



Verbal Communication

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Explore verbal communication techniques

Verbal Communication

Being Yourself and Sounding Your Best

Some people have a **phone voice**: a tone that they adopt when they pick up the phone and answer it at home or at work. Your phone voice might actually sound quite different from what you might think.

Many, if not all phone based sales people, use some kind of one-piece headset with a built-in earpiece. Depending on the quality of that equipment, as well as the telephone lines, your voice can sound distorted and interfere with the impact of your message. Trying to sound sincere? You might come across as condescending. Trying to sound committed? You could be heard as threatening. That's why it is so important to become aware of your voice and to make it an instrument in your toolbox, just like your keyboard, computer screen, and chair.

Your voice is a symphony created by:

- **Breath control**, which gives your voice its power. Good breath control is a result of proper posture and good care of your physical health, particularly the lungs and diaphragm. You are not breathing effectively if you are slumped and slouching at your desk. Make it a habit to sit up straight when you talk on the telephone. You will also notice that the more physically fit you are, the better control you have over your lung capacity and the more effectively you speak.
- **Tone**, which is the quality of your voice as air moves from your chest through your larynx. If you are angry or upset, surprised or excited, callers will hear it in your voice; this is something that your customers will pay attention to. Although you cannot eliminate negative aspects of tone completely, you can manage them with concentration and practice.
- **Articulation**, which is the way that your pronounce sound by using your mouth, lips, and jaw to form words. Articulation is highly responsive to practice, so if you wish to change the way you pronounce things, practice can certainly make perfect.

There are no right and wrong rules about speech patterns. Just be aware of your accent and vocal patterns and think about how they are helping you at work. Although a regional accent may provide more appeal in some areas, for example, you have to think about whether that same accent interferes with clear communication. As our workplaces continue to diversify, and we offer sales services around the world 24/7, the number of accents and regional variations will increase. You have to ensure that your customers can understand you.

The Four E's

The four E's of an effective telephone voice are:

Expressive

Use your voice to vary the tone of what you say and rate to make it interesting to hear.

Enunciate

Use clear enunciation and master articulation. We can be casual when speaking with friends or family, dropping a final consonant like the “g” in an “ing” ending or truncating the middle letters of a word. Unfortunately, when we do that on the telephone, the sound of these shortcuts gets exaggerated. Open your mouth and speak clearly.

Engage

Your voice should be smooth and pleasant, not whiny or negative. Communicate that you are happy in your work (and a happy person overall) in order to engage your customer. Speaking in anger or being curt will put your call – and your company – in a negative light.

Energize

Your voice needs to really shine when you use the telephone as your instrument. You need to feel energy and pass that positive flow through to your customers. This means that you approach your job as if it the only thing that matters right now, and that the customer you currently have on the line is the most important customer ever. Although it sounds corny and might feel uncomfortable, think about the salespeople you speak to in your own life, and what it was that led you to talk to them, buy from them, or made the conversation pleasant. Inject energy and joy into your voice and work from the attitude that you are there to serve your customer, and you will be more likely to meet your targets.

A Service Image

Do you give some thought to what is happening when you answer an incoming call from one of your customers?

Sales Professional	Robertsnanlewisnwehaveyerwinsheeldhullo.
Caller	Uh, hello, is this the windshield shop?
Sales Professional	Yathisizrobertsnanlewisnwehaveyerwinsheeldhowcanihelpyou?
Caller	I have an appointment Saturday to replace my windshield.
Sales Professional	Uhuh.
Caller	I need to confirm the time. I cannot remember the time.

Sales Professional	Justasecanilltranseryoutosomeeelz.
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Have you ever had an experience like that, where you call a number to find out some information and then cannot even tell if you’ve reached the right number because you cannot understand a word that’s being said? To the caller, the credibility of the organization is now in question.

The service image that you promote is just as important as the service itself. Even though the example above was not a sales call, you represent the company, and like it or not, the company pays you to promote their image.

The conversation should have gone like this:

Sales Professional	Robertson and Lewis. We have your windshield. How can I help you?
Caller	I have an appointment on Saturday, but I cannot remember the time.
Sales Professional	Let me pull up your record, sir. Can you please give me your telephone number?

Test Your Knowledge

Examples

The Good	The Great	The Not to Mention (Awful)

Identify the features of the good and great examples that make them that way.

To Serve and Delight

What You Say and What it Means

One easy mistake to slip into is to adjust your speech to what other people might expect. Whether you are new to the workforce or have been around a long time, you might find that your customers sometimes try to push your buttons. For example, they might swear and expect you to do the same. Or they might think that because you are from the same neighborhood or town, you can give them a deal.

The things that you say are a direct reflection on the company that you represent. Customers may not remember exactly what you say, but they will remember the service they receive. The qualities you display determine whether those customers will want to do business with your organization again.

When you talk with someone on the phone, you are the company.

Although you may be tempted (especially if you are talking to a regular customer or someone you know) never EVER speak badly of the company or any of your colleagues. We live in a small world and word of mouth, blast by text message, and social media are all effective ways for people to share any negative messages you may give them about your company. Even though you may be frustrated or you may know that a customer complaint is a result of a colleague's bad work habits, your customer does not need to know.

Planning the Ideal Answer

As a professional salesperson, we can benefit from set phrases that promote our own professionalism. Our customers benefit as they realize that we really are focused on their needs, which is what we want to continue to promote as part of our commitment to customer focused selling.

If you feel like saying:	Try this:
No problem.	

If you feel like saying:	Try this:
Is that it?	
That's just not possible.	
Oh, those guys in shipping are a waste of space!	
You should have called me yesterday.	
Aren't you the guy that never gets off the phone?	
You have to...	
That's not my job.	
I dunno.	
Honey, sweetheart, or love	
Swear word	