



American Expression E2280 From pillar to post

IOTS Publishing Team
International Online Teachers Society
Since 2011

From pillar to post is an idiomatic expression used to describe a situation where someone is moved around or sent back and forth from one place or person to another, often in a confusing, disorganized, or frustrating manner. This phrase is commonly employed to convey the sense of being given the runaround or experiencing bureaucratic red tape. It often implies inefficiency and a lack of resolution, leaving the person involved feeling exasperated and helpless.

The origin of the phrase can be traced back to medieval times, possibly related to the sport of real tennis, where players would hit the ball from one end of the court (pillar) to the other (post). Over time, the phrase evolved to capture the essence of being shuffled around without reaching a satisfactory conclusion. This sense of aimless or unproductive movement aptly describes many modern-day experiences, particularly in dealing with large organizations, customer service, or complex processes.

In everyday life, being sent from pillar to post is a common experience in bureaucratic settings, such as dealing with government agencies or large corporations. For instance, when trying to resolve an issue with a utility company, a person might be transferred from one department to another, speaking to multiple representatives, each of whom provides conflicting information or requires different documentation. This lack of coordination and clarity can lead to frustration and a sense of being trapped in a never-ending cycle.

In healthcare, patients can also experience this phenomenon when seeking a diagnosis or treatment. They may be referred from one specialist to another, undergo numerous tests, and still not receive a clear answer or effective treatment plan. This not only affects the patient's well-being but also erodes trust in the healthcare system.

The educational system can similarly subject students and parents to a pillar-to-post experience. Navigating admissions processes, financial aid applications, or academic advising often involves dealing with multiple offices and officials, each with its own set of rules and requirements. The lack of a streamlined process can make it difficult for students to get the support they need, impacting their academic success and overall experience.

To address the inefficiencies associated with being sent from pillar to post, organizations and systems must prioritize clear communication, better coordination among departments, and a customer-centric approach. Implementing streamlined processes, training staff to handle inquiries more effectively, and utilizing technology to create more efficient workflows can significantly reduce the frustration and time wasted by individuals seeking assistance or resolution.

In conclusion, from pillar to post is an expression that vividly captures the frustration and inefficiency of being shuffled around without achieving a satisfactory outcome. It highlights the need for better organizational practices and systems that prioritize clear communication and effective problem-solving to enhance the experiences of those seeking help or resolution in various settings.

Questions for Discussion

1. How does the experience of being sent from pillar to post impact an individual's trust in large organizations or bureaucratic systems?
 2. In what ways can organizations improve their processes to avoid customers or clients feeling like they are being shuffled from pillar to post?
 3. What are some common sectors where people frequently experience the frustration of being sent from pillar to post, and why?
 4. How does the phenomenon of being sent from pillar to post affect the mental and emotional well-being of individuals seeking assistance or resolution?
 5. What role can technology play in reducing the inefficiencies and confusion associated with the pillar to post experience in customer service and support systems?
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