



# Servicing Irate Customers



# Objectives

- Identify and understand customer anger
- Apply the ability to diffuse anger
- Create rapport
- Handle irate calls efficiently

# Why are They Calling?

- Customer called for a reason, don't lose sight of "why"
- Keep control of the call
- Re-direct the caller from getting off-topic

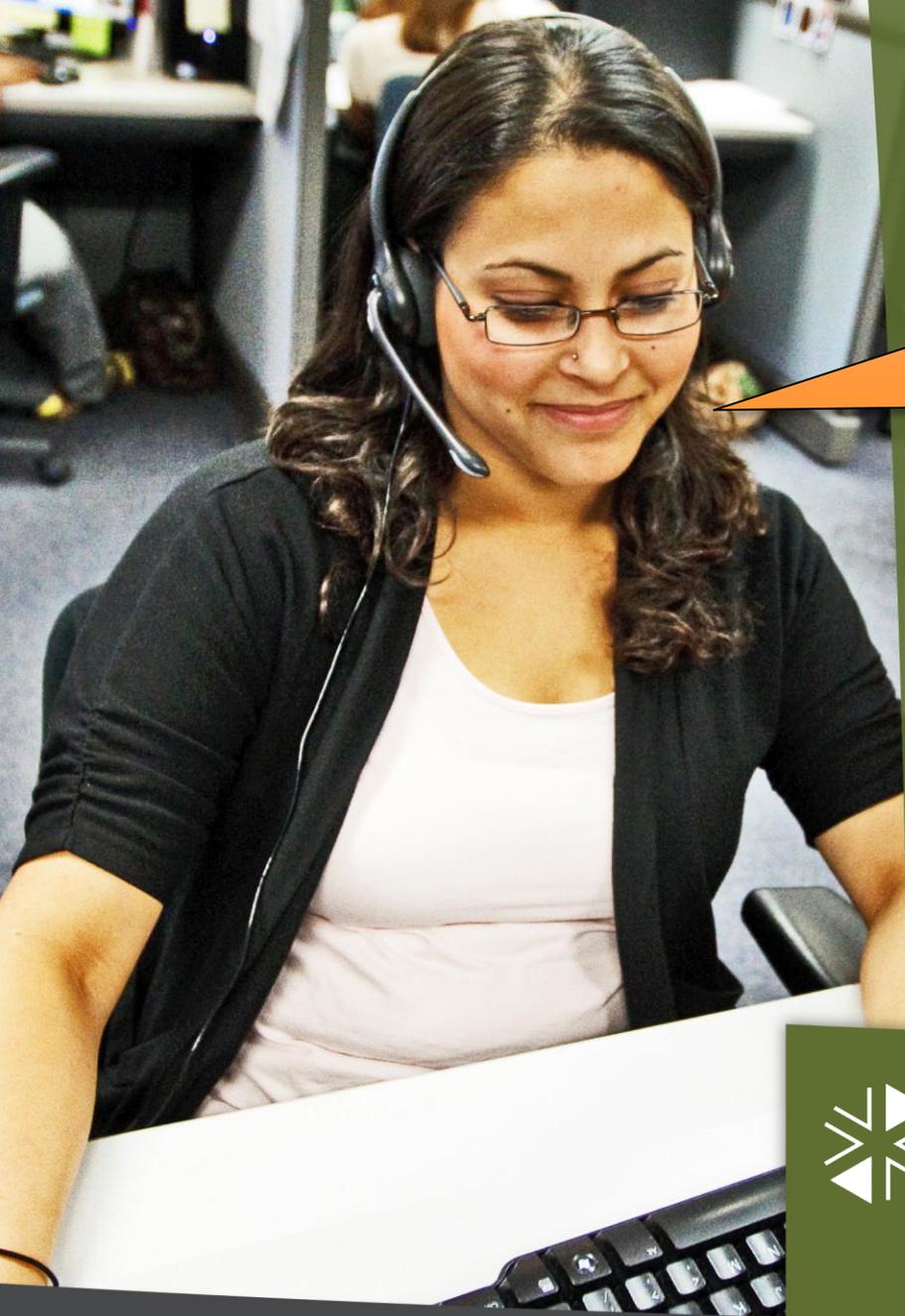


# Why are They Irrate?

- Long hold time in queue
- Account is past due
- Has a problem
- Don't like their options
- Want what they want
- Don't understand
- Don't *want* to understand
- Life happens!



# Introducing “The Four A’s!”



**Wait...what are  
The Four A's?**



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# The Four A's

- Accept
- Acknowledge/Address
- Apologize
- Assist
  
- Benefits
  - ✓ Flexible guideline
  - ✓ Balanced method



**Accept**



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# Accept

- Let the customer have their say.
- Don't interrupt!
- Listen with the intent of understanding.
- Think of solutions as they are describing their problem/issue.
- Multi-task! Use the time to research their account and arm yourself.

# Accept (cont.)

- Refer to the caller by name.
- Get information by asking specific questions.





# Acknowledge/ Address



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# Acknowledge/Address

- Acknowledge the customer's anger so they know they've gotten through to us.
  - Example: *“I understand you're upset, Mr. Johnson, and I want you to know that getting to the bottom of this matter is important to me too.”*
- Don't take their anger personally.
- Don't react emotionally.
- Let them vent *without* losing control.

# Acknowledge/Address (cont.)

- Steer the conversation in a constructive direction.
- Try to de-escalate the call:
  - If you can't give them exactly what they want, tell them what you *can* do.
  - Remember to show empathy.
  - Avoid needless transfers or hold time.



**Apologize**



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# Apologize

- Do it, no matter who is at fault.
- 67% of problems that customers experience are actually their own fault. (But don't judge.)
- The customer needs to feel the company cares about them.

## FACT:

**Apologizing can result in *fewer* escalated calls and *less* talk time!**

# Apologize (cont.)

- *Natural* response for customer service professionals.

**“Ms. Sanchez, I apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused you.”**

**“We’re sorry you feel that way, Mr. Watson.”**

# Apologize (cont.)

## ■ Benefits

- ✓ Establishes rapport and trust
- ✓ Helps settle problems
- ✓ Creates calm and reduces stress
- ✓ Minimizes talk time

*Do it sincerely and without delay!*



**Assist**



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# Assist

- Steven Covey is right: Understand, then be understood!
- Seek to first understand the customer and diagnose the problems, before attempting to prescribe a solution.
- Make confirmation statements to ensure you have all the information you need.

# Assist (cont.)

- Be knowledgeable about your product so you can respond quickly and accurately the first time.
- Stay up-to-date regarding any recent changes.
- Be specific about the information you are requesting.
- Ask close-ended questions to get precise answers.



**So, The Four A's  
really work?**



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# Positive Results!

- Difficult calls go quicker and more easily.
- Customer Service Professional feels they have efficiently completed the task and call.
- Quick control of the call ensures the real issue was handled properly in minimal time.
- Customer may have been educated.
- Customer feels their voice was heard, which helps create rapport and loyalty.

# Positive Results! (cont.)

- Avoiding escalation calls means the issue won't come back again.
- Customer satisfaction is positively affected due to the Customer Service Professionals ability to handle more calls.
- Helps ensure further business with the customer.



**Q & A**