

## **Communicating for Service Excellence**

How the customer perceives you determines how they view your service. Communication skills are the key to service excellence in the eyes of the customer. Whether it is in person or by telephone communication skills are crucial in any business. Follow these suggestions to represent your company with style and grace.

### **Non – Verbal Communication**

Managing the impression you make on others means paying particular attention to your non-verbal behaviors: body language, appearance, and how you sound.

It means considering how you look and sound when meeting with clients and customers, going on “cold” calls, dealing with unhappy customers, and most any interaction with others.

#### ***Remember:***

- Non-verbal communication is the first and greatest source of impressions in direct, face-to-face interactions.
- It is the yardstick against which your words and actions are measured.
- It precedes and structures all subsequent communication.
- It tends to be even more heavily relied upon if your words give a contradictory message.
- It is one of the most revealing differences between powerful people and those with little or no power.

People sensitive to non-verbal cues tend to be perceived as better adjusted, less dogmatic, more extroverted, more popular, more effective in interpersonal relationships, and more accurate listeners.

Non-verbal communication represents over 50% our message.

### **Effective Telephone Techniques: That Crucial First Impression**

First impressions are lasting impressions. That’s why the first moments you spend on the telephone with a customer are critical. Here are key points to keep in mind:

- Have you answered the phone quickly enough – without being too quick? “Quickly enough” is generally within 30 seconds. Surveys indicate the phone can ring that long before customers begin getting anxious.

Surprisingly, answering “too quickly” can also make callers uneasy. A general rule to follow is to answer on the second ring. This “buffer” period gives customers a moment to get settled and collect their thoughts before speaking.

- What are your first words? A friendly greeting such as “Good morning” is a pleasant way to start a conversation. Then follow with your first name and company or department. Providing such facts helps customers know how your responsibilities relate to their call.

Are you speaking clearly and naturally? Be sure you are speaking into the telephone. That may seem obvious, but most of us have never heard how we sound on the telephone. Often people who speak in normal tones face to face sound too quiet over the telephone. Test your phone voice periodically. Ask a co-worker to listen to you on an interoffice call.

- Have you asked for the customer’s name early in the conversation? Even if you don’t need the customer’s name to answer a query, asking shows you are interested in your customers as people.
- From the very first, do you treat the caller like the best customer the company has? This positive approach applies even to callers who currently aren’t customers. They never will be your customers if they aren’t treated well now.

**Even before you’ve answered the phone, the customer is forming impressions of you and your company. Make the most of the crucial first few moments!**

### **How to “Adjust” Customer Complaints**

Any act of customer complaint implies that on some level the customer is unhappy – otherwise he or she wouldn’t be writing or calling. Whether customer service is specifically your job or you just happen to pick up a ringing phone, here are some helpful guidelines to keep in mind:

- Answer promptly. This includes not just picking up that phone quickly but quickly getting a satisfactory answer or action.
- Get all the facts. Don’t “yes” the customer and hang up before you find out what’s really wrong. You’ll just waste your time plus irritate the customer because the problem still won’t be fixed.
- Admit mistakes. Admit the error (even if it wasn’t yours personally) and do what you must to correct it.
- Never argue. You are the company in the eyes of the customer.
- Be polite.

**Always leave the customer satisfied.** A particular problem may involve more time and effort than you first suspected, tempting you to arrange the easiest possible solution. Don’t. Do your best to achieve total satisfaction. Use the situation as an opportunity to “resell” the customer on your company and get the two of you back to a trouble-free relationship.

### **The Magic of the Smile**

The smile is the most universal of all expressions. It is said that it is the shortest distance between two friends. It has the same meaning in every language so it is the international symbol of openness and acceptance. A smile with positive eye contact says “I acknowledge you”, “I accept you”. Some people are more generous with smiles than others. We all have an unlimited supply but some people seem to want to hoard their smiles and keep them to themselves. And some take their smiles for granted and continually give that positive response to others throughout the day. Which category are you? Smiling not only



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brightens the day of those around you but research shows that it makes you have a much better day and feel better yourself. Try smiling when you don't feel like it; in fact smile especially when you don't feel like it. And here are a few reasons why.

- 1) It feels good.
- 2) It makes others feel good.
- 3) It makes you look younger.
- 4) It gives you energy.
- 5) It can relieve stress.
- 6) It can lift your spirits.
- 7) It cost absolutely nothing but the value is immeasurable!

Practice positive body language, pleasant and affirming voice tones and wear a genuine smile. Make your company proud they chose you to represent them!



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