

# What Counts in Exceeding Customer Expectations

By Judith Filek—President  
Impact Communications, Inc.

—JoAnna Brandi, author of  
*Building Customer Loyalty*

Jake was a supervisor of a call center for a large telecommunications company. He had worked for the company for four years when a consultant with **Impact Communications** coached the inside sales team and their supervisors. One of the things Jake religiously preached to his reps was the importance of exceeding customer expectations. Yet, when asked for specifics on how service contributed to the company's bottom line or his role in assuring success, he was unable to answer. In order for any company to exceed expectations, managers, supervisors and reps have to know how to create high performing teams and the effect world class service has on customers. The following comments and statistics from various researchers should highlight why it is important for every rep to exceed customer expectations.

**Fact:** Communicating clearly and listening effectively are the key building blocks of loyal relationships.

—JoAnna Brandi, author of  
*Building Customer Loyalty*

**Fact:** In a phone conversation, when there is any inconsistency between the words and the tone of voice, a listener trusts the tone over the actual words 85 percent of the time.

—Albert Merabian, author of *Silent Messages*

**Fact:** Customers base their decisions on the satisfaction of their emotional needs as well as their business needs.

—Dale Carnegie, communication's expert,  
author and public speaker

**Fact:** A call center is the firm's public heart and soul. If you're looking for a spot in your organization where training can have an enormous impact, look no further.

—Jay Stuller, San Francisco business writer

**Fact:** The most successful phone rep does things that most anyone can and does do. The difference is the successful person does it consistently.

—Michael Angier

**Fact:** A well handled call opens opportunities to sell more products or upgrades.

—Powell Taylor, Call-Center Consultant

**Fact:** To be a "World-Class" Call Center, the organization has to resolve a problem on the first contact 85 percent of the time.

—*Call Center Magazine*, April 1999

**Fact:** It is six times more expensive and difficult to get a new customer than to keep a current customer happy. Once you get a new customer, it's likely that it will take 18—24 months for you to break even on the cost of getting them. Do the math. It costs a bundle to keep replacing customers.

—JoAnna Brandi, author of  
*Building Customer Loyalty*

**Fact:** The average talk time in world class call centers is 60-80 seconds longer than in other centers. There are also fewer repeat callers.

—John Goodman, President of  
Technical Assistance Research Project Institute

**Fact:** A two percent retention rate is equivalent to cutting your sales costs by ten percent.

—Jerry Hocutt, Hocutt and Associates, Inc.

**Fact:** Most companies that operate call centers spend 97 percent of their time responding to the individual customer and less than 2 percent exploring the causes of these calls.

—John Goodman, President of  
Technical Assistance Research Project Institute

**Fact:** Experts say as little as a 5 percent increase in customer retention can boost your profits by 25-100 percent. You could double your bottom line profit by keeping only five percent of the customers you currently lose.

*Continued on page 2*

**Fact:** Seventy-Three percent of customers base their repurchasing decisions on the quality of service they received when problems occurred.

–Michael LeBoeuf, author of  
*How to Win Customers and Keep Them for Life*

**Fact:** The longer your company retains a customer, the more that customer will spend. Customers start out slowly. Over the course of time, they will increase their spending ten-fold if the service has been good.

–Michael LeBoeuf, author of  
*How to Win Customers and Keep Them for Life*

**Fact:** Customers are willing to pay up to ten percent more for excellent service.

–Ron Zemke, author of  
*Delivering Knock Your Socks Off Service*

**Fact:** The average turnover rate at a call center is 30 percent with some exceeding 60 percent. Most call center employees stay with a company from one to two years and then move on to another field. Turnovers speak volumes about working conditions. The way employees are treated influences the way they deal with customers.

–Olsten Corporation, Melville, NY

**Fact:** In order for reps to put a smile in their voice, companies have to provide an environment where people feel like smiling.

–Lori Lockhart, Director of  
Sprint Voice Services

**Fact:** The biggest reason for people leaving is burnout due to balancing two diametrically opposed goals. On the one hand, reps must do everything possible to satisfy the customer. On the other hand, they've got to keep the call as short as possible.

–Michael Hoffman,  
OmniTech Consulting Group of Chicago

When a company exceeds customer expectations, it stands out from its competitors. People want to do business with the organization, and they are willing to spend more for it. If reps are burnt out or if no one pays attention to customer retention, sales will go down, and, ultimately, market shares will be lost. A close examination of one's own organization and how the individual perceives his own role can provide valuable feedback in whether or not the organization is meeting or exceeding customer satisfaction.

**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](http://www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com).*