



## **Politely Hurrying a Customer Encounter**

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Customers! You can't do business with them and you can't do business without them! One of the challenges facing those of us who serve clients or customers is: How do you speed up a conversation with someone who is long-winded? Sometimes the customer is confused about an issue. They begin talking in circles, repeating the same thing over and over. Sometimes you encounter lonely individuals who simply want to spend time talking with another person.

We all need polite, constructive ways to deal with these situations. We don't want to damage our business relationship with any customer. Here are a few of my favorite **Positive Power**<sup>™</sup> Customer Service approaches for dealing with this sticky situation.

**First:** Remain patient. This will keep the customer from becoming even more determined to continue to control the communication.

**Next:** Gently prompt them by offering guidance, appreciation for what they've shared or options to re-direct the communication to its objective.

**Finally:** Stay focused on **YOUR** objective, which is not to overpower or control them. Instead, you're simply guiding them to help them focus on the issue they need help with.

When a customer goes into unnecessary details, gives too much extra information, or begins relating an unrelated story: Interrupt by saying: *I'm glad you told me about that **or** thank you for sharing that **or** that's really interesting...but I know you wanted to check on [whatever you think they really need] and I want to help you with that.* You might add: *Excuse me for interrupting, anytime after you have successfully broken through. Do you think [option 1] or [option 2] would work out better for you?*

When a customer has trouble expressing what they need or want:  
Gently and cheerfully interrupt by saying: *Excuse me, but are you talking about [A] or [B]?* This is a case where making an assumption is a positive strategy, because it can help get the customer back on track.

When another person is taking a long time to finish making a point, you can look at your watch and say:  
*Excuse me, I didn't know it was getting so late. I'll get back to you later on this.*  
*Excuse me, will you do me a favor and bottom-line this or let me set up another time to talk? I really need to run.*  
*You must excuse me—I know you don't want to make me late.*

Even though there are times when we need to use these particular **Positive Power**<sup>™</sup> Lines, we must never forget the special privilege of connecting with another person, even when some encounters take more time than others. Your connection with them—when you share your attention, your patience and your understanding—might make all the difference in the world to another person, who needs someone who will take the time to listen.

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*Unleashing the Communication Potential of Individuals and Organizations.*<sup>™</sup>