Listening Skills

Show customers that you are listening

Teaching reps to paraphrase what the customer says and then saying it back to them is one way to encourage better listening, says Richard S. Gallagher in the July *SkillSharpener*.

Paraphrasing, or restating what a customer has said ensures the communication has been received just as the customer wanted, allows the customer to correct misinterpreted information, lets the customer know the rep understood their problem, determines the course of further questioning, and focuses the rep's attention on the customer's perspective.

But, paraphrasing isn't quite as simple as it appears, says Andrea Nierenberg of The Nierenberg Group. In fact, there are four distinct types of paraphrasing each with a unique purpose. The following table summarizes each type of paraphrasing and provides an example.

When reviewing this month's issue of *The Customer Communicator* with your team, take a moment to discuss each of the types of paraphrasing.

Listening Behavior	Purpose	Examples
Neutral Response	To convey that you are interested and listening. To encourage the customer to continue talking.	"I see."
Restatement	To check out meaning and interpretation with the customer.	"As I understand it then, your hope is to …"
	To show you are listening and that you understand what the customer is saying,	"So this is what you have decided to do, and the reasons are …"
	To encourage the customer to analyze other aspects of the matter being considered and to discuss it with you.	"If that's the case, what do you think about …?"
Summarizing	To bring all the discussion into focus in terms of a summary.	"These are the key ideas you have expressed …"
	To serve as a springboard for discussion of a new topic or issue.	"If I understand correctly how you feel about the situation …"
Reflection	To demonstrate that you understand how the customer feels about the topic.	"So, you are saying that you feel …"
		"That seems to indicate that you were upset about …"

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