

How to Get the Long Winded Customer Off the Phone

*By Judith Filek—President
Impact Communications, Inc.*

Have you ever wanted to say to a caller, “Hey, let’s move this along?” Sometimes, it seems like our customers will never end the call. If there are calls in cue, long winded customers can make our lives very stressful. To manage calls more efficiently, pay attention to some important points.

For starters, be fully present on the call from the moment you respond. Customers will quickly sense if you are not paying attention or appear anxious to get off the call. They want to feel valued, and they need to feel they can trust you before they can move forward to resolution.

Customers feel rushed when you immediately interrupt them to ask for account numbers or product codes. However, if you explain the reason why you need this information, they are less likely to be annoyed. For example, you might say, “I am sorry to interrupt, but may I have your account number? That way I can resolve your issue more quickly. I can also see the specs of your product as you are talking about it.”

Customers need to feel you get their issue. If they don’t feel you are listening attentively, they will repeat their information again and again and delay you from completing the call. The wise phone rep takes notes. You can demonstrate that you are listening by acknowledging the customers’ problems as you hear them. A specific acknowledgement statement advances the call. It shows you really understand the entire problem and the inconvenience it is causing. An example of a strong acknowledgement statement is “I am sorry your System 5000 is only intermittently reading the tracking bar codes. It has to be very frustrating to worry that you have not accurately kept track of inventory. “Ok” is not a good acknowledgment, and it doesn’t demonstrate you understand. Without understanding, calls stagnate.

When you don’t understand the issue or problem, be sure to ask questions. Sometimes customers aren’t technical, or they don’t have the terminology to describe the problem accurately. To double check, you may have to ask them some very direct questions. As your customers see that you understand, they begin to trust you and they feel comfortable moving forward with the call.

Before you suggest a plan of action, be sure to summarize what you hear. Verify with the listener that these are the correct issues. Listeners will correct you if you have left anything out. Even if you have overlooked some points, they will see that you are trying to be accurate.

As you talk about how you will resolve an issue, be sure to “spoon feed the baby” by pausing often. The more you pause between your statements, the more your listeners will absorb. If you speak quickly, customers will miss some of your points, and invariably, they will ask you to repeat. Also, make sure your sentences come to definite ends. Do not connect one sentence to the next with an “and, but or so.” Short, concise statements are best for moving the call forward.

To end your call, start using the listener’s name and start speaking in the past tense. “John, I am so happy we were successful in troubleshooting your problem. Is there anything else I can help you with today because I know you want to get back to work?” Before you terminate the call, be sure to go over any action items for the customer.

Managing a call efficiently means more than just getting the caller off the line. It means protecting the relationship by showing callers you value their business and are listening.

Continued on page 2

Question: *We're interested in your reaction to this article. [click here](#) – to comment on this article, share your concerns or ask questions. Judy will respond to all questions.*

Impact Communications, Inc. consults with individuals and businesses to improve their face-to-face and over the phone communication skills. It is not what you know but how you communicate it that makes a difference. When you have to have impact, phone (847) 438-4480 or visit our website, www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com.