

ORDER OF ATTENTION TO SIGNALS

Your first responsibility in operating is attention to signals. This section gives the order in which different signals should be answered and the reasons why certain signals are given preference to others in relation to other work.

1. Order of attention to different types of signals. When two or more signals of different kinds simultaneously require your attention, follow the order given below in answering them. This order is based on the principle of first attending to signals involving charge to the customer; second, attending to signals which only you can answer and on which a customer is waiting; third, line signals; and fourth, clearing lines and trunks for further use. In the generally accepted order of attention, the several signals in the second group are arranged on the basis of their significance, the status of the call, and the probability of the customer being on the line.

Some portion, or all, of the work required on some of the signals listed below involves only manipulation of cords. This can be overlapped on work which requires your cutting in on a connection, so that it is expected that you may be attending to signals of the last type at the same time that you are answering one of the preferred type, and while another of a preferred type is waiting to be answered. For example, you can disconnect a front cord on which you observed a reorder signal while you are answering a customer's recall signal, or you can take down a connection on which you received a disconnect signal while answering one of several waiting line signals.

First. Connection to be Timed. The beginning and the end of conversation must be noted as promptly as possible. Generally it is possible to perform other work while doing this as, for example, by reading the clock at once even though your hands will not be free to write for a few seconds, but understand the accuracy of timing is of primary importance and do not permit other work to interfere with it.

Second. Flashing Supervisory Signal from Customer. This signal indicates that the person flashing wishes to communicate with you regarding the call or to make a new call. Since you are holding his line on a cord on your position you are the only operator he can signal. You should therefore give him prior attention over line signals which can be answered by other operators. Cut in as soon as you are in a position to leave the work in hand long enough to learn his wishes, to acknowledge them, and to give them normal attention.

If, however, a supervisory signal flashes after you have answered a line signal, try to establish connection on the new call before answering the supervisory signal. If there is a delay on the new call, make a note of the called number and then answer the supervisory signal.

Third. Reorder Signal. This signal may be mistaken by the calling party for a busy signal and lead him to hang up. To prevent this, disconnect the front cord as soon as possible. Subsequent action may be delayed a few seconds but should be taken at the first opportunity.

Fourth. Busy Condition Requiring Immediate Attention. In some cases the busy back signal requires immediate attention, for example, the coin should be returned promptly on a call from a prepayment coin line, and on an assistance call when you do not wish the customer to hear the busy signal the front cord should be disconnected as soon as possible. Similarly, when the busy signal is not accompanied by a tone and on split connections, it is desirable to give an oral report promptly.

Fifth. Disconnect Signal Requiring Challenge. A signal condition after station answer indicating that the called station has hung up but that the calling party is still on the line, may mean a slow disconnect

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or it may mean that the calling party wishes to make another call. You are the only operator who can learn which is the case. It does not justify quite the speed of attention that the previous classes do because usually these signals change to disconnects in a second or two but reasonably prompt attention from you frequently prevents a customer from flashing and will give a better impression than if you wait for him to do so.

Sixth. Line or Trunk Signals. Do not answer a line or trunk signal,—

- (1) Before making an attempt on the signal previously answered if it requires an attempt to complete or before preparing any ticket that was required on the previous call.
- (2) If there is any one of the foregoing types of signal on your position which you have not answered and on which you have not taken required action.
- (3) If you have not challenged as prescribed on the preceding signal when you received no response to your answer on it.
- (4) When you have the maximum number of established connections on which answer has not yet occurred that you are permitted,—usually not more than four.
- (5) When you have two calls with customers on the line on which you have not established connection.

Seventh. Busy Condition not Requiring Immediate Attention. Where tone is provided, this signal is usually understood by the customer and in most cases he hangs up promptly so that an oral report is unnecessary unless it becomes evident that the customer does not understand the meaning of the signal. On calls from prepayment coin lines, as mentioned previously, prompt return is desirable even though the report is not given immediately.

Eighth. Disconnect Signal not Requiring Challenge. Signals of this type do not require any action but disconnecting, consequently they are put at the end of the list. It is important, however, that you disconnect promptly because until you do, both lines are held out of service to incoming calls and at any moment one of the parties may return to originate a call which will be delayed by a slow disconnect.

2. Order of attention to several signals of a particular type. Within a given type of signals such as recalls, give attention to all in that class before proceeding to the next type. Follow order of appearance whenever possible but do not lose time in trying to recall which signal is to be answered next.

Since there is sometimes considerable difficulty in determining the order of appearance of line or trunk signals, the following suggestions may aid you in meeting sudden heavy surges of these signals when you are no longer able to follow accurately the order of appearance.

- a. Give preference to signals on your own position.
- b. On boards of the lamp in the multiple type, such as No. 11 boards, answer all line signals in the panel nearest the center of your position first, before going to the panels immediately adjacent to it. Be sure to distribute your attention over the entire panel.
- c. If an adjacent operator reaches into your position to answer a signal which you were about to answer, allow her to take the call.
- d. In so far as practicable, dispose of each situation before answering another waiting signal.

May 1, 1940.

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3. Regarding attention to classes of service. Do not give preference to any class of service. Be sure to take coin station calls in their proper order of appearance in relation to other classes of service.

If, however, you have learned that a particular station or group of stations is originating a series of calls or is especially likely to make calls because of some special event, be particularly on the watch for signals from those lines.

4. Supervisory signals on boards provided with team keys. If you observe a supervisory signal on a connection on an adjacent position which you can answer, consider it as occurring on your own position and handle it in the proper order.