



Hallmarks of horrible customer service

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Just about all of us will need to contact customer service at some point, and too often the outcome ends in frustration. Topping the list of irritants are thoughtless, indifferent, and just plain dumb corporate responses to calls for help. John Goodman, vice president of Customer Care Measurement & Consulting and author of the book "Customer Service 3.0" (AMACON, 2014), identified the flashpoints guaranteed to alienate consumers and fuel outrage.

- **Tell people on hold that they can get faster service by going to the website.** "The fallacy of this message is the belief that customers will call before going to the website," Goodman said. "In fact, almost all customers try the website first and only call when they cannot find what they are looking for on the site."
- **Provide a search tool that responds with "no answer found" for common questions and problems.** It's inexcusable and shows a complete lack of understanding about the customer experience when you enter into search engines common terms such as "complaint" or "problem" and it comes back empty, according to Goodman.
- **Tell customers on hold that their call is important.** "It's like pouring gasoline on the fire," Goodman said. "The fact that they are on hold long enough to receive that message means the company hasn't allocated enough resources to service. The message simply draws their attention to that fact."
- **Play advertisements pitching additional services while customers are on hold waiting to resolve a problem with an existing one.** "I was on hold on the phone trying to recover lost baggage, and playing in the background were ads promoting vacation travel to resort destinations," Goodman said. "Service lines should provide educational information, interesting, engaging facts, and calming music. Do not try to sell anything to customers on hold with a question or problem."

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