

Avoid these

FIVE FORBIDDEN PHRASES

when talking to a customer.

Sometimes the most costly mistakes can happen in the first few seconds upon meeting a customer or prospective customer. Here are five forbidden phrases that you do NOT want to use when talking to a customer.

Forbidden Phrase #1 – “I don’t know.”

There is no need to utter these words. If you don’t know, find out. Instead say: “That’s a good question. Let me check and find out.”

Forbidden Phrase #2 – “We can’t do that.”

This one is guaranteed to get your customer’s blood boiling. Instead say: “Boy that’s a tough one. Let’s see what we can do.” Then find an alternative for the customer.

Forbidden Phrase #3 – “You’ll have to . . .”

Wrong! The only thing that a calling customer *has* to do is die and pay taxes. Instead say, “You’ll need to . . .” or “Here’s how we can help you with that,” or “The next time that happens, here’s what you can do.”

Forbidden Phrase #4 – “Hang on a second, I’ll be right back.”

If you’ve ever said that to a caller, you’ve misrepresented yourself. Instead say: “It may take me two or three minutes to find out for you while you hold . . . Are you able to hold while I check?”

Forbidden Phrase #5 – “No” at the beginning of a sentence.

The word “no” is useless and conveys total rejection when working with a customer. Most sentences are grammatically correct without the word. Instead say: “We are not able to refund your money, but we can replace the product at no cost to you.”

The Six Cardinal Rules of Customer Service

Rule #1. People before paperwork: How many times have you stood and waited while someone tallied up a batch of figures or counted a pile of money? Then, only after they were done were you asked, “Now, how can I help you?” Paper can wait. People should not. Paper won’t walk away, but the customer might just hang up. Drop what you’re doing, answer the phone and focus your immediate attention to the customer.

Rule #2. Don’t be too busy to be nice: In most interviews, managers and owners hear something like this from the applicant: “I love to be busy. If I’m not busy I get bored and unhappy.” Then we hire them and one of the first things we hear is the complaint, “Wow, I am so busy.” Well, being busy does not give you carte blanche to be rude. Let’s not be too busy to be nice. It’s not worth it.

Rule #3. Rushing threatens customers: Whether it’s on the telephone or in person, avoid rushing people. Make each experience a great one. Remember, one word answers make you sound cold and unfriendly. Slow down. Stop rushing people. It threatens them.

Rule #4. Don’t use military language on civilians: Simply put, company jargon should stay within your company. Mistakes and miscommunications thrive on company jargon. You’ll be far more familiar and comfortable with the terms and abbreviations than your customer will. Some companies seem to have words and abbreviations that would make the CIA green with envy. Use simple, easy to understand words with the customer. They’ll appreciate your thoughtfulness.

Rule #5. Be friendly before you know who it is: Have you ever been a customer and been treated in a rather average, maybe even below average, manner? Later, when they realized you were a friend of the boss or someone other than an “average” customer, they brightened up? Why wait to be friendly? Why discriminate? If you’re friendly before you know who it is, you’ll make a good impression. When you’re friendly before you know who it is, you’re delivering the same great service to everyone. That’s the way it should be. Don’t discriminate.

Rule #6. “There ya go,” is not “Thank you.” “Uh huh,” is not “You’re welcome.” Count for one day, how many times people forget to say, “Thank you,” and “You’re welcome,” to you. “There ya go,” just doesn’t make it. When we, as customers say, “Thank you,” we don’t want to be grunted at with the old, “Uh-huh.” Speak clearly. “You’re welcome,” is a wonderful phrase. Please use it more often, and don’t be a grunter. When your customer tells you, “Thank you,” give a great big smiling “You’re welcome,” right back at them.