

THE ROLE OF THE TELEPHONE

The telephone is a most useful means of communication. It is fast, efficient and direct. However, the telephone is only one of several ways of making contact. Face to face, mail and email are other possibilities and are often used in conjunction with the telephone. The telephone is an excellent fast method but it does have its limitations. It is often the best way of initially responding to written enquiries.

The Telephone is Suitable For:

1. Quick and easy contact.	Important messages, making appointments, reaching busy executives. Finding out about deliveries. Arranging service calls etc.
2. The simple decisions.	To re-order goods or services, or to place orders for known goods. A simple sales talk can be made to encourage a straightforward order or decision.
3. Follow up of letters and proposals.	A good way to keep the pot boiling if the decision making process takes time.
4. Exchange views and testing the temperature.	Useful to clear the air on viewpoints and sensing attitudes. Convenient for conversational information and research.

The Telephone is Unsuitable For:

1. Providing proof.	In selling “<i>He will do it because I say so</i>” is usually insufficient to convince a prospect making an important decision.
2. Getting complex decisions.	You may be able to get a decision in principle, but often important big decisions require “<i>something in writing</i>” .
3. Explaining complicated matters or figure work	Usually better done in writing so avoid using the telephone for long explanations.
4. Holding interest.	Brief phone calls are usually best. Without face to face contact it is difficult to maintain interest for long periods. (Notice how many people doodle whilst on the telephone for longish periods.)

TELEPHONE TECHNIQUES: THE OUTGOING CALL

1. PREPARATION

Determine the objective of the call and decide what you are going to say. Arrange your points in a logical sequence and decide what the final conclusion to the call should be. List the calls you must make and compile a list of the numbers. You will need to know the best person to talk to, the best time to call and have all the relevant papers handy. Review the way you intend to handle any objection. Get in the right frame of mind, think a smile and pick up the telephone.

2. INTRODUCTION

Introduce yourself and your company, check you have the right person. State your reason for calling. Make sure your first few words are carefully chosen to get the attention of your contact, if in doubt, keep it simple.

3. DEVELOPMENT

Working logically through the points you wish to make, remember to use the person's name from time to time and allow the call to become conversational at this stage. Try to use you/yours rather than I/my/we, it is your customer's needs with which you should be most concerned. Look for agreement whenever possible, this helps to keep the conversation positive and the listener interested. Use open ended questions to get the information you require, making comments from time to time to show you are listening. Take notes of the important parts of the conversation. Check important facts, particularly quantities, sizes and specifications involving units of measurement. Repeat back to the person any figures you are not sure about, taking chances could be very expensive.

Listen carefully for signs that the time is right

4. CONCLUSION

Conclude on a point of positive agreement if possible. Summarise, from your notes, the main points discussed during the call and agree the next course of action. Then say "thank you", wait for the customer to hang-up and replace your receiver.