

A Difficult Economy Requires Extraordinary Communication Skills

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The effects of the down economy are being felt all around the globe. The “R” word is being said out loud. Every corporation in almost every industry is feeling the pinch of the recession no matter where they are located. In tough times, the frontline people, those folks that interface with the customer by phone, are really critical. They are the face of the company or corporation. With so much at stake, phone reps, whether they are inside sales, customer service or technical support, really need to “up the bar” on their communication skills. Otherwise, customers look else where. Here are three great tips.

- 1. Convey warmth and friendliness from the first moment to the last.** Your voice is your calling card. Within seconds, customers determine whether the individual on the other end of the line sounds sincere and caring. If a phone rep speaks quickly or speaks non-stop, inevitably, the speaker’s tone of voice will be compromised. Instead of warmth and friendliness, listeners may hear a speaker who sounds bored or anxious to get them off the line.

To have a pleasant, upbeat voice, a speaker needs to pause often and take a breath. Through pausing and breathing, a speaker can bring the necessary emotion into the voice and minimize the likelihood of non-words that chip away at trust and credibility. Additionally, while it may sound trite, customers can “feel” a smile through the phone. With a smile on your face, a speaker sounds sincere, truly interested in providing excellent service.

- 2. Be knowledgeable.** Customers expect to talk to subject matter experts, not neophytes. With all the pressures a down economy brings, clients need issues resolved efficiently and effectively. If a rep or sales person hesi-

tates, repeatedly asks for the same information or says, “I’m not sure. May I place you on hold,” customers become easily annoyed. They are busy people. They don’t want to wait while the person educates himself.

Today’s phone reps, thus, must have their Ph.D. in the company’s products and services. They need to be able to handle the tough questions, such as how a product compares to a competitor’s, why an upgrade is necessary or how long a “fix” or repair may take. Regardless of the size of the product line, phone reps must set aside time to learn, whether on the job or off. Learning as you go won’t be tolerated in today’s environment.

- 3. Exceed expectations.** Most company representatives can resolve issues. Those that exceed expectations garner attention and customer loyalty. Free shipping or special rewards are definitely noticed. So are special deals or promotions.

In today’s tumultuous business environment where many of us are doing multiple jobs, business people treasure trusted advisors. They pay close attention to those who help them do their jobs better or demonstrate they have their best interests in mind. These phone representatives are on speed dial.

The troubling economy may be around for a while. Your products or services no longer sell themselves. You do. Every interaction counts. Make sure to distinguish yourself from others with warm, knowledge and diligence.

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.

