How to Answer Customer Service Calls: The Dos and Don’ts



The palm of your hands become clammy and you begin to fidget with the pen in your hands. The temperature in the room seems to rise as your heart beats faster and a bead of sweat trickles down your face. You’re anxious, excited and nervous all at the same time, and you’re not quite sure how this conversation will go...

You might think this is a scene from a romantic movie, yet it's actually an accurate description of what happens when you have to answer a customer phone call for the first (and second, and third…) time. Interacting in real time with your clients can be nerve-wracking, as the pressure of saying everything right, proudly representing your company, and having all the answers can make you jittery. Here, we’ve gathered a few tips that will show you exactly how to answers customer service calls like a pro.

# DO’S

## ****Answer with a professional tone****

Answering the phone with an inviting manner will set the mood for the rest of the conversation. Start by creating a professional greeting that introduces yourself as well as your company. This introduction may sound something like this: “Hello, good \_\_\_\_. Thank you for contacting \_\_\_\_\_, my name is \_\_\_\_\_.” Continue by asking your customer how you can be of assistance. This will show them that you are happy and ready to initiate the call. Finally, throughout the conversation, continue to adopt this professional tone by speaking clearly and at a moderate pace. This way, customers can easily keep up with the information you are providing.



## ****Use common terminology****

“If you can’t explain it simply, you don’t understand it well enough,” Albert Einstein once said. As a general rule of thumb, avoid using jargon or technical terms. Instead, opt for common terms that are easily understood by everyone. Being able to easily follow you will reassure your customers that you know what you are talking about. And maybe more importantly, it will show them that they will be able to get clear answers from you.

## ****Start and end the call with enthusiasm****

Enjoy the conversation you are having with your customer and adopt a pleasant tone while you're on the phone. It will help your customers become more comfortable explaining their issue with confidence, as they will feel that you’re genuinely happy to help. Positivity is also crucial for maintaining a productive conversation and keeping your cool even when bombarded with complaints - especially if you’re dealing with difficult customers. If you're struggling to keep up your enthusiasm throughout the call, smile. Smiling is said to give you a happier and more relaxed attitude as it’s impossible to be upset or angry with a grin on your face. Bringing some sunshine into the conversation will inspire your customer to have an overall positive experience and will also make your time on the phone feel like a breeze.

## ****Keep the conversation personal****

All of us want to feel acknowledged by whoever we’re talking to. At the beginning of your exchange, ask your customer for their name. If you do not hear or understand their name, it's ok to ask them to repeat it for you. Saying their name throughout the conversation makes for a more personal experience. You can also look up their information within your help desk software to pull up any past tickets or notes they have for their account. Take the time to find this information and quickly look it over. Anything that gives you more details on your customer will demonstrate to them that you consider each request on a case-by-case basis.

## ****Clarify the customer’s issues and concerns****

The archenemy of good customer support? Ambiguity. When you’re having your conversation with your customer, make sure you’ve cleared up any possible misunderstanding by repeating every important element they have stated and asking them if you have understood them correctly. You don't want to find yourself scrambling to find answers that are not going to be helpful to your customer. If at any point in time you lose focus and need to catch up (which is totally normal - it happens to everyone), kindly ask your customer to repeat themselves and don’t be afraid to ask them to explain in more detail. For example, say “I’m sorry, \_\_\_. I’m not sure I caught that entirely. Would you mind providing me with more detail?” Not only will they notice that you are actively paying attention, but they will also appreciate that you are really interested in helping them solve their problems.



# DON'TS

## Interrupt your customer

Who likes to be talked over? Not you, and certainly not your customer. We couldn’t stress enough the importance of being patient and allowing your clients to fully express their issues or concerns over the phone - even when you can already anticipate what they have to say. Interrupting people while they’re speaking communicates that you are not interested in what they have to say, besides being rude and upsetting. Plus, if you allow them your undivided attention, you will have time to take notes and comprehend the issue at hand. This will help you better assist them in the future and will make it easier for you to find the correct information.

## Belittle their issues

Don't pass off your customer's concerns as insignificant. Even if you know the issue can be easily fixed, mirror the level of concern that they are showing you. Remember that they have taken the time to contact you because they feel the need to reach out for further assistance. If there is a sense of urgency in their tone, do your best to sympathize with them. Reassure your customers and make them feel recognized. If instead, you remain unbothered, they will begin to question if you care to help at all.

## Give incorrect information

Avoid giving faulty information for the sake of wrapping up the call. Even if you need extra time to find the correct answer, take it. Deceiving the customer to get them off the phone will only lower your FCR (first call resolution), decrease overall customer satisfaction, and create distrust in your company. On top of this, when the customer places a new call, which they will if you have given them the wrong information, another team member or agent will have to make up for this experience. And you certainly don’t want this to happen.

## Forget to use your resources

True fact: Your mute and hold buttons are your best friends. Surroundings can become noisy and distracting, especially if you're in a call center or an office where multiple people are having conversations. Utilize the mute button to eliminate this chatter from being heard by your interlocutor. It will become a lifesaver on your sick days, too, especially when you feel a cough coming on or need to sneeze often. Longer pauses will require you to put your customer on hold. Make sure to use the hold button sparingly and only when needed. Always ask the person on the line if it is OK for you to place them on a brief hold while you “take a look,” “investigate,” or “collect more information.” This will be the perfect time to gather all of your notes and come back with a resolution.



Another useful tool and perhaps the most important of them all is your knowledge base. Your help center articles should hold all of the answers to your most frequently asked questions and will usually include important product knowledge. This means that the pressure of having to remember all of this information will be lifted from your shoulders and you can answer the call feeling more relaxed and in control. When answering a phone call, make sure to open your support center on a new tab. If your customer asks a question you are unsure of, you can simply refer to your support center articles to locate the correct answer and be able to provide quick solutions to your customer. It’s impossible to know everything there is to know about your company or to guess what questions you will receive from your customers. No need to stress about this - just make sure to use the knowledge base to your power. It will surely boost your confidence on the call!