

Conflict with Customers: Masks and More ISRI

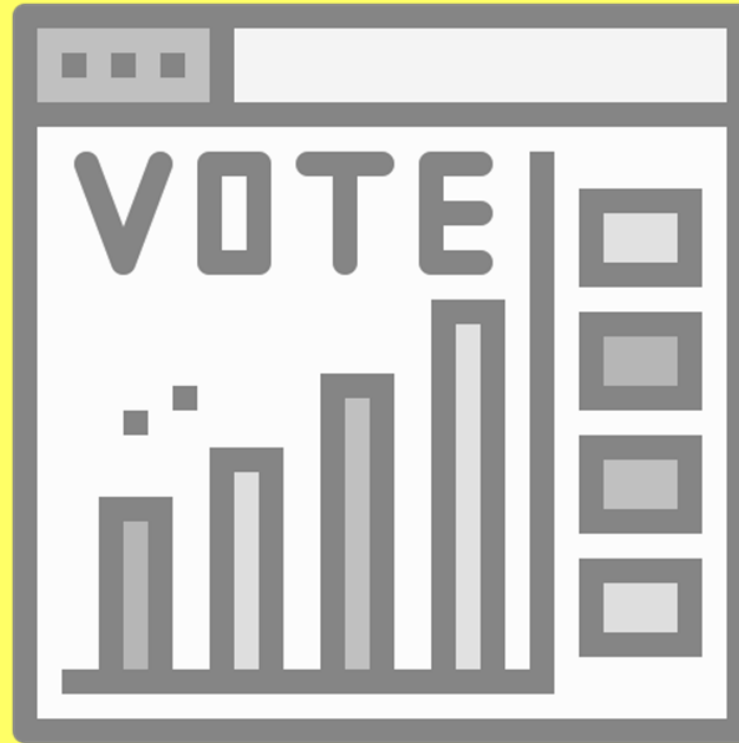
Presented by Cally Ritter, LICSW

Positive Ripple Training & Consulting + 

Today's Agenda

- Welcome
- Customer Service Challenges
- Pre-empting Conflict
- De-escalation
- Escalation
- Q & A
- Takeaways

POLL:
Let's find out
who's on the call
today.



Customer Challenges Today

- Concerns about stolen materials
- Customers under the influence or with mental health issues
- Disputes over pricing
- Disputes over mask wearing

***We don't
choose our
customers***

CHAT:
What are your
most concerning
customer
interactions?



Pre-empting Conflict

- Signage
 - Large, easy to read and in multiple languages
 - Set expectations for spacing, masks, safety
 - Have frontline employees wearing masks
 - Directions, marks on ground
 - Shared in advance on website, social media, email, etc.
- Offer masks
- Barriers
- Two exits
- Train staff on how to handle difficult customers

Masks

- Asking to wear a mask is like asking people to wear shoes. It's for everyone's safety.
- It's your right as a private company to require your customers to wear masks and you can turn away customers that won't wear masks.
 - Walmart, Costco, CVS, Lowes, and Home Depot won't service customers who won't wear masks
- People refuse to wear masks for a variety of reasons: hot, glasses fog, breathing difficulty, politics and more
- Shaming people doesn't work. Use direction and politeness.
 - *Please, we have masks available for you to wear.*
- It is NOT an infringement on personal rights: Masks don't prohibit us from *expressing ourselves*. While, they may make it tough to be heard, they don't limit *what* we say.

What NOT to Do

- Mirroring customers behavior and emotions
- Being sarcastic
- Saying things like:
 - *I have nothing to do with this*
 - *That's your problem*
- Moving closer to customer and encroaching on their personal space
- Hiding or keeping your hands in your pockets
- Showing aggression and agitation
 - pacing
 - clenching fists or jaw
 - eye rolling
 - staring down
 - Putting hands on hips
 - Crossing arms
 - tapping fingers or toes

***Don't touch
the customer.***

De-escalating Conflict

- Stop and give your full attention
- Ask questions to better understand their need/issue/grievance
 - *What would you like to see happen?*
 - *How can I best help you?*
- Listen to their story without interrupting
 - Head nods, verbal prompts
- Explain that you'll have to ask them to leave if they can't control their frustration or won't lower their voice
 - *I know you're frustrated and we both need to be calm to resolve this*
- Offer solutions/options
- Talk like a politician
 - *Here's what we know.*
 - *Here's what we've done.*
 - *Here's what we're doing next.*

De-escalating Conflict

- Back away
- Give space / keep 6 ft apart
- Have two exits (for them and you)
- Use calm, non-threatening tone
- Use a firm, yet respectful tone of voice if situation progresses
 - *I wish I could help you today. We're not able to make this transaction and I'm going to have to ask you to leave.*
- Calm body language
 - No pacing, clenching, fists, eye rolling, staring down, hands on hips, arms crossed, tapping fingers or toes

***Keep your hands
out where the
customer can
see them***

Asking People to Leave

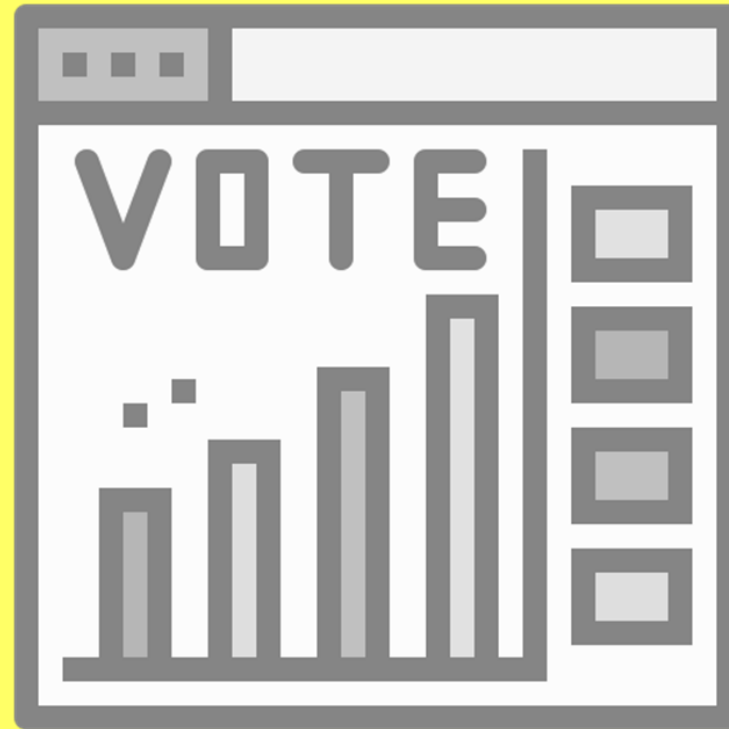
- Explain why you're asking them to leave:
 - *You have a right to feel upset but not to be abusive of me or my staff*
 - *I'm happy to work with you, but not in this manner*
 - *If you're going to fight me on this, I'm going to have to ask you to leave.*
 - *I'm happy to work with you, but you're making me uncomfortable*
 - *It's my job to protect my colleagues and other customers. I'm going to have to ask you to leave.*
 - *If you don't leave voluntarily I'm going to have to call the police*
- Move them toward the exit and watch them leave to be sure they left the premises.

When and How to Escalate

- When
 - Disrupting, angry or intoxicated customer is asked and refuses to leave
 - Customer threatens to physically harm staff, customers or property
 - Customer has broken the law
- How
 - Warn that you'll be calling police and follow through
 - Use panic button
 - Call security or 911
 - Get a description of person(s) and their vehicle

Pay attention to and trust your intuition.

POLL: Do you offer customer service training for your customer facing employees?



Supporting Your Frontline

- Acknowledge they have a tough job working with unpredictable customers
- Listen; evidence listening by making their suggested changes
- Give them coaching/talking points
 - *For everyone's safety, the company policy is....*
 - *Looks like you forgot your mask, could you please put a mask on?*
 - *I can offer you a mask.*
 - *I'd like to help you, but I can't until we're both masked.*
- Explain how and when to escalate to management
- Ask team for their customer concerns including safety concerns
- Explain that they have your support when they need to stand their ground or escalate a customer to management

Wrap Up

- Q & A
- Takeaways

Cally can be contacted at

cally@callyritter.com / 781-434-9542