



This employee newsletter article was written for MaxCare.

Phone Impressions Can Make or Break the Sale

Have you ever called a number and listened to 200 choices from an automated voice? You push button after button until you finally get to talk to a live person. Then, before you can ask your question, an angry voice puts you on hold.

Does this scenario sound familiar? If it does then you already know the importance of proper phone skills. A phone call is more often than not the first impression that a customer has of your business. In customer service, having responsive phone skills will boost sales and aide in creating returning clients. The goal is to have a professional sounding phone presentation.

There are several key elements that will ensure that proper phone etiquette is always displayed. First, it is very important to have a dedicated phone line for incoming customer calls. It amounts to lost sales when employees, customers, and faxes are all using the same line. A customer line will allow more answered calls than busy signals. Answer the phone promptly. Customers will lose interest after several rings and will hang up. Talking to a machine is annoying; never force a customer to leave a voice mail message.

Next, when you answer the phone, use a pleasant greeting that identifies the company and whom the customer is speaking to. For example, "Thank you for calling MaxCARE, this is Kenny, how can I help you." Using this approach makes the customer feel appreciated, and it provides a comfortable transition for the customer to ask a question or request a service.

As you speak to your customer, be polite and attentive. When answering a question or selling a service, give the benefits to the customer before the price. A customer will be more willing to pay for something when they know the benefit first. Of course, a customer's service can be greatly enhanced by receiving an accompanying service. Don't just end the conversation after the price. Always try to cross-sell Scotchgard, upholstery, and deodorizer.

Finally, end the conversation with the same enthusiasm and professionalism you began with. Before ending the call, always thank the customer for calling. This step will amplify his/her feeling of being appreciated.

Just how is this done? First step is to make out a script. Write a sample phone conversation, and then use it as a basis for all calls. Never depart from it. To help learn

these skills, we are starting a ghost call program. This is where someone will call a store while pretending to be a customer. The phone conversation will be recorded so that it can be evaluated. Then, the copy of the call and evaluation will be sent to the franchise. A blank evaluation will be sent along also, so that the franchise can evaluate itself. This will be done on an ongoing basis.

Remember that the first impression could be the last. A professional phone presentation will increase sales and customer loyalty.

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