

Listening X's 3

By Judith Filek—President
Impact Communications, Inc.

Everyone knows listening is a critical skill for people who do business over the phone. What is important to remember is that listening needs to be continuous. We must listen attentively before, during and after we finish talking.

Before:

Listening before responding requires that we pay attention to the emotion we hear in the client's voice as they begin to speak. Do they sound annoyed? (Maybe you have interrupted them at a busy time). Do they sound frustrated? (Perhaps, the product has not been delivered when promised, and a delay is costly). Do they sound friendly? (They are eager to talk to you). Listening to how the person sounds will help you to frame your responses in the appropriate manner.

During:

If you have sensed any emotion in the caller's tone, you should begin your response with an acknowledgement or an alignment statement. For example, "*It sounds like this delay has really created some problems.*" OR "*It sounds like I am interrupting. When might, be a better time for us to review this contract?*" After your alignment statement, your response should be clearly stated. It should not be buried in too many words. Filler words should be eliminated.

After:

After you have finished talking, you should listen carefully to the person's verbal and non-verbal comments. For example, if you hear sighing or any similar sounds or if the person interrupts, you should be aware that things are escalating. Your explanation may have been too technical or unclear. You need to re-explain using other words or analogies to facilitate understanding. On the other hand, if you hear, "*um hum*," or "*ok*" the person is agreeing or at least, following your reasoning.

Listening attentively requires work. Just because you have two ears, you may not be a good listener. Customers have choices today, and when you are on the phone, there are no visual cues to suggest you care. They need to get a sense you are truly listening. If you listen before you speak, while you are speaking, and after you finish talking, you will make a positive impression.

Impact Communications, Inc. consults with individuals and businesses to improve their presentation and telephone 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 web site, www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com.

