

## Surviving – and Exceeding – After Service Blunders

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Customer service is just as much 'public relations' as any other outward-bound communications activity your organization does. Because service or interaction more directly affects your customers than an article in the newspaper or story on the news, it is even a more critical foundation to your company.

Service blunders can range from missing a deadline to not returning phone calls to arguing with a customer to sending out mistaken invoices. The issue your organization must understand is that it's not how important *you* feel the blunder is, but how critical the *customer* feels it is.

However, all companies at one time fall short on customer satisfaction. It's how your organization chooses to respond from the misstep that can not only help you recover from it but perhaps even better your relationship with a customer or client.

The people that interface most with your customers are in the best position to provide suggestions to overcoming service problems. So, gather people from all lines of your product and services and management levels and brainstorm the problems that could happen or have happened in the past.

Then, develop bounce-back ideas or goodwill gestures that may assist in efforts to repair any customer service damage. Some of these ideas might include offering giveaways or discounting, or making personal phone calls to the client to apologize. Other gestures might be to write a handwritten, personalized letter or absorption of other costs such as hand-delivering a product or moving up a service call.

Sometimes a customer service setback offers companies an opportunity to improve a relationship with a customer or client, but it depends on how – and how fast – you respond to the initial problem.