

What Telephone Reps Want and Need to Make Your Customers Happy

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The health and well being of your organization depends on the service your customers receive. If they receive stellar service, then customers smile and stay loyal. Chances are, if your customer care representatives are smiling, your customers will be happy also. The rep's enthusiasm for their jobs affects how they treat their customers. Thus, a lot hinges on job satisfaction. Three factors will influence how a rep feels. They are:

- Knowing what is expected.
- Getting feedback on one's performance.
- Knowing that people notice your performance.

Knowing what is expected

"I didn't know I was supposed to do that! No one told me." If you have ever heard your reps say this, they need more information about what they should be doing to meet and exceed your expectations, as well as the customer's. Reps often receive a lot of training on processes and procedures. But few receive classroom soft skills training. Reps need training on what to say and how to say it.

We all know customers can be difficult, but they can be downright abusive over the phone. Do your reps know how to handle difficult customers? Do they know what a good acknowledgement phrase should be? Do they know enough not to interrupt a customer or to lay blame? Do they sound empathetic, and, if not, do they know how to add warmth to their voice. Have they listened to their own calls?

If a customer has received a shipment that is late or broken, can they offer free overnight shipping, can they discount the next order, can they remove a late fee? What exactly are they empowered to do or say?

When a rep receives training on both the hard and soft skills and when they feel empowered to make decisions, they will feel more confident about their jobs.

Getting Feedback on their performance

People will do what they have always done unless someone tells them to do something differently. Feedback is critical to peak performance. Feedback should be both formal and informal. Informal feedback should come when the supervisor or manager is walking around and hearing how the rep is responding to a customer. Obviously, when the rep deserves praise, it can be publicly given. However, if the feedback is of a critical nature, it should be done in private behind closed doors. Reps should receive formal feedback at least once a year, but informal feedback on a daily or regular basis.

Feedback that helps us to grow is balanced and documented. It is important for supervisors and managers to avoid generalizations such as, "You're always late." Feedback should be specific. "I have noticed that you were late six times this month. Obviously, when you aren't here on time, the customer's wait time is increased dramatically. What changes can you make to get here on time this month?" "When I listened in on your call to the customer from Phoenix, I heard more than 15 "ums" and "ahs." I also heard you saying, "No one here would have ever told you anything like that. That's not possible! Putting your self in the customer's shoes, what might you do or say differently?"

Knowing that someone cares

Researchers tell us that many reps feel that in their call center, they could work thirty three percent more or thirty three percent less, and no one would notice. That is a big number! If you want peak performance from reps, they have to feel noticed. They have to feel that someone cares about their efforts and appreciates them. Wise call center supervisors and managers not only reward peak performers for

Continued on page 2

exceeding their targets, but they also take the time to know their people on a personal level. They resist staying in their offices or cubes. They are very visible on the floor.

When reps feel their bosses care about them, they do not want to disappoint. They work harder than ever. They believe their contribution is essential and applauded.

Knowing what is expected, getting feedback on one's performance and believing that some one cares are the key ingredients for making your reps satisfied. When your reps are content, your customers will smile.

Impact Communications, Inc. consults with individuals and businesses to improve their face-to-face and over the phone communication skills. When you have to have impact, phone (847) 438-4480 or visit our web site, www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com.