

Fast Talker? It's Not Okay

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Do people ask you to repeat a lot? Do they tell you to slow down? If so, you are a fast talker. It might be alright to be a fast talker at home or with friends and family, but it is definitely not okay on the job, especially if your primary communication with others is over the phone as an inside sales or customer service representative.

The problems with being a fast talker are many. People may think you are trying to “pull something over on them” or to commit to something they shouldn't. It annoys them when they don't have time to process the information you are giving them, and thus, it may cause them to end the call abruptly. Since they probably weren't able to take notes or compare what you have said to what others have said, they also can't verbalize their questions or objections. Without time to understand and voice their concerns, listeners hesitate to move forward on a decision or make a purchase.

Talking fast also causes articulation to be sloppy. The person's lips, teeth and tongue cannot get into the right position to say the word correctly. What starts to happen is four syllable words are said in two or endings are dropped. People may incorrectly think you have said something you didn't. Additionally, lots of filler words materialize, and, thus, you will sound unconfident and ill-informed. Finally, if you have an accent and your pace is quick, listeners may interrupt you often, causing you to lose your concentration. It will make listening and speaking a real chore for both parties.

If you are a fast talker, do not despair. You can slow down by pausing and taking a breath at the end of a thought or idea or where you want to highlight a point. The idea of pausing and breathing may sound simple, but it is harder than you think. At the beginning, it can feel like a lifetime to pause for even half a second.

Voicemail can be a big help. By replaying voicemails before sending them, you can monitor your speed. If you hear a number of filler words (“um,” “ah,” “like,” and “you know”) or if words are not clearly pronounced, you aren't pausing long enough. Another suggestion is to tape yourself reading something out loud, perhaps a business journal or product update and practice pausing and breathing between points for one to three seconds until it becomes second nature. Finally, try reading children's stories out loud. A fairy tale or nursery rhyme requires the speaker to pause frequently in order to bring the appropriate emotion into the voice.

It is not okay to be a fast talker. The more you work at pausing and breathing, the more knowledgeable and confident you will appear to the person on the other end of the line. Consider how great it would feel if someone described you as precise and thoughtful, instead of as a fast talker.

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. When you have to have impact, phone (847) 438-4480 or visit our website, www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com.