

IMPROVING TENANT & VISITOR EXPERIENCE AT YOUR PROPERTY



Abstract

This whitepaper addresses how property managers can prepare for, combat, and prevent negative criticism thereby improving the overall tenant and visitor experience.



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Introduction

In the commercial real estate industry, thousands of micro-experiences make up your building's overall impression on a tenant or visitor. Experiences within your control might include communication, design/signage, facility staff (e.g., security, janitorial, and maintenance), general upkeep, and community-building events. Experiences outside your control might include altercations between tenants or visitors, criminal acts, inclement weather, and city events (e.g., protests, parades, and marathons/races). Focusing on the items you can control, and planning ahead for the items you cannot, will help to mitigate negative experiences. This includes hiring staff and contractors who heavily value proactive customer service.

Accidents, injuries, and altercations are unfortunate scenarios that can create a bad impression of your property. As these events typically elicit heightened emotions, they can be a significant source of negative feedback, directly to you or digitally through reviews and social platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram.

Exploring some of the motivations behind complaints and industry best practices for resolution, this whitepaper will inform and guide today's property managers to build programs that offer the best experience.

Why Complaints Matter

Consumer complaints can significantly affect a company's reputation, digital footprint, and longevity. Complaints can come in many forms, including phone calls, emails, and most popular, online reviews.

Reviews are deemed as an unbiased opinion of a company. According to [Invesp](#), 88% of consumers put as much trust in online reviews as they do in personal recommendations. Though personal recommendations are important, the scale of online reviews is much larger and therefore can reach a bigger audience.

According to a study by [BrightLocal](#), it reveals that 90% of consumers read company reviews before visiting the business, suggesting that a few negative reviews may sway a potential customer to reconsider. In simple terms, trust in reviews equals trust in a company, with 72% of consumers saying that positive reviews increase their confidence level.

90%

of consumers read reviews before visiting a business

72%

of consumers say positive reviews increase their confidence in the business

Essentially, good reviews increase revenue and business success, whereas bad reviews decrease revenue and severely limit long-term success. It is essential to recognize that negative reviews are most impactful to consumers - 86% of consumers hesitate to purchase from companies with negative reviews. In contrast, only 31% of consumers are more likely to spend money after seeing positive reviews.

86%

of consumers hesitate to purchase from companies with negative reviews

31%

of consumers are more likely to spend money after seeing positive reviews

Psychology of a Complaint

Despite the quality of the service delivered at your property, there could always be a disgruntled visitor or tenant. Complaining can be a feel-good factor for some individuals or a consequence of a completely unrelated life or emotional situation. In general, there are five main reasons why individuals may complain:

- 1. To spark a conversation or establish camaraderie**
- 2. To avoid taking action by minimizing responsibility**
- 3. To denote their superiority in a matter**
- 4. For control or manipulation purposes**
- 5. To excuse poor performance, behaviour, or inaction**

What Drives People to Complain Online

The leading driver of a complaint is when a consumer's expectations of the business offerings are not met. This often causes disappointment or frustration. If provoked or not managed properly, it can lead to complaints via direct channels (e.g., emails or phone calls) or online platforms (reviews, social media, forums).

Suppose direct avenues for complaints (e.g., emails, phone calls, customer service personnel, etc.) are unavailable or continue not to meet an individual's expectations or desired resolutions. In that case, people often turn to social media to vent or raise awareness. In extreme cases, if the post-complaint protocols don't succeed, the individual may experience 'double deviation,' described as "a product or service failure, followed by a series of failed resolution attempts."



A study conducted by TNS NIPO revealed that 30% of people post online to vent negative feelings, and 23% post purely out of spite. Typically, consumers seeking "payback" on a company will direct their frustrations to a social network, whereas those seeking genuine resolution will head to company websites. Stopping a complaint at the source, or dealing with a complaint properly, can often save property managers a huge headache.



30%

of people post online to vent negative feelings



23%

of people post out of spite

Preparing Your Team

Unfortunately, negative experiences can happen. Knowing how to properly handle them and preparing all your front-line staff (including contractors and customer service personnel) is essential to ensuring situations are dealt with professionally.

Remove Emotional Response

Your front-line staff must embrace that they interact with people regularly and it can often be an emotionally charged environment. It is best to focus on the needs of the person you are interacting with and address their emotions first. Your staff should avoid taking anything personally and instead focus on the issue at hand. Unrelated, collateral emotions are not always in our control, but we can learn how to manage these situations in a professional manner.

Below are eight tips you can teach your front-line staff to provide excellent service during all interactions:

- 1.** Practice common complaint scenarios and how they should be resolved or adequately handled.
- 2.** Look the part of a professional – uniforms, name tags, and overall presence and confidence are important.
- 3.** Greet visitors and tenants with a smile and maintain an approachable demeanour.
- 4.** Be alert for those who might be looking for help. Actively look for opportunities to be courteous and helpful.
- 5.** Make eye contact and be proactive when approaching and offering assistance.
- 6.** Escort a patron to where they need to go – provide clear and straightforward directions if you cannot escort them.
- 7.** Provide alternatives/options when rendering help – establish the perception of a safe and comfortable environment.
- 8.** Maintain a positive attitude – demonstrate this with your actions and words.

Risk Assessments

Conduct regular risk assessments of your property to objectively identify and understand where points of tension and complaints may come from. When touring your property, ask yourself the following:



Are there tedious processes for your visitors and tenants such as wait times (e.g., elevators, waiting to speak to the front desk, types of business in your complex)?



Is wayfinding difficult?



Are escalators frequently out of service?






Are environmental factors like lightning and noise causing stress?

These questions, as well as many others, are important to continually ask yourself when attempting to understand your tenant's and visitor's experience and feedback. You may realize that some of these factors are not in your control, which can help you sympathize with individuals when they are complaining.

Service Professionalism

Humans communicate in three primary ways:

1.  **Words**
2.  **Tone/Inflection**
3.  **Non-verbal messages**

Body language is one of the first and most important steps in making visitors feel welcome. From the start of the transaction to the end, a positive outlook and demeanour must be maintained. A smile is often contagious, and eye contact shows the visitor you're interested and listening to them.

Front-line staff should always greet visitors and bid them farewell

- “Good morning!”
- “Thank you very much. Have a good day!”

Offering small talk can help disarm visitors who may be stressed out or on edge because of factors outside of their control. Treating a visitor with a friendly, courteous disposition, means that they are more likely to remember the encounter as a pleasant one.

As a rule of thumb, use the 15, 10, 5 rules for interacting with visitors:



15 Feet Away

- While you may not verbally interact with the visitor, eye contact with a simple smile can create a positive presence.



10 Feet Away

- Make your presence known with eye contact, a smile, a head nod, and a greeting.



5 Feet Away

- Likely an opportunity for engagement, asking the visitor something like, “can I help you find anything?” can help open the conversation and create a positive experience.

How Visitors and Tenants Evaluate Service Quality

Researchers have identified five factors that service quality is judged on:



Reliability

- The ability to provide what was promised dependably and accurately.



Responsiveness

- The willingness to help, promptly. If unable to attend immediately, acknowledge someone when they approach and let them know you will assist them momentarily.



Assurance

- The knowledge and courtesy shown to tenants and visitors and the ability to convey trust, competence, and confidence.



Empathy

- The degree of caring and individual attention. Listen to what a visitor is saying and appear interested in what they say.



Tangibles

- Appearance of physical facilities, equipment, and person. Ensure that the area is tidy and that any uniforms/attire are clean and presentable.

Adopting Disney Training Best Practices

Disney is arguably one of the most successful organizations for delivering exceptional visitor experiences. They achieve this because their goal is simple; create happiness. Each Disney employee, throughout their journey, is made aware of how their role contributes to that goal. Employees are also reinforced with a culture that facilitates this goal.

Disney's world-renowned customer service training focuses on six key learnings:

- 1.** Adapt time-tested business insights to assess and improve your organization.
- 2.** Determine how you can differentiate your service to become a provider of choice.
- 3.** Design quality service standards to create a consistent service experience.
- 4.** Use tools to gauge the needs, wants, stereotypes, and emotions of your customers/visitors at an individual level.
- 5.** Understand the processes necessary to develop a culture that consistently delivers exceptional service.
- 6.** Recover effectively from a service failure and turn it into an opportunity to strengthen customer relationships.

Adopting the learnings from Disney's training methodology is key to delivering outstanding customer service to your visitors and tenants. Communicate your goals clearly to all staff, including contractors, such as security personnel, environmental services staff, parking attendants, and facilities/ maintenance staff. Often these staff members have significantly more impactful contact with your visitors and typically are the first point of contact and key to shaping first impressions.

For example, if you are a property manager responsible for a busy commercial tower, a goal might be to provide all visitors and tenants with a professional environment. Given this, communicate with all employees that their goal is to provide professional and courteous interactions, from how they speak to visitors and how they dress to how they carry out their duties. Reinforce this with awards and recognition for best dressed, best handshake, or mystery shopper programs. Additionally, consider offering certain perks that align with this goal, such as complimentary dry-cleaning, business acumen coaching, and career progression or promotion opportunities.



Perks and recognition such as complimentary dry-cleaning, awards, and promotion opportunities can help reinforce a professional environment to your employees

When a Visitor is Unhappy

One of the challenges of service work is that every individual is different. A fundamental problem for one visitor may not cause any difficulty for another. Some individuals have a dominant communication style, while others may be more passive and withholding, even if they are equally angry.

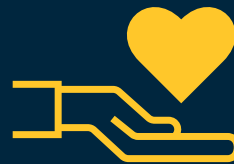
A key for front-line professionals is to 'read' the individual and evaluate the situation. When a situation is read correctly, their needs can be anticipated, and you can better respond to their concerns.

No matter what we do to make our visitors happy, some will not be satisfied. It is essential that our staff be empathetic with the individual. Being empathetic does not mean you agree; it means you can see things from their point of view and understand their concerns and frustrations.

Keys to Dealing with Unhappy Visitors



Situational Awareness



Empathy

The ability to read the situation and empathy are essential for responding to unhappy visitors

When faced with problems, many service professionals have been advised to remember the old adage that “the customer is always right.” But is the customer always right? Unfortunately, the customer (in this case a visitor or tenant) is often at fault and may well know it.

Successful service organizations realize that people make mistakes, but they let the individual feel right. Regardless of the cause of a problem, the service professional allows the individual to maintain their dignity and feeling of importance. Assume that the individual is innocent and use the opportunity to politely educate them about the property’s policies and procedures.

Some tips for dealing with unhappy tenants and visitors include:

- 1.** Actively listen without holding judgment.
- 2.** Ask questions to confirm your understanding of the real problem.
- 3.** Empathize with the stated point of view.
- 4.** Attempt to fix the problem or provide tools and resources that guide them to an acceptable solution.
- 5.** Keep things in perspective.
 - a.** The visitor or tenant is venting their frustrations through you; the frustration is not related to you personally.
 - b.** Upset individuals only represent a small percentage of your daily interactions.
- 6.** Communicate acceptable points of escalation and / or next steps

The Art of Delivering Bad News

Another challenging service situation arises when you say “No” to a visitor’s or tenant’s request. It is better to deliver the news immediately and personally to work to find an alternative and acceptable solution.

How the news is received is primarily determined by how it is delivered. Remember the following guidelines when delivering negative news:

- 1. Apologize for any inconvenience experienced.**
- 2. Focus on what you CAN do, not what you can’t.**
- 3. Offer alternatives – e.g., if the visitor doesn’t want to contact the administration, ask them if they would prefer an administrative representative to contact them.**
- 4. Thank the individual for their patience and understanding.**

Prevention: Setting Yourself Up for Success By Building a Community

Ensuring that you remove obstacles for visitors, tenants, and employees can seem like a challenge. We've outlined four tips to prevent complaints from happening in the first place:

- 1. Create a culture of positivity and safe spaces for everyone.**
- 2. Create outreach programs for vulnerable communities that frequently use your space.**
- 3. Provide an outlet for negative feedback and have a reliable follow-up process.**
- 4. Notice the small stuff and reward positive behaviour.**

1. Create a culture of positivity and safe spaces for everyone

Clearly outline and communicate appropriate conduct for your space

- Ensure visitors and tenants understand the expectations while in your space. This can include using signage, having "ambassador staff" who model this behaviour, and gentle reminders of appropriate behaviour for your area.

Take a positive approach to behaviour rather than a negative one

- Reinforcing your values with humour or positive reinforcement can help achieve further buy-in. For example, rather than posting a sign that says, "Inappropriate language will not be tolerated," consider posting a sign that states, "Our staff love it when you ask us about our day." Subtle positive spins can create a stronger sense of community and humanize your teams while conveying appropriate forms of conduct and respect.

Create opportunities for positive experiences

- Taking a proactive approach to your facility's environment can significantly reduce complaints or outweigh them with positive reviews. Examples could be:
 - Randomly hand out branded items or food to visitors and tenants to spark joy from an unexpected gift. Other opportunities such as milestones and holidays can be a great excuse to get others excited and optimistic while in your space.
 - Hosting charity events, community block parties, or even holiday-themed events can be great ways to get buy-in and remove any tension between visitors and staff.

Non-threatening spatial design

- Understand the layout of your space and how that may impact the overall feeling people may get. Using soft textures and calming colours can give off a sense of comfort and relaxation that can help diffuse tense situations before they even arise. Take note of the atmosphere next time you're in a spa. How have they created a space that encourages relaxation?

2. Create outreach programs for vulnerable communities that frequently use your space

If you find yourself continuously experiencing difficulties with specific populations, encourage an open dialogue with those communities to understand and learn more about why you are experiencing conflict.



Public Forums/Open Houses



Hot breakfast/brunch/ lunch and learning events



Ambassador programs



Focus groups



Empathy-led Security

Through this research, you may find underlying issues that come to the surface. Use these platforms as leverage to develop and forge stronger relationships.

3. Provide an outlet for negative feedback and have a reliable follow-up process

The reality is that not everyone will have a positive experience all the time. Knowing this, it is essential to give your tenants, visitors, or members of the public outlets to voice their concerns and the opportunity to be heard.

Standard options for feedback intake:



Call Centres



**Live Chat and
Support Portals**



Email



Webforms



**Social Media Messaging
(e.g., Facebook Messenger,
Instagram Direct Messages)**



Surveys

Without identified channels, people often turn to public platforms to voice their frustrations – which can lead to further negative attention and reputational damage to your brand and image.

Having a reliable and timely follow-up is an essential component of any feedback. According to research from Super Office, the average 'acceptable' complaint response time is 12 hours and 10 minutes. However, the same study stated that 46% of individuals expect companies to respond faster than 4 hours.



12:10:00

The average 'acceptable' complaint response time is 12 hours and 10 minutes



46%

46% of individuals expect a response in 4 hours

Providing instant responses to an individual's needs is essential to mitigating further complaints and escalation as well as repairing reputational damage. Opting for instant response options like live chat and call centres allows your tenants or visitors to voice their frustrations in a private channel with immediate interaction, which most people are looking for when complaining.



Instant response options like live chat and call centres provide tenants and visitors with immediate interaction

4. Notice the small stuff and reward positive behaviour

Ask for feedback: Comment boxes, surveys, and even informal solicitations for feedback are great ways to encourage visitors and tenants to share how/where you are doing well. Focusing on these wins and highlighting them on public platforms can also help boost your credibility in delivering excellent service, which can shape potential customers' perceptions for the better.



**Post “feedback of the month”
in high-traffic areas**



**Share good reviews on social
platforms.**



**Recognize employees who have received positive feedback – you can
even take this a step further by incentivizing it and/ or creating a
reward system.**

Conclusion

No organization is perfect, and incidents are statistically guaranteed to happen. However, taking a proactive approach to controlling your reputation, image, and your visitor experience can go a long way in reducing conflict and complaints at your property.

The key to effectively decreasing complaints is having open communication between all stakeholders to identify where problems are coming from, how to address them, and how to learn from them.