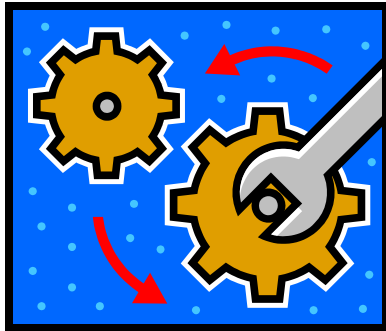


In my life I do a lot of things but I never forget my training.

Haile Gebrselassie

Module Eleven: Correcting Poor Telephone Etiquette



Poor employee skills can decrease productivity and damage company costs. The key is to address and handle the problem before it can affect the whole team. Poor telephone etiquette is no exception. Many employees may not realize that their etiquette may be inadequate, so it is important that there are several tools available to help them get back on track.

Screening Calls



Many companies that offer a telephone service have taken advantage of some sort of call monitoring service. The service records each employee call and allows them to be played back at a later time for review. This process, known as screening calls, can be a great tool for reviewing employee phone calls and checking for correct telephone etiquette. A manager or supervisor can review as many calls as needed to review an employee's performance and determine if any poor telephone etiquette was a small occurrence or a consistent problem. After the manager/supervisor has reviewed the calls, it is best to bring the employee into a secluded meeting to review the calls together. From here, the employee can hear how their calls sound to others and identify areas they need to improve on. This process is also a helpful tool for the manager/supervisor and the employee to create and set future performance goals.

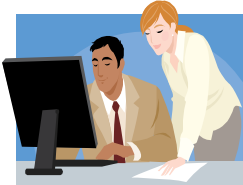
Employee Evaluations



Individual employee evaluations are another great tool for assessing and correcting any instance of poor telephone etiquette. An employee evaluation is typically created with several points or guidelines in place that an employee is expected to follow and meet certain criteria. Employee evaluations can be done through a number of methods, but the main goal is to use the criteria form and assess an employee's telephone etiquette skills and mark areas that are excelling and which areas will need improvement. The evaluator should meet with the employee to discuss any results of an evaluation so that they can know which areas are not meeting expectations and can set future performance goals.

Methods of employee evaluations:

- Individual call screenings
- Call re-enactment/role playing
- Direct monitoring
- Secret shoppers



Peer Monitoring

Peer monitoring is a tool of assessment that is growing in popularity. Peer monitoring allows employees to work together to help improve areas of skill and technique. This process allows an employee's peer, typically a team leader or floor manager, to work with an employee to evaluate and assess their telephone etiquette skills. Some common methods include direct monitoring by sitting with the employee, screening calls together and even completing written evaluations. Often times, because the monitoring is completed by a peer (instead of a manager or supervisor), the employee may feel less threatened and more at ease to accept terms of advice or criticism. However, the peer monitor must be able to deliver any positive or negative feedback necessary and not let the employee relationship hinder that process.

Customer Surveys



Another method of evaluating employee telephone etiquette is to employ customer/client surveys. A very common method of using customer surveys is to enable 'secret shoppers' to call and complete a survey on their experience. Secret shoppers are a well-known service that allows anonymous evaluators to call into a business and act and respond like a typical customer. The telephone operator does not know the caller is grading them or that their skills are being evaluated at that moment. At the end of the call, the secret shopper completes the evaluation and returns it to management. From here, the manager can meet with the employee and review how the call played out.

Another common method of customer surveys is by using customer follow up calls. While these calls typically focus on the company/service as a whole, they can be tailored to focus on the customer's experience with the telephone operator. They can be asked if the operator was friendly or helpful, or if the operator needed improvement in any areas. Once again, these evaluations can be completed and returned to management so they can be reviewed with the employee.

Case Study



Jennifer was reviewing some of Matthew's recent employee evaluations. After several secret shopper customer surveys, she saw that his scores were not as high as they should be. She had already placed him through a monitoring session with the team leader, Ashley, but it did not improve his telephone etiquette scores. Jennifer called Matthew into the office and spoke with him about this problem. Matthew explained to her that he didn't understand where he was making mistakes and that the peer monitoring session didn't help him. So Jennifer decided to take a few minutes and review some of Matthew's calls one-on-one. As Jennifer played some of the recorded calls, she took breaks to point out areas that were strong and areas that needed to be improved. After playing the second recorded call, Matthew said he identified several areas he could work on and was able to identify more of the mistakes he was making. Jennifer hoped after this evaluation session that Matthew would be able to improve his scores and better understand how to have better telephone etiquette.