

[Home](#) (<https://hyken.com/>) | [Customer Service Articles](#) (<https://hyken.com/blog/>) | **Guest Blog: Why You Should Train Frontline Personnel to Be Great Listeners**

GUEST BLOG: WHY YOU SHOULD TRAIN FRONTLINE PERSONNEL TO BE GREAT LISTENERS

This week we feature an article by Evan Hackel who writes about why it is important to train your frontline with excellent listening skills. Pay attention to what customers are saying. Take advantage of what you are seeing and hearing and then use what you've learned to surprise your customers with amazing and exceptional customer service. – [Shep Hyken](#) (<https://hyken.com/who-is-shep/>)

I have had negative experiences when dealing with frontline staff, and I am sure you have too. Just two weeks ago I went to check in at a condo-hotel where a good friend of mine was lending me his unit. It was 1:00 AM Mountain time and 3:00 AM on the East Coast where my friend lived. The front desk attendant could not find my reservation anywhere and was clearly upset that I had woken her from her nap. She seemed to be fumbling around and very frustrated. After a half hour, I ended up having to call my friend at 3:30 AM. The issue was that the attendant was looking for the reservation under my name, not my friend's name. I had told her my friend's name, but she wasn't listening and in my opinion, she didn't care.

That happened because a frontline employee was not listening

And then have been times when I enjoyed superb service from frontline staff. A waiter remembering my favorite meal. A phone call from my favorite ski shop telling me about a new pair of skis that they knew would be perfect for me. The simple use of my name.

Those experiences have something in common too . . .

They happened because a frontline employee was a good listener

Great Service Is All about Listening . . .

There are many explanations for why front-line people don't listen. They're multitasking . . . another worker called in sick . . . they're nervous because it's their first day on the job. But those are nothing more than *excuses*, and if you have learned to live with them in your organization, you are doing great damage to your business.

You Can Train People to Listen . . .

You have heard the common advice that people can be trained to avoid interruptive listening – which means that while people are speaking to them, they should not already be formulating a response in their minds. That's good advice, and following it can improve listening.

Yet there are other listening skills that should be part of your training for frontline staff.

Engaged listening – Employees can learn to concentrate on listening for the most important “nuggets” in what customers are saying. Are customers asking for a problem to be corrected, for a special service, for a special health concern to be addressed, or for something else?

Compartmentalizing – Your front-line people, like all workers, are handling multiple tasks at the same time. Yet you can train them to think in only one “compartment” at a time. If your retail salespeople are completing a retail sale on the floor of your store, for example, they can learn to concentrate on that task alone and ignore ringing phones, restocking the shelves, serving other customers and other tasks that are in other compartments.

Observing – Train employees to observe and notice something about each customer they encounter. Is he or she well dressed, polite, hurried, or something else? Employees who take a moment to observe something about each customer listen better to them.

Connecting on a personal level – Front-line employees can be trained to start each interaction by asking a question like, “Where did you travel from to see us?” or simply, “How are you doing today?” Connecting in that way is more than a pleasantry, it establishes a level of communication where better listening happens.

Repeating back – Repeating back to customers what they have just said only takes a moment, and it helps assure that the information that your employee received is the same as what the customer was trying to send. One good technique is for your frontline staffers to say, “Let me be sure I understood” and then to restate in their own words the customer’s question or concern.

Asking for confirmation – A simple statement like, “Have I provided what you are asking for?” can elevate the level of communication and assure that feel they have been heard, respected . . . and well served.

What's the Best Way to Teach Listening Skills in Training?

The first step is to explain that listening isn't a “nice to have” skill, but one of the most important that employees should learn.

Work simulations offer a great way to teach the listening skills I recommend in this article. Have some trainees take the roles of customers and others take the roles of front-line staffers. Practicing real-world customer interactions in this way makes sure that great listening skills will “stick,” be used – and elevate the quality of the customer experience your company delivers.





Evan Hackel, the creator of Ingaged Leadership, is an expert consultant in the areas of training, leadership, and franchising. Evan is CEO of Tortal Training, a leading training development company in Charlotte, North Carolina, and Principal and Founder of Ingage Consulting, a consulting firm in Woburn, Massachusetts. To learn more about Evan's book Ingaging Leadership, visit [Ingage.net \(<http://www.ingage.net/>\)](http://www.ingage.net/).

Follow [@ehackel](https://twitter.com/ehackel) (<https://twitter.com/ehackel>).

For more articles from Shep Hyken and his guest contributors go to [customerserviceblog.com](http://www.customerserviceblog.com) (<http://www.customerserviceblog.com/>).

Read Shep's latest Forbes Article: [CES Showcases Robots \(Again\) And Demonstrates How They Can Provide Amazing Customer Service](https://www.forbes.com/sites/shephyken/2018/01/21/ces-showcases-robots-again-and-demonstrates-how-they-can-provide-amazing-customer-service/) (<https://www.forbes.com/sites/shephyken/2018/01/21/ces-showcases-robots-again-and-demonstrates-how-they-can-provide-amazing-customer-service/>)

Posted in [Customer Service Strategies](https://hyken.com/category/customer-service-strategies/) (<https://hyken.com/category/customer-service-strategies/>), [Customer Service Training](https://hyken.com/category/customer-service-training/) (<https://hyken.com/category/customer-service-training/>) by **shephyken**.

Tags: [employee training](https://hyken.com/tag/employee-training/) (<https://hyken.com/tag/employee-training/>), [frontline customer service](https://hyken.com/tag/frontline-customer-service/) (<https://hyken.com/tag/frontline-customer-service/>), [listening skills](https://hyken.com/tag/listening-skills/) (<https://hyken.com/tag/listening-skills/>).

← [The Power of the Last and Lasting Impression](https://hyken.com/customer-service-strategies/power-last-lasting-impression/) (<https://hyken.com/customer-service-strategies/power-last-lasting-impression/>)

[5 Top Customer Service Articles For the Week of January 29, 2018 →](https://hyken.com/customer-experience-2/5-top-customer-service-articles-week-january-29-2018/) (<https://hyken.com/customer-experience-2/5-top-customer-service-articles-week-january-29-2018/>)

Leave a Reply

Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked *

Start typing...

You may use these [HTML](#) (HyperText Markup Language) tags and attributes:

```
<a href="" title=""> <abbr title=""> <acronym title=""> <b> <blockquote cite=""> <cite>
<code> <del datetime=""> <em> <i> <q cite=""> <s> <strike> <strong>
```

Name *

Email *

Website

Save my name, email, and website in this browser for the next time I comment.

Notify me of followup comments via e-mail. You can also [subscribe](#)

(<https://hyken.com/comment-subscriptions/?srp=14708&srk=902424cc094d3e4b6eb7090101e27cd7&sra=s&srsrc=f>) without

commenting.

[Post Comment](#)

The Shepard Letter

Sign-up to receive a weekly newsletter from Shep. The letter includes customer service and experience articles, business tips and more.



Enter the above code:

No Spam (/legal/privacy-policy/)

[Subscribe!](#)

 [Return to Blog Home \(/blog/\)](#)



RSS Subscribe to RSS Blog Feed (/feed/)

 Search

Connect with Shep

 (<http://twitter.com/Hyken>) (<https://www.facebook.com/ShepHykenSpeaker>) (<http://www.linkedin.com/in/shephyken>) (<http://www.youtube.com/user/shephyken>) (<https://plus.google.com/+ShepHykenSpeaker/posts>)



(<http://www.shepardvirtualtraining.com>)

Recent Posts

Categories

Bookmark Blog

 (<https://hyken.com/feed/>) RSS Feed (<https://hyken.com/feed/>)

 (<http://www.live.com/?add=https://hyken.com/feed/>) Windows (<http://www.live.com/?add=https://hyken.com/feed/>)

 (http://us.rd.yahoo.com/my/atm///*http://add.my.yahoo.com/rss?url=https://hyken.com/feed/) My Yahoo!
(http://us.rd.yahoo.com/my/atm///*http://add.my.yahoo.com/rss?url=https://hyken.com/feed/)



❑ (<http://del.icio.us/post?url=https://hyken.com/feed/&title=Shep+Hyken>) Delicious
(<http://del.icio.us/post?url=https://hyken.com/feed/&title=Shep+Hyken>)



[\(http://www.shepardvirtualtraining.com/\)](http://www.shepardvirtualtraining.com/)

SHEPARD VIRTUAL TRAINING: CREATE A CUSTOMER SERVICE CULTURE!

Do you wish you could have **Shep Hyken** train your employees one-on-one? Shepard Virtual Training makes this wish a reality! Shepard VT is an interactive online training solution that's the next best thing to in-person training with Shep! The program is available 24/7 so you can train on your schedule.

Courses: *The Customer Focus™, Amaze Every Customer Every Time, The Package—Get Customer Focused and Be Amazing, and Five Ways to Create an Amazing Customer Service Experience.*

[Virtual Training Center \(http://www.shepardvirtualtraining.com\)](http://www.shepardvirtualtraining.com)

*Ask us about corporate license discounts.



The Shepard Letter

by Shep Hyken, CSP, CPAE

Sign-up to receive a weekly newsletter from Shep. The letter includes customer service and experience articles, business tips and more from Shep's experiences as a customer service speaker.



Enter the above code:

No Spam (/legal/privacy-policy/)

Subscribe!



(/online-store/)

SHEP HYKEN IS A **BEST SELLING AUTHOR ON CUSTOMER SERVICE**



[\(/online-store/\)](#)

SHEPHYKEN
200 South Hanley Rd., Suite 509 • St. Louis, MO 63105
(314) 692-2200

 [_\(http://twitter.com/Hyken\)](http://twitter.com/Hyken)  [_\(https://www.facebook.com/ShepHykenSpeaker\)](https://www.facebook.com/ShepHykenSpeaker)  [in](http://www.linkedin.com/in/shephyken)
 [You](http://www.youtube.com/user/shephyken)
 [Tube](https://plus.google.com/+ShepHykenSpeaker/posts) [_\(http://www.youtube.com/user/shephyken\)](http://www.youtube.com/user/shephyken)  [\(/blog/\)](#)

© 2018 Shepard Presentations, LLC. All Rights Reserved. [Legal Information \(/legal-information/\)](#). [Sitemap \(/sitemap/\)](#).

Website by Prime Concepts Group, Inc. (<http://www.primeconcepts.com/>)

