
Powerful Phrases for Effective Customer Service

Over 700 Ready-to-Use
Phrases and Scripts
That Really Get Results

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Excerpted from *Powerful Phrases for Effective Customer Service: Over 700 Ready-to-Use Phrases and Scripts That Really Get Results* by Renée Evenson.

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Communicating Powerful Phrases

Customer Service means finding the best solution for each customer, quickly, correctly, and with a helpful attitude.

The above goal might be easy to accomplish when you're handling those easy-to-satisfy, pleasant customers, but let's face it: Many customers are not easily satisfied. And they're not always pleasant. In fact, they're often hurried, stressed out, impatient, demanding, or downright rude; no one, it seems, has the time for all the niceties of interpersonal interaction anymore. We live in a society where instant gratification is the norm. Customers want service and they want it now. Not later, when it's convenient for you. NOW!

As a service provider, it's your job to give your customers great service, but you know that it's often difficult to do. Dealing with customers can be challenging. They may leave you feeling frustrated, stressed out, angry, or visibly upset. They can sometimes leave you scrambling for the right words to say. They will occasionally flabbergast you to the point where you go blank and can't think of an appropriate response. And there are times when you completely regret the words that have flown out of your mouth. Knowing what to say when handling different types of customer behaviors is anything but easy.

The truth is, the customer is *not* always right. But ... when you work in the service field, it's your job to be courteous, respectful, and helpful, even when those behaviors aren't exhibited by your customers. And, although customers may not always be right, it's their perception of good service that matters and it's their how they're being treated that's important to them. You only succeed at providing exceptional service when your customers believe they've received exceptional service.

What if you possessed the skills to handle the less than ideal behaviors that some customers, and, at times, even you may display? What if you knew how to quickly identify bad behavior and maintain control of the conversation? What if you knew the right words to say to diffuse any situation and professionally handle every customer to his or her satisfaction?

Using powerful phrases – the right words – when you communicate gives you the confidence that you're communicating your best. As a result, your customers' perceptions of service will be positive. It's all about the words you choose. What you say can make all the difference in how your customers view you and your company.

Starting every customer interaction with a welcoming phrase helps put your best foot forward. By speaking courteously, respectfully, and enthusiastically, you foster an open dialogue with your customers. Building a rapport and showing that you are interested helps to make every interaction go smoothly. When appropriate, adding powerful phrases that convey empathy or regret indicate that you are genuinely concerned and truly understand the other person's point of view. Ending every customer contact with powerful phrases of appreciation leaves a positive impression in any customer's mind.

As you read this chapter, you're going to learn helpful powerful phrases that will make every customer interaction end successfully, especially those that didn't start that way, whether it was

you or your customer who behaved badly. Make the use of powerful phrases a habit, a part of your everyday vocabulary, and you'll successfully handle every customer confidently and maintain control of any situation.

Don't Do This!

Linda is a receptionist in a physician's office. Her responsibilities include greeting and checking in patients, answering the phone, and scheduling appointments. The morning has been unusually stressful for her. Earlier, the doctor was called to the hospital to perform emergency surgery and is not running approximately an hour behind in seeing office patients.

While Linda was busy phoning patients to reschedule appointments affected by the delay, she was also dealing with patients in the waiting room, many of whom were becoming impatient. She was on a telephone call when she noticed that one of the patients who had been waiting almost an hour was standing at the window to the reception area. Linda did not make eye contact, but rather stared at her computer screen until she finished her phone call.

She slid the window open. "Yeah?" she asked, with no emotion showing on her face.

"I've been waiting almost an hour now," the patient responded. "Do you have any idea how long it's going to be?"

"I told you when you checked in that the doctor's running behind," Linda answered in an annoyed tone. "I have no idea how long it'll be. Do you want to wait or reschedule?"

"Well, I'm here. The same thing could happen next time. I have no choice but to wait," the patient replied, mocking Linda's annoyed tone. Linda slid the window closed and picked up the phone to call the next patient on her list.

Why This Doesn't Work

Linda's interaction with the patient didn't work because she didn't choose the correct words. Powerful phrases could have made all the difference! When she slid the window open, she said one word, Yeah?, in a tone that signaled she felt bothered. Linda could have used a powerful phrase that was welcoming, such as asking in an interested tone, *How may I help you?* which would have gotten the conversation off on a more positive note. When she failed to empathize with the patient about the lengthy wait and then spoke in a chastising manner, the patient became annoyed. Choosing powerful phrases that show regret or compassion, such as, *I understand that you've probably got other things to do today*, and then following up with a statement of appreciation, such as, *I appreciate your patience*, would have shown the patient that she cared.

Had Linda incorporated powerful phrases into the dialogue, she would have paved the way to a successful interaction. Linda's choice of words left the patient less than pleased, and she likely didn't feel very positive about their conversation either.

Phrases of Welcome

The first words that you say to customers can welcome them into your business, giving them a sense of warmth and friendliness, or they can make your customers feel so uncomfortable that they want to leave. The temperature of your words can either be warm and inviting or cold and unwelcoming. It's your choice. When you choose phrases of welcome, you open the door wide and increase your chances of successful customer interactions.

Sample Phrases of Welcome

Offering a warm welcome to your customers helps break the ice, helps your customers begin forming a positive impression of you, and helps to create an atmosphere of comfort.

- *“Hello!/Hi!”*
- *“Good morning/afternoon/evening!”*
- *“Welcome to _____!”*
- *“Thank you for calling _____. My name is _____.”*
- *“Hi, Mr./Mrs. _____. It’s great to see you again.”*
- *“I’m pleased to meet you.”* (When introduced to a customer)
- *“My name is _____.”* (Offer when appropriate)
- *“How may I help you?”*
- *“What can I help you with today?”*
- *“Can I help you find something?”*
- *“May I help you with that?”*

Incorporating Phrases of Welcome

Always be the first to greet your customers; they should never have to greet you first or ask for help. Offer a warm welcome to show your customers you’re happy they chose your business. Include in your welcoming phrase an offer to help. For example: *“Hi. Welcome to Pete’s Patio Shop! How can I help you today?”* If your company has a standard greeting, add a phrase of welcome to personalize the greeting. When you use these phrases and speak enthusiastically, it indicates your eagerness to help. Sound like you are truly interested in being of assistance. Show that you’re pleased the customer chose your business. Even when their demeanor or facial expression is less than congenial, it’s your job

to welcome them into your business and make them feel comfortable. Using phrases of welcome can improve even negative person's attitude.

Powerful Phrases Make the Difference

Phrase: You walk into a store and spot a clerk behind the counter. She looks at you, and asks in a bored tone, "Do you need anything?" You can't help but wonder why she bothered asking.

Powerful Phrase of Welcome: You walk into a store and spot a clerk behind the counter. She looks at you, smiles, and enthusiastically says, "*Hi! How are you?*"

You reply, "I'm doing great, thanks."

She smiles, nods, and asks, "*How may I help you today?*" You return the smile, feeling comfortable that you came into this store.

Phrases of Courtesy

After welcoming customers into your place of business, how you handle the remainder of your interaction indicates how you view your customers, as well as how you view yourself. Customers appreciate being treated courteously, so when you interject words and phrases of courtesy appropriately throughout your conversations, you show your customers how you respect them. Using phrases of courtesy can also help you promote a positive first impression and keep you on track to build a rapport with your customers. When you form the habit of using these phrases, they'll become a natural part of the vocabulary you consistently use.

Sample Phrases of Courtesy

Below are some examples of common courtesies that should be a part of your normal vocabulary with customers as well as with all others.

- “*Please.*”
- “*Thank you.*”
- “*You’re welcome.*”
- “*Excuse me/Pardon me*” (When you didn’t hear of when you need to ask the person to move.)
- “*I apologize. I didn’t hear/understand what you said,*” or “*I’m sorry, I need to pass by.*”
- “*Will you?*” rather than “*You will.*”
- “*Yes,*” rather than “*Yeah.*”
- “*Sir.*”
- “*Ma’am.*”
- “*I’ll check and be right back.*”
- “*Will you hold for a moment while I check on that?*”
- “*Thanks for waiting.*”
- “*Mr./Mrs./Ms. ____.*” (Address by first name only if you know that’s appropriate)

Incorporating Phrases of Courtesy

Using *please*, *thank you*, and *you’re welcome* shouldn’t need any explanation, yet it seems these words, especially *thank you*, are seldom used anymore. Your customers will appreciate hearing these courtesies and a heartfelt *thank you* will go a long way. When you don’t understand someone, Huh? will make your point, but saying *Pardon me*, *Excuse me*, or *I’m sorry, I didn’t hear what you said*,

comes across more professionally. Likewise, if you need to move by someone, prefacing your request with *Pardon me* or *Excuse me* indicates courtesy. Choose *yes* rather than *yeah* because it sounds better. *Sir* and *Ma'am* are signs of respect, but make sure to say them in a respectful rather than a condescending tone. When you need to leave the customer to check something or place the customer on hold, explain what you're doing. When you return, thank the customer for waiting. Lastly, people enjoy hearing their names, so if you know your customer's name, interject it into your conversation.

Powerful Phrases Make the Difference

Phrase: You're in a home improvement store and can't find what you're looking for. You ask an employee, "Do you carry electrical boxes?" The employee looks up and says, "Huh?" You repeat the question. He replies, "Yeah, they're in Aisle 2," then turns and walks away. You walk to Aisle 2 and, still having a problem locating what you need, wish the employee had shown you where to find them.

Powerful Phrase of Courtesy: You ask an employee, "Do you carry electrical boxes?" The employee looks up, smiles, and says apologetically, "*I'm sorry, I didn't hear what you asked.*" You repeat the question, to which he replies, "Yes, we do carry them. You'll find them in Aisle 2 next to the wiring supplies. In fact, I'm going that way. Why don't I show you where to find them?"

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