

## Customer Service Becoming A Myth?

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**(CBS)** If you've ever blown your top dealing with a customer service representative, you're not alone. A new study indicates it's a problem for most consumers.

Consumer correspondent **Susan Koeppen** says that means you need a battle plan if you have a problem with a company because satisfaction isn't always guaranteed, and many companies no longer take the approach that the customer is always right.

And, according to the study, that has many people feeling customer rage.

Consumers such as Mickey Donahue, who calls what her cell phone company put her through "infuriating," says it got her nowhere.

For months, Koeppen says, Donahue fought with the company over a billing problem, spending hours on the phone with customer service. In the end, she paid her \$383 bill out of sheer frustration.

She says customer rage is on the rise.

"Road rage, move over," Donahue says. "It's all customer rage now."

Scott Broetzmann is with the **Customer Care Alliance**, which did the recent study.

It found that a whopping 70 percent of consumers felt "rage" when dealing with a problem in the past year.

According to the study, the telephone, financial services, and travel and leisure industries lead the pack when it comes to upsetting consumers.

"Is customer service really that bad," Koeppen asks Broetzmann, "or are we a bunch of whiners and complainers?"

"That depends on who you ask," he responds. "Of course, if you ask the service professionals, they'd say customers are unreasonable. But what the study suggests is that customers really want simple remedies, explanations, reassurances, apologies, and thanks for their business."

But 40 percent of consumers said they got nothing at all when they complained, and more than half responded they were upset they wasted time dealing with the problem in the first place.

Donahue was so annoyed, she fired back, sending the company an invoice for the time she spent trying to get her problem resolved.

She asked for her hourly rate at work, which is \$19.26 an hour. It wasn't a lot of money. It was really just kinda my point."

The company didn't pay her.

Koeppen says Donahue's case highlights one of the key findings in the study: Consumers are more upset about losing time than losing money.

Donahue continued to fight for a refund from her cell phone company. She was a squeaky wheel and it worked. She resolved her issue and says she's very happy she got results.

Koeppen offered **tips on the best ways to get companies to respond the way you want when you gripe:**

- Be clear about the problem. Outline the main points of contention before you complain.
- Know your rights. Familiarize yourself with the company's policies.
- Tell the service provider exactly what you want. An apology? A replacement? Clarification? Be clear and factual.
- Contact the relevant authority. Make sure the person you complain to has the power to do something about your situation.

- Keep good records. Take names, track dates, keep receipts and all packaging.
- Stay calm. Escalation rarely brings the best results. Be polite, but direct. An articulate complaint speaks volumes.
- Play nice. Keep the customer service karma in balance by passing along words of praise when due.

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