

Here's how to...

Resolve Complaints Using LAST

Your most unhappy customers are your greatest source of learning.
-Bill Gates

Even when you deliver exceptional service, you will still receive complaints. Even your most loyal customers will offer "constructive feedback." The best you can do is to continue to deliver impeccable service, welcome comments you receive (positive and negative) and recognize them as great sources of information to refine your store operations, because it is a fact that over 90% of complaints received are directly tied to a specific experience in a specified store, and relate to an issue that can be resolved at that store level. Most people recount and relay their negative experience to friends and family, and with the popularity of social media word can spread like wild fire.

<p>LAST</p> <p><i>Only 4% of guests with unsatisfactory service experiences will complain.</i></p>	<p>While most people understand that we all make mistakes, resolving problems lets your costumers see how expertly your store can handle tough situations. LAST is a great acronym to guide you through the complaint resolution process:</p> <p>Listen to the Guest's complaint Apologize for any inconvenience (and for the fact that the guest experienced this problem) Solve the problem immediately Thank the Guest for allowing you the opportunity to fix the problem</p>	<p>Closing Out Complaints Talk with your AD/RDO about procedures for "closing out complaints" in your brands' complaint monitoring system.</p>
<p>Making LAST most effective</p> <p><i>Respond to complaints within 24 hours</i></p>	<p>In the event that a customer shares a complaint with you, always do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sincerely explain that we appreciate complaints • Make sure the guest understands that you will do something immediately. • Ask for necessary information that will allow you to fix the problem quickly and then correct the problem. • Follow-up, make sure the guest is satisfied and genuinely thank the guest, again • Learn from your mistakes and complaints to prevent future problems (train your team). 	
<p>"Ands" not "buts"</p>	<p>Store Owner/Team Member to Complaining Customer: <i>"I understand what you're saying, but..."</i> But is the one word that has a powerful negative effect when dealing with customers. When the customer hears but, they become defensive, feel alienated and disrespected and then interpret the statement like this: <i>"I, the person here to serve you, am discounting everything you just said and am going on with my own agenda because I don't really care."</i></p> <p>In contrast, the use of and says to your customer, <i>"I value what you just said and I want to work with you to find a solution..."</i> ☺</p>	
<p>They just want to vent</p> <p><i>And aside from a few exceptions, most customers ARE reasonable and fair in their expectations for resolution.</i></p>	<p>Surprisingly, in most cases, most complaining customers simply want to vent, bring something to your attention, and feel heard. Don't assume that customers always want their money back or huge discounts or free product. Industry studies have found that the "solution" preferred by the customer is often a genuine apology.</p> <p><i>"I'm sorry. Thank you for bringing this to my attention. Your positive experiences at my restaurant are very important to me. I'll take action on your comments."</i></p> <p>Responding to a customer with sincerity makes them feel good again. It helps in re-establishing their trust. It signals to the customer that we want to solve the issue, which usually makes them more likely to work with us to find a mutually agreeable solution to the problem.</p>	<p>Minimize Complaints in the First Place ...by working to give customers what they want, expect and deserve! Here are basic guest expectations in the hospitality world:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prompt greetings/acknowledgements • genuine smiles from a happy, friendly staff • consistency from store to store within a brand • clean restaurants • adherence to food safety standards • service from trained, knowledgeable staff • stores to be staffed appropriately • product in stock • no unnecessary waiting • respect (not made to feel stupid, bad or attacked, or to feel regret over their restaurant choice)
<p>Take responsibility</p>	<p>Complaining customers often want someone to "take responsibility." Some people interpret "taking responsibility" as "accepting blame." By showing sincerity and taking responsibility during LAST, you're not taking responsibility for <i>causing the problem</i>, but for <i>finding a resolution</i>—a thing that should be a source of pride! Taking responsibility is often a critical part in the apology-solve part of LAST. It's what helps THIS customer in THIS frame of agitation today (who will be in your world <i>for only a few minutes</i> if handled LAST is handled correctly), come back tomorrow as the HAPPY customer who rewards your resolution with their repeat business.</p>	
<p>Talk to your team</p>	<p>Make sure your team understands how you want complaints handled. Demonstrate how to remain focused, empathetic and not defensive when faced by a complaint. Review The Power of Nice and ACT with your team so that the foundation of "great service" is clear. And always encourage team members to relay any feedback from guests to the manager on duty.</p>	
<p>Mystery Shops as a tool</p>	<p>To gauge the experience delivered by your store, use Mystery Shops, which are informal evaluations that record the customer's view of your store. The information provided in a Mystery Shop can give you a fresh perspective and help you see things that your familiar eye may have become blind to. Have a friend visit your store and perform a Mystery Shop. Mystery Shop forms accessible on KTEC online.</p>	