

Smile, You're On the Phone—Tips for Improving the Tone of Your Voice

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The tone of your voice either makes or breaks you when you are conducting business over the phone. People can't see that you are competent and knowledgeable. What they use to assess your credibility on the phone is your tone of voice.

Albert Mehrabian, author of Silent Messages, says that if there is any difference between your words and the tone of your voice, 86% of the time people will trust what they hear in your tone over your actual words. It is critical to your success as a salesperson, technical support or customer service representative that you consider the importance of tone of voice before picking up a phone to talk to a customer.

How to Improve the Tone of Your Voice

A voice that is starving for air can never sound sincere or pleasant. First, remember to pause and breathe frequently. Customers make many judgments within the first ten to twenty seconds. To insure that you make an initial positive impression, pause and breathe for three seconds between each line of your greeting.

With these distinct pauses, your customers will immediately feel you value their business and care about solving their issue. Every time you give your customer additional information or support, make sure you again pause for three seconds between your statements. It will help the customer to digest or process the new information and continue to see you in a positive light.

Learning to pause and breathe takes real discipline. Pausing for even a second can seem like an eternity. While it's true that your customers are busy

people and anxious to resolve an issue quickly, they want to understand the problem and the solution you are recommending. The more you pause, the more they will retain and the sincerer and helpful you will sound over the phone. It's impossible to bring any kind of emotion into your voice without pausing and breathing.

Smiling does a lot to add warmth to a voice. When you smile, the vocal cords are pulled differently and the voice automatically sounds friendlier. To monitor what is going on in your face, it is always a good idea to place a mirror by the phone. Another suggestion is to post family pictures around your cube. It's hard not to smile when you see a darling picture of your two-year old laughing or your spouse at a favorite vacation spot.

Gesturing and moving around also affect tone of voice. When you gesture, you bring additional air into your lungs. That extra spurt of air protects the voice from being a monotone. The bigger the gestures, the more air you will bring into your lungs and the better able you will be to bring emotion into your voice.

On occasion, customers can become difficult even angry. If you find yourself tensing up, standing up, moving around and gesturing will be a lifesaver. It will release the tension in the upper body and help your voice to continue to sound sincere. Customer notice when a rep sounds unflappable and calm down as a result. It's hard to be upset with someone who sounds sincere and knowledgeable.

A voice needing water will become strident and raspy. It is recommended that you lubricate your voice with an eight-ounce glass of water each hour. Caffeinated drinks, like sodas, coffee and tea, are diuretics and will actually take moisture away from your voice making it difficult for you to sound your best.

Customers have expectations about the person they hear you on the other end of the line. They also draw conclusions quickly. No one wants to listen to someone who sounds bored, tired or unsure. To produce a voice your customers will want to hear, remember to:

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- Pause and breathe between each statement.
- Use gestures.
- Smile.
- Move around
- Drink lots of water.

Impact Communications, Inc. consults with individuals and businesses to improve their face-to-face and over the phone communication skills. It is not what you know but how you communicate it that makes a difference. To reach us, phone (847) 438-4480 or contact our web site, www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com.