

Good Answers to Annoying Customer Questions

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Customers can try your patience. It is easy to conclude that no matter what you say; they won't listen or will become argumentative. Obviously, there are some customers that fill that bill, but most will accept your answers if they sound probable and if you seem trustworthy. The following are some possible answers to some trying questions. Any variation of these responses will help you to educate your customers and avoid misunderstandings.

Question:

"What do you mean your price went up?"

Customers always have questions about price increases. Old customers will expect you to cut them a special deal. If your goods or services are available elsewhere, some may even threaten to go elsewhere. On the other hand, most customers don't like the hassle of going elsewhere if your services and products are good and as long as the price increase has not been exorbitant.

A good solution to this question is to begin with an acknowledgement of how upsetting it is to pay more. Then, give a reasonable justification for the price escalation. Remember, customers need to see value in remaining loyal to your organization.

Solution:

"I can certainly appreciate how concerned you are with our price increase. We have worked very hard to keep prices as low as possible. You may recall there was no price increase for your organization for 2002. The fact is, our costs for production have increased dramatically, just as yours have. It was a difficult decision, but we will not be increasing delivery costs, and there will be no changes in our service."

Question:

"Why don't you know the answer?"

It's amazing how much information our customers expect us to know. Most of them don't have a clue how many parts a company sells or how many possible things can go wrong with a machine. The question usually comes after a rep looks up several pieces of information. At that point, customers start to feel anxious that the rep is unsure and may not be able to fix the problem. They wonder if they should be speaking to someone else. Your job is to quell those fears immediately once the question is posed.

Solution:

"Mr. XXX, I can see why you might wonder if I know my stuff because I am always accessing information from my data base. I double check my diagnosis every step of the way, just to be sure. There are three different models of this machine. I check my information so that we don't add to your problems. Your problem is more complicated than you think, but, if you can be patient with me for a moment, I can get you up and running quickly."

Question:

"Why can't you make an exception?"

Customers look for deals, but, in the end, they know every company has a bottom line. As a phone rep, it is important to know what authority you have or don't have with regards to making an exception. There may be times when it is appropriate to make an exception. In those instances, make it clear to the customer that this is a one time deal. When rules cannot be overlooked, never respond to the customer in a tentative manner to soften the blow. If you say to the customer that you are not real sure if you can make an exception, you imply that perhaps it can be done if they push hard enough.

Solution:

"Jack, I wish I could tell you that we can make an exception. Our company policy is that we do not return specialty items. Since these were made particularly to your specifications, we would not be able to resell them."

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Question:

“What do you mean that isn’t covered by my policy/warranty?”

It’s always a shock to have to pay for something that you think is covered. It causes people to feel cheated. When warrantee issues come up, be sure to be sympathetic. Also, know whether exceptions are ever made. It’s a good idea to create a “cheat sheet” of what various policies or warranties cover and keep them on your desktop. If there are policies the customer can take out to avoid this in the future, be sure to suggest changing the coverage.

Solution:

“Jerry, I am sorry to have to tell you but that part is covered by warranty for the first 90 days only. In order to continue coverage, you would have had to take out the extended warranty at the time of purchase. I don’t have any record that that was done. Just as an FYI, whenever you purchase an electronic product, it is always good to take the extended warranty. The cost for fixing this item is \$543.00. The repair can be done within 48 hours. How would you like me to handle this?”

Question:

“Can I speak with your supervisor?”

Customers ask to speak with a supervisor when they feel the rep is unconfident or when they get information that doesn’t make sense. If you get this question, examine how you have explained something. Perhaps, your words or voice sounds tentative. Perhaps, your explanation wasn’t clear. Considered rephrasing your explanation after assuring the customer you will connect him or her with a supervisor.

Solution:

“Mr. Smith, I can connect you with my supervisor. He is away from his desk right now. What he will tell you is the same as I have told you. Your policy covers...”

Customer questions can be exasperating. Knowing how to respond to them is important to making your life as a phone rep less stressful. While we have suggested some possible responses to difficult questions, it is a good idea to come up your own personalized versions. Then practice saying them out loud so that your voice sounds confident. Also, get feedback from your peers and supervisors on your responses. Finally, consider taping your actual calls and playing them back.

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 web site, www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com.