

# Top Reasons Calls Get Escalated

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Customers today seem quick to voice, “I would like to speak to a supervisor,” if they are unhappy with the service they receive. What is particularly vexing about these escalated calls is that as many as 85% of them could have been resolved with the initial phone rep. To better understand why calls are escalated, we surveyed some of our customers as to the top reasons and here is what we found.

1. **Knowledge**—Customers are very savvy about products and technology. If they are seeking help on an important issue, such as a system-wide outage, they won’t abide a help desk person who hedges. Too much is at stake, and time is of the essence. They will rightfully escalate a call if a rep answers incorrectly or says, “I don’t know” more than once.

**Manager Tip:** Reward on-going training, whether it is classroom based or on-line. Make sure reps continue to expand their knowledge level about new products and upgrades. The more the rep knows, the more quickly calls can be completed and the happier customers will be.

2. **NO**—No one likes to be told, “No.” For the customer to accept a “no,” the person has to understand the reason behind it and feel it is legitimate. Otherwise, the call will most definitely be escalated.

**Manager Tip:** Allow reps to approve requests when they are valid without a hassle. Also, train reps to say, “I can’t do that, but what I can do is” or “To avoid this happening in the future.”

3. **Confidence**—Within a minute callers can sense when a rep does not sound confident. Statements such as, “I am not real sure about that,” raise the alarm for supervisory assistance.

**Manager Tip:** Make sure to listen to recorded calls regularly and identify those phone

reps that appear to lack confidence in their responses or their voice. Meet with them personally to understand how best to help them. It may be that tentative language or the use of filler words compromises credibility. Individual coaching may be warranted.

4. **Attitude**—Reps with an attitude are rarely tolerated. Callers insist on being treated with respect, regardless of how poorly they have treated the company’s representatives.

**Manager Tip:** When reviewing escalated calls, notice any words or phrases that might be misconstrued. Statements, such as, “Don’t take it out on me,” or statements beginning with “Listen” should not be tolerated. Weekly all-hands meetings are a perfect setting for conducting role plays on good ways to respond to the irate caller in a non-defensive manner.

5. **No apology**—Customers want to hear an apology for the inconvenience caused by your company before they are willing to share information regarding their account number or name. Without an acknowledgement, the caller may easily become more aggressive and demanding.

**Manager Tip:** Review in-coming calls and listen for an acknowledgement or apology right up front. Have phone reps practice different ways to acknowledge or apologize so that they do not sound scripted.

6. **Accent**—If the caller can’t understand the representative due to an accent or enunciation of words, they will escalate the call. They will not waste precious minutes asking the representative to repeat over and over.

**Manager Tip:** Managers should identify those individuals with accent or articulation issues and provide outside coaching for anyone needing assistance.

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7. **Speed**—Phone reps who speak too quickly annoy customers, particularly if they are elderly, are trying to take notes or implement “fixes.”

**Manager Tip:** *Model the behavior you are seeking. Speak distinctly and say all of the syllables in the words when interacting with your reps. Whenever a rep is speaking quickly, the person should be reminded to slow down.*

There is no doubt that customers are impatient due to the pressures of the economy. However, supervisors and managers can assist reps in resolving calls before escalation by reminding their reps of these top seven reasons and by implementing the simple and quick suggestions we have outlined.

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