

Monthly Communications Article

FROM TELEPHONE DOCTOR® CUSTOMER SERVICE TRAINING



We hope you enjoy this installment in our series of monthly service tips. Feel free to forward this article on to colleagues and coworkers who you feel might benefit from it. You're welcome to reprint this article so long as the credit info, which follows the article, is displayed. If you'd prefer not to get these articles each month, simply reply back to this message and ask to be removed.

International Customer Service Week

Ask the Telephone Doctor...

By: Nancy Friedman, The Telephone Doctor

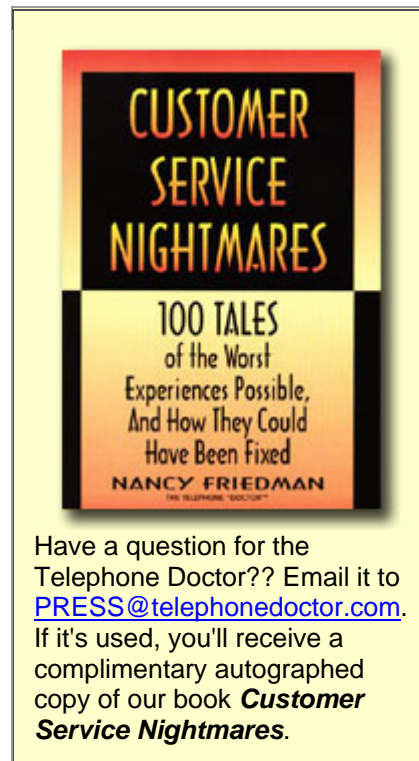
Many of us are aware that Customer Service Week is October 4 through 8. And most of us are also aware, that we really should be celebrating customer service week all year round - not just one week. At least that's the mentality of Telephone Doctor.

So in honor of Customer Service Week, we wanted to bring you a few of the letters we get throughout the year, from CSR's, managers, owners and every day folks. They email or write in what happened to them, and then ask our advice. I figured it would make a fun column. Sort of the Ann Landers of Customer Service.

As we all know, the day-to-day treatment of how we treat each other, as well as customers, can make or break a business relationship. And since we don't get a whole lot of time to create that bond of friendship, we need to be aware of the little things that can permanently damage that relationship we try so hard to make.

Here's a letter we got a while back:

Dear Nancy: I love my job and can pretty well handle most situations...yet every once in a while a customer will swear at me...and I frankly don't know how to handle that. Can you please share your Telephone Doctor Rx for that? It'll help me a lot, I know. Signed, Mrs. R.



Have a question for the Telephone Doctor?? Email it to PRESS@telephonedoctor.com. If it's used, you'll receive a complimentary autographed copy of our book **Customer Service Nightmares**.

Dear Mrs. R. Good for you for loving what you do. That's the first battle. Not sure who said it, but there's an old saying "Find something you love to do and you'll never work a day in your life." As for customers swearing at you, that's their BAD, as they say. There's no need to use that kind of language, especially when you're trying to get help from someone. How on earth could anyone think they'd get helpful, friendly information by swearing at someone?

The first thing we need to tell you, is do not take it personally. You have become the lightning rod, not the target. Wear your mental suit of armor and let those verbal projectiles bounce off of you. At that point, you can 'interject' to the caller the following Telephone Doctor Swear Stopper - "Excuse me, sir, I can handle your problem, that's no problem; however, I am not able to handle your abusive language." We're betting you'll hear, "Gee, I'm sorry...it's just that I'm so dog gone frustrated." Then you can go into your empathizing mode.

I warn you, if you say, "Hey, STOP SWEARING AT ME," you'll really hit their swear button and they'll go after you again. There's no value in giving that type of instruction to someone who's already swearing at you. Use of the Telephone Doctor's swear stopper has helped many a CSR. Then and only then, if for some reason they still are in the abusive mode, you'll be entitled to escalate the call to your supervisor.

Too bad - if people only realized they'll get more with sugar than they do with vinegar, it might make it easier for everyone. Thanks for writing. Best wishes, Nancy

And here's another question we got recently:

Hi, Nancy, Love your email monthly communication articles - thanks for including me. I pass it along to other co-workers and even to our vendors and customers. Now I have a question that I'm betting you'll have the answer to. While it's not terribly common, I get all flustered when it happens. What do I do with obscene phone calls? Thanks for your help on this. Signed: Rosemary J.

"You're welcome Rosemary." It's been fun sending these email communication articles out and getting the great feedback from folks like you.

Now, to your question. I'm betting that the reason you're not getting as many as there used to be a few years back is due to CALLER ID. While Caller ID hasn't eliminated obscene phone calls, it has certainly cut down on them. Telephone Doctor has several things someone can do when you get these.

The first is to gently disconnect from the call. Do not enter into any conversation. Do not ask the caller to repeat what they said. If you hang up with a thud...you're giving the caller exactly what they wanted - to upset you. If you say nothing, and gently hang up, they'll soon disappear.

Secondly, you can keep a whistle (a policeman or coach's) by the phone and use it when they start in on their obscene call. Kills the ear.

Thirdly, and this is quite effective: About 5 seconds into the call simply say, "Operator, this is the call." You'll hear them hang up faster than you said the sentence. Mock trace that it might be, they'll not be sure, and will prompt the caller to disengage from the call. (You can, of course, if the situation is bad enough, get the

calls actually traced. But as I say, with Caller ID, these types of calls have slowed down.)

Then you can also do what someone told me a while back. She said, "I just read 'em the Bible and they never call back."

So choose whichever one you feel comfortable with and run with it. Thanks for your email.

Nancy

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