

Clues for Solving People Problems

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Most of us conduct a lot of business by phone. If we are a member of a customer service or technical support team, all of our day is spent dealing with people on the telephone. Some people make talking to them a real challenge. They are Interrupters, Nay Sayers, Know It Alls and Ramblers. Having effective strategies for dealing with them is important.

Interrupters: When people interrupt, it is important to consider why and to assess if you promote this behavior. For example, if you speak too quickly, the listener may not follow what you are saying. With frequent pauses, you can lessen the likelihood of interrupting. Another thing that causes interruptions is the speaker's habit of repeating the same point over and over again. The person on the other end of the line interrupts in self defense, hoping that you will "cut to the chase" and he can get back to the task at hand. If a speaker is clear and concise and if his statements come to definite ends, very few people will interrupt. Conciseness gives the listener time to digest the thought and think about it. When our **Impact Communications' consultants** work with people on their phone skills, it is amazing how often the speaker says the same thing; as if by doing so, it will wear down the listener's resistance.

A speaker who is clear and concise and still gets interruptions, needs to take charge of the situation. The earlier you control the interruptions, the quicker the person will get the message that you are not thrown and that you are trying to be accurate. You might say something like, "Yes, I understand your concern. I was just getting to that. If I can finish my point, it might answer your question." A speaker can also say, "If you can hold your point for a few seconds, I'd like you to try implementing my recommendation. If that doesn't work, we can try your suggestion." A speaker may have to do this repeatedly until the person gets the message to not interrupt.

Nay Sayers: Nay Sayers are annoying because no matter what you say, they seem to take issue. The easiest way to control these people is to acknowledge their concerns with a statement such as, "I can see why you have some doubts. We have worked hard to correct that issue. Could I get you to give it a shot?" Typically, the Nay Sayer will acquiesce because you have been respectful of the person's knowledge level or past history with the technical support team. Primarily, Nay Sayers want you to acknowledge that you have caused them a lot of inconvenience in the past. They also want you to clearly understand that they do not want you to continue to waste their time. Asking a caller who has been having serious issues to do the same basic corrections that didn't work in the past bodes disaster and more resistance. When you get any objection, make sure you consider whether what the person is saying is true. If it is, and you don't have the technical skills to help, escalate the call immediately.

Know It alls: There are many times when technical support people speak to callers who are actually more technically astute than they are. What works best with this type of personality is to use the person as a resource and to acknowledge how much easier your job is because of their knowledge level. Flattery works! However, this does not mean that you have to acquiesce to their recommendations. Certainly consider them, but if you are confident, hold your position. A simple statement such as, "You are probably right. However, just to be sure, can I ask you to try this" will work wonders. Normally if the Know It All feels respected, the person will become cooperative.

Ramblers: The last type of personality, the Rambler, is difficult because you can never be sure exactly what his point is. Because the person rambles, we are kept on the phone a lot longer than is necessary. With a rambler, look for an opportunity when the person pauses, to step in and acknowledge any concerns that you have identified. After the acknowledgement, you should say, "I am confused about your point. What is the key issue?" You can also try to put focus on the Rambler's comments by saying, "Here is what I think you are asking. I want to be sure to address all your points. Are these correct? Is there anything I have left out?"

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While the strategies listed are important, they will all fail if your tone of voice sounds insincere or if you have a monotone. The more you pause and breathe, the more you can bring warmth into your voice. In addition, if you smile, you also affect how your voice will sound. With the right tone of voice and the correct approach, Interrupters, Ramblers, Nay Sayers, and Know It Alls can be managed. These suggestions take time to master, but they will be worth your efforts.

*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.*