

# HANDLING VOLATILE CUSTOMERS

Advice for reopening your business from *Loss Prevention Magazine*

RETAIL

SAFETY ADVICE



## De-escalation Tips

Having an effective strategy in place before a situation occurs is more likely to be productive than those decisions made when on the receiving end of emotional outbursts. A few tips to help get through some stressful and even dangerous moments might include:



Listen



Give your undivided attention



Avoid overreacting



Show empathy



Control your tone and body language



Apologize when appropriate



Don't use clichés



Consistency in courtesy



Focus on the future



Recognize and accept personal limits



Keep yourself and others safe

## Details

**Listen.** Listening is a powerful tool, and sometimes all that is needed is to allow an angry person to vent their anger and frustration to someone who is actually listening to what they are saying.

**Give them your undivided attention.** When we pay attention, people feel validated and important. By really listening we can take away the person's reason for escalating the situation.

**Avoid overreacting.** Remain calm, confident, rational, and professional. While you can't control the person's behavior, how you respond to their behavior will have a direct impact on whether the situation escalates or defuses.

**Show empathy.** Empathy needs to be shown during conflict situations. Even if you do not agree with the person's position, expressing an understanding why that person feels a particular way will help resolve the conflict.

**Control your tone and body language.** Be mindful of your gestures, facial expressions, movements, and tone of voice. Respect personal space. Allowing personal space tends to decrease a person's anxiety.

**Apologize when appropriate.** Accepting responsibility and sincerely apologizing for anything in the situation that is believed to be unjust can make a significant difference.

**Don't use clichés.** The worst of these being, "Calm down." If you have ever said those words during a verbal conflict, you will quickly realize that the typical response will not meet your desired intent.

**Consistency in courtesy.** Remember that we are providing an impression of the company, and as such we must maintain the position of a positive brand ambassador and consummate professional.

**Focus on the future.** Shifting the conversation to the future, can engage all those involved in a problem-solving activity rather than fault-finding. This creates hope for a resolution and a positive outcome to the situation.

**Recognize and accept personal limits.** Understand that it's not always easy to solve problems alone. Sometimes the most professional decision is to ask for help or let someone else take over, if that's an option.

**Keep yourself and others safe.** This should always remain our primary objective.