

BUSINESS PHONE ETIQUETTE

by Neil Payne

Etiquette is in essence about proper conduct and presenting yourself favourably. Demonstrating good etiquette is important if one seeks to be successful. An area in which this is essential is the business phone call.

Millions of business phone calls are made every hour and day. Business people that interact solely over the phone yet never meet still form strong opinions of one another. Practising good business phone etiquette helps encourage clear lines of communication, build rapport and avoid misunderstandings.

Most of us can recollect a phone call that left us feeling frustrated or irritated. How much of this could have been attributed to poor phone etiquette? Here we explore a few simple examples of areas within business phone etiquette that should be employed when making or receiving calls.

All successful business interaction needs preparation. The phone call is no exception. It is important to know who you are calling, the most convenient time to do so, the reason for your call and what you can do for them. Be structured, short and sharp.

If the caller is not known to the receiver it is important that the purpose of the call and the caller's credentials are established immediately. A simple introduction followed by a sentence or two not only shows good phone etiquette but allows the receiver to set the forthcoming information within a context.

Particularise your intention behind the call. Do not assume the receiver understands why you are calling them and what you expect of them. Expand upon information and specify the purpose of the call.

Pass on information that the receiver will understand, appreciate and find useful. Waffling and speaking generically will lose attention and generally reflect poorly on the caller.

Good business phone etiquette demands professionalism at all times. When speaking to someone you do not know avoid informal speech or personal questions. Once a relationship has been built it is considered polite to enquire about weekends, children or other non-sensitive personal matters.

Privacy and security around furtive issues must always be borne in mind on the phone. If it is imperative that sensitive discussions take place over the phone, business etiquette requires that you confirm with the receiver whether this is appropriate.

Be patient. Demonstrating good business etiquette relies on your staying calm, cool and collected under pressure or when facing a testing situation. Your ability to stay patient earns respect and avoids rash actions or decisions.

Although there is much more to business phone etiquette than the above guidelines, you will find they can go a long way in contributing to an improved understanding of how to use the phone effectively in the business world.