

# Get Back to the Basics: The Fundamentals for Building Rapport with Your Customer

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Within seconds, callers assess the competence and sincerity of a technical support or customer service representative. By listening to the rep's tone of voice and opening remarks, they feel that they can determine whether to trust the individual or ask for someone else. To build rapport quickly with your customers, remember some basic principles.

First, to make an initial positive impression with your voice, take three distinct pauses as you say your greeting. *"Good morning. // This is Jessica. // How may I help you?"* With these three distinct pauses, the tone of your voice will be sincere, and the customer will immediately conclude you really do want to help them.

When you start to ask customers for information, be sure to tell them **why**. *"May I please have your confirmation number so that I can check the delivery instructions?"* *"May I have the last four digits of the credit card you used to place the order so that I can verify that the transaction was debited to your account?"* Customers do not want to feel as if they are being interrogated. They just want to feel valued. When you give them the reason for asking them questions, they are more receptive to giving you the information you need.

Your customers can't see that you are accessing information from multiple screens or inputting data into the computer. Be sure to keep the customer abreast of what you are doing and why you are taking so much time to complete the transaction. In the interim, make small talk about the weather or the season of year. It will continue to build rapport.

If you need to place the customer on hold, tell the customer why it is necessary and approximately

how long it will take. Check back with the customer about every 30 seconds. If you need to transfer the customer to another department, again explain why. Assure the customer that you will stay on the line until the transfer is complete. Before you disconnect, introduce the customer to the new rep.

Use your customer's name during your conversation but make sure you are pronouncing it correctly. If you want to use the customer's first name, always ask permission. It shows respect. Generally, people like it when you use their names. It gives them the feeling that they are not just some nameless, faceless entity.

Never interrupt your customers. Let them finish what they need to say, particularly if they are calling about a problem. If you find yourself wanting to jump in because you think you know what they will say next and can service them more quickly by interrupting, think again. When customers are interrupted, they typically start all over because they don't want you to miss anything. Even if you do know what the customer will say, let the person finish. It will make them conclude you are really listening to them and not just trying to get onto the next caller in cue.

While talking to the customer, be sure to smile. Picture that you are helping a friend. There is much validity to the old axiom of smile, then dial. When you smile, it affects your vocal cords, and your voice automatically sounds warmer and friendlier.

*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. To reach us, phone (847) 438-4480 or contact our web site, [www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com](http://www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com).*