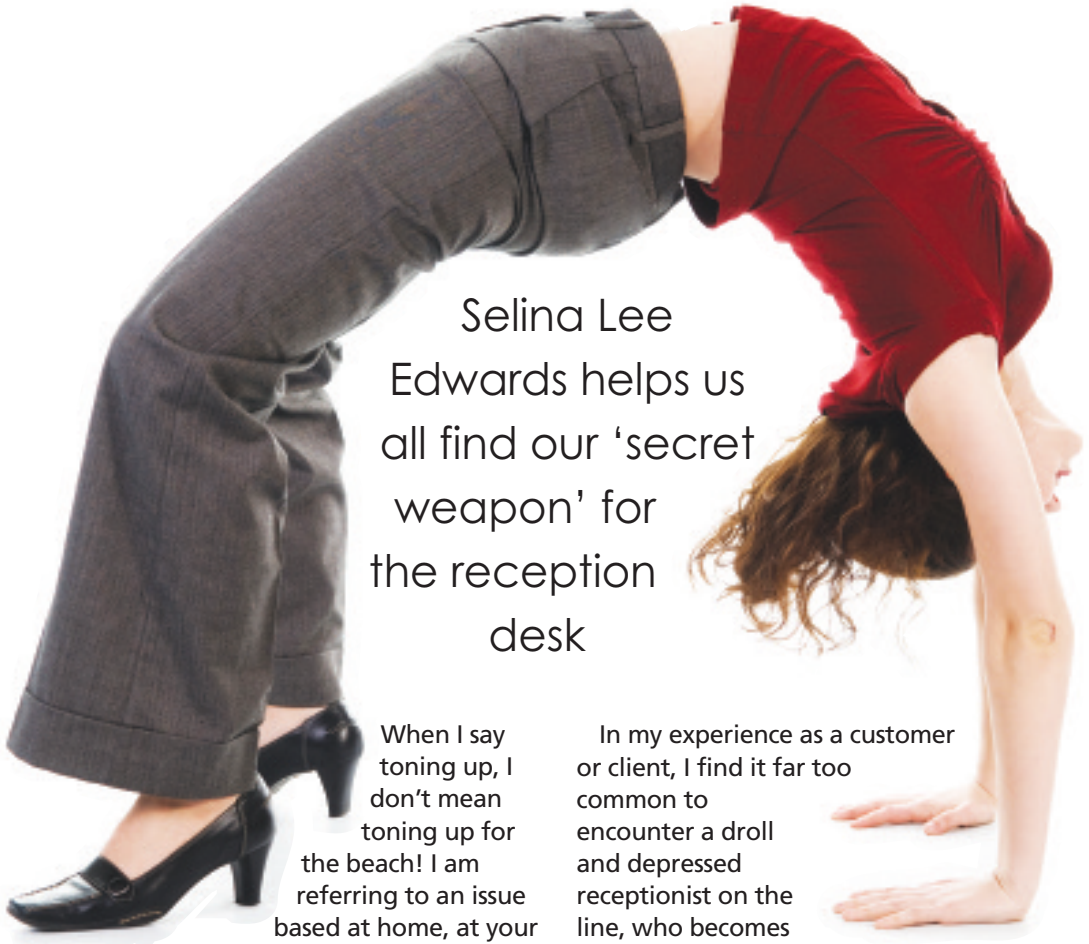


Toning up...



Selina Lee
Edwards helps us
all find our 'secret
weapon' for
the reception
desk

When I say toning up, I don't mean toning up for the beach! I am referring to an issue based at home, at your reception desk and your

In my experience as a customer or client, I find it far too common to encounter a droll and depressed receptionist on the line, who becomes

an automatic-reply robot when you need to make an appointment. It's really quite heartbreaking! What has happened to these once bubbly and heart-warming people?

It became apparent I wasn't the only member of the public to have experienced 'cold' receptionist staff or the feared 'desk-dragons' – as soon as I had told friends and colleagues the subject of my article, they all hastened to agree. Tales of daily hardship with doctors' receptionists, bank

end of the telephone line: our secret weapon called 'tone of voice'.

I say 'weapon' because every receptionist or customer service employee is wielding a force so powerful that it can be used without our audience realising. Our customers and clients aren't our only audience, suppliers and other veterinary colleagues should also have the pleasure of a heartfelt "Good morning!" or a cheery "Goodbye".

"What has happened to these once bubbly and heart-warming people?"

clerks and other front-line staff assured me there is a national epidemic of unhappy customer-service employees. Of course, you must take into account that it is the customers' perception of the incident in question and that the employee might have acted without fault; however, it is hard to forgive a poor tone of voice.

"I only asked her what the additional charge was for and she got right snappy..."

"I hadn't even explained the problem to her before she had interrupted me and said that was 'just the way it is here'..."

"He didn't even look at me once! He just took my card, took the payment then mumbled something when he gave me my bag..."

These are just a few of the examples I received from my sources and when you read them, you feel it's all happened to you before. I can only hope that we customer service professionals are able to restore faith into the public before we lose their confidence completely. Take a look at these pointers I have given below, in my experience a little enthusiasm goes a long way.

* Please **Smile**

The universal sign that you are actually pleased to see someone! Even when you're on the phone, you find that simply speaking with a smile on your face changes the tone of your voice immensely!

Don't worry that you look like a crazy person; even the most po-faced of your customers will melt to your grin.

* If you say it, MEAN it!

Saying hello and goodbye shouldn't just be something you do when the boss is around, you are hired to greet people and make

them feel at ease, so make a habit of giving EVERY customer a cheery greeting. Try to get out of the dreaded 'robot response' and try to give the words a little warmth, smiling when you say them will instantly give them a rosy glow.

* In the face of adversity, don't lose your cool!

Everyone in the world has, at some point, had to 'grin and bear it' when someone has forgotten themselves and insists on speaking to you like

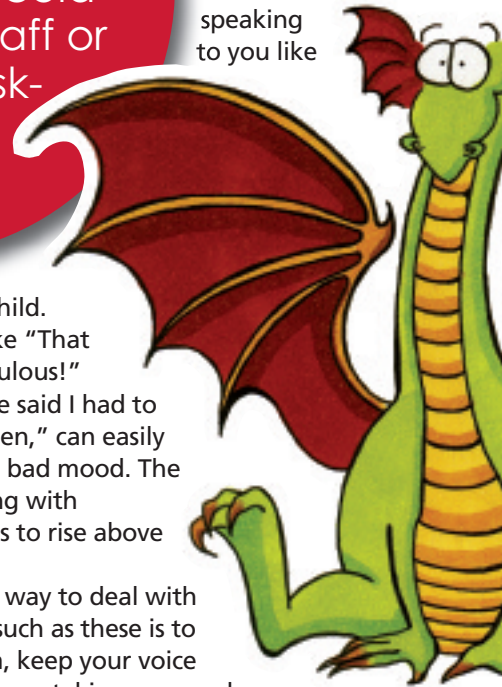
It became apparent I wasn't the only member of the public to have experienced 'cold' receptionist staff or the feared 'desk-dragons'

a naughty child.

Phrases like "That price is ridiculous!" and "No one said I had to pay to be seen," can easily put you in a bad mood. The art of dealing with complaints is to rise above the heat.

The ONLY way to deal with complaints such as these is to remain calm, keep your voice tone steady – as taking on an edgy tone in an effort to reprimand the customer will only make them more defensive.

* Always apologise that the customer is upset with their service, this doesn't mean you are taking any blame for their displeasure, but will make them feel a little compensated. Unless you are entirely confident that you can turn the situation into a success then don't attempt it, as you could make matters worse. Refer them to





your manager in a side room, so that other customers won't have to behold the drama.

"I am sorry that you're upset Mr Bennett, allow me to inform the manager so that we can sort out the problem for you." You're being sympathetic and willing to solve their problem, what's not to like!

At this point DO NOT storm up to your manager and claim that "a right old sod" is at the desk making a fuss about nothing. We may have caused poor Mr Bennett a problem and making the manager feel defensive before they have even spoken to him is unfair. You can certainly make the manager aware that Mr Bennett is upset or quite annoyed, so they can mentally

prepare themselves for a strong questioning or demand by the client.

* This is also the time you will need to

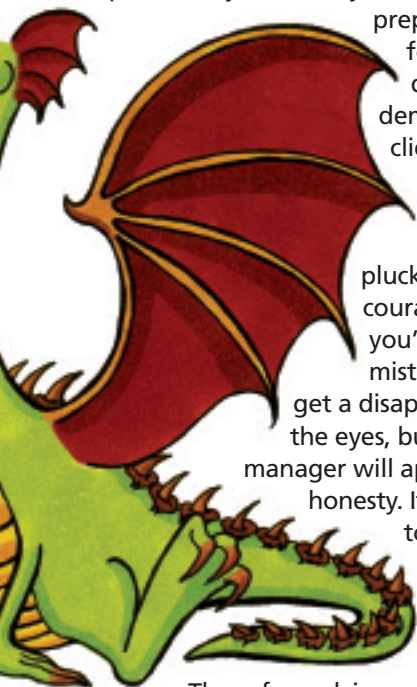
pluck up the courage to admit if you've made a

mistake. You may get a disappointed roll of the eyes, but your

manager will appreciate your honesty. It's much easier

to solve a problem when you know where you've gone wrong.

These few advice points are a basic minimum and we, being experts in customer care, should have no problem working them to death! We are the face of the companies we work for and this makes our jobs even more important and, if possible, adds even more pressure. The employees that keep customers happy as standard, whilst still providing complete administrative support, are worth their weight in gold, so let yourself shine!



Doggy libido problems

Dear Agony Aunt,

My entire two-year old spaniel-cross, Ned, humps anything: other dogs – male or female, visitor's legs, his bed... I think we should give him the snip, but my husband winces every time I even mention the subject and refuses to entertain the idea.

I would also prefer a non-surgical option, but I don't know what else to do – his behaviour is becoming embarrassing and has even put our friends off visiting! Is there anything we can do?

– Sarah White

Dear Sarah,

Don't you just love 'em! Trouble is, although this behaviour is undesirable in our human world, Ned is only doing what comes naturally – and is perfectly normal and acceptable in his doggy world. Neutering has certainly been the most common option, and has many benefits, such as avoiding unwanted litters, as well as unwanted behaviours.



Now you can cut the libido without bruising the fruit

A new drug, called deslorelin, however, has recently been launched, which can suspend Ned's libido without bruising his fruit, so to speak! This new, non-surgical procedure involves implanting a small, dissolving pellet containing the drug under the skin (very similar to microchipping).

Over a period of six months the drug is released from the pellet and enters the blood stream, causing a reduction in two sex hormones, resulting in temporary infertility and reducing sex drive to virtually zero. It takes about six weeks to be fully effective, but lasts for six months, when another implant can be administered or Ned can be allowed to return to full fertility and libido. The procedure is completely reversible (fertility and libido usually return within five to six weeks after the expiry of the six-month implantation) and is available through vets.

Castration offers a stark and irreversible choice, and the need for a general anaesthetic; so if you're really not sure about castration, it might be worth talking to your vet about the new drug.

– Auntie Crowe

Information brought to you by Virbac manufacturers of Suprelorin.

