

# Excuse Me!

When you're working with customers, there may be a circumstance when you have to excuse yourself. The customer will be accepting of this, as long as you don't do it repeatedly, and you follow four simple steps to excuse yourself properly.

1. If you know the customer's name, use it as you excuse yourself.
2. Tell the customer briefly why you need to excuse yourself.
3. Tell them about how long you're going to be.
4. Thank them upon return and use their name.

There may be many reasons you will need to remove yourself, and it may sound something like this: "Mr. Johnson, if you can excuse me, I've got to go in the backroom and locate another size for you, but I'll be back in less than a minute." And, when you return, you say, "Thank you for waiting Mr. Johnson, I found your size."

In a situation like I sampled above, you may think that being gone for a minute is not a big deal, and does not warrant excusing yourself or thanking the customer for waiting. Let's not think about what shouldn't be done; let's think about what could be done. What are we going to do that no one else is willing to do? What are we going to do to exceed each customer's expectations?

I was in Boise, Idaho performing a customer service seminar for one of my clients a few years ago. I checked into the hotel and went to the room where my seminar was going to be held. I always check to make sure that the audio system is functioning at the right level, and that the overhead projector works properly (before I began using PowerPoint). The overhead projector was not even in the room, so I went to the front desk to ask for their assistance. I told the woman at the desk that my seminar was to begin in 30 minutes, and the overhead projector was not in the room as I had requested. She never said a word. With an expressionless look, she turned, walked through a door to the backroom and disappeared. After waiting 10 minutes (and feeling my anxiety grow), a different woman came through the backroom door, smiled at me and asked if I had been helped. I told her that I was not sure if I had been helped or not, and proceeded to explain what occurred. She said she would check on the status of my overhead and then she disappeared through the same mysterious backroom door. It was 10 minutes later that the first woman reappeared and told me that they would deliver one to the room for me in the next five minutes. My seminar was to begin in 10 minutes and the room was full of people that were getting antsy. So as you can imagine, I had a ton of anxiety, which all could have been avoided with the courtesy of communication.

It is important to understand that you can create anxiety in some customers if you don't excuse yourself and give them an approximate time frame. When you turn around and walk away from your customer without excusing yourself, you normally know where you are going and how long it will take; but they don't. Don't ever assume that the customer should know, or that we don't have the right to know. Think of the anxiety you would create for a mother that stops by for a quick transaction on their way to the daycare. She has to pick her daughter up in the next 10 minutes before her daycare closes, and then you walk away from her without excusing yourself properly and disappear in a backroom. Excusing yourself will relieve anxiety and show the customer that you have consideration for their time.