

WANT TO KEEP YOUR CUSTOMERS? WELL WATCH YOUR LANGUAGE!

The quality of everyday language used in business is on the decline. We are often unaware of the impact that our words have on our customers.

by Debra J. Schmidt

When we use language that is negative or abrupt, we create communication barriers that will frustrate and offend people.

Negative language can quickly destroy even the strongest business relationships.

Below are four types of phrases that most people find irritating and some guidelines for changing them from negative to positive phrases:

Giving orders to your customers

Rather than:

"You have to..."

"You must..."

Use:

"If you will _____, then I can..."

"In order to _____, we need..."

Focusing on what you *can't* do instead of what you *can* do

Rather than:

"I can't do that..."

"We don't do that..."

"You can't..."

Use:

"Here is what I can do for you."

"Let's see what we can do."

"Here is what you can do..."

Criticizing or blaming your customer

Rather than:

"You should have..."

"You never..."

"You failed to..."

Use:

"Here's how we can resolve this..."

"Often..."

"We did not receive..."

Appearing not knowledgeable or unwilling to help

Rather than:

"I don't know."

Use:

"I'll be happy to check on that for you."

"Let me find out for you."

The ability to recognize and change your negative language into positive phrases will provide you with excellent tools to build lasting customer relationships.

It takes integrity and practice to master positive communication skills. But when you do, you will see immediate results in the delighted responses of your co-workers and customers.