# RI TAX COLLECTOR'S ASSOCIATION
## Regular Meeting
## January 24, 2017

A regular meeting of the Rhode Island Tax Collector's Association (RITCA) was held at Twelve Acres, 445 Douglas Pike, Smithfield, RI.

**Present:**  Rosemarie Silva (West Warwick) – President
Mary Lynn Caswell (Hopkinton) – Vice President
Caitlyn Choiniere (Lincoln) – Secretary
Marcy Alves (Richmond) – Treasurer
Charlene Randall (West Greenwich) – Meeting Coord. & Executive Board
Donna Sullivan (Cumberland) – Executive Board & DMV Committee Chair
Jane Steere (Glocester) – Membership Chair

**Absent:**  Rita Deane (Richmond) – Education Committee Chair
Kimberly Barber (Harmony Fire) – Executive Board

## I.   Program Presentation:

TOPIC: The Angry Taxpayer

SPEAKER: Dr. Amiee Shelton, Professor of Communications, Roger Williams
University (See attached Lesson Plan)

## II.   Call to Order:

The regular meeting for RITCA was called to order by President Rosemarie Silva at 10:51 am.

## III.   Reports from Committees:

**SECRETARY:**
The membership voted to approve the minutes from the February 11, 2016 and September 13, 2016 meetings. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Jane Steere and seconded by Charlene Randall. The motion carried unanimously.

**TREASURER:**
Treasurer Marcy Alves informed the membership that the current balance of the checking account was $13,739.70. A motion to accept the Treasurer's report was made by Caitlyn Choiniere and seconded by Mary Lynn Caswell. The motion carried unanimously.

**LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE**: No Report Available

**MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE:**
Membership Committee Chair, Jane Steere, informed the membership that we have 74 total members. This is broken up into 47 Towns, 14 Fire Districts, and 13 Associate members. A

motion to approve the Membership Committee report was made by Mary Lynn Caswell and seconded by Charlene Randall. The motion carried unanimously.

**EDUCATION COMMITTEE**:
Mary Lynn Caswell read a letter written by Rite Deane, Education Committee Chair, who was unable to attend the meeting. Please see attached letter. A motion to approve the Education Committee report was made by JoAnne Santos and seconded by Donna Sullivan. The motion carried unanimously.

**DMV COMMITTEE**:
The DMV Committee is a newly created committee of 10 RITCA members. The members will be meeting with the DMV to discuss the new RIMS system that is being implemented at the DMV. The DMV will also be meeting with the RI Tax Assessor's Association and RITCA on March 16, 2017, to discuss this new system. The committee will keep everyone informed as we receive new information. If you have any questions or concerns please contact Donna Sullivan at dsullivan@cumberlandri.org. A motion to approve the DMV Committee report was made by Caitlyn Choiniere and seconded by Jane Steere. The motion carried unanimously.
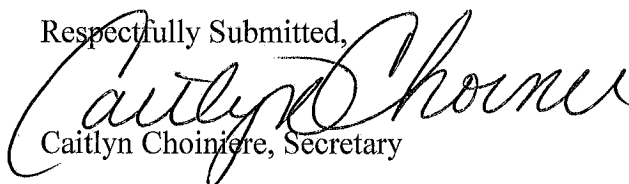
IV.    **New Business:**

- Rosemarie Silva informed the membership that the 2017 Northeast Region Tax Collector's and Treasurer's Association Conference will be held in RI this year. The 29th Annual Conference will run from Sunday through Wednesday, August 27th to 30th, 2017. If you are interested or want more information please see their website at www.nrtcta.com.

- The Education Committee is in the process of revising the By-Laws which focus on the RI Tax Collector's Certification Process. They are going to have a copy of the revision set out to the membership ASAP so we can vote on them at the May meeting.

- The next meeting is scheduled for May 23rd; an email will go out with more information as the date gets closer.

V.    **Adjournment:**

Caitlyn Choiniere made a motion to adjourn. Jane Steer seconded it. The motion carried unanimously. The January 24, 2017 regular meeting of the RITCA was adjourned at 11:02 am.

Respectfully Submitted,

Caitlyn Choiniere, Secretary

## The Angry Taxpayers Lesson Plan
### RI Tax Collectors Association
### Jan. 24, 2017

By 11 am, you should have a better understanding on the following strategies that you can use to deal with the angry people you meet. Specifically, you should be able to

- apply words and phrases in tense situations to diffuse the situation,
- recognize the curve of anger before it hits the high note,
- come away feeling more confident in your ability to handle the stress and anger that comes your way in your line of work.

**This morning's topics:**

1.  Know your own darkness.

2.  Seek to understand the other person's darkness.

3.  Understand why they are angry

4.  Understand what doesn't work with angry people.

5.  Beating the fear of anger.

6.  Preparing yourself in advance.

7.  Acknowledge their anger

8.  Common Personality Types

9.  Self-Control Strategies

10. Multimodal Strategies: social media, face-to-face, in person

# WHAT SETS YOU OFF?

*Different things trigger a person's anger. Some common triggers are listed below. Check the ones that trigger your anger. Use the blank spaces to fill in your own triggers.*

**I feel angry when I:**
- ☑ Think I am treated unfairly
- ☐ Am embarrassed
- ☐ Feel ignored
- ☐ Don't get credit for something I've done
- ☐ Have to follow orders
- ☐ Fail at something or don't do something well
- ☐ Feel helpless or out of control
- ☐ Get jealous
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

**I feel angry when people:**
- ☑ insult me
- ☑ criticize me or my work
- ☐ don't listen to me disagree with me
- ☐ don't work as hard as I do
- ☑ lie to me
- ☐ tell me what to do
- ☑ are rude or inconsiderate
- ☐ are late
- ☐ don't act or feel the way I think they should
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

**I feel angry when faced with these events or situations:**
- ☐ Traffic jams and encounters with other drivers
- ☐ Conflict at work
- ☑ Family arguments
- ☐ Child misbehavior or temper tantrums
- ☐ Waiting in line at the bank, store, etc.
- ☐ Financial problems
- ☐ Yelling or loud noises
- ☐ Mistakes or errors
- ☑ Wasted time  WORK ISSUE
- ☐ Losing a game or a contest
- ☑ Name-calling or teasing
- ☑ Child abuse
- ☑ Prejudice toward anyone
- ☑ Mistreatment of animals
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

*Once you're aware of things that set you off, you can work to change the way you respond to them.*

4

# The Anger Curve
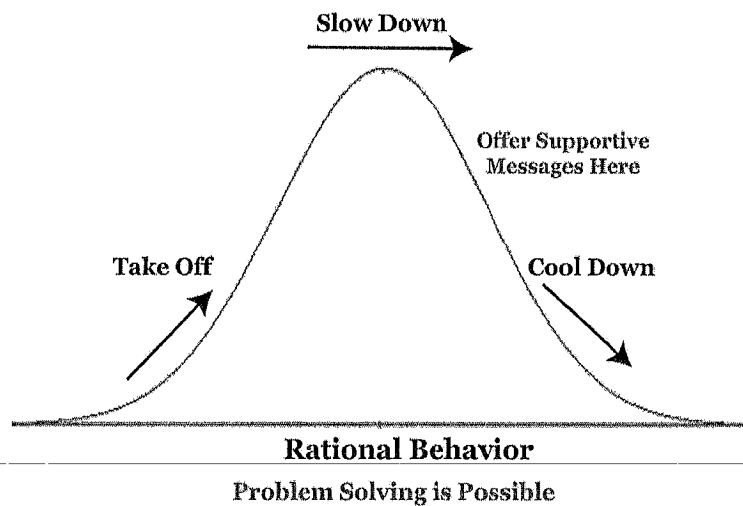


The baseline of the energy curve is normal rational behavior. At this point you can still have a reasonable discussion. Once an angry reaction has kicked in, the rational mind is no longer in control. You cannot reason with somebody who is getting angry.

- Anger builds momentum. This is known as the take-off point. How intense the anger gets will depend on the individual
- Some people restrict themselves to angry facial expressions while others will raise their voices and even progress to physical violence.
- *This is definitely not the time to try to reason with somebody.*

Eventually the anger stops gaining momentum and turns a corner. This is the cooling down stage where the person generally runs out of energy and, unless provoked, will begin to calm down. This is not the time to start a conversation or try to reason with them.

- You can offer supportive behavior but do not try to resolve the issue that triggered the anger.
- Only when the person is back to a rational state of mind should you start talking about the problem.

# CONFLICT RESOLUTION CHECKLISTS

## PROBLEM DEFINITIONS:

- [ ] MUTUAL OWNERSHIP: "WE HAVE A PROBLEM"
- [ ] BRIEF DESCRIPTION: "HERE IS AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT I MEAN"
- [ ] PRESENT & FUTURE ORIENTED: "PERHAPS THE NEXT TIME WE..."
- [ ] ISSUE, NOT PERSONAL: "THE ISSUE SEEMS TO BE..."
- [ ] ISSUE AGREED UPON: "IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU AND I AGREE ON THE PROBLEM"

## PROBLEM RESOLUTION:

- [ ] LISTEN (OBSERVE, ACKNOWLEDGE, DON'T INTERRUPT)
- [ ] CHECK OUT: "LET ME SEE IF I UNDERSTAND..."
- [ ] VALIDATE: "I CAN SEE HOW YOU MIGHT FEEL THAT WAY."
- [ ] BRAINSTORM: "LET'S THINK OF ALL THE POSSIBLE OPTIONS."
- [ ] POSITIVE PRESENTATION: "I WOULD APPRECIATE IT IF..."
- [ ] COMPROMISE (ADOPT A TWO-WINNER APPROACH)
- [ ] AGREE: "SOUNDS LIKE WE HAVE AGREED TO TRY..."
- [ ] REPEAT: "LET ME MAKE SURE I UNDERSTAND WHAT WE HAVE AGREED..."
- [ ] CONGRATULATE: "WE DID A GOOD JOB. LET'S TAKE A BREAK."

## EXAMPLE:

PROBLEM
DEFINITION_____

PROBLEM
RESOLUTION_____

# Personality Types & Coping Mechanisms

When it comes to calming angry customers, a skillful use of language by your agents could be very important. Here, we look into the words and phrases most likely to defuse the situation and bring about a mutually agreeable reconciliation.

Four main customer personality types

## The Offloader

More often than not, this interesting caller will have no legitimate grievance against your enterprise. Rather, he or she will have suffered a recent personal strain and, without anybody else to vent to, will turn to taking their grievance out on your staff. This frequently involves amplifying the most minor of complaints right out of proportion.

This type of caller is among the most frustrating for a contact center agent; he or she will likely have encountered legitimately furious customers in the past, and may feel that to "mollycoddle" their Offloader is a waste of time and energy. Even so, the caller should be taken as seriously as possible, and formally empathetic language should be used at all times.

The following is a list of phrases best suited to this type of customer; note that the words of particular importance have been highlighted – for best results, these should be repeated at various points throughout the conversation.

*Words and Phrases:*

- "I'm so sorry that you feel this way, Mrs. Brown…"
- "As a solution, may I suggest that…?"   "have you thought", "have you considered."
- "What I'll do right now is…"
- "We really do appreciate this feedback, Mrs. Brown…"
- "May I arrange for an update call, at a time most convenient for you?"

## The Legitimate Grievance

Mistakes happen; it's a fact of life, and it's forgivable. But, from time to time, corporations miss their service level agreements by such a margin that even the most experienced of inbound agents has difficulty believing the magnitude of the failing.

The Legitimate Grievance is far and away the most important item discussed on this list. You have severely failed your customer and, should the case be publicized in the media, the ramifications for your business could be serious.

*Words and Phrases and Expressions used to respond to complaints:*

- "Thank you so much for letting us know about this, Sir/Madam…"
- "I'm so sorry to hear about this, Mrs. Brown…"

- "I completely understand how you feel, Sir/Madam…"
- "Thank you so much for your patience/understanding, Mrs Brown…"
- "I will action this for you right away…"

## The Vulgarian

Ah, the Vulgarian: a fascinating specimen, easily identifiable through its signature high pitch and generous use of profanity.

Though no employee should be expected to put up with personal insults, it is industry standard for agents to warn abusive customers at least three times before ending the conversation. Still, there are a series of phrases which can help to restore calm.

Of course, even more important than the language used is the ability of the agent to hold his cool under pressure; needless to say, there can be no excuse for insulting a customer – such an act would constitute gross misconduct, even if done in retaliation. So, along with encouraging professional lingo, school your staff in the emotional side of dealing with obscene callers.

*Words and Phrases:*

- "I truly understand your concern, Sir/Madam, but unfortunately we cannot tolerate the kind of language you are using right now…"
- "I'm going to do my very best to help you, Mrs. Brown…"
- "You seem very upset, Mrs. Brown. Would you prefer to continue this conversation through email or post?"
- "I'm sorry you're so upset, Sir/Madam. Would you like for us to call you back when you feel a little calmer?"
- "I apologize, Mrs. Brown, but if you continue to use this language, I will be forced to end this call."

## The Threat-Maker

Easily confused with The Vulgarian, The Threat-Maker is, in fact, a different kettle of chips altogether. Whilst the former's intention is to insult the call handler, the latter seeks to obtain appeasement through emotional or even physical intimidation. Sticking to one's guns is the key to success over the Threat-Maker.

*Words and Phrases:*

- "I do understand the inconvenience you've faced, Sir/Madam…"
- "Let me see how I can fix this, Mrs. Brown…"
- "I recommend that you (insert action here), Sir/Madam, so that I can take further action without delay."
- "I am more than happy to help you, Mrs. Brown…"
- "For the quickest resolution, I would request you to…"

# Techniques to Defuse Anger & Calm People Down

There are a few strategies you can employ to de-escalate the anger and expedite the cooling down process. For the most part, an angry person just wants the opportunity to explain how they feel and have their feelings acknowledged.

If you are genuinely listening to them, it can help reduce their anger.

- Be sure to create a comfortable distance between you as, if you are sitting too close, they may feel stifled. You can guide clients towards taking back some control of the situation by offering them some choices that may help solve the problem.
- Ask if they are comfortable with you talking to them. Then ask what they think you could do to rectify the situation.
- Invite them to criticize you and ask what has upset them so you can understand what went wrong.

If you can find a way to agree with the person then do so. It sometimes helps to tell people you are willing to listen, but would appreciate it if they could calm down first. Remember, however, that not all angry reactions can be managed. There may be situations where you have to politely back away or reschedule another meeting.

- You can always agree to them having expressed their opinion.
- This can often de-escalate the situation.
- Continue to emphasize your willingness to help

## Very Effective Coping Statement: "I can't change this person."

### There's Power in a Name

Addressing your client with "I'm sorry ma'am," for example, sounds a lot more formal—and much less sincere—than "I'm so sorry, Cheryl." Once you use a name, you're suddenly speaking with a real person; a client who has a job and a life and a legitimate reason behind his or her frustration, rather than a faceless "ma'am."

*"I'm going to get right on that, Cheryl."*
*"Cheryl, have you spoken to your IT department?"*
*"That's OK, Cheryl—I'm looking up the information now."*

### Smile When You Talk

Try greeting a pretend client as you would on the phone—out loud—first with a smile, and then without.

Donning a pleasant expression immediately helps your voice convey friendliness and openness. Staying straight-faced, on the other hand, immediately removes that kindness from your voice. You can easily hear more of a strain—indicating that you don't really want to be talking to this

person right now (which, no matter how true that may be, isn't how you should want to come across). You'll probably feel silly, and in the cases of angry clients, you might have to fake it—but forcing a smile does wonders when it comes to calming someone down.

## Hit the Mute Button

Simply let the client vent. Put the phone on mute (so the client couldn't hear the background noise at our office) and just listen. Don't try to interject with a solution or even interrupt with clarifying questions.

Often, clients are looking to release their frustration. It's not exactly fun to be subject to it; but it's part of the job. But giving the client full rein over the conversation for the first few minutes helps him or her get out those frustrations, blow off some steam, and eventually, be able to focus on getting to a resolution.

## Original Tweet:

@proposify No fee table snippets, just broken fee table drafts that don't auto-save previous version. I've got 10 drafts, all the same. cute

9:03 PM - 16 Feb 2015

## Company Response:

**Proposify**
@proposify

HI                      sorry for the issues you're having. Do you want support to reach out to help or just looking to publicly shame us?

## Follow up Email

**Issues**
Kyle Rackl emailed

Hi

I saw your tweets this morning and thought I'd reach out to you.

1. "No fee table snippets, just broken fee table drafts that don't auto-save previous version. I've got 10 drafts, all the same. cute" I'm not quite understanding this - are you saying:

   1. You want to use snippets in fee tables? This is a good idea, we could add this quite easily.
   2. You're rolling back to previous drafts, making changes and they aren't saving? Can you let me know which proposal and section and we can take a look to try and fix.

2. "Serious text formatting bugs, c/p doesn't always function, tables totals don't always update. It's very frustrating for the cost"

   1. Copy and paste is an ongoing battle because of all the types of documents and formatting people try to paste from. Extra markup that gets copied in is usually what causes a lot of the formatting bugs, so it's best to copy to plain text first. If you send on your source doc we can try to fix for a future release.
   2. If you let me know the proposal and section I can take a look at the table to see why it's not updating.
   3. What browser are you using?

3. "Extremely perturbed by the inability to continue a fee table to the another page without hassle. Seriously, 6 item budgets?" This is something we're working on within the next couple of releases. For now you have to create a new page and budget table manually.

Sorry for the bugs you're experiencing. We pride ourselves on good support, so if you experience problems you'll generally get a faster response by emailing support@proposify.biz than slamming us on Twitter.

I applied a credit to your account so next month is free if you decide to keep using Proposify. In the meantime we'll work with you to get your issues resolved if you can get back to us with some answers.

PS - Saw that you're from Calgary, that's my old home town.

Cheers

**Email Break Down:**

I saw your tweets this morning and thought I'd reach out to you.

1. "No fee table snippets, just broken fee table drafts that don't auto-save previous version. I've got 10 drafts, all the same. cute" I'm not quite understanding this - are you saying:

   1. You want to use snippets in fee tables? This is a good idea, we could add this quite easily.
   2. You're rolling back to previous drafts, making changes and they aren't saving? Can you let me know which proposal and section and we can take a look to try and fix.

2. "Serious text formatting bugs, c/p doesn't always function, tables totals don't always update. It's very frustrating for the cost"

   1. Copy and paste is an ongoing battle because of all the types of documents and formatting people try to paste from. Extra markup that gets copied in is usually what causes a lot of the formatting bugs, so it's best to copy to plain text first. If you send on your source doc we can try to fix for a future release.
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3. "Extremely perturbed by the inability to continue a fee table to the another page without hassle. Seriously, 6 item budgets?" This is something we're working on within the next couple of releases. For now you have to create a new page and budget table manually.

Here, Kyle does something really important: instead of making assumptions about what the customer meant, *he asked for clarification*. It's an obvious but underused tactic in a world where many support departments are focusing on first-contact resolution, leading to scrambles to try to answer questions that agents don't even understand.

And importantly, Kyle offers to help resolve the issue once the question is clarified.

Kyle also stays positive, and compliments the customer's ideas. Note that he doesn't necessarily promise to add the feature (a promise we can't always make right away), but he still gives credit for good suggestions.

And here…

1. Copy and paste is an ongoing battle because of all the types of documents and formatting people try to paste from. Extra markup that gets copied in is usually what causes a lot of the formatting bugs, so it's best to copy to plain text first. If you send on your source doc we can try to fix for a future release.

… Kyle does a great job in explaining *why* a particular feature doesn't work the way the customer wants it to, rather than simply telling the customer that it doesn't work.

Sorry for the bugs you're experiencing. We pride ourselves on good support, so if you experience problems you'll generally get a faster response by emailing support@proposify.biz than slamming us on Twitter.

Again, notice that while Kyle is eagerly helping the customer solve the issue, his tone firmly makes it clear that the *way* the customer voiced their concern isn't the most effective way to get help from Proposify.

Rita H. Deane                                    Telephone 401-377-7781
                                                 email-rdeane@hopkintonri.org

January 20, 2017

Memo to Tax Collectors:

I met with some of the members of the Executive Board of the Tax Collector's Association
at the Town Hall in Hopkinton on Tuesday, January 17th to begin the process for Certification.

I presented a short test (not covering all areas required for Certification) for the members
to take. After it was completed we spent several hours reviewing the test format and information
included. It was a very productive meeting.

The following day several of the board members emailed additional test questions. I will work on
putting this together and we will have additional meetings to finalize the testing information.

Our contact person, Mr. James Savage, at the Department of Revenue was not available to speak with
me today regarding our Certification but I left a message and call back number and will review all of the
above with him.

I did send him a letter today regarding the above information and included a copy of the "trial" testing.

I will keep you informed as events happen. Just wanted to say that we made a very good start and I feel
that we will have Certifications for those who qualify in the months ahead.

Please email me at rdeane@hopkintonri.org with your questions, suggestions or concerns.

Thank you.

Rita H. Deane
Hopkinton Tax Collector