

Change Your Attitude, Change Your Performance

By Judith Filek—President,
Impact Communications, Inc.

An inexhaustible good nature is one of the most precious gifts of heaven, spreading itself like oil over the troubled sea of thought and keeping the mind and spirit positive in the roughest of weather.

~Washington Irving, writer

Customers can get angry. When they do, they make the phone rep's job down right miserable. It is easy to get swept into the customer's negativity and respond in a cold, uncaring manner. If the goal is to provide exceptional customer service, maintaining a positive attitude is critical.

What are some good strategies?

The easiest way to maintain an upbeat attitude with a difficult customer is to empathize with them. Put yourself in the customer's shoes. If the situation happened to you, wouldn't you be angry also? Instead of picturing the customer as a nameless, faceless enemy, picture the caller as someone like yourself, someone who wants an issue resolved quickly and to his/her advantage.

Post some pictures of people you love in your cubicle. Look at one of the pictures while talking and pretend the person on the other end of the line is someone you know and like. That frame work alone will change your attitude.

Force yourself to focus on solving the problem versus internalizing the customer's attacks. Use the person's name a lot in your conversation and apologize frequently. When people hear their name and hear statements like *"I am so sorry this happened to you,"* they begin to feel receptive to problem solving.

If you ever feel yourself getting frazzled by the customer's attacks, make sure to pause often to get your thoughts together. Always, think before you speak. At all costs, avoid saying:

- "Like I told you before."
- "No one here would have promised you anything like that."
- "If you would just listen."
- Sentences starting with "You"

Be careful of your tone of voice. The old adage, *"It's not what you say, but how you say it,"* is true. Regardless of how they have treated you, customers expect you to be pleasant, sincere and helpful.

In addition, do not lay blame on anyone in the organization. If the customer's problem is due to production or to the sales person's error, do not cast aspersions. Simply, apologize for the inconvenience.

When doubts occur, picture how good it feels to solve a problem and save the customer. It is what makes the job rewarding. It's what makes your day. In addition, it increases the likelihood that you will achieve your bonus and your call center will stay in existence.

Lastly, take care of yourself. If you have had a bad call, immediately de-stress yourself with a quick break or by taking a walk down the aisle. Talk out the situation with your colleagues or your manager. Look at the lighter side and find humor in the situation if you can. Finally, have a serious talk with yourself and remind yourself how good you are at your job and how committed you are. Consider doing some isometric exercises at your desk and even saying some positive affirmations out loud. Do not go back on the phone until you feel you are in the right frame of mind. Subsequent customers will notice if you take your negative feelings onto the next call.

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Being successful at handling difficult customers is draining. There is lots of stress dealing with upset people on a regular basis. However, if your attitude is positive, you can meet any challenge successfully.

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.