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90 Second Warning to Retailers

UK, London, – Mitel® issues a 90 second warning to retailers, either deal with customer sales and queries within this timescale or lose out to the competition. The warning follows the revelation that four in 10 (44 percent) customers are prepared to wait for a mere 90 seconds to buy goods in-store, according to new research from Mitel, the trusted provider of IP communications solutions.

However the reality is that nearly a third (31 percent) of customers have had to wait up to four minutes and, 11 percent have been kept waiting for up to six minutes and nearly half (48 percent) of customers kept waiting in-store will leave the shop without buying anything and will go to a competitor.

Interestingly the research revealed customers are more tolerant waiting in-store than holding on the phone, only 34 percent will stay on the phone for on average 90 seconds while, 44 percent of customers will wait in-store for the same period.

For eight in 10 (80 percent) customers the biggest frustration when calling a retailer with a query, is not knowing where they are in the queue, for 74 percent the biggest irritation is being directed to a foreign call centre and, over two thirds (68 percent) are worried about how much they will be charged for the call.

Nearly two thirds (64 percent) of consumers believe retailers need to make call centres more user friendly and 42 percent think making more information available online will improve customer service.

While nearly a third (32 percent) of customers think competition from larger supermarkets is the biggest challenge in retail, one in five (20 percent) felt the emergence of online brands presented the industry with the most cause for concern.

Lisa Dolphin, retail specialist at Mitel, said: "While retailers recognise the importance of the in-store customer experience and invest heavily in displays, lighting and other mood enhancements, the telephone experience is often overlooked. With the emergence of IP communications there is no excuse for customers to be kept waiting in call queues indefinitely or worrying about the cost of the call.

"Retailers can centralise or de-centralise communications to ensure that telephone queries are dealt with effectively, with an IP communications solution customers should not have to wait on hold just to ask what the shops opening times are, instead customers can call in and listen to a recorded message detailing opening hours and other frequently asked questions.

"Furthermore by deploying wireless IP Dect phones retailers can also ensure staff on the shop floor have access to shop and product information at their finger tips and, they do not have to abandon a customer on the shop floor or on the phone just to gather information.

"With competition fierce and big brands pulling out all the stops to entice consumers, customer retention has never been more important. Retailers need to ensure they are doing everything in their power to engage with its customers and deliver the standard of customer service they demand or they will lose out to the competition."

*Data was gathered in the UK by YouGov with a sample of 2,353 in May 2007.