

How to kick ass on the phone

So you want to be better on the phone with customers?

We've outlined some of the best ways to handle different phone call scenarios so you sound professional, confident and calm each and every time you pick up the phone.

1. Greeting and concluding a call

The best way to answer the phone is to start off with a Thank you! It sets a positive tone and gives you the opportunity to smile right away.

Greeting: "Thank you for calling (*company*). This is (*insert your name*), How can I help you today?"

I've thanked someone right away for choosing to call us, I've let them know my name so we can have a conversation like old friends and I've left the call open ended so they can now speak and tell me the reason for the call.

Ending a call: Sense when there is nothing more to discuss on the call but be sure to ask.

"Is there anything else I can help you with today?"

If not, "Thank you for calling (*company name*), we hope you have a nice day"

Try not to sound too robotic when you get to the end of a call, so many times I've had nice casual conversation with someone and as soon as the call is wrapping up you can immediately tell they have bounced back to a script. Keep it genuine.

2. When you don't know the answer

It's okay to not have all the answers. There is nothing wrong with telling someone you don't know and you need to put them on hold or call them back.

"I'm not sure, would you mind if I placed you on hold for just a moment so I can find out for you?"

"What's the best phone number to reach you at? I'll find out and get back to you as soon as possible."

If you need to call a customer back, do it right away. There is nothing worse than having to wait for days for a callback. It's a surefire way to give them enough time to contact a competitor to do the job instead.

3. The Rambler

It's not uncommon to get someone on the phone who just wants to chat. Some people are just looking for a friendly voice to talk to. It can be frustrating when you are busy and need to get back to work, but to someone else you might be making their day by taking 10 minutes to talk. Try to get them back on target when you find a good opening so that you can get to the point of the call and wrap it up without sounding rude.

"So you were saying you needed help with...."

"I'm sorry to interrupt but you were saying you needed someone to come out and look at your furnace?" (*insert your business*)

"Can we schedule something for you, so we can get your sump pump working again?"

Simple little reminders of why they called can get them back on track and to the point of the call.

4. Getting hung up on/ dropping a call

It can be awkward when you lose a caller, sometimes it's simply because of bad phone connections and sometimes you know right away, they hung up on you on purpose (if they are upset/angry).

Bad phone connection: You are talking and talking and suddenly realize no one is there, sometimes you don't even know at what point you lost a caller. You can wait a minute or two and see if they call you back, but if they don't right away and you know the number they called from you should try to reconnect immediately.

"I'm so sorry, it looks like we lost the call, I'm not sure what the last thing you heard me say was?"

"I'm sorry we lost our connection, where did we leave off?"

Getting hung up on: You'll know right away if someone hung up on you out of anger. Sometimes the best thing you can do is wait (20-30 minutes) so they can cool off and then have someone else try calling them back. A colleague or a manager might be better off handling someone who was obviously heated with you.

"I'm sorry you were having some issues with my colleague earlier, is there anything I can help with so we can take care of (the issue) for you?"

"I'm sorry there was some issues earlier, what seems to be the problem, hopefully I can help assist you?"

5. The angry and upset customer

There are a thousand scenarios we could make up that you may run into, some justified and some not. The most important thing to remember is to stay calm. You have nothing to gain by yelling back at someone, and it will only make them more angry. You need to sympathize with them and let them vent. Active listening and apologizing go a long way, whether it's warranted or not.

"I'm sorry you feel that way, let me see what I can do to fix this situation"

"I'm sorry to hear that, let's see what we can do..."

"I'm sorry for the trouble, can you please tell me a little more about..."

"I hear what you are saying and I'm sorry you had to deal with that, this is what we can do..."

"Thank you for bringing this to my attention, I'm sorry about (the issue), let me be completely honest..."

“What I can do for you right now is..... And then later...”

In all of the above statements, we’ve apologized to the customer, and we’ve let the customer know that we are going to try and find a solution for them. Sometimes you have to let them yell and scream to get their frustrations out and some sympathetic listening will let them do that. After they are done “complaining” let them know that you’re going to have a solution for them or be completely honest and transparent about the resolution.

Ask lots of questions. While they vent, try asking as many questions as you can, it lets the customer know you’re really trying to understand their side of the problem and also gives you the very best information in order to resolve the issue with a true understanding of why they are mad. People tend to leave out information that may point to some wrong doing on their end, so you want to extract every detail you can by asking them questions.

The Customer isn’t always right, but it’s your job to make them feel understood and resolve the problem. They are your best marketing tool and even one person with a bad taste from your company can do a lot of harm with online reviews and social media. Don’t let people take advantage of you, but be sure to treat everyone with the most respect while maintaining your companies reputation.