

# How to De-escalate

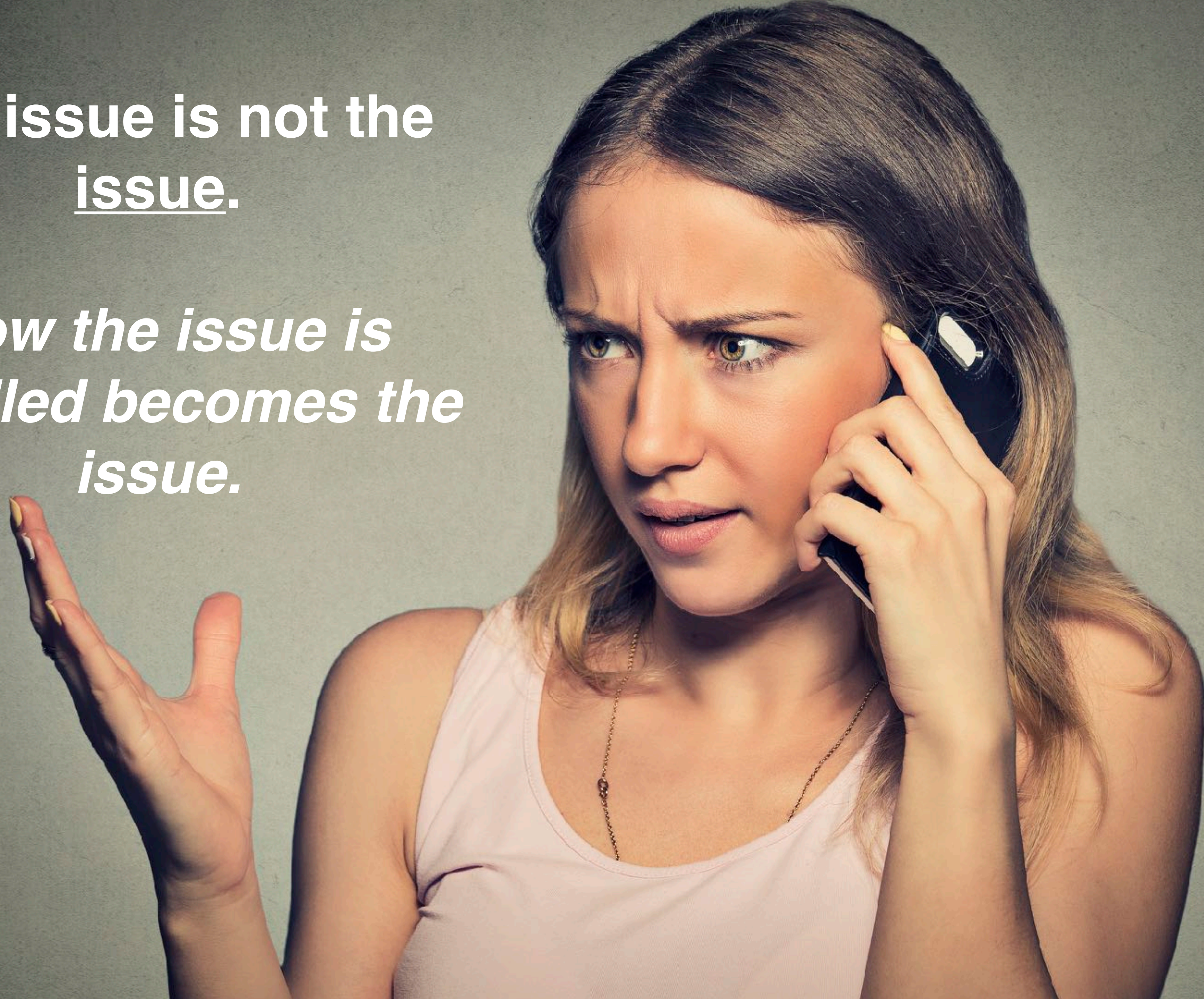
An assertive de-escalation strategy to create calm with difficult customers

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The issue is not the  
issue.

*How the issue is  
handled becomes the  
issue.*



# Kmart taught me how conversations escalate

Initial contact ➡ Employee response ➡ Customer reaction ➡ Employee reaction

# Why Customers React Negatively/Escalate

- Indifference
- Hearing, *“There’s nothing more I can do.”*
- Attitude of unwillingness
- Frustration from past interaction(s)
- Come out of the gate intense
- For some, it’s just who they are



Five Easy Pieces

# What went wrong here?

- Started with a negative.... *“no substitutions”*
- Spoke about what they can't do.... *“Only what's on the menu.”*
- Offered no choices
- Quick to escalate to a manager

#

# What We'll Cover

- De-escalation defined
- Quick look at what not to do (*Five Easy Pieces* said it all!)
- De-escalation Strategy - 3 Simple Steps; Lots of Practical Tactics

# What is De-escalation?

- **Calming** a customer who is agitated or angry
- Assertively **taking charge of a situation** to reduce more intense emotion and escalation
- Dealing with a past problem, **taking action in the present and moving toward a future solution**



# 8 Things Not to Do with Unhappy Customers



# 8 Things You Should Never Do with an Upset Customer

1. Pushing
2. Arguing
3. Reducing choice
4. Sounding too formal
5. Causing a sense of helplessness
6. Belaboring a point
7. Rebutting issues
8. Defending the problem/placing blame

Help  
Choices  
Acknowledgement

# De-Escalation Strategy

1. Acknowledge
2. Reframe
3. Resolve

# Acknowledge

1. Communication Chain
2. Project calm and concern
3. Listen with the intent to understand
4. Limit your responses to simple reassurances: *“umm hmmm”* or *“I see.”*



# The Communication Chain

# Project calm and concern

Dale Carnegie said, *“Make the fault seem easy to correct.”*

# Calming & Concerning Statements

- *“I can see your point on that.”*
- *“I understand and will do my best to take care of this for you.”*
- *“I apologize for the inconvenience.”*
- *“I realize this has been frustrating for you.”*

# Actual Call I Listened In On

*“That would be something you need to speak with the dentist about. I have no way of knowing that information.”*

# Projecting Calm (by being helpful) When You Can't Help

When you are not the person to help:

- **From:** *“That would be something you need to speak with the dentist about. I have no way of knowing that information.”*
- **To:** *“Any specific details on your treatment plan will come directly from your dentist. We make the product, based on the molds presented by your dentist, but we do not have your personal information or medical records. I’m sorry for any confusion about this.”*

Listen with the intent to  
understand

Limit your responses to simple  
reassurances:

*“umm hmmm” or “I see.”*

# **What to say to the customer who asks to speak to your supervisor**

(We're still talking about Acknowledgment)

# Acknowledging when a customer demands to speak to a supervisor

- U
- S
- A

# Acknowledging when customer demands to speak to a supervisor

- Understanding statement
- Situation
- Action

# When They Ask for Your Manager Right Out of the Gate

- *“I’m sorry you feel you need to speak with someone else, but that’s the reason I’m here. I have been given full authority to help resolve your concerns. May I have the opportunity to resolve this first?”*
- *“Please give me an opportunity to try and resolve this for you. That’s why I’m here.”*

Don't mention the words  
*supervisor* or *manager*.

*This plants the seed that escalation is possible.*

###

**Effectively Acknowledging  
Customers Helps You Feel and Act  
Assertive**

**Say what you mean**  
**Mean what you say**  
**Don't be mean when you say it**

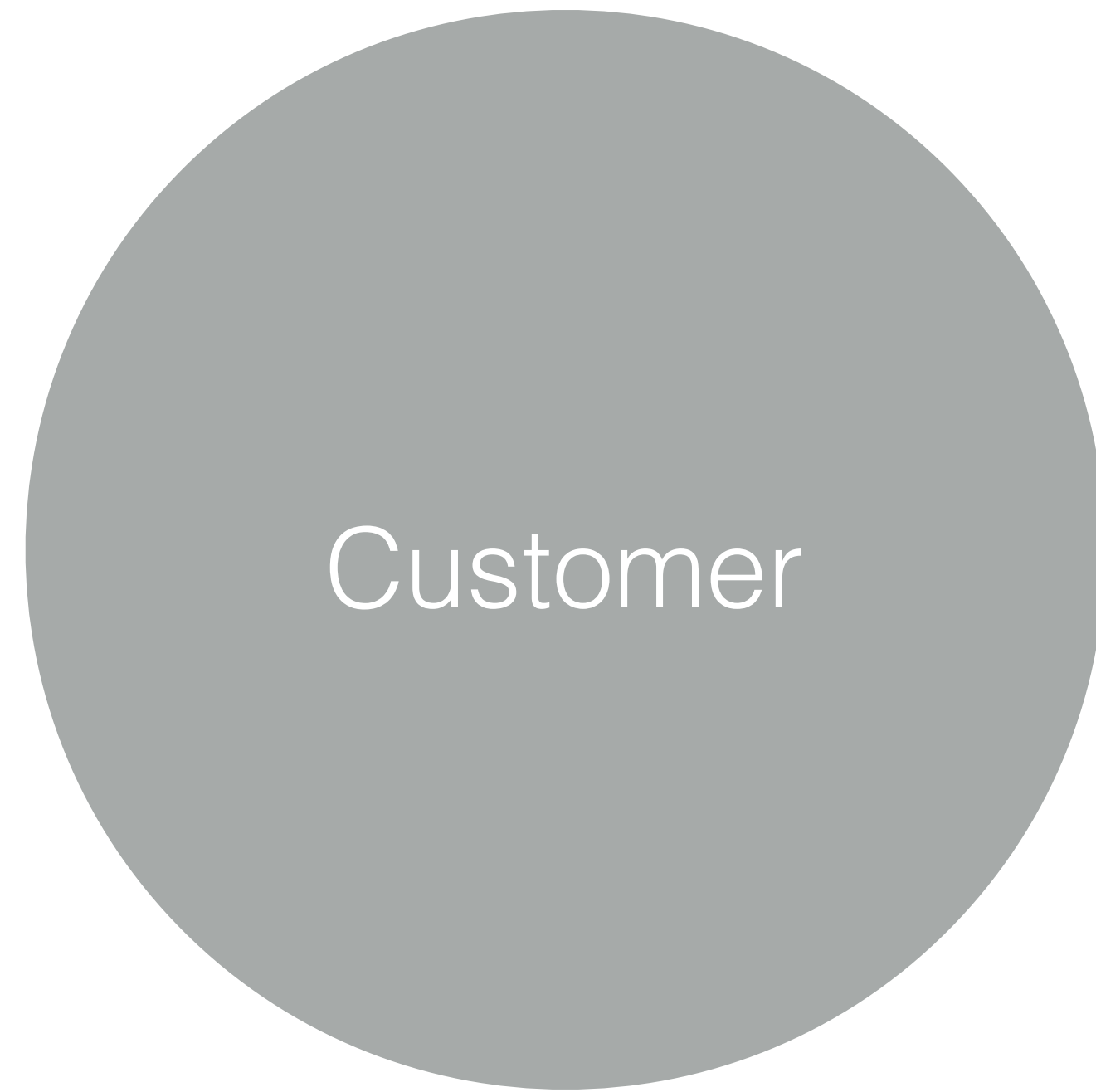
The (my) definition of Assertiveness

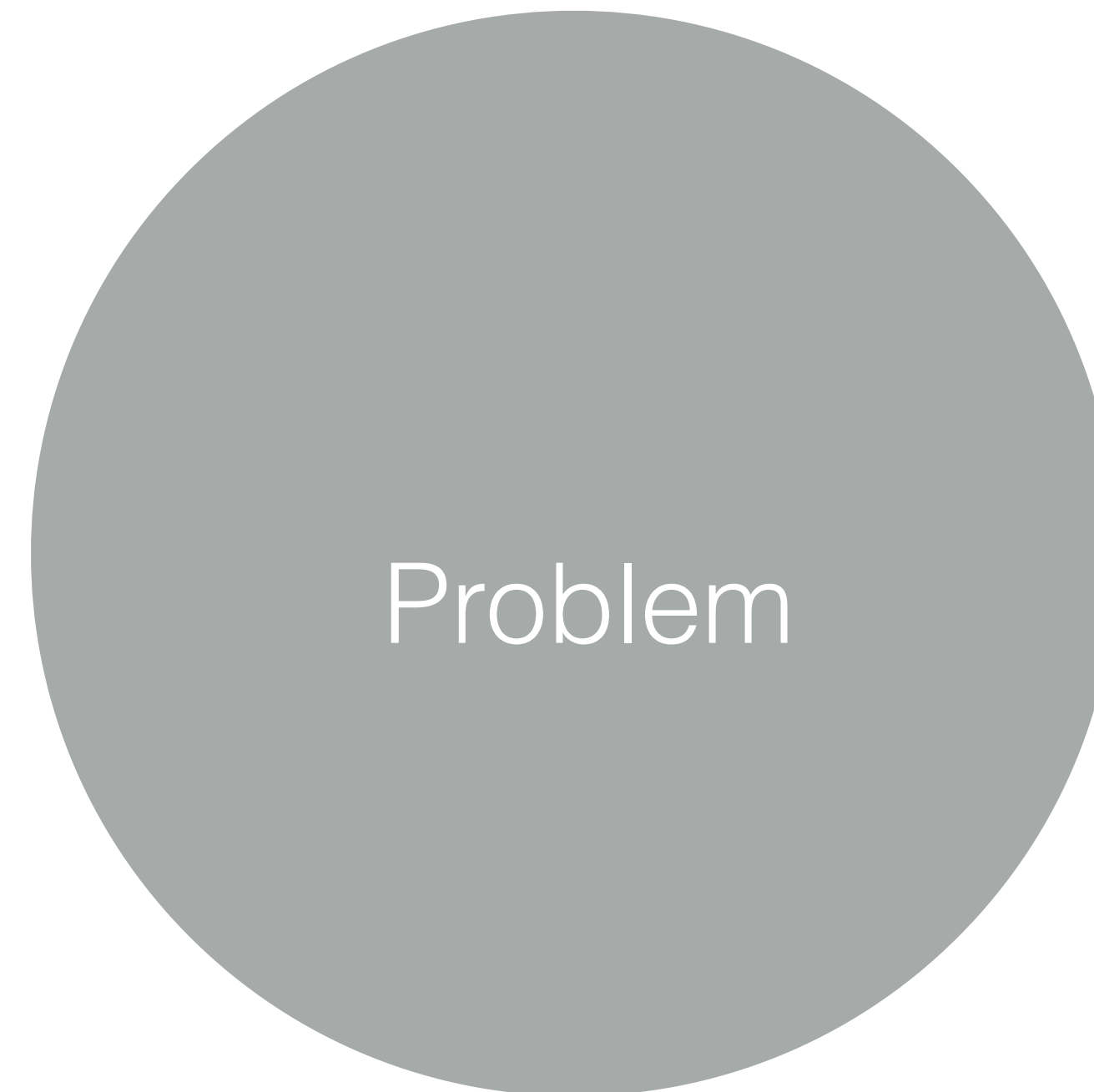
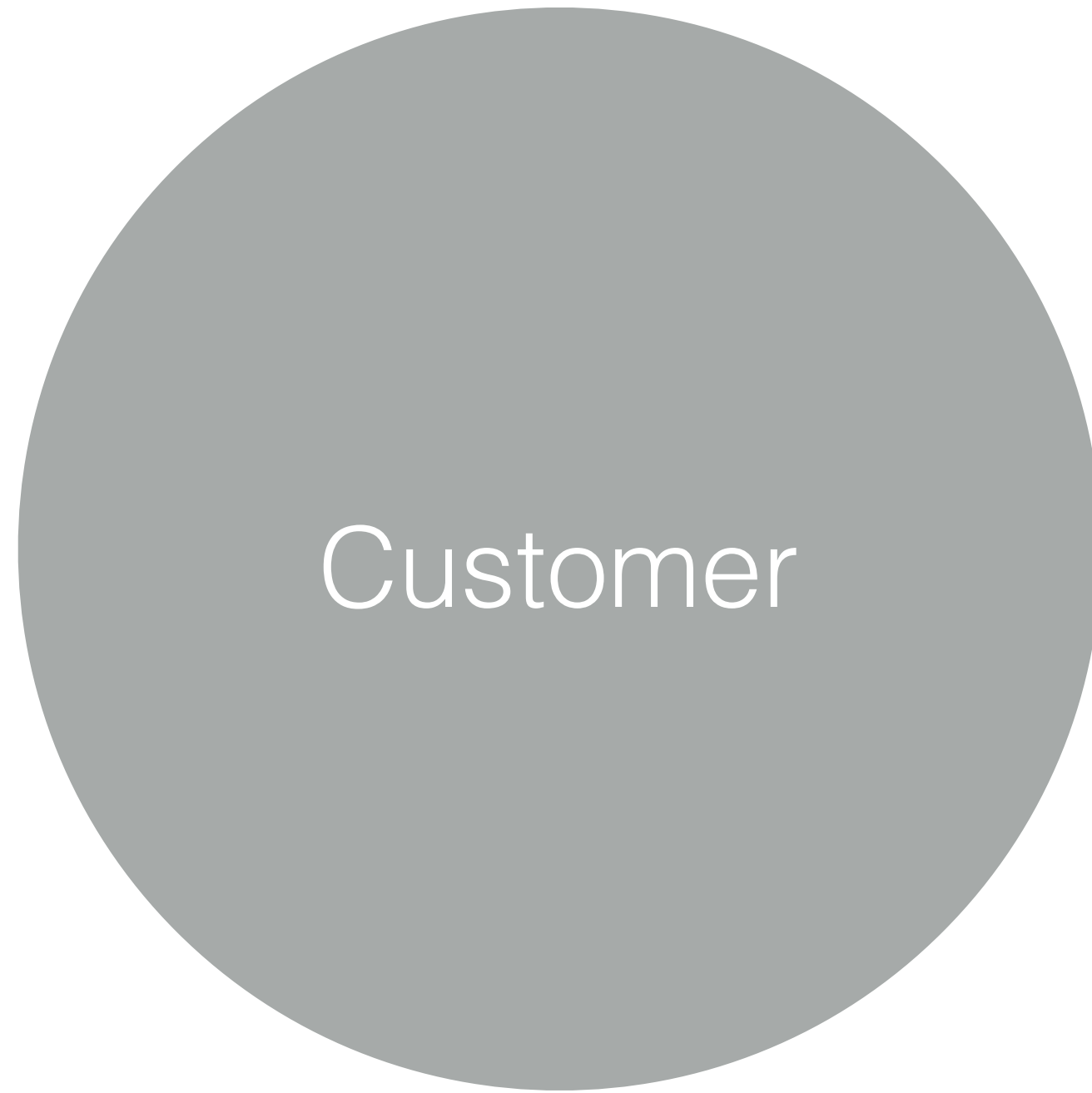
# Reframe

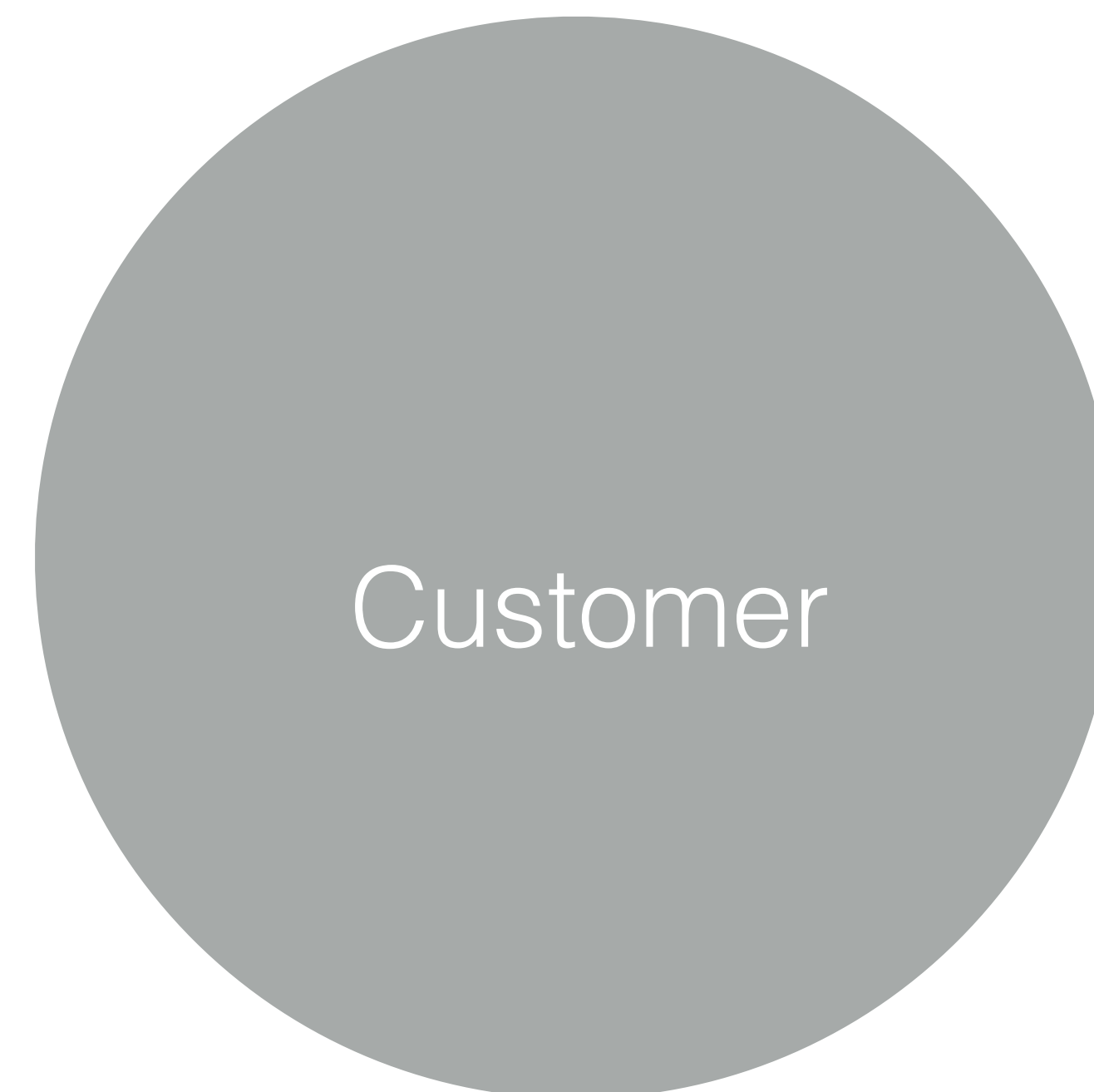
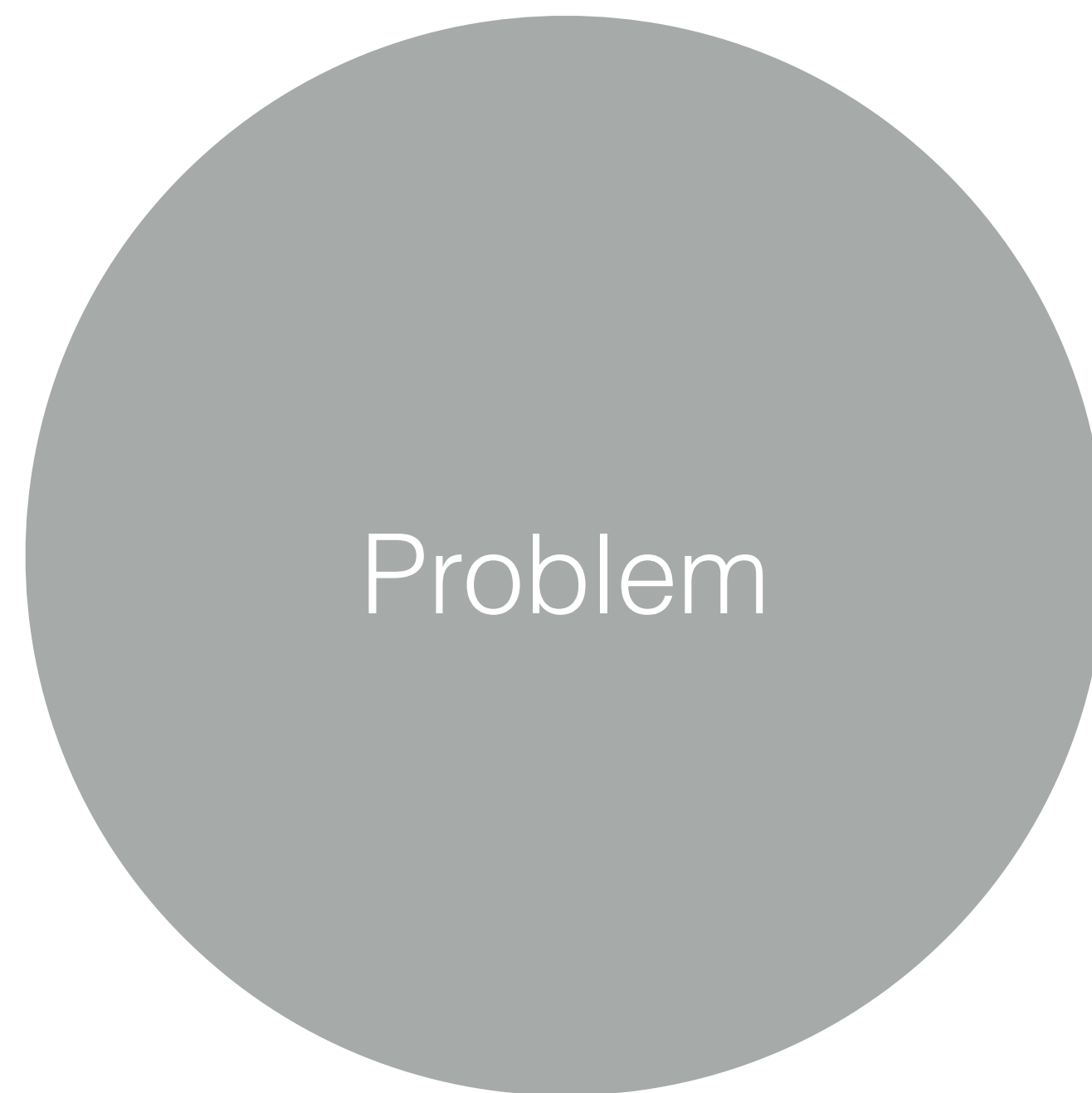
You have to move your customer out of the emotional right brain

# Changing the Frame

See the angry caller as your partner







# Partnership Language

- *“I realize this is frustrating for you.”*
- *“I want to get to the bottom of this just as much as you do.”*
- *“Let’s see what we can do to fix this.”*
- *“This is no more acceptable to us than it is to you.”*

# Amazon Chat Representative reframed perfectly

01:55 PM PST Sanket(Amazon): Hello Myra , my name is Sanket. I'm here to help you today.

"Thank you for being a Prime member."

I am really sorry that you are facing this issue , Could you please confirm the order ID you're referring to?

01:56 PM PST Myra Golden: ORDER # 111-0884587-6345001

01:56 PM PST Sanket: Thank you for providing the order ID. Let me check with this order. I request you to please stay connected for 2 minutes.

01:59 PM PST Sanket: Thank you for waiting Myra ,as you have received the two orders with the expiration date problem ,I will right away escalate the issue with our concerned team and ask them to check the inventory for the item,Please do not worry,I will issue the full refund for the item,You don't need to return the item. You're welcome to keep, donate or dispose it as per your convenience.is it fine with you?

02:00 PM PST Myra Golden: This makes me feel much better Sanket. Thank you very much.

02:00 PM PST Sanket: You're most welcome Myra ,Please confirm,Would you prefer refund on Original payment method or Amazon gift card balance?

02:01 PM PST Myra Golden: Amazon gift card balance would be great, thank you.

02:01 PM PST Sanket: Thank you for waiting Myra ,I have issued the refund,it will update on your account within 1 hour,Is there anything else I can assist you with today?

02:02 PM PST Myra Golden: That's it. Thank you!

Thank you.

[Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

# 3 Steps Politicians Use

1. Here's what we know
2. Here's what we've done
3. Here's what's next

Our rental car was hit  
while in possession of  
hotel valet

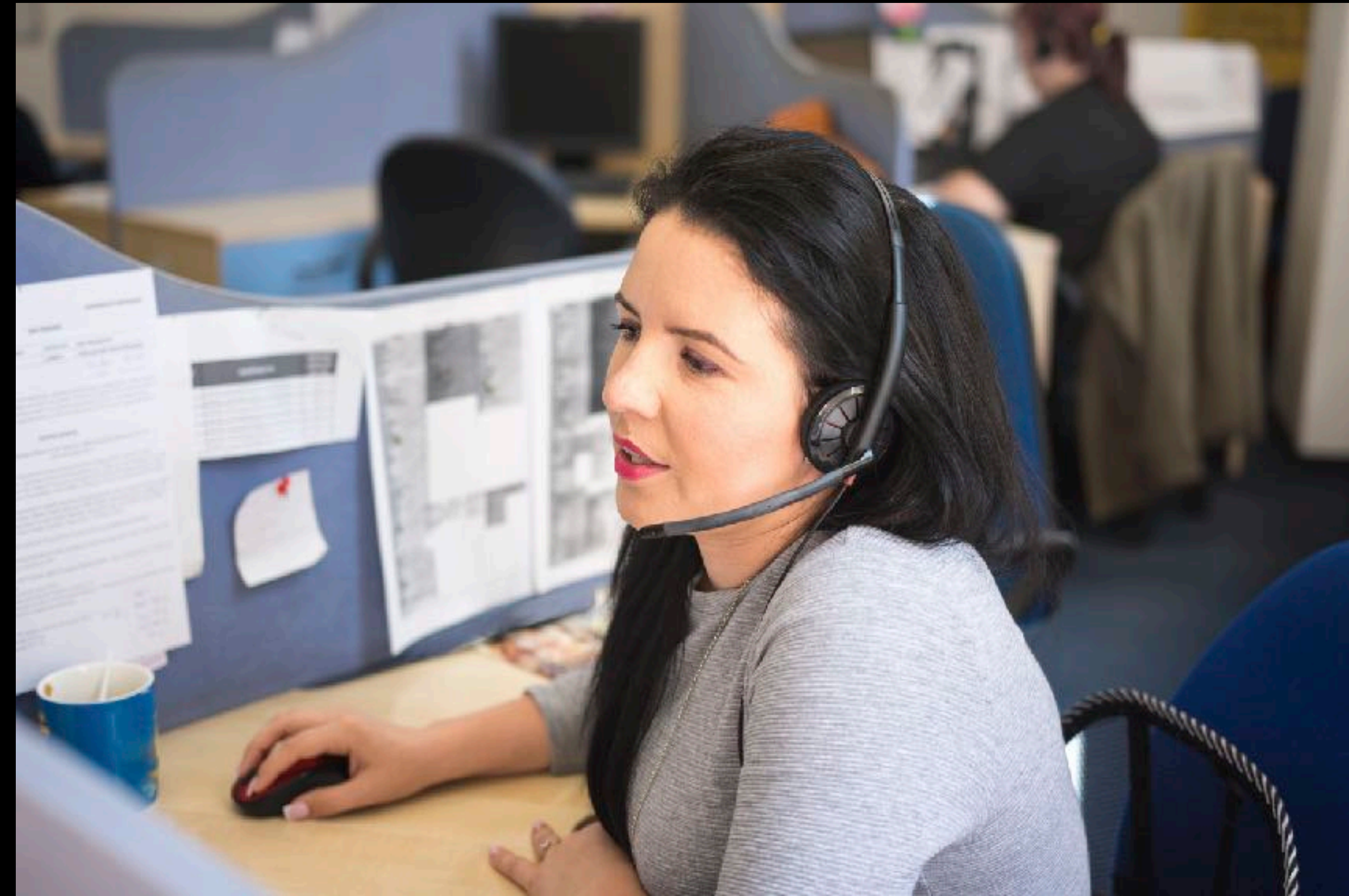
Valet de-escalated perfectly using these 3 steps

# 3 Steps in Action

- 1. Here's what we know:** *The accident happened in our parking garage at 7:42pm. The driver was in a white Honda Civic, license #. He sped off and left the scene.*
- 2. Here's what we've done:** *We've filed a claim with our loss-prevention team. We have two eye witnesses. We have filed a police report with the Austin Police Department.*
- 3. Here's what's next:** *You need to also file a police report. You need to notify both your insurance company and your rental car company. Your insurance company will go after the driver.*

# Reframing Statements

- *“We have a situation that has come about from a past issue. I want to now focus on what we can do to fix this for you.”*
- *“We want to get to the bottom of this as much as you do.”*
- *“I certainly understand your concern. Let’s take a look and see what’s going on.”*
- *“I will do my best to take care of this for you.”*



# How to Handle Specific Situations

# Yelling or Cursing Customer

- *“I’m trying to help you, but if you continue to yell and swear, I am going to ask that you call back another time. It’s up to you...which would you prefer?”*
- *“I’m sorry. It isn’t possible to help while listening to that language. If it stops, I can help.”*
- *“If a few minutes helps you calm down before we continue, that would be fine. You can certainly call me back.”*
- *“I want to help you, yet the language is getting in the way.”*

# When They Want On-the-Spot Answers

- Reiterate what you know, what you can do, and what they can expect.
- Explain, *“I don’t want to further disappoint you. I want to be honest about what we can do for you.”*
- Be honest with the customer.
- Do not let the customer make you give an immediate response.
- Do not make any promises you can’t keep.
- Sample responses:
  - *“Your request goes beyond my authority. I will however, contact the right people and have someone who can help call you back.”*
  - *“I know you would like an immediate response, and I wish that were possible. This request requires input from other people. I assure you I will locate the appropriate person who will get back in touch with you.”*

# 5 Human Relations Skills That Encourage Calm and Move Help You Quickly Reframe

1. Acknowledgement *(Just a reminder, we've discussed)*

2. Empathy

3. Urgency

4. Apology

5. Explanation

# Reframing: Conversation Control

1. Topic Grab
2. Ask 3 closed-ended questions, back-to-back



Topic Grab

Ask 3 Closed-ended Questions  
Back to Back

Resolve

Resolving the Problem is Either a  
**Resolution** or an **Explanation**  
and a **Helpful Attitude**

# End on a Positive Note

- *“I’m so glad that was easy for us to fix.”*
- *“It was my pleasure to take care of this for you today.”*
- *“Well, if there’s nothing else, all that’s left for me is to wish you a great afternoon. Thanks for letting us take care of this for you Kaley.”*

# De-Escalation Summary

1. Acknowledge
2. Reframe
3. Resolve

Start  
Stop  
Continue