

Keeping the Voice Sounding Terrific for the Long Haul – What the Experts Do!

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When one works day after day, week after week on the telephone, it is easy for the voice to be affected. Obviously, the goal is to keep one's voice sounding strong so that the caller's perception of the person on the other end of the line is very positive. The experts- those that consistently work the phones, as well as people who are "on air" personalities- offer these suggestions.

1. **Breathe from the diaphragm.** First and foremost, it is important for the voice to have the enough air to prevent it from fading or sounding flat. Thus, breathing from the diaphragm is essential. However, the tendency, when we are under pressure or rushed, is to breathe shallowly. When we do that, the voice often sounds strident or seems to be a monotone. The effect on the caller is quite negative. Listeners wonder whether the phone rep is disinterested or bored.
2. **Pause often.** Pausing provides the opportunity to breathe and refuel the voice. It gives the phone rep a moment to think about how to respond appropriately, instead of stammering. By pausing, particular ideas can also be highlighted so that the person on the other end of the line gets a better idea of what is critical to remember. Pausing, thus, is a phone rep's life line.
3. **Sit up straight.** The lungs are the largest organ in the body. When the phone rep has good posture, he or she can breathe well, and thus the voice has the fuel it needs to sound terrific. With poor posture, the voice can sound tinny or harsh.
4. **Drink plenty of water.** Using one's voice all day can strain the vocal chords. The ordinary person uses a quart of water an hour. The best way to replenish the voice is by drinking water throughout one's day. Anything

with caffeine is a diuretic, and, instead of lubricating the voice, it actually pulls moisture from the vocal chords. Milk and dairy products also are to be limited because they coat the vocal chords and cause a lot of mucus. Phone reps that drink coffee with cream, have cream cheese on their bagels or milk in their cereal may spend the beginning of their day clearing their voice which can be annoying to a customer.

5. **Drink warm water or water with lemon when under the weather.** Obviously, in anyone's life, there will be times when a phone rep catches a cold or doesn't feel well. At all costs, avoid ice water because it will further stress the voice. Instead, choose warm water, preferably with lemon. When possible, gargle with warm salt water.
6. **Walk around.** From time to time, callers can be challenging. In times of stress, it is important to let energy out appropriately. Walking around, even if it is in one's own cubicle, can detoxify a potentially negative situation and prevent the voice from showing signs of stress.
7. **Smile and have fun.** When a phone rep smiles, the individual's voice sounds better, friendlier. The epiglottis and glottis in the back of the throat are in different positions and, thus, the effect on the vocal chords is more pleasant or favorable.

People who work on the phones spend a lot of time worrying about what they should say to customers or clients. They often overlook the importance of an energetic and friendly voice. A "good" voice doesn't just happen; it needs proper maintenance and breathing.

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