



Telephone Skills

Delegate Manual - SAMPLE PAGES





WORKSHOP OUTLINE

- 9.00 Setting the Scene
 Knowledge/Skill Checklist
 Ice Breaker: Getting to Know You
- Communication Overview
 Benefits and Barriers to Communicating
 Personal Communication Style Questionnaire
- 11.00 BREAK**
- 11.15 Dos and Don'ts of Effective Telephone Work
- Importance of the Voice
 The 4 P's of Voice
- 12.45 LUNCH**
- 1.30 6 Steps to Handling an Incoming Call
 Questioning Skills
 Listening Skills
- Handling Incoming Calls: How Good am I?
- 3.00 BREAK**
- 3.15 Telephone Role Plays
 3 Steps to Assertive Behaviour
 Dealing with Irate Callers
- Competitive Recap Quiz
- Summary of the Day
 Action Planning
- 5.00 CLOSE**

"The average man finds life very uninteresting as it is. And I think that the reason why, is that he is always waiting for something to happen to him instead of setting to work to make things happen."

AA MILNE



KNOWLEDGE / SKILL CHECKLIST

In order to ensure that learning objectives are met by the course:

BEFORE THE COURSE: Rate your ability on a competence scale of 1-5 as follows: -

1= No knowledge/skill

2= A little knowledge/skill but considerable development required

3= Some knowledge/skill but development required

4= Good level of knowledge/skill displayed, with a little development required

5= Highly competent – no/very little development required

WRITE your numerical rating in the 1st column. **AFTER THE COURSE:** Repeat the exercise, writing your new rating, in the 2nd column

| COMPETENCE | PRE. (1-5) | POST (1-5) |
|---|---------------|---------------|
| 1. Can define the meaning of 'communication' | | |
| 2. Understands where communication goes wrong in business | | |
| 3. Can describe a range of good and poor telephone handling traits | | |
| 4. Understands the range of voice factors that affects communication | | |
| 5. Asks effective open questions during a call | | |
| 6. Understands the behaviours associated with active listening | | |
| 7. Handles an incoming telephone call in a structured way | | |
| 8. Is an effective listener | | |
| 9. Understands the meaning of the word 'assertive' | | |
| 10. Is assertive with others, utilising a 3 step technique | | |
| 11. Knows how to defuse a potentially aggressive situation | | |
| 12. Confidently deals with challenging Callers | | |
| OVERALL COMPETENCE | | |
| PERCENTAGE CHANGE (2 nd column total minus 1 st ; divide answer by 1 st column total; Multiply answer by 100): % | | |

"A satisfied customer-we should have him stuffed."

BASIL FAWLTY



WHERE COMMUNICATION GOES WRONG

The way we communicate to others in business sometimes breaks down. In small groups, consider the way you, your colleagues and line managers communicate in your organisation. What goes wrong? It might be useful to think of examples too. Record your findings below:

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

“People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are. I don’t believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and, if they can’t find them, make them.”

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW



TELEPHONE SKILLS – SELF DIAGNOSTIC

Answer the following questions to see how professional you are on the telephone.

| Do you... | Yes | No |
|---|-----|----|
| 1. Answer the telephone promptly – within three rings if possible? | | |
| 2. Smile as you pick up the receiver? | | |
| 3. Speak slowly and clearly? | | |
| 4. Start the call by identifying your organisation or dept and you own name to the caller? | | |
| 5. Ask open questions to find out what the caller wants? | | |
| 6. Listen and resist the temptation to interrupt? | | |
| 7. Make notes and read back the key points so that you have a record of the call and the caller knows that you are listening? | | |
| 8. Try to be helpful and volunteer information? | | |
| 9. Warn callers first if you need to put them on hold or transfer them to someone else? | | |
| 10. Finish the conversation by re-capping on exactly what you are going to do as a result of the conversation? | | |
| 11. Give your name in case the caller needs to speak to you again? | | |
| 12. You use the caller's name, rather than Sir/Madam? | | |
| 13. Speak with confidence (as you have taken time to learn about your products and procedures) | | |
| 14. Courteous and polite | | |
| 15. Avoid using jargon with customers | | |

"Attitudes are contagious. Are yours worth catching?"
ANON

THE FACTORS OF THE VOICE

Power

- Too loud, too quiet? Or is it just right? Ask a colleague to check it with you.
- Quiet is often associated with a lack of assertion; loud is associated with aggression and dominance.

Pitch

- Not too high/too low...rich warm medium/low pitch with some variance for interest.
- Don't forget to smile - it lifts the tone.

Pronunciation

- Ensure you are sounding word endings, and not slurring the words.

Pace

- When under pressure we tend to quicken our voice speed.
- Slow your voice down. Face-to-face, we partially lip read and look for facial expressions to help us interpret what the other person is saying. Impossible to do with the phone.
- The ideal pace is 120/130 words per minute (2 or 3 words per second), at least for the first minute so they can acclimatise themselves to your voice. After that try to match your pace to the other person. It can make them more comfortable with you.

Try Using:

Inflection/Emphasis

- The verbal underlining of certain words to add interest or importance.
- Try slowing down/speeding up your delivery or by speaking at higher or lower volumes.





6 STEPS TO HANDLING AN INCOMING CALL

1. P

2. A

3. R

4. S

5. A

6. C

**"Its funny but the more I practice the luckier I get."
GARY PLAYER**



LISTENING SKILLS QUESTIONNAIRE

Scoring

Score 2 points for each question you answered with YES

| Score | Comment |
|-------|---|
| 0-5 | You concentrate hard when listening and engaging in conversation |
| 6-11 | Your concentration span is above average but you could become a more effective listener with little effort |
| 12-17 | Concentrating on listening to what other people say to you is not your best talent. If it is any consolation, most people fall into this category |
| 18-20 | You stand to gain most from this section. Please turn off your personal stereo and pay attention from now on |
| 20+ | Not only do you find it impossible to listen to simple instructions, you also have difficulty with reading and basic arithmetic. A no hoper. |

"We have two ears, one mouth that we may listen the more and talk the less."

ZENO



| ACTION | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---|--|---|--|--|
| <i>Concentrates on what CAN be done for the customer by way of any solution/recommendation</i> | Offers no real solution leaving customer frustrated | Offers solutions – yet tends to do it 'matter of factly', without emphasising benefits Or uses the phrase "all I can do is..." | Explains fully what can be done, or what is being actioned | Customer is offered choices/alternatives Makes the customer feel 'special' "This will benefit you by..." Build confidence – "this rarely happens" |
| <i>Jargon free</i> | Used terms/references unfamiliar to customer | Used unfamiliar terms/references & then explained what they meant | No jargon used | Uses the same descriptions/terms the customer used |
| <i>Time-scales given are realistic</i> | None/incorrect timescale given | Timescale given – unsure | Correct timescale given | Confident, enthusiastic & positive when giving timescales |
| CLOSE | | | | |
| <i>Briefly – summarises call/confirms any actions</i> | Does not summarise call | Partially summarises call | Summarises call | Summarises call/actions clearly & concisely |
| <i>Asks "is there anything else I can help you with?" & "thank you for calling "</i> | Did not demonstrate any part of the closing salutation | Demonstrated in part the closing salutation | Demonstrated closing salutation in full | Demonstrated closing salutation in full, upbeat, uses the customers name |
| VOICE | | | | |
| <i>Pace</i> | Extremely slow/fast | A little slow/fast | About right | About right. Pauses at times to allow listener 'to catch up' . Varies pace. |
| <i>Power</i> | Extremely soft/loud | A little too soft/loud | About right | About right but varies the power to add interest |



ROLE PLAY: CALLER PREPARATION SHEET

Play the part of a 'typical' Caller for the Call Handler to deal with. You could be an external customer or an internal colleague from another department. You have a problem or issue that the Call Handler needs to resolve for you.

A couple of points about the situation you invent and your manner on the phone

- Create a realistic situation that you know is 'typical' of the calls they have to handle.
- Try to invent a problem or issue that requires more than a one-word answer from the Handler. For example:
 - A complaint that you have that requires you to explain something that's happened over a period of a few weeks.
 - An issue that may have more than one solution, so that the Call Handler needs to agree a plan of action.
- **REALLY IMPORTANT:** Respond to the Caller's questions exactly as they are asked. So if they ask a closed question, only offer a yes or no answer – do not be helpful in offering information that has not been asked for.

-

If one person says that you are a horse, smile at them.
If two people say that you are a horse, give it some thought.
If three people say you are a horse, go out and buy a saddle.

PROVERB



ACTION PLANNING SHEET

Think about the skills we have covered today. What exactly would you like to do differently as a result of the workshop? The changes you suggest don't have to be life changing – they could be very simple, quick things that you will change about the way you use the telephone.

1.

2.

3.

4.

“Training that brings about no change is as effective as a parachute that opens on the first bounce.”

ANON