

The Customer Service Survival Kit: What to Say to Defuse Even the Worst Customer Situations

Richard S. Gallagher

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Richard S. Gallagher : The Customer Service Survival Kit: What to Say to Defuse Even the Worst Customer Situations before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Customer Service Survival Kit: What to Say to Defuse Even the Worst Customer Situations:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Few good tipsBy JustMeI am in warranty service, this does not pertain to that part of customer service0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Larry BeachamReceived Item as described. No problems at all.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five

StarsBy CustomerFound this book to very helpful in teaching our employees

The worst customer situations demand more of front-line employees than good intentions and the right attitude. These kinds of issues can send seasoned service professionals into red alert, and require the communication skills of a crisis counselor. The Customer Service Survival Kit explains how to use the right words to turn volatile scenarios into calm and productive customer encounters. Anyone can learn this delicate art with the book's blend of clear techniques, lessons from behavioral science, case studies, situation-specific advice, and practice exercises. Readers will discover:

- The power of leaning into criticism
- Trigger phrases that can make bad situations worse
- The secret to helping people feel deeply heard in a crisis
- How to use the divide-and-conquer approach to safely deliver bad news
- Indispensable problem-solving tools
- How to become immune to intimidation
- How to wrap up transactions so that customers are happy
- And more!

Best yet, learning to handle worst-case scenarios has the spillover effect of boosting the skills and confidence needed to deal effectively with ANY customer—the key to radical improvements in every organization.

From the Back Cover Uh-oh! You know that panicked feeling when the customer is not just displeased or unhappy, but angry. Maybe even furious. And you know that the usual customer service protocols of courtesy and apologizing don't help in these red-alert situations. The Customer Service Survival Kit by Richard S. Gallagher is the first book packed with specific, step-by-step communication tactics tailored to steer potential disasters into calm, mutually agreeable solutions. Drawing from procedures rooted in behavioral science and used by crisis counselors and hostage negotiators, Gallagher explains:

- How to defuse anger by "leaning into" criticism
- Which well-intentioned "trigger phrases" make a bad situation worse
- The secret to making upset customers feel deeply heard
- A simple divide-and-conquer approach to delivering bad news
- What to say when a situation is your fault, and what to say when it isn't

Companies that have implemented Gallagher's principles have reaped the benefits in customer satisfaction rates, turnover levels, and sales. Illustrated by numerous examples and supported by practice exercises, The Customer Service Survival Kit will eliminate the fear of conflict and improve confidence and customer relations across the board.

ADVANCE PRAISE FOR THE CUSTOMER SERVICE SURVIVAL KIT

"This brilliant book is a page-turner. Richard Gallagher gives captivating explanations of more than just what to say to upset customers: he tells you why to say it, when, and how. It's a must-read for anyone who serves customers." —Marilyn Suttle and Lori Jo Vest, authors, *Whose Gladys? How to Turn Even the Most Difficult Customer into Your Biggest Fan*

"One of the most overlooked parts of providing great customer service is addressing the emotional state and needs of your customers—regardless of the facts of the situation. Listen to Rich and you'll nail this crucial aspect of service—and greatly enhance your company's performance." —Micah Solomon, author, *High-Tech, High-Touch Customer Service*

Richard S. Gallagher, MA MFT, is a former customer support executive, practicing psychotherapist, and author of numerous books on customer service and communications skills. He has trained over 20,000 people on how to handle their most difficult situations with customers and others, and is one of the nation's leading experts on workplace communications skills. See his website at www.CustomerServiceSurvivalKit.com.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

RICHARD S. GALLAGHER is a former customer support executive, practicing psychotherapist, and author of several books on customer service and communications skills.

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Introduction I love worst-case scenarios. Why? Because they hold the key to creating truly incredible service. Think about it. There is a lot of bad service out there. And most of it happens because people who serve the public constantly fear the worst, and then react to everyone from a defensive posture. Scratch the surface of most disengaged people who serve the public, and more often than not you will find fear lurking there. They feel alone and vulnerable on a very public stage, worrying about when the next customer will leave them twisting defenselessly in the wind. When service providers don't bother to ask you what you want, it is often because they are afraid they won't be able to handle what you tell them. When they tell you "no," they are hiding behind their policies because they have no idea how to negotiate with you. Even though they wear name tags that say "Hi, Can I Help You?" they are silently praying you will just go away creating as little damage as possible. And when you demand to speak to a manager, they often pass you off to someone who is as frightened and as clueless as they are. So how do you change this fear? By teaching people the skills that hostage negotiators, crisis counselors, psychotherapists, and police officers use in their worst situations. When people learn these skills, everything changes. They become supremely confident in any situation. They can really engage customers, because they know they are able to lean back on these communications skills for anything someone might throw at them. It is here, in this zone of incredible confidence, that greatness takes root. I know this works because I have watched it happen over and over. Let me share a little about myself. I am a former customer support executive who is now a public speaker as well as a practicing marriage and family therapist. My specialty is teaching people what to say in their most difficult situations. (In other words, when I am not busy having people get angry at me onstage in front of large audiences, I put myself in the middle of other people's family conflicts—go figure!) Before I did that,

I had a reputation for dramatically turning around the performance of customer-contact operations: creating near-perfect customer-satisfaction ratings, near-zero turnover, and record sales. It was here that I discovered the incredible power of the worst-case scenario. I found that when you teach people how to handle these worst cases, they become superstars. And when you teach everyone on a team how to handle them, the results are truly magical. Worst-case situations are defined by a customer's extreme reaction, no matter what actually happened. This book will teach you how to handle these situations calmly and professionally. Many of the book's examples will walk you through scenarios where the stakes are high, where people are completely unreasonable, or where someone is hopping mad and you are totally, utterly at fault. Others will examine routine situations where the wrong words could ignite a confrontation, and the right words can prevent one. You will learn how to walk safely into all of these discussions, defuse them with the skill of a bomb squad, and send everyone away feeling better. Best of all, you don't need to become braver, smarter, or craftier. You just need to use different words that I will teach you, step-by-step, using scenarios many of us lie awake at night worrying about. These words come from very recent, empirical principles of communications psychology that trigger the way other people think and feel. Using real-life dialogues and chapter exercises, including an appendix with my solutions, you will learn the same communications skills that I teach in my live training programs. There is just one catch to learning these skills: You must be prepared to take your human nature and stand it on its head. Instead of defending yourself, you will learn how to lean into criticism with gusto. Rather than minimizing the consequences of something, you will learn how to out-dramatize an angry customer and to take catch-phrases like "I understand" and banish them forever. You will also learn to challenge your assumptions about difficult customers. It will be a wild ride in spots. Here is why the ride will be worth it. Techniques like these spring from the relatively new field of strength-based communications, which has swept areas like athletic coaching, psychotherapy, and business leadership like a tidal wave in recent years—because it works. And when you see how well it works in your most difficult customer situations, it will become clear why all those years of telling yourself and your team to be "nice" never changed anything. When you get rid of the fear that sits behind most human interactions, you will find an authentic core of confidence that drives great service. When we first ask people how they would handle really tough situations in our training courses, they often reply, "I'd ask our boss to handle it." In this book, you are the boss. And by learning and practicing these skills, you stand a good chance of becoming the boss in real life, if you aren't one already. Leaders often stand out because of their ability to resolve conflict, and you are about to join the club. There is one more reason for learning how to handle your worst customer situations. These skills will affect the rest of your life in a big way. They will change the way you communicate with your supervisors, your coworkers, your children, and your life partner. (Trust me on this one—I have been together with mine for nearly forty years.) When you know how to make it safe to talk about anything, you get an added bonus of trust, intimacy, and goodwill that fundamentally changes your relationships with others. Your cost for all of these benefits? You just need to be prepared to look at your worst customer situations differently, with an open mind, and be willing to put these techniques to work. They take practice, but in time they will become a natural part of who you are. And then you will discover, as I have, how your worst customers can become the best friends your service career ever had.