

The Worst Customer Service Mistakes

By Nancy Friedman

The Telephone Doctor usually gets asked, “What are the best customer service tips?” Recently someone asked about the worst customer service mistakes. To make it an even number, we’ve compiled the 10 worst customer service mistakes. Take note, and don’t let these happen to you!

Not Being Friendly Enough

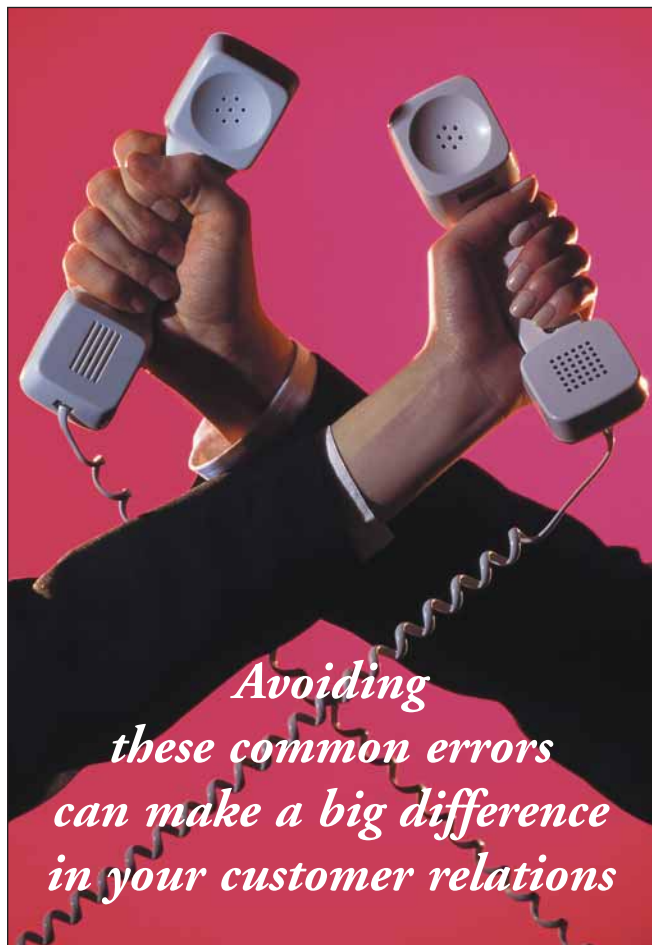
Without exception, not being friendly is the number one customer service mistake. Customers should be treated as welcomed guests when they call or visit your company. As we’ve all experienced, sometimes we’re treated as an annoyance or an interruption. The Telephone Doctor motto: “Be friendly before you know who it is” is one way to eliminate this mistake.

Poor Eye Contact

Heads that twirl on a spindle when you’re working with a customer is a big mistake. Keep your eyes on the customer. It’s a sure sign the person you’re talking with isn’t holding your interest when you’re glancing all around. And they’ll notice it quickly. Obviously, Telephone Doctor understands making good eye contact on the phone is a bit difficult, albeit impossible. Therefore, when you’re on the phone you need to be completely focused on the call and the customer. Don’t type, unless it pertains to the call, don’t read something else, don’t do anything but listen to the caller.

Talking with Co-Workers and Ignoring the Customer

This customer service mistake unfortunately happens a



lot. It seems as though it’s more important to continue talking with a co-worker than establishing immediate rapport with the customer. Drop the internal conversation as soon as you see the customer. Carrying on a conversation with someone in your office while you’re talking with a customer on the phone is a real no-no!

Being Rude

No one thinks they’re rude, certainly not on purpose. However, the customer can perceive many things you do as rude. And as they say, “perception is reality.”

Poor Product Knowledge

When working with a customer, if you’re not familiar with the products and services you offer, you’ll be making a big mistake. Take the time to learn about your company. Know what’s going on. If you’re temporary or are new with the company, it’s not enough to use that as an excuse. Customers don’t care if you’re new, working on a temporary assignment, or if it’s not your department. All they want is help and information. Ask to be trained. Ask for more information from your company. Telling a customer, “I’m new” or “I’m just a temp” only adds fuel to the fire. You can explain that you will find someone to help them as you are “not familiar” with the situation. That at least shows you’re going to help them.

Leaving a Customer Without Telling Them Where You’re Going and Why

It’s a very good idea to explain to your customer in person or on the phone what you’re going to be doing

for them. It helps them a lot, and gives them a lot of patience. If you need to go "in the back" to get something it's easy to say, "Mr. Jones, the Widget you're looking for is in the stock room. Let me go get it for you. I'll be a few moments." The same procedure should apply on the phone. Never tell the caller, "Hold on." Let the caller know where you are going and about how long you think you'll be. This will make working with customers easier for both you and them.

Blaming Others

It's not the person you blame that will look bad—it's you. Don't blame (or knock) the company, its policy, or any member of the staff. Customers don't want to hear about whose fault it is; they just want the situation fixed. Take full responsibility of the situation at hand.

Not Double Checking

When a customer wants something and it's not available, how you reject them is more important than the fact that you are rejecting them. The process of double-checking should become a habit. It should be a standard operating procedure. It feels so good when you tell someone, "The last time I checked we were out of stock, but let me double check for you to be sure." I personally can think of dozens of times when I asked the person to double check after they told me they were out of things, and what do you know...someone had reordered and the person didn't know about it. It's a big mistake to not double check.

One Word Answers

We're taught in school that three words make a sentence. Don't answer with one word. Even yes, no, and okay are perceived as rude and uncaring. A reminder: use complete sentences for your customer.

Head Shaking

When a customer asks you for something, give them a verbal answer. Shaking your head up and down or back and forth is not an

appropriate answer. They can't hear your head rattle.

Fixing these customer service mistakes will enhance your ability to work better with customers. Remember, it's the subtle little differences that make the big difference. Good luck! ■

Nancy Friedman, the Telephone Doctor®, is an internationally recognized expert on managing customer relationships. She delivers her customer service message to conferences and conventions and to corporate employees via her best-selling customer service video training series. She can be contacted at 314-291-1012 or Nancy@telephonedoctor.com.



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