

Term	Definition	Introduced In
Assurance	A promise; to pledge with confidence	Module 3
Barriers	An obstacle that can prevent effective communication, such as a desk between two people	Module 4
Brainstorm	A creativity technique in which efforts are made to find a conclusion for a specific problem by gathering a list of ideas spontaneously contributed by its member(s)	Module 5
Broken Record Robert	Generally refers to a customer who repeats a problem continually	Module 4
CEO	Chief Executive Officer; individual ultimately responsible for an organization's success or failure	Module 1
Corporate Policy	A documented set of broad guidelines specific to the operations of an individual organization	Module 1
Criticism	Comments that question quality or value; constructive criticism should be used as a learning experience	Module 5
Direct Supervisor	Usually the person who is responsible for hiring, firing, and performance appraisals	Module 1
Empathy	Understanding, and sharing the feeling of someone else	Module 2
Feedback	Evaluative information that addresses reaction to a problem, or a person	Module 5
Front Line Employees	Any employee with direct contact with customers	Module 1
Impression	An idea, feeling, or opinion about something or someone	Module 1
Irrational	Not logical or reasonable	Module 2
Middle Management	Generally a team of individuals just below that of senior administrators	Module 1
Q-Tips	Quit Taking It Personally	Module 2
Resolve	Settle or find a solution to a problem	Module 1
Upper Management	Generally, a team of individuals at the highest level of organizational management	Module 1

HOW TO RESOLVE CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS ON THE SPOT

MODULE ONE – MOST IMPORTANT EMPLOYEES IN AN ORGANIZATION

So, who do you think is the most important employee in an organization? Go ahead, take a guess before we move on. According to most organizational charts, the CEO, the Chief Executive Officer, is the most important employee in an organization, followed by Upper Management, then Middle Management, then the Direct Supervisors, then Front Line Employees basically being the bottom of the totem pole. However, from a customer standpoint, it's just the opposite. The Front Line employee is the most important employee in an organization. We're the employees who can keep a customer happy, or turn them away from doing business with our company. We're the employees who make the business successful for the person who is at the top, for the CEO, and for upper management. Let me tell you a great story about a friend of mine: she bought some sheets and a comforter set. When she arrived home, she realized they had been used. She was livid! She was ready to go in, and let that company have it. She marched into the store, when to the customer service desk, and of course she was dealing with one of the Front Line Employees. She explained the situation, and explained how angry and upset she was. Now, if you haven't noticed yet, my accent should tell you I'm from the South. My friend returned this comforter and sheet set to the store and the young lady behind the desk said "Well Dang! I would be mad too!" What do you think that did for my friend? First of all, it took the wind out of her sails as far as the complaint went. Her anger dissipated. She ended up laughing with the young lady behind the customer service desk. That is a great example of how a Front Line Employee is the most important employee in an organization. My friend tells that story about what a great experience she ended up having with that company because of

the front line employee. Not because of the CEO, or upper management, but because of that front line employee. We're the ones who give the customer a positive, or negative, impression of our company. And by the way, my friend told about 20 people about that store, and about that situation. We were all out at dinner one night, so there were about 20 people who heard her story. Now of course, all of us are re-telling the story, so hundreds of people are going to hear positive comments about that company, because of one great customer service representative. Let's focus on some things that we can't control at our company. Well, why would we want to do that? Why do we want to start off How to Resolve Customer Complaints by talking about what we can't control? Well, we need to recognize things that are out of our authority, things we can't control. Then we will move on and talk about things we can control. We don't control Corporate Policy. The company where we work, their policies are written, and we follow them, we understand them, and we enforce them, however, we can't control them. Of course, we can always give ideas and suggestions, we can input information to our managers. However, we can't control corporate policy as customer service representatives. The next item, we can't control what someone else told this customer about our company. So if I'm picking up the phone and I have an angry customer, and I'm the fourth representative they have talked to, they're going to be swayed, persuaded, angry, upset based on what the previous three people have talked to them about, what their attitude was, how they have been treated by previous employees, prior to my phone call. That's something I can't control. I can't control what someone else told them about our company before I pick up on their call. The next item is product quality. Hopefully all of you work for companies where your product quality is high,

however product quality is not something that we can control as customer service reps. So we're talking about How to Resolve Customer Complaints on the Spot, and product quality is not something that we can change, on the spot. The next item is pricing. Pricing is not something that is set by Front Line Employees. Most of the time, pricing is out of our control. We can explain it, justify it, however it is not something that we can normally change. And lastly, we can't control how the customer acts. When they call in, they may be in a good mood, a bad mood. We have no clue or control over the emotions of the person on the other end of the line. One time I was working on Christmas Eve, and I had a phone call, and the gentleman immediately starting yelling at me, before he even give me a chance to ask if I could help. He was irate, rude, and extremely upset. Within about 60 seconds I realized; it's Christmas Eve, and maybe the fact that he has to work on Christmas Eve is related to his current behavior. So I listened for a while. I was calm, and asked questions when appropriate, and basically just let him vent for a while. I let him rant and rave for a while. At the end of that conversation, which by the way, did take quite some time, he was happy. He was satisfied. He even wrote a letter about my customer service to my Upper Management. Put yourself in the other person's shoes. When a customer calls in, we can't control how they act. However, listening is a skill that we should put up front and first, when a customer calls, and follow-through, making sure the customer is happy. Let's move on and talk about some ways we can take care of that. What do we control? What can we control as front line employees, as customer service representatives? First of all, we can control our attitude. Have a positive attitude, whether you're meeting the customer face-to-face, or picking up the phone, they will pick up on our attitude immediately.

Have a positive attitude about our company, have a positive attitude about our job, and have a positive attitude about being a great customer service representative. We can also control our own emotions. Even if this customer is angry, and upset, like the gentleman I mentioned that I spoke with on Christmas Eve, does not mean that we have to be angry and upset. Control our emotions. And we can also control our response. I mentioned a few moments ago that active listening is an important element of resolving customer complaints on the spot. Listen to your customers and respond appropriately. Sometimes no response is needed. Sometimes they just need to talk about how upset they are, and they talk themselves right out of being upset. Follow your company policy, and respond appropriately. The three things you do control: attitude, emotions, and your response. Let's talk for a few minutes about the 7-11 rule. What is that? In the first 7 seconds of contact with your customer, they form 11 impressions about you, and your company. What are those 11 first impressions? Cleanliness. The cleanliness of your organization; your office area, and you, your uniform for example. Attractiveness. This does not mean physical beauty. Attractiveness of your office area. Is it clean and neat? Is your appearance clean and neat and attractive? Credibility. Do you know your company's product? Can the customer believe you? Do they have confidence in your credibility? This goes hand-in-hand with knowledge. Are you knowledgeable about your company's product, pricing, the company structure. And responsiveness. Customers want to be responded to quickly. Always try to respond to a customer within the first 10 seconds, if at all possible. And friendliness. I say quite often that a smile is a smile in a universal language. Everyone understands a smile, no matter what language you speak. Friendliness is one of the biggest first impressions

that your customer will walk away with from your company. Practice smiling. Helpfulness. Are you truly willing to help the customer? Do you have their best interest at heart? Are you willing to go out of your way? If you work at a retail store, and someone asks for the location of an item, if at all possible, escort them to see that item. If you're a customer service representative and you work on the phone, actively show a willingness to help. Say those words. Communicate that. "I'll be more than happy to help you with that issue." And Courtesy. Be courteous. Use things we learned in school like Please, and Thank You, and Yes Sir, and Yes Ma'am. Be courteous. And have confidence. This should be instilled in you from your upper management. Have confidence in your decisions. Have confidence, use a voice tone that shows confidence. And Professionalism. Be professional. One time I called a company, and the customer service rep who answered the phone said "Sigh.....Hello. What can I help you with?" It took less than 7 seconds for me to form an impression of that company. That person was not very professional. Be professional in your work world.

HOW TO RESOLVE CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS ON THE SPOT MODULE TWO –KEEPING EMOTIONS AT BAY

Module 2 - How to Resolve Customer Complaints on the Spot. We're going to be talking about keeping our emotions at bay. Does this picture look familiar to anyone? Whether you're on the phone with a customer, or face-to-face, we all deal with angry customers at some point. As Customer Service Representatives, our goal is to stay calm, even when the other person is probably not staying calm. Here's something I have learned when working on keeping my emotions at bay. 85% of my behavior comes from what I think about myself. My self-esteem. My self-confidence. I listen to Jack Canfield's resource *Self Esteem and Peak Performance* quite often. I know that I'm unique. I am valuable to my organization. 85% of my behavior comes from my self-confidence for the day. On the other hand, 15% comes from reacting to someone else's words and actions. It's so easy for that to kick in sometimes. When someone is yelling at me, and personally criticizing me, based on my organization's behavior, or pricing, or beliefs, sometimes I tend to take that personally. We need to remember; this is not personal. This customer on the other end of the line is not personally attacking me, although it may feel like they are, it is not a personal attack. One way to keep emotions at bay, my emotions at bay, is to remember that I am unique. I am valuable. I contribute a tremendous amount of value to my organization. Here's an idea for you. Remember This. Quit Taking It Personally. Any time I start taking things personally at my job, I start visualizing a Q-Tip. I want you to do that also. Visualize a Q-Tip. Quit Taking it Personally. Most of the time, the person who you are face-to-face with, who is on the phone with you, they're upset and angry. One way to keep the emotions at bay is for you to stay calm, talk in a calm voice, and keep thinking to yourself: Q-Tip, Q-Tip, Q-

Tip! Quit Taking it Personally. Let's talk about Albert Ellis' A-B-C Theory of Emotional Disturbance. I'll like to give you a personal story. Our daughter, KC, works for a bank as a Relationship Banker. I've given her the Q-Tip advice before. Most of you realize that working in a bank, especially as a Relationship Banker, KC gets a lot of yelling customers. That would be the activating experience. The A in the A-B-C theory is Activating experience: someone comes in, they're very upset, and they yell. An irrational Belief: now in the beginning of KC's job she thought, "Am I doing something wrong? Why are they so upset with *me*?" Then the emotional Consequence: several days in a row, KC went home from work feeling very depressed and upset, thinking maybe she wasn't doing her job well. Let's back up and think about that. The activating experience in that case was someone who was extremely upset, and the more I asked and talked about the situation, and said you are taking it personally, quit taking it personally, she realized it is was an irrational belief to think it was her fault. Two out of three cases, someone had overdrawn their account, and their account had been closed by the bank. This was the customer's problem, not the Relationship Banker's problem. How can you relate that story to your job? When someone asks you a question, and they're unhappy with your answer, and they become upset with you, think about 'Am I being rational about what I believe here? Is this my fault?' What emotional consequence am I having based on this conversation? Should I be depressed? Should I be angry? Should I be upset? Or is this just part of my job, and I need to work through this with the customer, with my co-worker. Let's add a D and E to our A-B-C theory. D: Dispute Irrational Ideas. A lot of times when we're dealing with angry customers, and we're trying to keep our emotions at bay, it's irrational to think that this

is our fault. In some cases, we may be dealing with misdirected anger. We talked earlier about how we cannot control what other people have told this customer prior to our phone call. It could be that we're dealing with irrational ideas based on previous information. We might be dealing with misdirected anger based on previous customer service experience, for this customer. And then E: How to Choose a New Effect. Let's wrap this together with our 85% and 15% rule. 85% of the way we act, the way we react, comes from the way we feel about ourselves. We need to have high self-esteem, high self-confidence. I mentioned earlier you are unique and valuable to your organization, and I want you to keep that in mind and choose a new effect. Don't let an irrational belief convince you that you're not doing your job well. If you have a question about your job performance, ask the question. For example, if your boss says "I'm not happy with this work, I'm not happy with this report that you produced." That would be the A: Activating Experience. We could jump to B, the irrational belief, and think "Oh My Goodness, I'm not good at my job, I can't do anything right." However, what I'm asking you to do is take a step back, and say "I understand you're not happy with my work. Let's work together. What can I do differently to have a better experience for both of us in the future." Choose a new Effect. Before we talk about Winning Attitudes, let's go over a few items that can make our customers angry. A few attitudes that can anger our customer. Arguing, Rationalizing, Defending, Complaining, Overreacting, Emotionalizing, Over Promising, Guaranteeing, or Judging the person. And now for the fun part! Here are some winning attitudes: Have a professional and polite demeanor. I'm not talking about a canned response. Customers will pick up on any canned response that you have been forced to say, but have a professional and polite

demeanor. A How CAN I help attitude. Notice the emphasis on the word CAN. How CAN I help you? Be sincere. Be honest. Use integrity. Have an attitude that you want to help your customer. How can I help you today? Empathy. Put yourself in the other person's shoes. Everyone has a story. There are two sides to every story. Try to put yourself in the other person's shoes. Be empathetic, and listen. Listening to our customers is one of the most important aspects of resolving customer complaints on the spot. We all should have Active Listening as one of our goals. You can use your body language, and your words, to show that you are actively listening to the customer. Under promise and over deliver. This is always a great idea when resolving customer complaints. Surprise your customer; over deliver. Go above and beyond. If at all possible, go above and beyond normal customer service. Keep your company policy in mind, follow the rules, and everything you can do to go above and beyond, try to do that. And take ownership of the problem. There's nothing more frustrating than dealing with someone who constantly says "It's not my problem. I didn't do that. I can't fix that." Take ownership of the problem. Even if you can't solve the problem right away, assure your customer that you will take care of the problem. Take ownership. Here are some words to avoid when we're dealing with our customers: I can't. All we can do is. It's company policy. You should have, or you shouldn't have. Watch our body language, and the tone of our voice, when we're dealing with our customers, and the tone of our voice. Our words portray a great deal of information. Our body language and our tone also portray a great deal of information.

HOW TO RESOLVE CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS ON THE SPOT MODULE THREE –GIVING THE CUSTOMER WHAT THEY WANT

Module 3 - Giving the Customer What they Want. Most of the time, satisfying our customer is very simple and basic. The first thing our customers want is an apology. A very sincere “I’m sorry.” And then an explanation is necessary. Why did this happen? Help your customer understand what the problem is. And then assurance that it will not happen again. Confident assurance that this will not happen again. Let’s dive a little bit deeper into each of these categories. I think we can all agree that not all apologies are created equal. A flippant “I’m sorry” is so much different than “I’m sorry that happened to you.” I was looking at a study done by the Nottingham School of Economics Centre of Division Research that said 40% of our customers want an apology. Sometimes that’s all that is needed or necessary. When someone from the company says I’m Sorry, and they’re sincere, customers are satisfied. We may not have to go on and take further steps, for example, giving them a refund, or giving them a gift card. A sincere apology is what a lot of customers are looking for - what most of our customers are looking for. Don’t you respect your co-workers, and people in your life, who admit when they have made a mistake? They say I’m Sorry, and more importantly, they recognize the problem, and come up with a solution. For example: I’m sorry, and here’s what we can do to take care of that problem for you. We can take responsibility for the issue that the customer is having, listen to them, we talked about active listening earlier, and be sincere. Apologize. Apologies are very powerful. Use them. The next step in giving the customer what they want is an explanation. Get the facts. Here’s some advice: keep it brief. Your customer probably is not interested in the fact that your system may have been down for the past two weeks, and that you are just recovering from a

software crash, and that's why they have an error on their billing statement. Instead of giving all those details that the customer really isn't interested in, basically say "I see the problem, and I'll fix it." A brief explanation will keep your customer happy. The third step for giving the customer what they want is to assure them this will not happen again. Back that up with a fact. This will not happen again, and here's what I will do to assure that. I apologize your food did not come out the way you ordered it. Our kitchen has been having a little bit of an issue, and I assure you that the next time you come to our restaurant, this will not happen again. Assure the customer that you are following up, and trying your best to handle this situation. Now let's talk about the situation where you may not be able to promise the customer that this will not happen again. Let's say this is an issue that happens frequently in your company, and management doesn't seem to be responding adequately. My advice at this point is to assure the customer you understand the problem, apologize, explain it, and assure them that you are following up and letting management know about the issue. Brief facts, honesty, sincerity, all of those things go hand-in-hand to let your customer know you are following up, you are listening to what they are saying, you are confident, and they know you will follow up with the problem, to help assure that it will not happen again. So let's review the basics of giving the customer what they want again: the apology, the explanation, and assuring them this will not happen again. I went into my favorite coffee store a few weeks ago. It was a busy morning, and I did not get my coffee in line. I stood there, and stood, and stood, and about six people who were behind me got their coffee. As soon as the barista recognized the situation, he apologized, and said "It seems you have been standing there a while, did we miss your order?" I said "Yes,

here's my order, here's the drink I want." He explained that the order did not move from the cashier to the barista. He apologized. He made my drink quickly, and handed me my drink with a gift card to get my next drink for free. I can assure you that was exactly what I wanted. Everyone makes mistakes. No one is perfect. Getting that apology, and just a brief five second explanation assured me that they would do their very best not to let it happen again, and handing me a free certificate for my next coffee was imperative, and critical, to keep me as a customer. I walked away very happy. One thing I want to ask you to do: we talked earlier about always put yourself in the other person's shoes. When you are the customer, and the customer service rep is on the other side of the counter, or the other end of the phone, I want you to put yourself in their shoes. We all know how they feel. I was at a restaurant, actually a fast food restaurant, a few months ago, and the person in front of me was irate. Their order had come out incorrectly. The young lady behind the counter did exactly what she was supposed to do. She apologized, she explained the situation, she tried to give free food, she apologized again. For some reason, I think the lady in line must have had some misdirected anger, because she continued to berate and belittle the customer service representative, in this case, the person behind the counter who was delivering the food. She continued to berate her for at least three minutes, until the young lady cried. At that point, a manager from the back of the store came out and did take care of the customer, however, the young lady who was doing her very to follow these steps, apologize, explain, and try to make her customer happy, walked away in tears. So here's my personal request for you: When we're on the other side of the counter, when we're on the other end of the phone, keep in mind the customer service rep that we're

dealing with, has the same problems, and issues and angry customers that we have. Put yourself in their shoes. Let's establish a framework for resolving a complaint. We all know that we never get two complaints that are the same. We never have two customers that are exactly the same. However, we do know that as customer service representatives, we will have problems, we will deal with angry customers, and part of resolving customer issues on the spot is adhering to this framework. First step: Determine the problem. The best way to do that is Listen. Listen to the customer. Listen to what they're saying. Listen to the problem they are describing. And then repeat the problem for confirmation. A good idea is to use the words that they used. Rather than changing the words around, re-stating the problem in your own language, repeat the problem back to them using the words they used. Now be careful here! I do not want you to become a parrot, and just repeat their words straight back to them. That could make them angry. However, I would like for you to repeat the problem to make sure you understood it correctly, and then apologize. We talked about several techniques to use when apologizing to the customer. Be sincere, and thank them for bringing the problem to your attention. Sometimes when a customer brings a problem to our attention, it is good for our company. It is something that we can resolve, before many customers have the same issue. And then seek the best solution. As a customer service representative, you may be able to offer several solutions. If none of the solutions you offer to this customer work, ASK. Ask what would make them happy. By following your company policy, and using your best judgment, you and the customer can agree on the best solution. Take quick action. Nothing frustrates a customer more than to have someone assure them they will follow up, and nothing happens. A week

later, the customer has to make another phone call. They're more angry, and more upset because someone promised them, and assured them they would follow up with the problem, and that did not happen. So take quick action when you're presented with a problem. Then follow up. Once you have taken that action, follow up. Let the customer know that the issue has been resolved.

HOW TO RESOLVE CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS ON THE SPOT MODULE FOUR – TIPS FOR STICKY SITUATIONS

And now, something that we all deal with as Customer Service Representatives, we're going to talk about Tips for Sticky Situations. One of the most difficult situations we find ourselves in is having to say No to our customer. We want to say Yes, but sometimes we just have to say No. If the customer's request is totally unreasonable, we will have to tell the customer No, we are not able to do that. Here's how to soften that. First of all, listen. Actively listen. I know, yes, there's a pattern here. We have talked about active listening a lot. It is a huge part of resolving customer complaints on the spot. We listen to what the customer is saying, acknowledge what they're saying, repeat what you hear them say, and then sincerely decline their request. For example, my husband and I have a vacation rental home. We rent it out by the week. One time we had a situation where the tenants had to leave, our guests had to leave for a few days. We had a water leak situation. We acknowledged their disappointment. Of course, we gave them their money back immediately. However, their request was to stay in the home, and get their money back. That wasn't a good solution, because we weren't able to do the repairs with them in the home. So although I wanted to make them happy, I wanted to say Yes to their request, I did have to decline. The way I did that was to acknowledge their disappointment, and I was sincerely sorry that they had to leave for a couple of days and stay in a hotel, and then politely explain that it would not work for them to be in the home while the repairs were being made. A great way to end the conversation when you're negotiating with a customer, and you have to tell them No, is to say "Would that be fair?" So present your solution, and ask the question Would that be fair? Asking the question in that manner tends to focus them on your solution. They

think about what solution you are offering, rather than other things that they may want. Or rather than a Yes or No question. It focuses them on the solution you have proposed. Another situation that we often encounter when we're trying to Resolve Customer Complaints on the Spot is Broken Record Robert. This customer continues to complain about the same thing over, and over, and over. The way we want to handle that is, of course, we want to be empathetic, show concern in our voice, and we want to offer our solution. When Broken Record Robert comes back and complains about the same problem again, and again, and again, we want to continually offer our solution. Try to use the same words and phrases, as you repeat the solution over and over. Robert is probably trying to get you to give in, and the more he complains about a situation, he is hoping you will give in, however, follow your company policy, and continue to state that company policy in a professional and tactful manner. Be courteous. Have a good attitude. Have a good tone in your voice, and repeat the company policy back to Broken Record Robert. Eventually, you should come to an agreement. And the person who demands to speak to the boss, how do we handle this customer? First attempt is "Due to privacy reasons, I really can't transfer you directly to my supervisor, or my boss, or the owners cell phone, however, I can give you their voice mail. Is that acceptable? Of course, find out what your company guidelines are, and follow those guidelines on how to handle a customer who demands to speak to the boss. Know beforehand who you should pass these complaints to. A nice way to pass along a customer who demands to speak to the boss is to stay on the phone and assure they get to the person you have been instructed to transfer the call to; this is called a soft transfer. Stay on the phone with the customer until the person on the other end in

your company, answers, then explain the customer's situation. This shows a caring attitude, on your part, for the customer. And sometimes when a call does get escalated, or a customer who is there face-to-face does get in front of the boss, sometimes the rules that you have been trying to follow get overridden. The way to handle that situation is to ask the person, your boss or their designated representative, how you should handle this situation in the future.

What are we going to do with the angry, exploding customer? This is the person who is beyond upset, they're yelling and screaming, potentially using foul language. First thing I want to ask you to do is acknowledge their emotions. Back to active listening again, listen to their complaint, acknowledge the emotions, and use phrases like I understand, I hear what you're saying, I see your point. And then try to move the conversation on; try to resolve the issue by saying "This is as important to me as it is to you. I am very committed and dedicated to solving this problem. I see that you're upset. It's important to me to solve this also. And by the way, is it ok to vent sometimes? Yes, of course it is. It's okay to vent. We all do it at some point. Allow your angry customer to vent, set a time limit, give yourself maybe 30-45 seconds, and then move the conversation along. You can do that by interrupting and saying "I understand you're upset. It's important to me to resolve this issue also." How do we deal with the person using foul language? One way we handle that customer is to politely interrupt and explain that you are really struggling to hear the content, the complaint they have, because you are offended by the foul language. Again, emphasize that you want to help, be empathetic and listen, however do not allow the language to continue.

Let's put a bit more emphasis on the angry customer, and talk about when customers behave badly. Again, acknowledge the anger. You can do that by looking directly at your customer if it's a face-to-face, and say I understand, I can see that you are very upset. Acknowledge their anger. Again, allow them to vent. Set a time limit. It's okay for everyone to vent. It's okay for your customers to vent. Don't let them cross the line of emotional abuse. Don't let them use four letter words in your area. Put a stop to that quickly. Set the time limit. Allow them to vent for a specified time. Another suggestion is to remove barriers. What does that mean? If you're behind a big, mahogany desk, get up and walk to the front of that desk. If your customer is standing, try to stand. If your customer is sitting, try to sit. Studies have proven that people emulate our behavior. If you speak in a calm tone, more than likely your customer will also begin to speak in a calm tone. Keep a close eye on your body language also. Make sure your arms aren't crossed when you're listening to your customer. Make sure you have an open posture. Smiling is always a good idea. Make eye contact when appropriate. Use your body language and remove barriers to assure your customer that you are actively listening.

HOW TO RESOLVE CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS ON THE SPOT MODULE FIVE – AFTER THE ENCOUNTER

We're talking about how to Resolve Customer Complaints on the Spot, let's move on and discuss what we'll do after the encounter. I'm going to ask you to learn from every complaint. It's a natural reaction to become defensive when we're being criticized, and when people are complaining. I'm going to ask you to take a step back, take a deep breath, and realize what I can learn from this complaint. Brainstorm with your team. How can we learn from this mistake? It's incredibly important in today's world with Social Media to learn what we did wrong, and fix it, and move forward. Studies have shown that the biggest reason customers quit a business is an attitude of indifference by the owner, or maybe the manager, or front line employees. Our goal throughout the process of Resolving Complaints on the Spot, and after the process, after the encounter, is to show an attitude of active listening, empathy, caring. Learn from every complaint. And then fix the systems. Fix the problem that was pointed out. Sometimes customers are our greatest resource to fix our systems. At one point, I was a customer service representative, we sold weather data where I worked. Somehow one of our systems had a small error. We did have a subset of customers who were our testers, thank goodness, and they found an error in one of our programs. I was very grateful for those customers who complained that there was a problem. Thank goodness it was the small subset of customers. We fixed that system immediately. We spoke earlier about thanking your customer. We apologize, we acknowledge, and then we thank them for finding problems and help us find solutions. The customer feels empowered and appreciated. It's a great way to Resolve Customer Complaints on the Spot. And then let's talk about fixing procedures. Maybe there are procedures in our area that need to

be handled differently. Like someone who demands to speak to the boss, for example. How is that system handled? How is that procedure handled? That may be something we need to review often. I'm going to ask you as you move forward to take those complaints and analyze how well or how poorly the complaint was handled, and resolved. Get your team together. Have a brainstorming session. What is a brainstorming session? Everyone gets in the room and throws out ideas, critiques the situation. No idea, thought, or sentence is criticized in a brainstorming session. Have a brainstorming session with your team, and make it a goal to analyze how well or how poorly the complaint was handled, and resolved. Then ask customers for feedback. It's so easy in today's world to ask your customer for feedback. I ordered an appliance last week from a major retail store. Within an hour of my order, I got an e-mail saying please provide feedback. Many times when I call an organization and speak with a customer service representative, I immediately get an e-mail asking for feedback. Determine what works for your customer base in order to get feedback. My favorite feedback is when I go to my favorite coffee store that I talked about earlier, and at the bottom of my receipt it says, "If you will enter this survey, you get a free coffee the next time you come in." I can assure you that I always give feedback when I get those receipts. In today's social media world, it's important that we as an organization ask for feedback. I can assure you that a lot of people are going to put feedback on their social media pages about our company, about our organization. We need to do everything possible to make sure the feedback is positive. And then, take criticism as an opportunity to make things better. This is hard! This is hard to do, most of us get defensive immediately, understandably. Handling emotions can be the hardest part of

our job, when we're resolving customer complaints on the spot. Our natural reaction when someone yells, is that we just want to yell back! Why do I have a cupcake on this slide? Gigi's Cupcakes is one of my favorite places. I have spent a small amount of time studying their company. They take criticism well. From their beginning days, they have taken criticism well. They have taken customer input, and customer criticism, and moved forward with ideas. They are a very successful company. When thinking about after the encounter, here's an important point: a customer who comes back after a negative experience is a customer for life. They are committed to your organization. Let's go all the way back to the first story I told about my friend, Crystal, with the sheets and the comforter. That was a negative experience. But I can tell you she is a customer for life with that company now. She had a very negative experience, and one customer service representative, turned that around. She tells everyone the story because it's funny. She is committed to that company for life. Keep that in mind. Follow up after the encounter. Make sure your customer is happy, if at all possible. Here's a final note from me: the only person who can make you unhappy is You. I know other people try. As customer service representatives, we see people all the time, we talk to people all the time. Sometimes we feel like it is their goal to make us unhappy. But always remember, the only person who can make you unhappy is YOU.

Thank you for attending How to Resolve Customer Complaints on the Spot.