

What these cards will do:

It will assist and remind you of basic questions. You will also find some sample phrases to be adapted for your style.

What these cards will not do:

It should not be used as a script. (Most of us don't care too much for scripts anyway.) There are no 'magic' questions or statements that will work all of the time.

You still need to use your imagination and initiative to resolve the overdue debt. It's *your* 'excuse terminator'; don't be afraid to write on it, always make improvements.

Using the Excuse Terminator

The Rules

- Ask for the money. Be ready with a clear, simple and eloquent request.
- Can't pay all? Never ask 'How much can you pay?' You are better with, 'How close can you get to \$Full amount due'.
- Be a good scout – Always prepared.
- Practice makes perfect. Try with a co-worker, be the debtor sometimes, works wonders when you're back on your side of the negotiation table.
- Don't take it personally.
- Cool, calm and collected!

The Rules

Phase One

Identification:

Customer first.

We will not discuss any details of the debt with anyone else. For commercial accounts it is the owner or the designated representative. Names are important, write them down, ensure correct spelling.

Now You:

Your name and company, followed by an assertive (non-aggressive) statement:

"The outstanding amount is \$XXX. Will you please mail or courier us a check for that amount today?"

Phase One

Phase Two

Response:

This is more involved than it appears, talking is important in our business, but listening skills will also result in more money being collected with higher customer retention.

Do not just 'hear' what they say, listen hard, listen between the lines

Take notes

Question Inconsistency

Ask for clarification

Phase Two

Phase Three

If they agree to pay in full, it is still often a good idea to ask the reason for the delay in payment. They may not appreciate the question, but sometimes, that may be the point – become the ‘squeaky wheel’.

- Take down details of any excuse offered
- Overcome the excuse! This is what we do, use the information in your ‘excuse terminator to help, but your own imagination will take you further.
- Keep in mind your objective – full payment today!

Phase Three

Bankruptcy

- Have you or your firm ‘actually’ filed for bankruptcy?
- Are we listed as a creditor?
- What is the name of the firm handling your bankruptcy, what is their telephone number?
- (If applicable) Where are the goods/product now?
- What was the date of your filing?

Bankruptcy

Cheque in the Mail

- When was the cheque mailed?
- What was the cheque number?
- Who mailed it? Can you confirm?
- What invoice(s) were being paid?
- How much was the cheque? (I know it seems obvious, but we don’t want any surprises, do we?)
- Why was it mailed so late?
- Did you send it to anyone’s attention, to a particular department?
- Was it sent with your invoice? Was your account number with us written on the cheque?

Cheque in the Mail

Cheque Needs Signature

- Who signs the checks and what is their telephone number?
- When is it expected to be signed?
- How soon after it is signed, will it be put in mail (or sent by courier/available for pick-up, if appropriate)
- What address do you have for mailing?
- Why the delay? Anything we should know?

Allow me to confirm that it has been approved, it is just the signature need for the check, right?

You have the authority do you not, to arrange for it to be processed with one signature?

Cheque Needs Signature

Customer Service

If they agree to pay in full, it is still often a good idea to ask the reason for the delay in payment. They may not appreciate the question, but sometimes, that may be the point – become the ‘squeaky wheel’.

- Take down details of any excuse offered
- Overcome the excuse! This is what we do, use the information in your ‘excuse terminator to help, but your own imagination will take you further.
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Customer Service

ILL or Vacation

- How long have they been ill/away?
- Who was responsible for their duties while they were out of the office?
- When will they be back on the job?
- Should we speak to someone else? Perhaps a manager or a supervisor?
- Do you have all the details to process payment?

“But the invoice should have been paid quite some time ago. Is there any other reason for the delay?”

ILL or Vacation

Invoice Not Received

- What is your fax number? (Send as you speak.)
- What is the name of the person who approves payment?
- How soon after you receive a copy of the invoice will a check be ready for pick-up?
- Have there been any problems with your receiving any other invoices?
- Will you also need proof of delivery? (Note: Head off right now, any excuse they may try to use after you resolve this one.)
- *"Is there something else we should be doing in order to ensure invoices are sent to the right person in your firm?"*

Invoice Not Received

Irate – Upset Customer

It is natural to be defensive, get our back up and respond with the same tone if not some of the same ‘language’ – understandable – but don’t. If you respond the same way, they win!

Empathy can be helpful, but we want to avoid saying "I understand how you feel." We don't.

Silence can be golden. Let 'em rant. Put the telephone down or hold the headset in your hand. Once they finish, "Now, will you mail me a check for...."

"We're not getting anywhere right now. I'm going to hang up and I'll call you back in ten minutes."

Irate – Upset Customer

New on Job

"Welcome! I'm hoping our relationship will be smooth. I'm here to help you if possible, as well as to bring some accounts/invoices up to date."

Who else in your firm can you call on for assistance?

Do you know if our invoices are ready for processing?

Are you aware of the terms your firm agreed to for payment?

Once processed, how long before the check will be mailed?

"Should we be sending these invoices to your attention in the future?"

New on Job

Not a Priority

What is the amount or the % you are paying on what you call your *priority* bills?

What was the process or how was the decision made to determine other bills were more pressing?

You're in agreement though, that you do owe this bill?

"From what you have been saying, I gather there is no dispute concerning this bill or the terms you agreed to for payment. Is that right?"

Not a Priority

Overextended (We Owe Everybody!)

- Who else do you owe money?
- How much do you owe each creditor and what are the amounts past due?
- Why did you decide to pay 'X' ahead of us?
- What steps have you taken to resolve the present and perhaps future problems?

How much are you short of \$XXXX.XX? (Quote the full amount due.)

Overextended (We Owe Everybody!)

Unusual Expense

Please tell me some of the details as to what occurred and how it delays our receiving payment.

Has this unusual expense been paid in full?

How have you managed to deal with your other commitments and expenses during this time?

"How close can you get to paying the full amount past-due?"

Unusual Expense

Waiting for Money

- Who are you expecting money from?
- Have you been able to confirm with them that it is coming (dare we say, 'in the mail'), and the amount?
- Who may we call to confirm this information? (It isn't that I don't believe you...it's just this new boss...)
- I'm sure that can't be your only source of income - and you do manage to pay other bills.
- "We appreciate your situation, but our agreement is with your firm, not a third party."

Waiting for Money

Your Company Owes Us!

- Please allow me to take some details (amount, locations, and terms of payment).
- Who have you spoken to in our company and what was their reaction?
- Do you know what the terms of payment are between our firms on that account?
- Once you receive payment, may we pick up our check the same day?

"The amount you claim our firm owes you is only a portion of the funds you agree are owed by you. First, let's clear up the difference."

Your Company Owes Us!

Busy

- What has been keeping you too busy?
- Would it be better if I call back in an hour? How about an hour and a half?
- Allow me to save you some time, please give fax (or email) and I can send details or a summary.

Would it be better if I speak to someone else, perhaps a supervisor or a manager?

Busy

Evaluate Your Call

A short pencil is better than a long memory! Write down the important points of the call, including specific arrangements, reasons for past due.

The value of your best collection efforts will evaporate if you don't follow up promises - yours and theirs.

Where a promise may not have been kept in the past, contact the customer on the promised mailing date, "Just calling to confirm that..."

Learn from your success and from your mistakes.

1.) What should you avoid doing next time?

2.) What should you try and do again/more often?

Evaluate Your Call