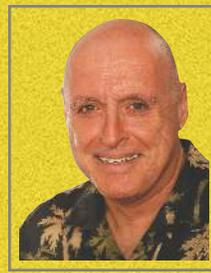


# THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



## # 846 The Ultimate Job of the Customer Service Rep

If you are in a direct customer service role with your employer, I've got a few thoughts on what to do and what not to do when someone calls with a problem. I'm Jerry Roberts, and how not to make a customer more upset than they already are, next, on The Extra Point.

I was calling a company I do business with over an issue with a transaction. In going over a report, part of the information seemed to be missing, and the transaction wasn't completed.

A young woman answered, and I explained why I was calling. She listened, and then told me, "Oh yes, everything is good." I told her I wasn't seeing that, then asked a question about the way they communicated with a third party, another company who was part of all this. After I made the transaction, how long did it take them to send the info to the other company, and was that at least partially responsible for the delay.

She proceeded to give me a long explanation, but it was almost as if she hadn't heard my question. She continued, and I tried to be patient, but finally I had to interrupt her. As I did, she continued talking, and our voices were simply in competition. I finally raised my voice slightly: "Excuse me, but did you hear what I asked you?"

This time she stopped, took a breath, and then went into another explanation, finishing up by telling me the transaction was complete, even though there was nothing on the ledger to directly indicate that. I told her a direct reference to it would have eliminated the need for my call.

Let me be clear, this is a pleasant person who knows her job. However, I felt she could have handled things differently.

1. When I told her I couldn't find evidence that

the transaction had completed, she should have focused on that point, before discussing my other question. It would go like this: "Mr. Roberts, I'll be happy to address your other question, but first, please look at the report on line 25, and that's where the transaction is." That would have proven to me that everything was indeed all right, as she had said.

2. I asked how and when the two companies communicated. She went into too much detail, and it didn't come out clear. The old saying is, "If I ask you what time it is, don't tell me how to make a watch."

3. I don't like to interrupt people. However, when I found it necessary to do so, she kept talking. Maybe she didn't like being interrupted, or maybe she couldn't hear me. I don't know. If she did hear me, she should have immediately stopped and let me speak. Yes, I interrupted her, but I am the customer.

The goal of the customer service rep is not to educate me about policies, or insist that everything is fine, even if I can't figure that out. The goal and purpose of the service rep is to maintain or help repair the relationship. Great reps constantly think about relationship.

They think to themselves, "He communicates this way, so I'm going to adapt to his style and energy, and then try to solve the problem."

Let me be clear. I'm not suggesting the rep sucks up to the customer, thanking them repeatedly for their business, or apologizing repeatedly for the trouble. You thanked me once. Check. I appreciate that. You apologized once. Check. I appreciate that, too. Now, please listen to what I say. Then, in the fewest and clearest words possible, tell me what I need to know.

(Con't.)

Being a service rep and taking customer calls all day can be a stressful job. I highly respect those who do it.

Solving the problem is important. Absolutely. However, again, the overall goal for the rep is to make sure I get off that call with a good feeling about my relationship with the company.

That's The Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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