

M [REDACTED] S [REDACTED]

Marketing 405

Tuesday/Thursday 2:30-3:45

Company Complaint Letter Response Analysis

I. Introduction

A. On January 7 my friends and I dined at Tango's Mexican Cantina in Toledo, Ohio. We were dining because one of our co-workers was moving and would no longer be working with us. We decided to make reservations because our party would consist of about ten or fifteen people. We chose Tango's Mexican Cantina basically by the positive word-of-mouth from our friends and families that Tango's offered good food and service within a great atmosphere. Since we had heard such good things about the restaurant, we decided Tango's would be just the place to say good-bye to our co-worker. We had arrived at approximately 7:00 p.m. and did not leave until 9:30 p.m. This is an extremely long period of time for eleven people to eat dinner. It is true that we had a few drinks before dinner however we did not stay after the meal to drink. In addition to the long wait for food, which was about forty-five minutes, the service from our two waitresses was less-than-satisfactory. Our waitresses had forgotten many of our group's drinks and they did not even take food orders from two of our group members! Furthermore we had to ask numerous times for condiments for our meals. I understand that Tango's busiest time is probably on the weekends; however when we were dining it was not too overly busy to receive as poor of service as we did.

B. The resolution that I was seeking from Tango's Mexican Cantina in response to my complaint was quite simple. First, I wanted the firm to acknowledge that they had a service delivery failure. Second, I wanted the firm to explain the causes as to why we waited so long for our food and the causes as to why the waitresses provided less-than-satisfactory service. Third, I wanted the firm to apologize and take responsibility for their service delivery failure. Fourth, I wanted the firm to provide some form of compensation and/or possibly lay out any options that could make amends for the service delivery failure. Last, I wanted the firm to act

quickly to my complaint either through hearing my complaint via the Internet, over the phone, or in person.

C. I expected the firm to acknowledge that we had to wait for our food for an extremely long period of time and that our waitresses had provided dissatisfactory service. I also expected the firm to explain the reasons we waited so long for our food and the reasons our waitresses had forgotten to take two of our group member's orders, often forgot refills on our drinks, and not gotten our condiments the first time we asked. In addition, I expected the firm to apologize for the long wait for our meals and inadequate service provided by our waitresses. I also expected the firm to compensate me somehow, perhaps through a gift certificate for a free meal or by offering a refund for our meals. Finally, I expected the firm to act quickly to my complaint by sending me an email or by calling me on the phone.

II. Firm Response

A. The firm first responded to my complaint by sending me an email four days after I had sent them my complaint letter. The email was written by the General Manager at Tango's Mexican Cantina. In this email the General Manager apologized for the service delivery failure and claimed that she will do whatever it takes to identify the waitresses that provided less-than-satisfactory service. The General Manager concluded by writing that she would like to continue a correspondence via the phone to personally apologize and offer appropriate compensation. As a result of the email, I contacted the General Manager via the phone. The General Manager apologized for the long wait for our meals and also for the poor service. I was asked to explain the service encounter again and to identify the appearance of my waitresses. The General Manager told me that she thought she had a general idea about who

the waitresses were and then explained that the reason she thought the waitresses delivered unsatisfactory service was because one of the waitresses was in training. The General Manager ended our conversation by stating that if I were to dine at Tango's Mexican Cantina again, they would compensate me by paying for a free appetizer.

B. As far as the adequacy of the firm's response, I feel as though they responded in a somewhat efficient manner. First, the General Manager did acknowledge and apologize for the service delivery failure. The General Manager also provided a reason as to why one of our waitresses did not deliver satisfactory service. Second, the General Manager did respond quickly to my complaint. However, the firm also responded inadequately to some of my expectations. First, the General Manager did not provide reasons as to why we had to wait such a long period of time for our food. Second, the offer to compensate me for a free appetizer on my next visit is generous but I feel that there should have been a more gracious compensation than that. Lastly, the opinion that I had about the email was that both waitress's behavior would not be tolerated anymore and therefore they would be eliminated. However, when I spoke to the General Manager on the phone it was almost as though she was making an excuse as to why one of the waitress's provided such dissatisfactory service. Even though the waitress may have been in training, we did have two waitresses and both of them delivered inadequate service. All in all, the firm's response was alright but their response could have been better.

C. One reason I believe the firm responded in the manner that they did, in terms of wanting to correspond via the phone, is because the General Manager wanted to get a clear description as to how my service encounter led to my dissatisfaction with Tango's Mexican Cantina. In addition, the General Manager wanted to get my identification of our waitresses in order to

accurately identify them. A second reason I believe the firm responded in the manner that they did, in terms of responding so quickly, is because Tango's Mexican Cantina is a fairly new restaurant and they probably did not want any customers spreading negative word-of-mouth about Tango's delivering poor service and a long wait for meals. A third reason I believe the firm responded in the manner that they did, in terms of not commenting about the long period of time we waited for our food, is because maybe the General Manager did not have an answer as to why we waited so long. Perhaps the General Manager did not question the individuals working that night or did not estimate how many other customers might have had food orders placed at the same time as ours.

D. There are a few things the firm could have done to better delight me. First, the firm could have researched why our food order took so long and then provided potential reasons for this failure. The firm could have researched these reasons by questioning the employees working that night or estimating how many other food orders had been placed at the same time as ours. Second, the firm could have provided a better offer of compensation, perhaps a free meal on the next visit or a refund on our previous meal. I think they should have provided a better offer of compensation because Tango's is about twenty-five minutes from where I live and by the time I drive there I have to wonder if the drive is even worth a free appetizer. Lastly, I understand that the General Manager was attempting to provide an explanation as to one of the waitress's poor service. However, the General Manager should not have made excuses for that employee's dissatisfactory performance. If the firm would have responded with these additional suggestions, I would have been more delighted with their response to my complaint letter.

III. Discussion

A. In my opinion, registering my complaint online had a huge impact on the firm's response. Due to the fact that Tango's Mexican Cantina is a fairly new restaurant, I believe that the General Manager responded so quickly because they did not want other online users viewing my unpleasant service encounter. If I would not have posted my complaint online I do not think that the firm would have responded as quickly to my complaint because I would have been the only individual that knew about the service encounter whereas there are now numerous individuals that can view my complaints via the Internet.

B. In terms of how I feel toward the organization now, I appreciate the response to my complaints. I believe that the firm took some appropriate measures to respond to my complaint and I also believe that there are improvements that could be made to better respond to customer's complaints. Additionally, I feel that the General Manager acted properly and did a satisfactory job of corresponding with me. I am undecided as to whether or not I will dine at Tango's Mexican Cantina in the future. Personally my service encounter was just that terrible that I may never go back to Tango's again even with the offer for a free appetizer.

IV. Final Thoughts

A. I believe the statement "The customer who complains is the firm's friend" is true because a firm should value a customer's complaints, as individuals value their friends, in order to measure their service delivery performance. In addition, once a firm has obtained complaints from their customers they can then implement any improvements that may be needed to create superior service encounters for their customers.

B. I have learned a great deal from this experience. First, I have learned that not all service encounters will provide me with satisfactory service; therefore writing a complaint letter to a firm is a great way of sharing my thoughts about my service encounter and as a result feeling a sense of accomplishment. Second, I have learned that the service and response from a firm is not always equal to my expectations. For example the service I expected from Tango's Mexican Cantina, mostly because of the positive word-of-mouth from my friends and family, did not meet the high expectations I had developed. Last, I have learned that a firm can respond to a complaint with good and bad responses. For example Tango's Mexican Cantina did have some good responses to my complaint such as the quickness of the response along with the acknowledgment and apology for the service delivery failure. However, Tango's did have some bad responses to my complaint such as not really providing any reasons for the dissatisfactory service and providing an insufficient compensation.

C. I will apply the knowledge, not all service encounters provide individuals with satisfactory service and therefore writing a complaint letter to a firm is a great idea, by making it very convenient for individuals to share their complaints and any improvements they may suggest. I will apply the knowledge, the service and response from a firm is not always equal to customer's expectations, by researching expectations that are valued by customers and then implementing them. I will apply the knowledge, a firm can respond to a complaint with good and bad responses, by first researching the characteristics that customers want in a response and then assuring that the responses match all of the characteristics that customers want in a response.

V. Appendix (See Attachments 1 and 2)

Attachment 1 – Complaint Letter

M [REDACTED] S [REDACTED]
9 [REDACTED] Thurstin St. Apt. [REDACTED]
Bowling Green, OH 43402
[REDACTED]@bgnet.bgsu.edu
January 30, 2005

General Manager
Tango's Mexican Cantina
30 Main St.
Toledo, OH 43605

Dear General Manager,

I am writing to express my dissatisfaction at the "service" provided by your restaurant and am hoping that you can bring a pleasing resolution to the problems I have experienced.

At the beginning of January, my friends and I called to reserve a table because one of our co-workers was moving and would no longer be working with us. We decided to make reservations because our party would consist of about ten or fifteen people. We chose Tango's Mexican Cantina basically by the positive word-of-mouth from our friends and families that Tango's offered good food and service within a great atmosphere. Since we had heard such good things about your restaurant, we decided Tango's would be just the place to say good-bye to our co-worker.

On January 7 my friends and I dined at Tango's Mexican Cantina. We had arrived at approximately 7:00 p.m. and did not leave until 9:30 p.m. This is an extremely long period of time for eleven people to eat dinner. It is true that we had a few drinks before dinner however we did not stay after the meal to drink. In addition to the long wait for food, the service from our two waitresses was less-than-satisfactory.

Although there was a long wait for our food, what really upset me was the poor service we received from our waitresses. Our waitresses had forgotten many of our group's drinks and they did not even take food orders from two of our group members! In addition we had to ask numerous times for condiments for our meals. I understand that Tango's busiest time is probably on the weekends however when we were dining it was not too overly busy to receive as poor of service as we did.

I understand that Tango's Mexican Cantina is suppose to have a good reputation for their outstanding food and service and I would like to hear what you have to say in response to this situation.

M [REDACTED] S [REDACTED]

Attachment 2 – Response to Complaint Letter

26 Main Street
Toledo, OH 43605

February 2, 2005

Dear [REDACTED]

My deepest apologizes for your recent visit to Tangos. I take great pride in our food and the service we offer. We thank you for taking the time to write about your visit, your input assists Tangos in improving and remaining competitive. Obviously, your continued patronage is not only valued, but our goal.

Since receiving your letter I have been determined to establish the identity of your server. The behavior and service from the individual in question shall not be tolerated and must be eliminated. I would greatly appreciate continuing our correspondence via the phone to personally apologize and offer appropriate compensation. I look forward to speaking with you at your convenience.

Sincerely

Rena Dean
General Manager
419.697.4678