



# HOW TO IMPROVE CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION

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Communication can make or break your business; it is the heart of any customer interaction and relationship building process. Being able to communicate clearly and more efficiently with your customers can lead to increased sales, a consistent renewal stream, and opportunities for referrals. On the other end of the spectrum, the lack of clear communication or inability to effectively communicate with your customers can lead to missed sales, frustrated customers and negative word of mouth.

The big question facing insurance agencies more than ever is: How can I improve communications with my clients and prospects?

For starters, improve your customer's experience when they call your business. Communication between a business and customers or prospects, even in our increasingly tech savvy world.

Keeping that in mind, here are just a few ways to improve your customer's experience and communication over the phone.

## **First Impressions & Hold Times Matter**

First impressions are more important for business because prospects can quickly send their business to your competition if they do not like their initial interaction with your agency.

One of the easiest ways to ruin your organization's first impression is not to answer your phone. If you are getting a decent amount of calls on a daily basis and you do not have an automated system that communicates with callers, it can damage your agency's reputation more than you know. Another study found that "more than 83% say they will avoid a company or stop giving it business after a poor experience with an automated phone system."

This study was conducted by Interactions.com and goes on to explain the importance of an IVR system.

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For many insurance agencies, the first point of interaction with a customer will occur over the phone, so the most efficient way to ensure better communication is to put a professional automated answering service (also known as an auto attendant) in place. Investing in this system takes a huge burden off the shoulders of your administrative assistant or office personnel and makes for a much smoother communication experience.

There are many low cost platforms available for automated systems. For a more personal approach, you may consider using your office manager or secretary's voice for the system's guide.

Additionally, automated systems also help limit hold times when setup correctly (another huge frustration to customers.) Help

Scout found that 75% of customers believe it takes too long to reach a live agent, and 67% of clients have hung up the phone out of frustration.

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## Customers are Real People & Priority

Telephone interactions should be less scripted and should little to no transactional language. Remember always to use a positive tone and avoid negative language. Many automated systems have the ability to sync with your CRM (customer relationship management tool), giving you additional support and access to your client's information.

You can input notes about previous conversations (their children, future vacations, goals) to form a real conversation and continue building the relationship with your customer.

When it comes to customers, the primary form of communication you will have is a service related issue. Keeping that in mind, when communication breaks down over the phone, people take it personally, and they tend not to give you their business.

Keeping your customer and their problem top priority is imperative. Demonstrating your ability to solve their problem in a caring matter, continues to build trust in your relationship; increasing your odds of retention and the opportunity for referrals.

An insurance agent should act as a client's ally in resolving their issue, rather than trying to hit sales numbers and metrics. Agencies often let metrics distract them from the actual problem solving piece of the puzzle. Instead of trying to beat the fastest support time or the easiest sale, focus on engaging your customers in a meaningful way.

Having the real conversations to uncover hidden problems and identifying their expectations is a better way for communication.

You will create better experiences for both yourself and your client as you continue to enhance your communications.