MODULE OVERVIEW

Angry key client: Rebuild trust and reach an agreement

Adaptive module | ~20 min

In B2B, losing a key account is expensive: acquiring a new client costs 5 to 25 times more than keeping an existing one. This module's approach: treat dealing with an unhappy client as a full negotiation, prepared in advance with real options, conducted without getting defensive, and sealed with a written agreement and a follow-up that turns the incident into loyalty.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

01 Prepare for a meeting with an unhappy client by building three solution options and a walk-away option that gives you solid ground.

02 Listen to and rephrase complaints without getting defensive, and admit a real failure to begin restoring trust.

03 Present your view calmly, then build an acceptable agreement by letting the client propose their solution first.

04 Put the agreement in writing and maintain the relationship, following up to turn the incident into loyalty.

WHO IT'S FOR

Salespeople, account managers, consultants: anyone who handles an unhappy B2B client and wants to reach an agreement.

- **Prerequisite:** none

HOW THE MODULE WORKS

Self-paced, with practice tailored to each learner.

1. **Self-assessment**: on 9 dimensions, to gauge current habits and guide the practice.
2. **Expert video**: 10 minutes, with 3 pauses for reflection.
3. **Practice scenarios**: the first 2 chosen from the self-assessment, then 16 optional ones. Every answer gets feedback: what it leads to, and one way to improve.
4. **Dated commitment**: one action to try, written by the learner or picked from the suggestions.
5. **Memo to download**: key takeaways, questions, commitment, personal notes and checklists.

ASSESSMENT AND COMPLETION

Pass mark: 80%

The score takes into account your answers to the practice scenarios, your commitment and, where relevant, any additional learning activities. Passing requires a commitment and a score of at least 80%.

METHODS & MODELS

- Walk-away option – inspired by BATNA (Fisher & Ury, Getting to Yes, 1981, Harvard Negotiation Project)
- Afthonios 5-step method for handling an unhappy B2B client (prepare your options, listen and rephrase, present your view, build a solution, confirm in writing)
- Active listening and rephrasing – inspired by Carl Rogers
- Service recovery paradox – McCollough & Bharadwaj, 1992

SOURCES & REFERENCES

- Bain & Company (Frederick Reichheld): a 5% increase in client retention raises profits by 25 to 95% (Harvard Business Review, 2000)
- Harvard Business Review (Amy Gallo, 2014): acquiring a new client costs 5 to 25 times more than retaining an existing one
- Fisher & Ury, Getting to Yes, 1981 – BATNA (best alternative to a negotiated agreement)
- McCollough & Bharadwaj, 1992 – the concept of the service recovery paradox

Module created by Afthonios.com.

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