

Seminar on  
**TELEPHONE EFFICIENCY AND HUMAN RELATIONS**

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My hats off to our Telephone Receptionist

Years ago, maddened and frustrated by what I believed was the ineptitude of my telephone operators - a girl who gloried in the name of Foote - I dedicated the following lines to here:

Line Engaged, My Foot(e)

'You are old, Father William,'  
the young man cried.  
'You look far from healthy and strong.'  
'No wonder, my son,' Father William replied,  
'When I ask for a number, either it's wrong,  
Or the line is engaged in the whole day long !'

Now, mellowed by age and experience, I think I was unjust in blaming the poor girl, who had to struggle with just one line and many extensions. Now I look with a kindly and tolerant eye upon the work of all switchboard operators. Theirs is indeed an exacting and exasperating job which imposes a heavy demand on their skill and patience.

At all Blue Star offices, public relations begin with the switchboard operator (who, as at some offices, also doubles as receptionist). Hers the polite voice, hers the smiling face, hers the inexhaustible patience, whether she is dealing with a member of the staff, a caller on the phone or a visitor in the reception hall - and, believe me, some of these people can be quite demanding !

An operator who is impolite, irritable or arrogant is no good, however skilled she may be. That is why at Blue Star the switchboard operators have been taught to be courteous to everybody, in addition to being prompt and efficient in their work.

For every operator the day begins at around 9.15 a.m. at most offices. Soon the wires begin to hum. There is a constant stream of incoming and outgoing calls. Throughout the day switchboard lights flash, cords are plugged in and out, keys are raised and lowered for hundreds of incoming, outgoing and trunk calls. The operator is kept busy with rarely a break.

A notable feature of our switch board service is that it is never allowed to remain unattended - not even for a moment. Almost all secretaries and stenographers are trained to operate the switchboard; any one of them can take over the regular operator's duties for short or long periods in a day.

Courtesy BLUE STAR

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TOWARDS BETTER TELEPHONE EFFICIENCY  
SUGGESTIONS THAT EMERGED DURING A RECENT SURVEY

1. "Proper seating arrangement for telephone receptionist; also consider lighting and ventilation."
2. "Telephone operators should not be given unrelated work, unless there is a relief operator."
3. "A little understanding support from the executives will help. A number of executives ask for numbers at the same time and every executive wants 'my number first', and feels annoyed, if it is not given."
- 4a. "Why not an executive give at one time all the numbers that he wants? This will help to dial for the next number, if the former is engaged. Further, it will save a lot of time".
- 4b. "Executives asking to be connected to a number should be in their seats at least for a reasonable time - five minutes say."
5. "The telephone operator should be provided with an intercom. Quite often she has to leave her place to call a person or convey a message. Otherwise a peon shall be at hand and be available near the telephone operator."
6. "The switchboard should be located in a quiet place, free from noise."
7. "Operators should be relieved very two hours. Where traffic is heavy, there should be two operators working alternatively."
8. "Otherwise, there may be a reliever at least for two half-hours".

9. "The staff should be brief and to the point when using the telephone."
10. "To know the nature of work at the telephone board, why not every executive spend some time at the switchboard, say between 2.30 pm & 4.30 pm, at least once in six months."
11. "The films shown to us are interesting and instructive. Why not show it to our executives?"
12. "The book on Telephone Manners and Etiquette by Dr. Atthreya is very good. But the executives also must read this book. Only then the telephone traffic can be smooth and controlled on rational lines."

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## MY NEXT TWELVE HOURS....

JUST FOR TODAY, I will try to live through this day only, and not tackle my whole life problem at once. I can do something for 12 hours that would appall me if I felt that I had to keep it up for a life-time.

JUST FOR TODAY, I will be happy. "Most folks are as happy as they make up their minds to be."

JUST FOR TODAY, I will try to strengthen my mind. I will study. I will learn something useful. I will not be a mental loafer. I will read something that requires effort, thought and concentration.

JUST FOR TODAY, I will adjust myself to what is, and not try to adjust everything to my own desires. I will take my 'luck' as it comes, and fit myself to it.

JUST FOR TODAY, I will exercise my soul in two ways: I will do somebody a good turn. I will not show anyone that my feelings are hurt; they may be hurt, but today I will not show it.

JUST FOR TODAY, I will be agreeable. I will look as well as I can, dress becomingly, talk low, act courteously, criticize not one bit, not find fault with anything and not try to improve or regulate anybody except myself.

JUST FOR TODAY? I will have a programme. I may not follow it exactly, but I will have it. I will save myself from two pests; hurry and indecision.

JUST FOR TODAY, I will have a quiet half hour all my myself, and relax. During this half hour, sometimes, I will try to get a better perspective of my life.

## WHAT IS A CUSTOMER ?

A customer is the most important person  
to enter your place of business.

A customer is not dependent on you.

You are dependent on him.

He pays your salary.

A customer is not  
an interruption to your work.

He is the purpose of it.

You are not doing him a favour by serving him.

He is doing you a favour by serving him.

He is doing you a favour  
by giving you the opportunity to serve him.

A customer is not  
an outsider to your business.

He is a vital part of it.

A customer is not a cold statistic.

He is a human being with hopes and ambitions  
like your own.

A customer is a person who brings you his wants.

It is your job, duty and privilege  
to handle him  
with promptness, courtesy, and consideration.



TWENTY GOOD TELEPHONE PRACTICES

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
1. Answer the call promptly	.....	.....	.....
2. Hold the receiver correctly	.....	.....	.....
3. Speak directly into the mouthpiece	.....	.....	.....
4. Identify your organization	.....	.....	.....
5. Visualise the caller	.....	.....	.....
6. Listen carefully and patiently	.....	.....	.....
7. Speak in a natural tone	.....	.....	.....
8. Ask questions factfully	.....	.....	.....
9. Say, "May, I tell him who's calling Please?"	.....	.....	.....
10. Use the caller's name or say "Sir"	.....	.....	.....
11. Apologise for waits	.....	.....	.....
12. Say 'sorry' for any mistakes	.....	.....	.....
13. If you leave the line, explain why	.....	.....	.....
14. Transfer calls properly	.....	.....	.....
15. Leave a message, when you leave your telephone	.....	.....	.....
16. Keep pad and pencil handy	.....	.....	.....
17. List frequently called numbers	.....	.....	.....
18. Terminate calls courteously	.....	.....	.....
19. Let the caller disconnect first	.....	.....	.....
20. Replace the receiver gently	.....	.....	.....

TELEPHONIC SITUATIONS AND RECOMMENDED APPROACHES

Most men, before answering the telephone, like to know who is calling so that they may be prepared; therefore, the telephone operator answering the call in the outer office should attempt to ascertain at least the name of the caller. Furthermore, in order to conserve time and energy, a certain formula in answering calls has been rather generally adopted by business houses. If both parties to the conversation followed the formula, the conversation would be something like this:

1. The Ideal caller:

Telephone ball rings.	Telephone operator answers.
Telephone Receptionist (TR)	Good morning. Good Will & Co.
	Mr. Ram of MMC School of Management
	May I speak to Mr. Suresh, Please
TR	Hold the line a minute, please (Telephone Operator rings Mr. Suresh's private line)
	Please speak to Mr. Suresh Mr. Ram.

2. The caller has to be identified:

Telephone Receptionist	Good morning. Good Will & Co.
Caller:	I would like to speak to Mr. Suresh, please.
TR:	May I tell him who is calling Please ?
Caller:	Ram of MMC School of Management.

...

3. The caller will ring later;

(Bell rings)

TR: Good morning. MMC School of Management

Caller: May I speak to Mr. Ram Please ?

TR: Mr. Ram is out just now. Will you leave a message, please ?

Caller: No. I will call him later.

TR: (Quickly, before caller hangs up)  
Will you kindly leave your name so that I may tell him you called ?

Caller: This is Ramesh of Well Done & Company.

TR: Thank you. What is your telephone number please ?

Caller: 99 99 99 Extn. 19.

TR: Would you like Mr. Ram to call you when he comes in ?

Caller: No, thanks. I will be out of the office all afternoon. I will call Mr. Ram later.

TR: Very well Mr. Ramesh, I will tell Mr. Ram. Thank you.

4. The caller with a complaint;

(Bell rings. The voice is that of a woman, evidently very much excited and displeased)

TR: Good morning ? Ideal Department Store.

Caller: Whoever is in charge of home appliances ?

TR: Yes, madam. so that I may put you in touch with the right person, may I know what it is about ?

Caller:

I have a complaint to make about the Electric Kettle I purchased from your stores a week back. I don't think that a firm of your standing should deal in such worthless goods.

TR:

Mr. Guru Charan will attend to you, please. If you will kindly hold the line a minute, I will connect you to Mr. Guru Charan.

5. The line is busy, caller prefers to wait:

If the line is busy, tell the caller, "Mr. Ram's line is busy. Will you please wait?"

If he answers in the affirmative, say, "THANK YOU".

Return to him every minute to keep him posted; no one likes to feel he's holding on to a line that's been forgotten. You can say, "Mr. Ram's line is still busy". And don't forget to say, "thank you" when he says he will continue to wait.

When Mr. Ram hangs up, connect and say "Mr. Ram's line is free now please. Thank you for waiting".

6. The person called is busy and the caller leaves a message:

Very often the person called may be talking on another extension or be busy with other pressing business. At such times, it is better to say: "May I take a message for him please? Mr. Ram is talking on another extension".

"Mr. Ram has gone for a conference. I will have him call you as soon as possible".

Should a caller decide not to wait, be sure to get his name and number. Take them down and say "Thank you. I will tell Mr. Ram you called".

Coplete Message

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TELEPHONE MESSAGE

To .....

From .....

Tel. No. .... Extn. No. ....

Message .....

.....

.....

.....

Date.....Hour.....Talked by .....

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Record details as given by the caller.

THE OTHER TOOL

There are 433 different parts  
in the telephone instrument -  
each developed through years of research.

The telephone is a precision instrument  
designed to carry out voice accurately.....  
down the street ... across the town .....  
or if you wish around the world.

It is a fine piece of reproduction equipment;  
but the finest telephone in the world  
can only reproduce.

What comes out of the telephone  
depends on what is put in.

That is why we call  
telephone as one tool.

ALWAYS REMEMBER

Remember, when you are talking to a caller his impression is probably what you make it.

The caller cannot see your face hence the necessity for developing the voice with a smile.

The caller can hang up the receiver, thus terminating the conversation, at any time. For this reason, you must be particularly persuasive in order to secure the desired information without causing an important caller to hang up in disgust.

You cannot see the caller and, consequently, cannot make any sort of accurate classification.

## CULTIVATING A VOICE WITH A SMILE

### YOUR VOICE IS YOU

You are only a voice to those  
who hear you over the phone.

In a telephone communication  
your voice is you.

When you are speaking face to face with someone,  
your smile, your grooming, your own charm combine  
to present your own self....

all help to create a good impression.

When you talk over the telephone, however,  
everything depends .... on your voice.

You can make it a welcome one.

You can make your voice reflect your best self.

### DEVELOPING YOUR TELEPHONE PERSONALITY

The 'voice with a smile'  
should describe your telephone voice

How does one cultivate that ?

Here are some tested ways:

\* First of all

Speak distinctly.

Say every syllable of every word properly  
so that your listener will have  
no trouble in understanding you.

Speak the more difficult words slowly.



\* Take your time.

Over the telephone,  
it is important  
to speak unhurriedly, as well as distinctly.  
Remember, your listener cannot have  
the benefit of watching you,  
seeing your gestures  
and the changing expressions of your face.  
You save yourself and others a lot of time  
when you make yourself understood the first time.

\* Do not speak too slowly or too rapidly.

About 120 words per minute is right.

\* Telephone speech should be  
neither too fast nor too slow.  
If too fast, words are jumbled,  
parts of words are lost to the ear,  
and bad sounding forms creep in -  
"wadjado," for "what did you do" for example.  
If too slow, the words sound disconnected,  
and lose meaning and interest for the listener.  
Ordinarily, the very act of speaking clearly  
helps prevent your talking too fast.  
You cannot be "Miss Garbled," because  
your tongue, if used correctly to form your words,  
acts as a sort of metronome  
placing your words at proper intervals.

\* Speak directly into the mouthpiece.

Your voice is carried most clearly by the telephone when you speak directly into the transmitter, with your lips close to the mouthpiece, For best telephone results this is just as important as keeping the receiver to your ear.

\* Make your voice interesting.

Another name for "voice with a smile" is a voice having "personal interest tone".

Don't be a "Miss Mechanical".

The difference between "Miss Mechanical" and "Miss Voice with a Smile" is suggested in these contrasting sets of words:

The voice having personal interest tone

+ PLEASANT  
+ FRIENDLY  
+ CORDIAL  
+ CHEERFUL  
+ INTERESTED  
+ HELPFUL  
+ PLUS PERSONALITY

The voice lacking personal interest tone

- Expressionless  
- Mechanical  
- Indifferent  
- Impatient  
- Inattentive  
- Repelling  
- Minus Personality

\* Vary the pitch of your voice

to give certain words emphasis. If you emphasise some words by speaking them at a slightly higher pitch, the variation in voice becomes welcome to the listener.

\* But keep the volume constant.

Speak in normal conversational tone -  
neither shouting into the transmitter  
not letting your voice drop too low -  
with plenty of inflections but  
not too much variation in voice level.

\* After important words, pause for emphasis.

For example:

Mr. Barodawalla . . . (pause) . . . I know you will  
be glad to know of our next publication,  
namely, HIGHER OFFICE PRODUCTIVITY . . . (pause) . . .  
packed with practical ideas, it has been prepared  
with a view to help DECISION AND IMPLEMENTATION . . .  
(pause) . . . THOSE WHO ORDER IN ADVANCE . . . (pause)  
. . . get the special concession  
of 33.1/3% off . . . (pause).

\* Address the other person by name, if it is appropriate.

\* Keep your voice cheerful and businesslike.

\* Say 'please' and 'thank you' often.

In face to face conversation  
courtesy may be expressed through  
actions, gestures, and facial expressions.  
You can compensate  
for this lack on the telephone  
by using, in a pleasant and natural manner,  
such expressions as "Thank you", "Please",  
"Would you mind?", "I'm sorry", "I'll be glad to".

You may also avoid expressions like

"You must", "You'll have to",  
"Put him on", "Let me talk to him", "Talk louder".

In answering a call,  
even when the caller fails to identify himself,  
it is well to avoid such abrupt questions as  
"Who is this?"

Say rather,

"May I ask your name, please?"

And if you answer the telephone for someone else,  
try a phrase that sounds

more like a request than a demand,

as for example:

"Would you mind giving your name?"

"May I tell him who's calling, please?"

At the close of conversation,

end the call courteously.

And don't forget those final words, "Thank you."

Never hang up without definitely indicating

that the conversation is finished

Say 'Good-bye'.

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WHEN TENSE . . . .

The Bank of England requires its employees to sign a daily register. If they are late for work, they have to record the reason on the register.

London weather being what it is, the first tardy worker generally writes "fog" opposite his name. And human nature being what it is, those who sign in after him just make ditto marks. One morning the first late-comer wrote in the book, "Wife had twins". Under this gentleman's name 20 people placed their ditto marks !

. . . . .

"You sure kept your promise, Doctor, when you said you'd have me walking within two months."

"Glad to hear that", said the doctor.

"Yes Sir", sighed the patient, "when I got your bill I had to sell my car".

. . . . .

A farmer wrote a veterinarian for advice: "I have a horse that sometimes walks normally and sometimes has a limp. What shall I do ?"

The veterinarian wrote back: "The next time your horse walks normally, sell him".

. . . . .

Lawyer: "You say you were about 35 feet away from the scene.  
Just how far can you see clearly?"

Old Farmer: "Well, when I wake up I see the sun and they tell  
me that's about ninety-three million miles away".

.....

Teacher: "If a farmer has 20 sheep in a field and three of  
them get out, how many will be left in the field?"

Boy: "None".

Teacher: "That's wrong; 3 from 20 is 17".

Boy: "Teacher, you may know your arithmetic, but you don't  
know sheep".

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## STEPS TO A JOYFUL AND ENTHUSIASTIC LIFE

Since thinking has much to do with what your life becomes, you might consider the following suggestions:

- FIRST      Stop depreciating yourself. There is a lot that is right in you. ~~Empty your mind of failure thoughts and mistakes~~ and start seeing yourself as a competent person.
- SECOND     Eliminate self-pity thoughts. Start thinking of what you have, instead of dwelling on what you may have lost. List your assets of personality and talent.
- THIRD      Quit thinking constantly of yourself. Think of others. Actually go out and look for someone who needs the kind of help you can give, and then give it freely. You will not maintain a continuing flow of abundance if your thoughts are only of yourself.
- FOURTH    Remember the words of Goethe: "He who has a firm will molds the world to himself." Almighty God put as tough power into human beings called the will. Use it.
- FIFTH      Have a goal and put an achievable timetable on it.
- SIXTH      Stop wasting your mental energy on gripes and post-mortems, and start thinking about what to do now. Amazing things happen when you think constructively.
- SEVENTH    Every morning and every evening articulate these words aloud: "I can do all things through God who strengthens me."
- EIGHTH     Think and practice joy every day.
- NINTH      Get enthusiasm; think enthusiasm; live enthusiastically !

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