

Handle Client Complaints Like A Pro

As you're preparing for your next sales presentation, you're feeling pumped-up, energized and confident. That is, until an existing customer calls with a complaint about the product you just sold her.

You spent weeks luring her in as a new customer and finally got the sale. But now she's not satisfied. You can't ignore her; that would be implorable considering you just sold her on your company's outstanding customer service.

So how do you stay focused on your next sales pitch and still help a not-so-happy customer reconcile her problem? Follow these tips:

✦ **Make a quick contact.** If you're on your way out the door to a new sales meeting, let your customer know that you have a pending appointment, but you would like to call her back immediately after your meeting. This way you can stay focused on your meeting, but still let your customer know you care about her problem.

✦ **Evaluate the situation.** Make sure you truly listen to her complaint. Find out

the true root of the problem. It's possible she got a defective product, or maybe she just needs help understanding how to use it properly.

✦ **Keep your cool.** Resist the temptation to turn the problem on the customer. Don't make her feel like it's her fault the product doesn't work. Assure her that the mere fact that she has a problem is disturbing to you and you will do everything in your power to rectify the situation.

✦ **Tap into your resources.** If you have a specialized customer service department, tell your customer that you will connect her with a representative who can assist her better. Tell her that you will connect her with your most highly skilled rep, and you'll follow up to make sure she is getting the treatment she deserves. This will please your customer because she will truly feel like she's a priority to you, even though you won't be the one helping her directly.

✦ **Follow up.** Make sure you call her back in a timely fashion to find out the status of her problem; she'll appreciate your special attention to her matter. ■

- **Reschedule when you're sick.** If you've come down with a cold, be considerate of your potential customers and reschedule your appointments. They'll appreciate the fact that you don't want to spread your germs to them, and you'll appreciate not having to sell products while sneezing, coughing and wiping your nose.
- **Be on time.** Nothing makes a worse first impression than not showing up on time. After more than 15 minutes of waiting, your potential customer is bound to become frustrated and irritated and won't be very receptive to how wonderful your products or services are.
- **Keep extra cards on hand.** Don't leave the house without a pocketful of extra business cards. You never know where you'll be when you'll run into your next potential customer.

Eat Healthy While On The Run

You may have a busy schedule, but that doesn't mean you can skimp on healthy eating. Being on-the-go all day makes you more susceptible to becoming rundown.

But how do you eat healthy when you don't have time to dine? Keep the following snacks on hand to make sure you're fueling your body properly:

- * Nuts, raisins and other dried fruits.
- * Carrots and other vegetable sticks.
- * Half peanut butter sandwiches made on whole-grain bread.
- * Bananas or other fresh fruits.
- * Whole-grain cereal bars
- * 100-percent fruit or vegetable juice
- * Whole-grain crackers
- * Microwavable soup. ■

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

You have some clients who are hard of hearing. How do you communicate with them properly?

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WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Communicate Well With The Hearing Impaired

You want to make sure you present yourself and your message properly, so make sure that you consider those potential customers who may be hard of hearing.

There's a chance you'll encounter a potential customer who has a mild to severe hearing loss. You want to make sure he understands what you're telling him, and you also want to make sure you don't offend him. For clients who have some degree of hearing impairment, use these tips to make sure you are communicating as well as you possibly can:

- ④ Make sure the room you are in is well lit.
- ④ Be sure to speak clearly but don't shout.
- ④ Make sure you have your client's attention before you speak. If he is busy reading one of your pamphlets, speak his name to gain his attention so you know that he is focusing on what you are saying.
- ④ Reduce any extraneous background noise that you can. If a radio is on, turn it off, and close your door to eliminate noise from the hallway.
- ④ Use facial expressions when you speak, but don't over-exaggerate them.
- ④ Don't cover your mouth. Your client may rely on reading your lips in conjunction with listening to you speak to fully understand what you are saying.
- ④ Brush up on your sign-language skills. Take a night class or invest in some books that teach basic sign language. If you encounter a customer who has a complete hearing loss, he'll appreciate your efforts.

Learning sign language is akin to learning a second language. Having the skillset makes you a more versatile sales person as you'll be able to communicate to a larger customer base. ■

Present Your Next Pitch Confidently

Your product knowledge is a very important ingredient in making a sale. But how you present yourself during a presentation pulls a lot of weight as well.

As you prepare for your next presentation, you're probably thinking about the product or service you're selling and how close to your quota you'll be at the end of the day. But don't forget to keep the following presentation tips in mind as you gear up to convince a customer why she needs your product:

➤ **Be enthusiastic.** You'll deter your potential customer if she thinks you're bored out of your gourd.

➤ **Stand up straight.** It's much more professional than slouching.


➤ **Primp up.** Tie your hair back, tuck your shirt in and button up your jacket. Don't give yourself a reason to fiddle with your clothing or accessories during your presentation — it's distracting.

➤ **Be ready to listen.** You may have a whole spiel planned, but your first priority should be to listen to what your potential customer is looking for. Her needs could change the course of your presentation, so it's important to fully understand her needs. ■



~ Michael Pritchard

EDITOR IN CHIEF: AMY PALERMO MANAGING EDITOR: SARAH TERRY EDITORIAL DIRECTOR: RICK RUNYAN PUBLISHER: SEAN MCPARTLAND

 **DARTNELL** 2222 SEDWICK ROAD, DURHAM, NC 27713
PHONE: (800) 477-4030 E-MAIL: DARTNELL@DARTNELLCORP.COM

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How Ethical Are Your Sales Practices?

Ethics are difficult to measure because they are based on an individual's value system. As a salesperson, your potential customer's value system should mean more to you than your own.

Because you can't possibly screen all of your potential customers to find out their individual value system, you're going to have to aim high. How do your current sales ethics stack up? Take our quiz and find out.

	<u>TRUE</u>	<u>FALSE</u>
1. I will tell a lie if it's the only way I'll make a sale.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I tempt potential customers with great offers so I can upsell them to something more expensive.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. When discussing a deal with a potential customer, I will withhold important information if I think it will cost me the sale.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I have tried to sell products that I believe are sub par.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I often speak to my potential customers with complex and confusing jargon.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I will give my potential customers false complements to soften their moods in hopes they will buy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I will exaggerate a product's benefit and make it sound better than it is, so I can make a sale.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I will flirt with potential customers to increase my chances of making a sale.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

So how do you rate? Add up the total number of TRUE responses.

0-2: Virtuous and true is how your clients see you. You probably get a lot of referrals from happy customers who have complete trust in you.

3-5: Wavering somewhere in the middle, your ethics aren't a total washout, but you have a hard time setting and adhering to solid ethical guidelines.

6-8: You're sneaky and sly, and a sale is more important to you than your integrity. Watch out, your clients probably don't fully trust you and if someone with higher virtues comes around, you may lose your business. ■

Defend Yourself When Sales Are Down

When your sales are low, you're often hit with a double whammy: not only do you feel badly because you didn't meet quota, but you also have to explain yourself to your boss.

While most sales supervisors really don't want to hear your whining and excuses, many of them have been around the block a few times so they know the pressures you're up against. They realize that sometimes low sales are the result of a plunging economy, fiscal cutbacks or perhaps you just need some more coaching.

Taking some time to evaluate why your sales are low will enable both you and your boss to see where your weak points are. When evaluating your sales, ask yourself the following questions:

☞ **Have people given me a reason why they weren't interested in buying?** Calculate the percentage of people who declined sales because they didn't have the financial resources. This could explain a trend and help your supervisor evaluate if you need to restructure your pricing.

☞ **Am I excited about what I'm selling?** Customers really can tell when you believe in a product. Your body language and tone of voice convey a lot to a customer. See the article "Present Your Next Pitch Confidently" on page 2 for positive presentation tips.

☞ **Is my region already flooded with products similar to what I'm selling?** There comes a time when a product isn't viable anymore. Discuss this potential with your supervisor, and see if you can come up with ways to extend your selling base.

☞ **Are my goals unrealistic?** Everyone wants to aim high, meet goals and break quotas. But the higher your quota, the more difficult it will be to meet it. Is it possible that you or your supervisor has set unrealistic goals for you?

There are multiple benefits to evaluating your sales processes when sales are low. You'll no doubt impress your supervisor for taking the initiative and being proactive in seeking a solution to your dilemma. More importantly, you may find the weak link in your sales process. Once you identify that, you're one step closer to correcting it. ■

Manage Your Email Time Successfully With These 6 Tips

Email is a great form of communication, but it can be a time-wasting nightmare if you let it get out of control. If you're finding that you spend a lot of time emailing during the day, it might be time to get more organized with your email.

When you send email more effectively, you inspire your co-workers to do the same. Organizational consultant **Barbara Hemphill**, author of "Taming The Paper Tiger," offers these tips on how to increase your productivity by sending more efficient emails:

1. Clarify Immediately. Use the subject line to provide as much detail as possible. Instead of "Important meeting," for instance, try "Mandatory marketing meeting at 2:15 p.m. in the conference room." Your audience will know what you mean immediately.

2. Type It Out Beforehand. There's nothing worse than losing a long email before you've had the chance to hit "send," but it's happened to all of us. To avoid this common problem, type all of your complex or involved emails in a word processing program, then cut and paste the text into your email.

3. Prioritize Information. If you're replying to a message, include enough of the original email so that the reader knows what you're talking about, but delete

any duplications or redundancies. If you've sent multiple messages back and forth, extract the specific lines you're responding to and type your message in a different color or use the highlighting function to distinguish your email from your reader's.

4. Avoid Attachments. Recipients are wary of opening attachments and releasing a virus, so when possible, include the relevant text in the body of the email and attach the file as an alternative option. If you're sending a spreadsheet, though, you'll have to attach it.

5. Determine The Necessity. Before you click "send," make sure that everyone on the receiving end will need the information. Otherwise, you'll flood their inboxes with non-relevant messages, and they'll begin to ignore incoming emails when they see your name.

6. Double-Check The "To" Box. If you received a message from a listserv, double-check the "to" box before you hit "send." A quick, 30-second check is all you need to avoid the embarrassment of sending a private message to the entire group. If you do hit "send" prematurely, don't send another time-wasting email apologizing for it. If you really feel bad, apologize in person when you see your co-workers on a break. ■

How Safe Is Your Data?

You store a lot of your personal information on your computer and probably have a good amount of customer information on there as well. Is it all safe?

You may have an IT department that monitors your corporate network, but as an employee you have a certain amount of responsibility to monitor your own workstation. Here are some simple tips to help you do your part to protect your company's — and your client's — data:

☑ Leave it on the server. If you have multiple workstations, such as a desktop in the office and a laptop for traveling, you're probably used to copying and transferring information to removable media such as a USB thumb drive. Consider the ramifications if you lose the drive or if your laptop is stolen. You should store all

customer information on a secure corporate server. Don't gamble with your clients' personal data.

☑ Treat your PC better than you would your wallet. Would you consider leaving your wallet on your desk when you go to the rest room? Of course not. Though you like to trust your co-workers, you also don't want to tempt them with a wad of cash and credit cards. Similarly, you should never leave your PC without locking it or logging off. You never know when a disgruntled co-worker or an unescorted visitor may happen to walk by your workstation.

☑ Recognize suspicious email. Computer users are still opening attachments that launch viruses such as Trojan horses, which infect the entire company. Hackers

No Typography Skills? No Worries! We've Got You Covered

You want to create fancy Microsoft Word documents to impress your clients, but you're not so design savvy. Not to worry, because we've got a host of typography basics to get you started.

Typography and graphic design may not be your forte. But that doesn't mean you can't create visually appealing, easy-to-read documents. Use our design tips to keep your styles snazzy, but smart.

✂ **Limit yourself to two font families.** Although you may be tempted to use several decorative fonts to glam up your document, you should use no more than two font families. Font families consist of a font and its variations, such as italic, bold and so on. For example, you could choose Arial for your heading 1 style, and change the size, weight, italics and color for the other heading styles. More than two font families can distract the reader from your message and create a document that looks disorganized and cluttered.

✂ **Select a serif and a sans serif font.** To define document sections clearly, use a sans serif font for headings and a serif font for the body text. Serif fonts have a finishing stroke (called a serif) at the end of each letter, like the font you're reading now. Serif fonts are

more readable, making them perfect for blocks of text. Sans serif fonts don't have the finishing strokes, leaving the letters cleaner and simpler, such as the font we use for our headlines.

✂ **Keep font sizes proportional.** As a general rule, the standard type size for body text is nine to 12 points. Anything smaller is too hard to read and anything larger looks sloppy. The smallest heading size is generally two to four points larger than the body text, and titles are usually twice the size of the headline.

✂ **Pick the perfect line spacing.** Line spacing is the distance of the baseline from one line of text to another, which affects the space between lines of text. Lines of text that are too close together or too far apart make your document difficult to read. In Microsoft Word, you can adjust these options by using the Format | Font and Format | Paragraph menu options. Body copy and headings should have a line spacing of about 130 to 140 percent, so 10-point body copy should have 13- to 14-point line spacing. For titles, it's usually standard to keep the line spacing around the same size to 120 percent. So a 20-point title would have 20- to 25-point line spacing. ■

are getting increasingly clever at disguising malicious macros and other viruses, and many users don't stay up-to-date on the latest tactics used in email viruses. For more information about virus prevention and recovery, check out **Microsoft's** computer-virus help and support at <http://support.microsoft.com/kb/129972>.

📁 **Create encrypted passwords.** Strong passwords contain a mix of numbers and letters. They ought to be at least seven characters long, and they shouldn't spell a word. Hackers are clever enough to know that people may exchange a zero for an "o" and an eight for a "B." Be creative when coming up with passwords, and use a combination of characters that is meaningful to you.

📁 **Change your passwords.** Just when you've managed to remember that ultra-long mix of numbers and letters, it's probably time for a change. IT experts

suggest that users change their passwords at least every quarter. You should also avoid the temptation to use the same password for every account.

📁 **Back up important documents.** Get into the habit of backing up important documents and presentations. Hard drive failures and unexpected computer glitches can cause a lot of potential downtime, so don't let them cause you to have to redo hours of work as well. Remember, backing up a file only takes a few minutes, but re-creating it can take a few hours.

Take the necessary steps now to stay educated about computer security issues, and you'll save time in the long run. You'll be able to catch potential problems before they start, and you'll be doing everything you can to keep your company's information secure. ■

Keep Your Paperwork Under Control

There are two absolutes to paperwork: you absolutely hate to do it, but if you don't do it, it'll absolutely be there waiting for you tomorrow morning.

Even though you may do a great deal of your work on a computer, you've probably got your share of paperwork as well. Customer applications, internal company requests, thank you letters and to-do lists — they all pile up, making your desk look like a filing cabinet exploded in your office.

But you can't work efficiently if you can't find what you need. Use these tips for more efficient filing that will enable you to stay on top of your paperwork:

☐ **Do a little each day.** Take some time each day to sort through any piles of papers you have on your desk. File the ones you need and toss the ones you don't.

☐ **Use only one notepad.** Do you have five notepads lying around with miscellaneous phone numbers and messages in each one? That only contributes to disorganization. Keep only one notepad for jotting things down, and then you'll never have to hunt around to see which notepad you wrote in.

☐ **Purchase the right filing system.** If you need things tucked away, get yourself a filing cabinet. If you need your papers in plain sight, purchase a tiered folder holder for your desk. Consider color coding folders and establish a system for each color's priority. Find what works best for you, and you'll be more apt to stick with a filing system. ■

What's Your Sales Challenge?

I know you've got one; everybody does. You know — that thing that makes you want to kick your laptop at the end of the day. Let me know what your biggest on-the-job sales challenge is, and I'll ensure this newsletter is filled with articles that will help you become a better sales professional. You can write to me at amyp@elijournals.com. I look forward to hearing from you! ■

Can You Afford To Take A Long Leave?

You may want to take an extended amount of time off of work to tend to important family matters, but how does it affect your job when you return?

If you're considering taking time off to have children or care for a sick parent, you can do that and still stay on top of your work. The 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act allows up to 12 weeks of maternity or family leave. However, protection under the law doesn't necessarily make things easy for you. Offices adopt new technologies overnight, so even a few months away from work can complicate your return.

To ensure a smooth transition from home to office, follow these tips:

☞ **Plan Ahead.** Strike a balance between work and home. Come up with a plan to handle the emotional stress of your time off and list specific ways you'll handle it. For example, the **Mayo Clinic** offers tips for new moms at www.mayoclinic.com/health/working-life/WL00034.

☞ **Wrap it up.** Before you take an extended leave, be sure to notify any clients whom you have open accounts with. Let them know who will be their point person while you are out. Make sure to provide those helpful sales reps who are filling in for you all the customer information they need to finish up your pending accounts and keep your clients happy.

☞ **Set Goals.** Identify professional goals for your time away, such as "I will read two new books about sales" or "I'll complete online training in Excel." This will help you stay up to speed before you return; plus you'll learn to balance professional and personal responsibilities before you're back in the office.

☞ **Stay Connected.** Keep in touch with colleagues and stop in from time to time. If your office is planning a big party, do your best to attend.

☞ **Enjoy your time.** Eventually your time will be up and you must return to work. Make sure you don't spend your entire leave worrying about what's going on with your job. Take this time to truly enjoy the time with your newborn or tend to you sick family member. Whatever the reason for your leave, make sure you focus on your family and don't stress about your job. ■

Leave A Lasting Impression And Harvest The Sales

You may get only one chance to make a first impression with your clients, but with personalized leave-behind products, you have ample opportunity to leave a lasting impression.

Purchasing personalized products is a great way to stock up on thank you gifts and appreciation tokens, but it's also a way to keep your clients thinking of you.

For example: If you give a customer a magnet with your logo and phone number on it, he may use it to hang his daughter's finger painting on the fridge. Everytime he looks up to admire his budding artist, he'll subconsciously be thinking of you and your company as well.

What to buy, what to buy?

If you're going to purchase a package of trinkets and personalize them, you want to get something that speaks of your company. Are you a company geared toward fun? Buy personalized squish stress balls or office toys. If you're a more sophisticated establishment, consider fountain pens.

If you're downright practical and want your customers to use the products often, consider something from our top picks:

- ✓ Pens and writing implements
- ✓ Toys for people to keep on their desktops
- ✓ Magnets with or without clips
- ✓ Mouse pads
- ✓ Pocket screwdrivers
- ✓ Ceramic mugs with lids
- ✓ T-shirts
- ✓ Baseball caps

Personalize It

Once you've decided what to purchase, the next decision is what information do you want to put on the item? The items you purchase will effect how much information you can adorn the item with.

For example: Depending on your logo's complexity, printing it on a small item such as a pen might not be such a good idea. Some logos get blurry and look awful when scaled down too small. For small items, you could

just have the company name, your name, address and phone number printed.

Who creates the art?

If you have an art department in your organization, work with one of the graphic designers to create and prepare the files for the print vendor. An experienced graphic designer will understand what file format your print vendor needs.

If an art department is a luxury your company is without, you may be able to prepare the files yourself. Before you attempt this, make sure you have the proper software to create the art and a solid understanding of the following:

TIFF, JPEG, EPS. These are various file formats your print vendor may request your files in.

Pixels Per Inch (ppi). This is the image resolution, or how many pixels are in a square inch of your image. A larger resolution such as 300 ppi is a higher quality than a 72 ppi resolution file. Vector EPS files are scalable so you can make them smaller or larger and not affect the print quality.

Print ready art. You'll need to understand how to clean up a file so it's got only the necessary colors, whether it's a CMYK print job, or a one- or two-spot color print job.

If all that sounds greek to you, your best bet is to hire a freelance designer to help you out. ■

Find The Right Promos Online

Searching for those perfect promos to keep your clients thinking of you? Here is a list of online retailers to get you started:

- 🖨 www.norwood.com
- 🖨 www.branders.com
- 🖨 www.actionprintinginc.com
- 🖨 www.rushimprint.com
- 🖨 www.empirepromos.com
- 🖨 www.motivators.com
- 🖨 www.garyaustinadvertising.com ■

Be Courteous When You're On A Cell Phone

Being on the run as much as you are, you probably have a cell phone. But are you too busy to worry about your manners while you're talking on it? Hopefully not.

Your cell phone is a communication tool. Use it wisely and you have the resources to get answers to important questions, schedule appointments from practically anywhere, and notify a client of an emergency cancellation before she leaves her house. But it can also cause undue stress and annoy those around you if you aren't mindful of your manners.

Don't bother your co-workers, perturb your boss and annoy your clients with your cell-phone chatter. Follow these tips to brush up on your cell-phone etiquette:

① **Turn the ringer off.** Set your phone's ringer to the off or silent position during meetings and whenever you are visiting a potential client in his office. Most phones have a vibrate setting you can choose, and then clip the phone to your pocket so you don't miss an important call.

② **Keep your current conversation.** Don't ignore the person in front of you in a mad dash to get to your cell phone. If it is absolutely necessary to take a call while you are talking to another person, explain why you must take the call and offer an apology.

③ **The phone is not a toy.** Don't cycle through your ring tones while you're at the office. As fascinating as scrolling through your list of choices may be, the person sitting next to you probably doesn't want to hear all 20 rings.

④ **Social events are for those present.** If you're at a special luncheon or other social function, talk to the people sitting at your table or mingle with others at the buffet table. Don't spend your entire time at the function taking and sending cell phone calls. Or better yet, leave your phone in the car.

⑤ **Make it snappy.** When you're in the midst of others, keep your cell-phone conversations short and your voice down. Do your best to find a quiet spot away from others so you can have your privacy, but mostly so you don't disturb those around you with your chatter. ■

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