How to Deal with Difficult Situations Part II

Another cause of frustration in user support interactions is when people talk over each other. This usually happens over the phone. Since there's sometimes delay, but it can happen in person to. Typically it leads to people talking louder and sometimes ends up feeling like you're yelling at each other. You've probably been in a situation like this with your friends or family. Everyone wants to talk and the person with the loudest voice wins.

How can I help you today?

>> My laptop isn't working. I need a new one, I have meetings I need to go to.

>>I can certainly look into this and see what we can do to fix it

>> But I want to set context that our policy is to only replace laptops if all other options have been exhausted.

>> I don't need you to go snooping around my computer. Just give me a new one. Gale, I'd love to do that for you, but.

>> That's ridiculous, I'm a director. I should get a new one. I don't have time for this.

>> I completely understand the urgency of the situation. Why don't you let me take a look.

>> That's why I came. You need to fix it.

It's important to try and identify why this is happening. So you can course correct. In this case, you can simply stop talking to calm things down, then pause for about five or 10 seconds to make sure they're done talking and start again. This might take a few tries before the user realizes what they're doing and gives you time to talk. Use that time to calm down and really listen to what the user is saying. Ask yourself, why are they talking over me? What am I missing then in those 5-10 seconds, collect yourself and think about what you want to say.

>> How can I help you today?

>> My laptop isn't working. I need a new one, I have meetings I need to go to.

>> I can certainly look into this and see what we can do to fix it. But I want to set context that our policy is to only replace laptops. If all other options have been exhausted.

>> I don't need you to go snooping around my computer. Just give me a new one.

>> Gale, I'd love to do that for you, but I.

>> That's ridiculous. I'm a director, I should be able to get a new laptop. I have no time for this.

>> I completely understand. Can you let me have five minutes to do a quick triage and then we can discuss next steps?

If the user is crossing the line and making you feel uncomfortable ignoring it can feel like the easiest solution. It isn't, remember that if you do the next person they interact with will be treated the same way and that's not okay. It's also easy to say that the person being attacked needs to stand up for themselves, but in situations like this one that's really hard, ideally by standards would call out this behavior in a calm way. It's also important that you escalate these issues to the appropriate channel. Whether that's your manager, the human resources department, whomever. Disclaimer, I love being in the IT support field and I don't want to dwell on the negative, but I do want to prepare you for what you might encounter. So let me throw another tough scenario at you. You might find that a user skims over what you wrote or doesn't listen to the full instructions you present before taking action. When this happens, be patient. You've likely been on the other end of this before when you ignored instructions? Why were you overwhelmed with information? Were you in a hurry? Maybe you need reading glasses. Whatever the case might be, the best tactic is to break these steps down into smaller, more digestible pieces for the user. If you sent them an article that they didn't finish reading, ask where specifically in the documentation they're having issues. So that you don't have to bore them with the parts they already know. Sometimes you come across someone wanting to bend a policy or push back on an established process. Take this as a sign to look deeper into the situation. Is it really a company policy or just a common way of doing things? If it is a policy, is there documentation of it? You can reference that to the user. If not offer to follow up to get a definitive answer. You might be surprised what you find. The takeaway here is that it's important to try to see things from other people's point of view. In that moment when you're feeling riled up and frustrated, take a minute to see the situation from the other person's perspective. If you were them, how would you be feeling? What would make you feel better? If you can train yourself to see things from another's perspective, you're on your way to turning things around.

Revision #1
Created 2023-05-29 15:01:20 UTC by naruzkurai
Updated 2023-05-29 16:41:21 UTC by naruzkurai