



Secrets to Service Success

by Nancy Friedman

Hidden Gems of...



Relationship Selling



Communications



Telephone Skills



Customer Service

Hidden Gems
of
Relationship Selling
Communications
Telephone & Life Skills
and
Customer Service

Nancy Friedman
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Nancy Friedman

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Preface

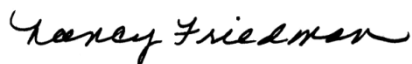
Successful communication is largely common sense using basic skills and techniques. It's not brain surgery or rocket science. It involves trying to be thoughtful and focused when working with customers. Let's not make it more difficult than it is.

We've taken what we feel are the most important basic communication tips, skills, and techniques – Hidden Gems we call them, and put them here for you.

In the future, electronic technology will probably change, but the all-important “people skills” are timeless. They will never go out of style! And these skills are for all six touch points of communication!

So enjoy, profit, and remember the Telephone Doctor motto:

“IT’S FUN TO BE GOOD!”

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy Friedman".

Nancy Friedman
The Telephone Doctor

Dedication

Dedicated to you who just opened this book! Congratulations.

About the Author

Nancy Friedman, the Telephone Doctor, has been bringing customer service, sales, and communication skills to thousands of organizations and associations throughout the United States and abroad for years.

Nancy is the author of eight books on her favorite topics: Customer service, sales and communications, and is a much sought after speaker on these topics and with good reason.

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Thank You

Thank you to Valerie Phillips, my Executive Assistant, who helped compile this information. Her patience is a virtue.

I have a lot of patience too; just never used any.

The cover was personally designed by the talented, one and only Kimb Manson of Kimb Manson Graphic Design in Canada.

Thanks as well, to all the Telephone Doctor staff who walk our walk and talk our talk. We know it works.

To my husband Dick who's always there for me. To my children, David, Linda, and their spouses, Robyn and Les, thank you for all your support. You are the best!

And special thanks to Ben, Alex, Sami, Lou and Nina who say they never saw their name in a book. Here ya go! Now you can't say that anymore. Love you!

Thank you all for making my life so happy and fulfilled.

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Introduction

This is how it all started:

“Your people stink!”

With those succinct words, Telephone Doctor history was born.

Many years ago, I called my insurance agent after being treated rudely by his staff. I told him, “Your people stink!” He asked me what happened and I told him.

“They’re so rude, so abrupt, so unfriendly, so unhelpful; I don’t want to do business with you anymore!”

“You know Nancy, you’re right” he said. “When I call your office I’m treated like a king and I’m not even a customer.”

I told him we treat our wrong numbers better than he treated his customers.

He asked me to come over and show his staff what we did at our office.

I went to the agent’s office and stood in front of 10-12 people. Their pens and paper were ready for some scientific strategy on how to be nice to people on the phone.

Would you believe, when I told them at our office we say please and thank you, they stopped to write down those words? That’s right. They thought please and thank you were great ideas!

I spoke about 20 minutes, thanked them and started walking out the door. The president of the agency stopped me and said: “Thank you Nancy, we really learned some new things!”

When I got home I told my husband, Dick, what happened. I said, “The president of the insurance agency told me that he really learned some new

things; things you and I do like breathing in and out. Dick, I don't understand."

Dick's reply: "Don't ever be surprised Nancy. Nobody's ever shown them."

At a business dinner that night, I mentioned this story to the general manager of a newspaper in Davenport, Iowa. The next day, he called me and asked me to come up to his newspaper and train his people. He said, "If there's a telephone on anyone's desk, they should be trained!"

So I sat down and wrote a half-day program, flew up to Davenport, and delivered the four programs. The first was to his management only, because as Bob, the general manager said, "If this program is to work, and I want it to, it must start at the top. It must dribble down. It cannot dribble up."

After the first program, the newspaper's editor came up and told me, "Nancy, that was fabulous. You're very good. You sure have all the cures, don't you?" He snapped his fingers, pointed at me and said, "I'm gonna call you the doctor...you're the Telephone Doctor."

I told my husband I had been dubbed the Telephone Doctor. "What do you think?" I asked.

He said, "Let's get it registered ... we're gonna have some fun."

And fun we've been having, running around the country, the world if you will, helping companies communicate better with their customers.

A

Attitude (It's Your Choice)

You have little or no control over many things in life.

However, you do have control over one essential factor – your attitude.

Once you've figured this out, it's easier to stay positive longer whether you're dealing with a mean, nasty person or the nicest person in the world!

There is a huge difference between an attitude and a mood. One is temporary and the other is permanent.

Attitude, of course, is permanent and a mood is temporary.

We know that those who have a great attitude get out of the bad mood quicker. Those with a good attitude don't like to spend time with people who are in a bad mood all the time.

HIDDEN GEM: It's sorta simple. YOU HAVE A CHOICE. Make it a good one.

Ask For Time To Talk

If you're looking to make a great phone call, you won't miss out asking, "Did I catch you at a bad time, Mr. Jones? Do you have a moment to talk?"

This phrase is the bottom line for getting into cold calls without frustrating the customer. It's great for all calls, but for cold ones a must.

Without it YOU ARE an interruption. You are intruding.

Look, few folks are sitting there with their hands folded thinking "please let a salesperson call me."

If you forget to ask for time to talk, you may be forgotten real quick.

HIDDEN GEM: Be considerate. People's time is valuable.

Always

A word that can and usually does start an argument.

The word always is normally a conversation diversion. It will detract because someone is bound to say, “I don’t ALWAYS do that.” Now an argument can start.

Its first cousin **NEVER** also diverts a conversation. As will **all**, **everytime**, and obviously a few others.

Other words that seem to work better are **usually**, **sometimes**, or **occasionally**.

Even the word **often** is better than **always** or **never**.

Protect yourself – Beware of negative absolutes!

HIDDEN GEM: Always and never are usually conversation diversions.

The Automated Attendant

The automated attendant is now the number one phone frustration of the American public.

Now the automated attendant is even able to understand words. (Well, sometimes.)

It's become a huge frustration when the customer says something and the automated attendant comes back with a monotone: "I'm sorry that's not an option."

And, unfortunately, there are some automated systems that hang up on you.

I'm betting some of the corporate folks don't use their own automated attendant. They must have secret numbers that get them into their company. Otherwise I believe the systems would work better.

HIDDEN GEM: Call your own automated system. Is it customer friendly?

B

Benefits

A good reminder in sales:

- * Features Tell
- * Benefits Sell

If you're someone who talks a lot (or announces as some people call it) and simply go over the bells and whistles of your product or service, you'll probably still sell.

You'll just sell MORE when you start offering and advising the customer of the differences between features and benefits.

It's amazing how many folks don't really understand the difference.

Here's Mr. Webster's definition. It's pretty good.

Feature:

1. A distinction or noticeable quality
2. Something offered as a special attraction

Benefit:

1. Anything that is helpful or advantageous
2. Something that contributes to, or increases, well-being

A good idea is to make a list of your products and then list the features and the benefits. Once you can memorize your own features and benefits, you'll have an easier time selling your product or service.

And here's a magic bridge to get you from the features to the benefits. Once you cover the features, the magic bridge are the words "what this means to you..." Then you get to bring up the benefits.

Example: "This car gets 45 miles per gallon." (That's a feature) "And what this means to you is you can drive farther on a tank of gas." (That's a benefit)

Do you see how the bridge statement "and what this means to you" makes it more effective? The benefit is what's important to the prospect.

HIDDEN GEM: Remember, features tell benefits sell.

Be Friendly Before You Know Who It Is

Each visit or call from your customer deserves your best service.

And just because you don't know who it is, is not a reason to 'dis the customer.'

Few people recognized Sam Walton of WALMART when he went out. He dressed in cowboy boots, baseball cap and understated clothes. He also drove an older pickup truck. We all know he could have bought the most expensive suits and cars in the world.

I heard a story about Oprah calling up a viewer, who when told who it was said, "Oh sure...right" and hung up on her.

HIDDEN GEM: It's the old "don't judge a book by its cover."

Buffer Words

What are they? They're a courteous welcoming phrase in all channels of communication.

Buffer words set up the most important part of any conversation: The company name or your name, or a statement.

Phone Buffers:

Here are a few buffers to use when answering a phone call:

“Good morning.”

“Good afternoon.”

“Thanks for calling.”

“Happy holidays!”

Our preference? “Thanks for calling.” Why? Because you don't need to worry about the time of day.

Who hasn't picked up the phone at 5 pm and said, “Good morning. I mean good afternoon.”

We eliminate the frustration of what time is it when we use “Thanks for calling.”

In Person Buffers:

We use buffers in person as well. When we meet someone we extend our hand out and say:

“Nice to meet you.”

“Good to see you.”

“Hi, my name is Nancy.”

Those are also buffer words. They're words that help warm the relationship.

Picking up a business phone without a buffer is considered cold and rude.

Also, starting up a conversation in person without a few nice warm buffer words is also cold and rude.

HIDDEN GEM: Buffer words are your friend and warm the conversation.

Bureaucratic Bounce

Is there anyone out there who hasn't been 'bounced' around on the phone from department to department after asking a question?

It's so frustrating. Repeating and repeating and repeating our information to three different people. And to add insult to injury, NO ONE CAN HELP us. They keep bouncing us around.

The Bureaucratic Bounce can be stopped very easily.

When you get a call – STOP! Accept the responsibility.

THINK. If you don't know where to put the call, it's better to get a number from the customer and let them know we will get back to them.

Know where a call should go. Ask before you start answering calls at your job. It's your job to ask management where to put a call when you don't have the answer.

Know the departments and take responsibility. You got the call? You own the call.

HIDDEN GEM: Only you can stop the bureaucratic bounce.

C

Cell Phones

Okay, I took over from OPRAH here. Do not text and drive. End of subject. That's like drinking and driving. It's bad enough that we talk and drive. Many states have issued a hands free only law when talking on the phone and driving.

By now the guidelines of using cell phones are pretty familiar to us. But you may know someone who isn't aware of them yet; so this is a good list to share with them.

- When you make a call, it's a good idea to notify the first person you speak with that you're on a cell phone.

This lets the called party know if the connection is lost (and it often is), you have not hung up on them. While polite, it also has the added effect of making your call a little more urgent and often speeds the connection to the called party.

- Get a phone call at a restaurant? Please get up, get to a quiet private area and then talk. No one wants to hear your conversation. I promise.
- If you're in a meeting or at a conference, turn you cell phone off. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I know you do. But isn't there always someone who forgot?
- When in public areas like airports, or in line at the store, or you name it, stop yelling and talking so loud. That's a microphone you're using. You'll be heard on the other end. Better yet, hold the call till you're in a private area.

Here are some additional guidelines that apply when you're in the car with a cell phone:

- When you take your eye off the road you take a chance.
- When you sneeze you take a chance.
- When you change the radio station you take a chance
- Focus on safety first, pull off the road, stop the car, and then dial and have your conversation.
- Use of a hands-free mode is recommended. In some states it's a law.
- If you're in an accident, insurance companies are now asking if you were on the phone while driving. It's senseless to try to get out of it, because the phone records can tell if you were or not.
- If you have a passenger that can dial for you, all the better.
- Even those speed dials have you taking your eye off the road for that split second. And that's all it takes.

Hey, who do you think likes to talk on the phone more than me? I love it, yet I follow these guidelines. You should too!

HIDDEN GEM: Don't text and drive. Ever.

Company Jargon

Company jargon should stay within the company. Using it with outside customers often causes mistakes and miscommunications.

We are far more familiar with our own terms and abbreviations than the customer. You won't impress anyone with words or technical knowledge they don't understand.

Just the opposite, you'll annoy and confuse them. To maximize communication and understanding, use common English without the "alphabet soup" abbreviations to the customer.

IDK WTDT!! DY?

Translation: I don't know why they do that!! Do you?

HIDDEN GEM: Don't use "military" language on "civilians."

D

Details

Details are small innocent items that if left out of the plan or are forgotten can cause big problems.

Darn, those details that get in our way. Frustrating aren't they?

Here's a small detail that can eliminate a big error: When you give a date, include the day with the date.

That's a detail that can save you a lot of aggravation. If I said, I'll call or meet you Thursday. Which Thursday?

Or if I just said the 16th? That could get in the way of details as well.

However, if I said I'll call or meet you Thursday, April 16 those are details that help cement the situation.

Missing little details (like a day or a date) are what cause big mistakes.

There are thousands of little details that can foul up our lives, both personally and professionally. Don't ignore the details.

HIDDEN GEM: Details do matter! Include them!

Drama 101

If I ran the world, every student – in every grade – would get theatre training. Not to be an actor – or stage manager, but to learn how to work with everyone, be on time, and know that everyone needs to work together and to learn that the show must go on.

But Drama 101 is more than theatre, it's part of customer service, communication and sales skills, rapport building and life skills.

It's learning how to react to people, things, and problems. Ideas, thoughts, and anything else we might run into.

Drama 101 also allows you to learn how to “read” words and sentences. Ever notice the TV reporters and how they dramatize the news...with emphasis on certain words.

That's what needs to be done in life. Monotone conversations are losing conversations; they're boring, uninteresting and won't move the ship off the dock.

Drama 101 is my name for practice what you're saying. Learn how to phrase a question so that someone will answer it.

Learn how to make what you say important so people will listen to you.

Drama 101 is critically important to be successful; even if you practice with a short piece out of the newspaper. Make what you read exciting. That'll help you in conversations.

If you can take a theatre class ... do it. You'll have more fun than you can imagine. At any age. It'll do more good for a student than learning a topic or subject they'll never use in their life (e.g., biology/philosophy/trigonometry). You get the picture.

HIDDEN GEM: We're talking basics. DRAMA 101 will help you in life.

Discipline

Show me a top performing person and I'll show you someone with discipline.

We are referring to self-control and great work habits. Unfortunately, not everyone has discipline.

Example -- The Olympians have discipline. They spend hours and hours practicing, disciplining themselves to win.

It's not easy to be self-disciplined. Yet it can be done.

Like losing weight. The disciplined person knows that the cookie she's about to put into her mouth isn't good ... and she doesn't do it. The undisciplined figures one cookie won't hurt!

Discipline is different from organization; however, they're related and good organization helps discipline.

HIDDEN GEM: Discipline takes time and energy but is worth it.

Don't Be Too Busy to Be Nice

Being busy does not make it acceptable to sound rushed. Being busy does not give us carte blanche to be rude.

Let's face it, everyone is busy at one time or another. When someone asks you how things are going, a simple: "Great! How can I help you?" with a big smile, is more appropriate than, "Wow, I'm soooooo busy, what'd you want?"

If you complain about being too busy, you may scare folks away. Customers want and deserve your full attention. If you appear too busy, they may go elsewhere.

Work on appearing calm, cool and collected even when you're busy. It's an acquired trait and an important one.

HIDDEN GEM: Those that appear too busy to be nice can be labeled as rude.

E

Eight Great Hates

A few years ago Telephone Doctor did a survey with USA Today to find out what bugs people on the phone.

The number one frustration of the American public? **“Being put on hold.”**

Here are the rest of the Eight Great Hates:

Being put on hold.....	23%
Poor screening.....	11%
Call waiting.....	11%
Mouth noises.....	9%
Not paying attention.....	8%
Answering machine	7%
Bad attitude, rude	7%
Hang ups (ring & runs)	7%
Other	11%

Wondering where the Automated Attendant is? Did you notice it isn't even on the list? That's because this survey was taken a while back. Automated Attendant wasn't around then.

The more recent survey did put the automated attendant in the list of Eight Great Hates. Yes, the Automated Attendant is NOW the number one frustration of the American public.

Voicemail was number two on the list.

And while still an irritant, being put on hold is now number three.

HIDDEN GEM: Everyone seems to have a phone frustration.

Email Errors & a Few Other Email Topics

Here are the five top email errors and not necessarily in any order of importance because they're all bad.

- Poor spelling
- Poor grammar
- Wrong subject line
- Misspelling customer name or company
- Forwarding messages to the wrong people
- Extra long emails

Oh wait, that's six. So it's the six top email errors.

And for those who say, "Wait, wait, you forgot the use of all capitals," I didn't forget. I just disagree with the total non-use of caps.

Certainly we don't want an entire email in all caps. However, there are many times when caps make it special.

A few that come to mind:

I LOVE YOU!

YOU DID A GREAT JOB!

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR HELP!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

I'm sure there are several other short sentences that are approved in all caps.

So while we don't want to do an entire email in all caps, it's ok when you need to make a positive point.

Wait, wait, wait. You forgot “REPLY TO ALL” when not necessary. I didn’t forget anything.

There are way too many email errors to list them all. I’m simply pointing out a few of the worst.

You may make your own list.

HIDDEN GEM: You’re; Your; Their; They’re; There; Hear; Here; etc. Be sure to use the correct one when sending an email. Spell check won’t be your friend on this one.

Jokes on Email

By now many of the jokes have gone around twice or more. Jokes that run too long are not often appreciated. They take too much time and probably are not even read.

While we all like a good laugh or ‘smiler’ every once in a while, it’s best to keep the jokes short and to the point. (The funny ones anyway.)

If you’re getting them and don’t want them interfering with your emails, I suggest you make a JOKE file and have them automatically go into that file so when you’re ready to read them they’ll be there.

HIDDEN GEM: Sending too many jokes? The joke will be on you!!

Confidential Matters on Email

Ouch! Have we not learned our lessons yet? We can all name someone who sent an inappropriate email and – hello? They somehow got passed around.

If you don't want your email seen in the NY Post, 'fuhgetaboutit!'

Before you send an inappropriate email, think about what it might mean to you if it got widely distributed.

HIDDEN GEM: Re-read any confidential or negative email several times. Do you really want to send it?

Sending Angry Emails

NEVER, NEVER send angry/irate emails. Just don't do it. At least while you're still angry!

Even those of us who send nice emails sometimes get misinterpreted and misread.

Best to hold your thought for at least 24 hours. Jot your thoughts down on paper or in a Word document, but please...not in an email.

Then wait the obligatory 24 hours and reread. We're betting you'll soften the email before you send it or not send it at all.

There is no value in sending nasty, irate, angry emails. NONE!

HIDDEN GEM: Hold that thought! At least for 24 hours; then revise or, better yet, refuse to send it.

Unanswered Emails

I'm often asked, "Nancy, what do you think of people that don't return their phone calls?"

My answer: "Not very much."

Now I'm getting, "Nancy, what do you think of people that don't return emails?"

The answer is the same. Not very much!

I don't understand that (outside of spam or form emails etc). Not to respond to a human being who is emailing you? Why ignore that? And how easy can it be?

What's wrong with a simple, "Not interested, thanks" or "Please take me off the email list" or "Thanks for the thought, will get back with you shortly" or "Message received. Thank you."

Some sort of answer – especially when you know the person is due one.

It's way too easy to get an email today. On your phone, iPad/iPod, and pretty soon, it could be on your watch.

HIDDEN GEM: Bottom line: Not responding one way or the other to an email is like not returning a phone call. Rude!

Hiding Behind Email

“Some people are accused of hiding behind their voicemail and being selective about returning calls. (Reprinted from: CommCore Consulting, the Electronic Messaging Assn., and the Council on Communication Management Training and Development Magazine.)

Surveys show that workers in the U.S. also admit using email this way, specifically to avoid speaking with people in person.”

HIDDEN GEM: Shame on you!

Emotional Leakage

Great phrase isn't it?

When my husband came up with that phrase we knew immediately that everyone would understand exactly what it was.

Getting mad at Peter and taking it out on Paul. You fight with a family member before work or you get a flat tire. Then you go to work and bark at a co-worker or a customer.

That's Emotional Leakage. It's not right, it's not fair, and it's no fun to take a negative thought out on someone who's not involved.

But let's face it. Stuff happens. And then the phone rings. Or a customer will walk in to the store. How do we stop "emotional leakage?" How do we NOT take it out on the next person when they weren't even involved?

And that next person can be our spouse, our friend, our children, our neighbor, anyone.

Avoid emotional leakage (on the phone):

1. Let the phone ring one more time. One more ring won't hurt, but answering the phone in an angry tone will. Use this moment to pause and relax.
2. Take one or two deep breaths. That's a proven calming influence recommended by psychologists.
3. Smile. Put that PHONY smile on your face. (It will come through in your voice.) THEN...
4. Answer the telephone.

We've all been victims of emotional leakage. Walking into or calling a place of business and have the first person we come in contact with jump all over us.

We realize something happened and we know it wasn't our fault, so how do we feel when that happens?

Right! "Hey, don't take it out on me. I wasn't even there."

Emotional leakage (in person):

Difficult we know. Keep in mind – the next person you work with was not involved with the last one and should NOT be involved in getting leaked on!

HIDDEN GEM: Don't emotionally leak on the phone or in person. Regain your professional composure.

Empowerment

It should not take two people to give good customer service.

And if it does, the first time is normally a learning lesson. If more companies would empower their folks to handle the situation, things might get done faster and the customer might be happier than waiting for someone else to come make the same decision the person they're working with can do.

When we empower someone, they are liable to make an error. When that happens, explain to the employee what they did wrong, show them what they could have done, and move on.

However, I do know there are some folks who might not like to have empowerment, even when they're given it. That's a whole 'nother story.

Here's a personal story of empowerment. You'll like it.

My new Tiffany bracelet, sadly, is somewhere in Alaska. While on our Alaskan cruise it fell off somehow. I didn't feel too terrible because the bracelet said, 'If found please return to Tiffany's' and I had faith someone would actually do that and I'd get it back.

About a month later, I happened to be in a mall with a Tiffany's store. I went in to tell them my sad story and to see if lost bracelets ever get returned.

I told the woman my story: "I had open heart surgery in February and came home from the hospital on Valentines Day. My husband (whose last present to me was an iron in 1984) surprised me with a Tiffany bracelet which, appropriately, had a heart on it. He even had the date of the surgery engraved on the heart.

"It fell off somewhere in Alaska and I'm curious, how long do you think it will take to have it returned, because the heart said: 'If found please return to Tiffany's.' "

I could see her eyes wander and look side to side. “No, you won’t get it back” she said, “they just melt the silver. If they do get returned, we melt them down. The ‘If found’ comment is from our collection that was started for the key chain.” Silence.

“That’s really sad, it was such a great gift from my husband,” I said and started to leave the store. The young lady said: “Wait a moment please, let me show you another bracelet.”

“Thanks, that’s okay, I’m not gonna buy another bracelet.”

“Come on,” she said, “let me show you.” I knew I wouldn’t get another one, but I walked over to the counter with her. She brought a similar bracelet out and asked me, “Was this the one your husband gave you?”

“Yes,” I said “exactly, but the date of the surgery was engraved and it had a toggle clasp, not the lobster clasp.”

She said, “It probably didn’t have enough links taken out and was too big on you, causing it to fall off. What was the date engraved?” she asked. “February 9, 2012,” I told her.

She wrote that down on a Tiffany form which, frankly, I thought she was using as notepaper. “What are you doing,” I asked?

She said, “I want you to pick out a font.” (From the many shown on what I thought was notepaper).

I told her nicely and even smiling, “As I said, I’m not going to get another bracelet thank you. But out of curiosity how much would it cost if I did?”

“Nothing,” she said. “This is free. That’s such a beautiful story and you didn’t have it that long. It’s my pleasure to replace it.”

More silence. I was floored.

The sales clerk was empowered to do something and did it!

Now, I'm not suggesting everyone should get something replaced when it gets lost; however, Tiffany's proved that, as we say, there are exceptions to policies and empowerment.

And I believe the young lady who was empowered felt good about helping me. So everyone went home happy.

HIDDEN GEM: Give your employees some empowerment to help the customer. Everyone wins!

F

Four Killer Words - What are they?

They are:

“Hi, how are you?”

It’s what we call social noise. Especially to someone we don’t know, haven’t met and may never meet.

There are dozens of other ways to open a conversation in person or on the phone.

- Nice to meet you.
- Good to see you.
- Happy we can make this happen.
- Glad to have this opportunity to talk.
- Thanks for taking my call (or coming in).

These four words can reduce effectiveness, especially on first time calls and meetings.

Plus you risk surrendering control of that conversation at a critically early stage.

Want to save a relationship?

Start off the conversation with a more proactive comment.

HIDDEN GEM: Lose “Hi, how are you?” Insert other welcome phrases.

Finish the Day Ready to Begin

Want to be more productive?

When you get ready to go home at night, what does your work area look like? And it applies even if you work from home.

What you leave at night will be waiting for you the next morning when you come to work.

“Be Prepared” is more than the Boy Scout motto, it’s a way of life for a professional.

Before you leave work for the day, organize your work area for the next day. Have a list of calls or things to do ready for when you get back to your desk.

Place a few items you’re excited about at the top of the list. You will make those first and, if you’re excited, the calls and your day will start off in a more positive manner.

Have you ever said, “Well, it may be messy, but at least I know where everything is.” Well, you’re still losing valuable time because of the work habits and methods used.

Take a few extra minutes at the end of the day to straighten up your area.

HIDDEN GEM: Neatness can add dollars to your day!

Fast Talkers

Sometimes it seems as though they are running their words all together, right?

YES, fast talkers are frustrating; however, they can be handled.

What we don't want to say is: "What do you think I am? A machine? I can't write as fast as you talk! Slow down."

Not the best way to set the stage and build that all important rapport. Hold those thoughts. Wait for the person to take a breath. And they will.

When you hear the pause, then insert:

"Excuse me. I'm having a little difficulty understanding you. If you could please slow down just a bit, I'll be able to get this all correct for you."

It really works. All someone really wants is to be assured that you will get the information for them and correctly.

Remember, don't accuse anyone with words like "Stop going so fast," or "I can't understand a thing you're saying." (Bad news)

Those are not Business Friendly words and they won't be appreciated.

Understand certain parts of the country talk faster and certain parts speak much slower. It's a given.

Let's face it, slow talkers frustrate fast talkers and vice versa.

HIDDEN GEM: Learn to deal with both slow and fast talkers.

Foreign Accents

Here are five easy steps to remember when dealing with a foreign accent:

1. Don't Pretend to Understand

If you don't understand the person you're speaking with, it's perfectly okay to say you're having a little difficulty understanding them. It's OK. They know they have an accent.

Ask the person if they'll please slow down a bit so you can get all the information correct. Not knowing what the person wants is not good at all.

2. Don't Rush the Customer

Rushing threatens customers. Take the time, usually only a few seconds, to do it right. Listen to their pattern of speech. You normally are able to pick up key words. Repeat the key words back to clarify and confirm. Customers will appreciate the fact that you're really listening.

3. Don't Shout

People with accents are not hard of hearing.

You don't need to repeat one word over and over to be sure they understand.

Remember, people with an accent usually speak two languages, so it will take them a little longer to go through the thought processes: their native language for thinking and English for communicating with you.

4. Don't Be Rude

If you've ever said, "I can't understand you," "Huh?" or even "What did you say?" you've been a little rude whether you intended to be or not.

It's much better to stop, take full responsibility and explain you are having a bit of difficulty understanding.

Say, "If you'll repeat that for me again, I'll be able to assist you." It's a subtle difference, but a key one.

5. Keep a Job Aid Available

If most of your interactions are predominantly from one particular ethnic group, consider keeping a handy job aid near your desk; a list with a few commonly used phrases.

In Spanish "Un momento, por favor" means "One moment please." Even if you pronounce it poorly it would be appreciated by a Latino who is having difficulty trying to communicate.

Making an effort to understand and respond to people with language accents is not only common courtesy, it's better business.

And if it's you who has the accent and people aren't clearly understanding what you're saying, bringing it out in the open normally helps.

You might say: "You'll notice I have an accent. If you are not able to understand what I'm saying, please let me know and I'll slow down so we can have a good conversation."

Since you are the one with the accent, it's not a surprise to you. Being open and honest will help a lot.

HIDDEN GEM: Focus on a few words vs. trying to get the entire sentence.

G

Gum Chewing

TWO WORDS: NOT ALLOWED!

Chewing gum while talking to customers on the phone or in person is NOT acceptable.

The only thing that should be in your mouth is your tongue. (Bad breath? Take a quick mint.)

End of subject!

Let's move on.

HIDDEN GEM: No gum at work. Ever!

H

The Dreaded: HOLD

Think anyone calls a business and says, “Please put me on hold?” I doubt it.

Being put on hold remains one of the largest frustrations of the American public. And rightly so. It’s also one of the biggest lies we tell our customers.

“Hang on a second, I’ll be right back.” BIG FAT LIE. Nothing takes just a second.

Remember to ASK your caller if they are able to hold.

Request, not demand.

There are dozens of ways to ask:

“Do you mind holding?”

“Will you hold please?”

“Please hold while I get you the information.”

“I’ll be placing you on hold for a short time to get what you need.”

The list goes on and on. At Telephone Doctor we prefer, “Are you ABLE to hold.” Why? Because it works and we seldom get a ‘no.’

HIDDEN GEM: The forgotten technique of the hold? When you return to the phone, after putting someone on hold, remember to THANK the customer for holding. It’s one of the most forgotten techniques around. Thank the customer for holding.

I

“I” Irritates

Know how often that word is used? A lot. And in many cases without even realizing it.

The word “I” has become an irritant when it’s overused in a presentation or a story.

One of the things we ask interviewees when hiring is to jot us a note, email or letter on why they’d like the position.

The CATCH: They’re not allowed to use the word “I.”

It can be done. Most folks insert way too many “I’s” in an email or letter. And certainly in a resume. And certainly in person.

Limit the number of “I’s” to a maximum of three within a note or email. That’s plenty.

Your customers don’t want to hear or see, I - I - I - I - I. They’re interested in themselves. Remember WIIFM? (What’s in it for me?)

HIDDEN GEM: Lose the I’s when communicating.

Irate Customers

Oh, so not fun! However, if you're in the business world, you most probably are handling irate customers. And if you haven't yet, you will.

Get Off on the Right Foot

Realize that an angry customer is usually not unhappy with you, but with the situation or the company.

We shouldn't take the hostility personally. We become the lightning rod, not the target.

You can do a great deal to diffuse a customer's anger. Keep that smile on your face before you handle the situation.

Customers find it more difficult to be rude to someone who is warm and friendly than stone faced and rude.

Use the Telephone Doctor's ASAP Technique

Apolo**g**ize and Acknowledge the Customer's Feelings

This is KEY.

We spend more than 80% of the time smoothing the customer's feelings and about 20% of the time working on the problem.

The apology needs to be immediate. Don't wait to apologize. If we fouled up, ADMIT it.

Apologize. And notice we're saying "apologize," not "I'm sorry."

I'm sorry is when you step on someone's toes. I'm sorry is not effective when there's a major, or even minor, problem with a customer.

Sympathize and or Empathize!

Know the difference.

Sympathy is something you feel sorry for.

Empathy is something you also have experienced.

Example: When my father passed away. A friend of mine came to the funeral and came up to me to tell me, “Oh, I’m so sorry Nancy. I know just how you feel.”

That made me angry. I told her, “Myrna, your father is sitting right over there; you cannot possibly know how I feel.”

It would have been better to hear, “I’m so sorry for your loss, Nancy. I can’t imagine how you feel” than to have her think she *knows* ‘how I feel.’ No one can do that. No one.

“I understand how you feel” is another frustrating comment.

Accept the Responsibility

Every time you handle a customer you represent the company 100% of the time. You are responsible.

Accept the responsibility by saying:

“Let me see how I can help. My name is Mary. I’m the (fill in your title). And I’m speaking with...?”

In order to get a name, you need to introduce yourself first. If you have a title, this is a good time to use it to create credibility.

Re-introducing yourself will help speed the rapport building process. (Even if you said your name, the customer has probably

forgotten it because you have spoken after your name. So it's a good idea to re-introduce yourself.)

Prepare to Help

Indicating that you sincerely care about the situation helps a lot.

Using the customer's name will also help diffuse the situation.

Asking "what was your name again" does not help the situation. It makes for more frustration. Listen for the name the first time and jot it down.

Once you have done this, start asking questions:

"Thanks, Mr. Jones. Again my name is Mary. Let's get started and see how I can help you. Now please tell me more about what happened."

NO EXCUSES – NONE!

Excuses only say, "I'm NOT GOING TO HELP YOU NOW." Don't make excuses to any customer!

No one wants to hear "The computer is down," or "I'm the only one in the office," or the reason something happened. That is your problem, not theirs.

The worse excuse? "I'm new."

You can say, "Please bear with me, this is my 3rd day (or 2nd week) and I'm going to help you. I'll just need a little time and patience." Most customers identify with this statement.

"I'm new" is a useless statement.

HIDDEN GEM: Turn angry, upset customers into friends!

I'm Sorry

Useless unless it's concerning a romantic situation or you step on someone's toes.

Here's a useless example of "I'm sorry."

"I'm sorry, Ms. Abraham is out of the office."

Why are you sorry? It's not your fault she's out. Unnecessary; useless.

Use "I'm sorry" when there's personal responsibility on your part. It is not your fault when someone is out of the office.

Keep "I'm sorry" from becoming a universal excuse.

Leave "I'm sorry" out. Isn't this better: "Ms. Abraham is out of the office until Tuesday."

Perfect.

HIDDEN GEM: Be aware of the overuse of "I'm sorry."

J

Jerry's Pet Peeve

My late brother, Jerry, was a professional sales trainer. He really understood what helped people to buy and, also, what killed or delayed a sale.

One of his biggest pet peeves was confirming a negative; okaying everything.

A while back I called my bank. Here's how it went down:

Bank: Blah, blah. How can I help you?

Me: Great. Yes, I hope so. I just got my statement and I believe there is a mistake on it.

Bank: OK

Me: Well, it's NOT okay to have a mistake.

Bank: I know.

Me: Then why tell me it's OK?

It went downhill from there.

When someone brings up a situation, and especially if it's a negative one, OK is not appropriate.

It is NOT okay to approve a negative. If I told you that you wouldn't be getting your paycheck this week, would you say, "Okay?" Of course not. You'd want to know why. You'd ask questions.

When you offer someone something and they don't take advantage of it and you simply say "okay," that makes you average and passive.

You don't want to be average, do you? And we sure don't wanna be passive either.

When there's a chance to say "OK," use "Tell me more" or "What can we do to fix it?"

HIDDEN GEM: Don't approve a negative with "OK."

“Just a Second”

“Just a second, I’ll be right back.” Liar-liar, pants on fire! Nose as long as a telephone wire!

If you have ever said that to a customer, you have told a lie. Not a big lie, but nevertheless an unnecessary lie. Nothing takes a second.

Why not tell the truth?

“This may take me a few minutes to get the information. Are you able to hold while I check on that for you?”

“Are you able to hold” is a real crowd pleaser. Asking, rather than demanding, the customer to hold lessens the pain and frustration of being put on hold without a choice.

Once a customer knows why they are holding, they’re a lot more willing to accommodate you.

Also, giving a “visual” clue by letting the customer know where you’re going when you leave the phone creates credibility.

Simple: “If you’re able to hold, I can get you that information. It may take me a few moments as I need to (check the computer, ask a supervisor, check the files, etc.)”

Don’t LIE to your customer. “Hang on a second, I’ll be right back” is not the truth.

HIDDEN GEM: Tell the truth when putting someone on hold.

K

Know Your Objectives

When you get in the car, you usually have an objective of where you're going.

So when you talk with a customer in person or on the phone, it's critically important to have an objective as well.

Knowing exactly why you're calling, and/or what you're going to say is very important.

Objectives are like maps. If you have a map you know where you're going. Without a map – you might run in circles.

HIDDEN GEM: Without an objective you won't do as well. Simple as an objective may be, it's important to have it.

K.I.S.S. Method

The K.I.S.S. method, as we know, stands for “Keep It Simple, Simon.”

What we’re talking about in this book is not rocket science, it’s not brain surgery. It’s plain old common sense. But you and I know common sense isn’t common out there.

If I asked you to send me three good leads right this minute of folks who need this type of training, I’m betting you’d send me five or more.

We’ve kept it simple, you should as well. Customers enjoy simple. They understand simple. Don’t complicate your product or the issue.

HIDDEN GEM: K.I.S.S.

L

Let's -

Let's talk about what's important.

Let's is a cooperative word that encourages a customer to do something with you, usually positive.

It tells customers that you're with them and that they're not alone. Customers feel as though you're on their team with the Let's Technique.

Think about teachers and parents getting young kids to do what needs to be done.

The teacher will say, "*Let's clean up our toys and then we can go out to recess.*"

The parent says, "*Let's finish our dinner and then we can go to the mall.*"

By using this "let's" the children respond positively. And so will your customers. "*Let's get this order going.*"

Let's is a momentum word. It starts motion and movement where there was none before.

Will it work all the time? Probably not.

Will it work most of the time? Absolutely! I'm good with the 80% factor.

HIDDEN GEM: Let's do it!

Leave a Good Lasting Impression

You hear so much about making a good first impression and we agree, that's certainly important.

It's as important to make a good last impression.

Closing a call with "Uh-huh...uh-huh...okay, bye" can leave a customer with the feeling of casual dismissal.

Not shaking a customer's hand and thanking them for their time in person will also leave a feeling of casual dismissal.

HIDDEN GEM: We don't get a second chance to make a good first impression. Creating a good last impression is just as critical.

M

Monogram the Call

Most people have something monogrammed.

A shirt, a pen, a ring. Monograms personalize an item.

Names are a form of monogram. People like their names and want them pronounced and spelled correctly.

Overuse of a name has the customer thinking they'll change their name

Using the name once or twice sounds nice and is effective. It shows you're paying attention. Use it too many times and the effect is lost.

If you're not sure of how to pronounce the name, ASK. Don't butcher a person's name.

No one wants their name misspelled or mispronounced. An easy way to achieve this is, "I don't want to mispronounce your name. How do you prefer it to be pronounced?"

That's one way and a sure way, to start off on the wrong foot.

HIDDEN GEM: Know the customer's name? Use the name! Everyone likes to hear their name, but be careful not to abuse it.

Mirror on Your Desk

Having a mirror on your desk is not just for checking makeup and hair.

A mirror on your desk will remind you to smile BEFORE you pick up the phone.

Do you have a mirror on your desk? You should.

HIDDEN GEM: Yes! Customers can hear your smile. You'll sound better when you smile.

Music (or Announcements) on Hold

“Music on hold” can be a benefit or a detriment, depending on who is listening and what is playing.

If your company uses music on hold, and you’re getting a lot of complaints, you’ve probably got your answer. Lose the music. Know too, we aren’t going to please everyone.

And I’m thinking, we shouldn’t leave customers on hold that long that they can have a choice of music.

Another choice might be using announcements about your company or product. Those can be very useful. (As long as they’re helpful hints rather than how wonderful you are.)

Announcements have value when they’re of benefit to the customer; if you have unusual hours, specials or upcoming events – that’s useful. “We’re the best in town” is blah.

For instance, an automotive shop. Your announcement could explain the benefit of a front end alignment or if you’re having a special on tires.

A flower shop? Provide plant care tips.

No matter what service you sell or provide, you can probably provide good information for the customer

It’s not necessary to apologize for the hold during an announcement such as, “Your call is very important to us.”

The feeling here is: “If I’m so important to you, then why aren’t you here to help me?”

The most beneficial hold is when the recording is able to tell the customer approximately how long they will be on hold. That’s neat!

Thank you APPLE CARE and the others who give us a timeframe of how long the hold will be.

If you are going to use announcements, I suggest keeping them short, and of value to the customer.

One more point: The person recording the hold message should be a professional who knows how to deliver an announcement. It should be recorded in a professional, upbeat manner, in a professional studio; not from your home phone. Make it a recording the customer will want to listen to.

Monotone voices are out. If you're going to do the announcements, smile and HAVE FUN with them.

HIDDEN GEM: On-hold information should be of value to the caller.

N

Naturally Inquisitive

How, Why, When, Where, What, & sometimes Who.

There's a fine line between being naturally inquisitive and being nosy.

Nosey questions ask for information that is NOYB (None of Your Business).

Nosey example: "Hey, Mr. Smith. How much do you weigh?" (Not good!)

There are questions that are legitimate. Asking pertinent questions (questions that pertain to the conversation) is the key.

It is easy to ask pertinent questions. You expand on what the customer is saying. By doing that, you become naturally inquisitive and you'll get more information.

That will often help you serve your customer better and build rapport.

Let's say you're talking to Mr. Jones and learn that he's new with his company.

Asking, "I see you're new at XYZ Company, where were you before?" You'll be amazed at the information that comes out after asking that simple question.

You got more information by being naturally inquisitive, by asking one pertinent question.

Also, when you're naturally inquisitive and ask additional questions that pertain to the conversation, you show you're interested.

You'll become adept at communicating more clearly, uncovering your customer's needs, and building rapport and strong relationships.

*I keep six honest serving-men (They taught me all I knew);
Their names are What and Why and When
And How and Where and Who.
I send them over land and sea,
I send them east and west;
They have worked for me.*

-- Rudyard Kipling

HIDDEN GEM: Build rapport by being naturally inquisitive.

NUM Calls

Don't look it up because we made it up.

A NUM call can produce business, re-establish a great relationship, and be a bright spot in someone's day.

It means to make a NO ULTERIOR MOTIVE (NUM) call.

For those who may remember Peter Falk and his show **Columbo**, after his interview/investigation, he would nicely thank the person, start to leave, and as his hand was on the doorknob say, "Oh, by the way, Mr. Jones, where were you on the night of May 27th?"

And from the music that played in the background, you knew Columbo was on the right track.

Well, I'm not sure you'll get music with this technique; however, it works pretty much the same way on the phone or in person.

We make a contact for No Ulterior Motive or reason. Let's say you worked with someone on a project last year that didn't go the way you wanted it to and yet you knew you had the best idea for the client or you merely want to remind the customer of something.

We pick up the phone (NUM calls are good for emails too; however, the phone will be your best friend on this technique) and call Mr. Jones and say, "Mr. Jones (after you have asked for time to talk which is mandatory), I've been thinking about you recently and how nice it was to work with you and I'm calling to say thank you for giving me the opportunity to bid on the project. And while it didn't go the way I had hoped, you remain a good person to stay in contact with. I hope you're doing well."

Mr. Jones says, "Well, thank you and it's good to hear from you." And then he explains how it went for them. This gives you the opportunity to ask a few more in depth questions and, in most cases, since this isn't a 'sales' call, it will open up the conversation and give you more information. This is normally a very well received call because the person

isn't on the defensive. It's a nice, gentle "I'm thinking of you call" and most folks are very receptive to this type of call.

Two things can happen here:

1. You have in effect given him your verbal business card on the phone and in all likelihood, he will think of something that will/could benefit you. (Which you wouldn't have known about had you not made a NUM call.)
2. The other thing that can happen, as you close the call with a "thank you so much Mr. Jones, I'll be staying in touch with you" then here it comes, the Columbo technique. As the conversation is about to close: "By the way Mr. Jones, while I have you on the phone, will you be considering another proposal any time soon?"

BINGO! You're back in the ball game! Your 'by the way' comment can be anything that will gain you more information, give you an appointment or offer a new product.

So instead of the same old, same old 'here comes a salesman's call' this call is a well respected 'get back in touch - no pressure call' and many doors can open. Worse case, no door opens, but again, you have left your verbal business card and he will be thinking of you for the nice gesture you just did.

This is an awesome technique! (And FYI, this technique works in our personal life as well!)

HIDDEN GEM: A NUM call a day keeps the competitors away.

O

One-Word Answers

Basically considered rude and cold.

“Yes.”

“No.”

“Okay.”

“Fine.”

You get the feeling that this person doesn't want to talk to you or is rushed.

One-word answers are unfriendly. When you use them, customers are apt to feel you don't really want to help them. It only takes a few extra words to turn a one-word answer into a sentence.

Instead of saying “right,” add a few words to make it: *“Yes, Mrs. Smith, that's exactly right.”*

Instead of “Monday,” say, *“Mrs. Smith, you can expect your delivery on Monday.”*

HIDDEN GEM: Avoid one-word answers. There's no cost for the extra words. They're free. Use them!

P

Practice Being Positive

“It’s too hot.”

“I’m too cold.”

“I’m so tired.”

“I’m too short.”

“I’m too tall.”

“Thank goodness it’s almost five o’clock.”

Blah, blah, blah. No one wants to hear those complaints. Keep them to yourself. Maintaining a positive attitude in both your professional and personal life is key to success.

When customers hear negative comments about your company, product or service, they may think there’s more wrong with the company than you’re telling them. It makes them wonder if they’re doing business with the right company.

And when a customer makes a comment, perhaps to make conversation, there’s no need to return with a negative response.

HIDDEN GEM: Think positive thoughts and say positive things to everyone.

People Before Paperwork

No matter what you're doing when a customer comes into the store, your office or if you're on the phone, put the paperwork down, and work with the customer.

Paper will wait. Customers won't and shouldn't.

Rapport building starts with immediate attention and a smile. Putting paperwork ahead of the customer isn't very smart.

HIDDEN GEM: Don't make the customer wait.

Please...Thank You...You're Welcome

Your mother was right. Great words.

And a reminder:

1. "There ya go" is not "Thank you."
2. "Uh-huh" and "No problem" is not "You're welcome."

These are words we're taught as little kids.

What happens? How do we forget them so easily?

Use them in all six touch points of communication:

Email
Voice Mail
Snail Mail
Phone
Fax
Face-to-Face

HIDDEN GEM: Whichever method we communicate in, please, thank you and you're welcome are always appreciated.

Q

Qualifying

It's pretty simple when you think of it.

One of the most basic principles in selling is to make sure the person you're working with is qualified to purchase. Making sure they are the right person.

Ideally, you want to talk to the decision maker, the person who can say "Yes" without asking someone else.

If you come right out and ask, "Do you have the authority to buy?" you'll probably offend someone.

In fact, to keep from admitting that he has no power to purchase, sometimes the person will dodge the question rather than answer it.

You also can get the proverbial, "I want to think it over," while he goes to someone else for a decision. They don't want to "lose face." These people are commonly referred to as *the recommender*.

And we need recommenders. As long as we realize that's what they are and normally are not able to make the final decision.

Here's one way to help the process along:

Key factor: *Expect* that someone else is involved in the decision making.

A few key qualifying questions:

"What needs to happen for us to do business?"

“Who else is involved in the ordering process?”

“Let me ask a question. If we do want to go ahead with this, who else do we need to include and impress?”

“It seems as though many of my clients have several people involved in the decision process. Who else at your company is included in the process?”

These are good methods for finding out if the person you’re talking with can make a decision all by themselves.

By expecting others to be involved, you make it easy and natural for your prospects to tell you it is their decision or to give you the names of the other key players.

If you go ahead with a presentation and assume the person you’re talking with is the decision maker, when he’s not, several negative things can happen:

- You can make a perfectly marvelous presentation, use all your energy and all your good material and come up empty, all because the person you’re talking with isn’t able to buy. Such a shame.
- When an unqualified customer tells you “they’ll pass along your information,” don’t count on the sale. They won’t present your proposal with your enthusiasm and confidence. Usually they’ll present it in a neutral manner to see if the decision maker gets enthusiastic or not.
- Most recommenders won’t recall half of what you said, nor will they tell it with the same enthusiasm, knowledge and conviction you do. I doubt any actor on Broadway doing a show would let you stand in for him.

HIDDEN GEM: When a decision is being made and you’re absent from the scene of that decision, a successful outcome is in doubt.

Quality is a Four-Letter Word

Quality is a first cousin to the word LOVE. There are different types of love.

The love you have for your family.

The love you have for music or a favorite hobby.

The love for your spouse or significant other.

And the love of your job.

If you're like most folks, everything you pay for comes from the money you earn at your job.

- Your mortgage or rent,
- Your family's food,
- Gasoline for your car,
- Breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks,
- Movie or a concert, entertainment.

All bought with the money from your paycheck, which comes from our job, which comes from the customer. No customer – no job.

Think about it. You almost have to be an ingrate not to appreciate your job and your customers. If you love your job, quality customer service will follow.

For the sake of your paycheck and your job, remember: Quality is a four-letter word – LOVE.

HIDDEN GEM: There's an old saying: Find a job you love and you'll never work a day in your life.

R

Rejection

Everyone in sales eventually finds rejection somewhere along the line. It's part of the territory of sales. How you handle the rejection is what's key.

When you get a rejection, the customer is usually rejecting one of these factors:

1. The offer
2. The company
3. The product
4. The price
5. The timing
6. Some other outside factor

There are six items on that list. Notice that not one of them is you. And if it is you, for some odd reason, you probably know that anyway.

HIDDEN GEM: Don't take rejection personally. Move on.

Returning Phone Calls

I'm often asked, "Nancy, what do you think of people who don't return a phone call?"

My answer? Not very much.

Not returning a phone call is like not using your turn signal – just plain rude.

"Yea, well, I get so many calls, I can't return 'em all."

Who said "YOU" must return the call. Perhaps you can have the call returned on your behalf. A gesture that will help the cause, that's for sure.

And if it's a call you really don't want to make, make it anyway to finalize the relationship. Explain you don't want to be on their list...or you're not the right person...or whatever the situation is. But be careful, you might be hurting the feelings of the wrong (or right) person.

Gentle rejection is suggested.

HIDDEN GEM: Return your calls or have them returned on your behalf.

Rushing Customers

FACT: Customers don't enjoy being rushed.

Customers know when you're rushing them. (e.g., one word answers, such as yea...sure...ok... all sound as though you're rushing people.)

We usually rush a customer when there is a deadline on our end.

Rather than rush a customer, often times the truth will win out.

“Mr. Jones. I'd love to finish this conversation in the morning. I've got a 5:30 appointment and it's 5:10 now. Ok to reconnect tomorrow?”

What we've done here is explain the truth. Most customers can, and do, identify with that.

HIDDEN GEM: Rushing will stress you out!

Rapport Building

Ask anyone in sales and they're sure to say rapport building is a key factor in getting business.

Rapport is connecting; having something in common; liking who you're with; wanting to be with that person.

Making a good rapport with a customer in person or on the phone is something we need to work on constantly.

To find that 'connection' we need to get moving with the person. We need to ask a few questions.

Rapport building isn't taught in our schools today; your kids aren't getting this information in high school or college. It's not taught in corporate America, as far as I know either. In some cases it's self-taught. There's the JIT method (Just in Time) and maybe a book or two will show you a few ideas, but bottom line, rapport building is like a good attitude. Seems you either have that gene or you don't.

If you don't, ask someone who does. Pick their brain so you can be a great rapport builder too.

HIDDEN GEM: Rapport building starts with you and a question!

S

Smile

You knew this was coming, right?

TELEPHONE DOCTOR Motto: A phony smile is better than a real frown.

Don't believe in phony smiles? Second place Miss America does. Most gracious losers do.

By the way, your teeth need to be showing when you smile. Otherwise it's just a silly grin.

Show those teeth!

HIDDEN GEM: It takes more muscles to frown than it does to smile.
(Why overwork?)

Screening Calls

Most sales people HATE being screened. How would you like to never be screened again? Ever! Read on!

Screening, at best, is intimidating; at worst, humiliating.

There are three types of screens: a single, a double and a triple.

Single Screen: *“Who’s calling?”*

Double Screen: *“Who’s calling? AND, What company are you with?”*

Triple Screen: *“Who’s calling? What company are you with? AND, What’s this in reference to?”*

To avoid being screened: When you make a call:

1. Give your name first.

Then

2. Your company name.

Then

3. Ask for your party.

When you give full disclosure at the start of the call, you seldom get screened.

Reason: You’ve done most of the work for the screener. You’ve given them 2/3 of the pie.

All that’s left to ask is: *“What is this in reference to?”* And that seldom happens because you have given the screener 2 of the 3 things needed. Ninety percent of the time the screener is a happy camper and the call goes

through to Mr. Big. However, what happens if I'm wrong? There is still a third part to the screen.

The dreaded: "Will he know what this is in reference to?"

Then you use the ultimate answer. The best tip in this book, in my humble opinion.

You've given your name and your company and yet the screener still says, "Will he know what this is in reference to?" or "What is this about?" (Or any one of those obnoxious questions.)

Use our "BEST OF" techniques: Take a theatrical beat and say: "Yes, I'm interested in doing business with your company."

It works. Good luck.

HIDDEN GEM: Avoid being screened. Give full disclosure at the top of your call.

Slow Talkers

Slow talkers, like fast talkers, can be frustrating and challenging.

When you're faced with a slow talker, help the customer along by using aided recall. You'll most often be able to guess what the customer is talking about once they start. And by giving a bit of aided recall, go ahead and suggest a few things you feel they're talking about.

Don't give up on slow talkers. Just have a little more patience with them.

Remember: If you're working with a senior who is having trouble and talking slow, good Lord willing, you'll get there as well. You'd want someone to have patience with you.

HIDDEN GEM: Patience!

Speakerphones

Speakerphones should not be used when immediately answering a call or when closing a call.

When using a speakerphone, ask if it's OK to place the customer on the speaker. Some folks don't like to be on a speakerphone.

Be sure to let them know who else is in the room.

More than 2 people in the room? Each party should identify themselves when it's their turn to talk. (Especially if there are more than 2 women or men. Voices can be difficult to recognize.)

Sometimes you don't want to be on a speakerphone. How do you get someone off a speakerphone and have them pick up the receiver?

Try this technique; it usually works:

"I'm having difficulty with the audio on the call, your voice is going in and out. May I ask you to pick up the phone please?"

And again, pick up the receiver at the end of the call and make a more personal closure to the conversation.

HIDDEN GEM: Don't terminate a call on a speakerphone. Pick up the receiver to end the call.

Swear Stoppers

It's no fun when a customer starts using foul or unpleasant language.

In fact, it's not even right. Yet they do it.

Use our Telephone Doctor 'swear stopper.'

"Excuse me. I can handle your problem. That's no problem. I am not able to handle your abusive language."

8 out of 10 times they don't even realize they're swearing and back off. Some even apologize. It brings them down to earth. Now you can start working on what happened.

HIDDEN GEM: Swearing won't work.

Sandwiching

This is not about a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Or maybe it is. Cuz it's that good of an idea.

It's all about reaching a customer.

Years ago, leaving a voice mail was a great idea. And if you learned how to leave a GREAT voice mail, the call "might" even get returned. (There are ways to get your calls returned.)

Enter email. So now when we want to reach someone, most of us 'email' the client.

What we've learned from our surveys is more often than not an email will get returned more times than a voice mail.

However, what we also learned – is a SANDWICH is the best of both worlds.

How to Make a "Sandwich"

Call your party. Leave a great – although short – voice mail letting them know you're not sure which they go to first; email or voice mail, so you'll also send a short email to them. Then give the reason why you're calling.

Then email that same client – starting with "I just left you a voice mail with similar information; wasn't sure which you go to first."

Then tell them what you just left on their voice mail.

It can, of course, be reversed. You can start with an email and then leave a short voicemail advising you just left an email for them with a similar message.

What this does is cover all the bases.

Since we have no idea at all which a person will go to first (their email or their voice mail), sending a short message to each increase your chances of getting a return call or email.

While it doesn't guarantee it, it will increase your chances. And that's good enough for me.

Telephone Doctor surveys are now showing us that email has surpassed voice mail in responses. And why not? Isn't it much easier to hit "reply" than to write the phone number down the party left, hang up the receiver – pick up the receiver – dial the number – ask for the party only to find the party you're calling isn't there and now you need to leave a voice mail?

So "sandwiching" is a Telephone Doctor favorite. Many times when I ask the client if he heard my voice mail – the answer was, "Nope, I saw your email first."

It shouldn't matter how a client responds – either by email or phone – just as long as they do!

So don't just leave one or the other ... SANDWICH. You'll be glad you did.

HIDDEN GEM: Use both email and voice mail to reach your clients.

T

Tone of Voice

The Carol Story:

Several years ago I interviewed a young lady for a phone position. She was bright, friendly, fun, and positive. We talked for quite a while and because of her enthusiasm, I hired her on the spot.

After a few weeks of training, she went on the phones calling Telephone Doctor clients.

I happened to walk past her office one day shortly after she got on the phones and I nearly fell over. It looked like the same person, but it didn't sound like the same person.

She was dull, unfriendly, cold, and impersonal.

I called her into my office. "What happened to the tone of voice and enthusiasm I heard in the interview?" I asked. "You were wonderful."

She said, "Oh, that was for you. I use a different tone when I'm on a business call."

"Wrong," I told her. "Business customers deserve a bright, friendly tone of voice too."

There's a big difference between a bright cheery voice and a dull tone of voice, even when you use the same words.

The right tone of voice is so important on the phone. It sets the entire stage and mood of the relationship.

Customers tend to mirror your tone.

When you're upbeat and bright, chances are they will be too! It's not what you say, but how you say it!

P.S. – Guess who doesn't work at Telephone Doctor anymore!

HIDDEN GEM: Don't be a Carol!

Three-Part Greeting

(How to answer the business phone)

“Hello” is not a business phone phrase.

When you answer a telephone call, the first four to six seconds are critical because that’s all the time you get to make a good first impression on the telephone.

As basic and simple as that sounds, when the initial greeting is ineffective, the opportunity to create immediate goodwill for a business will be lost.

To create a good impression when initially greeting a customer, use this three-part approach:

The Buffer (Needed to warm the call.)

The buffer is the welcome mat that says I’m glad you called. It can be:

“Good morning.”

“Good afternoon.”

“Thanks for calling.”

Without the buffer words the welcome is hard, cold and rude.

Buffer words set up the most important part of the greeting. That’s going to be your company or department name. All that’s left to say then is:

Your Name

Names need to be at the end of each greeting without anything after it.

“How can I help you” is not necessary on an initial greeting.

You’re there to help. That’s why you answered the phone. It’s like a belt and suspenders. Not necessary.

It's not bad; it's not wrong; just unnecessary.

When a customer asks: "Who's this?" or "Who am I speaking with?" it simply means you've not used your name. You've answered the phone ineffectively. Not wrong. Ineffectively.

An expert initial greeting creates goodwill and starts the conversation off on the right foot.

Sample:

*"Good morning,
XYZ Company,
This is Steve."*

STOP. Remember, we don't need "How can I help you."

HIDDEN GEM: "How can I help you" is better used in message taking situations, not in the initial greeting.

U

Understanding Customer Needs in a Sales Situation

A sale can only take place when a customer has a need and you're able to *identify* and *fulfill* that need with your product or service.

Whatever the need is, it's critically important to uncover it and understand the need. Develop a list of simple statements to help you in this process.

"Mrs. Evans, if you were going to try out a new bank, what do you feel your biggest reason for doing so would be?"

or

"Mr. Kelly, what would you rate as the most critical element in your decision to upgrade your policy?"

These types of questions will help determine the needs of your customers and facilitate the sales of your product or service.

Taking the time to stop and ask questions is key. Customers sometimes think they know what they need when actually, after a short discussion, you will know more about what they need than they do.

Letting customers know that in order for you to meet their needs it's important you ask some questions. That way, the questions aren't a surprise and, in general, will be accepted.

You'll have a much better chance of selling to customers when you understand their needs.

Take the time to find out what they are.

Most “understanding needs” questions start with: Who, What, Where, Why and When. (And don’t forget How.)

These are great words for uncovering and understanding the customer’s needs.

HIDDEN GEM: “Questions are the answers.” (J. Douglas Edwards, Master Salesman)

V

Vary Your Responses

There's a great saying: "If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you always got."

Some of us are semi-addicted to using the same words over and over.

Repeating: OK - OK - OK - OK after everything the customer says is annoying and not very effective.

Show some personality! Vary your responses so you're not saying the same word over and over again.

A few good ones:

Thanks!

Great!

That's good!

Perfect.

I understand.

Yes.

HIDDEN GEM: Don't use the same word over and over.

Voice Mail

5 Most Frustrating Voice Mail Phrases

Surveys show that an upbeat message left on voice mail with a smile will be responded to more often than a dull, uninteresting one.

Here are the five most frustrating voice mail phrases. Are they on your cell phone?

1. Hi I'm not able to answer the phone right now (or a similar statement).
 - Well that's a hot lot of news. Your voice mail answered. We know that!
2. I'm sorry I missed your call.
 - USELESS statement. Sometimes we're not 'sorry' we missed their call.
3. Your call is very important to me.
 - The customer is thinking: Yea, then why aren't you there if I'm so important?
4. I'll return your call as soon as possible.
 - Well, Nancy, what's wrong with that statement? I'll tell you what's wrong. Your "as soon as possible" is different from "my as soon as possible" and we will never exceed anyone's expectations with "as soon as possible."

The statement simply needs to be: "I will return your call." Best not to state a time that you'll return a call. Stuff happens. And could be you won't meet that deadline. Then you're into apologies, and excuses.

5. While it's not a 'phrase' per se, this frustration is when we don't leave the customer a place to go for help.

- Give an email, another phone number, an assistant or even the 'O' for operator. But customers need direction.

NOTE: Most people don't listen to how their own cell phone voice mail sounds or even their home one. It's a good idea to call your voice mail, cell and home, to hear what the customer will hear.

HIDDEN GEM: Call your own home or cell phone to hear your voice mail message!

W

Weak, Wimpy Words

Definition: Words that aren't needed or need to be replaced in a conversation.

There are tons of them. They're "semi-useless" and can, and should, be avoided. They're words that bring a sentence or conversation 'down.'

A few that come to mind are:

Just
Maybe
Possibly
I'll try
I think

If you say the sentence without these words, the sentence becomes much stronger!

HIDDEN GEM: Your message will be stronger without weak, wimpy words.

WACTEO

Don't look it up because we made it up.

We Are Customers To Each Other.

Often times, inside company interaction is often treated differently than outside the company.

Bottom line, let's treat our co-workers as well as we treat our customers.

Happy employees make happy customers.

HIDDEN GEM: Add some WACTEO into your life!

“We”

Using “WE” statements increases the relationship along. “You” statements can often be threatening, and, of course, “I” statements aren’t real good.

When we use the “WE” statement in talking with customers, it makes it a more personal relationship and moves the process along.

HIDDEN GEM: Create a personal relationship. Use the WE statement more often.

X

X-Out Credibility Busters

“Let me be honest with you.”

Or

“To tell you the truth...”

Or

“Let me be perfectly frank.”

Or

“Can I level with you?”

Your customers expect you to be frank and honest with them and to tell them the truth. Eliminate credibility busters!

HIDDEN GEM: Why use words that affect your credibility?

Y

Yes!!

To a salesperson, the most beautiful word in the English language is often “yes.”

In sales, we know it takes a lot of no’s to get to that one yes. And when we get that YES, there’s a certain kind of high; a feeling difficult to describe.

In order to get a yes in sales, we need to use all our talents and personality. It is not just one thing that gets an order, it’s a combination platter.

It could be the tone of voice, our understanding of the customer’s needs, or something fun.

And yes, it could be the smile in our voice.

HIDDEN GEM: Getting the customer to agree with you and telling you “yes” is your ultimate goal.

Z

Now, it's no secret that the letter Z is a tough letter when you're making a program based on the alphabet. So we got to thinking, the next time you run into a tough sales situation, remember to be creative. Use your imagination to solve the problem. It doesn't always need to make perfect sense. Try to step outside the box. Be fresh, be creative!

Zip

Practice and master the basics of customer service, sales and relationship building. If we don't, "ZIP" will likely be the total chance of having a successful career!

Zest

The dictionary defines zest as "stimulating or exciting quality. Keen enjoyment; gusto" – for example: "a zest for life."

We started with A for Attitude. Now we're at Z for Zest!

Be stimulating, be exciting, be different.

HIDDEN GEM: Hidden Gems are all around us. Z-End!