

## Effective Phone Techniques

Anyone who conducts marketing and sales has to deal with using the phone as an important communication tool. The problem is that most people don't maximize its effectiveness.

Using the phone poorly can inadvertently act as a detriment to our success. Understand that the phone conveys our personality, our sincerity, our belief, our energy, our attitude, our professionalism, and our message. If you aren't aware of how you sound, you may very well be sending the exact opposite message that you want! One of the best examples of the misuse of the phone is a typical telemarketing call. Let's analyze why that call is usually so ineffective. What is it about that call that marks it as a telemarketing call? There are several factors that make us cringe at these calls. First off, telemarketers are either overly friendly to start with or they sound completely disinterested. Either extreme makes the caller sound insincere. Secondly, telemarketers talk and rarely ask. The call is all about their product and service, and not about you, the person who received the call. Thirdly, they usually launch right into their script and plow through it, not allowing us to get a word in edgewise. And fourth, it's always evident that they're reading a script to you rather than having a conversation with you. Those four factors generally mark the call as a telemarketing call.

It's good to be enthusiastic with an appropriate level of energy and a positive attitude, but when a person is too enthusiastic they come across as phony and insincere. If they go to the other extreme and are very low-keyed (perhaps as an attempt to sound "professional"), they run the risk of sounding bored or apathetic. Secondly, when a person is focused on making a sale instead of looking for ways to help solve a problem, the gist of their conversation revolves around their products and services, rather than their prospect's needs. You've probably heard the expression, "Telling is not selling." It's true. If your phone work consists of calling people and telling them what you sell, you are going to have a hard time succeeding. People don't want to be sold. Instead, they want to make a buying decision - and you can't achieve that if you're telling and not asking. The next issue with telemarketers is that once they start their "pitch" or script, they plow right through, barely pausing to take a breath. How does this make you feel? To most of us, it demonstrates that they are insincere and are focused on their products - not on us. In addition, it comes off as being very unprofessional. The final issue regarding telemarketing calls is that they always sound like they're being read. Know why? Because they are! In fact, many telemarketers are REQUIRED to read their script word for word. Of course when they do that, it quickly becomes evident that there is no conversation taking place, but rather that a scripted presentation is being made. And we all know that if a script is being read to us, then it's the same one that everyone else hears. There's nothing personal about it and it pretty much precludes rapport building.

I've observed another phenomenon that occurs when people create a script and develop a style for the phone. Even though they dislike telemarketing calls, they can't seem to help themselves from behaving and sounding like a telemarketer when they get on the phone! I guess when we're not sure what else to do, we tend to emulate what we're most familiar with.

Now that we're better aware of some of the pitfalls to avoid, let's discuss how to be an effective professional on the phone. People like to be around people who are appropriately positive, appropriately enthusiastic, and who reflect a belief and confidence in what they're doing.

There are several ways to sound positive and enthusiastic:

- Be positive and engaged in your phone work, but not artificially so.
- Make your calls during the time of day when you have the most energy and the best attitude. This will play to your natural cycle of energy.
- Smile! You've probably heard this before and it's true. When you smile as you talk, your smile can be "heard".

- Get proper nutrition to feed your body, your mind and your attitude. Ever notice how you become impatient when you're hungry? Ever notice how you have trouble staying focused when you're hungry? Ever notice how your attitude dips when you're hungry? Don't neglect this important aspect of phone success.
- If you've been on the phone for a while (an hour or more), take a break to refresh yourself and rejuvenate. Your attitude and energy level will rise and your voice will reflect it.

As far as being and sounding professional goes, there are a number of very important techniques to employ:

- It's good to develop a script so you remember the important points you want to make, but most of us don't write the way we speak. Get out of the habit of writing properly, and instead, write how you speak. It will make you sound more natural and will keep you from having to read your script.
- Practice saying your script so it sounds like a completely natural conversation for you and your style.
- Work to have a conversation instead of a presentation. As you get into your conversation, ask questions. Be consultative. Remember, this is about your prospect, not about you.
- An excellent way to establish yourself as a professional is to introduce yourself as someone who helps people or businesses solve problems, rather than as someone selling insurance.
- Another GREAT technique for setting yourself up as a professional is to be respectful of your prospect's time. After introducing yourself, simply ask, "Do you have a few minutes to talk?" If you've been clear with your introduction, they'll know who you are and what you want to talk to them about. Their answer to your question will be very revealing.

Here are a couple of additional pointers:

- \* If you feel like you sound like a telemarketer, you probably do. Change your approach/style.
- \* If you feel that you're "over the top" with enthusiasm, you probably are. Tone things down to a more professional level.
- \* If what you are saying makes you feel uncomfortable, your prospect will undoubtedly feel uncomfortable as well. Change how you say what you want to say so it comes out professionally and naturally. This way, you and your prospect won't become uncomfortable.
- \* If you feel like you're coming across as being pushy, you probably are. Change your approach to reflect your own style of expressing yourself.
- \* If you feel like you're not doing enough phone work, you probably aren't. Find a way to say what you need to say in a professional manner and in a way that protects your attitude and energy, and get to work!

In conclusion, by listening to yourself as you use the phone and being sensitive to how you sound to others, you can develop an excellent style of telephone marketing that will set you apart from other marketers, will establish you as a professional, and will boost your rate of success tremendously.

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