

TIP OF THE MONTH - FIRST IMPRESSIONS COUNT

We've heard it before and we know it's true; a customer's first impression of your business weighs heavily on their decision to buy from you, or not, as the case may be. The telephone is the first point of contact for you with many of your customers so what first impression does your telephone etiquette give to your customers?

Here are a couple of things to keep in mind to make your first impression a great one:

1. Don't say your business name first. Start with *"Good morning/ good afternoon...."* or *"Thank you for calling...."* This gives the caller just enough time to start listening. At McLean Reid we get round this by answering "Chartered Accountants McLean Reid" and then offering to help.
2. Remove the word "busy" from your vocabulary forever. The telephone will stop ringing if your customers are always getting the message, *"Sorry they're busy at the moment"*. Speaking of busy do answer the phone - not doing sends out some very negative signals.
3. Don't screen calls. We all dislike the pesky telesales people but are your customers also getting the third degree when they call? If you have to screen, maybe try *"Can I let them know who is calling?"* Remember, there's nothing wrong with politely asking to be removed from their telephone list if it is a salesperson.
4. Can somebody else help? Often people on the front line can answer the majority of questions your customers are asking, but just get used to transferring the call. Empower your people to ask, *"Is there something I can help you with?"* They will be able to handle the bulk of the calls and you will get fewer interruptions. If they can't answer the question, a simple, *"I'm sorry, Janet is the best person to talk about that, let me take a message"* is fine.
5. Create an internal standard for returning calls. When should your customers expect you to return their call – the same day, within 24 hours? Your customers will appreciate it greatly if you let them know.
6. Thank people for holding. We don't thank our customers enough. A simple *"Thank you for holding"* sends them a strong message that you value them as a customer.
7. And finally, get rid of on hold music. Instead, you could have a recording that promotes your products and services made. For some businesses it's a great way to cross sell to customers.

Make your first impression count and you'll enjoy converting more prospects into customers and selling more to current customers.

Please let me know if you are interested in discussing this further, or just call me to see how we do!