

## Handout 1: 10 Tips for Dealing with Difficult People

Try to keep these strategies in mind when dealing with a difficult client.

- 1. Maintain self-control.** Losing your cool and giving in to emotion will only escalate the situation. Lower your voice and speak slowly.
- 2. Ask non-threatening questions** beginning with “what” to identify the root cause of the difficulty.
- 3. Listen to the customer’s reason for being difficult.** Few people are difficult without a reason—even if that reason doesn’t seem important to you.
- 4. Acknowledge the problem,** and then repeat it back to the client to ensure understanding.
- 5. Don’t argue.** Justifying your actions will only fuel the flame. If you do feel you must defend your actions, give your one best reason and then stop.
- 6. Apologize** — even if you think the client is wrong. Avoid assigning blame, even if the client’s actions helped create the situation.
- 7. Offer to rectify the situation** — make a specific commitment as to what actions you will take. If you can’t make things right, offer an alternative solution.
- 8. Continue to act professionally.** Demonstrate a high level of professional competence, and make doubly sure that every detail of the transaction is handled correctly.
- 9. Analyze what caused the client’s behavior** so that you can avoid repeating the incident.
- 10. Set limits on what you will tolerate.** Saying “no” to a client is OK. If you want to try and preserve the relationship, ask your manager or another salesperson to act as a mediator.

Can you think of additional tips or examples of a situation in which each tip might be especially useful?