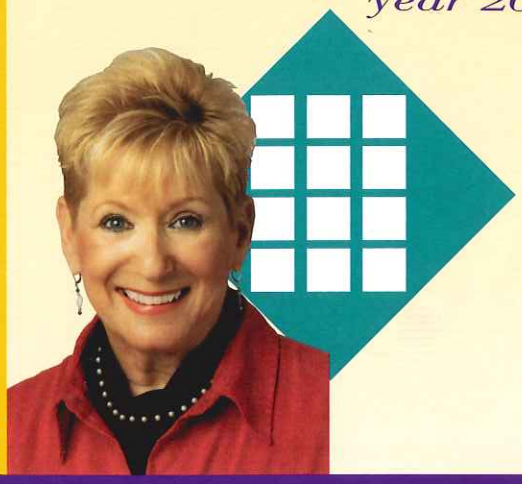
TELEPHONE DOCTOR®
CUSTOMER SERVICE TRAINING

The Friendly voice

"Improving the way your organization communicates with customers."

Summer... year 2008



How to Keep Customers Knocking on Your Door

By Nancy Friedman *The Telephone Doctor*

What's the biggest and most costly customer service mistake in business today? Simple -We're just not friendly enough.

Customers should be treated as welcome guests; instead, they're often treated as an interruption or an annoyance.

How can you make them feel welcome? Consider bringing your staff together to discuss frustrating customer events. How they were handled. How it could have been done. Not having a customer service training program in place can cost every organization revenue and customers. Poor customer service creates a negative image for the entire organization, no matter how wonderful the products or services are that you offer.

Here are three of the biggest mistakes that are most likely to anger customers into a lifelong resentment toward an organization:

MISTAKE 1: NOT SMILING

Solution: Smile. Insanely simplistic. On the phone or in person, we need to understand why a smile works – because you can hear a smile. OK...sometimes we don't feel like smiling. Well ya know what? Smile anyway. The customer doesn't care if you feel like smiling or not. Frankly, I'd rather have the customer think your office is closed than to have you answer the phone or greet someone in a negative mood.

MISTAKE 2: NOT ACKNOWLEDGING A CUSTOMER'S REQUEST OR PROBLEM

Solution: Rapid responses. We have a so-called "mental stamp" at Telephone Doctor that reads "RR," which means, "This request or piece of information needs an immediate and rapid response." Requests and problems need to be handled sooner than later. Delaying a request can cause more problems than the original request.

Another good habit to get into is to ask the customer: "By the way, when would you be needing this?" Our surveys found that when a customer is asked when they would like to receive the requested item, 80% did not automatically respond, "I need it now." Thus, you don't have to promise, "I'll get that to you right away." Often, customers won't need something until tomorrow or next week. Asking for a timetable is good customer service. And, by the way, "as soon as possible" is not a time. Confirm a date or time.

MISTAKE 3: IMMEDIATE REJECTION OF A REQUEST

Solution: Be a "double-checker." It's so easy to tell people, "We don't have it" or "Sorry, it's past the deadline" or "We ran out of that report." Instead, use a soft rejection: "The last time I checked it wasn't available, let me double-check for you." This simple statement immediately defuses some of the tension of not being able to fulfill a request. And often when we do double-check, we find a way to get what the person wanted after all.

Conclusion: To make these techniques happen, the entire staff, from president to maintenance, needs to embrace the customer service program or it might not work. The organization's entire image is at stake since it is unlikely to get a second chance.

Don't have time? Make time. What or who is more important than those customers? You'll be surprised at how much fun it is to hear a customer say, "Thanks, you've been super."