

module one: customer service

Communication

article:

Scripting for Superior Communication

by Laurie Guest

Scripting for superior communication means using the right word at the right time for a desired result. Avoid the robotic “Do you want fries with that?” Instead put words together in a professional, classy way that communicates great service.

Scripting, an often-overlooked technique in customer service, can make a big difference in the impression you give your guests. For example, a customer at a retail location asks where a certain item is located. The response could be, “Hey, it’s over there in aisle three.” The better, scripted response is, “I’d be happy to show you. Please follow me.” See the difference? We feel totally engaged with the person who used the scripted response.

I learned this concept at an early age. My dad would come in from a night of farming, go upstairs to take a shower, and then settle into his La-Z-Boy in the living room. On more than one occasion, he would turn to me and ask, “Pumpkin, you run upstairs and get my slippers?” Boy, did this drive me crazy. That man was just upstairs. Why couldn’t he get the slippers himself? One day I decided to educate my father to that fact. I said, “Dad, you were just upstairs. Why didn’t you get your slippers yourself?”

He then proceeded to teach me the best four words I’ve ever learned in my life. He explained, “Laurie, I’m your dad, and when I ask you to do something, you would be much better saying I’d - be - happy - to. I will feel better about asking you, and you will feel better about doing it.” I didn’t understand at the time, but the lesson remained with me. Years later when I entered the work force and was taught the concept of scripting, I heard Dad’s words. I realized my dad had first taught me about putting the right words together to communicate the best possible impression.



Just like the words I’d be happy to sends a favorable message, are you able to hear in the scripts below that the customer is valued?

Version 1: It’s going to cost you about two hundred and ninety-five dollars for this.

Version 2: The fee for that service is two hundred and ninety-five dollars.

Version 1: Unfortunately, he’s not here right now.

Version 2: Mike’s not available at the moment. May I leave him a message, or is there something I can help you with?

Version 1: If you want to wait over there, the doctor will be with you in a minute.

Version 2: If you’ll please make yourself comfortable in this area, we’ll escort you to the exam room as soon as possible.

Though the end result is no different between version one and version two, the way we feel about the customer service differs vastly.

taboo words and scripting

Another area that falls under the topic of scripting is the taboo word list. These are words that our team had decided not to use. Of course the list varies among industries. I've chosen my top five universal taboo words and provided replacement words or phrases.

The first one is the word "no". Replace it with the word "actually". When somebody questions, "Can I expect to receive that order tomorrow?" and you reply, "No, not going to be here," it comes across as rude. If instead you respond, "Actually, it's due to arrive on Friday," it sounds courteous.

Another taboo word at our office was the word "busy". We replaced it with the phrase "currently assisting other patients".

Next is the expression "there's nothing we can do". That is like throwing gasoline on a fire. There is always something more you can do. You can listen, empathize, or redirect.

For my healthcare clients, remember not to call guests by what they need, "Hey, we got a pap in room two." There's not a pap in room two. There's a patient who needs a pap test in room two. Instead, refer to them by their names.

I remember reading an article years ago about a doctor visiting a café and ordering the blue plate special, which was a meatloaf. It came with a choice of potato or vegetable, but the server forgot to ask him which side he wanted. He continued to read his paper as she walked away. Then she turned and yelled, "Hey, meatloaf." He, of course, didn't realize she was

talking to him. She was calling him meatloaf because that's what he had ordered. His point in the article was that we call a person by his name or at least come back and refer to him as sir or get his attention in some way, but calling him meatloaf certainly wasn't the path to excellent customer service.

My final taboo phrase isn't really taboo, but more of a pet peeve. It's the sentence in our culture that bothers me more than any other, and it is so common. In fact, it's impossible to go a day without hearing it. Any guesses? The phrase is "How are you?" Although it is a common greeting, do we expect an honest answer and then stick around to hear it? I think the replacement phrase for that is a simple "Hello", or "Hello, nice to see you". Only ask "How are you?" if you mean it and plan to stay engaged long enough to hear the answer.

Remember, if we don't teach scripting, the staff will bring their own personalities and previous experiences in communication to the position. If they naturally excel at this task, you are all set, but years of training have taught me that many need help on this concept.