



## Building Rapport and Delivering Great Service Over the Telephone

**Delegate**  
**Notes**

Name:

Date:

## Building Rapport and Delivering Great Service Over the Telephone

This workshop will focus on key client service skills and how to converse professionally with clients on the telephone. Developing rapport over the telephone is harder than when we meet someone face-to-face, but there are techniques we can use to connect with people consciously whilst keeping the conversation natural and professional.



First and Lasting Impressions



Call Structure and Telephone Etiquette



Getting your Message Across



Vocal Quality (VESPA)



Listening Using: CARES



Closing a Call



**Activity:** Personal learning objectives

What do you hope to learn today? Please record below:

# First and Lasting Impressions

With the [firm/department] handling hundreds of calls each week, it is vital that we always present a positive and professional image from the moment we pick up the telephone right through to the end of every incoming and outgoing call. But how do we want our clients to think and feel after we have spoken to them and how do we achieve it?



MAKE A GOOD  
FIRST IMPRESSION



**Group 1 Activity:** Working in your group, consider the impression we want to present over the telephone and the techniques needed to ensure we consistently achieve this:

**Impression:**

**Techniques:**



**Group 2 Activity:** Working in your group, think about times you have been the client making a call and list below the characteristics of calls that have been handled poorly and then record how this makes you feel:

**Poor call characteristics:**

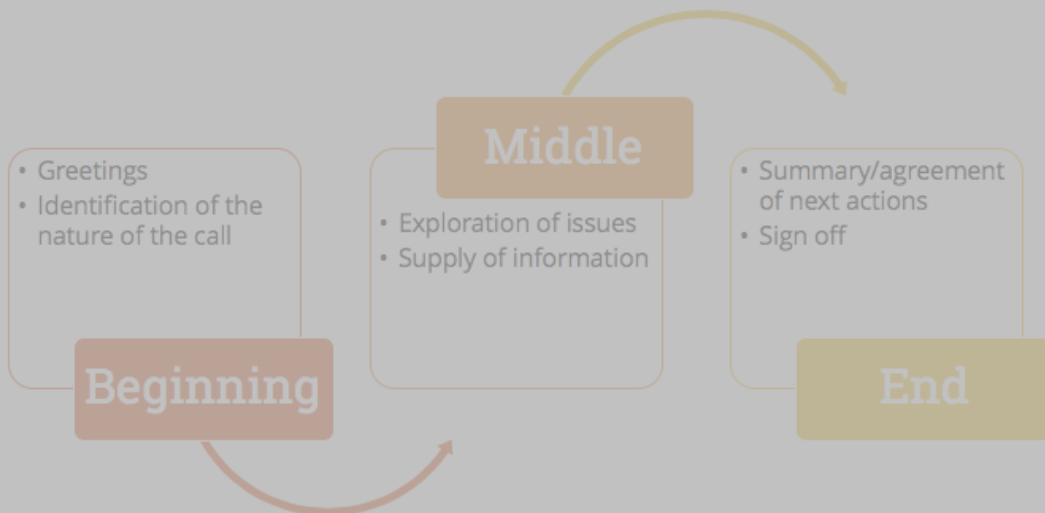
**Feelings after a poor call:**

SAMPLE

# Call Structure and Telephone Etiquette

A great deal of internal and external communication within the department happens over the telephone, so it is important to be aware of the appropriate telephone etiquette.

Every call (however short) follows the structure below:



These top tips will help you move through each stage smoothly in a professional and approachable way:

## 1. Identify yourself

Whether answering or making the call, identify yourself to the other person on the line. When you say your name, make sure you say it clearly (lots of people just rattle off a standard phrase really quickly or mumble!).

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### 2. Speak slowly and clearly

It can be harder to understand a voice over a phone line, so make sure you speak slowly and clearly. This should ensure you are fully understood and don't need to repeat yourself.

### 3. Listen actively and avoid distractions

From the moment you take or make a call, ensure you aren't also trying to do something else at the same time. Focus on the call as if the person was sitting in the same room as you.

### 4. Ask before placing on hold

If you need to put someone on hold, make sure that you have checked with them first. They may prefer that you call them back at a time that suits them.

### 5. Don't interrupt

Try not to interrupt the caller, in the same way that you wouldn't interrupt them in person. It can be hard because of the lack of visual cues, but it is important to let them know they can speak uninterrupted.

### 6. Give verbal prompts that you are listening

The lack of visual signs means that it can sometimes be hard to tell if you are being listened to. Use verbal prompts to show the caller you are listening by confirming what they said or just saying phrases such as "I see".

### 7. Don't give the impression you are rushed

Even if you are extremely busy, the caller should never be aware of this. If you don't feel you have time to deal with the call, rather than appear rushed and disinterested, it may be better to arrange another time for the call.

### 8. Agree next actions

Where appropriate, ensure the caller is clear about what will happen next. i.e do they need to send you more information, will you or someone else be calling them back? If very important, it may be worth confirming next actions by email after the call.

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### 9. Take multiple numbers and get time options if required to call back

If you need to call someone back, make sure you get an appropriate number, or possibly more than one, and agree a convenient time for the call. Check with the caller to ensure the number you have written down is correct.

### 10. Smile!

If you smile on a call, the other person will pick up on your cheerful voice tone, which should improve the overall effectiveness of the call.

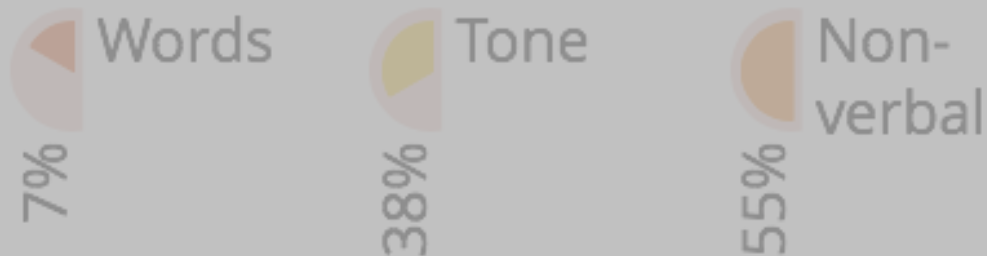
SAMPLE

# Getting Your Message Across

As well as following a clear and professional structure during all calls, we must also focus on the quality of our voice to ensure that our clients always hear voices which sound professional, friendly and confident.

When we communicate face to face there are three elements to the message we deliver:

## Face-to-Face Communication



This reduces to just two elements when we are communicating on the telephone as the receiver cannot see our body language:

## Telephone Communication





# Vocal Quality (VESPA)

When we are communicating over the telephone it is useful to remember the **VESPA** acronym:

## Volume

It is important that the other person can hear you, especially if they are in a noisy environment. Ensure you speak at the right volume level without shouting (this won't make you popular with your colleagues!).

## Energy

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 the other person. This means that you approach every call as if it is the only thing that matters right now, and that the person you currently have on the line, is the most important person ever! Inject energy and joy into your voice and work on the attitude that you are there to serve them, and you are delighted to speak to them. Communicate that you are happy in your work (and a happy person overall) in order to engage with your client. Being blunt or impatient will put your call – and the [firm/department] – in a negative light.

## Speed

Conversational speech generally falls between 120 wpm at the slow end, to 160 - 200 wpm in the fast range. If you know your natural speaking voice is fast, make a conscious effort to slow down when on the telephone so the client can understand and digest everything you are saying.

## Pitch

Use your voice to vary the tone of what you say to make it interesting to hear. Your voice should be smooth and pleasant, not whiny, negative or monotone.

## Articulation

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.

# Your VESPA Score



**Activity:**

Give yourself a score out of 5 (1 = poor, 5 = world class) for each element of VESPA and then list techniques that you could use to improve each score to a 5.

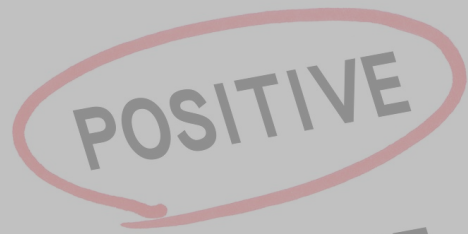
Quality	Your score	How to improve
Volume		
Energy		
Speed		
Pitch		
Articulation		

# Importance of Postive Language

To build rapport further and to give the client confidence in your ability and desire to help:

## Use positive language such as:

- I **definitely** will make sure that it gets sorted...
- I **absolutely** agree with you...
- I can **certainly** help you...
- That is **exactly** right...
- I **completely** agree with you...
- I will **quickly** run through this with you...
- That is a **fantastic** alternative...
- **Great** news!



POSITIVE



NEGATIVE

## Avoid negative language



**Activity:** Review the statements in the left-hand column below. How could you turn these into more positive statements? Record your new statements in the right-hand column:

Negative Words/Statement	Positive Statement
"I'll try to look into it"	
"I'll see what I can do"	
"Maybe we could speak later"	
"Perhaps you would like ...."	
"It may be possible....."	

## Listening Using: CARES

Obviously when we are communicating with another person, it is a two-way process. So, as well as ensuring your message is delivered positively and professionally, you must also ensure you are actively listening to what is being said by the caller. 'CARES' help us remember the process for listening actively:

Concentrate

Acknowledge

Record

Encourage and Empathise

Summarise

## Closing a Call

Whilst we want to deliver exceptional service at all times, we are also very busy, and our time is valuable, so it is important to bring a call to a close at the appropriate time. The follow points will help you end calls professionally:

Look for a natural end to the conversation when the 'business' part of the call is over



Summarise key points and check the other person has covered everything that they wish to



Use phrases such as "thank you for your time XXX ..." to signal that you feel the call is complete



Make sure the caller has your name and contact details



Update your notes/records



Complete or diarise any actions that you need to take as a result of the call

# Call Analysis



## Activity: Call #1

Discuss the first call example with your group and record your thoughts below:

What did the hotel receptionist do well?

What did the hotel receptionist do poorly?

How do you think Michelle felt after this call?

Other comments?

SAMPLE



**Activity: Call #2**

Now you have heard the second call, hold a further discussion and record your thoughts below:

**What did the hotel receptionist do well?**

**What did the hotel receptionist do poorly?**

**How do you think Michelle felt after this call?**

**Other comments?**

## Notes / Personal Action Plan

Use the space below to record any notes and/or actions you plan to take after this Boost Workshop.

