

Effective Telephone Communications

CIO Staff

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Welcome to Effective Telephone Communications. Effective communications requires the ability to know what to say and how to say it. I would first like to introduce you to the Seven 'C's to having effective telephone communications.

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1. Caring. Care about your organization. Care about the customers. Care about yourself. 2. Confidence. Respond with confidence. 3. Consideration. Be considerate of everyone. 4. Commitment. Be committed to your duties. 5. Creativity. Don't sound like a robot. 6. Control. Be in control, don't lose it. 7. Contagious. Smiles are contagious, so wear one always.

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Be aware of your posture. Don't slump or hold the phone under your chin. Listen to your voice. Don't whine. Put energy in your voice. Listen to the caller. Show interest in their needs and requests.

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Choose your words. Instead of "You have to" or "You need to," say "I suggest" or "I recommend." Instead of "No, but" say "Yes, however." Instead of "Hold on" or "Hang on," say "Please hold". You need to be concerned about the customers' feelings. Remember, we are all customers so choose your words correctly. Never, never chew gum while talking on the phone, or eat or drink. Put a mirror by the phone. Check your expression occasionally, it shows in your voice. So smile, it shows in your voice. Don't buy into other people's anger and by all means leave off the "Bye-byes," and the "Okey dokeys" and the "Alrightys". Goodbye is best.

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Call transferring. A call should only be transferred when the person who is transferring it cannot help the caller and is reasonably sure the person to whom the call is being transferred will be able to help the caller. Do not transfer if the caller has zeroed out of a voice mail box unless you have the caller's permission. The reason for the transfer should be explained, and the name given of the person to whom the caller will be transferred. For example, "Mark Jensen in Accounting handles that. I'll transfer you to him, Miss Smith." That prepares the caller for what is about to happen. It avoids appearance of telephone runaround and it shows patience and concern for the caller. The person transferring the call should announce the call to the person receiving the call. For example, "Mark, I have Miss. Smith on the line and she has a problem with..." That prepares the person receiving the call and that also avoids wasted time. It also eliminates the need for the caller to repeat.

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I know we've all had complaints, irate callers from time-to-time, this happens. An irate caller will often be hostile, sometimes abusive, and even confused or incoherent. However, this person may well have a legitimate complaint

and you must be receptive if you are going to meet your ultimate objective of retaining the good will of the caller. So listen carefully without interrupting. Don't take the complaint personally, remain calm and maintain your self-control by all means. Remember, the caller is angry with the system rather than with you personally. You need to express your regret in a sincere tone. Regardless of whether or not you feel the complaint is justified at this time, you must show sincere concern in the very first statement you utter after the caller has poured his heart out to you. A comment such as "I am sorry this misunderstanding has happened" or "I am sorry you feel that way" is appropriate when the complaint obviously appears to be unfounded. So, listen carefully, don't take the complaint personally, and express your regret in a sincere tone.

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Taking messages. Keep pad and pencil handy or use telephone message forms. Listen carefully. This is very important in entering the call, person's name, the date and time. Secure a caller's name. Make sure the body of the message is written clearly and understanding. Deliver the messages promptly.

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Listening verses hearing. Effective communications requires the ability to know what to say and how to say it. But, you must also have the ability to listen well. A few keys to good listening is limit your own talking; ask questions and be considerate; think like the customer; don't interrupt; take notes; react to ideas, not the person; prepare in advance and don't jump to conclusions, and just practice listening.

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Voice qualities. Alertness --gives the impression you are wide awake and alert, interested in the calling person. Pleasantness -- put a smile in your voice. Both courtesy and the pitch of your voice influence how pleasant you sound. Speech experts have determined that a pleasant, low pitch is desirable because it projects and carries well. Naturalness -- just be yourself. Use simple, straightforward language. Avoid repetition of mechanical words or phrases. Distinctiveness -- clear, distinct speech is a business asset. Talk directly into the transmitter. Pronounce words clearly and carefully and avoid speaking with anything in your mouth. Expressiveness -- avoid speaking in monotone. Instead, use feelings to express an idea or mood. Raising the inflection at the end of the sentence is helpful.

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Difficult-to-understand and hard-of-hearing. When a caller is difficult to understand because of his speech pattern or accent, listen carefully and politely. Ask him to repeat or to speak more slowly when necessary. If the caller has difficulty hearing you when you know you're using the proper tone and voice, speak more slowly and pronounce your words distinctly. Shouting will distort your voice over the telephone and could be irritating to an already unhappy customer.

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Voicemail Tips. Always answer your telephone when possible. Don't ever use your voice mail as a call avoidance tool. Return calls quickly. Calls that come in before noon should be returned before the end of the day. Calls that come in after noon should be returned before noon of the next day. Greetings should be professional. Always record a personal greeting. Keep greetings short, leave out unnecessary information. When on extended leave, create an extended absence greeting. Callers can not "#" out of that so they have to listen to your message and they know that you are unavailable at the time.

That concludes this presentation of Effective Telephone Communications. Thank you for visiting our web-based training presentation. If you have any further questions, please contact your telephone coordinator.