

Take your next step to connect to us. Email us if you have an interesting story to share related to career.

facebook.com/  
thedailystar.nextstep  
Email: nextstep@thedailystar.net

The Daily Star

DHAKA, FRIDAY, JULY 7, 2017

ASHAR 23, 1424 BS

e-mail: nextstep@thedailystar.net

# NEXT STEP

## HOW TO DEAL WITH ANGRY CUSTOMERS ONLINE

The social media page or website of your business has publicly received a rude, derogatory comment that makes you question the compassionate nature of human beings and perhaps blurt out a curse or two. What's your next step?

The digital presence of organisations has undoubtedly been a boon to maintain customer relationships. However, it has been a curse at the same time. Today, customers not only have the ability to boost a business using their commendable reviews online, but simultaneously have the power to sink a brand's future. There is only one thing more disastrous for your business than critical, complaining, and abusive comments from customers—and that's a poor response to them.

Here are a few tips on handling negative comments online as sanely as possible.

### Listen

When people realise that they've been heard, they are much better listeners. Instead of immediately attacking the individual, direct your replies as a means of starting a conversation, e.g. "We understand your problem and thank you for reaching out" or "I hear you and empathise". This helps calm the person down

and shows mutual respect and understanding.

### Criticise the idea, not the person

A common mistake is expressing instant hatred towards the person who is voicing the opinion or problem, instead of focusing on the core message that they convey. This only spews further abuse and tasteless banter (often going as far as threats). Exchange information and ideas that ultimately lead to a holistic solution, rather than pointless disagreements that may drive the individual to make the issue go viral on the internet.

Be inquisitive to find flaws, not faults

Ask questions. Simple questions show your interest and concern in the individual's suffering. It may also help uncover the root of the problem—be it real or not—allowing you to decide the gravity of the situation. More importantly, polite questions almost always have the power to

calm people down.

### Keep calm and be kind

It is of utmost importance that you keep your calm and maintain it all throughout the incident—surely you can't calm the customer down when you're breeding further negativity. Given the vague nature of online communication, focus on conveying as much kindness and politeness in your reply. Emotions and the tone of your language are often lost in translation, and a harmless message of "Wow, that's too bad" may appear cold and ruthless, even if it's written out of sympathy.

Go the extra mile to appear kind. Use an extra dose of words, friendly emojis, and see wonders happen in your customer's temperament.

### Take their side

Bill Gates once said, "Your most unhappy customers are your greatest source of learning." Criticism gives you the drive and need to improve. Don't be blinded by your

ego and fail to recognise the core issue. Through the dramatic and perhaps exaggerated comments, accept that there might be a pinch of truth to it.

### Apologise

Dealing with clients and customers requires a certain level of maturity. When there is a responsibility to carry the reputation of a brand with graceful professionalism, you need to be capable of recognising the moment to step back and apologise. Sometimes this will be necessary even if the blame was not yours to take. You do not deal with an angry customer like a two-year old child throwing tantrums.

### Further tips

Do not make the mistake of deleting comments—it shows that you are trying to hide something instead of facing an issue up front. Be as transparent as you possibly can. However, some inappropriate comments do need to be deleted

based on the business's code of conduct and policies, so it's best to use one's own judgment (or consult someone).

It is often good practice to take screenshots of the complaint. Documenting these situations will help train others in the business or be useful when a follow-up is required at work.

Always proof-read and edit the drafts of your replies before sending them. It is also crucial that after the issue is taken care of online, further monitoring be carried out to ensure that the problem does not re-occur.

Mistakes happen. We are all human after all. Nobody expects businesses to be perfect, but what people do expect is rectification of what goes wrong.

SABRINA RAHMAN

The writer is a junior at the Institute of Business Administration, University of Dhaka.



ILLUSTRATION: EHSANUR RAZA RONNY

## THE BOSSMAN

BY E. RAZA RONNY



## 9 ways to have more EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

1

Only invite people who are absolutely necessary and can add value, regardless of title.



2

Schedule half the time you think you'll need for meetings. If you block off a whole hour, you'll find ways to fill it.



3

Capture attention and focus on goals by opening with an interesting statistic, customer quote, or captivating story.



4

Ask each attendee "What's this meeting about?" in five words or less to ensure the meeting is focused and includes only who's necessary.



5

Share a list of discussion points before the meeting and follow it exactly. Discuss side issues later. End meeting once list is complete.



6

Incorporating sketches, mindmaps and mockups stimulates a new part of the brain and kickstarts your team's problem solving skills.



7

Ban phones and laptops. Take notes by hand or appoint a meeting leader to record action items.



8

Assign a directly responsible individual for each task, along with next steps and dates.



9

"Who will do what, by when?" End your meeting with this question to ensure roles and deadlines are clear.



SOURCE: WIKI.COM | INFOGRAPHIC: AMIYA HALDER

## Making a DIFFERENCE

Bangladesh is rapidly moving towards middle income status by 2021. Our businesses definitely offer immense opportunities for the growing economy and this diversity needs a stage for the stories untold. See Bangladesh make its mark on the global map as Making a Difference brings you our proudest success stories from across the country.

### WHY DO COMPANIES STOP GROWING?

Growth is a phenomenon that every organisation yearns for and a special few truly experience. Companies start their journey with the objective to expand in every possible direction. Founders dream of augmenting their pool of target customers, branches, and product and service diversity. But things do not play out like that at the end of the day. Plans and goals are all set and shared, work starts, time flies, and after several years, it is found that the milestones are yet to be reached. Why does it happen? What makes a company fall behind?

#### Not empowering the entry level

The belief of the managerial level that the boss is always right makes people unable to think in new ways. Meetings are held, plans are made, and even participation from all employees is also ensured, but the inability to empower the entry level employees to a measured extent hampers progress. Often it is believed that those working at the entry level are not worthy of the power, despite being the very people who implement the plan, face the various challenges of implementation, and come up with effective solutions. If employees' suggestions and ideas are experimented with, it will breed enthusiasm amongst them and they will put greater effort into making their work a success, which often leads to growth.

#### Diversion from the core vision

It is natural that the elements of



the external environment will keep changing throughout the year. Sometimes it becomes imperative to opt for cost effective solutions and compromise on premium quality. In such cases, if the original vision was to maintain a superior quality, choosing low cost solutions to adapt to the external environment might yield a negative effect. People also become confused about the image of the company when unrelated diversification in products or service starts to appear.

#### Changes in higher authority

A change in upper management can change the direction of the organisation. It has been observed that each time there is a change in the higher level, the set of beliefs, values, and procedures also change, which becomes extremely difficult for the employees to maintain as once they have gotten used to one set of working patterns and think in a particular way to move forward, a sudden change

in the direction might spoil the progress.

#### Lacking people focus

Sometimes, plans are made, decisions finalised, strategies formulated, and every string of preparation weaved behind closed doors, forgetting one element that is the prime factor—the human factor. Before deciding on changes in schedules and working patterns, for instance, it is necessary to consult with the people who will be affected by these changes.

Every organisation aspires towards growth and it is most certainly not impossible to achieve. All it calls for to think strategically, act accordingly, empower and train the related parties, and stick to the core vision.

ABU MD. ABDULLAH

The writer is Assistant Professor, Faculty of Business Administration, Eastern University.