

## Review Those Problem Calls

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John F. Kennedy once said efforts are not enough without courage and direction. As inside sales people and support people, our days are filled with trying to placate irate or distressed customers over the phone. In fact, most of us go through enormous efforts. Our efforts may be in vain without proper direction. However, direction comes from understanding or awareness of exactly what went wrong and what could have been done differently.

After hanging up from a bad call, it is important to keep a log and write down in detail as much as you can remember about the caller's issue, what you said in response, what the caller said, and what you suggested as a solution. If the call seemed to escalate, it is important to try to identify the pivotal point in the conversation. Also, recall your feelings as you handled the call. Were you annoyed, under a lot of stress, concerned about other callers in cue, or worried that you were spending too much time with one caller?

Most sales centers and call centers record calls. After your written analysis, take the time to listen to the call in its entirety. Often, what people find is their responses weren't exactly what they thought. Their tone of voice sounded defensive. They gave the customer a lot of orders or laid blame with statements such as "what you need to do..." or "what you should have done..." Reps responded with one of three deadly statements: "NO," "Don't take it out on me or "It is not our fault."

Once one knows what actually happened, the person can ascertain the right direction for next time by talking it over with more senior people or management. Maybe in the future, they have to be careful of giving orders or becoming defensive. Maybe they have to watch their tone of voice so that it doesn't sound unsure or timid. With knowledge, there is power.

Obviously, it takes courage to examine a call, but the best phone people strive to get better. They

take being a professional seriously. They actively seek to learn from their mistakes. Speaking to an upset customer can be stressful, but the more we learn from the past, the more productive our efforts in the future will be.

*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.*