Up-a-Notch™ Sales Training System for Inside Salespeople

By Dave Kahle

Dealing with Difficult Customers

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

Congratulations, you are going to facilitate this training session.

Your job includes these things:

- facilitate the group conversations
- support and encourage each member
- manage the details of the program
- help hold people accountable for doing their assignments

It's important that each member of the group personally consider the material on the tape and do the exercises in this manual. Instead of "teaching," your job is to help them learn. That means ensuring that each participant completes the exercises, enters into the dialogue, and faithfully keeps to the learning procedures built into the program.

It's really not that difficult. Just follow our directions. As you complete each task, check the line in front of it.

Note: If you have more than eight participants, we recommend you split the group into two small groups with four or five participants in each and hold separate training sessions for each group. The exercises are designed for small groups, usually no more than seven people.

Here's how to do it…

Prepare for the session:

____ Make sure you have a working video player and monitor, or as a less desirable option, an audio cassette player.

____ Have an easel or white board available.

____ Prepare one set of materials for each of the participants.

✓ Make sure you have one *participants manual* for each person involved in the training. Order additional manuals from The DaCo Corporation, 1-800-331-1287.

- ✓ Split up the "bubble pads" so that each participant has at least three sheets. Split up the "prescription pads" so that each participant has at least two sheets.
- ✓ Obtain the copies of the "Prescriptions" that were written at the end of the last meeting.
- ✓ Arrange the chairs in a comfortable, semi-circular pattern.

____ Send a written invitation/reminder to each participant. Remind them to bring something to write with, and to hold their calls.

<u>During the training session:</u>

____ Begin with a discussion of the progress the participants made on their previous prescriptions. Get last session's prescriptions then say this:

"At each training session, we will all be making commitments for things we are going to do differently. In some cases, we may reconnect to something we already know we should be doing. In other cases it maybe something we haven't done before, regardless, making these commitments or writing "prescriptions", is a part of every session.

A part of every session is following up on the prescriptions we wrote in the previous training session. That is what we are going to do now. I am going to read each prescription and ask you how you are doing on that.

I will go first"

Now, read your prescriptions and explain in detail how well you have done at accomplishing it. If you noticed some positive results, make sure that you describe them and relate these results to the actions you took on your prescription. Remember to give a well thought out, honest, detailed report. The other participants will copy your modeling of how to report.

Then proceed to ask each person to report. Say, *"(person's name), you said you were going to (read the prescription). Tell us what you did."*

When appropriate, also ask, *"What result of your actions did you see?"*

Be sure to thank everyone who reported, and to positively encourage those who followed through on their prescriptions.

____ Allow them a few minutes to review the materials. Tell them the pages marked "Notes" at the top are to be completed while the tape is being played, and the pages marked "Exercises" are for after the tape is finished.

Say this:

"Today's topic is "Dealing with Difficult Customers: The Angry Customer." Take a couple of minutes to look through the materials. Note

that the pages marked "Notes" at the top are to be while the tape is playing, and the pages marked "Exercises" should be completed afterward."

____ When everyone is ready, turn on the tape. Continue to view (listen to) the tape until it is finished.

Following the end of the tape:

____ Immediately after the tape is finished, give everyone a few moments to complete their "Notes."

Say this:

"Take a couple of minutes now and finish filling in the blanks on the 'Notes' exercise."

The participants may want to discuss the notes or some aspect of the taped presentation. Allow them to do so.

___ *Exercise One: Role-playing*

This is a role-playing exercise. The learning value of the exercise is both the role-playing itself, as well as the discussion of it which follows. Your job will be to select the people to do the role playing, and then to lead the subsequent discussion.

- ✓ Begin by asking everyone to read the directions to Exercise One.
- ✓ Then, select two participants to do the role-playing. Give them a few moments to collect their thoughts. While they are preparing, instruct the rest of the group to watch the role-playing, complete the questions listed for exercise two, and be prepared to share their thoughts with the group.
- ✓ When everyone is ready, begin the role-playing. After a few moments, call an end to the role playing session, and lead a discussion of the questions. Ask each person to share their thoughts.
- ✓ Repeat the role-playing and the resulting discussion of it until each person has had the opportunity to practice as the "Customer Service Representative."

___ *Exercise Two: Role-playing*

This is a role-playing exercise. The learning value of the exercise is both the role-playing itself, as well as the discussion of it which follows. Your job will be to select the people to do the role playing, and then to lead the subsequent discussion.

- ✓ Begin by asking everyone to read the directions to Exercise Two.
- ✓ Then, select two participants to do the role-playing. Give them a few moments to collect their thoughts. While they are preparing, instruct the rest of the group to

watch the role-playing, complete the questions listed for exercise two, and be prepared to share their thoughts with the group.

- ✓ When everyone is ready, begin the role-playing. After a few moments, call an end to the role playing session, and lead a discussion of the questions. Ask each person to share their thoughts.
- ✓ Repeat the role-playing and the resulting discussion of it until each person has had the opportunity to practice as the "Customer Service Representative."

___ *Exercise Three: Generating Ideas*

- ✓ Give everyone about five minutes to complete three of their yellow bubble pads.
- ✓ Then, once again, ask people to share their ideas. This exercise will help others understand how to record a "good idea," and will stimulate additional ideas.

Say this:

"Now let's share some of these ideas. I'd like each person to share at least one. If you hear someone else's idea and that makes sense to you, feel free to record it as your own on one of your bubble sheets. You can have more than three. (Call on someone or go first yourself) ____________, what's one of your ideas?"

Continue in this way until everyone has had a chance to share at least one idea.

If people are hesitant to share, or if they have no ideas, take a few extra moments to review the content of the tape by going through the "Notes" exercise. Review each major point, and ask people to comment on it.

Say something like this…

"*The first point he made was that …………..*"

"Does that make sense to you?"

"How could we use that idea in this organization?"

"Any way that you might be able to use that?"

- ✓ In this way, continue down through the "Notes" exercise, reviewing each point, and encouraging people to find "ideas" and write them down.

___ *Exercise Four: Distilling the Best*

- ✓ Give everyone a few moments to complete it.
- ✓ Ask each person to share his or her ideas.

___ *Exercise Five: Precisely Prescribing*

- ✓ This time, ask each person to make a copy of his or her prescription, writing it on an additional Prescription pad. Ask each to write his/her name on the prescription, and turn it in to you.
- ✓ Mention that at the beginning of the next session, the group will review each of these prescriptions in order to hear what progress each person has made.

> Say this:
>
> *"At the beginning of the next session, we'll take a few minutes and find out what progress each person has made on his/her prescriptions. Be prepared to tell us what you did, and what results you saw. We'll be looking especially for success stories."*

____ Now, confirm the time, date and place for the next session, and close this session.

____ Fill out the evaluation form (next page) and fax it to 616-451-9412.

Congratulations! You have just successfully facilitated this training session.

EVALUATION

Please complete this form after the training session and fax it to 616-451-9412.

Program title:____

How many people attended: _________ Date of session: __________

Based on your discussion of the progress made on *last month's prescriptions*, which of these occurred? Check one in each column.

____ No one acted on their prescriptions.
____ A couple of people acted on their prescriptions.
____ Most attempted to complete their prescriptions.
____ Everyone acted on their prescriptions.
____ Everyone reported positive results.

____ There were no positive results.
____ A few people indicates some positive results.
____ Most reported positive results.

One such result was:

____

Please place a check in the box for how you believe the majority of the people would respond.

	Not at all	A little	Some-what	A lot	A great deal
How practical & useful was the content?					
How practical & useful were the exercises?					
How easy was the program for you to facilitate?					

What was the most valuable thing your people gained?

____
____
____

What one thing would you suggest we change for next time?

____
____
____

Do you have any suggestions for topics that we should test in the future? Please describe.

____
____
____

Optional: Your Name _________________________________Phone # __________________
Email ____

Difficult Customers

NOTES AND EXERCISES

NOTES

The benefits of handling customers who are upset are enormous. You gain the satisfaction of turning a _(negative)_ situation into a _(positive)_ one. You learn some important things about _(human)_ _(nature)_, and you become a better _(communicator)_ and a more effective _(ambassador)_ for your company. You become more _(competent)_ at your job, and more _(confident)_ in yourself.

The consequences of not managing angry customers will range from _(unnecessary)_ _(stress)_ for you to _(lost)_ _(sales)_ for your _(company)_. Not only will you lose sales, but you'll also lose _(customers)_ and the years of _(income)_ they represent. If you don't become adept at this skill, you'll contribute to spreading a poor _(image)_ of your company. And, on a more personal level, you'll have less _(confidence)_ in what you do.

(Principle #1) No one _(WANTS)_ to be angry.

(Principle #2) Angry people are _(NOT)_ in _(control)_. In fact, their anger comes from feeling out of control and trying desperately to regain some control.

(Aggressive) behavior is characterized by _(anger)_, _(accusations)_ , and _(belligerence)_. Aggression is intolerant and _(non)_ - _(sympathetic)_. Aggressive people are often indirect, latching on to things that have nothing to do with what's really upsetting them. They act like _(bullies)_.

(Assertion) is different. Assertive people say what they _(mean)_. They are _(firm)_ but _(warm)_. They are _(assured)_ but _(relaxed)_. Assertive people can (persuade) people instead of (commanding) them. And they know how to respond to people without (criticizing) them.

(Principle #3) Anger is a (symptom), not the problem.

With that as perspective, your objectives, when you deal with an angry customer, are to (clam) the customer (down), get at the (root) of the problem, and then to get it (resolved) to the best of your ability and as much to the customer's satisfaction as possible. You do it by being disciplined in your response – assertive, not aggressive.

RESPECT is your number #1 (tool) in handling the irate customer.

Dealing with an angry customer is like cracking an egg. The rich yellow yolk at the center of the egg represents the solution to the customer's (problem), the hardened white which surrounds the yolk represents the (details) of the customer's situation, and the hard shell represents his/her (anger).

In order to get to the yolk, and resolve the situation, you must first crack the shell. In other words, you have got to penetrate the customer's (anger). Then you've got to cut through the congealed egg white, or, understand the (details) of the customer's (situation). Finally, you're at the heart of the situation, where you can offer a solution to the customer's (problem).

In order to do so, follow this step process:

1) LISTEN

2) (CALM) THE CUSTOMER DOWN

3) IDENTIFY THE (PROBLEM)

4) (AVOID) BLAME and

5) RESOLVE THE (PROBLEM)

To begin, all you can do is (LISTEN).

Try to calm yourself first, and then to acknowledge his/her (feelings). When you say something like "I'm sorry that happened. If I were you, I'd be frustrated, too." It's amazing how much of a calming effect that can have.

First you (listen) carefully and completely to the (customer). Then you (empathize) with what the customer is (feeling), and let him or her know that you (understand).

After (calming) the customer down just a bit, it's time to clearly (identify) the problem. This is a good place for some (specific) questions. Ask the customer to give you some (details). These kind of questions force the customer to (think) about the (facts) instead of his/her (feelings) about those facts. It's important, when you think you understand the (details), to restate the problem as you (understand) it.

It is very important to AVOID (blame) or accusations.

The fifth and perhaps most important step is to (RESOLVE) THE (PROBLEM).

As a result of your (skillful) work, you gain (value) in your company, you gain (confidence) in yourself, and you take one more step in moving your (competence) up a notch.

EXERCISE ONE:
ROLE PLAYING

Role play a typical phone call from an angry customer. One of the players should act the part of the customer and the other should act the part of a himself/herself. During the role play, the "customer" should be angry about something, and the customer service representative should concentrate on listening and empathizing with the customer's feelings. As soon as that had taken place, stop the role play and discuss it.

If you are playing the role of the customer, try to act as natural as possible. If you are playing the role of yourself (the customer service representative), focus on only the first part of the phone call: listening and empathizing with the customer. Maintain control of your emotions, and show respect for the customer

If you are watching the role-play, look for four things:

1. To what degree did the Customer Service Representative maintain emotional control of himself/herself?

2. To what extent did the Customer Service Representative show respect for the customer?

3. How well did the customer service representative listen to the customer?

4. How well did the customer serviced representative empathize with the customer?

EXERCISE TWO:
ROLE PLAYING

In this exercise, you'll again role play a typical phone call from an angry customer. Only this time, you'll concentrate on taking the phone call further. Not only will you listen and empathize with the customer, but you'll also call the customer down, and identify his/her problem.

One of the players should act the part of the customer and the other should act the part of a himself/herself. During the role play, the "customer" should be angry about something, and the customer service representative should concentrate on "cracking the egg:"

1. Listening and empathizing with the customer's feelings in order to break the shell of the customer's anger.
2. Asking detailed questions and restating the customer's situation in order to penetrate the egg white and identifying the customer's situation.
3. Solving the customer's problem.

If you are playing the role of the customer, try to act as natural as possible. If you are playing the role of yourself (the customer service representative), focus on taking the customer completely through the "cracking the egg" technique discussed in the tape. Maintain control of your emotions, and show respect for the customer

If you are watching the role-play, look for these things:

1. To what degree did the customer service representative maintain emotional control of himself/herself?

2. To what extent did the customer service representative show respect for the customer?

3. How well did the customer service representative listen to the customer?

4. How well did the customer service representative empathize with the customer?

5. How well did the customer service representative ask detailed questions and/or restate the situation?

6. How well did the customer service representative solve the customer's problem?

EXERCISE THREE:
GENERATING IDEAS

Use the bubble pads to write down at least three good ideas you gained from today's session. Remember the four criteria for a "good idea." We've illustrated a couple of samples for you.

Remember, a good idea is one that
* *focuses on the future*
* *focuses on action*
* *focuses on your behavior*
* *is a small step toward one of your learning goals.*

Decide to invest a certain amount of time in self-improvement every month.

Use a specific process in order to learn more effectively.

EXERCISE FOUR:
DISTILLING THE BEST

Select the one good idea from the previous exercise that you think is the best. To help you make that selection, ask yourself these questions:

1. Which of these ideas could make the fastest impact on my performance?
2. Which of these ideas would make the biggest impact on my performance?
3. Which of these ideas will be easiest to implement?
4. Which of these ideas am I most passionate about?

Rewrite that idea here.

EXERCISE FIVE:
PRECISELY PRESCRIBING

Turn the idea from the previous exercise into a Precise Prescription. Write that prescription on the Rx pad. We've done an example for you. Now, take your prescription and post it someplace where it will remind you to do it.

Rx (Precisely Prescribe)

I will set aside two hours every week for personal improvement and keep a record of what I do in that time.