



# Chapter 10: Communication Skills



## IT Essentials: PC Hardware and Software v4.0

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## Chapter 10 Objectives

- 10.1 Explain the relationship between communication and troubleshooting
- 10.2 Describe good communication skills and professional behavior
- 10.3 Explain ethics and legal aspects of working with computer technology
- 10.4 Describe call center environment and technician responsibilities



# Worksheets and Class Discussions

- 10.1 Worksheet: Technician Resources
- 10.2.2 Class Discussion: Controlling the Call
- 10.2.3 Class Discussion: Identifying Difficult Customer Types
- 10.3 Class Discussion: Customer Privacy

# Introduction

- Troubleshooting is as much about communicating with the customer as it is about knowing how to fix a computer.
- Learn to use good communication skills as confidently as you use a screwdriver.



# Communication and Troubleshooting

- A knowledgeable technician who uses good communication skills will always be in demand in the jobs market.

As technical knowledge increases, so does ability to quickly determine a problem and find a solution.

- A technician should establish a good rapport with the customer since a relaxed customer is better able to explain the details of the problem.
- The technician has access to several communication and research tools. Any of these resources can be used to help gather information for the troubleshooting process.

# Communication and Professionalism

- A technician's professionalism and good communication skills will enhance their creditability with the customer.
- Successful technicians control their own reactions and emotions from one customer call to the next.



# Determine the Problem

- **Know** - Call the customer by name.
- **Relate** - Use brief communication to create a one-to-one connection between you and your customer.
- **Understand** - Determine what the customer knows about the computer to effectively communicate with the customer.
- Practice active listening skills. Listen carefully and let the customer finish speaking.
- After the customer has explained the problem, clarify what the customer has said.
- Ask some follow-up questions, if needed.
- Use all the information to complete the work order.



# Display Professional Behavior

Handle customers with respect and prompt attention.

On a phone call, know how to:

- Place a customer on hold
- Transfer them without losing the call
- Help the customer focus on and communicate the problem
- Stay positive by focusing on what you can do to help
- Convey an interest in helping the customer

# Holds and Transfers



## Putting a customer on hold:

- Let the customer finish speaking.
- Explain that you will put the customer on hold and why.
- Ask for their permission to do so.
- Explain how long they will be on hold and what you will be doing during that time.

## Transferring a customer:

- Let the customer finish speaking.
- Explain that you will transfer their call, to whom, and why.
- Tell them the number you are transferring them to.
- Ask for their permission to do so.
- Thank the customer and explain the details of the transfer.
- Tell the new technician the details of the case.

# Keep the Customer Focused

- Part of a technician's job is to focus the customer during the phone call.
- When the customer stays focused on the problem, the technician controls the call.
- Do not take any comments personally and do not retaliate with any comments or criticism.
- If you stay calm with the customer, finding a solution to the problem will remain the focal point of the call.

# Types of Difficult Customers

Recognize traits to manage a call accordingly.

- A **talkative customer** discusses everything except the problem and uses the call to socialize.
- A **rude customer** complains during the call, makes negative comments, may be abusive and uncooperative, and may be easily aggravated.
- An **angry customer** talks loud, tries to speak when the technician is talking, is usually frustrated and upset that they have to call somebody to fix the problem.
- A **knowledgeable customer** wants to speak with a technician that is equally experienced in computers and usually tries to control the call.
- An **inexperienced customer** has difficulty describing the problem and may not be able to follow directions correctly.



# Handling the Talkative Customer

A **talkative customer** discusses everything except the problem and uses the call to socialize.

- Allow them to talk for one minute.
- Gather as much information about the problem as possible.
- Politely refocus the customer. This is the exception to the rule of never interrupting a customer.
- Ask as many closed-ended questions as you need to once you have regained control of the call.
- Avoid conversation that is not related to the problem.



# Handling the Rude Customer

A **rude customer** complains during the call, makes negative comments, may be abusive and uncooperative, and may be easily aggravated.

- Listen very carefully, as you do not want to ask them to repeat any information.
- Follow a step-by-step approach.
- Try to contact the customer's favorite technician to see if they can take the call.
- Apologize for the wait time and the inconvenience, even if there has been no wait time.
- Reiterate that you want to solve the problem as quickly as possible.



# Handling the Angry Customer

An **angry customer** talks loud, tries to talk when the technician is talking, is usually frustrated and upset that they have to call somebody to fix the problem.

- Let the customer tell their problem without interruption, even if they are angry.
- Sympathize with the customer's problem.
- Apologize for wait time or inconvenience.
- Avoid putting this customer on hold or transferring them.
- Avoid talking at length about the cause of the problem.
- Focus on solving the problem.



# Handling the Knowledgeable Customer

- A **knowledgeable customer** wants to speak with a technician that is equally experienced in computers and usually tries to control the call.
- If you are a level-one technician, try to set up a conference call with a level-two technician.
  - Tell the customer the overall approach to what you are trying to verify.
  - Avoid using a step-by-step process.
  - Avoid asking the customer to check the obvious.



# Handling the Inexperienced Customer

An **inexperienced customer** has difficulty describing the problem and may not be able to follow directions correctly.

- Use a simple step-by-step process of instructions.
- Speak in plain terms.
- Avoid using industry jargon.
- Avoid sounding condescending or belittling.



# Proper Netiquette

- Be pleasant and polite.
- Open with an appropriate greeting.
- Check grammar and spelling.
- Remember you are dealing with people.
- Follow the standards of behavior that you follow in the rest of your life.
- Know where you are in cyberspace.
- Respect other's time and bandwidth.
- Be ethical.
- Share expert knowledge.
- Respect the privacy of others.
- Forgive other's mistakes.
- Use mixed case lettering. All upper case lettering is considered shouting.
- Never send chain letters through email.
- Do not send or reply to flames.
- If you would not say it to their face, then do not send it.

# Workstation Ergonomics

- Make sure that your desk layout works well
- Have your headset and phone in a position that is easy to reach and easy to use
- Adjust your chair to a comfortable height
- Adjust your monitor to a comfortable angle
- Place your keyboard and mouse in a comfortable position
- Minimize external distractions such as noise





# Time Management

- Prioritize your activities
- Follow the business policy of your company
- Make sure call back a customer as close to the callback time as possible
- Keep a list of callback customers and check them off one at a time as you complete these calls
- Avoid giving favorite customers faster or better service
- Avoid taking only the easy customer calls
- Avoid taking another technician's call unless you have their permission

# Stress Management

- Take a moment to compose yourself between customer calls
- Ways to relax include:
  - Relaxed breathing
  - Listen to soothing sounds
  - Massage your temples
  - Take a break for a quick walk or to climb a flight of stairs
  - Eat a protein snack
  - Plan your weekend
  - Avoid stimulants





# Service Level Agreements (SLA)

- A contract defining expectations between an organization and the service vendor to provide an agreed upon level of support
- A legal agreement that contains the responsibilities and liabilities of all parties involved

**4.2.4. SERVICE MONITORING**

The objective of service monitoring is to effect prompt identification (detection) and facilitation of the resolution of incidents as they may arise during the operations. The IT services are continuously monitored by Regional IT-Operations staff and system management tools based upon the Tivoli Framework. In case of exceptions, the responsible operations staff is automatically notified.

Affected user groups will be notified (through phone or email) of any incident that could affect user productivity.

In normal circumstances, the system will be attended by Regional IT operators in all working days of the serviced branch/subsidiary as defined in the SLA-addendum for each customer (see Appendix C).

Monitoring is performed by CSR, 24 x 7 hours, including non-working days. In case of incidents detected the responsible Regional IT staff is notified.

**4.2.5. CONTINGENCY**

A backup facility or contingency site will be employed when critical intervals are reached.

The maximum time for this facility to be operational is 24 hours. During this period affected user-groups are kept informed about the progress.

Maximum loss of transaction data from the last backup window:

Contingency arrangements for:

1. hardware failures, alternative AS/400 systems
2. software related problems or site disasters, alternative location

The contingency plan maintained by Regional IT-Operations defines the details of the procedures and arrangements.

**4.2.6. MAINTENANCE WINDOWS**

The customer is informed about planned maintenance activities and planned changes at least 1 week in advance. A change schedule is maintained and published to all involved countries.

Maintenance Window (defined in local time of the customer):

Period	Maintenance Window	Remarks
Monday - Friday (working day)	-	
Saturday	00:00 to 24:00 (local time)	Maintenance period after finishing EOD and weekend processing
Sunday	00:00 to 24:00 (local time)	

**Response Time Guarantee**

[Quotations](#) + Response Time Guarantee

- Within 3 business hours of receipt of your online request for a personalized rate quote, you will be contacted by phone by a personal loan consultant
- Business hours are 8:00 AM through 6:00 PM Central Time, Monday through Friday.

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# Business Policies

Be aware of all business policies about customer calls.

- Time on call
- Time in queue
- Number of calls per day
- How to pass calls
- Promises to customer
- Follow SLA
- When to escalate





# Ethics and Legal Aspects

Respect the customer and their property including, their equipment and their data

- E-mails
- Phone lists
- Records or data on the computer
- Hard copies of files, information, or data left on desk

Obtain customer's permission before accessing their account.

Divulging any customer information is unethical, and may be illegal.

What are the copyright and trademark laws in your state or country?

# A Call Center

- Usually very professional and fast-paced
- A help desk system
- Customers call in and are placed on a callboard
- Available technicians take the customer calls





# Help Desk Software

Uses	Software
<b>Log and track incidents</b>	Software to manage call queues, set call priorities, assign calls, and escalate calls
<b>Record contacts</b>	Software to store, edit, and recall customer information
<b>Research products</b>	Database of supported products, including features, limitations, versions, constraints, bugs, availability, and online help files
<b>Run diagnostics</b>	Diagnostic utility software, including remote access to customer's computer
<b>Research a knowledge base</b>	Database of common problems and their solutions
<b>Collect customer feedback</b>	Software to collect customer feedback

# Call Prioritization

Name	Definition	Priority
<b>Down</b>	<b>The company cannot operate with any computer equipment</b>	<b>1 (Most Urgent)</b>
<b>Hardware</b>	<b>One or more computers not functioning correctly</b>	<b>2 (Urgent)</b>
<b>Software</b>	<b>One or more computers have software or operating system errors</b>	<b>2 (Urgent)</b>
<b>Network</b>	<b>One or more computers that cannot access the network</b>	<b>2 (Urgent)</b>
<b>Enhancement</b>	<b>Request for additional functionality</b>	<b>3 (Important)</b>



# Level-one Technician Responsibilities

- Gather pertinent information from the customer
- Document all information in the ticket or work order

- Contact information
- What is the manufacturer and model of computer?
- What OS is the computer using?
- Is the computer using AC or DC power?
- Is the computer on a network? If so, is it a wired or wireless connection?
- Was any specific application being used when the problem occurred?
- Have any new drivers or updates been installed recently? If so, what are they?
- Description of the problem
- Priority of problem



# Succinct Problem Descriptions

A level-one technician succinctly documents a problem.

Problem	Documentation
• Printer will not print	• The printer will print a test page, but not from an application.
• Mouse does not work	• The user is not able to control the cursor.
• Cannot get onto the network	• The user is not able to login to the network.
• Monitor is not working	• Monitor settings have been altered. No images can be seen on the screen.
• Computer will not turn on	• The computer will not boot to the Windows OS desktop.



## Level-two Technician Responsibilities

- Usually more knowledgeable about technology
- May have been working for the company for a longer period of time
- Receives escalated work orders from level-one technicians
- Calls the customer back to ask any additional questions
- May use remote access software to access the customer's computer to diagnose the problem and possibly to resolve the issue



# Chapter 10 Summary

## Communication Skills

- Relationship between communication skills and troubleshooting skills
- Combined, these skills, can make a person a successful technician.
- Legal aspects of and ethics involved in customer relations
- Situations facing level-one technicians
- Situations facing level-two technicians



## Additional Resources

- Whatis?com: IT Encyclopedia and Learning Center  
<http://whatis.com>
- TechTarget: The Most Targeted IT Media <http://techtarget.com>
- ZDNet: Tech News, Blogs and White Papers for IT Professionals  
<http://www.zdnet.com>
- HowStuffWorks: It's Good to Know  
<http://computer.howstuffworks.com>
- CNET.com <http://www.cnet.com>
- PC World <http://www.pcworld.com>
- ComputerWorld <http://www.computerworld.com>
- WIRED NEWS <http://www.wired.com>
- eWEEK.com <http://www.eweek.com>



# Q and A



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