

Raker

Appliance Repair Professionals, Inc.

Communication Systems

Manual 8

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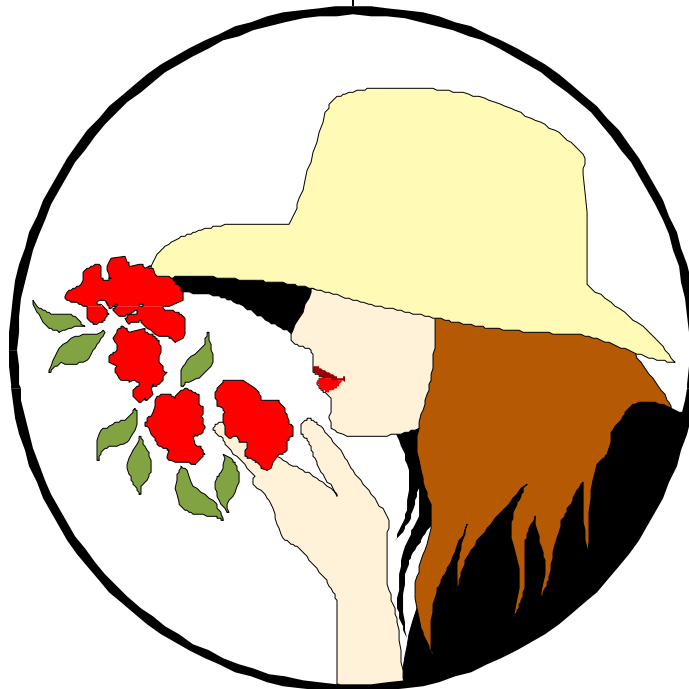
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Communications Systems

Introduction

In most service businesses initial contact with a customer takes place over the telephone. Consequently,

proper operation of the telephone is absolutely essential. An initial inquiry call from a customer is like a fragile seed that has floated into your care. If handled properly, it cannot only grow into a service call, but also into a continuing relationship with an entire family and their circle of friends.



Uncle Harry's Story Time

Back in 1984, my Uncle Marshall and I were partners in the start up of an asbestos removal business known as Asbestos Engineering Inc.. As part of our marketing we had placed a small ad in the Washington, DC yellow pages.

One evening, about 6 PM, Marshall and I were still at the office and the phone rang. It was an air quality consultant calling from our new ad.

My Uncle, the consummate salesman that he is, finessed the call into an appointment. The appointment evolved into several trips to Norfolk VA. After six months of negotiations, we signed a multimillion-dollar contract with the United Virginia Bank (now Crestar). The contract involved asbestos removal in numerous locations all over Virginia. It lasted for several years and made the company a success.

*The contract and really the success of the entire company developed from the proper handling of that **one phone call**.*

I have often reflected back on the fact that, we didn't even have an answering machine at that time.

Many think that telephone operation is simple and not worth significant consideration. Hook up the answering machine and forget it.

How wrong they are!

This entire lesson is devoted to perfecting your use of the telephone and other communication devices. We are going to study all of the systems available and teach you the most effective communication techniques.

After we cover the hardware issues, we will review a sampling of actual phone calls. Finally, we will begin the task of customer list building.

When a new phone number is connected, what causes it to ring? It rings as a result of your diligent, time consuming, and expensive marketing efforts. Every phone call comes in at a price. They are far from free.

Uncle Harry's

Trick of the Trade # 111

Believe it or not, the typical cost of a customer inquiry is from \$30.00 to \$100.00. At this cost, what company can afford to irritate customers? Only the foolish ones.

Factor this cost into all your business thinking.

The current national communication rage is voicemail. Every large company that you call is answered by voicemail along with countless options.

It won't be too long before that a call to the hospital emergency hotline will be answered by voice mail. If you live long to survive the numerous options, you might hear,

"If this is a real emergency, press 43."

With your dying breath, you will finally get a human voice.

This current trend has created a near rebellion on the part of the public. It has gotten very difficult to use the phone for a simple purchase. It has become nearly impossible to obtain anything but basic information.

It is the firm belief of many that the small savings created by adopting voice mail has resulted in losses ten fold. It creates enraged customers and lost sales. A company utilizing knowledgeable helpful employees handling phone calls, will beat out a “voice mail company” every time!

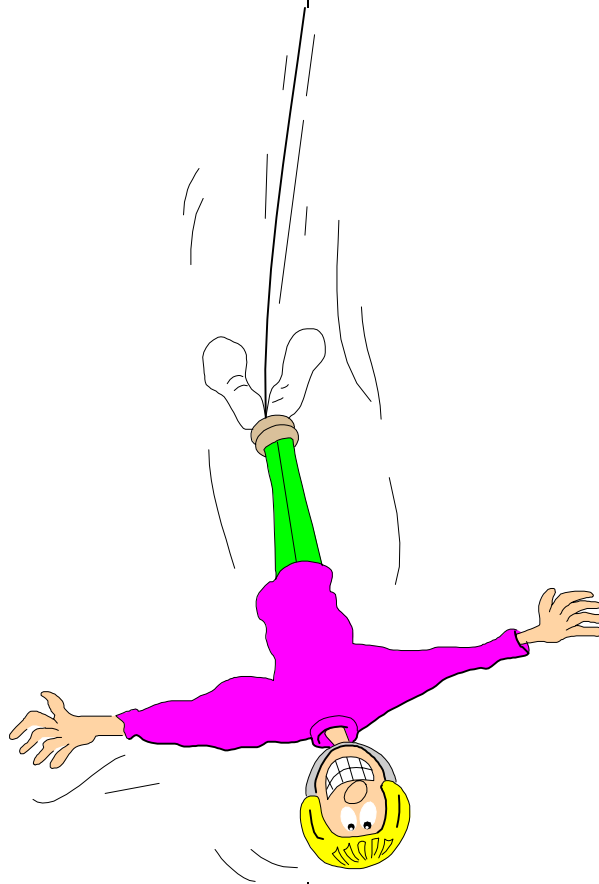
It is important to treat each phone call as if it represents a \$100.00 dollar bill (it does). It must not be wasted and every effort must be made to handle each one with maximum concern.

There are several key elements to proper handling of the telephone.

1. Maintain a continuity of telephone service.
2. Provide a quick informed response to a customer’s inquiry.
3. Gather maximum information from each inquiry.
4. Be as helpful as possible.

Your Telephone Line

Obviously, the telephone is your primary method of communication. It is your **Lifeline**.



Does it make sense to share this critical source of communication with your children or even your spouse?
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No!

A separate phone line costs only \$15.00 per month. A single lost call, because of a busy signal or improper handling, could cost you \$100.00. That's enough to pay for six months use of a separate line.

Residential versus Business Phone Service

In selecting an additional phone line there are two options, residential and business service. Residential phone service is usually a little cheaper and includes "unlimited service.". Unlimited service does not cost more for each minute of phone use. Long-winded housewives would go broke paying by the minute. In contrast, business service bills are calculated by the minute.

The first thought is to lie and request residential service. Of course, you will really use it for your new business line. (This is not too original an idea.) However, this "money saving technique" has distinct disadvantages. Primarily, it creates marketing limitations.

You cannot advertise a residential phone number in the yellow pages. In fact, you **cannot list** a residential number in the business white pages, under a company name.

For instance, a new company owned by Eddie Simon will only appear as Simon, Eddie, in the residential book. The new company name, Simon's Appliance Service will not appear anywhere.

A second limitation is directory assistance. When you set up a new business phone, almost immediately

your new business name is on the computers at 411.

A listing in the white pages also adds a certain amount of credibility to your business. Occasionally, a supply company may even open a phone book to verify that you truly are in business and deserve wholesale.

Unfortunately, a new phone number also brings with it a lot of sales calls. Everybody, from stockbrokers to copy paper people will solicit you. Like vultures, they will circle to a new business line.

Uncle Harry's

Trick of the Trade # 112

Ignore every advertising scheme presented. Only utilize the methods advised by *Uncle Harry*. He's not trying to sell you anything.

He's on **your** side.

It is possible to convert a phone from residential to business service at a later date. However, once it is listed in a phone book, you cannot go backward.

Uncle Harry's

Trick of the Trade # 113

To avoid cost per minute fees, simply install an extension of your residential service on your office desk. Use the residential line for all your outgoing calls. The business bill can be kept very small.

Choosing a New Phone Number

Getting the proper phone number is an important decision. Remember you will be living with that phone number for years to come.

First, consider the importance of the proper exchange. A little history is in order.

Originally, the phone company had buildings in every neighborhood. In the building, telephone operators and switching equipment were setup. The "exchange," as it was called handled all the local telephone traffic and manually routed all calls to and from other exchanges. The exchanges were named after the local neighborhoods.

For instance, in Baltimore, there was a Clifton exchange in the Clifton Park area. Gradually the Clifton exchange was shortened to CL-4-XXXX and called Clifton 4.

How old are you? Do you remember the popular Glenn Miller song,

"Pennsylvania 6-5000"

As the numbers of telephones expanded, the letter prefixes were eventually dropped and Clifton 4 became simply, 254.

The first three numbers of any local phone number is still called the exchange, although the buildings and operators are long gone.

The primary point is, people in a local area all have the same exchange. This is simply because all their phone wires go through the same electronic switching devices. Nearly everybody is well aware of this fact. They think that companies with the same phone exchange as theirs must be nearby. (Hah, they are wrong about that!)

Customers, for many valid reasons, prefer to use a "local service company." They assume that a local firm will be cheaper, faster, more accountable, and maybe, even a familiar face. Why call a stranger from far away, and chance being ripped off.

Regardless of the reason, the tendency is very strong. It is a factor that must be considered when setting up a business and choosing a new phone number.

In order to promote local business, some service companies, go to the expense of setting up separate "local phone numbers." (More about how this is done later.)

Following are samples of yellow page ads of companies that advertise many local phone numbers.

Sample Yellow and White Page Ads

SERVICE TODAY

SERVICE & PARTS • ALL MAKES & MODELS
 WASHERS • DRYERS • REFRIGERATORS
 FREEZERS • RANGES • DISHWASHERS





Featuring









Landers Atlas Appliance Service

PERRY HALL
 WHITE MARSH
256-1686

COCKEYSVILLE
 TOWSON
666-8030

DUNDALK
 ESSEX
288-3232

CALL 24 HOURS

"BALTIMORE MAGAZINE'S BEST OF BALTIMORE" (1987 - 1989)

Appliance Repair Of Baltimore	323-8103
Appliance Repair Of Baltimore	465-4349
Appliance Repair Of Baltimore	675-1885
Appliance Repair Of Baltimore	783-5713
Appliance Repair Of Baltimore	
Cockeysville	666-5767
Appliance Repair Of Baltimore	
Ellicott City	461-4753
Appliance Repair Of Baltimore	
Ellicott City	761-3112
Appliance Repair Of Baltimore	
Glen Burnie	761-9865
Appliance Repair Of Baltimore	
Pikesville	486-7753
Appliance Repair Of Baltimore	
Randallstown	833-1214
Appliance Repair Service	
Severna Park	647-6698
Appliance Repair Service service	
306 Poplar Rd Essex	687-7771
Appliance Service Co Inc Parkville	661-1778
ApplianceMaster Glenwood	489-7331

In the last few years, with the use of so many fax machines and computer modem lines, the phone companies are running out of numbers and adding new exchanges. Many of these new exchanges are local to an area but still may be unfamiliar to the nearby population.

Uncle Harry's

Trick of the Trade # 114

When getting a new business number, always stick with the old established exchange.

When you call the telephone company and arrange for a new line, ask for the exchange you want and an easily remembered number. It would be great to get a number like 727-9000 or 833-0002. Somehow, all the really good numbers are always taken and the little guys like us are stuck with the leftovers. How did AT&T happen to get 800 CALL ATT for their number?

Nevertheless, make the phone company representative earn her pay. Request several choices of GOOD numbers to select from. If you push a bit, hopefully, a number will be available with double digits or easily remembered number sequencing. If possible, think over the new numbers choices for a day.

Uncle Harry's
Story Time

Year's back, we were into the local exchange trick. We were trying to solicit calls in northern Baltimore. I pushed the phone company for a good number and was very pleased to obtain 332-0800. What a great phone number! We went ahead with the set up and began to advertise the number.

Everything was wonderful, until the first rain. Quickly, we realized that our phone number was easily confused with 337-0200, the number of the Royal Cab Company. In the rain the numbers on the side of a cab or those in a wet phone book were blurred. We were hit with numerous calls. The callers were all looking for cabs rather than service work.

At that time, I had a feisty young secretary, Michele. Politely, we put up with the cab calls until one rainy day, after countless explanations, she finally cracked.

I could only hear her end of the conversation. It went like this:

"Sure, what's your address? We'll send a cab right over."

Then she would hang up the phone and laugh devilishly. She knew some poor slob was standing somewhere in the rain, vainly waiting for his cab.

We dealt with the rainy day calls for about a year and finally gave up the line.



Continuity of Telephone Service

All people are creatures of habit. Rather than change habits, people will continue to shop at a store, travel the same road, and **call the same service company**. Change is not something that people welcome. This is particularly true of older people.

Uncle Harry's Story Time

Last year, I was at Tom Matte's house. Tom Matte is the famous Baltimore Colt football player of bygone years. His wife had called me to unclog the disposer. I tried in vain and finally gave up.

"Judy, this thing is not clogged at the sink, it's way down in the plumbing.

You need a plumber with a drain cleaning rig."

Just then Tom came home. He butted in and said in passing,

"Judy, call Abbott, the plumber, he'll fix us up."

I looked out from under the sink at Judy.

"Tom, Abbott was crushed under a car over 15 years ago."

He stalked off, saying over his shoulder,

"We'll, that shows you how much I know."

Once a business telephone number is established, it is critical to keep it in operation. Remember the time, money,

and effort that it takes to establish a number.

