

WE CARE

The bridge between an irate customer and a loyal, repeat client

By

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Murphy's Law makes it certain that every product or service, no matter how good, will suffer a failure. No organisation is immune to this - be it the government, a hospital, the MRT, a bank, restaurant, a Telco, a car, or any retail service outlet.

That's why it's imperative that every organisation has a well considered and regularly practised service recovery process to address such failures.

Let's look at the reality

What usually happens is that the *first responders* (client facing staff which are the first point of contact of a customer who is faced with a service or product failure) of most organisations either initially fail to acknowledge the failure, or try to minimise it by dismissing it with an insincere apology - one that is as embarrassingly insincere as the practised smile of a politician or a United Airlines airhostess. Then they immediately offer a solution to resolve the service failure. In most cases, this may solve the problem, but fails to address the emotional upset caused.

A classic case is when I recently moved to a new condo and needed to shift my fibre broadband internet connection. The telco technician first failed to show up despite a confirmed appointment and repeated calls to their helpline. It's important to highlight that the telco made me accept a contract that stipulated I would need to pay a fee if I changed the appointment.

The helpline manager I finally got hold of apologised cursorily, and when I reminded him about the penalty I would have paid for changing or cancelling the appointment promised me a one-month service rebate (which hasn't yet materialised). He then sent a technician at 10 pm, who was in such a rush that he did little. Several more complaints later, another technician arrived a week later, and he did even less.

It eventually took the telco 3 trips and 7 weeks to ensure my 3 bedroom (a mere 1100+ sq feet) apartment has wireless coverage in every room.

Needless to add I am still feeling let down by their lack of understanding, failure to honour their commitments, or apologise for their screwed up response to a

very basic customer need. And because of this, despite the hassle of doing so, I will change service provider as soon as my contract expires.

Showing We Care

That's why every such service recovery process must begin with the most fundamental step of letting the irate customer know that WE CARE . . . that we are genuinely sorry for the trouble caused and will do our best to ensure this failure does not recur. (Or at the very least improve the mean time between failures, in cases where such failure is inevitable; for example, an MRT breakdown.)

The minute we are able to satisfy the emotional hurt suffered by the customer with genuine apology AND rectify or replace the failed product or service we have a very high chance of gaining a loyal customer for life. Customers NEED to know that you have their back.