CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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By

J. Branch Walton
Security Services International

812/342-0305 Columbus, IN
215/654-0988 Blue Bell, PA
Three Types of Problem People

- Those seeking revenge or justice
- Criminals/Gang members
- The mentally ill

Our Communications Process Is Mostly (75% to 90%) Nonverbal*

- 60% is visual (watching people)
- 30% is sound (voice tone, volume, etc.)
- 10% is words

* (nonverbal: eye contact, proximity, overall appearance, smell, facial expressions, physical contact, posture, positioning, gestures, silence, etc)

Six Basic Human Emotions

1. Anger
2. Fear
3. Surprise
4. Disgust
5. Happiness
6. Sorrow

The 2 Basic Conversation Needs

- To be understood
- To be valued

Anger

- Is a fact of life
- Happens when we become victims of situations that are (or seem) beyond our control
- Recognize and admit that you can get angry
- "Normal" people handle normal anger/stress in an acceptable manner
Dealing with Angry Customers
1. Don’t expect everyone to respond the way you would.
2. Treat them the way you would want to be treated.
3. Remain professional but personal. Don’t take things personally.
4. Develop empathy skills, genuinely listen and try to understand the problem.
5. Be patient and willing to listen. Let angry people vent.
6. Ask for clarification when you don’t understand something.
7. Be aware of your voice tone and volume.
8. Remember, you are in control.
9. Use person’s name.
10. Use “thank you’s” when appropriate.
12. Never say “That’s not my Job.”.
13. Never inconvenience customers because of company policy unknown to them.
14. Don’t make customers restate complaints to several employees before having it resolved.

Dealing with the Customer from Hell
1. Understand that this problem is probably only one of many that customer has.
2. Don’t treat them as jerks.
3. Have known limits on what you will accept (profanity/physical abuse).
4. Known your own limits. Call for help if appropriate.
5. Say “You interrupted me.” if appropriate.
6. Remember you are in control.

Handling Hostile Aggressiveness
1. Personal safety is always your first concern.
2. Stay beyond arm’s length.
3. Listen and let them run out of steam.
4. Don’t respond to insults.
5. Get help when needed. (Do you have procedures in place for this?)
6. Don’t take their abuse. Depart if necessary.
7. Show your disapproval.
8. Don’t laugh at them or return aggressiveness in anyway.
9. Watch their actions and read body language constantly.
10. Change what they say to something more agreeable and repeat it back.
11. Use his/her name & stay at eye level if possible. (looking away shows weakness).
12. Don’t take actions as a personal attack against you!
14. Don’t let your anger show.
15. Respond only to actual facts of the situation.
16. Stay calm and show self confidence.
Are You the Problem?

1. Are you treating them the way you would want to be treated?
2. Are you objective and willing to look at issues from another’s point of view?
3. Do you listen without interrupting?
4. Do you speak in an ordering, demeaning or commanding manner?
5. Do you interrogate rather than question others?
6. Do you threaten?
7. Do you take everything personally?
8. Do you speak too loudly?
9. Do you constantly judge others?
10. Do you react or respond too quickly?
11. Is your speaking tone sincere and clear?
12. Do you place blame elsewhere?
13. Do you often do or say things in anger that you later regret?
14. Are you willing to change?

Stress Reducers

- Take deep breaths & smile (make your own mood).
- Don’t keep anger or frustration locked up.
- Exercise/walk.
- Keep your sense of humor.
- Organize (gives you a sense on control).

Gang Members/Criminals

- Safety first. Depart if in danger
- Best defense is preparation.
- Know areas of activity. Drive by once before stopping. Observe.
- Beware of distractions. Beware of “scouts”.
- Develop close liaison with law enforcement. Discuss problem areas.
- Carry nothing valuable.
- Observe area closely upon arrival.
- Get to know residents/business persons in area
- Stay in public view. Avoid isolated areas.
- “Publicly” report suspicious activity
- If making regular stops, vary your schedule as much as possible.
- Stop - Look - Listen!
More Cautionary Actions To Consider When Faced With A Confrontational Situation

Other Suggestions

These comments are for your consideration when confronting an angry person. Study them. They may help you resolve a potentially dangerous situation.

Actions to Avoid

- Interrupting the person
- Use of defensive comments
- Use of argumentive comments
- Taking comments personally
- Attacking or fighting back (verbally)
- Making excuses
- Telling them what you CAN NOT do

Actions to Consider

- Your goal is to diffuse
- Listen to the upset person. Try to understand their problem.
- Acknowledge their anger.
- Offer an apology. It is OK to say "I'm sorry" even when that person is wrong.
- Empathize.
- Talk about what you CAN do for that person.

Try This to Evaluate Your Own Behavior

1. Tape your voice
2. Ask others to observe you
3. Observe others interact
4. Practice reading body language

The above notes are intended solely as guidelines to help deal with angry, upset or hostile persons. There is no guaranteed way to accurately predict how any angry or hostile person will respond to your actions. Your primary concern should always be personal safety.

References: Problem People at Work by Marilyn Wheeler; Anger at Work by Dr. Hendrie Weisinger.
service industry survey released a few years ago estimated that service-related businesses and government agencies dealing with the public describe 5 to 10 percent of their customers as difficult. The specific demeanor of a difficult customer can vary greatly, from being mildly upset but irritatingly persistent to being violent.

Those in the security industry are perhaps faced with these confrontational situations as much or more than in other occupations. How these confrontations turn out should not be left to chance. It is a natural, albeit subconscious, feeling for the security officer, receptionist or other employee facing the upset customer to think the end results are entirely dependent upon the customer. They think the situation can be handled only if the angry customer (or angry employee) quiets down, listens up or changes their tone of voice. Customers are frequently told to back off or they will be refused service. It is natural when facing a confrontational situation to take all offending comments personally. A defensive stance is then taken, and the situation becomes more and more difficult to resolve. It becomes an "I'm going to win, you're going to lose" situation.

Anger, stress and frustration are normal emotions. We all encounter them at one time or another. They happen when we become victims of situations that seem to be beyond our control, but it is a rare work confrontation that cannot end with win-win results. This article focuses on three important points to help you when facing the angry customer, employee or visitor:

Personal safety is ALWAYS your first concern.

You, not the angered person, are the one in control.

You have a responsibility to get or keep the individual as a customer.

Once your employee becomes consciously aware that the primary goal is the safety of everyone, an effective mental approach begins to develop. The mental attitudes of "He can't
talk to me like that" and "Who does he think he is?" will begin to fade and be replaced by more productive attitudes such as "I must do what I can to calm him down so no one is hurt" and "How would I want to be treated if I were in his shoes?"

A win-win approach will come naturally to some and can be very difficult for others. Changing the way you deal with others is not necessarily an easy task. You must consciously think about and evaluate your behavior at each step when dealing with anger. The next time you are at home and have an argument with your spouse, significant other or mature child, notice how their body language, voice volume and tone dictate yours. They yell or threaten and you yell louder and threaten more. You may hear them but you don't really listen. You are too busy preparing your next comments to throw back at them. Whatever happens, they are not going to get the best of you. This is the I win-you lose method of dealing with confrontations. In the long run, it doesn't work.

Here are some suggestions for dealing with the next angry person you encounter in your job:

- Make a quick evaluation about safety precautions such as distance between the two of you, your stance, evacuation route, physical barriers, etc.
- Evaluate their body language, facial expressions and words for warning signs. Watch hands, eyes and possessions for weapons.
- Let them vent. Let them talk. Let them release their frustrations.
- Use empathy skills. Genuinely listen and try to understand the problem.
- Ask for clarification if you do not understand something.
- Be aware of your voice, tone, volume and words.
- Don't take anything personally. Don't lose your temper. Don't interrupt.
- Use the person's name occasionally. Use comments such as "thank you," "I understand" or even apologies when appropriate.
- Don't create more obstacles for the customer. Never say, "That's not my job."
- Sincerely try to help. Treat them the way you would want to be treated in the same circumstances.
- Appropriate use of humor can be effective in defusing anger.
- Don't make excuses or use defensive comments. Tell them what you can do for them.

When dealing with hostile, aggressive people:

- Remember your first goal of personal safety. Constantly watch actions and body language.
- Listen and let them run out of steam. Acknowledge their anger.
- Do not respond to insults. Don't show your disapproval. Don't return aggressiveness.
- Change what they say to something else.
- Use them over and over again as the foundation of your fire protection library.

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thing more agreeable.

- Stay calm and display self-confidence.
- Know your limits and call for support if needed.
- Act as if every action you take is being videotaped.
- Remember you are the one in control, not them.

The communication process is predominantly non-verbal. Studies of the communication process show that words account for only about 10 percent of the message. Thirty percent comes from sound, the tone, speed and volume of the voice. Sixty percent comes via body language, including facial expressions, stance, gestures, physical contact and proximity. Actions do speak louder than words. Watch people from a distance when you can’t hear words and you may be surprised at how accurate you are when guessing general relationships. Are they newly acquainted? Are they related?

Is it a business or personal relationship? Do they enjoy each other’s company? Are they agreeing or disagreeing? Is it a serious or jovial conversation? Do they appear to be sincerely listening to each other? What is it that made you answer the way you did? What specific body language did you see to reach your answers?

Practice reading people and listening to the real messages given. This can be a developed skill and one that can be extremely valuable to you in the workplace.

Most people really don’t know how they sound or what image they project when dealing with an angry person. It may help and would probably surprise you if you taped your responses. If your working situation allows it, you might review a video or audio recording of an encounter you’ve faced. You might ask a co-worker to offer candid opinions of how you handled a situation.

Here are some guidelines when encountering extremely hostile persons:

- Stay at least two arm lengths away from the person.
- Determine if the person is right- or left-handed. (Hint: Look for their watch.)
- Stand with your body at a 45-degree angle to theirs.
- Establish eye contact. Scan upper body. Don’t stare. Avoid making demands.
- Develop calm, controlled responses and breathing. You can practice this.
- Give them some recognition. Give them an “out.” It’s all about saving face for them.
- Don’t argue.
- Use diversions to distract them, i.e., “Sit here and we can talk.”
- Bring their voice volume, tone and speed down by bringing your own down.
- Stay on guard.

Finally, don’t forget your responsibility to your employer. It is part of your job to keep the angry person as a customer. What they think of you and the way they were treated by you is how they will think of your company or agency. No matter what businesses say, the customer is not always right; but they are always the customer or potential customer. It is equally important to remember there is a limit to just how much an employee can be expected to take from any disgruntled person. Draw a line in the sand. You only have to take so much. Once that line is crossed you can call for support.

When confronting an angry person, remember it is not about winning, but safety and helping someone with a problem. It doesn’t really matter if that problem is real or imagined. To the upset customer or employee it is real. The way you deal with them can reduce the problem or magnify it. The outcome is dependent upon your responses. Handle it with care!

J. Branch Walton is a security consultant and adjunct university professor, former security director and retired secret service agent. He is a regular contributor to ST&D and can be reached by e-mail at branwal@earthlink.net.
Biography of J. Branch Walton

Branch Walton has an extensive background in law enforcement and adult education. He is currently a security trainer and consultant. He is a nationally known speaker on the topic of workplace violence prevention. He specializes in several other crime prevention topics as well.

After receiving his undergraduate degree, Mr. Walton joined the U.S. Marine Corps as a commissioned officer. After a brief period as an investigator for an insurance company, he became a civilian criminal investigator for the Office of Naval Intelligence (now Naval Criminal Investigative Service). Subsequently he joined the U.S. Secret Service where he retired after a 21-year career. His USSS assignments included Special Agent in Charge of Springfield, IL Field office; Assistant Special Agent in Charge of the Office of Training; Senior Instructor - Office of Training; Presidents Carter and Nixon and Candidate Reagan Details, and the Omaha and Kansas City field offices. He also served briefly as a Program Specialist for the LECC program of the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Springfield, Illinois conducting training needs analysis, content development and program administration for the law enforcement community.

Mr. Walton was the Director of Corporate Security for Cummins Engine Co., Inc. in Columbus, In. where he was responsible for worldwide security operations. He has 14 years of consulting in security and law enforcement topics. He has made over 900 presentations to a wide variety of audiences. His thirty-five years of practical experience in the areas of workplace violence prevention, executive protection, personal safety and general investigations and crime prevention have made him a popular speaker on these topics. While at Cummins Engine Company and FLETC he was a member of their workplace violence response teams.

He served as the Chief of the Management Institute and Branch Chief of the Security Specialties Division at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC), Glynco, Ga.. He has been an adjunct faculty member of the criminal justice departments at 4 universities, most recently, Indiana University at Bloomington, In..

He served as the National Director of Training for ASET Corporation and Lockmasters, Inc., security firms headquartered in Dayton, Ohio and Nicholasville, Ky. respectively.

He has authored numerous magazine articles, book chapters and a textbook and has consulted on several video training tapes. Mr. Walton earned a Masters Degree in Administration of Criminal Justice and worked on a doctoral degree in adult education. He is a current or past member of numerous professional associations of the security, law enforcement and crime prevention areas. He has also served on curriculum advisory committees for the criminal justice departments of several universities and on various funded committees studying criminal justice topics.