



Complaining and apologizing

Lesson code: 11K5-M6CC-8R9U

INTERMEDIATE

 American English

1 Warm-up

Read the following text. How far would you agree with the points raised? Have you experienced the situations described below from the point of view of a customer or business?

CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS

Many business people regard a customer complaint as a negative experience. However, if your business handles complaints properly, previously unhappy customers may start singing your praises. Consider a complaint as one of the best opportunities you have to show your commitment to creating another satisfied customer. Customer loyalty is one of the biggest assets a business has; fight for this loyalty - be passionate about it!

Complaints should be handled sympathetically and promptly. Some businesses believe that if they don't receive many complaints, their customers must be satisfied. Wrong! Only a few customers will complain to you. The majority will not return to your business and will tell others of their bad experience.

WHY SHOULD YOUR BUSINESS WELCOME COMPLAINTS?

Some published statistics say that:

- a typical business hears from only 4% of its dissatisfied customers; the other 96% just go quietly away and 91% of them will never come back;
- a typical dissatisfied customer tells more than 8 people about his or her problem;
- 7 out of 10 complaining customers will do business with you again if you resolve the complaint favorably.

HANDLING COMPLAINTS

Try putting the following points into practice:

- Set up a complaints handling system and train your staff to handle complaints well;
- Make it easy for customers to lodge a complaint;
- Welcome customer complaints and deal with complaints promptly.

The above extract is adapted from a Consumer Affairs Factsheet by the Australian Department of Justice Northern Territory Government.



Find words and phrases in the text which mean:

1. take action in order to solve a problem (two synonyms): _____
2. showing your approval (idiom): _____
3. willingness to give your time and energy to something (noun): _____
4. useful qualities or advantages (plural noun): _____
5. repeatedly purchasing goods or services from one company; not changing for another company (phrase): _____
6. immediately (adverb): _____
7. not satisfied (adjective): _____
8. to your advantage (adverb): _____
9. make an official complaint (phrase): _____

2 Typical complaints

Look at the following typical reasons for complaining in business. Match them to the possible excuses/reasons on the right:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. damaged goods | a. a delay at the border |
| 2. goods never arrived | b. a lost invoice |
| 3. a late delivery | c. a missing order |
| 4. an overcharge | d. an accounting error |
| 5. an overdue payment | e. bad handling |
| 6. lack of customer service | f. business is short-staffed |

Listen to four dialogues. Which complaint/excuse did you hear in each dialogue?

What action was decided on in each dialogue?

Dialogue 1: _____

Dialogue 2: _____

Dialogue 3: _____

Dialogue 4: _____

