

What happens in the service industry with a service call?

A typical question from a service technician with running a service call is how do I do it? The service technician is required to understand where the service call starts. The service call starts with the branding and marketing of the organization. This is where the client develops interest to call or not to call. It can come from the web site, radio and television advertisements. The best place to gain interest from a client is a referral from a previous client. The marketing of a company determines the procedures of the sales system.

The next step is with the customer service representative. This position is very important. This is where the client gains valuable information that influences their decision to move forward with your organization. The customer service representative must be professional and clear with the client explaining how the organization operates and what the client can expect from the technicians. The csr must keep in touch with the client to inform the client with the schedule and to confirm the appointment.

Many service technicians do not realize how important these steps are with the sales system. Many service technicians neglect this part of the service call as a tool to help guide the client .The service technician must ask the csr to let them know what was told to the client. Why you ask? Would you agree that it is important for you to repeat the very same information to the client? After all the information was important to the client and is part of the reason they chose to call your organization and then schedule the appointment. Often the technician will discover something the customer service representative stated to the client struck a chord that is in line with the client's way of thinking and things he or she liked about your organization. It also will give the technician an idea of how much the client remembers about the way an organization operates and what he or she expects from the technician. If the service call is generated from a referral it is wonderful to have the client repeat what he or she liked that the referral source stated. This information guides the service technician to what is important to the client. A referral is generally a friend that this potential client respects and trusts and that builds a road towards the service technician's trust with the client. Trust through a common friend builds trust through association.

It is now time to arrive at the client's home or place of work. Prior to arriving take care of all issues that are policies such as calling in to the office to confirm arrival, have all literature ready and park in a space that will not interfere with traffic and the client's normal activity. I would suggest parking on the road in

front of their main window. This allows the client to look outside and see that you have arrived and know who is arriving at their home.

The service technician should be excited to be at the home and exit the vehicle rapidly. Walk like there is a place to go and announce your arrival. Knock on the door or ring the doorbell is fine. Some sales organizations say never to ring the doorbell as this announces a sales person is at the door. I ring the doorbell when I visit a friend's home and that is what the doorbell is for and is to be used. I would ask any and all serviced technicians what do most clients say when you knock? Mine ask if I rang the doorbell or if the doorbell is working. Most sales organizations will throw this in to prove their theory what if a baby is sleeping. The client should have been called by the csr to inform him or her that you will be arriving shortly and I do believe most phones ring loud. Where is the concern for the baby sleeping? It is a false theory. I have heard of a test that states that homeowners are alarmed by a ringing doorbell. None state the testing or who did the testing. Did the testing include home owners that are called by the csr prior to the technician arriving at their home? Most sales trainers, sales organizations will inform you throughout the training that the home owner is waiting for you to arrive and frequently waiting for you by the door or front window. How can ringing the doorbell alarm the home owner if this is the case? I realize this will go against all conventional wisdom however I have done this for over 35 years and it has never affected a sale.

Once the client opens the door immediately say hello. Start developing communication. At this point the conversation can be about anything .Decide what it will be immediately, do not allow silence or it will be awkward for you and the client. The service technician wants the client relaxed while increasing his or her comfort level with you and is very important.

As an example the client is wearing a sweatshirt that has a college logo ask if they attended the college or a fan of that college. Even if the client is not a fan they will give you information on who gave them the sweatshirt and why .This allows for that conversation to move forward. Asking more than one question concerning the open statement will show that you have an interest in the conversation.

Ask to see the issue, problem and follow the client to the problem area. This is a critical point of the service call. Many technicians stand there and look at the problem for a long time. This gives the impression to the client that the technician does not understand or have the proper knowledge to make the repair or replacement. Inspect the problem and look the client in the eye and inform him or her that I can fix that or I can take care of that.

Recently I was training a service technician and his response was I can repair that and what we discovered is the part is obsolete and no longer available. There was no intent to lie to the client however intent is not the issue. Replying I can take care of that or I can fix that means that it can be repaired or replaced. Another time the technician responded by I can fix that and the client stated harshly I do not want it fixed, I want it replaced.

Typically the client will ask how much will that cost. This is a natural response from a client due to the client's apprehension that you are there to take their money. A best practice answering this question is we will cover that, we will go over that, we will get to that.

This is the time to ask questions that will compel the client to answer. Start off asking the client if this has happened in the past. If it has happened ask how often this has happen. What did you do at that time? What would you like to accomplish today? How do you feel about the product in question? These questions will give you information such as; is this a thing that has given the client fits, if the repairs have been partial repairs and not the complete repair, helps you discover the frustration level with this product or past service, and finally if a new product would be of interest.

Do not be concerned with the amount of time this takes you to gain information. What is significant to the client is he or she understands and knows you are there to help them and you are concerned about the issue?

Let me make a small point with this system the professional's knowledge of their trade has not entered into the conversation or has not been introduced and does not matter at this stage. Yet the client knows and understands you do have this knowledge to make this a thing of the past. Everything up to this point has given the client the information to be comfortable with you and that you do have the ability to take care of their issues.

It is imperative to ask the client to do a full house inspection. Explain the inspection and what you do with this inspection. Explain the benefits to the client and that is it a free inspection. All clients love the word free. Always use the words I do, I give, we do, we give this inspection to all out clients. Often a technician will state that we offer an inspection. An offer can be accepted or denied. You do this for each client and he or she deserves this inspection. Sometimes or usually we do an inspection implies that this is not done with every client. Stop using words that give the impression that it does not have to be done however if you like I can do it. This inspection allows the service technician to become familiar with the clients home and system.

All sales have some type of inspection. Some professional sales people believe an inspection can only occur with a visual and physical inspection. This is false. The inspection can happen verbally. The sales person must allow the client to put into words their vision and their expectations and their feelings. This happens often with business to business sales. The inspection is completed through the words of the client and the picture that he or she has painted. The service technician must confirm the painted picture back to the client to affirm that the message is clear to the technician.

The inspection can give information if it is possible to turn a repair into a replacement. Recently while training a technician we went into a client's home where the plumbing fixtures were dated 1962. While doing the inspection we discovered two fixtures in this home have been replaced since 1962, fifty year old fixtures in their home. There are a total of 15 fixtures in the home. I did discover a new car in the garage and this means change is possible.

Why is this information important? It informed me that this client loves the status quo. Change is a tough thing to accept and desire. Most technicians would believe this client is cheap and does not want to spend money. To me it tells me I must facilitate the client to change and help him or her to discover change is good and benefits for him or her. It has very little to do with the client being cheap and everything to do with change. The information gained from an inspection is very valuable.

While the inspection is taking place create conversation. This conversation covers anything and everything that is important to the client. It can be about their children, grandchildren, doctors' visit, sports, or the issue that you are there to fix. It does not matter what the conversation is about. Listen, observe and be interested in their conversation. It is imperative that the technician acknowledges the conversation and that you are listening to him or her. The breakthrough with this conversation will give you the style of communication and the client's motives and moods to move forward today.

The technician's knowledge of their profession still has not entered into the conversation. It is still unimportant at this time. Effective communication that expresses the client's wants needs and concerns are what are essential and helps guide the client towards a permanent solution.

Everything we have covered above has a tremendous affect between success and failure. This is where the service technician builds rapport, trust and a relationship with the client that is mutual. The items covered are the most difficult part for a service technician to understand and implement including those

that have had different sales training in the past. Grasp the different concepts and make it part of your sales system that will increase your ability to communicate with the client. Where the client has new ideas from the information you have given that coincides with the client's new mindset.