TAMING THE TELEPHONE

Outline

LEARNING OUTCOME
Upon successful completion of this segment, participants will be able to manage a variety of customer calls using effective listening skills and verbal techniques. Participants will have assessed their own skills and developed an action plan for skills refinement.

OBJECTIVES
Upon successful completion of this segment the participants will be able to:
1. develop an understanding of customer needs and sources of frustrations
2. evaluate their own telephone voice, attitudes and skills
3. observe basic telephone conventions/ develop a phone script
4. use effective listening techniques to manage callers more efficiently
5. distinguish between various types of calls and develop strategies for dealing with each
6. effectively close a call
7. develop an action plan for self improvement

RATIONALE
Service Managers, Advisers and other customer relations staff with background knowledge of telephone techniques will serve customers more effectively, improve customer retention and enhance the employer’s public image.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
Upon successful completion of this segment, participants will have:
1. identified customer needs and sources of frustration
2. identified and evaluated their own telephone voice, attitudes and skills
3. scripted a basic 4-point telephone opening
4. defined open and closed questioning techniques
5. developed open and closed questions to obtain information
6. defined active listening sub-skills
7. used active listening skills to enhance customer service
8. identified customer turn offs
9. developed strategies to transform casual callers into regular customers
10. identified the need for customer progress calls and follow up
11. developed strategies and techniques for dealing with angry customers
12. developed strategies for handling talkative customers
Taming the Telephone Outline

13. effectively closed a customer call

A sound knowledge in the following areas would be an asset:
• No prerequisite courses

1. What mistakes did the service staff in the video make?: __________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Customer Retention Grid
2. Your vocal quality is determined by: _______________________________________
   _______________________________________
   _______________________________________
   _______________________________________

3. Self Evaluation

   • I am comfortable with my telephone voice ________________________________
     My voice has certain qualities I’d like to improve __________________________
   • I can handle just about any call with a customer __________________________
     There are some calls I just dread _________________________________________
   • When I pick up the phone, my goal is to get that person into the shop________
     When I pick up the phone, my goal is to get off the phone ASAP so I can get back to
     my customers_________________________________________________________

The Basics

4. Critique the four audio greetings you heard in class. What did you like/dislike in each
case?

   _______________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________
5. The standard 4 – point greeting includes:


6. **Things to have at hand:** There are lots of items you could keep by your desk that will boost your ability to serve customers. Write down as many as you can.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

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### Call Management

7. **You’ve just returned from lunch to find eight phone messages that came in over the past hour:**

1. Customer Betty Boop called from her cell phone. Her engine light is on and she wants to know what to do.
2. Your boss called. He wants to know how last week’s course went.
3. Darlene called from the front office. There’s a problem with your dental claim.
5. Customer Eric DeRed called. His transmission is still shifting roughly and he wants to know what you’re going to do about it.
6. Your son’s hockey coach called. He wants to talk to you ASAP.
7. Customer Don Corleone called. He says it’s important.
8. Your friend Chris called.

Compare each call to the others. In which order would you return them?

1. _____________________  5_________________________
2. _____________________  6_________________________
3. _____________________  7_________________________
4. _____________________  8_________________________
8. Some strategies for dealing with telephone/in- person customers include

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________


Customer Turn-offs

Which of the following statements has a negative connotation? Suggest a more appropriate alternative for each.

9. Your car should be ready by noon.

10. I’m sorry, but Bob hasn’t come in yet.

11. The parts guy went home early.

12. I’m sorry I didn’t call you back. My boss made us go to a meeting that lasted all morning.

13. You have to watch those guys – I’ve heard a lot of stories about their work.


15. Sorry about that…I just had to finish up with a customer. Hold on for a second…he has another question…__
Turning Inquiries into Customers

Video Clip #1

16. The Adviser might have successfully invited the customer into the shop if he had:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Facing objections

Think of as many responses as possible to the following objections:

17. “I can’t afford it”_______________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

18. “I already had that done”______________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

19. “I probably won’t keep the car”_________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

The Follow Up Call

20. How often do you call a customer to follow up on service work?
   1) Only when there’s been a problem
   2) Whenever I can
   3) Never
   4) Sometimes with new customers
21. Follow up calls should be used in the following situations:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Learning from the angry customer

22. Think back to the last time you phoned an organization to complain about something. How did the service person handle your call?
   1) Not well – I’m angry just thinking about it
   2) I don’t remember
   3) Reasonably well
   4) Very well

23. Video clip #2: What techniques did the service adviser use in dealing with the angry customer? Was there a turning point in the exchange? Write your observations below.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

24. The four steps to follow when dealing with an angry customer on the phone are:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
The Progress Call

25. **Exercise:** You’ve promised a very particular customer that his car will be ready by noon. The shop is behind schedule. The car won’t be ready until 2 at the earliest. Do you…

1) Go to lunch 5 minutes early
2) Work on one of the techs – he owes you a favour
3) Bite the bullet: call the customer ASAP

Closing the Call

26. Four points to remember when closing a call include…

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Developing an Action Plan

A = I can do this well consistently
B = I have some confidence in this area
C = HELP! I definitely need work in this area

Fill in the blanks below using the ABC code above.

1. I know what our customers want
   ___________________

2. I have a good attitude when dealing with customers
   ___________________

3. I can empathize with customers’ concerns
   ___________________

4. I can efficiently prioritize my phone messages
   ___________________

5. I’m comfortable with my greeting script
   ___________________

6. I know when to use open and closed questions
   ___________________

7. I understand the benefits of active listening on the phone
   ___________________

8. I understand the impact of negative telephone language on customer perceptions
   ___________________

9. I have strategies for dealing with angry callers
   ___________________

10. I have strategies for dealing with talkative callers
    ___________________

11. I feel in control and able to manage a variety of caller behaviour
    ___________________

12. I use the phone as a management tool: I make follow-up and progress calls to help manage my time and satisfy my customers
    ___________________

A       B       C

Take pride in your “A”s and give some thought to practising those “B” skills. “C” skills require immediate attention. Try talking to a peer or supervisor to get some insight and practical suggestions for improvement.
SUMMARY

Studies show that up to 60% of a service and repair facility’s business comes in not through the door, but through the phone. You simply can’t afford to view the telephone as an annoyance. It is the tool that gives you access to dozens of customers every day. If these callers feel valued, they’ll give you their business. If they don’t, they won’t. Simple as that. Perfect the telephone management techniques we’ve demonstrated today and critically evaluate your skills on an ongoing basis. Your job satisfaction and marketability will increase tremendously.

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Your questions and comments are always welcome. Please visit the CARS web site at www.cars-council.ca. We can also be reached by phone at (905) 709-1010