

Who Do You Trust?

By Judith Filek- President
Impact Communications, Inc.

Groucho Marks emceed a television game show in the fifties called "Who Do You Trust." The contestant had to choose which of three people was telling the truth. On this show, contestants paid close attention to the body language of the three people as a means of determining who was telling the truth. When business people attempt to sell their ideas face-to-face, their customers also notice whether their body language supports their message. This is not possible on the telephone. Instead of body language, listeners gauge trust by tone of voice.

Over the phone, people assess whether the words the person is saying actually match what they hear in the voice. If they do, they trust you. For example, if you say you are sorry for the mix-up and you sound very apologetic, the listener is likely to give you another chance. On the other hand, if you ask how you can help the person, but sound very bored, the caller is likely to feel you are insincere. Your credibility will be severely affected. The person may even ask to speak to someone higher up, rather than waste time with the wrong person.

Tone of voice is very important to credibility when speaking on the telephone. In fact, Albert Mehrabian in his book, "Silent Messages," says that if there is a difference between the person's words and tone of voice, 85% of the time, people will trust what they hear in the tone of the voice over the actual words. Obviously, we want people to pay attention to the things we are saying when speaking to them over the phone. It is critical that we make a strong impression through the tone of our voice.

To keep the tone of your voice sounding sincere, it is important to assess how it typically sounds. By taping your calls periodically, you can gain powerful feedback on how your voice sounds to others as your day progresses.

To maximize the tone of your voice make sure you pause often and take frequent breaths. A voice that is starving for air will be a monotone, or it will sound strident. If you pause for a second or two where you might want to highlight a point or where you would have a comma or a period, you will greatly enhance the tone of your voice. Also, if you smile, the voice will be much warmer. It is a good idea to have a mirror by your phone so you can watch your lips and mouth. You may notice that you hardly open your mouth, and, consequently, the voice sounds flat.

Trust and credibility is essential for anyone selling an idea. To insure that people believe your words, make sure that the tone of your voice is not an issue - that it supports and matches the words you are saying. It is your best tool for persuasion.

Impact Communications, Inc. consults with individuals and businesses to improve their face-to-face and over the phone communication skills. When you have to have impact, phone (847) 438-4480 or visit our web site, www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com.