

Here's How to Be Perceived as a Polished Professional on the Phone

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Before you start worrying about building brand identity through marketing and public relations campaigns, you might start thinking about the image you and other employees are projecting when making or taking a phone call. Obviously, when customers can't see you, the way they assess your confidence and professionalism is by what they hear in your voice. So what is the image you are broadcasting through your voice?

If your enunciation is crystal clear, the impression you create will be very positive. Customers will see you as a highly trained professional, interested in their well being. Conversely, if you have "sloppy" articulation, your listeners will draw unfavorable conclusions. Those mispronounced words or missing syllables convey a careless attitude about one's self and/ or what one is saying. Additionally, sloppy articulation makes listeners focus on what you have just said, versus what you are currently saying, often causing confusion or misinterpretation of information. To insure that your message gets the desired attention, it is important to sharpen your articulation.

The starting point is to video tape your self while talking on the phone. While audio taping will allow you to hear your voice, video taping will help you to see your mouth and your lips. Mispronounced words are often the result of "lazy lips." Instead of saying the vowel or consonant sound correctly, you may notice that you only partially open your mouth, causing you to "slip" over some syllables or omit them all together.

As you review your tape, you should make a list of any poorly enunciated words or phrases. You may notice it is certain letter combinations. If possible, ask a third party to review your tape with you and give you feedback on whether or not you are saying all of the syllables in each word. Also, ask yourself whether a person who has English as a second language would understand every word you say. If you

are a non-native English speaker, ask yourself if you are pronouncing words as an American would.

Once the assessment step is complete, it is important to practice words you do not say correctly and to tape record your practice attempts. You may find using a mirror helpful.

After you have mastered single words, then practice reading out loud any business related materials such as marketing pieces, product descriptors or technical solutions. Make sure you say all of the syllables in each word in each sentence.

You will notice that for your lips, teeth and tongue to get into the right position, you will have to pause often to breathe. Consequently, your speech pattern will be slower and more labored. It will not sound natural at the beginning. In fact, your voice may even sound flat or dull. Any time, you learn a new habit, there is an adjustment period. However, once you get used to pausing frequently and taking your time to carefully enunciate, your listeners will respond to you in a more positive manner. They will not be asking you to repeat. Your message will come across with conviction. The effort you make to sharpen your articulation will be worth the effort.

Question: *What are the issues with diction in your company and how are you handling them? We're interested in your reaction to this article. Click here – to comment on this article, share your concerns or ask questions. Judy will respond to all questions.*

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.

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