

Professional Business Telephone Etiquette



How often have you telephoned a business and found the person answering the telephone is unprofessional? Were you greeted with a pleasant or unpleasant voice on the other end? What was your first impression? Did you feel welcomed, or did you feel that you were intruding on the person's time?

Think about it - as a customer, how did your telephone conversation make you feel?

Have you listened to how others in your business answer the telephone, are they professional? As you know the first impression with a customer is very important to any business. Customers will often hang up when their calls are not answered promptly, or the person answering is rude and not helpful. When met with this, potential customers quickly change their mind and decide not to proceed with their business inquiry.

In every business a telephone call can be the first point of communication and interaction. Therefore, it is important that you use proper telephone etiquette so you give people a good impression of yourself and the business you represent. In addition, it makes a satisfying and positive experience for the other person on the line.

Below are some professional tips to help you with making that good first impression:

1. Answer the phone within three rings.

This is a business standard and shows that you are available to help. Not the first ring as this can take the caller off guard. The second or third ring is the ideal time to answer the call.

2. Speak with a Smile.

Answer the call with a smile, people can tell if you are smiling, friendly and happy by the sound of your voice.

3. Greeting should include your business name.

Use "hello", "good morning" or "good afternoon", your business' name, your name, and "How may I help you?".

Use your name as it makes the caller feel that you are friendly and happy for them to know who you are. Do not use long

greetings, if your company's name is long, use an abbreviated shortened version of the name.

An example of a greeting is:

Good morning! Thank you for calling ABC Services. This is Mary speaking. How may I help you?

4. Speak Clearly

Sometimes circumstances will be such that you may experience poor telephone connection, background noise and muffled voices. Speak in a clear moderate tone so people can understand you. Use clear enunciation of your words - this shows the caller that you are efficient and professional. By doing this you will save time by not having to repeat yourself and avoid frustrating your caller.

5. Avoid Slang

Avoid using slang and industry specific buzzwords. Remember people may be from different countries and may not understand what slang words mean. Instead of using unprofessional slang, use professional words like "very well", "you are welcome", "yes", "let me find out" etc.

6. Be positive

Maintaining a positive tone helps callers feel welcome and at ease. Use proactive phrases such as, "let me see if I can figure that out for you", "let me look into it for you and find out what happened".

7. Always ask before you put someone on hold

Sometimes you may have to put the caller on hold to find out an answer or to transfer them to someone else. It is important to show the caller that you respect their time and confirm that they are happy to be put on hold. Explain to them why you have to put them on hold, and always thank them when they oblige, eg:

"I will have to check if the manager is available to speak with you now. Would you mind if I place you on hold?"

When you go back to the caller, remember to thank them for waiting, eg:

"Thank you for waiting, I will transfer you to Mr ..."



8. Listen to what your caller is saying

Make sure you give your caller your full attention and listen to your caller. If it is an inquiry or complaint take notes so that you can clarify with them what they require or what the issue is.

9. Need to take a message - make sure the information is accurate

If you need to take a message, be accurate and include all the details from the call. Ensure you get the person's name and any other details that may be required, eg: telephone number, address or email address. Repeat back to the caller the message and contact details to make sure information and spelling are all correct.

10. Close on a positive note

When you are about to finish your call, try to end the conversation on a positive note by thanking them and giving them a positive feeling, eg:

"Thank you for your call today, Mr ..., is there anything else you may need."

or

"Thank you for your call today, Mr ..., have a good afternoon."

THE FOLLOWING ARE SOME OF THE THINGS YOU MUST NOT DO:

- Do not answer when eating, chewing or drinking. Remember to swallow or remove anything from your mouth before picking up to the telephone.
- If you must leave the telephone while on a call, never leave the line open, instead press the hold button on your telephone or cover the mouth piece and remember to check back with the caller at least every 45 seconds.
- Never say "I don't know" when talking to the caller, use a sentence like "I will check on that for you."
- When talking to a caller never be rude. Remember to talk to the caller how you would like someone to speak to you.
- Never use slang or swear words on the telephone.
- It is never acceptable to argue with a caller.

- Do not transfer a call without informing the person on the phone and asking their permission to do so.
- When ending a telephone call do not hang up without thanking the person for their call.

Remember: Being courteous to your caller leaves a good impression of you and the business you work for.