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Communication Difficulties of Filipino Call Center Agents in the Asia Pacific Region

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Abstract
Aim:
The study focused on crafting training exemplars that target the communication difficulties of Filipino call center agents working in a Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry that operates in the Asia Pacific Region and proposed training exemplars to remediate the identified difficulties. It also aimed to provide additional data that schools may use in the training of their students in the identified soft skills.
Methodology: Deductive coding was used to process the recorded conversations. There was a predefined set of codes to classify the communication difficulties. While the coding allowed the possibility of new concepts to emerge in the set of codes, the analysis concentrated on the predefined set and classified all difficulties there. This methodology is used in qualitative data where classifications are a significant part of the coding system.
Results: The data gathered showed four classifications of communication difficulties. The recorded conversations showed call center agents who lacked skills or have difficulties in active listening, expressing genuine empathy, building rapport and dealing with angry customers. These soft skills are considered necessary for these agents to be successful in their work.
Conclusion: The findings show that Filipino call center agents have difficulties in the components of communication that focus on human relations and empathy. The Coordinated Management of Meaning Regulative Rules by Pearce and Cronen (1980) cover these skills which are about how the communicator reacts for the message and how they respond or behave towards the message they received.

***Keywords**:* Communication, Soft Skills, customer service

INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-paced world, call centers play an integral role in customer service and support. Effective communication is crucial in call centers, where agents interact with customers from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and languages. A single miscommunication can lead to customer dissatisfaction, increased call times, and ultimately, a negative perception of the brand. Understanding the common communication difficulties that agents face can help organizations provide better training, tools, and support.

The Philippines has emerged as a global powerhouse in the business process outsourcing (BPO) sector, particularly in call center services. With a workforce renowned for their English proficiency and customer service skills, Filipino call center agents play a crucial role in supporting multinational companies and their clientele. Despite their many strengths, these agents encounter various communication difficulties that can hinder their effectiveness and overall job satisfaction (Sienes & Catan, 2021).

While Filipino call center agents possess a wealth of talent and potential, communication difficulties can impede their ability to provide exceptional service. By understanding and addressing these challenges through targeted training and support, BPO companies can enhance their agents' communication effectiveness, thereby improving customer satisfaction and fostering a positive work environment. As the global demand for quality customer service continues to grow, investing in the development of Filipino call center agents will remain vital to maintaining the Philippines' position in the BPO industry

The study is hooked to the Social Learning Theory of Communication by Albert Bandura which requires conscious awareness and active engagement in the learning process. By recognizing the influence of social reinforcement, one can evaluate communication choices and behaviors. Through self-reflection and assessment, one

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can identify areas for improvement and actively work on adopting more effective communication strategies. This may involve consciously selecting positive role models to observe, seeking feedback from others, and actively practicing and refining our communication skills in various contexts. It is recognized that soft skills are a very important communication tool for a customer-oriented industry and that it is essential to enhance the communication skills for employment. Universities should target improvements of soft skills and specific personality development component in the curriculum (Patacsil, 2017).

Objectives

This study focused on the development of training exemplars aligned with identified communication difficulties among Filipino call center agents.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the difficulties of the call center agents in the following soft skills:
   1.1 Active listening;
   1.2 Expressing genuine empathy;
   1.3 Building rapport; and
   1.4 Dealing with angry customers?
2. What training exemplars may be proposed to remedy the difficulties?

METHODS

Research Design

This study perfectly fits under qualitative research because it focuses on the collection and analysis of non-numerical data (e.g., text, video, or audio) to explain, describe, and define concepts, opinions, or experiences (Bhandari, 2020).

Population and Sampling

The BPO company has a significant number of Filipino call center agents across the Asia Pacific region where it operates. Through the training specialist assigned to coordinate with the researchers, an invitation to voluntarily participate in the study was sent to Filipino call center agents in the company. One hundred six (106) agents positively responded to the invitation and they were grouped based on their location in the company's operation.

Data Collection

Actual conversations of call center agents with their clients were audio recorded. As a matter of company policy, consent was sought before every recording.

There was also preselection which considered the potential of the recordings in the success of the study. Recordings which did not show the targeted difficulties were no longer included in the sample. Thirty (30) recordings were considered and included in the coding.

Data Analysis

Coding is the process of breaking the data into words or phrases which correspond to the topics or issues and organizing the data in a way that is useful for further analysis (Bailey, 2007). The are several steps followed in the coding of data in the study.

1. A coding protocol was designed where the words and phrases were assigned to categorize the segments of the data by topic. The development of this preliminary coding scheme considered what questions are needed to be answered and the related topics to those questions.
2. The researchers also considered an intercoder to validate the coding protocol or scheme. In this stage an expert in the field was asked to use the coding scheme to another data subset. The result was used to refine all issues in the coding protocol or scheme.
3. Coding was done by hand, entering data into a table using the coding protocol.
4. Finally, the coded data was reviewed by both the researchers and the expert who did the interceding to validate the result of the coding process.

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While inductive and deductive coding were used as powerful tools in analyzing the qualitative data, deductive coding was a more appropriate process in the study because there was a predefined set of codes to classify the communication difficulties. Finally, the training exemplars were validated by the training specialists in the company.

Ethical Considerations

Recorded conversations included were edited to maintain the privacy of the customers including the Filipino agents. Personal details which were provided in the conversations were edited out to completely conceal the identity of those in the recorded conversations. The coding and analysis of the data were conducted inside the company to protect all details covered by data privacy and only the consolidated communication difficulties and the proposed training exemplars were allowed to be cited, discussed, and published in the paper.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

After a thorough analysis of the recorded conversations, four categories emerged in the coding process which included active listening, expressing genuine empathy, building rapport and dealing with angry customers.

1. Active Listening

   1.1. did not capture/confirm customer's relevant information the first time,
   1.2. did not apologize when asking the customer to repeat himself,
   1.3. did not explain why we need to repeat our question,
   1.4. did not rephrase the question when not understood by the customer,
   1.5. did not paraphrase important information said by the customer
   1.6. did not understand the customer's issue and
   1.7. did not ask relevant questions or no probing at all. All of these are components of active listening.

This is one of the most crucial soft skills required of call center agents. Paying attention to all information, staying calm and compassionate during the conversation and conveying interest and comprehension verbally and nonverbally are the most important aspects of active listening according to Robin Abrahams and Boris Groysberg from Harvard Business School in their article, "How to Become a Better Listener".

2. Expressing Genuine Empathy
   2.1. failed to provide empathy statements at the appropriate time and
   2.2. the agent's delivery did not adjust to the customer's emotion(s). These signify that the agents failed in expressing genuine empathy to the situations of the customers.

These behaviors indicate gaps in agents' ability to respond genuinely to customer emotions. Research suggests that timely and adaptive empathy is crucial in creating a supportive and satisfactory customer experience (Pizzi, et al., 2020). Implementing specific coaching on emotional intelligence and situational response can help address these shortcomings, fostering a more empathetic service culture.

3. Building rapport with the customer
   3.1. was not able to truly understand the Customer's needs
   3.2. lots of dead air occurred, which created frustration and confusion on the Customer.
   3.3. interaction sounded highly transactional leaving an impression that the agent was impassive and unconcerned.

These aspects - understanding customer needs, managing dead air, and conveying care beyond transaction - are essential for building effective rapport. According to Robbins and Groysberg (2019), establishing rapport through active listening and empathetic communication is central to enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty.

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4. Dealing with angry customers
   4.1. unable to analyze concerns and issues of angry customers,
   4.2. failed to immediately pacify angry customers and
   4.3. unable to provide proactive and realistic resolution to angry customers.

Effectively managing angry customers is crucial for preserving customer relationships. Failure to analyze their concerns can escalate frustration, while delays in addressing anger may lead to feelings of neglect. Providing proactive resolutions demonstrates a commitment to customer care. Davidow (2003) emphasizes that effective service recovery significantly influences customer satisfaction and retention, underlining the importance of prompt and realistic responses.

Training Exemplars

The template of the training exemplars was carefully designed to cover the goals or targets and be aligned with the training activities and assessment. The targets or goals of the training are detailed in the following parts and are placed in the first section of the training exemplar:
1. Customers' Expectations;
2. How to meet the Expectations;
3. Expected Behavior or the Agent;
4. Identified Behavior of the Agent; and
5. Words that work

The goals for the customers are first listed to show emphasis on the importance of customer satisfaction in BPOs. The part where the *identified behavior* is detailed emphasized the communication difficulties deduced in the audio recordings that were analyzed. The last three parts in the training template detail the plan and activities to be initiated by the trainer.

1. Active Listening

What Do Customers Expect?	Customers expect agents to capture their details the first time they provide them to the agent. The agent should also grasp the Customer's needs through active listening and pick up on Customer triggers to understand the exact concern.
How Do We Meet the Expectations?	• Ask relevant questions to identify the concerns/needs of the Customer. • Rephrase statements/questions when the customers are unsure of what is being asked. • Paraphrase the concerns to demonstrate that we have understood what the concerns/needs of the customer. This will ensure that the resolution of the concern is focused on the right things. • When we need to ask the agent to repeat information, ensure an apology is given and why we need to ask for the information again.
Expected Behaviors	• Correctly capture all relevant information from the Customer the first time • Probe to gain more understanding of the Customer's needs/concerns • Rephrase questions/statements if the Customer fails to understand • Paraphrase Customer's concerns to show active engagement in the call • Apologize and explain reason for the request to have information repeated by the Customer
Identified Behaviors	**The following opportunities for improvement were observed:** • Did not capture/confirm Customer's relevant information the first time • Did not apologize when asking the Customer to repeat himself • Did not explain why we need to repeat our question • Did not rephrase the question when not understood by the Customer • Did not paraphrase important information said by the Customer • Did not understand the Customer's issue

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	• Did not ask relevant questions or no probing at all
Words that Work	**Asking relevant questions** "Can you please tell me more about the concern that you are having with your service?" "Can you please provide more details about your concern?" "I'd like to know more about your product. What exactly is happening when you use your <product>?" "May I ask a follow up question on your...?" **Rewording your question** "Let me rephrase my question, I'd like to ask ...?" Paraphrasing Customer's statements "If I'm understanding you correctly…" "So, what you're saying is…" "Did you mean telling me that..." "What you're saying is…" **Apology on repetition** "I apologize, I know that you already mentioned this earlier but just to confirm..." "Just to make sure that I have it right..." "I'm sorry but I need to ask for your information again because..."
Pre-Coaching Session What do I need to prepare?	**Communicate and follow through on previous action plans and current performance results** **1. Gather all the data** • What is the focus KPI? Observe a 3-week trend on how performance is doing. • Review the previous coaching sessions goal/s and action plans. **2. Listen to call recordings** • Identify trend in behavior – Mark call segment (timestamp) that has been identified as an opportunity. **3. Check previous coaching session/s with the agent** • Verify the effectiveness of the previous coaching session and its impact to the agent's score card. • Identify what action plan worked and didn't work.
Coaching Proper What do I need to do?	**Obtain and gather information to drill behaviors on Root Cause Analysis (RCA).** **1. Have the agent listen to the calls and use probing questions to identify the issue.** • Define observed strengths and opportunities observed on the call/s. • Acknowledge and validate inputs provided. • Discuss current and future impacts of behaviors to performance. • Utilize effective probing techniques to analyses the root cause in order to create the appropriate • SMART action plan.

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	Use the identified behavior to craft a SMART action plan. • What will the TL do to improve identified? behavior or root cause? • How can you measure the agent's compliance to? the action plans? By how much? By how often? • Using what measurement? By when? **Have a discussion with the agent based on the behavior you observed.** • If it's a will issue, let the agent understand the importance of meeting his KPI, how it impacts his/her score card, how it impacts the team, how it impacts the business, and how it could lead to PIP. • If it's a Knowledge/Skill issue, you may use page 2 of this coaching pack to address the agent's performance gap.
Post Coaching Session What are my next steps?	**Use the Coach Tool to create and document path of Actions.** **1. Take action on items indicated on the SMART coaching log.** • Act on initial check back shortly (24 hours after the coaching session). • Perform follow-ups in a timely manner. • Monitor the agent for the successful execution of previously committed actions. **2. Remember the DOs and DON'Ts of coaching.** <u>Dos when documenting your session</u> • Identify helpful behaviors. • Positive reinforcement by identifying good behavior that needs to be practiced. • Associate did well behaviors to impact (self, team, customer, client. • Check entries for spelling and grammatical errors. <u>Don'ts when documenting your session</u> • Leave a comment blank. • Use inappropriate entries such as period, comma, hyphen, asterisk, and the like to fill the comments field. • Flag the comment field with the agent's metrics. • Make the habit of copy-pasting comments made from previous coaching sessions to populate the more recent one.
Processing	**Objective:** This activity aims to correctly capture Customer's individual pieces of information the first time, grasp the Customer's need/s or situation through active listening, pick up Customer triggers to understand the exact issue/concern, appropriately respond to the Customer's situation or need, and clarify spelling or issue if unclear. **Reminders:** 1. TL should prepare sample scenarios based on common markdowns of the agent

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<td></td>
<td>and top call drivers.
2. Ask the agent to always check Compass for real-time assistance and for updates on new products, services, and processes.
3. Be ready to provide feedback using:
• Did well (Gems)
• Do differently (Opportunity)
• How to make it better

Let's Practice: Using the sample spiels, show that you are actively listening to the Customer.

Issue: A payment that has been returned

Sample Active Listening Statements
"I'm sorry but I need to have a clear grasp of your concern. Could you say it again? If I got it correctly, you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Scenarios</td>
<td>Ask relevant questions on the following Customer concerns.

1. Cable or Internet issues
2. Promotional step-ups
3. Rate increases
4. Past due collections

Assume that you are talking to a 5-year Customer. How would you reword your question on the following concerns?

5. Collections accounts in temporary suspension
6. Returned payment
7. Video repair

Ask and apologize to the Customer because you need to ask them to repeat their:
8. Product details (product number and serial number)
9. Customer details (phone number, email and physical address)
10. Date of payment
11. Status of the product when the incident/issue happened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMART Action Plans</td>
<td>Agent Commitment

I will actively listen to my Customers. This will enable me to get all relevant information, focus on their concerns, and make
them feel that I am truly engaged in the conversation. I understand that this will help me find the best resolution to their reason for the call.

Sample Agent Action Plan

<table><tr><th>#</th><th>Action Steps</th><th>Date</th></tr><tr><td>1</td><td>Review suggested spiels provided by TL and practice delivery.</td><td>Immediately after the coaching
session - Daily</td></tr></table>
Sample Team Leader Action Plan</td>
</tr>
</table>

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#	Action Steps	Date
1	Do side-by-side listening in on calls for at least 15 minutes and provide real-time	Do side-by-side listening in on calls for at least 15 minutes and provide real-time
2	Take some calls and ask the agent to listen to pick up additional active listening	Take some calls and ask the agent to listen to pick up additional active listening
3	Using a list of scenarios, continue to do role-playing with the agent helping him use	Using a list of scenarios, continue to do role-playing with the agent helping him use

2. Expressing Genuine Empathy to Customers

What Do Customers Expect?	Customers expect to interact with Agents who would understand and care for them.
How Do We Meet the Expectations?	Show we care by acknowledging how our Customers feel. A genuine connection is established when we can relate to their emotions and experiences.
Expected Behaviors	• Emotions are acknowledged. • Empathy statements are provided. • Delivery adapts to the Customer's emotions. • Understanding when empathy is appropriate and needed.
Identified Behaviors	**The following opportunities for improvement were observed:** • Failure to provide empathy statements at the appropriate time. • The agent's delivery did not adjust to the customer's emotion(s).
Words that Work	**E- Empathize** (Relating to what the customer feels) **You may begin your empathy spiel by:** • We apologies for the inconvenience this has caused you... • We understand how frustrating this issue has become for you... • Please accept our sincere apology for any trouble or inconvenience we have caused you... • I'm so sorry to hear that you are having issues with your... • I see where your frustration is coming from...I am here to help... **A- Acknowledgement** (Paraphrasing the issue) **You may begin your acknowledgement spiel by:** • Let me check if I have this right... • Let me see if I have this correct, you want me to... or would like me to... • If I understand you correctly... • So, you are saying that... **O- Ownership** (Providing the best resolution) **You may begin your ownership spiel by:** • I see where your frustration is coming from... what I will do for you is... • am truly sorry to hear that the situation is unavoidable...

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	• I want to resolve this for you quickly, let me look into this and see what options we have... To start with, I need to ask you a couple of questions... • For your Spectrum package to start working, we begin by...
Pre-Coaching Session What do I need to prepare?	**Communicate and follow through on previous action plans and current performance results** **1. Gather all the data** • What is the focus KPI? Observe a 3-week trend on how performance is doing. • Review the previous coaching sessions goal/s and action plans. **2. Listen to call recordings** • Identify trend in behavior – Mark call segment (timestamp) that has been identified as an opportunity. **3. Check previous coaching session/s with the agent** • Verify the effectiveness of the previous coaching session and its impact to the agent's score card. • Identify what action plan worked and didn't work.
Coaching Proper What do I need to do?	**Obtain and gather information to drill behaviors on Root Cause Analysis (RCA).** **1. Have the agent listen to the calls and use probing questions to identify the issue.** • Define observed strengths and opportunities observed on the call/s. • Acknowledge and validate inputs provided. • Discuss current and future impacts of behaviors to performance. • Utilize effective probing techniques to analyses the root cause in order to create the appropriate SMART action plan. **Use the identified behavior to craft a SMART action plan.** • What will the TL do to improve identified behavior or root cause? • How can you measure the agent's compliance to the action plans? By how much? By how often? • Using what measurement? By when? **Have a discussion with the agent based on the behavior you observed.** • If it's a will issue, let the agent understand the importance of meeting his KPI, how it impacts his/her score card, how it impacts the team, how it impacts the business, and how it could lead to PIP. • If it's a Knowledge/Skill issue, you may use page 2 of this coaching pack to address the agent's performance gap.
Post Coaching Session What are my next steps?	**Use the Coach Tool to create and document path of Actions.** **1. Take action on items indicated on the SMART**

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Processing	**Objective:** This activity aims to allow Agents to demonstrate their ability to express genuine empathy based on different customer statements and scenarios.
	Reminders:
	1. TL should prepare sample scenarios based on:
	  • Common markdowns of the agent
	  • Top call drivers
	2. Ask the agent to always check Compass.
	  • For updates on new products, services, and processes
	  • For real-time assistance
	3. Be ready to provide feedback using:
	  • Did well (Gems)
	  • Do differently (Opportunity)
	  • How to make it better
	Let's Practice: Using the sample spiels, show empathy following the E-A-O approach.
	
	Issue: My Spectrum TV does not turn on.
	
	Sample Empathy Statement (Opening)
	
	E - We understand how frustrating it is
	
	A - for your Spectrum TV not to turn on
	
	O - I want to resolve this for you quickly so that you can start using your television but first let me ask you a few questions...

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“Prices go up and offers for new customers only, even though we never miss a bill.”
“I pay $60 for a 35Mbps connection (rip-off), it rarely tests above 25.”
“I was repeatedly berated, being told "We can lower your price down to $54.99 but that will also lower your speeds. “
“My video on demand has been down for a week. I have been promised a phone call from the "higher ups" within 24 hours....no call. I'm considering to go with another cable company.”

</td></tr>
<tr><td>SMART
Action Plans</td><td>
Agent Commitment

I will listen to my customers more. This will enable me to express genuine empathy to Customers. I understand that this
will allow me to make my Customers feel that I care.

Sample Agent Action Plan
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Sample Team Leader Action Plan
<table>
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<tr><td>1</td><td>Do side-by-side listening in on calls for at least 15 minutes and provide real-time feedback.</td><td>Within 1 day after the coaching
session</td></tr>
<tr><td>2</td><td>Take some calls and ask the agent to listen to pick up additional empathy statements.</td><td>6/01/2017</td></tr>
<tr><td>3</td><td>Using a list of scenarios, continue to do role-playing with the agent helping him use empathy statements that are appropriate for the scenario.</td><td>6/01/2017</td></tr>
</table>
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3. Building Rapport

What Do Customers Expect?	Customers expect their interactions with Spectrum to be conducted in a friendly and courteous manner while maintaining a professional approach. They expect to be informed all throughout the process and that all tones and issues should be appropriately acknowledged.
How Do We Meet the Expectations?	Demonstrate understanding of the issue by sincerely relating with the customer. Making sure that all issues are acknowledged promptly while maintaining a human connection all throughout the call.
Expected Behaviors	• Identify the Customer's needs and expectations. • Fill dead air during calls. • Avoid sounding too transactional in a call.
Identified Behaviors	**The following opportunities for improvement were observed:** • The Agent was not able to truly understand the Customer's needs.

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	• Lots of dead air occurred, which created frustration and confusion on the Customer. • The interaction sounded highly transactional leaving an impression that the Agent was impassive and unconcerned.
Words that Work	**Ask for clarifying questions to understand Customer's needs.** "What is currently happening on the cable box or modem?" "Is it happening on all equipment?" "What error are you seeing?" "How was the payment made and when did you make it?" "Do you have a copy of the bill handy?" "Have you received any new notices from us recently?" **Keep the Customer in the loop to avoid dead air.** "It is just going to be a moment to..." "I am checking now the availability of support techs..." "Let me check in my system how...Anyway, Mrs. Smith, how have you been enjoying your favorite channel" "What I am doing now is verifying in our system why you were billed late charges again and why you kept on receiving automated calls. I can see here that..." **Put personal touch to the conversation.** "I see that you're in [city]. What's the best part about living there?" "I've never met anyone who went to [college] before! What was it like?" "You seem like someone with good Netflix picks. What have you enjoyed recently?" "I can hear your dog is barking. What type of dog do you have?"
Pre-Coaching Session What do I need to prepare?	**Communicate and follow through on previous action plans and current performance results** **4. Gather all the data** • What is the focus KPI? Observe a 3-week trend on how performance is doing. • Review the previous coaching sessions goal/s and action plans. **5. Listen to call recordings** • Identify trend in behavior – Mark call segment (timestamp) that has been identified as an opportunity. **6. Check previous coaching session/s with the agent** • Verify the effectiveness of the previous coaching session and its impact to the agent's score card. • Identify what action plan worked and didn't work.
Coaching Proper What do I need to do?	**Obtain and gather information to drill behaviors on Root Cause Analysis (RCA).** **2. Have the agent listen to the calls and use probing questions to identify the issue.**

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Define observed strengths and opportunities observed on the call/s.
Acknowledge and validate inputs provided.
Discuss current and future impacts of behaviors to performance.
Utilize effective probing techniques to analyses the root cause in order to create the appropriate SMART action plan.

Use the identified behavior to craft a SMART action plan.

What will the TL do to improve identified behavior or root cause?
How can you measure the agent’s compliance to the action plans? By how much? By how often?
Using what measurement? By when?

Have a discussion with the agent based on the behavior you observed.

If it’s a will issue, let the agent understand the importance of meeting his KPI, how it impacts his/her score card, how it impacts the team, how it impacts the business, and how it could lead to PIP.
If it’s a Knowledge/Skill issue, you may use page 2 of this coaching pack to address the agent’s performance gap.

</td></tr>
<tr><td>Post Coaching Session

What are my next steps?</td><td>
Use the Coach Tool to create and document path of Actions.

1. Take action on items indicated on the SMART coaching log.

Act on initial check back shortly (24 hours after the coaching session).
Perform follow-ups in a timely manner.
Monitor the agent for the successful execution of previously committed actions.

2. Remember the DOs and DON’Ts of coaching.

<u>Dos when documenting your session</u>

Identify helpful behaviors.
Positive reinforcement by identifying good behavior that needs to be practiced.
Associate did well behaviors to impact (self, team, customer, client.
Check entries for spelling and grammatical errors.

<u>Don’ts when documenting your session</u>

Leave a comment blank.
Use inappropriate entries such as period, comma, hyphen, asterisk, and the like to fill the comments field.
Flag the comment field with the agent’s metrics.
Make the habit of copy-pasting comments made from previous coaching

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<tr><td>Processing</td><td>Objective: This activity aims to allow Agents to demonstrate their ability to build better rapport based on different customer statements and scenarios.
Reminders:
1. TL should prepare sample scenarios based on:
• Common markdowns of the agent
• Top call drivers
2. Ask the agent to always check Compass.
• For updates on new products, services, and processes
• For real-time assistance
3. Be ready to provide feedback using:
• Did well (Gems)
• Do differently (Opportunity)
• How to make it better
Let’s Practice: Use the sample spiels provided based on expected behaviors.

Issue: This is the worst Internet service ever! We put a package deal together for TV, Internet, and Phone. The internet is the worst. We called and complained, spent over an hour on the phone with an Agent only to have him give us guidance which shut down our Internet that he could not get running again.

Sample Building Rapport Statements

Let me gather some information and see if we can help... And what seems to be the problem today? Is it happening to all gadgets that you connect to the Internet with?... I am checking now the availability of support techs...Anyway, how have you been enjoying your favorite channels?...
(While on the different phases of the call, keep in mind some spiels you can use to avoid dead air and being too transactional)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Sample Scenarios</td><td>1. “The supervisor for Bright house says that they have trouble accepting electronic 3rd party payments.”
2. “I paid for 100 download/10 upload service and now, my internet is randomly running at 9-108 download /0.3-2.6 upload.”
3. “Change channels and get "Please wait" message. Then another message "Channel is unavailable. Please try again later". Wait another minute or two and the channel comes through.”
4. “I recently received a notice that my bill would be increasing by $15 a month and since I feel I already pay too much, I called and asked to speak to someone about lowering my bill.”</td></tr>
<tr><td>SMART Action Plans</td><td>Agent Commitment

I will listen to my customers more. This will enable me to build better rapport. I understand that this will allow me to
make my customers feel at ease in the conversation.

Sample Agent Action Plan
<table><tr><th>#</th><th>Action Steps</th><th>Date</th></tr><tr><td>1</td><td>Review suggested spiels provided by TL and practice delivery.</td><td>Review suggested spiels provided by TL and practice delivery.</td></tr></table></td></tr>
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	Sample Team Leader Action Plan | # | Action Steps | Date | | 1 | Do side-by-side listening in on calls for at least 15 minutes and provide real-time | Within 1 day after the coaching session | | 2 | Take some calls and ask the agent to listen to pick up additional empathy | 6/01/2017 | | 3 | Using a list of scenarios, continue to do role-playing with the agent helping him use | 6/01/2017 |

#	Action Steps	Date
1	Do side-by-side listening in on calls for at least 15 minutes and provide real-time	Within 1 day after the coaching session
2	Take some calls and ask the agent to listen to pick up additional empathy	6/01/2017
3	Using a list of scenarios, continue to do role-playing with the agent helping him use	6/01/2017

4. Dealing with an Angry Customer

What Do Customers Expect?	Customers expect their queries to be addressed by patient and calm experts. This means that Customers want to1) know why the issue occurred, 2) be assured that the problem won't happen again, 3) be provided an immediate and favorable solution.
How Do We Meet the Expectations?	We meet expectations by understanding the type of irate Customers, exhibiting a positive attitude amidst difficult conversations, putting forward a fair and realistic resolution, and maintaining a positive Customer relationship.
Expected Behaviors	• Identify Customer's problem by listening attentively. • Skillfully use expressions and statements appropriate to irate Customers. • Provide a proactive and realistic resolution to angry Customers.
Identified Behaviors	**The following opportunities for improvement were observed:** • Unable to analyze concerns and issues of angry Customers. • Unable to immediately pacify angry Customers. • Unable to provide proactive and realistic resolution to angry Customers.
Words that Work	**Reassure Customer that you are listening.** • "I'll let you explain the situation first, and then we'll find you a solution" • "Please feel free to tell me anything you think is relevant" • "Your issue is a cause for concern. Let's find out why this happened" **Express genuine empathy.** • "I would feel the same in your situation, but we will sort this out." • "I know how frustrating it can be. Let's see how I can help you." • "Thank you for bringing this to my attention." **Keep the interaction factual.** • "Let me check if I've got all the facts straight" • "Is there anything else about the situation I need to know?" **Place yourself on the Customer's side.** • "If this happened to me, I will be upset as well. Let's sort it out" • "Let's make sure you get what you need from this situation" • "Here's an idea – tell me what you think of this" **Provide fair and realistic solutions.** • "In my experience the best way to proceed is_____. How does that sound to you?" • "There are a few ways to address this – we just need to find the best fit for you" • "So, I have a few ways we can make this situation better. Let's go through them and tell me what you think."
Pre-Coaching Session	**Communicate and follow through on previous action plans and current performance results**

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Post Coaching Session What are my next steps?	**Use the Coach Tool to create and document path of Actions.** **1. Take action on items indicated on the SMART coaching log.**

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Ask the agent to always check Compass.
For updates on new products, services, and processes
For real-time assistance
Be ready to provide feedback using:
Did well (Gems)
Do differently (Opportunity)
How to make it better

Let’s Practice: Use the sample spiels provided based on expected behaviors.

Issue: Hi, I’m Mary. I received an offer from Spectrum for internet service at $39.99 for 12 months. After ordering the service I was billed at $44.99 and not the advertised price. After contacting Spectrum, I was told by another representative that there had been a price increase. Can you help me with this?

Sample De-Escalation Statements (Opening)

“Your issue is a cause for concern. Could you tell me more about it? I’m sorry to hear that. I know how frustrating it can be...Let’s make sure you get what you need from this situation... So, I have a few ways we can make this situation better. Let’s go through them and tell me what you think.”
</td></tr>
<tr><td>Sample Scenarios</td><td>

“My TV reception has gotten noticeably worse in the last few months with screen freezes and weird glitches, and I'd blame Spectrum for this!”

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2. "The prices have soared with no notice or explanation and the workers who keep having to come out hate the new rules, which make it much more difficult for them to do their job!"
3. "Spectrum TV is absolute crap; it hasn't worked correctly for a whole month and now every day, it is rebooting five times a day!"
4. "It has been 4 months and the buyout has not been processed after several follow ups and sending all the documentation several times!"
</td>
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<td>SMART
Action Plans</td>
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Agent Commitment

I will listen to my Customers more. This will enable me to effectively interact with irate Customers. I understand that
this will allow me to calm Customers down and provide them the best resolution.

Sample Agent Action Plan

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<tr><th>#</th><th>Action Steps</th><th>Date</th></tr>
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