

# Telephone Courtesy & Customer Service

Third Edition

Lloyd Finch

## ***A Crisp Fifty-Minute™ Series Book***

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# Learning Objectives For:

## TELEPHONE COURTESY & CUSTOMER SERVICE

The objectives for *Telephone Courtesy & Customer Service, Third Edition*, are listed below. They have been developed to guide the user to the core issues covered in this book.

### THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS BOOK ARE TO HELP THE USER:

- 1) Learn the basics of providing high-quality customer service
- 2) Understand proper telephone skills
- 3) Explore the importance of understanding customer needs
- 4) Discover the essential role customer service plays in creating a favorable impression of the company

### ASSESSING PROGRESS

A Crisp Series **assessment** is available for this book. The 25-item, multiple-choice and true/false questionnaire allows the reader to evaluate his or her comprehension of the subject matter.

To download the assessment and answer key, go to [www.axzopress.com](http://www.axzopress.com) and search on the book title.

*Assessments should not be used in any employee selection process.*

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# Preface

Welcome to *Telephone Courtesy & Customer Service*. This book is about the important telephone skills that help produce excellent customer service. You have been given this book because you are an important provider of customer service for your organization. The skills and ideas presented in this book will help you deliver an even stronger job performance.

This book has been written so that you can complete it in a relatively short time. The important thing is to read the material carefully, understand it, and apply it to your job.

There are four sections in this book. Part 1 defines a quality customer service provider, and discusses service responsibility. Part 2 discusses telephone skills and their importance to providing quality service. Part 3 explains customer “wants and needs” and describes the importance of a positive attitude. Part 4 teaches the reader how to manage customer perceptions.

Keep this book near your work location for reference. By using it regularly you will learn correct telephone skills and develop the personal skills required to provide the best possible customer service.

Applying the telephone customer service skills in this book will help you become a professional provider of quality customer service. This should be your objective.

Get out your pencil, relax, and enjoy this book.

Lloyd Finch

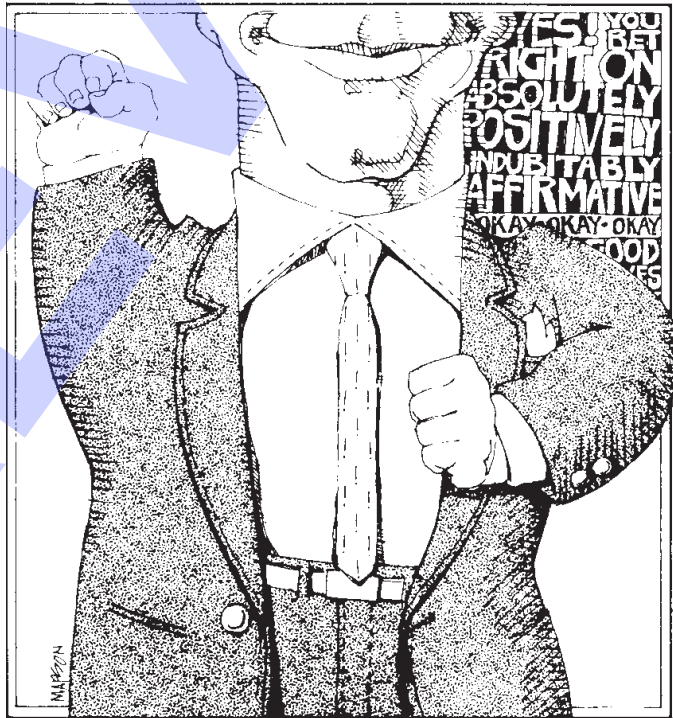
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*P A R T*

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1

# Quality Customer Service



PREVIEW

# You Play a Key Role

An employee who provides quality customer service, whether for external or internal customers, must do three things:

1. Accept responsibility for providing timely customer service in a courteous manner.
2. Understand that the success of the organization depends on the level of service provided.
3. Learn and apply customer service skills in a positive manner.

Often employees are so busy there is little time to think about their jobs or how they relate to the overall success of the company. Sometimes, those who spend much of their day on the telephone talking with customers don't consider their jobs to be very important. The fact is that anyone regularly involved with customers has one of the most important jobs in that organization. Following are some points to consider:

- Customers will take their business elsewhere when they aren't satisfied. Customers will not continue to do business with you unless they are treated in a courteous and professional manner.
- Anyone working directly with customers occupies a position of trust.
- Organizations known for providing outstanding service acquired that reputation through the consistent efforts of people like you.

# Customer Service Is Everyone's Responsibility

When we think about customer service, it is common to think that certain individuals or work groups are responsible for providing service. However, in most organizations customer service departments represent only a portion of the overall service responsibility. Everyone from CEO to shipping clerk provides customer service and contributes to an organization's reputation for service and courtesy.

If all employees learned to provide the service concepts in this book, their individual organization's reputations for quality service would improve.

In the next few pages, you will learn about successful telephone skills that will help you become even more professional when speaking on the telephone with external and internal customers.

This book offers skills, ideas, and suggestions for improving the service you provide. Put them into practice.

**QUESTION:** Dave is a lobby receptionist for Acme Systems. His responsibilities include registering and providing security badges for all non-employees who enter the building. Is Dave responsible for customer service?

**ANSWER:** You bet!

# The Importance of the Telephone Within Your Organization

In your job you may use email, fax, voicemail, and the telephone. Each of these tools can help you satisfy your customers. (We will talk about managing technology later in this book.)

Although there are salespeople and others who meet with customers, most service in the typical organization is provided over the telephone.

## *What is your organization like?*

Think for a moment about all the customer contact that occurs where you work.

1. What percentage of all customer service is managed on the telephone?
2. What percentage do you think is handled in face-to-face meetings?
3. Who has more responsibility for satisfying customers?
  - those who meet face-to-face with customers
  - managers and supervisors
  - those who speak with customers on the telephone



## EXERCISE: WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE?

Rate the overall contribution to customer service by the various work groups listed below. Write in a 1 for the largest contributor, a 2 for the second-largest contributor, and so forth. If your organization doesn't have a particular work group, don't rate it. But if you have the work group, it must be rated.

- the shipping and receiving group
- the sales group
- the customer service group
- technical support
- service technicians
- telephone receptionists
- managers and supervisors
- order processing
- lobby attendants
- accounting
- others

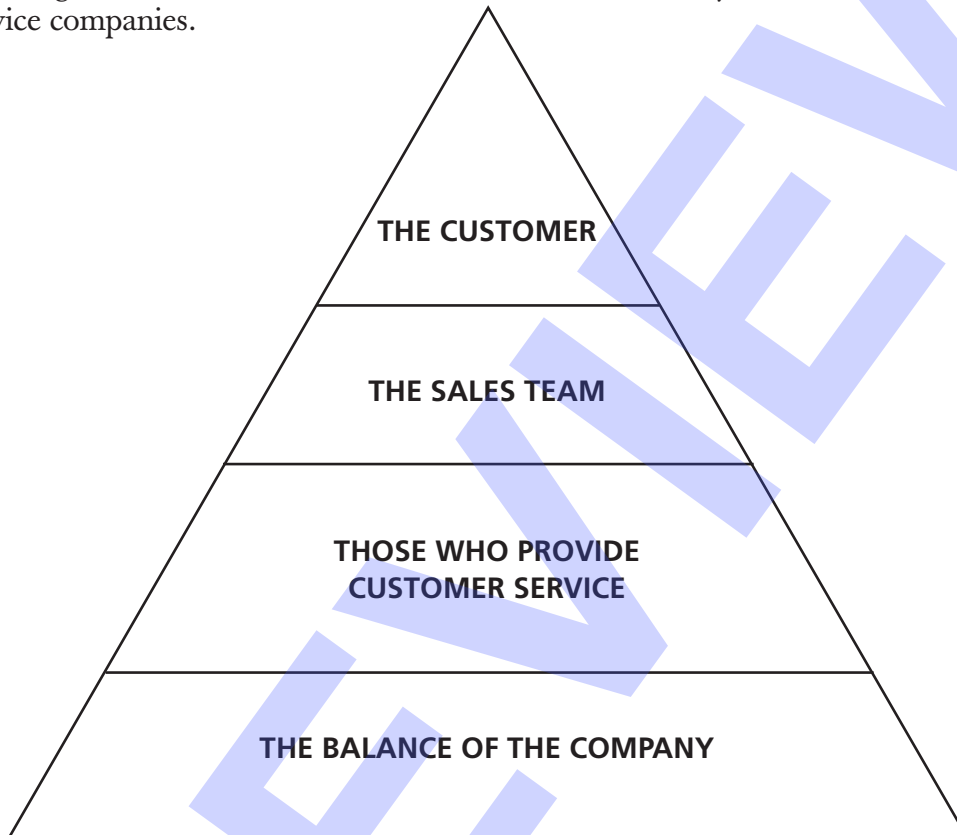
Although one or two groups probably stand out, it is important to realize that nearly everyone has some responsibility for satisfying customers. Also, look at your selections and note how much of your service is provided over the telephone. This is why telephone skills are so important.

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# DIAGRAM OF A QUALITY-CONSCIOUS COMPANY

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The diagram below illustrates how a customer is viewed by the best customer service companies.



Please notice that customers are at the top of the pyramid and are supported by sales, customer service, and the balance of the organization. Keep this diagram in mind as you learn about telephone skills that can help provide quality customer service.

PREVIEW

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*P A R T*

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2

# Proper Telephone Skills



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PREVIEW

# Skill 1: Handling the Telephone

Features of the telephone need to be understood. These features are designed to help you handle calls smoothly. At first glance they may seem complicated but normally are easy to use. To understand the capabilities of your telephone better, read about the available features or ask a more experienced person to explain them to you. Then practice until they become automatic.

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*Joan needed to transfer a caller to a co-worker. She wasn't sure how to do it. After quickly reading the instructions Joan made the transfer, but the caller was accidentally disconnected. If Joan had spent a few minutes practicing the call transfer feature, the disconnect would have not occurred.*

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- The time to learn about your telephone is ahead of time. Do not practice on the caller. Be familiar with all of the features.
- Hold the transmitter portion of the telephone directly in front of your mouth. If the transmitter is held away from your mouth, you risk not being understood.
- Place the telephone on your desk so the receiver will be picked up without banging into anything. No one likes unnecessary noise.
- Avoid side conversations while talking on the telephone. Your party deserves your full attention. Do not attempt to carry on two conversations at the same time.
- Make sure you place the caller on hold before discussing his or her situation with a co-worker.

*Wouldn't it be embarrassing if you told a co-worker that a caller didn't sound too smart, only to discover that he or she was listening?*

- Never eat or drink while talking. If your mouth is full when the telephone rings, wait a few seconds before answering.

## Skill 1 (CONTINUED)

- Answer in as few rings as possible. A maximum of three rings is a good standard.

*Some organizations have a “three-ring policy.” Check to see if yours does.*

- Before you place a caller on hold to answer another line, ask for permission and *wait for an answer*.

**Example:** *“Would you mind holding for a moment? Wait for the customer to say, “Sure, go ahead.” Too often customers hears, “Please hold” and the person is gone.*

- If you have several callers on hold, remember the priority of each call. If necessary, make notes of who has been holding on which line and for how long.

*Nothing is more irritating than to answer the question, “Who are you holding for?” several times. When you forget who the caller was holding for, simply apologize. “I’m sorry, who were you holding for?”*