

module one: customer service

Communication

article:

Reframing Issues

Restructure thinking to put your organization in a favorable position.

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Reframing issues, a specialized topic in communication, assists in restructuring thinking and addressing problems. Because mindsets are powerful and influence future choices and behaviors, successful reframing puts your organization in a favorable position through accurate communication. When should you consider reframing your issues? When the public perception of a situation is skewed or when false information is floating in your marketplace, consider reframing.

What does reframing look like?

When I worked for two doctors who were married, we photographed them separately any time we planned a special event so we could get more photos done with our guests in a shorter period of time. She would be seen with some referral sources while he would be seen with others. Those professional photos would then be sent to the local papers of the referring source as a press release. As a result of the published photos, the rumors started that they were headed for a divorce. How did we reframe it? We simply took the photos with three people in the picture so they no longer looked separated.

Another even wider known example is with Domino's Pizza. For years, they've had a reputation of producing subpar pizza. Taking the issue head on, they put it in their advertising, "We want to make our pizza taste better." They called it as people were seeing it, which was a very bold move. It was also a great way to reframe how consumers felt about their product. Most of the time, thinking in advance about framing the issue pays off. If there's a false rumor surrounding your organization or maybe a truth to the gossip, you need to take a stand for your position.

What are the steps to reframe an issue and avoid pitfalls? Begin by asking what is the issue, who's involved, what lead to the problem, and what's the best solution? Does the public need to know about this? What will be different in the public opinion after we reframe?



You may be wondering how staff play a role in this topic. It may seem like this is a management and business owner issue. However, staff play a large role in keeping the issues rolling. Sharing inside gossip at backyard barbecues with friends and family exacerbates the rumor mill. Like the old game of telephone, the retelling of data is rarely exactly the same. By the time it has passed between several people, the message becomes unrecognizable from the original.

Though this is certainly easier said than done, remember what goes on at work should stay at work. What is the image you send to the community? If a friend asks, "How are things going at work?" and you respond, "Man, I'm telling you, things are so messed up over there. I don't know how much longer we can even keep the doors open", you just pushed yourself one more millimeter out of a job. Instead, reframe the issue in positive language. Say, "Well, things have been stressful lately, but I really believe in the work we're doing. I'm hoping the new management will make things easier."

When you reframe your image, remember to choose words to your advantage. As a team, discuss whether you need to reframe current issues in the marketplace. If you do, then develop a campaign to reframe and improve your image.