VE VIRTUAL ELVES

8 Ways to Practice Empathy In client Service

1. Understanding the Difference Between Empathy and Sympathy

Often, there's confusion between **empathy and sympathy** – this applies to support agents and normal people as well. It's because the difference between empathy and sympathy is very subtle but important!

What Is Sympathy?

Sympathy is when you understand a person's situation and feel sorry for them. You maintain a certain level of distance while doing so and you don't put yourself in their shoes to understand what they are going through.
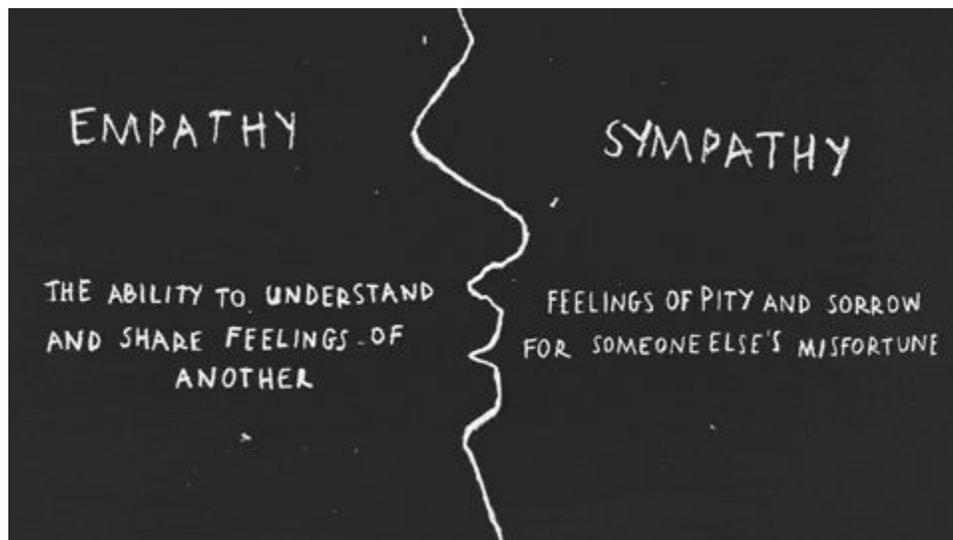
What Is Empathy?

Empathy is when you put yourself in the shoes of another person and understand what they are going through from their point of view. Empathy requires understanding, and the ability to share the feeling of another.

When it comes to client service, it's empathy that you should exhibit. Not sympathy. When empathized, your clients feel like they are understood, and listened to and you're doing everything you can to help them out.

P.S. We'll be looking at a couple of empathetic statements you or your support team should use in the later sections of the article.

2. Get The Basics Right

Mentioned below are the general characteristics a support agent should have to show empathy in client service.

- The agent should make sure that the tone they use aligns with the tone of the client. If the tone of the client is formal, the agent should be formal as well.
- Late replies are common in client service. It could be due to handling other critical cases or finding the solution for the problem could have consumed time. At times like this, it's important that you address the client with an apology.

- When a client reaches out to an agent seeking for a solution, the agent should make sure they get to the bottom of it and resolve the issue. They should not divert the client to other agents saying it's not related to them. If that is the case, they should make sure the right person deals with the problem and only then leave.
- When dealing with difficult clients, always make sure you are respectful and address them by their names.
- clients should always be encouraged to contact the support team in case they face any issues. As a business, you should always be within the reach of your clients – pre and post-purchase.

If you're not okay with any of the above-mentioned, then there's a serious empathy problem you need to address. Only when the basics are right, you can start practicing being more empathetic. And the above traits are equally important as all the other steps in this article.

3. Practice Active Listening

This is where you'll make your clients feel that they are being listened to!

Active listening is the practice of allowing your clients to talk and you, on the other hand, will listen to everything they've got to say – without interrupting.

Most of the time, half the issue gets solved when you allow your clients to speak *(vent in some cases)*.

Once when your clients have finished speaking, repeat their issue just to show that you've listened to and understood their issue. In case you have any queries or need information that could help you serve better, ask and clarify with them. It's always better to ask rather than to assume.

Also, gently acknowledge them as they speak. And make sure your tone aligns with the client.

4. Understand Who Your Clients Are

Sometimes, you might feel a client is overreacting to an issue that is not so serious. But it's not what it looks like!

Say, for instance, you run an eCommerce business and one of your clients places an order by mistake and asks for a cancellation plus refund. You cancel the order and say that the refund might take between 4-7 business days.

Now, a client who knows about online shopping understands that this is normal. But a client who isn't familiar might not be okay with this. This is exactly why you need to know who your clients are and offer support based on it.

Getting to know where your client is from, their educational background, age, organization, how they have been using your products or services, previous experiences with your business can help you bridge the gap, show empathy and offer personalized client service.

5. Never Let Biases Do Your Work

We thought this would be the right place to discuss this. In the previous point, we talked about understanding and knowing who your clients are.

At times, after you get to know the background of your client, you make judgments based on their age, color, gender, language, accent, etc. This makes you treat certain clients differently than others.

Ageism is one of the most commonly faced issues by clients today. When an aged client calls or reaches out for support, the service agent automatically assumes that the client is not tech-savvy and gets frustrated dealing with them. They think it might be hard to deal with such types of clients.

Having biases like this will affect the overall quality of client service and brand reputation. You must address all your biases and make it a point never to judge a client based on them.

6. Include Your Clients' Thoughts

Bottlenecks are common in client service. You might reach an impasse where any solution offered by you will not satisfy the client.

Empathy is a two-way channel and this is where you can actually experience it. When you think the client is unreasonable, you might want to take a step back and ask your client what could possibly be done.

Two things happen here,

- Your client realizes that you're doing everything you can to find a solution.
- Your client might come up with an out-of-the-box solution that might work.

Asking your clients for a solution will put them in your shoes. And when your client practices empathy, they'll realize that you are working for them and

not against them. Including your clients' thoughts is an ideal way to show empathy and receive empathy as well.

7. Agree With clients When They Are Right

Sometimes, your clients might be right and your business could be at fault. During such scenarios, don't be afraid to take the side of your clients.

The goal is to work for your clients and resolve any issues they face. Not to defend your company by finding faults with clients when they need you the most.

When you start accepting the facts and act on them, your clients will appreciate your transparency and willingness to fix things. This improves their overall perception of your brand and they become more loyal to you.

8. Gather client Feedback at the End of an Interaction

client feedback is crucial for growth both individually and as a business. Make sure that you ask for your client feedback at the end of every interaction.

Shooting questions like *"What do you think I could have done to make our conversation better?"* and *"On a scale of 1-10, how much would you rate my support?"* will help you understand how your support has been.

If you come across multiple negative feedback of the same kind, then it's something you need to work on. Genuinely asking your clients for feedback will make them feel valued.

Client feedback is the key to identifying existing gaps, improving products & services and reducing the churn rate. So, make sure you listen to whatever your clients have to say – it's going to be insightful and super helpful.

Mentioned above are the 8 ways that can help you practice and show empathy in client service.

Empathy Statements You Should Use While Serving Clients or your external clients

With these statements, you can pretty much start a conversation and close it as well.

1. XXXX, I am so sorry to hear that you are going through this.

2. I truly understand how difficult and challenging that can be for you.

3. I am so sorry to hear what has happened. This makes me really sad.

4. I can completely understand what you are going through as I've been in a similar situation myself. Here's what I will be doing to help you out.

4. XXXX, Thanks so much for bringing this issue to our attention.

5. I couldn't agree more with you, XXXX. You are totally right.

6. Thanks so much for your honest feedback. We truly appreciate it.

7. XXXX, your feedback means a lot to us. It sure will help us grow. Thanks so much.

8. Thanks so much for your patience. Here's how I can …….

9. XXXX, I assure you that I'll do everything possible from my side to fix this.

10. I can assure you that the issue you are facing will be completely solved in a maximum of x business days.

11. Is there anything you'd like to know or I can help you with?

12. What do you think I could have done to make our conversation better?

13. On a scale of 1-10, how much would you rate my support?

14. Your satisfaction means a lot to us. Let us know if we were able to help you out today!

15. Come up with statements of your own. Make sure they reflect empathy and serve the purpose well.

Reference : Simplify360.com