

Kitty vs Goliath - A Customer's Battle with AT&T

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SYNOPSIS

Because the Kitty vs Goliath case involves problems with a telecommunications company, students will easily relate to it. This case illustrates the difficulty customers of large corporations can encounter in attempts to resolve problems, even relatively simple ones. Kitty had been an AT&T customer for forty-seven years. For the past few years she had enjoyed the convenience of the company's e-billing plan until, without notice, she was unable to access her bill. Although distasteful to her, she made several attempts to contact AT&T's customer service line to resolve the problem, with no success. Since AT&T had established no provision for an alternative method of contact, Kitty found addresses on AT&T's website and sent letters requesting service but was ignored. Finally, AT&T simply turned her account over to a collection agency and discontinued her telephone service.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this case are to:

1. Assess ethical issues inherent in large corporations' treatment of customers.
2. Develop alternative methods of providing customer service that could result in more satisfied customers.
3. Describe improvements that could make written communications more effective in conveying customers' problems.
4. Identify the potential advantages and disadvantages to customers and to companies of e-billing, e-payments, and e-communications.

APPLICATION

The case is appropriate for e-business, management, business communications, and ethics courses.

KEY WORDS

customer service, ethics, e-business, communications

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