



Customer Service

3. Telephone service

More and more customers are using the telephone to contact businesses. Customers recognise the quick and convenient access telephone contact offers them, but not if it is at the expense of personal service.

Whether it is a customer ringing a '13' number connecting through a call centre or phoning a local plumber, the issues are still the same. It is all about you helping the customer to meet their needs.

The first fundamental is to ensure that your telephone number is correctly and widely publicised.

Once contact is made, as for face-to-face service, a telephone encounter can be broken into a number of stages, including:

- answering the calls – first impressions are crucial
- dealing with the customer
- any required follow-up.

It is important to remember to provide quick and accurate service.

To assist you to do this, follow the checklist on the next page.

Checklist - Telephone service

1. Advising customers of the number to call

- ▷ Ensure your correct telephone number is widely publicised.
- ▷ Make sure all staff know how to handle the call to ensure that the customer's enquiry can be dealt with effectively.

2. Answering the calls

- ▷ Ensure sufficient fully-trained, competent staff are available to answer calls.
- ▷ Answer all calls quickly, ideally within 10 seconds. Where calls are answered with a recorded announcement, ensure the caller can speak to a person (ideally within 30 seconds of answering).
- ▷ Clearly announce the name of the business and your name to reassure the customer they have called the right number.
- ▷ Ensure the customer quickly speaks to the person who can best deal with their requirements.
- ▷ Where calls are to be answered by an answering service or voice mail that requires the customer to leave a message, ensure you return the call to the customer ideally within 4 hours.
- ▷ If a call has to be put on hold, ensure the caller is acknowledged while they are waiting and apologise for the delay.

3. Dealing with the customer

- ▷ Treat callers as individually important - be responsive and flexible.
- ▷ Personalise your dealings by introducing yourself and allow the customer to introduce themselves if they desire.
- ▷ Always deal in a genuinely friendly and courteous manner and use plain understandable language.
- ▷ Show interest by asking questions and listening to requirements.
- ▷ Apply your knowledge to meet the customer's needs. Ensure staff are fully knowledgeable about your business, products and services and also about your organisation.
- ▷ Take time to handle the call to the customer's satisfaction – deal efficiently so as not to waste the customers' time, but don't rush.
- ▷ Demonstrate a balance between a commitment to the customer and your organisation, through flexibility and problem solving.
- ▷ Treat customers as you would wish to be treated.
- ▷ Always finish your dealings by saying good-bye and wait for the customer to hang up before you do.

4. Follow-up

- ▷ At the end of a call ensure you clearly summarise what happens next and explain what you will do and what you require them to do – even if it means saying they don't need to do anything.

5. Returning calls

- ▷ Ideally all calls should be returned within 4 hours.

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We also provide services at the following locations:

Naracoorte,
Port Lincoln,
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