

**Applied Perceptions
LLC
Bruce S. Stone
President**



Bruce S. Stone has over 25 years of direct marketing experience and is president of **Applied Perceptions LLC**, a full-service contact center and consulting firm specializing in customer service and sales located in Simi Valley, Calif. He can be reached at (805) 526-2525, ext. 206, or via e-mail at bstone@apcrc.com.

Electronic Retailer: What are the main elements a marketer should consider when choosing a teleservices company?

Bruce Stone: Essentially, there are four key elements.

Key to Profit - Customers. Without customers, a direct marketer will fail. Without great customer connections to bring in new sales, save existing sales and to keep customers happy, a direct marketer will not be as successful as possible. Being able to convert calls/contacts to sales and being able to calm customers when everything does not go right can make the difference between a significant profit and a loss. Find a teleservices company that understands this and is able to provide both excellent customer service and sales. Your choice should be focused on being a profit center not a cost center.

Key to Customers - Call Center. Direct marketers are faced with many decisions when they market their products or services. The call center choice is critical to customer satisfaction. Keeping your customers happy and coming back for additional purchases makes the most of all of your other marketing efforts. There is a reason the customer bought the product—take them back to that reason.

Keys to Look for in Your Call Center -

- Skilled staff that is a seamless extension of your company.
- Problem solvers who satisfy your customers and provide timely and valuable customer feedback to keep you running your business efficiently.
- Strong sales ability (new and saved).
- Profit Center focus to bring in and save more sales than the call center costs your business in charges.
- Proven ability to handle even the most difficult escalated contacts.
- Effective training, appropriate staffing levels and

low turnover to provide the best service.

Great Solution - Applied Perceptions is an excellent outsourced contact center solution for companies that understand the true value of their customers. AP prides itself on not only offering excellent customer service, but in focusing on being a profit center for its clients as well.

Excellent customer service sets the stage for strong saved sales, loyal continuity customers and additional new sales. Once a customer's issues or questions have been answered and a rapport is established, there is a perfect opportunity to inform the customer of other product options and make more sales.

ER: How do call-center agents add value?

Stone: AP agents are problem solvers. AP agents not only can handle the typical sales contacts, but they are well-equipped to address the often wide-ranging challenges of customer service calls. Every customer contact can result in a new customer service challenge. AP agents are also well able to work effectively with callers to educate them about the product and work with customers to reach excellent sales results. Many call center agents are so focused on the mechanical reading of scripts that they are not able to work in a conversational manner with customers. AP agents offer effective contacts, both with established scripts and with the ability to work in situations that are not scripted.

ER: How has the growth of the web (including social networking) affected your business?

Stone: The web has presented exciting new ways for AP's clients to grow and for AP to provide service to an ever widening array of customers. The web offers an exciting additional avenue to even more closely identify targeted consumers. As with all direct marketing, it is important for web customers to be able to effectively contact a company to get correct information and have their issues addressed.

Our clients have used all forms of media and communication to directly market to consumers. And AP is there to help and support all marketing channels. Not only can we handle customer calls, AP offers full correspondence center services as well including e-mail, mail, fax and chat support so that customers receive consistent and timely responses whether they call or choose e-mail contacts. We also offer a wide range of backend business support such as refunds, returns, and timely credit card charge-back response/resolution. AP can be your one-stop, outsourced customer care and sales solution. 