



## Turn Complaints into Compliments with Exceptional Customer Service

---

Do you want to know how pet care customers really feel about the experiences they have with pet care providers? Do you want to know exactly how customers want to be treated? I hope you do and if so, read online reviews!

Of the thousands of negative online reviews written about various pet care providers across the US, one common theme undoubtedly emerges. Customers want to feel that the safety of their pet is as important to you, the pet care provider, as it is to them, the loving pet parent.

Here are some real examples:

*"She was so defensive and basically scolded me for requesting more information about the incident. Then she curtly stated, 'Let me check for you.'"*

\*\*\*\*\*

*"I sent an email providing some suggestions and expressing my total dissatisfaction and never heard back."*

\*\*\*\*\*

*"Turns out he was scratched in the eye, but all I got was a report card that said he had a "great time!"*

\*\*\*\*\*

*"The front desk staff seems under-trained and as a result overwhelmed by the situation. If this is what's happening in front of the public, who even knows what's going on in the back with the dogs."*

\*\*\*\*\*

*"The fact that the manager was so cold, defensive and uncaring about the whole situation was just so alarming to me."*



## Turn Complaints into Compliments with Exceptional Customer Service

---

We can all agree that some online reviews are difficult to trust and that some reviewers obviously need to get a hobby. Nevertheless, the examples above represent negative customer experiences that actually could have been prevented. In each of these cases, and the thousands more just like them, the customer is most concerned with the treatment they received after the incident in question. Not only did they write a scathing review, but also, it's pretty safe to say they told all of their closest friends who, in turn, told many of their friends. Instead, if these customers had been pleasantly surprised and amazed by an exceptional experience after an unfortunate incident, think about the compliments they might have shared online and with their friends. I assure you, it's entirely possible to turn what might have been a horrible complaint into an amazing compliment for your business, even after an unfortunate event.

Just as your pet care team receives special training to anticipate and handle potential dog incidents before they escalate into dogfights, your customer service team must receive training, to anticipate the myriad of possible reactions they might see during specific encounters with customers.

One of the biggest opportunities you have to show customers how much you value them is in the way you handle delicate customer situations, conflicts or complaints. While your team should be able to handle the vast majority of everyday customer encounters, it's important to implement a procedure that involves a manager when a customer is significantly unhappy. By following the 4 C's for Turning Complaints into Compliments, you can avoid many negative reviews and gain customers who trust you for the lifetime of their pets.

Time and time again, I have watched this process work with tremendous results. People do not naturally expect to encounter exceptional customer experiences. Even in the most difficult situations, if you can show your customers that you care very deeply about their pets and their peace of mind, you will not only gain a customer for life, but they will compliment you and become one of your best marketing assets.



# Turn Complaints into Compliments with Exceptional Customer Service

## THE 4 C'S FOR TURNING COMPLAINTS INTO COMPLIMENTS

1. **Care** right from the start by speaking with the customer immediately. When the need arises, select an employee who has been trained to handle sensitive conversations, who can speak on the owner's behalf. Never wait for a customer to call and ask to speak with a manager. When a customer is unhappy, show them you care by speaking with them immediately, in person or on the phone, and offer a resolution.
2. **Calmly Communicate; never get defensive.** While the customer is not always right, it is in the best interest of your business to make the customer happy. Relay what you know about the situation and then ask them if they mind you asking some questions to better understand all of the details.
  - a. **Use the pet's name.** It's important that they feel you know their pet personally and care about them, just as much as they do.
  - b. **Empathize with the way they feel.** This doesn't mean you must always accept fault, but don't be afraid to say you're sorry the situation made them feel frustrated, badly, scared for the safety of their pet, etc., using whichever words match the feelings they have expressed. This lets them know you understand and care about how the situation made them feel.
  - c. **Be as transparent as possible.** If you are at fault, honestly discuss the situation and apologize for the unfortunate occurrence. Being defensive and never admitting any fault is not realistic and will only make matters worse. People admire honesty. Honesty will diffuse the situation so the conversation can go from a complaint to a solution.
3. **Correct the situation.** Determine what it will take to make the customer happy and without hesitation, provide a solution that will prove to customers that you and the business can be trusted.
  - a. If their pet has been injured while in your care, honor your promise to provide superior, safe care, and pay the vet bill...no questions asked.
  - b. If their pet didn't receive a service that had been scheduled, offer to provide that service free of charge the next time around.
  - c. If the customer feels that a staff member was rude to them, let them know you value their feedback and you are sorry they feel they were treated in a less than exceptional manner. Ask questions to let them know you care about the situation. This may also provide you the opportunity to explain something they may have misunderstood, or it could help you make internal improvements.
4. **Call to follow-up.** A follow-up call after an unpleasant or unfortunate situation will let the customer know that you took the situation very seriously, that you have not forgotten, and that you still care.
  - a. If there was an injured pet, call to check on the pet and consider sending a care package.
  - b. If they have not been back in to visit in a long while, call to check on them and invite them back.