Title:
 Creating a Call Center Script

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1079

Summary:
Call center script creation has many pitfalls that can leave your operators and your callers confused. Here are some suggestions for clear communication.

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Article Body:
At the beginning of my creative career, I volunteered as an overnight deejay at a college radio station. I loved playing the music and interacting with insomniac listeners, but I got a real kick out of reading the news. I would tear copy straight off the wire service printer and if I was lucky, I had a producer turn that raw newsfeed into informational text that I read into the microphone. The text was broken up into reasonable sentences that were designed for easy delivery over the air. When my producer didn't show up for my shift, I did this myself I'd mark up the page, insert pauses, and emphasize the words and sentence clauses that I wanted to stress. If I couldn't be understood over a fuzzy and weak AM signal, then what was the point of taking five minutes at the top of the hour to deliver the news? I had a lot of fun and I learned how to "speak" all over again. Whenever I do any live speaking today, I use the same exact techniques that I learned while the "On-Air" sign was flashing above the studio. I mark up my speech or the text passage I'm reading because I know that impact is everything. If I lose my breath in the middle of a sentence, then it's too long. If the last word of a sentence drops out inaudibly, my message is lost. If I stumble on an unfamiliar word or name, my audience loses confidence in my message.

Live telephone operators who work in call centers and answering services need the same help that any live speaker needs. It's the job of the call center operator to communicate the client's business image to the caller, and this begins with the first few seconds of the phone call. Many small business owners' needs never go beyond representatives answering their lines with "XYZ Company, may I help you?" and improvising the rest of the conversation to obtain the information that the client requests. When clients upgrade their accounts

to more complex services, it's important that they create a script that works for both the company signing up for the service, the operator reading the script, and the customer. Your sales representative is more than willing to help you create the best script to fit all of your sales or information inquiries.

Creating a call center script begins with the "answer phrase" and the same principles continue through the entire process of creating a logical script. H ere are some important items to keep in mind when you are creating your script:

 • Avoid tongue twisters. Make your greeting as easy to pronounce as possible. "Doctor Perkowicz Peoria Plastic Surgery Plaza" isn't easy to say, even for the native English speaker. Make sure that your operators know how to pronounce every part of your answer phrase, and the rest of the words in your script. Keep phrases brief and avoid repeating consonant sounds that will sound awkward over the phone or might lead the operator to stutter.

 • Go global. A "Good Morning/ Evening" greeting can work for some businesses, but not for all of them. If your company is doing business across time zones, think about using a simple "Hello, XYZ Company" for your customer on the other end of the globe.

 • Humanize your greeting. Have an impartial friend or a trusted customer listen to your greeting, especially if it's a long introductory message of more than a sentence or two. Do you sound like a recording? If you give that impression to a caller, the person on the other end of the line might just hang up because she wants to talk with a live person, not a machine. Keep all parts of your script brief and give the operator relaying your message time to breathe and sound like a live person when you create your script.

 • Less is more. There's a temptation to try and pack all the information about your company into your call center script, including providing an operator a copy of your frequently asked questions list (FAQ) so that he or she can quickly scan the file and answer 99.9 % of your callers' questions. However, this skill takes practice and training on the part of the operator and patience on the part of the caller. Long pauses to look up information, add expensive minutes to the call and are frustrating experiences for the operator and the caller alike. Extensive account training is available through most call centers, if your budget permits. If this resource is not an option for you, limit the information available to the operators to a few facts about your product or service, and let them know that it's okay to ask callers if someone from the right department can return their call and answer their questions in depth.

 • Test. Call your account weekly and test to make sure that the

operators are following your instructions, are handling your scripts the way that you expect, and are able to easily access the information that they need to take your calls. After the honeymoon period with a new account, operators often grow lax and shorten your script, or improvise far beyond the call of duty. This can be detrimental to your business. Make sure that you follow up with your call center to make sure they are serving your needs.

 • Tweak, and tweak again. Review your script from time to time, and see if it's still leading to action. Ultimately, your script should lead to a sale, an appointment a request for more information or further contact from your office. Check your call logs and any statistics your sales representative provides you with on a monthly basis. If you notice a downward trend in your results, work with your sales rep to change your script.

These suggestions are only the beginning of creating a successful call center script for your organization. Work with your sales representative and listen to their suggestions, add your own, do your market research and your script will be a success. Clear communication starts with clear instructions from you, and clear voices on the answering end of your phone lines. Your call center will work with you to make sure that all of your needs are filled over and above your expectations.