

Want More Bang for Your Buck, Try Coaching Your People

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When your customer service or technical support representatives handle between forty and eighty calls a day, it is easy for them to become complacent. Regardless of how good your reps currently are, they can always be better. Just ask Tiger Woods or Phil Michelson how they got to be superstars, and they will tell you excellent coaches. John D. Rockefeller said that when managers act as coaches, they can show average people how to perform as superior people. The challenge for managers is how best to coach. Three key activities are necessary and should be done on a regular basis. They are **record**, **review** and **refine**.

Record: Call center reps must know how they are doing. Unless there are specific complaints, many reps don't pay much attention to their own performance, figuring that no news is good news. If there are complaints, some are unsure how to correct them. To learn how they are doing, the manager or the rep should record at least three random calls over the course of day. These calls should not be at the beginning of the day, but rather as the day progresses when the rep gets more "in the zone."

Review: Once the calls are recorded, the manager and the rep should review them in the privacy of an office. It is critical for this review session to be a "give and take." The rep should be asked to evaluate his calls on two things: what he said and how he said it. He should also be invited to give feedback first.

In terms of the content, some questions that should be considered are the following.

Did the individual answer the caller's issue and respond appropriately. Was the information accurate? If the caller needed technical advice, did the person resolve the caller's problem? Was there information that the rep should have known but didn't?

The rep should also be asked to listen to each of the three calls from the perspective of the customer. Did the rep sound friendly, sincere, interested or did the rep sound bored or pre-occupied? Did the rep acknowledge the person's issue? Did he seem empathetic?

Since we are often our own worst critics, the rep may need to be reminded to notice not only the things he might do better, but also the things he is already doing well. Once the rep gives his impressions, the manager should voice what he hears, sandwiching the areas for improvement between positive observations.

Refine: The tricky part for any coach is offering suggestions and providing tips for improvement. It is especially hard if the rep is already good. Wise coaches read and stay up-to-date on any topic related to customer service. They walk around a lot and are very observant. They know their reps on a personal basis and look for informal ways to increase a rep's problem fixing options or expand their skill set. Finally, they provide opportunities for frequent training, whether it is product or soft skills training, to make people feel more confident in their roles.

When coaching is a priority and done on a regular basis, unbelievable results can occur. Not only do market shares and profitability increase, but the reps themselves become committed to exceeding customer expectations in every task that they perform. Coaching is your insurance policy for delivering world class service.

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.