

## DEALING WITH CUSTOMERS

### GENERAL

The purpose of this operating practice and these accompanying notes is to assist you in giving the most satisfactory telephone service through the official Company switchboard that it is humanly possible to achieve. Our Company is engaged in providing telephone service and as applied to private branch exchanges our demonstration of service should be as perfect as we can make it. Operation of our official switchboard should be such that it tends to develop for us a telephone personality that our customers and other users will find most pleasant and totally satisfactory with each call.

#### 1. ATTITUDE AND MANNER.

Most communications between you and a customer or other user involve simply a request for a connection to the business office or an extension station. Completion of such requests involves only a small interval of time. Short as this interval is it is nevertheless your opportunity as the official receptionist of your Company to create in the customer's mind a favorable impression both of yourself and the Company. Such brief contacts have much to do with the attitude which the customer adopts toward our Company.

Customers expect accurate and expert operating on our part. Technically perfect operating, however, is not sufficient - the manner in which this service is rendered is equally important. Our service should be courteous, friendly, helpful and pleasing. Good technical service plus personal service rendered in a pleasing, natural manner that leaves no doubt of your genuine and sincere desire to be helpful are what you should strive to achieve. Your attitude, the manner in which you operate and your tone of voice should all speak for you in conveying to each customer your desire to give him assistance that is helpful, understanding and personal to him. Your objective should be to make a favorable impression with each contact. You can do this by being alert to the customer's request, by talking in a friendly and natural manner as if conversing face to face and by showing a definite interest in each customer's request or problem.

#### 2. YOUR VOICE.

Your voice is a major part of your personality. Over a telephone it is your only means of expressing your personality. Your tone of voice must substitute for facial expressions because your voice and the words you use are your only means of conveying friendliness, interest or sympathy. In speaking you should select words and tones that will cause customers to look forward to their contacts with us with pleasurable anticipation.

Speak clearly and distinctly in an unhurried and natural manner. Retain the individual characteristics of your voice and refrain from adopting a tone that will sound stilted, affected or mechanical. Practice unhurried speech and give thought to the modulation you use for each word and make use of rising and falling inflections where required. Avoid slurring words or syllables or clipping off

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of words or phrases. Speak distinctly and give full value to the letters in each word as correct pronunciation directs. Exaggerated inflections, mechanical speech and overdone and overemphasized attempts at a pleasing tone are displeasing to customers and should be eliminated.

3. COURTESY.

It is imperative that courtesy be evident in all operations at official switchboards. Anything less than complete observance of this is entirely contradictory to the desire of the Company and to good business practice. We are not discussing courtesy because of a wish to caution you against intended discourtesy but rather to point out that the tone of voice you use, evidence of impatience or irritation or failure to be completely helpful may be construed by customers as a lack of courtesy on your part or on the Company's part. Your goal should be the creation of a favorable impression on the customer by your personal eagerness to please and to be helpful and under every condition the elimination in your tone of voice or the words you use of indications of irritation or vexation. Courtesy, generally, is indicating to a customer a sincere desire to be helpful, showing him by cheerfulness of tones, warmth of expression and sympathetic interest that you are actually very pleased to have the opportunity to serve him.

4. ACCURACY.

Accuracy in operating is a part of the technical job that complete understanding and care produces. Inaccuracies result in a loss of time to both yourself and the customer and promote dissatisfaction and annoyance. They can be avoided by thoughtful attention to the customer's order and care and close supervision in the establishment of connections, disconnecting and ringing. You should never accept an order about which there is doubt and you can insure accuracy by enunciating clearly in a questioning tone any partially understood order and then allowing ample time for correction. Attention to supervisory signals should be thoughtful and prompt and care taken to insure that action is taken in accordance with the signal observed and the cord pair indicated.

5. PROMPTNESS.

Promptness is a necessary and desirable feature of telephone service. It is dependent on your alertness and the accuracy of each of your operations. Promptness is not mere haste but quiet, easy and efficient operation without loss of time and with the least possible expenditure of energy. You should strive through your individual efforts to eliminate all unnecessary and wasted motions and to anticipate through your alertness the next requirement.

Prompt service is also consistent service. One case of slow service is likely to affect the favorable impression of many cases of prompt service.

As an example of simulated promptness and wasted effort that may promote duplication of the call and your requirement to answer it, consider the plug interval. Here a line signal is plugged out before you are ready to answer. This

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is not prompt service, the act of plugging out the signal has only resulted in extinguishing the signal, stopping the ringing and giving the calling party a legitimate reason to assume that his call has gone astray. He will no doubt originate another call and thus increase your labor.

6. PHRASES.

The operating practice that follows contains many suggested phrases placed there to indicate suitable expressions for the operating conditions described. These phrases should be regarded as examples only of how you can express your thoughts concisely and completely convey the idea you wish to express. Phrases, however good, have several faults; they may not express your present thought completely, their use and the knowledge of this continued use by customers makes them sound mechanical and without personal interest on your part and such phrases rigidly memorized give an impression of unnaturalness.

There is no requirement that you use all phrases precisely as given in the practice. The words you use should be those that readily occur to you as the natural reply to each expression of the customer as you try to ascertain and comply with his request. Your choice of words should be simple and natural answers to the condition to be covered and should be varied as variations in conditions require.

Daily social contacts you make require that you frame a suitable reply to each question or statement as encountered. You choose your words and phrases to fit the condition never limiting yourself to a conversation consisting of two or three sentences memorized beforehand. Regard operating phrases in the same way.

Accordingly, you should direct your attention and effort to mastering the following principles governing the use of phrases rather than to the specific phrases given in the practice.

- a. The phrase used should state facts completely and correctly to the best of your knowledge.
- b. Any phrase used should be grammatically correct.
- c. The phrase should be appropriate. If the customer says, "Will you give me the business office," a reply of, "Yes, sir, I will," or "I'll be glad to," is more appropriate than "Thank you."
- d. Use contractions only to the limited extent sanctioned by good usage. Thus, "I'm sorry," sounds more natural than, "I am sorry"; "I'll see" than "I shall see."
- e. Phrases should be direct and personal. Keep these points in mind.

(1) Direct your questions to the customer, as "Do you know his initials?" rather than "What are his initials, please?"

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(2) Use personal pronouns whenever their use is natural, as, "I will connect you," instead of "One moment, please."

(3) Replies and questions should be direct, specific and to the point. If the customer is calling on a matter that should be handled by the business office, "I'll connect you with the business office," is more direct and personal than "Thank you," and prepares the customer for the answer by the Commercial Department employee.

f. Generally, a phrase should be as short as possible to convey the idea you wish to express, but be sure that it is long enough and clear enough to make your meaning completely understood and that it doesn't sound curt. There are many situations, however, where good personalized service requires a fuller more leisurely phrase than the minimum requirement.

g. Make an effort to vary the wording of a phrase when it is necessary to repeat it.

h. Do not use the phrases, "Thank you," "Please," and "I'm sorry," too frequently as doing so gives the impression of mechanical usage and of studied formality rather than interested friendly personal conversation.