

answer phone calls effectively

1. How do I answer?

With your name, business or department, as appropriate, and a greeting, such as 'good morning'. You will sound more confident, if you're comfortable with the way you answer a call – practise to see what works best for you.

2. What details do I need?

Ask for the caller's identity, phone number and the reason for their call – make notes of these, in case you need to call them back or pass these details to a colleague. Callers behave differently, depending on whether the purpose of their call is positive or negative. People complaining are likely to be more impatient and will require more patience from you, although with the right handling you can turn them into very happy customers.

3. What if it's nothing to do with me?

If the call is not related to your job or department, point the caller in the right direction or transfer them to the right person. If you and your colleagues/ managers don't know who should deal with the issue, offer to phone the caller back. When you've found out and do call back, the caller is likely to be very impressed, as many people experience poor customer service so often that they never expect anyone to call back when they say they will.

4. What if it is my job?

Listen and be attentive to the caller and ask questions to obtain further information. If you get it right first time, they won't need to make repeat calls and will be satisfied that you're doing what they want; it's also more efficient for your organisation. Advise the caller of any action to be taken and when it will happen, so that they are fully informed.

5. What do I do next?

If you handle all parts of a process, action the caller's request or schedule the next stage. If you're responsible for just one part of a process, ensure that you initiate the next stage, using the information you obtained during the call.

6. What is the best result?

For your caller to be satisfied that you have listened to them and taken whatever action is required – whether giving them information, taking action yourself or initiating action by others.