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**Professionalism
and
Customer Service:
First Contact to Last
(or, Close Encounters of the
Three Kinds)**

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2 **What is customer service?**

"Customer care activities that support the delivery of the product or core service."
www.cval.com/glossary.htm

3 **Why should we care?**

- Almost everything we do is customer service
- Good customer service is directly related to good communication between the provider (us) and the client (them)
- Good communication should be the cornerstone by which we are measured as businesses and as an industry

4 **Good communication =
Good customer service =
Professionalism =
*continued and increasing business***

5 **First Contact: Reception**

6 **Reception**

- The most vital component in good First Contact and first communication;
- Yet it is often overlooked and underpaid;
- Here are a few observations that can be said not just of some of our companies, but maddeningly, of many businesses and organizations:

7 **Reception:
Close Encounters of the First Kind**

- In a rush.
"HellothisisXYmanagementcompanycanyouhold?"
- Uninformed.
Reception: "I'd like to speak to Joe Smith please."
Reception: "Uh... Uh... Uh... we have no one here by that name..."
- Inappropriate business language.
"Thanks Dude!"
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8 **Reception: Close Encounters
of the Electronic Kind**

- The auto-answering system: Some inherent problems with robotic communication, starting with...

"Spell the first or last name of the person you are trying to reach."

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- a) The client may have to find her glasses (numbers are way too small on the dial pad);
- b) She may not know how to spell the person's name;
- c) She may not know the person's last name;
- d) She spells the name right, but that person isn't in the system, seemingly having joined the Witness Protection Program.

10 **Area 51: Voicemail Hell**

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- Without option, the client goes to voicemail hell:
The General Mailbox, aka

The Great Void Where all Messages
Go to Die.

Not a good method of communication
nor of customer service.

11 **The fix**

- Executives: Periodically need to walk through the reception system exactly as if they were a client.
- Give reception a script.
- Managers: If you know about an issue, notify your executive (we're in this together!)
- Until then, it's a first impression that you may not want to be making.

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Poor communication = poor customer service =
poor professionalism.

12 **Middle Contact: The Manager**

13 **Close Encounters of the Second Kind:
The Continual Contact of the Manager**

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- The tenets of good customer service/ communication on the manager's part are very, very important.
- Most all of those tenets require good communication skills;
- Imparting good customer service and promoting the professionalism of the organization.

14 **The Do's of
Good Customer Service:**

- DO Return calls and email.
 - Within 24 business hours
- DO write well.
 - Poor writing skills may not communicate what you, or the client, wants.
- DO what you say you are going to do, when you say you are going to do it.
 - Maintain credibility.
- DO look the part.

- How you "present" speaks volumes.

15 **The Don'ts**

- DON'T give answers you aren't sure about.
 - You don't have to know everything, all the time, right now.
- DON'T blame others.
 - Take responsibility for rectifying, not causing the problem (unless you did) and fix it.
- *It's not the mistake, it's how you handle it that is important to the client. The buck stops with you.*

16 **Last Contact**

17 **Close Encounter
of the Third (and last) Kind**

- Professionalism,
Customer Service,
Good Communication
and
Losing an Account

18 **So, there's the high road, and
there's the low road... for example...**

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- Dumping all records in trash bags;
- Dumping records in the dumpsters;
- Deliberate foot dragging on turnover of records;
- Doing -0- for the association the last month of the contract;
- Withholding the checking account;
- "Losing" signature cards;
- "Losing" Minute books;
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19 **...and lower road...**

- "Losing" ageing lists, alpha lists, contractor lists, insurance declaration sheets;
- Refusing to give owners any new contact information after turnover has taken place;
- Refusing to answer even the simplest of inquiries from the new manager/
management company/Board;
- Sabotage of physical property.
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20 **Why It Matters**

- What you do when you lose an account communicates volumes about you and your firm's professionalism to the former client, to potential clients, to other staff members, to the new management company and to the local industry as a whole.

21 **Do's When Losing an Account**

- DO maintain professional detachment throughout the life of the contract.
 - Detachment keeps emotion out of the equation and keeps feelings of revenge at a minimum.
- DO manage until the bitter end.
 - Establish and maintain you and your firm's reputation for good customer service. And it's the right thing to do.
- DO keep lines of communication open.
 - Be available (within reason) for the first 30 days to answer questions from the new

mgmt. co. and the Board President.

22 **Don'ts**

- DON'T Sabotage!
 - Access codes changed, keys broken off in locks, pool filters & sprinkler heads damaged, files corrupted, etc.

*To make your last contact with an association an act of sabotage is beyond the pale and will come back to haunt you in one way or another. You reap what you sow.
Grow up.*

23 **And Now for the High Road!**

- Executives: have a standard checklist and timeframe of turnover items outlining...
 - What;
 - When;
 - And the manner and condition in which they are turned over.

24 **And to really go over the edge...**

- Outline your company's method of turnover in your contracts and COMMIT your company to
 - Good communication,
 - Customer service and
 - Professionalism
 through it's Last Contact with the client.

25 **Review: First Contact to Last**

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- First Contact: Reception
- Should provide professional accurate service to the client, be it robotic or humanoid;
- Should kept up to date on personnel changes and kept in the loop in general;
- Executives: Periodically call your office as a client would – did you end up in Area 51?
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26 **More...**

- Middle Contact: Managers
- Return calls and email in a timely manner;
- Write well;
- Do what you say you will;
- Look the part;
- DON'T give answers you aren't sure of; and
- DON'T blame others.

27 **And more...**

- Last Contact: Losing an Account
- Take the High Road: Handle account turnover with dignity and professionalism;
- Manage until the bitter end;
- Keep lines of communication open;
- Don't sabotage, grow up.
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28 **And more... (it's almost over)**

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- Have an SOP checklist for account turnover, indicating what, when, and the manner and condition in which items are turned over.
- COMMIT your firm to proper turnover procedures in your contracts.

29 **Why do we care?**

Good communication =
good customer service =
continued professionalism =
continued revenue.

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This program is not endorsed by anyone. It is not politically correct.
Your comments are welcome, but I may not listen. I could be wrong
but I don't think so. Keep your humor and your wits about you. I wouldn't belong to
any club that would have me as a member. Predict catastrophe no later than 10
years hence and no sooner than five years away -- soon enough to terrify, but far
enough off that people will forget if you are wrong. One of the symptoms of an
approaching breakdown is the belief that one's work is terribly important.

Please place all candy wrappers, popcorn boxes and soda containers in
the receptacles provided in the lobby.

You may now un-silence your cell phones.
You are now free to move about the cabin.

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