Title:
Getting the Most Out of Your Next Customer Support Call

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368

Summary:
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That situation can be even more frustrating if there are children involved.

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There generally are two types of issues that come into customer support centers.
First is a standard "not working properly" problem where a piece of equipment
doesn't work as it's supposed to. For example, you purchase a new digital video
disk player and the movie won't play.

The other type of issue is missing parts or accessories when the manufacturer
doesn't include all the necessary components in the package. For example, your
new personal computer does not have the power cord.

These types of issues are inconvenient to the consumer but are often very easily
resolved. Consumers can take several steps to prepare themselves before they
call customer support:

* Research. We're all eager to get the new electronic gizmo up and running, and
we sometimes forget to look over the manual. There are plenty of basic problems
that consumers encounter that are often addressed in the user's manual or on
companies' Web sites.

* Information. Make sure you have all the information the customer support

representative is going to need. Having everything in front of you will speed up the process. This information is the real basics like make, model and serial number of the equipment.

* History. You should be prepared to detail what happened before you encountered the problem or explain previous issues the device may have had that were resolved.

* Timing. If you don't want to wait on hold, the best time to call customer support is in off-peak hours. Typically, call centers deal with their heaviest volumes in the morning and late afternoon. If you can call during late morning or early afternoon, you'll get quicker assistance.

Finally, remain calm. Take a deep breath before you pick up the phone. Remember, the customer support agents are there to help you, so having a friendly tone and attitude will make your experience a better one.

Bill Owens is vice president for service and support for IBM. - NU