

Great Persuasion and Phone Skills

Communication over the phone poses unique challenges. A first impression over the phone is just as important as it is in face-to-face contact, but the first challenge is that your audience can't see your face, your body language, or your presence. Everything about you is being judged entirely through the phone.

Face-to-face presentations are usually scheduled and planned, while phone conversations are often viewed as interruptions. It is amazing how many companies are still using automated systems when one of people's top complaints is that they are not getting a live body. (The second most common complaint is that they are getting the run-around by being transferred from person to person.) You can always find out if it is a good time to talk simply by asking your audience up front if it is. You are not in a race to finish your agenda. You need to be considerate of your audience's time. Otherwise, you become the uninvited guest who becomes a pest.

What are the biggest complaints your audience has about persuaders contacting them by phone?

- The caller races to finish the script without interruptions.
- The caller rambles.
- They feel insulted by casual greetings.
- They do not like the caller's tone of voice.
- The caller is hard to understand.
- They feel rushed.
- They feel that the caller is only pretending to listen to them.
- The caller lacks empathy.
- They believe they are being treated as though they are stupid.

The best persuaders do the following over the phone:

- They prepare before the call is made.

- They know the exact purpose and desired end result of the call.
- They smile during the conversation. (Yes, you *can* hear the smile.)
- They are polite.
- They focus on their audience's needs and wants.
- They use appropriate humor.
- They use the phrases "please," "thank you," and "you're welcome."
- They return calls within twenty-four hours.
- They end on a positive note.
- They are brief and to the point.
- They never ask, "How are you today?" because it is a telemarketing red flag.
- They qualify early and often.
- They exemplify sincerity and empathy.
- They employ listening skills.
- They use questions to control the conversations.
- They leave clear messages on voicemail and an explicit reason to call back.

Optimal Phone Delivery

- Listen more than you talk.
- Don't speak too loudly—hold the mouthpiece an inch away from your mouth.
- Vary your rate of speech—don't speak too quickly or too slowly.
- Let your audience *know* that you're listening (for example, "uh huh," "yes," "oh").
- Don't force your audience to strain to hear.
- Vary your inflection—don't speak in a monotone.