

Keeping reps busy during downtime

In the October issue of *Customer Service Newsletter*, the “Ask the Panel” column offered a number of strategies for dealing with downtime for customer service reps (CSRs) — downtime from phone-related activities, in particular. Panelists came up with a number of great ideas, including using downtime to conduct training, to help out with projects for other departments, and to allow reps time for personal development and skill-building. Following are some additional ideas from panelist Jeanne O’Brien of Mile-Hi Foods Company.

Self-managed productivity during down-time

Many self-managed activities can be offered to selected CSRs for completion during down time. These activities can be geared to personal growth as well as center improvement.

- **Facts Scavenger Hunts**, for instance, reinforce use of software programs or reference materials. CSRs complete hunts for details concerning new products, software or frequently asked questions. Successfully completed Facts

Scavenger Hunts, those with correct responses, are entered into the “Fact Finder Box” for a weekly drawing. This program can also be used for task knowledge.

- **Trivial Pursuit** is a challenging self-response game that can be geared to call technique, products, or software. During down time CSRs respond to fun and task-related questions. The winner may assist with creating questions for the following month. Participation can also be team-based, with challenges assigned to each team member.

Information gathering — added value

Customer service representatives, using information probing skills and product knowledge, can easily gather valuable information regarding customer wants and needs, and achieved satisfaction levels.

- **Initiate** follow-up calls to sales or service interactions and online order contacts for upselling or add-ons.

- **Validate** call effectiveness, and gather customer satisfaction feedback to provide insights leading to service or product improvement.

- **Locate** and substantiate sales leads.

- **Complete** Quality Check Calls based on service, quality and delivery elements. Provide feedback by department or process.

- **Update** customer information. Obtain emails and permissions to prepare for surveys and marketing updates. Validate customer contact names, telephone numbers, and addresses to avoid unnecessary mailing costs.

Satisfaction surveys

- **Customers** continue to be awed by a sincere follow-up call to check on satisfaction with product or process.

- **Conduct** satisfaction surveys for customer service or other areas of the company. In some cases, time and wages may be billed out to these departments.

- **Discern** customer-desired process improvements and develop client wish list items to consider for future company goals. This will insure that each department targets requirements that are in synch with customer requests.

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Customer Service Group

712 Main Street — Suite 187B • Boonton, NJ 07005

Phone: (973) 265-2300 • Email info@CustomerServiceGroup.com