

## Fast Talker—Fast Fix

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A lot of us speak quickly when we are on the phone with our customers or clients. Sometimes it is because we have so many calls in the cue or because we feel pressured to get on to the next call. Whatever the case, it can be costly to your business.

### Why?

When we speak too quickly, customers can assume that you are just making a perfunctory call. You really don't care. Someone told you to call and query him or her. They can also feel that you are trying to pull something or that you are giving them the "bum's rush." It can make them angry.

### Problems that speaking quickly can cause.

When you speak quickly, it affects other vocal issues. For example, speed affects the clarity of your words. Literally, the lips, teeth, and tongue can't get into the right position in your mouth. Customers expect to hear the words as they learned them. If you are slipping over syllables or eliminating them altogether, customers start focusing on what you just said, versus what you are currently saying. They feel like they are translating a foreign language. It affects comprehension. Also, if any of your customers are not native-born, English-speaking Americans, it may be difficult for them to make any sense out of what you are saying.

Speaking quickly also affects the tone of your voice. It is impossible to sound friendly, sincere or empathetic without pausing. Your voice may even be a monotone. If the voice is a monotone, the customer concludes you are disinterested. Who wants to do business with someone who is disinterested?

### Ways to slow down.

First, you should get yourself into the mindset that when you are at work; you need to put on your "cash voice," the voice that earns you a living. On-air personalities speak a lot slower on television than they do when they are with friends and family. They know that if they speak quickly, viewers will be complaining, and they will lose their jobs. What on-air personalities learn is the value of pausing. In fact, they pause a lot. They pause not only at the end of sentences and clauses but whenever they want to emphasize a point or idea. They know that the more they pause, the more their listeners understand.

To get comfortable pausing, use your voice mail system to give you feedback. When you send internal voice mail messages, press "review" before you press "send." If you hear yourself speaking quickly, redo the message until you are satisfied.

Get feedback from family members when you are at home. Ask them to tell you to pause more or to remind you that you are mumbling. Fast talkers also mumble.

If you have a child, read out loud to your child. Children demand that you really get into the story. They will tell you to slow down because they want to enjoy the story of Hanzel and Gretel, for example, or any other children's book. As you drive down the street, use your car as a laboratory. Say out loud what you are seeing and over-enunciate each word. No one will hear you. Over-enunciating will get you used to saying every syllable in the word.

While speaking quickly is a habit, it is not a habit that helps you to develop relationships with your customers. The more you pause, the more they feel you care. The less likely they are to become upset. A one or two-second pause can make a huge difference. Put on your "cash" voice and see what a difference it will make.

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