

## Call Centre Selling

### Dealing With Customers On The Phone

## Call Centre Selling

Ask anyone how they feel about ringing a call centre or being contacted by a call centre and the reaction that you get is often negative. People say things like:

- It takes a long time before I get to get to speak to a person who can help me
- They play music and keep telling me how important my call is. Why don't they employ more staff?
- When I do get through, the agent is obviously working from a script
- The agents are often incapable of dealing with my problem
- The call centre is based overseas, with corresponding language and accent problems
- The company has touch tone menu systems and automated queuing systems that just make me feel frustrated
- Departments don't communicate with each other so I have to repeat information, or describe my problem over and over

First of all, if you are an agent some of these issues are out of your control. Systems have often been designed from people in IT who don't always see customer service issues from the customer's point of view.

There are some key issues, however, that you can influence. Ideas that can help you give better service and make your role more fulfilling. Here they are:

- Begin with your attitude. Customers want to speak with someone who is friendly and helpful. However, they haven't called you to make friends so you must stay focused on identifying and solving their problem

- Introduce yourself and give your name. One tip is to say your first name first, then give your full name. “Hello, my name is Sally. Sally Smith and I work in Customer Services. How can I help you?”
- Be friendly and helpful. Asking “How can I help?” encourages the customer
- to talk and give you the information you need
- If you get an angry customer don’t interrupt them. Let them have their say.
- Usually, once they have had their say they will apologise and be more receptive to listen to you. Be empathetic
- Ask them for their name. People like to deal with people and, increasingly, call centres have become more automated and less customer friendly. You need to create a relationship if you are giving excellent customer service
- You can produce a script, but make sure you use your own words and phrases that sound natural and not scripted
- For incoming calls a typical structure for the script will be:
  - Open and introduction
  - Ask questions
  - Identify problems and needs
  - Present your solution
  - Gain commitment
  - Upsell and cross sell
  - Close the call
- During the call use the statement-question technique. If you follow a statement with a question you keep control of the call. I have examples of this technique. For more information e-mail me [frank@salestraining.co.uk](mailto:frank@salestraining.co.uk)

- Give the customer time. People buy differently. Some people buy quickly, but others prefer to buy slowly. Match your selling style to their preferred buying style
- By the same token, some people want to buy quickly. If this is the case let them buy at the pace they prefer
- Try not to interrupt. This is one of the most common faults in salespeople.
- By interrupting we stop the flow of information from the customer. Also, it is rude and doesn't help to build relationships
- Nothing is a problem. The best sales agents talk about what they can do rather than what they can't. If you have to say no then say no, however try to find an alternative to help your customer
- Work on your questioning skills. Asking questions is 3 times more persuasive than presenting information. Write your questions down. Learn the value of open questions that get the customer talking. Open questions

ask the respondent to think and reflect. They will give you facts, opinions and feelings.

- Closed questions give specific information. They are also useful, but too many closed questions, which give short sharp answers, can make the customer feel they are being interrogated
- One way to overcome this is to introduce your questions. Explain what you are going to ask before you ask it. This is called prefacing. Examples are:
- May I ask you.....? Could you tell me.....?I would be interested to know.....?
- Work on your listening skills. On the phone we can use 3 basic techniques.

- Asking questions, summarising and responding without saying anything specific. This third technique has been called NCGs; non-committal grunts. Examples are “Mmmm” “Yes” “Really?” They encourage the other person
- to keep talking and show we are listening
  
- Once you feel you have identified their needs present your solution. Don’t just present a list of features, but explain the advantages and benefits of your offer.
  
- If you get an objection like “That sounds a bit expensive” use the following,

4 stage process. Listen to the objection. Don’t interrupt. Ask questions to clarify the objection. Most salespeople jump in too quickly with their justification and it annoys customers. Now you can deal with objection and then close the sale or move on

- Upsell and cross sell. Once the basic buying decision has been made you are more likely to be able to upgrade the initial offer, or sell ancillary products. Don’t feel you need to a sales pitch, just ask questions

- Dealing with rejection. Sales is tough. Rejection is a big part of selling that we need to get used to. Don’t take it personally. Keep smiling and stick to the basics.

