

START THE DIALOGUE

At a loss for words?

Employer Solutions Group helped BusinessQ come up with a sample script for a boss working on a customer service issue with an employee. Every corrective action situation is different, so this isn't fool-proof. But it's a place to start. And don't forget to document!

BOSS: So, Derek, tell me your opinion on customer service and how it relates to our company succeeding. *(Assess the employee's understanding of the policy or topic in question before discussing the problem.)*

DEREK: If we make our customers happy, they'll keep using us.

BOSS: And how do you think we make our customers happy?

DEREK: By being friendly and helpful — going the extra mile.

BOSS: Exactly. But we have a situation where that type of interaction didn't happen. Do you know what I'm referring to? *(Let him acknowledge the situation.)*

DEREK: I'm guessing Mrs. Smith.

BOSS: Yes, Mrs. Smith. On June 6 she called in a complaint. Her exact words were that you were stubborn and rude to her — that you told her she was being ridiculous. *(Use dates and exact quotes — be specific.)*

DEREK: She WAS being ridiculous!

BOSS: I want to hear your side of it, but let me finish her complaint first. Mrs. Smith said you dismissed her request for a refund before she had a chance to explain herself, and then you hung up on her. Is this accurate? *(Give him a chance to explain his side.)*

DEREK: I did hang up on her, but what she said leading up to that point isn't entirely true. From the minute she got on the phone she was yelling at me and cursing the company. She was so upset I couldn't get a word in. I got really frustrated and hung up.

BOSS: I can see how you would get upset. She put you in a difficult situation. However, that does not give you the authority to respond to her that way. We have to treat our customers — even the difficult ones — with respect. *(Be sympathetic, but explain why the behavior is still a problem.)*

DEREK: I understand that. But do you realize how hard it is to talk to someone like her?

BOSS: Absolutely. I don't enjoy it when customers are rude to my employees, and there are even cases where we will refuse service if a customer is repeatedly abusing our staff. But that's not your call to make. So in future situations, I want you to do everything you can to help the customer, and if you are unable to, pass the client to a manager. *(Give him a solution for similar situations in the future.)*

DEREK: I will. And I'm sorry.

BOSS: Thanks for saying that. Now, I also want to determine our expectations for the future. If you act in this way again, we'll have to suspend you for a week without pay. And if it happens a third time, we'll have to let you go. Do you understand? *(Get on the same page for future actions and consequences.)*

DEREK: I do.

BOSS: Great. And Derek, we want you to know how much we appreciate you. You're a great employee, and I would hate for difficult customers to get in the way of that. Please know you can come to me with any frustrations you might have in the future. *(End on a high note.)*

DEREK: I will. Thanks.

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