

RESTAURANT MANUAL - Handling Customer Complaints

Zoey introduces the B.L.A.S.T. method for handling customer complaints

Zoey: So, I want to introduce you all to the 'blast' method – that's B, L, A, S, T, some of you may have heard of it before. We use here in the restaurant for dealing with customer complaints and each letter stands for a step in our system.

Our first letter, B is for Believe. It's really important for us to accept what a customer says as the truth. Yes, I know that in some cases it will be easier to believe the customer than others, but whatever our personal opinions are, it's that old cliché, the customer is always right. We accept their version of events without argument.

Ok, the second step, L is for Listen. Let the customer know and feel that he or she is really being heard. For example, you could repeat back to them what they've told you, and say something like 'I just want to make sure I've heard you correctly about what the problem is'. Note by the way that I say 'the' problem not 'your' problem. Remember from the first step, we're already believing them from the start that the problem is real.

Step three – A is for Apologize. We should say sorry. And I do mean genuinely, not in a sarcastic or dismissive way. We don't need to launch into a big explanation or justification as to why the problem might have occurred, we just say we're sorry to the customer about whatever happened.

Then we're straight onto the next step, S is for Satisfy. We take action to rectify the situation for the customer. Obviously, the action will depend on the situation itself, and we'll look at a sample situation in a moment. An action could be offering a customer a replacement for a spilled drink. Something simple like that.

Ok, we're at the final step, the T is for Thank. I can see some of you looking surprised, but yes, you heard me correctly, Thank. We say thank you to the customer for passing on the complaint to us and giving us an opportunity to resolve the issue.

CUSTOMER: (*approaches the register holding a tray with an empty plate; all the food has been eaten, and two drumstick bones are visible*) I have to tell you: Today was probably the worst experience I've ever had at your restaurant. First of all, your cashier messed up my order. I ordered drumsticks, and your employee gave me wings. Then, the wings you gave me were as hard as beef jerky. Everything else was just as inedible, too.

STAFF MEMBER: So, you didn't receive the correct order and were unhappy with the food quality, correct?

CUSTOMER: Colonel Clucky would roll over in his grave at the quality of this meal. I don't know what this place is coming to.

Staff Member tries to satisfy the customer

Accuracy and Product quality complaints – (some of the playouts would also involve personnel complaints.)

Answer Option	Correct?	Playout Animation	Written Feedback
None of the other customers seem to have a problem with their food but, well, I am very sorry that you		What's that supposed to mean – I 'seem' to be unhappy? I <u>am</u> unhappy and I can tell you I have every right to be. The service in this	You are saying sorry to the customer but not in a genuine way. You're suggesting that Joan is the only 'difficult' customer who is

<p>seem to be unhappy.</p>		<p>place has gone to the dogs.</p>	<p>unhappy and also you don't offer any solution to satisfy the issue.</p>
<p>I'm sorry but we're really busy at the moment. That's probably why it happened. Sorry but it couldn't be helped.</p>		<p>It couldn't be helped? Are you serious? So, if I come in here and you're a little bit busy, I just need to accept that I'll get the wrong order and terrible food? Well, honestly! You won't be seeing me in here again.</p>	<p>You are saying sorry but claiming that it happened because you're busy is just unprofessional. The customer is not interested in hearing excuses as to why she got the wrong order. She wants a genuine apology and a solution – which you also haven't offered her.</p>
<p>I'm really sorry – both about the order being wrong and about the unsatisfactory quality of your food. Let me do everything I can to rectify this straightaway. I'd like to offer you a replacement meal, either today or the next time you come to the restaurant. And I promise I'll do everything we can so that something like this never happens again.</p>	<p>X</p>		
<p>Ok, well what do you want me to do? I can replace your meal if that's what this is about.</p>		<p>I tell you what I want, a little bit of courtesy and politeness for a start. This restaurant used to be somewhere where people actually had manners.</p>	<p>You didn't apologize to the customer. You offered a solution but not in a way that showed you were genuinely listening to her dissatisfaction. You didn't make her feel you were in anyway sympathetic to her situation.</p>