

Lingo Bingo

Create Win-Wins For Customers and You!

by Craig Harrison, *Transaction World*, September 2008

Let's face it, some words and phrases are helpful to customers, while others are harmful. It's time you audit your language to rid yourself of destructive terms and phrases that annoy, irritate or otherwise agitate your customers. Whether consciously or not, you and your employees may be sending negative messages through callous, insensitive or otherwise ignorant responses.

Meanwhile, we know from experience that there are magic words and phrases that are music to the ears of customers. Your mission: replace uncaring language with those magic words and phrases that make bring smiles to your customers' faces.

Introducing CUSTOMER SERVICE BINGO

Most people have played BINGO before, and in the corporate world many have played Buzzword Bingo (AKA "BS" Bingo). This month I invite you to play *Service Bingo*. Test yourself and your team to see how many negative words and phrases are part of your daily dialog. Remember, five in a row in any direction makes you a loser!

Invoke any five of these words or phrases in a vertical, horizontal or diagonal line during the course of a given day and head straight to the Loser's Lounge!

LINGO				
No!	Nobody else has complained	We're doing the best we can.	We're only human.	Oh Well.
Can't Be Done	There's nothing we can do about it.	Oops.	What do you want me to do about it?	Ring. Ring. Ring. (no answer)
Really?	Is this a problem for you?	 (Frown)	OUT TO LUNCH	Whatever you see is what we got!
So you say!	This usually doesn't happen.	¿No Comprendre?	Huh?	This never happens.
That's how we do it here.	I don't know.	That's against our rules.	(No Response)	It's Impossible!


Are you a loss leader?

Excessive use of these words and phrases is killing your business. Why? Because you are losing customers. These words and phrases tell customers you don't care, aren't trained properly or are otherwise clueless about their needs. Each of these responses sends a negative message. It erodes confidence in your products, your service and your management. In some cases they signal a resignation or lack of desire to please your customers. Whether customers tell you or not, they are offended when you use such words and phrases.

Good Vibrations

Now that you've audited your communications for negative words and phrases, give yourself props for the use of positive words and phrases that show customers you care, listen well, understand their needs and have their best interests at heart. Again, five in a row in any direction (up, down or diagonally) during the course of the day and you are a winner.

Service Bingo

BINGO				
Hello!	We've missed you.	Is everything to your liking?	How can we serve you better?	How can we make it right?
How are you?	How can we help you?	What would please you?	What else can we help you with today?	Here's something special...
Welcome back!	What else can we do for you today?	 (Smile)	I'd like to give you a preview	How would you like...
You're looking well.	How can we improve our service for you?	Your input is appreciated.	Thank you for bringing this to our attention.	We'd be glad too!
We're so sorry.	We apologize.	We can fix that!	Thank you!	It's been our pleasure to serve you.

For bonus points, create a new 5 x 5 table and populate it with your own winning phrases specific to your customers, field, sales process and personnel. Then use it amongst yourselves to improve your responsiveness to your clientele. Then, just like Larry David, you needn't *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. Instead, you can rejoice with the most magic of words: Bing-GO!