the customer about it.
- Ask clarifying follow-up questions when uncertain about what the customer is saying.
- Take notes.

2. State the problem in one sentence.

- Be specific—it's the only way to end up with valid solutions.
- Use the customer's language as much as possible.
- You may need to help the customer see the big picture—not just their perception of the problem.
- Then ask: "Is this how you see the problem?" or "Does that capture the situation?"
- If necessary, adjust the problem statement until the customer confirms that it is accurate.

3. Explore possible root causes with the customer.

- Look for the root cause(s), not just symptoms.
- Ask probing questions.
- NOTE: Don't skip this step. Many do and, therefore, find they have not addressed the real issue.

4. Redefine the problem, if necessary.

- It is not uncommon, upon exploring possible root causes, to discover that the presenting "problem" was a symptom, not the real root issue.
- So, restate the problem in one sentence, if necessary.
- Then ask the customer whether this is how they see the problem now.

5. Briefly brainstorm possible solutions.

- Explore options to solve the problem. Care about their feelings as well as the facts.
- Identify constraints where necessary (in a "can do" positive way)—legal, ethical, technical, cost, etc.

6. Decide on action(s) to take that will resolve the problem.

- Determine the best solution(s)—considering outcome, time, cost, etc.
- Agree upon next steps to resolution.
- Ask the customer if they feel good about this solution.

7. Follow-up, if at all possible.

- Check the results to see if the problem was resolved and how the customer feels about it.

www.davismayoassociates.com



©2008 Davis-Mayo Associates, LLC