

HOLD, TRANSFER, MESSAGES & VOICEMAIL

1. Putting Customers On Hold

- Ask permission first e.g. "May I put you on hold please?"
- Wait for an answer
- If 'yes' then thank them & provide a time guideline
- If 'no' offer to take number & call them back
- Never leave on hold for a long period
- Go back to reassure them you are still there
- On returning thank them for holding

2. Call Transfers

- Get it right first time; don't just get rid of the call!
- Obtain relevant details e.g. name, company, telephone number & key facts
- Explain who you are transferring them to
- Provide information to colleague to ensure customer does not have to repeat the information and that they can be greeted accordingly
- If you are receiving the call make sure you use information provided. It is good customer service to be able to respond with the caller's name, e.g. "Good morning Mr Gordon, this is Jean Smith, I believe you are calling about a product damaged on delivery."

3. Message taking

- Be accurate, concise yet complete
- Take customer's name, company, telephone number, details of their requirements, date & time of message.
- Provide your name for reference
- Repeat message to ensure accuracy
- Do not make any false promises
- Pass on message ASAP

4. Voicemail

- Principles are the same as live calls
- Keep messages up to date
- Provide clear indication of where you are and when you will be able to return calls
- Prioritise calls ensuring important calls are returned immediately
- When leaving a message make sure it is understandable!
- Leave your contact number with the message, even if the other person has it.

ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

There are a number of techniques that can be adopted to demonstrate that we are listening to our customers in the interest of customer service excellence.

1. By explaining that we want to take notes. This act alone will show that we are interested in what the customer is saying and keen to get it right.
2. By asking appropriate questions for clarification. If we ask intelligent questions, those that relate to what the customer is saying then it will demonstrate that we have listened and understood.
3. By restating the key points by way of a summary. Summarising the key points will prevent customers from wondering if their points have been heard and understood. It also provides them with an opportunity to add or alter points.
4. By echoing and repeating key words to encourage further comment. There will sometimes be key points in the conversation that, if echoed back, will encourage the customer to give further information as if a question had been asked.
5. By re-phrasing parts of the conversation. Some customers may be over-verbose or not particularly good communicators. Re-phrasing will show that we understand exactly what they have said.
6. By careful use of silence or pauses at appropriate points. There is often a danger of monopolising the conversation, asking too many questions, finishing sentences, etc. A good time to remain silent is after we have asked a question or when a customer is obviously happy to talk.
7. By using encouragers or acceptance techniques. Short phrases or noises that say we are listening, interested and want them to continue. Such as:

'Mmm, Go on, I see, Right, That's interesting, uh-huh, really.'
8. By using reflection. Reflecting communicates that we understand **how** the person is feeling and **why**. This type of response offers no advice, comment or opinion. When used effectively it will not only demonstrate that we have listened but will serve to develop a better rapport with our customer.

e.g. "I have worked hard on that customer for months, the account would guarantee my target this year and Credit Control just refuse terms without giving any reason, what's the point?"

Reflective response: "You feel you have done your best, and are discouraged to see it jeopardised by something outside of your control."