

Senior Advice: Supervisors have the power to say yes

by *Doug_Mayberry*

Q: As she raised me during the Great Depression, my mother taught me how to get things done. Today, I feel more challenged than ever to handle simple tasks like returning unwanted merchandise. It can be intimidating when one encounters poorly trained sales representatives, confusing warranties and store policies that declare all sales final. Can you offer any suggestions?

A: One suggestion for successfully returning merchandise is to quickly evaluate the attitude of the store sales clerk or customer service representative. On contact, be friendly. But should you get a negative response, ask to speak to a supervisor. If you are told the supervisor is unavailable, hang up or walk away. Attempting to deal with an unwilling employee is usually a waste of time.

Your next step is to contact the merchant again later. If you are lucky, you might receive a satisfactory response from a positive employee. Remember, though, employees have limited authority. Supervisors usually understand the importance of keeping existing customers as repeat buyers and have the authority to say yes to your request.

The truth is, most retailers are able return unsatisfactory merchandise to their suppliers, but it costs them time to do so. Frequently, a compromise can be reached in which the merchant offers either a store credit or replacement.

Assuming you used your credit card for payment, tell the supervisor you will cancel the charge. Because he knows this will mean a time-consuming investigation, he could consider a counteroffer that might satisfy you.

In today's tough economic sales climate everything is negotiable. This week, after a tune-up, my automotive dealer told me I needed two new tires. I hesitated because I felt his price was high. Understanding my attitude, he offered to match the tire price of the local discount tire dealer without my asking. I saved nearly \$125.

Buyers have more power now. Retailers need their business. Always ask for their best price!

Q: Our mother is in her 70s and still driving. Because of two recent incidents, one on the street and the other in a parking lot, we believe it is time for her to give up the keys. She says, " No way!" She won't even discuss the issue. We fear that someday soon we will get a traumatic phone call from the police. What can we do?

A: Unfortunately, giving up the car keys represents the end of freedom to most of us.

Sometimes, this dilemma is solved by the natural turn of events. Many elderly drivers are forced to give up the keys because they can no longer afford the cost of a driver's license, registration or maintenance. Sometimes they fail to pass a driving test.

Other times, concerned relatives disable the elderly driver's auto, or get rid of the car by selling it or giving it away. Some studies indicate that authority figures such as doctors, ministers, policemen and males in general have more influence over elderly drivers than do family members.

Other options to consider include paying for a driving test, notifying the department of motor vehicles of your mother's incidents, contacting the local police about your safety concerns, and moving to a convenient retirement community with nearby shopping, restaurants, theatres, markets and hairdressers.

Whatever you decide, a course of action needs to be set well before it is too late to take the keys.

Life is a process. Ongoing positive communication leads to success!

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