

Signature Press



IT'S TIME TO FOCUS ON THE PHONE

By **Dave Hamilton**
IARE-News

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During my recent travels, I met with a number of current and prospective clients from the call center industry. Almost everyone agreed that every aspect of reservations center operations has changed except one! And that is the human factor. We still need to motivate our agents to maintain compliance to a structured sales and service process.

There is a consensus among center directors, managers and supervisors that the phone is ringing. So my message to companies struggling to change technologies and processes to survive these challenging, yet still opportunistic, economic times is to focus on the telephone. Engage each call and remember the value of that call to your business.

The following five suggestions will help your center focus on increasing sales and building customer loyalty.

1. Repeat after me: "The phone is my friend, the phone is my friend. It is not an interruption." Even if the phone rings when you are at your busiest, you need to answer each call with a positive attitude. Agents need to remember that every guest contact could change their lives. The person you are talking to could take you one step closer to your personal goals.
2. Get yourself in the right frame of mind. Even if you are busy, each customer deserves your best. Overwhelm them with legendary service and consider the sales potential of each customer interaction. When you leave for work, put your personal attitudes on a wire

hanger. Don't worry. It will still be there when you get home.

3. Create a personal connection with each customer. Use the call as an opportunity to build or strengthen a great customer relationship. Ask the right questions so you can hone in on their needs while building confidence and trust. Be conversational. If you feel like a robot, then rest assured that there is a robot that can do what you do. There will not be a computer program in our lifetime that has passion!
4. Ask for the business. This might seem like "Selling 101," but our extensive research indicates this simple task is actually done less than 30 percent of the time. If you want the business, ask for it. It's as easy as saying, "May I make this reservation for you?" If you don't know the state of willingness to confirm, the foundation for overcoming resistance is nonexistent.
5. Use continual training tied to individualized action plan. Legendary customer service and sales skills are not natural for most people. They have to be taught and reinforced.

During these opportunistic times, it is important to develop a plan and implement a program that converts inquiries into sales. There is no magical, grand idea that will solve all your human issues, but with the right focus on the little things, I am absolutely convinced that the strong will survive — and even flourish.

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