

## Transforming Customer Disputes Into Service Opportunity (Part 1)

Disputes are common in the service industry. They are to be expected. Here's part one of my take on this problem as well as perspectives in transforming customer disputes to your company's benefit.

Why do disputes occur?

### 1. **Lack of Competent Staff**

Many staff members are untrained to deal with customer complaints. As a result, they are afraid of them and avoid them, passing the buck to somebody else. Or they treat customers harshly or indifferently. The result: dissatisfied and disillusioned customers. It has been estimated that 60% of customers go somewhere else because they are being treated badly.

### 2. **Uncooperative, Disputing Staff**

Great customer service recovery usually begins from the inside and works its way to the outside. When colleagues are grumbling and fighting with each other, customer disputes are neglected and the system for handling those disputes will fail.

### 3. **Poor Product Quality**

Sometimes, good products also break down. There is no guarantee that every product we market is perfect. Although companies strive to provide quality products, sometimes a customer may get a lemon! As Peter Drucker said so aptly, "Quality in the product or service is not what we put into it but what a customer gets out of it."

### 4. **Inefficient Processes**

Similarly, no matter how efficient our processes are, they can also fail us.. Invoices are billed wrongly, refunds are not made promptly – the list goes on. Glitches do happen. Here's a tip for you: Consistent customer complaint is a sign that the system has broken down and needs improving.

### 5. **Unreasonable Customers**

It has been estimated that 10% of customers are chronic complainers. For these, there is always something to gripe about, no matter how good your products or how efficient your systems may be. There are customers who want to take advantage of us. Our skill lies in the ability to distinguish the unreasonable from the genuine complaints.

## Meta's Key Perspectives in Transforming Disputes

### 1. **Check Your Attitude**

We believe that every customer dispute can be transformed into an opportunity when we learn how to handle each one well. As one CEO says, "There is no such thing as bad news, only news that can become good." Your attitude counts. If you perceive each dispute

negatively, you tend to avoid it or treat it badly. On the other hand, if you see it as positive “negative” feedback, then you welcome it and you can transform it.

As someone stated quite precisely, customer service is 80% attitude and 20% technique.

It is not the dispute that will sour the relationship between customers and us. But it is how we handle them. Unfortunately, not many know how to do this well. Having a right perspective is a good start.

## 2. Focus On Execution

Having great customer service is not exactly rocket science. We all know what we should do when dealing with customer disputes: timeliness, professionalism, good demeanor, constantly improved processes. It is simple yet hard to execute. Leaders must focus on the execution. As one marketing director of a renowned hotel chain said, “I simply concentrate on doing it better and then watch the other guy blink.”

Execution of service recovery is the key.

## 3. Attend To Dispute Transformation

Every dispute can be turned around. In fact, we should welcome customer complaints. At least they tell us where we have gone wrong. The worse that can still happen to any organization is when we are complaint averse. Everyone knows about how bad our service is, except us. We develop, what I call, Service Blind Spots. We simply drive people away without our recognizing it or doing anything about it.

I would rather know so that I can fix it.

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