

STRIKE STORIES



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On September 18, 2000, I plugged in my headset as MTA

Switchboard Operator for the first time, and calls immediately began rolling in. In front of me were frequently requested telephone numbers that I jotted down during my two hours of training.

Patrons were more concerned about which bus lines were running than when the strike would end. I took 450 calls that day, and never left my chair, except for a few restroom breaks and to take a Tylenol for my headache.

The next day, we were deluged with calls from irate customers asking when the strike would end. As I advised people to listen to the news for strike updates, many got mad and personally blamed me for the strike.

Two calls were most memorable. One was from a 42-year old businessman, who said he would lose his business because of the strike. He began to cry when he told me he was about to file bankruptcy. Another was from a lady who was angry because a previous employee had put her on hold. She repeatedly called back and put me on hold to let me know how it felt.

From this experience, I learned that to be a telephone operator and interface with the public, one must have endless patience. Callers expect you to know everything, even if it does not pertain to the MTA. Our telephone operators provide an excellent service to the public, and I appreciate more than ever their importance to this organization.

[Back to 'Strike Stories'](#)