

DTD Episode 15 Show Notes

Escalate Customer Issues for Great Service



What do you do when a customer has an issue? Do you have a system in place that escalates customer issues and allows for swift action and resolution?

Difficulty in dealing with customer issues ignites more workplace drama! And drama stands in the way of great service. You can create an escalating cycle of drama!

Did you know that a customer issue handled well creates the opportunity for a more loyal customer? I'm not suggesting you create problems so that you can solve them well. I am saying you must make sure that your team is armed with the ability to handle customer issues well as they arise.

We've all had the experience of calling the customer service center with our fingers crossed and mouthing under our breath, "please be my champion, please be my champion", as the phone rings.

How many times have you hung up the phone only to dial back in the hopes of getting a more resourceful person on the line? What does that feel like as a customer?

Your customers want a champion too.

Stop and think for a minute. When your customers contact your organization with an issue what is the probability of them getting a champion? Get real! This matters!

A customer issue champion must:

- Have Empathy
- Be Resourceful
- Have the Required Resources Available to Resolve the Issue

This usually includes the ready and enthusiastic help of co-workers to get the job done.

A few years ago I was conducting a cultural assessment for a client.

I was interviewing a service department employee. He began to complain about a specific sales employee. In his mind this co-workers always felt that his issues should take precedence over other work priorities. As the conversation continued it became very apparent that the sales person was the spokesperson for disgruntled customers who had already tried to maneuver through the normal channels and had found no success. The sales team had the relationships so became a collection point for unhappy customers. By the time an issue got back to them it WAS time to make fixing it a priority. Unfortunately, the company had no escalation process and the employees had no understanding of customer service.

The perception of this service department employee, mirrored by others in the organization, created barriers to providing great customer service and also ignited more employee drama. The service department became more and more frustrated with the "pushy" sales people

while the sales people became more and more aggravated with a department who was unwilling to address the issues of disgruntled customers.

To combat this phenomenon:

1. Every member of the team must know the part that they play in providing great customer service. Whether they have direct contact or not, each person is participating.
2. As an organization you must elevate the goal of providing great service. Keep it front and center. Show appreciation for employees who provide great service.
3. Create an escalation process. Find a way to communicate to the team that this is the issue and assure that all know where a customer service issue should be prioritized. Use a system. Find a special name. Whatever it takes. I recommend that you work with your team to create a process and mode of communication that will work inside of your organization. Let everyone have input. If you haven't already, listen to podcast number 13 to learn about a simple process improvement protocol. Creating a good escalation process could be one of your initiatives. Bring the team together. Help them each see the role they play and design a system that will work.
4. Remove the focus from employee to employee relationships, drama and frustration. The requests made on behalf of a customer are not made by a demanding co-worker. They are made on behalf of a customer who needs the issue resolved. Period. Help your team members focus where they must.