

**Title:**

The Voice of Customer Service

**Word Count:**

823

**Summary:**

Customer service is about more than mouthing the words customers want to hear in a manner so as to convey our inflection. It is important to understand where in a sentence we put the emphasis. Using a pleasant tone, effective intonation, and empathic emotion our voice can go a long way toward helping customers feel heard, valued and cared for.

**Keywords:**

customer service, customer retention, motivational speaker, sales trainer, sales training, salesmanship, sales trainer, sales training, cold calls, humorist, storyteller, communicator, better communication

**Article Body:**

Customer relationship management tools abound, yet let's hear it for old technology. Your voice is the most multifaceted customer service tool in your toolkit. Your voice can convey concern, care and compassion. It can alternately convey boredom, neglect or contempt. Your challenge: to insure your voice reinforces the service you strive to deliver through your actual words and action.

Customer service is about more than mouthing the words customers want to hear. You have to sound believable. How do you sound? Try this experiment. Call your own answering machine and leave yourself a message normally intended for your customers. Now replay it. Are you convincing? Does sincerity ring from your voice or are you just mouthing clichés in a disinterested fashion?

Depending your tone of voice you can alternately sound:

Compassionate or Condescending

Confident or Insecure

Knowledgeable or Ignorant

Attentive or Disinterested

Focused or Scattered

Alive or Comatose

Pick one of the following phrases:

"Thank you for calling. We're excited to serve you."

"Welcome back. It's so nice to see you again."

"We've missed you. Thank you for coming in again."

Mouth it a few times to a colleague next to you or over the phone to a friend.

- Now ask your listener: "How do I sound?"
- When you're monotonal you may sound flat and lifeless.
- How does this sound when you're tired? Uninspired?
- How does this sound when you're expressive? Do you generate good will and energy?
- How does this sound when you're sincere? Is there a genuine quality to your voice?
- How does this sound when you're friendly? Does warmth emanate from your conversation?
- How does this sound when you are smiling? Does your good humor come translate?

#### **<b>Mirror Mirror on the Desk</b>**

There is a reason many telesales and customer service representatives have mirrors on their desk. It's not to admire their beauty or to insure the proverbial spinach isn't stuck to their teeth. In this case, the mirror has two purposes. First, as a reminder to reps to smile while on the phone. Even though their smile isn't seen by listeners, it is felt. When we smile it loosens up our jaws and relaxes us. This is then conveyed through our voice. We sound more relaxed, friendly and open because we are. The act of smiling activates certain muscles in our face and neck and actually alters our disposition for the better. The mirror both reminds us to smile and confirms we are when we glance at it periodically. Not to sound overly Dramatics, but "What you see is what they get."

#### **<b>Inflection</b>**

When we consider the message our voice sends customers, don't forget to consider

your inflection. It is important to understand where in a sentence you put the emphasis. What words do you accentuate? Which words do you emphasize? Depending on your placement of accent you can send different messages with the same set of words. Consider the following statement: "It's all over my friend." Depending on the placement of accent and pause, this statement could either lament the end of a successful run of some sort, or be describing the result of a sick bird flying overhead of your pal.

Similarly, this statement, based on inflection, may send two entirely different messages: "What's that in the road ahead?" or "What's that in the road, a head?" You can see how inflections inform. Let's make sure the information we convey is supported by our inflections.

Actors often take the Shakespearean phrase "to be or not to be, that is the question" and repeat it alternately while emphasizing different words. For instance, one variant might be "To be or NOT, to be THAT is the question!"

Revisiting our triplet of phrases let's see how inflection alters their meaning:

"Thank you for calling. We're delighted to serve you."

We can place the accent on different words to convey different sentiments. The capital letters indicate the words being accented through our inflection.

"THANK you for calling. We're delighted to serve you."

"Thank you for CALLING. We're delighted to serve you."

"Thank you for calling. We're DELIGHTED to serve you."

"Thank you for calling. We're delighted to SERVE you."

"Thank YOU for calling. We're delighted to serve YOU."

For yourself, try this same exercise with each of the statements below, accenting different words within each sentence so as to find the inflection that best conveys your sentiment.

"Welcome back. It's so nice to see you again."

"We've missed you. Thank you for coming in again."

<b>Voice Your Concern</b>

Using a pleasant tone, effective intonation, and empathic emotion your voice can go a long way toward helping customers feel heard, valued and cared for. Mama was right, it is more than what you say, it's how you say it too.