9018

Programed Training Course For Outward Operators

Operator Flexibility and Judgment

LG 9018
1-74

OBJECTIVE

At the completion of this learning guide, you will be able to recognize situations for being helpful and flexible and accommodate your customer accordingly.

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In the Telephone Company our most important product is service - the best possible service.

To provide the best possible service, we follow some basic guidelines and procedures. However, telephone calls are made by people and people say and do unusual things under different circumstances. As a result, we sometimes get unpredictable requests. We do not have definite procedures to cover every condition but we do have guidelines that you have learned which will help you in deciding upon the best action to take in an unusual circumstance.

This Guide will help you to consider what action might be taken.

Start a page in your training Notebook for:

Operator Flexbility and Judgment

THE BEST POSSIBLE SERVICE

What do we mean by "the best possible service"?

Naturally, there are times when the service we give may not seem to be as good as at other times. There are storms or emergencies when our equipment may not be adequate and customers may have to wait for service.

Most customers can understand unusual situations and realize we are trying to provide the best possible service under the circumstances.

* * *

He does not understand when an operator is unwilling to help him or when an operator is discourteous.

He surely does not feel s(HE) is giving him the _____.

best possible service

We have talked about the ways we provide good service, and how they affect the customer. Name the four ways.

Continuing to keep these in mind, there are some additional aspects to providing the _____.

Let's find out what they are.

Accuracy, speed, helpfulness, politeness

best possible service

FLEXIBILITY AND JUDGMENT IN HANDLING CUSTOMER REQUESTS

Your instructor has set up the tape recorder and instructed you how to start and stop it.

As you listen, pretend you are handling the customers requests and decide what you would say to the customer.

Leave the guide open to this page and start the tape.

1. Turn on tape recorder.
2. Listen carefully to the request.
3. Turn off tape recorder at the sound of the bell.
4. Write your reply in your notebook.
5. Turn on the tape recorder to obtain instructions for locating the suggested response in your Learning Guide.
6. Return to tape. Proceed through steps 1-5 again.

And now begin with Step 1, shown above.

Sometimes you will have an angry customer. He may be upset about something other than the operator or his call. Maybe you are the first person to whom he has spoken after an upsetting experience, and you are the one to whom he speaks angrily.

"Get me 313 963-1000 and I want the sales manager. I don't want anyone else if he isn't there. Find out when he will be back because it's important."

When you recognize the customer is angry, you should try to complete his call without delay, following any instructions he may have given. (within reason)

You may have acknowledged "All right, sir." in as pleasant a voice as possible. (This could change his tone)

Return to the Tape.

"When I placed this call last week, I talked about the same amount of time and it didn't cost that much. In fact, it only cost me 55 cents for the first 3 minutes instead of 65, which I deposited for this call."

There are several areas in which an error could have been made. Therefore you should check all possibilities to correct any error while the customer is on the line.

You would probably want to explain that you will check the rate to make sure you are computing it correctly.

(You have no way to check the call placed previously and can only explain the charge for the call which you handled. If the customer does not accept what you say, tell him you will connect him with the service assistant.)

Return to the Tape for Call #6

Our aim is that all of the operators cause the customers to feel this way:

"Operator, you have been so helpful in getting my call through that I would like you to take several more calls which I am going to place. How about giving me your name or your number so that I'm sure to get you?"

As with any compliment, you should acknowledge the customer.

Do you want him to know your name or your number? Maybe not. You would rather explain that all operators are trained to be helpful and the operator answering his signal will give him this type of service.

Return to the Tape.

The important part of this request from the customer's standpoint is "How will I get the money I lost?"

Here is the request:

"Operator, I deposited 20¢ to reach you and you didn't answer, so I had to put in 20¢ MORE which did come back when you answered. I want to place a collect call, so how will I get the money I lost?"

You don't know how to handle this request. However, you learned previously that you always apologize when the customer has been inconvenienced. Check the back of the page, as usual, for the answer.

You may have said:

1. "I'm sorry that happened. One moment, please." (inform the service assistant)

OR

2. "I'm sorry. I'll have the money returned to you by mail. What is your name and address, please?"

(Maybe you had another idea)

Return to the tape for Call #2

"Well, it's about time you answered. I have been waiting for at least five minutes. Were you out on a coffee break?"

Customers are used to prompt answers and usually question slow service.

You may have said "I'm sorry to have kept you waiting."

You might have added "May I have your call, please?"

(To explain that it is busy or give any other explanation only delays the call)

Return to the Tape for Call #5

Many times customers call the operator with unusual requests such as: "I'm a stranger in town and I would like to know some good places to go for entertainment. Can you give me the names of places you like, Operator?"

You do not know in what type entertainment the customer is interested.

You could have said "I'm sorry, I cannot supply that information. You may be able to obtain names in the Yellow Pages."

Return to the Tape, please.

"Operator, how late are you working tonight? May I pick you up when you're finished work?"

Personal conversation should not take place with customers.

I am sure you have decided not to give out any information about your hours to a stranger.

Return to the Tape, please.

It is annoying to a customer if he is disconnected on a call. It happens sometimes when transferring calls from one extension to another or for some unknown cause.

Here is the request:

"I was talking on my call, Operator. How did you get on the line? I was disconnected on this call before. Can't you do something about this?"

You should express regret immediately and tell him you will reconnect him. Also, you will want to let him know he will be given credit.

Did you try to determine anything about the call so that you can refer the call to the service assistant for credit entries.

Return to the Tape.

This customer placed a call from a coin telephone and has already deposited the coins for a call on which he reached a wrong number.

Here is his request again:

"Operator, I placed a call to New Haven, Connecticut and you gave me a number in Delaware. I don't want to have to pay for that call."

Notice that he said "you gave me. . ."

To many customers, there is only one Operator on duty. If you answer the call, you are the Operator who handled the first call also. (This is what the customer thinks.)

You should have said something like: "I'm sorry you reached the wrong place, sir. I'll try to reach the correct number for you."

Since you know he reached an entirely wrong place and you know the requested called place, you would also want to check for the correct NPA code.

You would naturally want to refer this call to the Service Assistant to find out how to make out the ticket.

Return to the Tape.

"My credit card number is 8236-5142-067 and I'm calling 203 273-0158."

Did you recognize this as a wrong card number?

You might ask "May I have the credit card number again, please?" or a similar question.

(Be sure not to give instructions as to what would make it a "good" number.)

Return to the Tape for Call #3.

"Operator, on that number I'm calling in Wichita, I want to speak to Dr. Swenson. Please call me back when you get him on the line. You have my number."

(It would save him time if he held the line.)

You could suggest he hold the line while you try his call as it will save him time. If he doesn't want to hold the line, then you would go on to comply with his request.

or

If the customer used words or a tone of voice that caused you to feel that he was upset or that he would not take kindly to your suggestion - you would probably decide that it would not be good judgment to say anything more to him than, "Yes, sir" or "Certainly", or some similar acknowledgement.

Return to the Tape.

After passing you his order this COIN customer said, "Please get me the engineering assistant at that number. And, Operator, I'll pay for the call when I'm finished talking."

What would you do on this one!

You usually request the deposit before you connect the customer with the called party. However, there are several ways you could handle a request like this one. For example: you could find out if he would like to bill his call to a Credit Card -- to his home telephone number --- make the call collect

or

if he doesn't have the right coin denominations, you could hold the line while he gets change.

If your customer still insists you may want to refer the call to your Service Assistant.

We hope these examples have been helpful in giving you some ideas as to how you can deal with customers.

Success in handling each request in an individualized manner depends more on your interest and desire to help than on precise rules.

Put yourself in the customer's place - he is relying on you for assistance.

Use Flexibility and Judgment in handling requests.

Tell your instructor you have finished this guide on:

OPERATOR FLEXIBILITY AND JUDGMENT