



Basic Telephone Skills @ Verztec

Just as how Business Emails and Casual Emails are handled differently, phone calls at home or from your personal friends and at the office (*business calls) are different and should be handled differently.

Outward follow-up sales or project related calls should be scheduled to suit your timetable and that of your respondent. Inward calls should be professionally handled. Once you are using the telephone you need to develop some procedures that ensure you get the most out of each call and that you do not waste time at work.

Scheduling outward calls

At the beginning of each day:

- make a list of the calls you have to make for the day
- put them in order of priority (essential, desirable, those that can be rescheduled if necessary)
- allocate times for each call trying, if possible, to bunch them and to bear in mind when each call is likely to be suitable for your respondent.

Appropriate greetings and endings

Appropriate greetings and endings to calls help build a good rapport and avoid misunderstandings and wasting time. The three elements of an appropriate greeting are:

- ***pick the call with a greeting "Good Morning Verztec", "Good Afternoon Verztec" etc.***
- (Be sure to identify your company in the greeting)
- Introduce your name and job title/department in the call (*Personalize the call)
- Ask how you can help the caller

Always check:

- Caller's name, company's name, contact details and also note down the query

When you close the call you should:

- make sure that the caller has no more queries
- thank the caller for his/her time
- let the caller **put down the receiver first** so they don't feel you have cut them off.

*Pls check with your department manager when in doubts

Gathering information

A telephone call is a purposeful activity. People do not call for no reasons, especially when it is business related. Your caller will have some objective in mind and you will need to elicit this objective as quickly and as clearly as possible.

In a simple information-seeking call, all you need to do is ask for the caller's name, company name, contact details and query.



However, in more complex situations, you need to develop your questioning techniques so that you obtain the salient facts. Let's assume your caller has a complaint about a service your company has sold them. You need to:

- ascertain the nature of the problem
- verify that the product is one of yours and who is the person who handled the project
- mention that you understand the frustration of the issue and apologize for the inconveniences this matter has caused, give him/her your assurance that you would look into the matter straight away and get back

*Pls check with your department manager when in doubts

Listening skills

Another skill in receiving telephone calls is the ability to listen properly. Passive listening is simply allowing the caller to talk and not taking any action to ensure we have the right message.

By actively listening we mean **first indicating** to the caller that we are listening by interrupting in an encouraging manner—interruptions could be 'yes', 'I see', 'Okay', 'right', 'I know what you mean', or they could be prompts to encourage the caller to say more: 'is that true?', 'are you sure?', etc. And secondly we mean asking questions or using prompts to ensure that the caller gives precise information so that the message we receive is accurate. This can be done by the use of wh- questions:

- What color?/how many?/when will you arrive?/where shall we meet?
- And by techniques such as echoing and reformulating.

Suggesting and verifying a course of action

Once you have an accurate picture of the situation, you are in a position to propose a course of action to your caller. You should:

- outline the proposal and check that it is acceptable to the caller
- confirm that they understand what is to be done.

Take notes

If you are expect to handle a lot of calls each day, especially if you are on duty rotation, then it is essential to log each one under date and time. For **all** calls you should make a note of who rang, for what reason, and the action you agreed with times and details of address, telephone number etc.

Dealing with difficult callers

Sometimes a caller is very difficult, especially if complaining.

First remember that this caller is a client, or potential client, so your handling of the call could result either in more business for our company or in the caller going to a competitor and never to come back.

Whatever the nature of the problem, don't try to fob the caller off by disclaiming personal responsibility or by trying to pass the buck.



What you should do is:

- listen without interrupting
- gather the facts and make a note of them
- take their details so you can get back to them
- sympathize with them and offer to act as fast as you can
- apologize if you have made the mistake
- stay calm even though the caller is angry and possibly abusive.

Telephone etiquette

Just because you can't see the caller, it doesn't mean you have the right to suspend the normal rules of politeness. Be helpful to the caller even if the subject of the call is not strictly speaking your field of responsibility. This means trying to find someone who can help now, or someone who can ring them back later. Don't put the caller on hold and then leave them suspended there indefinitely.

Remember too that you give out subliminal signals by the tone of your voice, the clarity with which you speak, how fast you speak, the pitch of your voice. You should always devote your full attention to the call; mistakes and misunderstandings will arise if you are doing something else at the same time. Even if the call is a difficult or heated one, stay calm; try to be helpful and never slam the phone down.

Things to avoid when on the phone

It's easy to fall into the trap of believing that because your caller can't see you, they won't be affected by what you are doing and what's going on around you. Remember not to:

- let it ring more than three times
- eat and drink while talking on the phone
- be too familiar
- talk to someone else in your office
- have too much background noise
- speak too quietly or too loudly
- speak too quickly.