



## Facilitator — August/September 2011



Change Language: Choose



Text Size A | A | A

*All translations are provided for your convenience by the Google Translate Tool. The publishers, authors, and digital providers of this publication are not responsible for any errors that may occur during the translation process. If you intend on relying upon the translation for any purpose other than your own casual enjoyment, you should have this publication professionally translated at your own expense.*

### Sharpen Your Tools

Nancy Friedman

#### The Six Cardinal Rules of Communication

Talk the talk—in the right way

There are a lot of rules in the world of communication and customer service; however, few are more important than the six we've listed here. Each tip presents a valid statement and will increase the satisfaction of your customers.

#### Don't Pass the Buck

The importance of personal responsibility and accountability cannot be overemphasized. Normally I leave the best till last; however, because of the very nature of the restaurant industry, I know that one of the most important attributes a company staff member can have is personal responsibility and accountability.

Personal accountability is ownership. When I speak at a conference, I often poll the audience by asking, "What's the one characteristic you need and want in an employee?" It's always, without fail, ownership or personal accountability. It's high on the list of every owner and manager for an employee.

Those who have personal accountability/ownership refuse to accuse, refuse to blame and never complain. Those who do accuse, blame and complain break one of the most important cardinal rules: Don't pass the buck. Don't accuse. Don't blame. Just fix it.

The customer doesn't like to hear accusing, blaming and complaining statements. They know when you're passing the buck.

#### People Before Paperwork

This one rates high in the restaurant business. It happens so often when we walk into a restaurant, or any business for that matter: An employee is counting something or talking to someone else (the worst) and they make us wait.

This rule doesn't allow for that. When someone walks into your place of business (or calls you) while you're working on something else, or talking to another employee, drop everything. Attend to that person.

Remember, paper and other tasks can wait; people should not. We've all been ignored because a staffer is doing something else. We know how that feels. Let's not ignore our customers. It's really a simple rule: people before paperwork—always.

#### Don't Rush Your Customers

Sadly, this happens a lot. You may understand something quickly, but rushing the customer along will only make them feel intimidated—and may cause them to avoid your place of business in the future.

Remember to mirror their speed of speech. Trying to be "done" with a customer as quickly as possible is perceived as rude and uncaring. Rushing threatens customers. Take your time with each and every contact.

The more time you spend with your customer, the more loyalty you'll get out of them. Customers value being listened to and heard. Rushing them does the opposite.

#### Don't Use Company Jargon

Some companies use enough jargon to make the CIA green with envy. Be very careful not to use company jargon on your customers. You and your employees may understand it very well, but the customer probably won't. You'll only cause a lot of unnecessary confusion and misunderstanding.

Spell things out for your customers, use easy words and try not to abbreviate.

#### Don't Be Too Busy To Be Nice

Remember, everyone's busy! And in your industry, in particular, that's a very good thing. However, being busy does not give anyone carte blanche to be rude. It's a fact: We meet the same people going down as we do going up. And customers remember you. They remember when they've been rushed. And they'll tell other people how you weren't nice to them, and that's not good.

Telling your customers, "I'm sorry; we're just so busy" is one of the worst things you can say. Being busy is a privilege. Using it as an excuse isn't a good idea.

#### Be Friendly Before You Know Who It Is

Basically this boils down to smiling at everyone, whether you know them or not. Telephone Doctor has a saying: "Smile before you know who it is." Often times it's too late. Being friendly before you know who it is will earn you classic customer service and communication points.

Smiling is the one universal worldwide communication tool we have. The customer needs to know you want to work with them, no matter who they are. Remember, sometimes it's too late to smile and be friendly after you know who it is. If the damage has been done, smiling might not help.

[View All Articles](#)

---