

# CUSTOMER SERVICE

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- What your #1 goal ought to be
- Dealing with phone calls
- Tapping into patience
- What to do when things go wrong



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## How to Provide Quality Customer Service

Almost everyone must interact with a customer service representative on the phone. Does your business offer an ongoing pleasant service experience? Does your business consistently respond to questions, concerns and issues in a timely and helpful manner? Do your representatives have a pleasant demeanor and make it so that communication is not a hassle

### Your number one goal is to:

1. Represent the company as a world-class service organization
2. Conduct ourselves in a manner that will make the company help look professional

How you "say it" is as important as what you say. Presuming we all know the correct responses to the questions we are asked, we will discuss how we give those responses to our customers and what customer service we give over the phone.

### ***The phone is the lifeline of our business***

Because your time is very important and it is necessary that we know when to engage the customer and how to best reach the conclusion of the conversation to the satisfaction of the caller.

General skills needed:

Ask for caller's name and use that when you are speaking with them.

Always use the customer's when you can (jot it down, people love to know their name).

#### **Active listening:**

Be an active listener. Don't interrupt the customer. When you have been interrupted, this may seem hard as your head is already somewhere else. Go into the call with all your senses as quickly as you can.





**Voice control:** (have you ever listened to a tape recording of yourself)? You should do that to ensure that you modulate your voice appropriately, that you don't sound hostile and that you don't raise your voice up and down. You should speak slowly and succinctly. Do not use slang words or colloquialisms.

Use a calm but confidence voice. Be careful of pitch, wine, nasal, and sing-songy styles. Listening to you should not be painful (example: individuals with pierced tongues are often difficult to understand).

**Know your product:**

1. You should be able to navigate your company websites quickly and adeptly.
2. Know the phone numbers of the departments or individuals whom you may need to transfer callers to. These should be easily accessible.

**Have a positive attitude about answering phones:**

Believe it or not your attitude come through when you are speaking on the phone. What will your attitude be when you get to answer the phone have you already decided it is an interruption to you and it will be an idiot on the other end or are you excited to help people understand how the company works and cheerfully address questions or concerns?

Think a minute about how you feel about your part of the phone experience. Is it negative or positive? Your attitude drives your reaction.

**Calls are either incoming or outgoing:**

**Incoming:**

it really doesn't matter which of these calls you receive, you should always reflect your professionalism:

Since we represent the company. it is very important to ensure we don't get caught off guard and appear to be anything but professional, on calls, in our voice and email.

One must always come across as helpful, professional, empathetic, and caring. It doesn't matter what others out there's do or say. We aren't going to exhibit bad behavior.

Often when we are called, we are in the middle of a project (and we may be very deep into that project, heart and mind) it is so important not to let the caller feel like an intruder. I'm sure we all agree it is a hard jump from one chain of thought to another on a whim, but that is our job. Remember we are all in a "service" industry and we are here to provide a service. Customer's pay our wages.



**When answering a call, it is important to make the caller feel they are the most important call you will receive today.**

How can we do that?

1. Use their name Jot it down, everyone loves to hear their name
2. Be Friendly

Many times, a customer will call and be so frustrated that he/she are near to tears. We may be the 4<sup>th</sup> call they have had to make. This is where your empathy needs to kick in. Let them know you feel their frustration. How do you feel when you think you have gotten the run-around? Try to make this the last stop on that ugly mentally exhausting train called a phone tree.

**This applies to written communication as well.**

Be super careful with your emails. Read and re-read your responses for typo's

Write this down somewhere: THERE IS NO UPSIDE TO NEGATIVITY!

Have you ever been lost in a phone tree before? Then you know how it feels...

Example: After "active listening" you say, "This is a situation that I will need to give someone who can help you. Let me suggest you call ???????? who may be able to assist you. That number is....." or "Let me redirect your call to someone who may be able to help you."

If you can help them that is one less person, they have to tell their situation to. That is the best case scenario. Really try to happily find the solution for them.

### **Summary of 'incoming'**

Again, be an active listener. This is worth repeating. When you have been interrupted this may seem hard as you head is already somewhere else. Jump into the call with all you sense as quickly as you can.

#### **BE CAREFUL NOT TO INTERRUPT**

Be careful of interruptions. I know we just want to help them get to the end of the story, but don't cut them off, gently interject. Let them talk, but gently guide the discussion to conclusion. Many times they just need someone to talk to. This is an art! Get them to the talk without them feeling they were cut off.

**Example:** You get a person on the line that wants to tell you all the details of a surgery that went wrong and you are in the middle of a big project. You feel this person is wasting your time on something not relevant to you. What do you do?

You can say: "I'm sorry about that, but how can I help you now?" Even if they persist in the story, you don't have to engage them to tell you more, simply restate the above statement and get to what you can do to help now. Get them out of the horror of the event to the present.





### **BE PATIENT WITH THE CALLER**

Example: A person calls and needs to get help saying that a certain number is the only number on their card. How would you help them find the number on their card if they insist we are the only number they can see on their card?

Ask them to read their card to you...they usually find it then, or ask who they work for and simply give them the number. Never say, "Noooooo, it is on your card." (Rude and condescending)

### **BE CAREFUL NOT TO SOUND CONDESCENDING**

Have empathy without being condescending.

**QUESTION:** What is the difference between empathy and being condescending? How would the caller be able to tell (tone of voice, inflections, attitude)?

When you put yourself in their shoes, that is empathy. "I can understand your frustration. Let me help you find the answer."

Wait for them to formulate their questions. You may gently supply a word if they are lost for it. Don't cut them off. But do anticipate their needs once you get the gist of where they are going with their request.

Be careful not to appear or sound rude or abrupt in voice or emails.

TRY TO NEVER SOUND OR APPEAR \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_

### **QUESTION:**

What is it important to not be rude, let alone come across as rude on the phone?

(It is the \_\_\_\_\_ of wise that you are putting at \_\_\_\_\_)

Give me an example of rudeness we might experience over the phone.

What is mirroring?

What tone of voice is used when someone is being rude?

What quality or tone of voice is used when someone is being rude?

**SET STANDARDS HIGH AS A WORLD CLASS COMPANY SO YOU DON'T HAVE ANY BAD STORIES**

Let's talk about it.

It is the Reputation of the company you are putting at Risk

SUMMARY OF PHONE CUSTOMER SERVICE (Fill in the blank)

Be an \_\_\_\_\_ listener  
(ACTIVE)

Don't be \_\_\_\_\_ (you just don't give a dam, tone of voice will betray you)  
(Too Casual)

Monitor you \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_  
(tone) (volume)

Speak \_\_\_\_\_ (no food or gum in mouth) and \_\_\_\_\_  
(clearly)  
(slowly)

Don't come across \_\_\_\_\_  
(as disinterested)

Don't let the caller feel \_\_\_\_\_  
(they interrupted you)

Be careful not to sound \_\_\_\_\_  
(condescending)

Have \_\_\_\_\_ and be \_\_\_\_\_  
(empathy) (be patient)

Never come across as \_\_\_\_\_  
(rude)

Always be \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_  
(respectful) (eager to help)

***TRANSFERRING CALLS IN HOUSE***

If a call is transferred to you, how do you want to receive it? An introduction to the caller?  
What is the call about?

**OUTGOING:**

Outgoing calls are usually those that are:

1. Returning a call. Same rules apply as incoming calls as we discussed with incoming calls.
2. When leaving a message speak slowly and clearly. People tend to be fast talkers.

**When leaving a message on their answer machine:**

Problem: Leaving phone numbers so fast or they can't understand.

Solution: Speak slowly and clearly. Each number must be given clearly, not run together.  
Make a call as short as possible. Their time valuable too.





**Problem:** Getting tongue tied. Be succinct.

**Solution:** Know what you want to say before the beep.

#### GENERAL RULES OR ASK YOURSELF.

1. Do I put on my positive attitude every morning?
2. Am I excited to come to my place of employment?
3. Does the way I speak portray me as an adolescent or capable adult?
4. Do I use slang words on the phone?
5. Do I laugh inappropriately?
6. Do I talk too much and use too many words to communicate my thoughts?
7. Am I abrupt with the caller?
8. Am I rude to the caller?
9. Do I take my frustration with others out on the caller?
10. Do I mirror the negative or the positive on the call?
11. Do I use mushy words?
12. Do I ever trash talk the caller or the company?
13. Am I careful with the emails I write, what they say and how it is said?
14. Am I courteous always?

## When Customer Service Goes Wrong

Does your business seem to be out of touch with providing quality customer service? Are your representatives rude, pushy or impatient and not really listening. How you navigate a challenging customer service interaction can be vital to your customer's experience.


Here are some tips to help you navigate the Customer Service Experience:

- **Stick to the facts**

Before you call make a list of bullet pointed facts that can act as a script. Be succinct, Address what happened and why and how. Timeline the events of your circumstances and explain them in a clear and concise manner.

- **Take Notes**

If you are a company representative always give the customer your name. If you are the



customer record the date and time of your call and interaction. Let the representatives know you are documenting them and keeping a record of their service. This way if you have a negative experience or if you feel the individual is violating company standards and protocol you can report the person to a supervisors or corporate officer.

- **Inquire about a survey**

Most companies nowadays will offer a customer survey at the end of each call. If they don't inquire about a customer survey that you can take regarding your call experience. Always include your email and phone number so that you can be reached if the company wants to pursue further questions about the survey responses.

- **Be poised under all circumstances**

Whether you are the service representative or the customer, **DONOT BE ADVERSARIAL**. Don't lose your cool or your composure. Do not get angry or scream or raise your voice. Escalating a situation with screaming or accusations wastes energy and time and won't get you to a quick resolution. This doesn't mean you must be a pushover, you can stand your ground, be calm and respectful. Treat others the way you would like to be treated, put yourselves in their shoes. Be polite and business like and do not get emotional.


- **Provide a solution**

Be a problem solver not a problem instigator. If you are the customer it is wise to have a solution in mind that you can propose to the company. Don't wait for them to initiate a solution. Present a solution that you deem fair and reasonable. Be willing to negotiate, be flexible. What is it that you are looking for; a refund, and exchange, information, help or assistance, do you need to escalate the request to a member of the management team? Is the solution ending the relationship and cancelling the service? Keep in mind the company may not be able or willing to provide what you are asking for. If that is the case then be willing to compromise on a mutually agreeable solution. Generally, the company will not want to lose a valued customer. Keep in mind that you catch more Bees with honey, so be polite and considerate.

- **Take it to the Top**

If you are having trouble with the customer service representative and can't make any headway or come to an amiable resolution, then your next recourse, depending upon the size of the business is to escalate through the tiers of management. Ask to speak with a





manager or supervisor. If you don't have any luck with them you may want to contact the corporate leaders. You can generally find them on the company website.

- **Be Persistent**

My motto has always been. Don't take no for an answer: simply find another way to restate your request or clarify your request. Be persistent, be nice and calm but don't settle for no. If you do not get the answer you want on the first try, keep trying. Often you simply must approach an issue numerous times with different individuals to solve the problem. To be fair, you must realize that customer service goes both ways. On the other side of the coin the representatives have the challenge of interacting with customers who they may often find rude, harsh, difficult or dishonest. At the end of the day, you have choices, don't be a victim but be fair. Empower yourself and you always have the choice to take your business elsewhere if you are not satisfied.

If you enjoyed this workbook and found it useful, you will also enjoy the workbook on Resume Writing and the workbook on Image and Influence. Dress for Success in the Workplace.











