Customer Service Hell Is Spelled...IVR!

Calling for help

By John Tschohl

You have just entered Customer Service Hell. It’s the phone call looped through a frustrating automated system known as IVR (Interactive Voice Response)—you know, the one where you “Press 1 to continue in English” and “Listen closely to our list of options, as they may have changed.” Or, “Please call back during our normal working hours.”

Very few companies have 24/7 live people answering their phones thereby limiting their ability to attract new customers and keep old ones. Very few companies realize that the power of a live person answering the phone still matters! The following companies do:

Metro Bank in London has 24/7 live customer service representatives. (44 20 3402 8312).

LL Bean has 24/7 live customer service representatives (888-731-3170).

Stew Leonard Grocery stores has live customer service representatives during their open hours from 7am – 11 pm (203-847-7214).

Apple is an anomaly, you are connected with an IVR for a very short period of time. They answer the phone quickly and your telephone number alerts them who is calling and then they answer with, “Good Morning John, which of your apple products are you calling about?” After which you are connected to a live person. (800-676-2775).

How to Win customers... talk to them. A phone greeter is the first impression of the company, the person that is going to answer general questions that may make an "interested" customer turn into a "sold" customer, and the person that verifies details to make sure the customer gets their appointment scheduled or transferred to the person in the company that can help them best. I think businesses should treat the person that answers the phone as a part of the sales team.

An automated voice is such a deterrent that some customers won’t wait to go through the prompts or listen all of the way through until they know which number to hit; they may simply hang up after feeling like they are just another number.

A welcoming voice on the other hand can make a person feel good, reflect well on the company, and make it easier for a solution to be made to the reason behind their call. Companies that treat their phone greeter like a sales person may notice that taking the position seriously is a great way to boost sales and get prospective customers to do business with you.

Give ‘Em Something to Talk About

Get everybody customer-driven so that if somebody walks in to your business through the phone line, the Internet, or in person, the experience is “Awesome.” Your customers will feel much more important when they are handled by a human rather than an automated operator.

“You have a better chance at offering a superior level of service when a live person can help someone promptly and in a friendly way.” — John Tschohl

SSE

John Tschohl is an international service strategist and speaker. He is Founder and President of the Service Quality Institute in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Described by Time and Entrepreneur magazine as a customer service guru, he has written seven books on customer service. Visit www.johntschohl.com

Connect John Tschohl
Follow @johntschohl

Would like to Comment? Please Click Here.