



## Marketing Opportunities Lost When the Phone Rings

by Debbie Allen

The telephone is another way customers may reach you before they come to your business. A telephone may not seem visual at first, but most people create a visual in their heads about your professionalism and attitude.

Even a brief phone call for directions may make or break a new customer relationship. Telephone and listening skills should be included as a very important part in the training of your employees. So often employees are busy waiting on customers and take a phone call in the middle of a transaction.

This is not only a distraction to the customer they are waiting on, but it comes across to the caller as a negative as well, since the employee might not be “all there.”

When the phone rings in your business are your employees prepared to turn the call into a solid marketing opportunity?

Or are they rushing through the call, not connecting with the prospecting customers and losing you thousands of dollars in lost revenue?

How many businesses do you call that WOW you on the phone?

How many actually take the time to connect with you and use the opportunity to market their business more effectively?

This always amazes me because most businesses spend countless dollars on advertising hoping customers will call them, but when they do customers are often put on hold or put off.

**HOLD PLEASE!**

You know how frustrating it is when you call a business and before you can get a word out you hear, “Can you hold please?” Most of the time you don’t even have time to respond and they already have you on hold.

So why did they even bother asking?

You didn’t call to be put on hold or transferred three times explaining your question or concern over and over. And when you finally think you’ve been heard you hear, “Sorry you’ve got the wrong department. I’ll need to transfer you. Can you hold please?” ERRRRRR!

**VOICE MAIL HELL**

The only thing worse than being put on hold is going thru voice mail hell.

Will a REAL LIVE person ever answer the phone?

Often there are so many choices on the voice mail that you forget when you called for and then the message comes on and says "To repeat these messages press ..."

Then you go thru it all over gain and finally you reach the right person in the right department and they say "Can you hold please?" ERRRRR!

Do these companies ever call their own companies to see how their prospective customers are being turned off everyday? I doubt it!

### Call Your Business Challenge

When discussing lost marketing opportunities in my presentations I ask for volunteers that would allow me to call their businesses in front of the audience. Some brave business owner always steps up to the challenge. They call their business from their cell phone and hand it to me. I get on the call posing as a prospective customer and at the same time the call is heard by the entire audience on the microphone. Much of the time they are shocked by what their employees have to say.

For Example: The owner of a company who sold sandals wholesale had a warehouse in the city where I was speaking. I asked him to call his business and to hand me the phone so I could record it LIVE during my presentation. When the employee answered I explained to him that I understood that they were wholesalers, but wondered if they could tell me of a retail store in the area that sold their shoes.

After the employee told me he was not sure, he put me on hold and when he returned he told me no sorry we don't have anyone in town. I said, "Okay, well I live in Scottsdale, Arizona, do you know of a store that sells them there? I really want to buy a few pairs because I think they're great." He says, "No, I don't think we have a store there either. I really don't know what retailers carry our shoes".

The business owner sat there in shock as he heard the conversation. When I hung up the owner told me how upset that made him because they had a couple of retail stores in the area plus some in my city as well.

Whose fault was it that the marketing and sales opportunity was lost ... the employee or the owner/manager? Both but if the owner or manager never communicated to the employee just how to handle calls or to allow the employee to think on their feet. How would they ever know how to do it, much less do it well?

### Studies Reveal More Lost Opportunities

Studies consistently show that the telephone remains one of the most underused business tools. Researchers called 5,000 advertisers to say that they had seen their ad and asked about the price of product or services.

The results revealed endless lost opportunities. More than 78 percent of those phoned didn't bother to ask for the caller's name.

### Lost Opportunity!

Over 55 percent took eight rings or more to answer. According to the researchers, many of the people who answered the phone rushed through the call and spoke so rapidly that it was hard to understand them.

### Lost Opportunity!

Less than 10 percent answered the phone in a manner that made the caller feel welcome enough to want to do business with them.

Lost Opportunity!

Your telephone could be a powerful marketing tool if you and your employees regard every call as a marketing opportunity.

Are you ringing up marketing opportunities or placing them on hold?

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