



This programme was first broadcast in 2001.

This is not an accurate word-for-word transcript of the programme.

Carmela: We'll provide you with the most useful expressions used every day at work.

There'll be new language, so have a pen and paper ready so that you can write down the phrases you hear.

This week, we're looking at how to handle difficult customers or clients.

David, this is a tricky one, isn't it? The phrases you choose for this situation are crucial.

David: Yes, there's an expression, "the customer's always right", which people who deal with customers are supposed to remember. So it means that even if you are dealing with someone who is very angry or is being very unreasonable, it is still essential that you are polite to them and that you choose the language that you use very carefully.

Carmela: Well, let's hear how a typical conversation between a company and a

dissatisfied customer might sound. The following is from a training exercise with the international travel company, Thomas Cook. Angela Rossella is a manager in customer services and she's dealing with someone who has just returned from one of their holidays. And the customer isn't happy.

CLIP

- Angela: Hello, I'm Angela, I'm the customer services manager. **Would you like to come with me** and come and take a seat and you can explain to me, what actually is the problem?
- Alison: Okay, OK, fine.
- Angela: **Can I take your name?**
- Alison: Yes, my name's Alison.
- Angela: Okay, Alison if you'd like to make yourself comfortable. As I said I am the customer services manager and I would like to help you. **I understand you** are having a few problems. **Would you like to just explain from the beginning** what's happened?
- Alison: Well yes. I've just come back from one of your holidays. I went to Crete, in Greece, got back last week and the whole thing was a disaster.

END OF CLIP

- Carmela:** Some interesting phrases used by Angela there with the customer. David, could you pick out some of the expressions that she used.
- David:** Well, she begins in a fairly functional, formal kind of way, saying, **Can I take your name?** Then when they are both sitting down, she begins to use much

more polite language. I think it's very important in this situation that the person isn't too direct with the customer, so she uses the expression, **Would you like to... Would you like to come with me? Would you like to just explain from the beginning what happened.**

Carmela: And you got the feeling throughout that conversation that Angela the customer services manager, was actually very sympathetic with the customer.

David: Yes, she's used that expression, **I understand you are having a few problems.** She tries to make the customer think that she is seeing it from her point of view.

Carmela: Let's go back to our conversation and focus on some more phrases that Angela uses to help the customer.

CLIP

Angela: **Would you like to** just explain from the beginning what actually happened.

Alison: Well yes. To start with, when we got to the airport in, in Crete, we had a two hour wait on the coach, I think there was a delayed flight or something, and... and...

Angela:Right, that's quite possible....

Alison: ...Yes.. And I just can't work out why you didn't take us to our hotel and then come back to the airport to pick up the people from the delayed flight.

Angela: Right, **I'm sorry for that wait. I don't know what the problem was.** You mentioned a delayed flight there. **As you can imagine,** you probably weren't the only family on the coach waiting and to ferry people to and from resort to the airport would have been a lot of extra work and they like to try and keep

everyone together who are going on the same flight. **I can actually look into that for you**

END OF CLIP

Carmela: David, what were some of the phrases that Angela used there?

David: Well, the first thing that Angela did was to apologise for what happened. She said, **I'm sorry for that wait** - that's very important. She then went on and talked about the situation a little bit. She firstly explained that she couldn't comment on it personally. She said, **I don't know what the problem was**, but she tried to get the customer to see things from the company's point of view, using the phrase **As you can imagine ...** Then, right at the end she promised to take some kind of action, to investigate the problem for the customer, by saying **I can look into that for you.** Look into, is a phrasal verb which means to investigate, and it's slightly less formal and has a friendly feel. So it's typically used when promising action in this type of situation.

Carmela: ...which is exactly what an angry customer wants to hear. Let's hear another example of someone dealing with a complaint from a customer. Listen out for the phrases used by the person answering the phone. You'll notice the language is similar to what we've been looking at so far.

CLIP

PHONE RINGING

- Female: Hello!
- Mark: Hello, can I speak to despatch please?
- Female: You're through to despatch.
- Mark: Right. Well, I phoned two days ago to say that I hadn't received delivery of my order and I'm ringing again to say it still hasn't arrived.
- Female: **Can I just take your name please?**
- Mark: Yes, it's Mark Anderson.
- Female: Ah!..I think there's been a problem with that order Mr Anderson.
- Mark: What kind of a problem?
- Female: Oh, I don't know offhand. **Let me check for you.** (*rustles paper*). Yes, part of the order didn't arrive here at the depot, so we couldn't send it out until we'd received everything.
- Mark: Well, surely that was your problem to sort out without me having to call back, again. I did phone and drew your attention to this a couple of days ago. Look I placed this order weeks ago. It's just not good enough.
- Female: **Yah, I'm sorry about this Mr Anderson. I'm sorry for the inconvenience, but I can assure you** we'll do everything we can to send this out to you today.

END OF CLIP

Carmela: Well, there were some phrases that we've heard before there. David, can you just remind us of that language?

David: Yes, first of all the person dealing with the complaint investigates or **looks into** the problem. She says, **let me check**

for you. She then apologises - **I'm sorry for the inconvenience.** And finally she promises some action - **I can assure you we'll do everything we can.**

Carmela: Well, so far in both conversations all the people have been really quite polite. But as the conversations continue you'll hear both customers becoming slightly angrier. In this next section you'll hear lots of language for helping you calm down that angry client.

CLIP

Alison: I just think it's a disgrace because my children were extremely tired and nobody offered a bottle of water or a sandwich or something. I mean...

Angela: ...OK....

Alison: ..are you...are you that bothered. You clearly don't have children if you think it's something acceptable to sit on a coach for two hours at 11 o'clock at night with extremely tired children.

Angela: Alison, **it's not going to help if** you start to get angry, and I do, yes, I do have children, I do appreciate what you're saying. **I really do want to help you** and I think that we just should take this piece by piece and talk through it. **I am here to help you.**

END OF CLIP

CLIP

Mark: Why should I believe you now, when we went through all of this two days ago? Honestly! The stupidity and sheer incompetence I've encountered at your company is unbelievable! I really do wish I'd never got involved with you in

the first place.

Female: **Look, look it's not going to help if you get angry. As you can imagine**, we have hundreds of orders coming through this depot every day **I take your point** that you shouldn't have to call us again, and **I do understand that** you're angry, but if you could just remain calm, then we can **sort this out** for you.

Mark: ... We....

Female: ... I am here to help...

Mark: You know, I'm already looking into other suppliers.

Female: ... OK ... if you could just give me an hour or so, I'll **look into it** and I'll find out exactly what's happened and I'll call you back.

Mark: Well, just make sure that you do phone me back within the hour. Because if you don't I'm going to cancel the order and our account with you and I will want a full refund.

Female: **OK. Mr Anderson I can assure you** I'll sort this out, I'll call you back before 2 pm.

Mark: Great. I look forward to hearing your explanation!

Slams phone down.

END OF CLIP

Carmela: Well, lots of complaints there, and both customers sounding quite angry. David, what language did they use to calm the customers down?

David: Both people made it clear that there was no point in the customer getting angry. **It's not going to help if you start getting angry**was the expression we heard. And they also wanted to make it clear to the customer that their job was to assist. **I am here to help**, was the expression we heard. And there was lots of

language that involved reassuring the customer that they were being understood and that action would be taken. We heard the phrases **I take your point** and **I understand, as you can imagine, I can assure you.** This is the kind of language that angry customers need to hear if they are going to start calming down.

Carmela: Well, that's almost it for this week. Thanks again to David Evans and to you at home for listening. I hope you can join us again soon for more *Business Language To Go.*