



STRESS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

Most people would assume that the most stressful job for a retail company falls squarely on the shoulders of the sales staff. Sales personnel have to deal with the pressures of facing the customers on a regular basis, as well as finding ways to work around the usual objections. There's also the stress and anxiety often associated with having to deal with some of the more hostile customers that one might encounter. This is true whether you're the one doing the marketing or if the customers come to you.

However, the notion that salesmen have more stress and anxiety than anyone else in their companies is false. The harsh reality is that, most of the time, the stress and anxiety of the sales staff pales in comparison to what one other division of the company has to handle. For anyone that's worked in that sort of job, customer service is the prime incarnation of a high stress and anxiety job.

Customer service personnel are typically expected to handle pretty much any possible complaint or problem a customer might have. While most products of a technical nature, such as computers and consumer electronics, defer technical problems to technical support, for most retail items, the customer service team ends up developing the solutions. The stress and anxiety of having to find solutions to problems that, in some cases, are no longer the company's fault has a tendency to produce either frustrated and burned-out employees, or ones that have serious stress-related psychological issues.

A huge chunk of the work of customer service, particularly when it comes to some computer companies, is fixing problems that the inevitably overzealous sales representatives create. It isn't entirely unusual for a sales rep to mention that a feature or item is packaged with a product when it isn't, leaving the customer service rep to figure out a way out of the mess when the customer inevitably calls in. Explaining how this came about is a difficult task already, getting progressively harder when customers insist on getting a product they didn't pay for. This typically happens in the sales department of some of the larger computer companies, particularly in their phone-in sales divisions.

Apart from that, customer service representatives have to deal with the countless complaints that people launch over even the slightest dissatisfaction with a product. When processing a return, they also have to face the stress and anxiety of facing the customer's anger and disbelief over why it takes so long for their credit (assuming credit was used and not cash) to be given back. Another difficulty lies in the fact that the rep has to find an acceptable solution (and, in some instances, a concession) to the customer's problem, but not deviate from the often strict and stringent policies of the company.

It is a common misconception that customer service personnel can make arrangements for anything and everything that a customer asks for. The simple fact is that, while they may have the power to hand out concessions and fix certain issues, the problem is that the power they have is limited. It is limited by the internal policies and procedures of the company, not to mention what arrangements and procedures that a rep at their level can make.

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