

What is the Most Important Skill for a Customer Care Representative?

By Judith Filek—President
Impact Communications, Inc.

Our organization is often asked, either by managers, interviewers or call center representatives, “What is the most important skill a customer support representative needs to ensure their success?” Is it the ability to handle irate customers or to resolve issues quickly? Is it the ability to develop strong customer relationships or is it the rep’s familiarity with product lines? While all of these are important, the most important skill for a customer care representative is good listening skills. Without strong listening skills, one will never be able to soothe angry callers, quickly handle an issue or connect with customers.

When a rep listens attentively to an upset caller, the caller feels vindicated. The customer also typically calms down and becomes more receptive to solving problems. Also, because the rep gets it right the first time and does not need to ask for the same information over and over, less time is spent on each call. Additionally, customers stay loyal when the rep listens to their needs and is able to recommend the right solution or product.

So how does one acquire good listening skills if this is not already a strong point? It takes work, a lot of work. A good listener must stay in the moment and resist the temptation of multi-tasking or any other distracting behaviors. The person must frequently show he/she is paying close attention by acknowledging the caller’s feelings. The rep also must ask questions and verify what he/she has heard. He or she might even take notes. Finally, the rep must summarize and gain agreement on how the caller’s dilemma will be handled so that there are no mistakes.

Listening is a powerful skill. It is a skill that not many people possess, but one that can be learned through practice and effort. To avoid costly mistakes due to faulty listening skills, periodically assess your own listening skills or those of your phone representatives.

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 web site, www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com.

