

Customer ESP Comes from Listening

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It isn't easy to do business by phone. Those that are successful have a clear understanding of their customer and the person's issues or needs. Extra Sensory Perception or ESP concerning our customers comes from being an observant listener.

By listening to the person's tone of voice, pace, diction, you can uncover volumes, almost as much as if you are face to face. Through the tone of voice, you can determine whether the individual is friendly, annoyed, pre-occupied or indifferent. If the person sounds friendly, that is an indicator that you can proceed. Through their pace, you can see how anxious or relaxed they seem. If they appear "hyper" at the start, you should probably offer to call back at a more convenient time, rather than launching into your product pitch.

Linda Richardson in her book, *Selling by Phone*, says that a client's stress patterns can indicate their interest or needs, as well as their readiness to buy. For example, if the client's voice trails off at the end of a sentence or softens on key words, he or she may be giving you an important clue about their lack of commitment.

Good listeners notice non-verbals. A "gulp," an "un huh," or "hmm" can mean a lot. For example, if a client "gulps" when you mention price, it is not likely that you will close. If the client says "hmm" or "ah" frequently as you explain, it typically indicates he is listening and following your argument, and you have a good chance. On the other hand, their silence or lack of response spotlights their disinterest or confusion.

Finally, the kinds of questions your client asks can also provide you with invaluable information about how best to proceed. For example, questions that ask about a particular feature or functionality indicate that the person is seriously considering what you have said, and you should go into more detail. Questions about delivery or risk free trials reveal the individual is ready to close, and you should talk about price and terms.

The mistake that many of us make when calling a customer is to talk too much or to interrupt. Instead of listening, we focus on ourselves and the points we want to make. Some clients report that often they repeat their needs three or four times before the sales person picks up on them. It's no wonder that these frustrated customers stay non-committal. It is only through listening that our clients feels valued. Once they sense you are a good listener, they are more likely to perceive you in a positive manner and stay engaged.

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.*

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