

First Impressions Are Everything

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For many of us, the telephone is our primary vehicle for doing business. Since people make instantaneous decisions about our competence and confidence, often within the first thirty seconds, it is critical to remember the importance of making a good first impression. While we all agree this makes perfect sense, the reality is that we are often multi-tasking, and instead of being conscious of making a positive impression, we respond on auto pilot. As a result, we end up sounding mechanical, insincere or even annoyed. To have impact, one must pay attention to three key things.

#1 Attitude is everything!

First and foremost, you must have a positive attitude, whether making or receiving a call. Get yourself “psyched” to be fully present. Remember you are there to help or educate your customers, and you are in business only because you have customers. So Never answer or place a call if you are preoccupied with another issue. Do not attempt to finish a report or finalize an order while talking. The person on the other end of the line will notice that you are trying to do two things at once. They will also notice if you seem upset. If you have had a “bad” call, it is better to wait before placing your next call or to let a call go to voice mail. Customers will sense your anxiety or annoyance. They won’t know it is because of a prior call. They will feel they have upset you, and this will jeopardize the relationship.

#2 Your voice is your calling card!

Your voice speaks volumes about you and the mood you are in. Whether it is the first call of the day or the last, your voice should sound positive and upbeat. People need to trust you, and your tone of voice affects how they feel. To bring warmth into your voice, you should smile as you talk. You might even have a mirror on your desk so that you can see how your face looks. If you look like you are having a good time, listeners on the other end of the line will notice. To clarify enunciation and not to sound rushed,

it is also important for you to pause for a few seconds at the end of each sentence or statement. If you speak quickly, listeners will feel like you don’t care or are anxious. As you make or take a call, always be conscious of the impression you want to make.

#3 People want you to “just listen!”

The only way to know what the individual on the other end of the line wants, needs or believes is by listening. Yet, most of us listen effectively only 25% of the time. People notice when you ask the same question more than once. They notice when you interrupt them or talk over them. It takes real discipline to listen. To ensure that you have gotten all of the key points, take notes. Also, repeat what you have heard to double check that all the information is correct.

Making a good first impression is essential to anyone in today’s business world. Obviously, it is more difficult to do when you are not face-to-face. By truly listening, having an upbeat and friendly voice and a positive attitude, you increase the odds that people will take you seriously and will want to do business with you.

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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.