

Title:

Complaint Letters: How to Respond in 7 Simple Steps

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Summary:

Ask many small business owners what goes into providing great customer service and you have answers such as, being polite, serving promptly, keeping your promises etc. But in this hi-tech age, we tend to forget that the humble letter has just as an important role in ensuring good customer service. In this article I am going to share some tips on how to write a great letter.

Keywords:

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Article Body:

Ask many small business owners what goes into providing great customer service and you have answers such as, being polite, serving promptly, keeping your promises etc. But in this hi-tech age, we tend to forget that the humble letter has just as an important role in ensuring good customer service. Yet how many times have you received a 'letter of apology' which makes you even more dissatisfied? The message it conveys, the language used - all designed to wind you up!

With some careful thought, a well-crafted letter can provide comfort to a complaining customer and enhance your reputation as a customer-focused business. In this article I am going to share some tips on how to write a great letter.

**What are you writing for? **

To write a great letter you have to be in the right frame of mind. Are you writing to handle a complaint, answer a query or to thank them for placing an order? Framing the letter in the right context means you will use the appropriate language and the tone will be right. Try writing a thank you letter as if you are responding to a complaint - the message is totally different.

Before putting pen to paper, think for a minute and decide what your aim or goal is.

State your purpose

Start off by summarising why you are writing. Open your letter by saying that you are responding to a query, or to resolve a problem they have had. This set out to the reader why you are contacting them and puts them in the right frame of mind to accept your message. An opening summary will grab their attention.

**Include a W.I.I.F.M. **

No, this is not some obscure radio station! WIIFM stands for 'What's in it for me?' To truly engage your customer and get them on your side, you have to include a benefit for them. They have to get something out of your letter so they feel satisfied. What could their WIIFM be? Their complaint may be resolved; they may get a discount voucher; a priority service the next time they use you. If the complaint is a minor one, a simple, heartfelt apology may be enough!

Study your letter carefully and make sure you have a WIIFM moment.

**Don't say 'I' **

Wherever possible, avoid littering your letter with I's. The reader will find it hard to link with you if they receive 'me, me, me' letters. Review your letters and wherever possible substitute 'I' with 'you'. Change the focus to the reader. Make them feel valued.

**Write as you speak **

I forget the number of times I have received letters, which read as if they were written in the early 1900's! Packed full of boring, stiff and outdated language - too formal. Your writing style should reflect the way you talk. After all, providing good customer service is partly down to how you interact or communicate with your client and letters play an important role.

So, review your letters and get rid of those phrases you learnt in school letter-writing lessons!

** "Please do this..." **

Having written a great letter, you don't want it to tail off into nothing. Have a clear action-orientated close. Make sure your reader knows what you expect him to do next - "call me so we can discuss this idea in more depth", "Fill in the attached form and pop it in the post", "send me an order" (a bit strong perhaps but certainly to the point!).

A resounding call-to-action is a great way to finish a letter and leaves the

customer in no doubt what he has to do next - another element of good customer service.

Ask someone to check your letter

If you are writing a very important letter or one containing a complex message, it's wise to ask someone to proof read it. This is not just to check your spelling but also to check readability. Is the structure of the message you wish to convey clear and understandable? You'll be amazed by what someone else will pick up which you have completely missed!

So, there you have it. Some useful tips on how to write a superb letter, which will further enforce your image of providing exceptional customer service.