

PAUL

WORK [VIII]

My name is Paul Sutherland, and I am a Telephone Support Specialist for Pascal Information Technology Solutions.

002: Yeah, that guy who people call when they need someone to scream at? That's me.

003: [laughs] No, actually, it's not as bad as all that.

004: Oh, sure, don't get me wrong, most of the people who call are *upset*—

005: See, here's what you have to remember about doing telephone support. You have to remember that the people *don't want to call*. Just *making the call in the first place* is an inconvenience to them. They have to put *down* what they're doing, go *find* the phone number—little things, but they add up. So you can pretty much safely assume that people don't bother to call until they're at their *wits' end*.

006: Sure. And that's the thing that most of my co-workers—if I can speak frankly here—that's the thing that most of my co-workers forget. Because half the time the problem that the callers have is something totally basic and obvious. *Did you remember to turn the power on?* [pause] *You should be seeing a big button? Marked POWER?* [laughs]

007: Right, so it's not *easy* for us to *remember* that these people are actually *suffering*. Most tech support people are like *why are you bothering me with this question that you could have figured out super easily if—if you'd just spent your entire life fooling around with computers like us* [laughs]

008: And most of the people calling in *know* that the tech support people are going to be looking down on them like that, and that gets them annoyed, *on top of whatever annoyance drove them to call tech support in the first place, they lost a bunch of data or whatever, and on top of that they usually have to wait on hold for a while, especially now that they laid off about half of the support staff.*

009: So, yeah, it makes *sense* that they'd be upset. And so my *job* as a phone support guy—the way I see it, my job is to make them feel *less upset*. And actually fixing their problem is only one part of how I can do that.

010: I can try to *understand why* they're upset. I can make them feel like they're *within their rights* to be upset, like that's OK? I can listen to them, and do my best to respond to them at their own level? I can help them to understand that I don't think they're stupid?

011: It's actually very easy. I can usually defuse even the angriest caller in, I don't know, thirty seconds. A minute.

012: I just have a good ability to understand people, I guess.

013: Do I *like* it? Uh. It's OK? I mean, I like helping people to feel better. But do I want to be doing night shift phone support for the rest of my life? [laughs]

014: That's a good question. Let me think about that one for a second.

015: I'd like to be a Morale Officer.

016: Yeah, you know, with the economy so bad and all these layoffs and everything morale everywhere is just really down.

017: Oh, you know, I would be in charge of like setting up theme days. We could do, like, Pirate Day. Arr!

018: Or we could have afternoon parties where people could have tea. And some little gingersnaps?

019: Or when I wasn't planning stuff like that out I could just walk around, you know, circulate among the offices, building better morale through compliments. *Hey, nice tie! Lookin' sharp! Hey, Jane, that new haircut is really flattering!*

020: No, I'd be totally *sincere!* It's not hard to find something nice to say about someone if you think about it for a second.

021: I really think that this is my calling.