

What's Important When Training Phone Representatives

By Judith Filek—President
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Most companies spend their training dollars on improving **What** Phone Reps say to their customers. While this type of training is an important piece to the puzzle, especially for new hires or when the company has changed directions, it still leaves many Reps feeling uncomfortable or apprehensive in their roles. Most often, Reps don't know why, but their lack of confidence is apparent to customers. Giving Reps the words to say is simply not enough. There is a missing component to training Inside Sales, Technical Support or Customer Service Representatives, and that is the soft skills aspect.

Reps need to know **How** to communicate with their customer in a way that puts the customer at ease and builds a bond of trust and credibility with the company's message/ value proposition. Audio taping and coaching are critical. With coaching and support, Reps can adjust their attitudes, behaviors and vocal techniques to become true Phone Pros.

Certainly, everyone would agree that trust and credibility are the keys to growing and maintaining a customer base- the heart of a company's profits. But what exactly is the difference between training Reps to improve what they say versus training Reps how to communicate with impact?

Even if you have never heard of him, you probably know what Albert Meribian, Professor Emeritus at UCLA, demonstrated over and over in his work. Communication is primarily non-verbal -subconscious. Meribian's extensive research proves that within seconds, a customer determines whether or not they will trust the message conveyed to them by the Phone Rep.

Meribian explains that only 15% of a customer's trust level and subsequent willingness to purchase or feel satisfied with customer care is the result of the actual words your Reps say. Fully 85% of a Rep's credibility and perceived trustworthiness on the phone is determined by how the customer feels about his or her

interaction with your Reps. This feeling is not something determined logically in the cerebral cortex of the brain by the customer consciously processing the words and the logic communicated by your Rep.

The feeling of trust that is so crucial to whether or not the customer will buy, buy again, and remain a satisfied walking testimonial for how great your company is, comes from the Limbic System, or animal part of our brain. Credibility and trustworthiness are not the result of sticking to a well-crafted script that says all the right things. Rather, this emotional bond of trust is brought about in a customer by the subconscious cues indicated in the Rep's tone of voice, placement of pausing and breathing, effective listening techniques and tact in responding so that the customer feels at ease. Trust comes more from communicating in all the right ways than it does from saying all the right things.

In other words, trust and credibility on the phone are determined fully 85% by what is heard in the voice and only 15% by the message itself. We call this 85% IMPACT. It is not what gets said so much as how it gets said that satisfies the customer.

The ratio outlined by Meribian is not arbitrary. It is proven, and it is affecting your bottom line right now. You do have the power to use this principle to give your company a tremendous advantage over your competition. By outfitting your call center reps with world class Phone Pro Training provided exclusively by Impact Communications, you can be certain that you are receiving the best return on your training dollar investment.

Question: *We're interested in your reaction to this article. Click here – to comment on this article, share your concerns or ask questions. Judy will respond to all questions.*

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