

Inflection Matters!

By Judith Filek—President
Impact Communications, Inc.

A voice with inflection is captivating and motivating. It commands attention and makes people want to hear more. A voice without inflection is flat, a monotone. An uninteresting voice bores, annoys and confuses those having to endure it. As you consider how you might up the bar in your customer service skills, record your voice and review it as if you were a customer. Is it a voice a customer would like to hear? If not, make a conscious decision to bring more inflection into your voice. Consider the following suggestions.

1. **Sing in the shower.** As ridiculous as that sounds, singing takes the voice from high to low. It helps to expand your range. Remember, it is a flat voice that customers find unappealing.
2. **Read out loud from business journals or your company's marketing pieces.** Make sure you are saying all the syllables, especially the beginning and final consonants. Use your cell phone to tape your voice. If you are skipping over syllables, practice enunciating all syllables in those particular words. Redo until you hear a noticeable difference.
3. **Practice stressing particular words in a sentence.** For example, "I can imagine how annoying that must be" or "Let's see what I can do to fix that for you." In any one sentence, there should be two or three words emphasized.
4. **Assess the length of your sentences.** People with a monotone voice often speak in long sentences. Their voices frequently trail off as they conclude because they are out of air. Often, listeners ask you to repeat.
5. **Read fairy tales to children or poetry out loud.** The words of a fairy tale or poem will demand energy and vocal variety. Again, use your cell phone to tape your voice. Review what you hear.

6. **Use your own internal voice mail system to monitor your voice.** Before you leave voice messages for colleagues or customers, review them. Redo the message until your voice sounds interesting and sincere.
7. **Assess the speed of your voice.** If you speak quickly, it is easy for your voice to sound flat.
8. **Listen to the newscasters.** Notice how much they pause, how slowly they speak and how much they open their mouths. Assess whether you are doing the same.
9. **Stand in front of a mirror and pay attention to how much you are opening your mouth and moving your lips.** A tight jaw causes a nasal voice. Practice talking with a wide open mouth.
10. **Keep a mirror on your desktop at work.** As you speak to customers, look in the mirror. Pay attention to whether your face seems tense and how much you are moving your lips.

Your voice is the best tool you have for convincing customers you can solve their problem and you value their business. If your voice has inflection, you will be perceived as warm and friendly. You will make a positive impression and distinguish yourself from other service representatives.

Question: *We're interested in your reaction to this article. Click here – to comment on this article, share your concerns or ask questions. Judy will respond to all questions.*

Impact Communications, Inc. consults with individuals and businesses to improve their presentation and telephone communication skills. It is not what you know but how you communicate it that makes a difference. When you have to have impact, phone (847) 438-4480 or visit our web site, www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com.

Copyright © 2011
Impact Communications, Inc.
All Rights Reserved.