

Delivering an excellent customer experience.

You know about the importance of first impressions. In business, a good first impression can often mean the difference between winning or losing a sale. If a customer calls your business about a problem or a question regarding a product you sold them, the first impression they get on that call can mean winning or losing future business.

With the growth of social media and online reviews, poor impressions can generate negative comments that can diminish the future of your business.

That's why it's essential in business to deliver an excellent customer experience.

Jim Bush, executive vice president of World Service, reports, "Getting service right is more than just a "nice to do"; it's a "must do." American consumers are willing to spend more with companies that provide outstanding service, and they will also tell, on average, twice as many people about bad service than they do about good service. Ultimately, great service can drive sales and customer loyalty."

Part of that great service is how well your business handles its incoming calls — and the best way to find out how your business is doing is to call your business yourself. You'll quickly discover:

- How easy it is for your callers to navigate to the department they want.
- How well your automated attendant works and if it sends callers to the right extensions.
- How friendly and welcoming your employees sound when they answer their phones.

If your caller experience is not exceptional, you could be losing business.

To maximize sales and customer loyalty, you can use these tips to analyze and improve your callers' experience when they contact your business.

1. **Keep your automated attendant message short.** People are impatient and the longer the instructions, the more irritated they will become.
2. **Set up the message that allows callers to immediately dial an extension;** then, follow that with other instructions.
3. **Include the option to speak to a live operator.** This is critical for reducing caller frustration. If you do not have one person designated to answer incoming calls, set up your system to route calls to other extensions where employees are available.
4. **Be sure to include the option to press a key to repeat the instructions.**
5. **Tell callers if your business is open or closed** at the time they call. Then, make it easy for callers to leave a message in a "company mailbox" and state when that call will be returned.
6. **Include an informational keypress** that tells callers your business hours of operation, fax number, directions to your location and other basic information.

7. **Train your employees to answer calls** in a bright, friendly and helpful voice. If the call is about a problem, employees should immediately show concern and willingness to get the problem solved.

8. **Establish practices for handling callers' common questions.** When every employee who might be answering the phone knows how various issues are to be handled, this reduces the need to transfer the caller to other individuals. Obviously, not every issue can be covered in advance, so be sure employees make it as easy as possible for callers to have their questions answered and their problems resolved.

9. **Return calls quickly.** When calls come in while the business is closed, make sure that any messages left in the company mailbox are returned early the next business day.

The key is to set up your auto attendant and prepare your employees to give your customers an excellent experience when they call your business. Your Ideacom Network telecom partner is an expert at consulting about, and setting up, your automated attendant. Contact them today for an evaluation and recommendations on how you can best serve your customers.



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