



Time
Required:
45 minutes

Grade Level:
9th -12th
grades

Skills for the 21st Century Marketplace Activity
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It's Okay

Infusionomics Themes, Keystone Economic Principles, and Skills for the 21st Century Marketplace:

• **THEME: CHOICES**

- **Keystone Economic Principle™ #1:** We all make choices
- **Keystone Economics Principle™ # 3:** All Choices Have Consequences
- **Skills:** 3. Ethics

• **THEME: Resources**

- **Skills:** 17. Communication and Interpersonal Skills; d. Dealing with Conflict; 7. Handle difficult customers; 8. Interpret business policies to customers/clients; 9. Handle customer/client complaints.

** For additional standards and content references, please see the [end of document](#).

Overview:

Handling difficult customers takes practice. In this activity students get the opportunity to role play handling difficult customers.

Objectives:

Students will gain confidence in handling difficult situations with customers so that when they face this they will be better prepared to deescalate the situation.

Materials and Handouts:

[Handout #1 – Tips](#)

Video or projection equipment to show a YouTube video.

Pre-Activity:

- Begin by showing a YouTube video of a hidden camera prank involving an angry customer and the waitress's response.
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S4sBEBgq-a8&NR=1&feature=fvwp>
 - Or you can try real footage of some angry customers.

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILV3WCQJjA&feature=related>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kH3JS0fnGQ&feature=related>
- Ask students if they have ever dealt with a difficult customer or a difficult person. Perhaps they have witnessed a situation involving an angry customer. Have them share the experience with a person sitting close to them.
- Tell the class that dealing with difficult customers/people is a vital skill as an employer, employee, or an entrepreneur.

Activity:

- Divide the class into triads and tell them they are going to practice the skills necessary for handling difficult customers by participating in a role play exercise.
- Each group receives [Handout #1](#) outlining the steps for dealing with difficult people.
- Scenario: Students can choose to use any of the scenarios from the videos above.
 - Scenario #1: It is the drive through window at McDonalds and it is 6 am. A car pulls up and orders chicken nuggets. McDonalds only serves breakfast at this time.
 - Scenario #2: It is a local coffee shop. A customer receives a very bad cup of coffee.
 - Scenario #3: It is a clothing store. A customer would like to return an item that is ripped. Store policy states that you may only give store credit for returns not cash back.
- Review roles:
 - Angry customer – follow the scenario to express your dissatisfaction. Respond to the employee/entrepreneur like you would if you were really upset. If they do a good job following the tips then respond appropriately.
 - Employee/entrepreneur – use the 5 tips to help resolve the situation.
 - Observer – pay special attention to the employee/entrepreneur. Be able to give them feedback on their use of the 5 tips, what they did well, and what they could better.
 - Each member of the group will take a turn in each role
- Give the groups about 3-5 minutes to work through the scene and then have them rotate roles two more times. Monitor the time and make sure the each group exercises the steps to deal with the situation.

Writing Prompt or Class Discussion:

Here are some optional questions for writing prompts and/or class discussion.

- What is the most challenging aspect of dealing with difficult people?
- What other environments might these skills be useful in?

Additional Standards and Content References

Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics:

- Standard #1 : Scarcity; Consumers, Wants
- Standard #2 : Decision Making; Benefit, Costs
- Standard #5 : Trade
- Standard #7 : Markets and Prices

Partnership for 21st Century Life Skills Concept:

- Learning and Innovation Skills > Creativity and Innovation > Work Creatively with Others
- Learning and Innovation Skills > Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Learning and Innovation Skills > Communication and Collaboration

National Content Standards for Entrepreneurship Education:

- Ready Skills; D. Communications and Interpersonal Skills; D.31 Handle difficult customers/clients, D.32 Interpret business policies to customers/clients, D.33 Handle customer/client complaints.

Keystone Economic Principles™:

- For more information: http://infusionomics.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Keystone_Cheat.pdf

Handout #1 – Tips

5 Tips for Handling Angry Customers

1. **Always listen to everything the customer has to say before providing any kind of answer.** Ask questions to gain greater clarification of problem. Then assure them that you understand the problem by sincerely restating their problem to them.
2. **Assure customer that you empathize with him.** You know this problem is a bad thing, and you, also, hate being inconvenienced by these types of things. However, don't go too far with the empathy, to where you bad-mouth other people, departments, vendors, etc. You don't want to seem like you are passing the buck or looking for someone else to blame. That is of no help to the customer.
3. **Don't be negative; frame information in the positive.** Get the customer to articulate what problem resolution would look like to him in this specific case. Find out as soon as possible what it will take to resolve this customer's problem to his satisfaction. If customer makes an impossible request, avoid saying "no," but rather, say what it is you can do to address the customer's needs.
4. **So don't take anything an angry customer says personally.** Take it seriously, but not personally. The customer is angry, but not necessarily angry at you. In fact, the customer's anger may not have anything to with you or your organization. They could be having a bad day, or be in pain, or just cranky. Keep this in mind, and try to let the customer that you are in fact an ally who can assist him in his problem resolution. The problem is the enemy, not you!
5. **Defuse an angry customer quickly with the assurance that the problem will be addressed.** They need to know right away that they are speaking to the person responsible for that resolution. As soon as you figure out how to resolve the customer's problem, tell him what you're going to do, get his approval, and then do what needs to be done. Once everything is complete, re-contact the customer to confirm that the issue has been satisfactorily resolved. Use that opportunity to apologize again. Do this immediately; do not let angry customers stew for long.

<http://www.squidoo.com/angrycustomer>