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## 5 Worst Things You Can Say to a Customer

Never let these phrases pass the lips of your customer service team.



Almost nothing leads to a customer service meltdown more quickly than the use of one particularly offensive phrase. You know it. Heck, we all know it. I don't really even need to write it. However, just in case you've been hiding-out in a California commune or were raised in upper Albania, here it is:

### 'That's our policy.'

I'd wager that even as you read those words, you flashed-back to a past personal experience in which someone spoke them as if they were a magic wand that would miraculously make you go away. But, of course, you didn't go away. You just became more frustrated, and more convinced that particular company had little interest in your eventual satisfaction.

In seminars, I call it "TOP," and it is a phrase that is less than useless. It is destructive. TOP is the customer service equivalent to "That's tough" or "You're out of luck." Its primary purpose is to shut down a conversation. TOP only accelerates the transformation of current customers into a former customers, and was undoubtedly crafted by someone completely oblivious to the value of customer retention. Even worse, for some customers it's a declaration of war. Every dispute-gone-viral tracked by my firm has involved some version of that terrible text.

Whenever someone tries TOP on me, I respond with a carefully crafted policy statement of my own, "Your internal policy decisions have nothing to do with my expectations of customer satisfaction." And that's the point, customers should not accept contract verbiage as an excuse for a less-than-promised product or service. "That's our policy" might save a current sale, though all future business will likely be lost.

Now that I've lambasted TOP, here are a few more quips that should never leak from the lips of your customer service team:

## **'There's nothing I can do'**

Your soon-to-be former customer replies, “Then why did I spend the last forty-five minutes on hold with you?” Plus, there’s always an option—returning the customer’s cash. Focus your team on problem solving rather than problem diverting. Give them the freedom to find creative alternatives. Reward them for innovative solutions and brushfires doused.

## **'Would you mind holding for a moment?'**

Of course they mind, and what if they say “No.” Better to be specific and direct. “I’m going to put you on hold while speak with my supervisor, and I’ll check back with you in a minute or so if I haven’t an answer by then.” Sure. It’s long-winded, but considerably more satisfying for your already frustrated customer.

## **'You'll have to go to our website.'**

This is just another way of saying “I can’t help you.” Instead of making your customer hunt around with their browser after they’ve already waited on the phone, email them a link directly to the page or necessary file.

## **'That's the manufacturer's responsibility.'**

Or, as it's sometimes put: “Our business partner will have to help you.” You’re telling your customers that while you’re happy to take their money at the time of sale, you’re not willing to back them in a crunch. The underlying principle is that your customer doesn’t have a financial relationship with your partner, supplier, or manufacturer... and therefore no leverage in negotiating a remedy. You took the customer’s money. So, whatever the problem is, it’s your responsibility to fix.