



# The Customer Communicator Web Extra



## Celebrating the telephone

For most customer service reps, the telephone remains the dominant mode of communication. Take some time this month to practice the essentials of excellent phone service.

Nancy Friedman, also known as the Telephone Doctor, has made a career of training customer service reps on phone skills. She says that there are five essentials that all service providers must master. These are:

### 1. Greeting the caller courteously.

This is an issue that plagues many smaller companies in particular: Everyone has a different way of answering the phone. "There should be one uniform greeting used by everyone, every time," says Friedman. "It should include a buffer — words that welcome the caller, such as 'Thanks for calling' — then your company name. Then your name — 'This is Sue' — and then stop. Adding anything after your name is simply not necessary."

**2. Thanking the caller for holding.** "I'm always amazed at the number of times I am put on hold, and when the person comes back, they just start in on the conversation without a 'Thank you for holding,'" Friedman says. "I always wonder why they don't thank me for taking the time to stay with them. Don't you?"

**3. Monogramming the call.** "Most people save things with their name on it. Same thing

should happen on a phone call," Friedman says. "When you have the caller's name, use it. Don't abuse it, but include it throughout the conversation. Everyone likes to hear their name, but they want to hear it pronounced right and see it spelled right. Don't be afraid to ask a caller about the pronunciation if you are not sure. Same thing goes for spelling names properly. Ask, don't assume."

**4. Avoiding mouth noises.** "I cannot tell you how many times I talk with people on the phone and it sounds as though they have a mouthful of mush," Friedman says. "The only thing that should be in your mouth when you are on the phone is your tongue."

### 5. Leaving a positive lasting impression.

Most people understand the importance of making a positive first impression, but making a positive last impression is important as well. "Don't screw it up at the end of the call," Friedman says. "Say something like, 'I'm glad I had the opportunity to help you,' 'We appreciate your call,' or simply, 'Thank you for calling' — something that will make a lasting positive impression."

