

Achieving Long Lasting Client Relationships on the Phone

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The importance of developing long term relationships with your customers cannot be underestimated, particularly in this down economy. In the past, if a company had a terrific product, customers flocked to the company and stayed with it. Not any more. Today, despite the product, there are competitors who are selling something similar. Customers have lots of choices, and unless a company has built strong client relationships, customers will continue to jump from supplier to supplier.

The question is how do you build customer loyalty over the phone? The following are six easy steps that can increase your chances for success.

- 1. Have a positive attitude every time you take or make a call.** Make sure that the customer can sense that you like your job and enjoy people. Use words and phrases that show customers you have a positive outlook. For example, a simple statement, such as, “We value your business,” can really impress a customer. Another good way to convey a positive attitude is to have a smile on your face as you pick up the phone. It will transfer across the wires. At all costs, avoid sounding “negative.” If you have to say “no,” be sure to tell the cus-

tomers what you can do as an alternative. Never take or make a call immediately after you have had an upsetting call. Always calm down first, or it will show in your voice, and the current customer will feel that you are irritated.

- 2. Work at developing a rapport with your customers.** It will increase their comfort level in dealing with you and your company. Ask your customers some questions about where they live or the weather. Make note of any personal or business issues they reveal in your computer and refer to them on subsequent calls. Share something personal about yourself also. Customers enjoy speaking with someone who is friendly and outgoing. They have a tendency to remain loyal to companies with whom they feel they have personal connections even if the company raises prices.
- 3. Be trustworthy.** Never give the customer any reason to mistrust you. What you tell the customer should be true, even if that means accepting blame. Customers should conclude that you are highly ethical and will give them a straight answer and not an inflated estimate, for example, just to get their business.
- 4. Be accurate.** Customers don't like when reps say, “I think” or “I am not really sure.” They want a rep who knows his/her product line. If you are unfamiliar with your company's large product line, learn one or two new products each week. Always have your facts straight before you give an answer to a customer. An inaccurate statement can affect people's lives. For example, if you misquote the weight load for a connector or the type of nail to be used, floors may collapse and lives will be lost. If you have to place a customer on hold or call the person back after you have checked with an engineer, do so.
- 5. Be responsive.** The quicker the rep is at responding, the more impressed the customer will be. How long does it take for a customer to receive a call back from you or your company? If the customer thinks you will call back within the hour, and you don't call back for a week, he will find someone else with

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whom to do business. It is a good idea to under-promise and over-deliver. Customers hate when reps promise a delivery or call back, and it doesn't happen. On the other hand, they are very impressed when it seems you have done something above and beyond what would be required in a particular situation.

- 6. Create a win/win relationship.** Anyone in business today knows things can go wrong. What determines whether customers want to continue doing business with your company is how you treat them when there is an issue. Do they feel as though it has been a positive resolution to a situation for everyone concerned or a war to get the company to act on the problem?

Building client relationships is something that every phone rep needs to consider. By maintaining a positive attitude, developing rapport, being trustworthy, accurate and responsive and by creating a win/win situation, front line representatives can turn customers into raving fans.

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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.