

- \* Expectations not met
  - \* Someone was rude
  - \* Someone was indifferent
  - \* No one listened
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1. **Customer did not get what was expected.** Put another way, you did not get what was promised to you. I recently contracted to have my two-story frame house spray washed to get rid of dirt and mildew. The house washer, a pleasant, professional young man with a good reputation, arrived early one morning and began the

to put towels around the windows and doors so that the pressurized water wouldn't get into the house. No problem; I followed

and received food, driven home, opened the bag, and found it all wrong or missing items? Your anger and frustration over not getting what you expected are immediate. Or which one of us has not pulled a freshly cleaned and pressed shirt out of the plastic bag only to have a button crumble in our hand!

The solution? Raise the quality of your product or service or, in some

Cases, make sure the customer is clear in advance on what to expect!  
Think back to my house washing experience. I could have covered my

the day after Christmas. It sometimes seems that all lines of service are suspended for customers and sales associates alike on that day. Or even worse, the customer service desk of an airline just following cancellation of the last flight to Anywhere, USA. With frustration at a fever pitch, and

tempers as short as summer in Alaska, the mere statement, "I'm sorry, we've had to cancel the flight because the engine fell off," might be perceived as rude behavior by some.

The solution? Read on. We'll give you some practical advice later in this chapter on how to deal with challenging customers without resorting to rude behavior.

3. **Someone was indifferent.** Have you ever asked a question of a

service provider and been greeted with a response such as, "I don't know, I just work here," or "That's our policy." Words,

the privilege of renting a videotape. I had, and still have, a difficult time

understanding why my personal income is something a clerk needs to

order to determine if I am worthy of having ten dollars worth of credit  
extended to me. Unfortunately, xxxxxxx purchased the store, but we

continued to use it. The reason for this is to give you some information  
on how your employees are treating customers.

with the feedback. Refer back to Chapter 7 for some practical tips on listening effectively.

OK, you've done everything possible to be pleasant, to listen, and to

meet your customer's expectations, and they are still upset. How much? Satisfying even the most challenging customers is a critical skill. Most of us are

pretty good at dealing with customers when they are rational, reasonable,

rushed and panicky.

**P—Finally, Practice.** Being aware of your early warning signals and how best to deal with them won't guarantee that you stay calm but

Get your customers talking about what's upsetting them. Here are some tips:

be upset too if I received a \$350 electric bill.”

- Find areas of agreement with your customer. “I know it’s frustrating to have to call back for the second time.”

because this is the highest bill you’ve ever received from us.”

- Thank the customer (yes, thank him) for bringing the situation to your attention.



tone of voice. Use the customer's name, but gently set limits to the behavior. Here's how it would sound: "Mr. Jones, I really want to help you. As long as you continue to use this language, I am

you let me?" In most cases the customer will answer yes, and you can move on to logic. If the customer is still difficult, move on to the next step.

6. **Delay action or consult a second opinion.** If all else fails, call

time can buy something that, but the job. ...and ...and

This both reassures the customer and gives him a person—  
you—who knows the history of the situation and with whom they  
have built some rapport.

On some occasions, no matter how hard you have tried, the situa-

A long-awaited special order item for a Christmas gift has been dis-  
continued by the manufacturer. The shipment of parts to an automo-  
bile assembly plant has been delayed because of a truck breakdown.

Remember, we began this chapter by saying that customers are not always right or correct. Aren't we contradicting ourselves? Not really! The difference between not right and wrong is in perception. The customer may be absolutely off base in his rationale or assumptions about your product or service. Since he perceives he has been wronged, the burden is on you, the service provider, to make things right if you want to see that customer again. If you don't care, tell him he's wrong and he

will tell!).

With that in mind, here are some techniques to use when the customer appears to be wrong.

promised and a customer is disappointed. This is where the following recovery skills come in.

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### Customer Recovery Skills

★ Apologize sincerely

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★ Solve the problem quickly

★ Involve the customer

★ Do something extra

★ Follow up

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1. **Apologize sincerely.** Customers can tell when you are faking it!

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... even the apology comes across as a flat monotone, such

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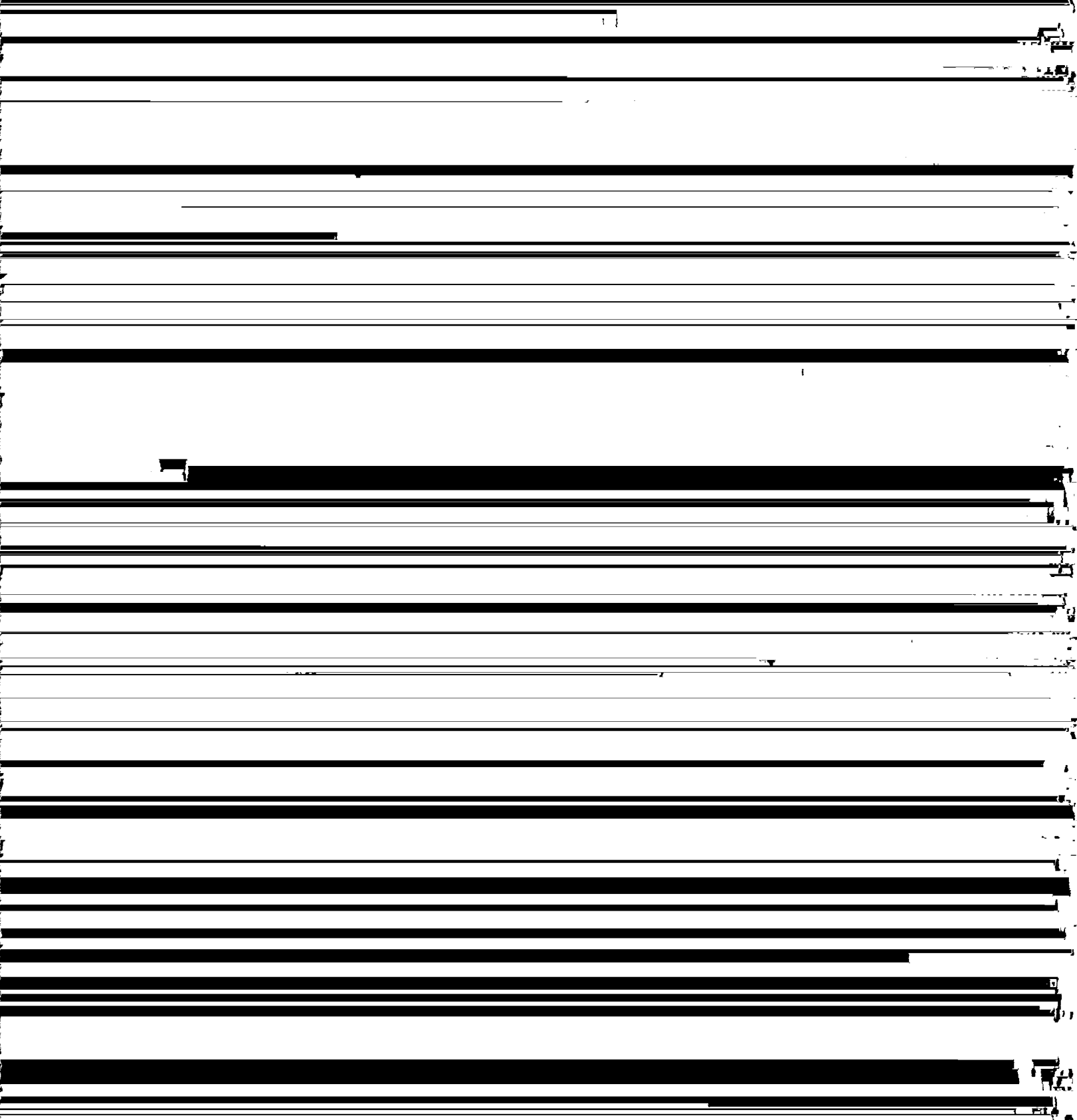
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... sorry about that. This is a time when tone of voice and body



...constructed for a customer,



case or paper to a business when it has exceeded the estimated  
repair date and time following a trouble call.

**What Can You Do?**

List below a few extras that you and your organization might  
offer to disappointed customers to recover their loyalty.

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