

AN UPSET CUSTOMER

One of the folks who attended a collection program of mine last fall had some great success in reducing receivables. However, she also reported that, for the first time, she experienced a Customer who hung up the telephone on her.

For those of you in consumer collections, this is not an unusual experience, but it happens less with commercial accounts.



What to do?

First of all, congratulations are in order. At least congratulations of a sort. If you never have anyone who gets a bit 'stroppy' or hangs up the telephone, odds are you are not being assertive enough.

In our business, we often deal with customers folks who are 'under the influence.' It may not be drugs or alcohol, but it will often be stress (work, home or both), a high-pressure environment, reduced sales, specific problems resulting from 9/11, and just life itself.

Specific actions:

Please keep in mind that none of these are guaranteed to work every time. A 'good technique' may work one day, but not the next, even with the same person! Also, these techniques are for the 'hang-up,' which is a bit different than the 'obscene' collection call.

Q.T.I.P.S. – Quit taking it personally. Odds are it has nothing to do with you as an individual.

Call them back. The options are to do this right away or wait for ten minutes or so. You may choose to ignore the fact they have hung up on you and just

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carry on as if it hasn't happened. You may decide to bring it into the open. "Mr. Smight, you decided to cut our call short a bit when we last talked, but we still need to resolve your outstanding account."

Get someone else to call back. It 'could' be a supervisor or manager, but a peer will often do just fine. It gives the appearance of escalation.

Let it go. If you have most of the information you need and believe you have made your desires and/or intentions clear to the customer, you may decide your call was 'successful' even though shorter than planned.

All for now folks...I know I have my hang-ups and hope you do too!

Pithy quote of the month:

"Don't get mad. Don't get even. Get ahead."

~Christopher Matthews