

# COMMUNICATOR

New ideas, trends, and techniques for the working communicator

## Customer Service

### Don't let this happen to you

Sometimes, the most costly business mistakes can happen in only four to six seconds upon meeting a new business contact. Here are five forbidden phrases you don't want to use when talking to a customer:

- **Forbidden Phrase #1: *I don't know.***  
There is no need to ever utter these words. If you don't know, find out. Usually, there isn't a thing you can't find out, outside of sensitive and financial information. *Instead, say:* "Gee, that's a good question. Let me check and find out."
- **Forbidden Phrase #2: *We can't do that.*** This one is guaranteed to get your customer's blood boiling. *Instead, say:* "Boy, that's a tough one. Let's see what we can do." Then find an alternative solution.
- **Forbidden Phrase #3: *You'll have to.*** Wrong. The only thing that a caller has to do is die and pay taxes.

*Instead:* Use phrases such as "You'll need to" or "Here's how we can help with that" or "The next time that happens, here's what you can do."

- **Forbidden Phrase #4: *Hang on a second, I'll be right back.*** If you've ever said that to a caller, you've lied. Not a big lie, but nevertheless an unnecessary lie. *Instead:* Watch what happens when you tell the truth. "It may take me two or three minutes to get that information. Are you able to hold while I check?"
- **Forbidden Phrase #5: *"No" at the beginning of a sentence.*** The word "no" is useless and conveys total rejection. Most sentences are grammatically correct without the word. *Instead:* Turn every answer into a positive response. "We aren't able to refund your money, but we can replace the product at no charge."

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