

Health Mart News

January 25, 2019

Turn frustrated customers into loyal fans

Adopt a consistent process to overcome negative situations

In 2018 Health Mart® once again had higher customer satisfaction than Rite-Aid, CVS, Walgreens and other chains.¹ That speaks to the outstanding service available to customers through locally owned, independent pharmacies. However, as good as you are, no one is perfect.

Common complaints

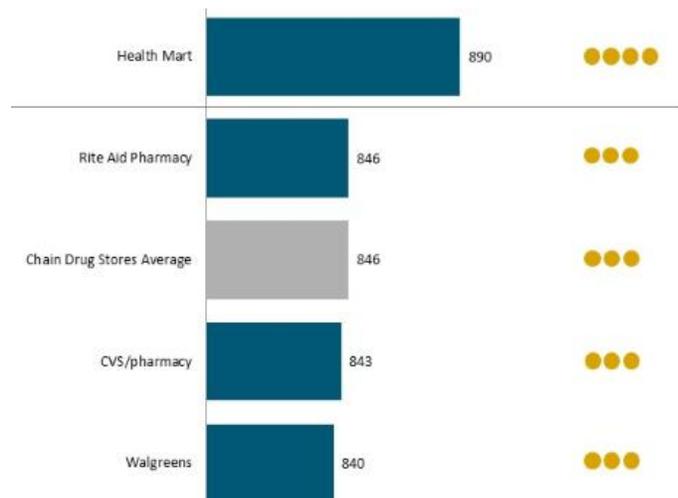
A few years ago, a New York magazine asked four independent pharmacists about their top customer complaints.³ Common complaints were the cost of prescriptions, issues with insurance, and frustration if a doctor hadn't called in a prescription. None of these issues are actually under the pharmacy's control. But, at some point customers will have a negative experience that is under your control. When this occurs, what do you do?

See it as an opportunity

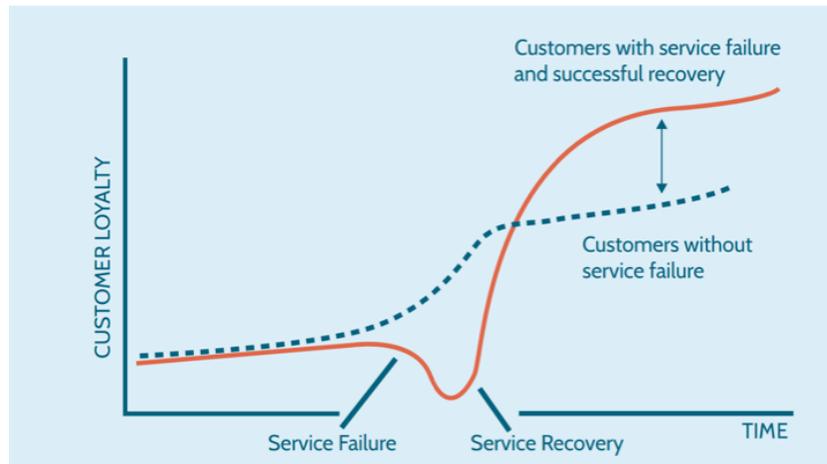
Yes, you read that correctly. A customer who voices dissatisfaction presents a "moment of truth." Moments of truth are opportunities. How you respond makes all the difference.

If a customer leaves your store frustrated, they may not come back. They may tell others and create negative word of mouth. Likewise, if you address this customer's issue you have an opportunity to win them over.

There is a phenomenon termed "The Service Recovery Paradox."⁴ A customer who has a negative experience has a dip in loyalty. But when there is a successful recovery, the customer's loyalty rises higher than it would have been without the negative experience. Turning negativity into positivity creates a loyal fan.



J.D. Power 2018 U.S. Pharmacy StudySM 2
 Customer Satisfaction Index Ranking
 Brick and Mortar — Chain Drug Stores
 (Based on 1,000-point scale)



Source: Customer Thermometer⁵

Have a consistent approach

How do you and your staff deal with negative customers? Tim Johnson, who trains McKesson team members in dealing with difficult situations, suggested this approach:

- **Listen.** Actively listen to a customer's complaints without interrupting. Acknowledge their concerns by repeating back what you heard. This confirms you understand their complaint and shows you are listening.
- **Probe.** Ask questions to get at the root cause. An effective technique is "3 levels of why." Ask an open-ended question to learn more, such as, "Can you tell me why you are frustrated?" Listen carefully and then probe further by asking "why" again. Repeat one more time to reveal the real issue.
- **Options.** After listening carefully and probing concerns, identify possible options and alternatives. Present and explore these options with the customer. Give them control by letting them make the final decision.

This process can be effective at resolving many problems. However, even if you're not able to resolve an issue it can still help. Just listening, asking questions and presenting alternatives goes a long way toward building a positive relationship. Sometimes the process is even more important than the result.

Prepare your staff

Since you can't predict when a negative experience may occur, it is important to train and prepare your staff to respond in the same positive way. The method above is simple to teach and learn. Feel free to refine it for your store. Or, you can use Starbucks' LATTE method.⁶

- *Listen*
- *Acknowledge*
- *Take action and solve the problem*
- *Thank the customer*
- *Explain what you did*

By having a consistent process for dealing with negative experiences you can use moments of truth to your advantage. You can further boost customer satisfaction and turn dissatisfied customers into fans.

¹ J.D. Power 2018 U.S. Pharmacy Study, August 28, 2018. [LINK](#)

² J.D. Power 2018 U.S. Pharmacy Study, August 28, 2018, graphic excludes Good Neighbor Pharmacy. [LINK](#)

³ Top Pharmacy Customer Complaints, Westchester Magazine, October 2, 2015. [LINK](#)

⁴ Service Recovery Paradox, Wikipedia, accessed Dec. 17, 2018. [LINK](#)

⁵ Customer Thermometer, "The Service Recovery Paradox," accessed Dec. 17, 2018. [LINK](#)

⁶ Thanks a Latte: How to Fix a Customer Service Failure, Per Starbucks, Marriott and Me. Forbes, November 19, 2017. [LINK](#)