

Ringing in the millions

Companies lose millions of dollars of business through bad telephone handling. A survey found that company switchboards failed to answer one out of five calls within ten rings, or reply to 10% of calls within 20 rings. Ninety percent of all sales enquiries begin on the telephone, so this is the opportunity to project a healthy company image – one of friendliness, efficiency and professionalism. Staff should be aware that bad telephone behaviour can result in millions of dollars in lost revenue. In the insurance business, for example, failure to answer promptly could see a policy of a quarter of a million dollars go straight to the competition!

A single telephone receptionist can answer as many as 300,000 calls a year. Companies should train personnel in the skills of transferring a call, placing calls on hold, dealing with angry callers, answering correspondence by phone, using a caller's name, and taking messages correctly. Callers should not hear expressions like "she's just gone out" or "he's not with us anymore". Surveys show that customers want a prompt response by a real person (not a machine) who can make a decision.

For a great many of a firm's customers, the first – and often the only – impression they carry in their minds is the one generated by the people they talk to on the phone. The quality of a firm's response to a call is one of the key factors in creating a perception of good or bad service. And remember, more business is lost through poor service than by poor product performance.



Ex. 1 Match the words from the two columns to form collocations:

- | | |
|----------------|--------------------|
| 1. to deal | a decision |
| 2. to lose | a healthy image |
| 3. to make | calls |
| 4. to place | calls on hold |
| 5. to project | messages |
| 6. to take | millions |
| 7. to transfer | with angry callers |

Ex. 2 Decipher these words from the text:

1. _wi_ch_oa_d
2. _pp_r_un_t_
3. _ffi_i_n_y
4. _eh_vi_u_
5. _om_e iti_n
6. _m_ _ess_o_
7. __rc__ti_n

Phrasals, phrasals...

This lesson's reading text was about telephoning. This area of business language is very rich in phrasal verbs. Here are some of the most common ones. Try and guess their meaning by matching with Polish equivalents:

- | | |
|----------------|----------------------|
| 1. be cut off | dodzwonić się |
| 2. call back | mówić głośniej |
| 3. get through | oddzwonić |
| 4. hang up | odebrać (telefon) |
| 5. hold on | połączyć |
| 6. look up | sprawdzić |
| 7. pick up | zaczekać |
| 8. put through | zakończyć połączenie |
| 9. speak up | zostać rozłączonym |

Ex.3 Complete the sentences with the "telephoning verbs":

1. She's not in her office but if you'd like to _____ a minute, I'll find her.
2. His line is free now, I can _____ you _____.
3. I can hardly hear you, Maggie. Can you _____?
4. Hello... I think the line's gone dead – we've been _____.
5. If you don't know the number try to _____ it _____ in the Internet.
6. Sorry, my taxi is waiting outside. I've got to _____.
7. Could you tell her I'll _____ later.
8. If the phone rings, please don't _____ it _____. It might be this crazy customer!
9. I've been trying to _____ all day but his line seems to be engaged all the time.

Grammar corner...

In this lesson's reading text we can observe such grammar forms: caller's name / firm's customers / firm's response. They are called Saxon Genitive and are used to express belonging to sb or being part of sth and in most cases can also be expressed by "the ... of ..." structure (the name of the caller / the customers of the firm etc.). What we need to remember is where to put the apostrophe ('). Look at these examples:

worker's desk is biurko pracownika and workers' desk is biurko pracowników!

Ex. 4 Use the Saxon genitive structure correctly in these examples:

1. I have to check my customers/applications this week.
2. I hate taking broker/advice.
3. The Smiths/house is going to be sold soon.
4. I'm a bit nervous before today/meeting with my boss.
5. It's my colleague/birthday next Monday.
6. We'd like to invite our clients/children to the party.
7. The company/name reminds me of last summer.

GLOSSARY	
handling	obchodzenie się z czymś, tu: odbieranie (telefonów)
survey	badanie
switchboard	centrala telefoniczna
to fail to do sth	nie zrobić czegoś
to reply to	odpowiedzieć na
sales enquiry	zapytanie sprzedażowe
opportunity	sposobność
friendliness	życzliwość
efficiency	wydajność
to be aware	być świadomym
behaviour	zachowanie
to result in	skutkować
revenue	przychód
insurance business	ubezpieczenia
failure to do sth	niezrobienie czegoś
promptly	szybko
a policy	polisa
competition	konkurencja
to train	szkolić
skill	umiejętność
to transfer a call	przekazywać połączenie
to place calls on hold połączenia oczekujące
to take messages	przyjmować wiadomości
response	odpowiedź
impression	wrażenie
to generate	wytworzyć
key factor	kluczowy czynnik
perception	postrzeganie
product performance	działanie produktu

ANSWER KEY:

Ex.1

1. to deal with angry callers
2. to lose millions
3. to make a decision
4. to place calls on hold
5. to project a healthy image
6. to take messages
7. to transfer calls

Ex. 2

1. switchboard
2. opportunity
3. efficiency
4. behaviour
5. competition
6. impression
7. perception

Phrasals

- | | |
|----------------|----------------------|
| 1. be cut off | zostać rozłączonym |
| 2. call back | oddzwonić |
| 3. get through | dodzwonić się |
| 4. hang up | zakończyć połączenie |
| 5. hold on | zaczekać |
| 6. look up | sprawdzić |
| 7. pick up | odebrać (telefon) |
| 8. put through | połączyć |
| 9. speak up | mówić głośniej |

Ex. 3

1. hold on
2. put through
3. speak up
4. cut off
5. look up
6. hang up
7. call back
8. pick up
9. get through

Ex.4

1. I have to check my customers' applications this week.
2. I hate taking broker's advice.
3. The Smiths' house is going to be sold soon.
4. I'm a bit nervous before today's meeting with my boss.
5. It's my colleague's birthday next Monday.
6. We'd like to invite our clients' children to the party.
7. The company's name reminds me of last summer.

