

How to Get Better Customer Service (and Reduce Your Frustration)

There may be no better way to raise your blood pressure than by being on the receiving end of poor customer service. We all have a right to get what we paid for, at the agreed upon price, in a friendly and timely manner, but as we all know too well it often doesn't work out that way. And when we try to resolve our problems too many customer service systems only add to the aggravation. *Lifehacker.com* says that according to a study, nearly 45% of customers can't remember having a recent, successful customer service experience.

"Many complaint processes are actually designed to help companies retain profits by limiting the number of customers who can successfully resolve their complaints," say Marketing Professors Anthony Dukes of the

University of Southern California and Yi Zhu of the University of Minnesota. Writing for the website *conversation.com* they added, "the [complaint] process involves a tiered structure in which all incoming inquiries start at 'Level 1.' Level 1 may be a call center operator who listens to a complaint but acknowledges that there is nothing he can do."

There are some steps you can take to get better customer service and tamp down your blood pressure.

Prevent the problem in the first place. Before buying check the reputation of the company you are considering buying from. Search for online reviews by typing the company name followed by the words "customer reviews". Another search with the company's name and the word "scam" can help you avoid serious heartache and heartburn.

Verifying prices is also a good strategy. "Every store has items mispriced all the time," says consumer advocate Clark Howard. If you see a really good price marked on a store shelf next to an item take a photo of the price tag and then watch as the cashier rings it up. If the two prices don't match you have the photo as proof that a correction is called for. "If you transact by phone, [AARP and] Howard advise requesting an email or text confirmation — and then reviewing it. For instance, are the dates and prices of your hotel reservation correct? Does the hotel's cancellation policy match what you were told? Whatever you're



Get the customer service rep on your side by being polite.

buying, try to get the employee's name and an order number."

When you call a customer service number be prepared in advance and be prepared to wait. Before you dial your phone collect any documents that are a part of your purchase. Have the date of purchase, a product model number, and your order number at your fingertips. Be concise and have in mind specifically what you want the company to do to set things right—Send a missing part? Provide a replacement product? Give you a full refund?

Wait times drive all of us crazy, especially when the on-hold message keeps telling us: "Your call is important to us, please continue to hold." Here are a couple of options to consider. *AARP.com* advises "[t]ry calling Wednesday or Thursday mornings, which typically have the shortest wait times, according to *Talkdesk*, a provider of contact centers." Most companies these days offer an auto-callback option where you can go

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Better Customer Service...cont.

about your business without losing your place in the phone queue.

Get the customer service rep on your side by being polite and work to build empathy for your problem. If the customer service rep (that Level 1 person) can't fix your problem, don't lose your temper. Instead just say something like, "I appreciate that you have tried to help me, but would you please transfer me to a supervisor?"

You may have to turn up the heat. If polite requests aren't resolving your problem, then you may have to ratchet up the pressure. One higher level strategy is to put the purchase in dispute with your credit card issuer. Businesses hate chargebacks—when a consumer contacts their credit card company in order to reverse charges and get their funds back—so this may nudge them toward a settlement.

Lifehacker.com suggests harnessing the power of social media. "Some large companies...actually employ people to comb through social media for mentions of their brand with the purpose of resolving complaints. You can exercise your right to free speech by posting about your experience on Facebook and Twitter."

Consider notifying the Better Business Bureau of your problem. If the company is a BBB member they will contact the company in question. To remain as a BBB member in good standing, the company has to respond.



"5 Deadly Mistakes That Can Destroy Your Social Security Disability Case" is the #1 guide to improving the odds of winning a disability case.

For a FREE copy for you or someone you care about call Cuddigan Law at 402.933.5318 or email us at lawteam@cuddiganlaw.com

Question of the Month: I have more than one medical problem. Will Social Security consider all of my medical problems, or do I have to select one?

People with illnesses or injuries often suffer from multiple conditions which impact their health. In many cases, the impact of all of these conditions, in combination, prevents the individual from being able to function and sustain work.

When deciding a case for disability benefits, if an applicant has more than one medical condition, the Social Security Administration (SSA) regulations require it to consider the combined impact of all the individual's impairments. It cannot just evaluate each medical condition separately. This applies to both physical and mental conditions, and even a combination of the two.

We advise our clients to include in their application for disability all impairments or medical conditions that might affect their ability to work, even those that may seem minor. People often do not understand which impairments are most important to their claim—and that in the eyes of the SSA not all impairments are created equal.



Comfort Food

From the kitchen of Janet Cuddigan

Spring Asparagus Salad

This Asian-inspired salad is quick and easy to make and just right for a spring meal.

- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar
- 1 teaspoon red wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon white sugar
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 2 tablespoons peanut oil
- 1 tablespoon sesame oil
- 1 ½ pounds fresh asparagus, trimmed and cut into 2-inch pieces
- 1 tablespoon sesame seeds

Whisk together the rice vinegar, red wine vinegar, soy sauce, sugar, and mustard. Drizzle in the peanut oil and sesame oil while whisking vigorously to emulsify. Set aside. Bring a pot of lightly-salted water to a boil. Add the asparagus to the water and cook 3 to 5 minutes until just tender, but still mostly firm. Remove and rinse under cold water to stop from cooking any further. Place the asparagus in a large bowl and drizzle the dressing over the asparagus. Toss until evenly coated. Sprinkle with sesame seeds to serve.

Adapted from allrecipes.com

Can the VA Take Away or Deny Disability Benefits for Marijuana Use?



Medical marijuana is now legal in 37 states and the District of Columbia and legal for recreational use in 18 states. (It is legal for medical use in Iowa but is severely limited. In Nebraska, as of the time this article was written, the Unicameral is considering a bill to legalize marijuana for medical use, but only under very restrictive conditions.) However, federal law still classifies marijuana as a Schedule One Controlled substance. This makes it illegal in the eyes of the federal government and the VA is required to follow all federal laws.

Despite these facts, the VA says veterans will not lose or be denied disability benefits for marijuana use. Furthermore, the VA says "[v]eterans are encouraged to discuss marijuana use with their VA [health care] providers. VA health care providers will record marijuana use in the Veteran's VA medical record in order to have the information available in treatment planning. As with all clinical information, this is part of the confidential medical record and protected under patient privacy and confidentiality laws and regulations.

The use or possession of marijuana is prohibited at all VA medical centers, locations, and grounds. When you are on VA grounds it is federal law that is in force, not the laws of the state."



Sudoku Medium

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	7				8	6		
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	5		8		7	3		9
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For the solution go to cuddiganlaw.com/library/newsletter
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Disability law is all we do.



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Subscribe to the Cuddigan Law YouTube channel to view our free library of videos about Social Security and VA disability. You will find a full range of information about qualifying medical disorders, how-to tips on navigating the system, and insider advice on winning your claim.



Are you a disabled veteran?

Before you apply for VA disability benefits call Cuddigan Law at 402.933.5318 or email us at lawteam@cuddiganlaw.com for your FREE copy of our book *The Essential Guide to VA Disability Claims*.

