



## *Work Smart Live Smart*

### **Ensuring That Irate Customers Don't Rattle Your Staff**

**By**  
**Beverly Beuermann-King,**  
**CSP, Stress and Wellness Specialist**

**Question: With the busy Christmas season fast approaching how can I ensure that irate customers don't rattle my staff in a detrimental way?**

Negative attitudes and behaviours are usually expressed when our customers are stressed out or they just don't have the energy to use better communication skills, judgment and manners. Being stressed out is chronic in today's society, especially during the busy Christmas season. We often have too much to do, too many decisions to make and are usually running behind schedule.

The difficulty behind the negative attitudes and behaviours of our customers is that they are highly "toxic" to our staff. Dealing with these type of customers can make us feel grouchy, out-of-control and can rattle staff to the point where they may quit.

It takes a lot of energy to be positive, to keep things in perspective and to actively fend off this toxic effect. As the leader there are several steps that you can take to ensure that your staff can effectively handle the best and the worst in these customers.

Follow these tips to reduce the impact of negative attitudes and ensure a healthy, happy staff:

1. Discuss the types of customers that you may encounter ahead of time. What are some of the common complaints that your staff may face? Share past experiences and horror stories with each other and prepare answers/solutions ahead of time. Preparation allows your staff to feel more confident in dealing with these difficult customers and not absorb the negativity.
2. Teach your staff how to keep their composure, be assertive and know exactly what it is they want to communicate. Help them to get comfortable with those customers who need to vent and express themselves – however do not tolerate abuse.
3. Help your customer to feel more in control. Start with your body language. Have you ever been in a hurry and talked without looking directly at the other person? What message does that convey? Talk to your staff about the importance of facing the person, making eye contact and being in the moment. Treat each person as if they are

all that matters and help them to problem solve their difficulties. Remind your staff that it is hard to be difficult with someone who makes them feel special.

4. Take a walk. What does the atmosphere convey? Is it comfortable, peaceful and engaging or chaotic, noisy and crowded? Though the “extras” may seem unnecessary in accomplishing the business of the day, to decrease the incidence of difficult behaviours and negative attitudes, make your workplace a visual, auditory and aromatic haven in the customer’s hectic day.
5. Dealing with difficult people requires extra energy and focus. It is essential that your staff take care of themselves. Ensure that they are taking frequent and adequate breaks. Encourage them to eat properly to control mood swings and to feel more energetic and to cut out caffeine, which heightens our responses and makes us more sensitive to those around us. Help them to lighten up and to have fun. Create an environment that your staff wants to return to - not one that they are dreading or a place where they are just putting in time.

As the leader, you play a very important role in preventing customer negativity from rattling your staff. Empower your staff by helping them to problem solve various scenarios, provide a calming and respectful environment for your customer and your staff, encourage healthy practices and develop a sense of fun. By using these simple tips, you may be able to diminish the difficult behaviours presented by your customers and reduce the toxic impact on your staff.

Stress and wellness specialist, **Beverly Beuermann-King** translates current research and best practices information into a realistic, accessible and practical approach through her dynamic stress and wellness workshops, on-line articles, e-newsletters and media interviews and through a collaboration called *Awakening The Workplace*. Visit [www.WorkSmartLiveSmart.com](http://www.WorkSmartLiveSmart.com) for more on Beverly and her wellness work.

©Articles available for reprint – please include source as Beverly Beuermann-King, [www.WorkSmartLiveSmart.com](http://www.WorkSmartLiveSmart.com)

**Bring one of these related workshops to your team -  
From Job Stress To Job Smart or  
Harnessing Your Energy – Bust Your Stress**

Call Beverly at 705-786-0437 or  
Visit **Presentations & Keynotes** at [www.WorkSmartLiveSmart.com](http://www.WorkSmartLiveSmart.com)  
for presentation descriptions and outlines.