



10 Call-Center Script Mistakes to Avoid

Callers want a conversation, not a monologue. Avoid these pitfalls and build rapport with customers.
By **Pam Baker** on **April 10, 2008**

To **script** or not to script – that is the burning **call-center** question. While there are roughly an equal number of proponents and detractors on both sides of the issue, most agree that if you are going to use a script, you need to execute it well or you risk losing customers.

“Everything you watch at the movies and most of TV is totally and absolutely scripted, and it is far from awful. Well some of it is, but that’s content and a different subject,” said telesales expert Flyn Penoyer of **Penoyer Communications**, a sales-management consulting company.

Why Not Use a Script?

If content and scripting are two different components, and your content is good, then what can go wrong with your script? “The biggest error in scripts is actually first the writing, and second the formatting,” said Penoyer. “Skip any tendency to make a speech in the script.”

And if the writing and the formatting are up to snuff and the script considered “perfect,” then it should be used all the time, right? Wrong. “Scripts are helpful in the **initial phases** when a person joins the company. But in the long-run, the employee should use his/her experience, presence of mind, and business knowledge to handle the issue,” said Sailaja Sivalenka, regional sales manager for **Aspire Systems** in Chennai, India.

Mistakes to Avoid

As shown above, a script is more of a **guide** than a dictate. Many call centers make script errors which result in repeating mistakes. Here are 10 tips to avoid common errors call centers encounter when writing scripts:

- 1. Avoid formatting the script in long paragraphs that promote mechanical reading.**
- 2. Omit irrelevant information.**
- 3. Avoid accepting any **limitation or fault** on your side immediately.**
- 4. Avoid “blaming” or criticizing the customer from the outset.**
- 5. Don’t talk to the point; you need to proactively build **relationships** with customers to generate more business.**
- 6. Don’t forget to include a proper **follow-up plan**.** Without follow-through, your customers’ frustrations will quickly escalate to permanent anger.
- 7. Don’t require a full **agent** script, because it can diminish the customer rapport.**
- 8. Avoid a long greeting or closing.** Customers hear enough about who they’re calling in the **IVR** (interactive voice response), so make greetings short and simple – identify the brand, yourself and get down to business.
- 9. Don’t require **inflated cheerfulness** or an overly polite tone.** Saying please and thank you is customary, but

requiring it after every request annoys many customers.

10. Don't repeat the same questions. If a question was asked on a previous contact or in the IVR, don't ask it again. That applies to verification, phone numbers or anything that should have been captured in the first contact. Leverage your **CRM application**, automatic-number ID pop-ups, softphone capabilities and any previous data stored.

Last, but certainly not least, consider timing. "Don't measure on calls per hour or minutes per call — you're just setting yourself up for bad customer service," said Jacques Pavlenyi, segment executive of communications industries for a major IT vendor. "Instead, measure on key **performance metrics** that are aligned to your strategy."