

## **Rude Retail Service**

By Jill Evans Kryston, Etiquette Consultant

**Q: My pet peeve is with rude retail sales personnel. More often than not, I find I'm ignored while shopping as though I don't exist. To add insult to injury, many sales clerks chatter amongst themselves and act as if I'm bothering them whenever I ask a question or go to check out. It makes me want to walk right out the door. What's a customer supposed to do about rude service?**

A: You have acknowledged a growing problem in American business practices over the last ten or so years. The old adage that the customer is always right seems to have gone by the wayside.

Don't bite the hand that feeds you! Unfortunately, employers don't seem to understand that bad customer service can translate to lower sales and lost business. Front-line employees who do not demonstrate courtesy and professionalism can easily sabotage the effort to produce and market valuable products and services for their company. Employees cannot afford to be rude if they want their companies to succeed and keep their jobs.

Before you attempt to address a rude situation, it is imperative to take personal inventory of your own behavior: has your body language sent a wrong message, was your tone of voice unpleasant, and have you remembered to use "please," "thank you," and "excuse me?" If you have made an error, you should apologize immediately.

If all is well on your end, then it is time to look your sales representative in the eye, smile, and be as kind as possible when you deal with them. After all, you don't want to ruin your day or that of everybody else's by being less than kind. If your politeness doesn't seem to work, then you can say, "I'm sorry you're having a bad day, but I could really use your help right now."

Try to give the sales representative the benefit of the doubt. A bad mood is usually not personal. Perhaps the person has just been reprimanded by a superior or has dealt with a rude customer before you. If you decide to address the person who gave you the rude service, you may want to wait a few minutes until you've calmed down. Keep in mind that rudeness begets rudeness and will exacerbate an already tense situation. Proceed by telling them honestly how you feel in the most controlled and polite tone of voice.

If you want to take your complaint to the next level, you can write a cordial letter to the management. Include the date, time of day, and the name of the person who helped you. You will be taken more seriously when you are specific about the circumstances rather than generalize about someone's bad attitude which is then open to interpretation. It is best to have realistic expectations for the outcome. At the very least, you will get the satisfaction of having vented your frustrations and perhaps help to improve the environment for future patrons.

*Do you have an etiquette question you want Jill to answer in her monthly column? Email your question(s) to: [information@DefiningManners.com](mailto:information@DefiningManners.com) or mail to: P.O. Box 1703, Shavertown, PA 18708.*

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