

## Watch That Tone Of Voice

By: Nancy Friedman The Telephone Doctor

Your Mom was right. It's not what you say, but how you say it. Several times while I was out shopping recently, I've been told things that frankly, weren't that bad, but the tone of voice was so wrong. I walked away not wanting to do business with that company anymore.

It reminded me of that game we played a long time ago. You take one sentence and emphasize each word one at a time every time you say the sentence. Something like this:

- *I* love my job.
- I *love* my job.
- I love *my* job.
- I love my *job*.

You can take most sentences and do that. Point being, the way we emphasize and use our tone of voice means a whole lot in the customer service arena. Think of all the 'tones' and deliveries we can use. A few that come to mind are:

- Bored
- Happy
- Sad
- Angry
- Terrified
- Worried
- Unconcerned
- Hurt
- Inconsiderate
- Shocked

You can take your own sentence and infuse it with any one of the emotions listed above. Certainly you can think of other emotions to use also.

Obviously, there are various tones we don't want to use in certain situations. As basic as this sounds, we cannot forget that our voice is a key instrument delivering customer service.

Let's go back to the opening paragraph and my true story. I had gone into a store and purchased an item. When the clerk told me the amount, I wrote out a check. He took it and looked up my account. Without even looking up at me he said, "If you're gonna write a check, I have to see a picture ID." The tone he used was rather threatening in my perception. I'd been a customer there a long time and this was the first time I'd been asked for ID. I immediately made a decision not to return there any more.

There were several ways he could have told me he needed ID. Especially since he saw from the database, which he found prior to my handing him the check, that I had been a frequent customer.

He *could* have said, "Mrs. Friedman, I see you're on the database and shop here often. Most clerks know you. However, I've only been here three days and haven't met everyone yet. If I can get your ID this time, next time I'll recognize you."

That's just one way. Gosh, you even feel the difference just by reading the words. See the difference? More importantly, I'm sure you could hear the difference.

At the other end of the customer service spectrum, I went into a jewelry store the other day to pick up an item. When I said to the owner, who does know me, that I was here to pick up my watch, I could sense he seemed to blank out on my name. With a big smile he said, "Good, glad to get it. By the way, which name will that be under?" A class act. And he didn't make me feel as though he couldn't remember my name.

So practice using your most positive tone with which to talk to customers. Then, practice saying positive things. It works wonders. **And remember, you can "HEAR" the SMILE.**