



Building Rapport and Delivering Great Service Over the Telephone

Trainer Guide

- Projector/monitor
- Laptop/PC with sound card
- Flip chart paper and markers
- Talking on the Telephone VESPA Activity

Agenda:

Session Topic	Time
Introduction and What You Will Learn	5 mins
First and Lasting Impressions	20 mins
Call Structure and Telephone Etiquette	10 mins
Getting Your Message Across	5 mins
Vocal Quality	20 mins
Importance of Positive Language	5 mins
Listening using: 'CARES'	5 mins
Closing a Call	5 mins
Call Analysis activity (AR)	20 mins
Commit to Action	10 mins
Total Time	105 mins

(AR) = audio recording on slide

Session One: Introductions and What You Will Learn (Page 2, Slide 2) (5 minutes)

Introductions

Welcome the group, discuss timings, carry out any necessary introductions and the discuss topics being covered in this Boost Workshop.

What you will learn

At the end of this workshop, you will be able to:

- First and Lasting Impressions
- Call Structure and Telephone Etiquette
- Getting Your Message Across
- Vocal Quality
- Listening Skills
- Closing a Call



Activity

Give participants a moment to write down their own learning objectives on page 2.



Explain that the back page can be used to record any notes and action they plan to take as a result of this Boost Workshop.

Session Two: First and Lasting Impressions (Page 3-4, Slide 3) (20 minutes)

MAKE A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION



We can sometimes handle 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. So, we are going to start this Boost Workshop by considering how we want our customers and prospects to think and feel after we have spoken to them and how we achieve it every single time we make or receive a call.

Split the delegates into two groups. Explain their task and allow 8 minutes before bringing them back together to share their results. Hold group discussion and record any actions.



Group Activity (8 mins): Group 1

Using a flip chart or page 3 in their delegate notes:

Step 1: Ask the group to think about the impression we want to give every time we speak to someone on the telephone. How do we want the other person to think and feel?

Step 2: Now consider what we all need to do to ensure we achieve the right impression. What are the processes and techniques we should all follow?

For example, having a standard answering technique, *"Good morning Womble Bond Dickinson, xxxxx speaking, how can I help you?"*



Group Activity (8 mins): Group 2

Using a flip chart or page 4 in their delegate notes:

Step 1: Ask this group to think about times when they have been the customer making a call and list as many characteristics of poorly handled calls (for example, calling your broadband provider to report a fault and being passed to several departments and kept on hold for ages etc..)

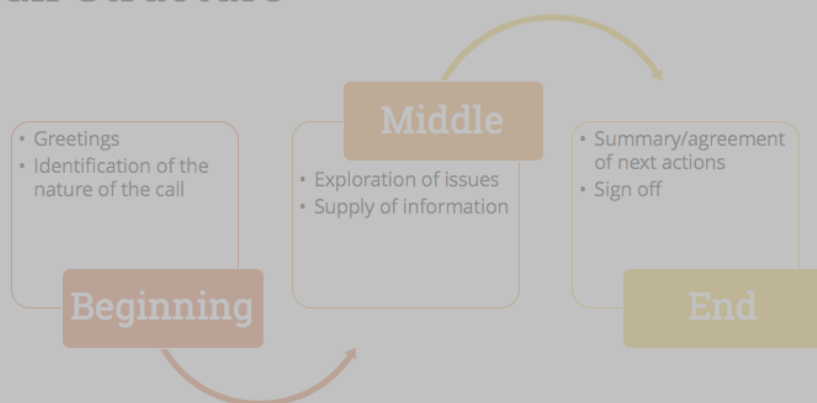
Step 2: Now think about how these calls made you think and feel about the experience and the company you were calling.

Session Three: Call Structure and Telephone Etiquette (Page 5-6, Slide 4 & 5) (10 minutes)

Explain to the group that whilst email has become a key communication tool, relationships are not built via Outlook. Fortunately, a great deal of external communication within a business still happens over the telephone, so it is important to be aware of the structure of all calls and appropriate telephone etiquette to ensure we create the impression we identified in the last session (refer back using Group 1 words) and to ensure we don't make any caller think and feel negatively (refer back to Group 2 outputs).

Using the notes on pages 5 and 6, talk through each of the following points:

Call Structure



1. Identify yourself
2. Speak slowly and clearly
3. Listen actively and avoid distractions
4. Ask before placing on hold
5. Don't interrupt
6. Give verbal prompts that you are listening
7. Don't give the impression you are rushed
8. Agree next steps
9. Take multiple numbers and get time options if required to call back
10. Smile!

Finally, remind the group that our aim is to always try to leave people pleased to have spoken to us!

Session Four: Getting Your Message Across (Page 7, Slide 6) (5 minutes)

Explain that when communicating over the telephone, our tone of voice has a huge impact on the message we convey – even more important than the words we use.

For example, we can say all the right words and sentences but still come across as unfriendly or unprofessional.

When we communicate with someone face to face, we have the advantage of being able to read their body language as well as listening to the words they say and the way they say it. Obviously, when we are speaking on the telephone the body language element is removed.

Discuss the graphs and percentages below – highlighting the very low % linked to the words spoken.

Face to Face Communication

- 55% Body Language
- 38% Tone of Voice
- 7% Words used

Telephone Communication

- 82% Tone of Voice
- 18% Words Used

We are now going to look at how we can improve our vocal quality and ensure our tone of voice is friendly and professional.

Session Five: Vocal Quality (Page 8-9, Slide 7) (20 minutes)

VESPA is a great acronym to remember when speaking on the telephone:

Review the notes on page 8.

- **V**olume
- **E**nergy
- **S**peed
- **P**itch
- **A**rticulation

Use the following activities to practice VESPA:



Pairs Activity (5 mins):

Get the group to work in pairs. To warm up the vocal chords, each person should pick one of the follow phrases to say out loud several times to their partner. They should keep repeating the phrase getting faster and faster until they become unclear. Make sure each person gets a go at doing the exercise with at least two different phrases.

- The blue bluebird blinks.
- Three free throws.
- What time does the wristwatch strap shop shut?
- Strange strategic statistics.
- Freshly fried flying fish, freshly fried flesh.



Pairs Activity (10 mins):

Now they are warmed up, hand out the Talking on the Telephone VESPA Activity and ask each pair to have a go at reading the script (or part of) to their partner a couple of times. *Note: You may want to use some company literature instead of the script).*

After the first reading, the listener should give them feedback based on VESPA and the 'speaker' should repeat the exercise trying to improve their vocal quality based on the feedback received.

Now swap roles and repeat.

Now ask each person to complete the score sheet on page 9. They should score themselves based on the feedback they received from their partner during this exercise and also consider their normal speech and vocal quality.

Ask the group to share a few examples of improvements they intend to make.

Session Six: The Importance of Positive Language (Page 10, Slide 8) (5 minutes)

Explain to the group that although our words only account for 18% of our message, it is still important for us to consider the words and phrases we are using to ensure we sound confident, positive and keen to help.

Review the positive and negative language phrases on page 10, emphasising the positive words highlighted in yellow.



Pairs Activity (5 mins):

Working in pairs, ask the delegates to complete the exercise on the bottom of page 10.

Here are a few examples of more positive statements:

Negative Words/Statement	Positive Statement
"I'll try to look into it"	"I will certainly look into it"
"I'll see what I can do"	"I will do this right away"
"Maybe we could speak later?"	"I will definitely call you back later today"
"Perhaps you would like"	"I recommend you..."
"It may be possible....."	"I am certain it's possible..."

Session Seven: Listening using: 'CARES' (Page 11, Slide 9) (5 minutes)

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 customer.

Listening actively can be a real challenge when working in a busy open plan environment where we are surrounded by distractions.

There is another Boost Workshop dedicated to 'Listening and Questioning Skills', but we are going to quickly review a simple process to help improve your listening skills.

'**CARES**' help us to remember the process for listening actively:

- **C**oncentrate (clear your mind, focus on the call, avoid distractions)
- **A**cknowledge (use the persons name, use words and sounds to show you are listening)
- **R**ecord (take notes and transfer them onto MSD etc)
- **E**ncourage and Empathise (use open questions and encouraging statements to get the caller to open up)
- **S**ummarise (ensure you refer back to key points, review actions and agree follow up)

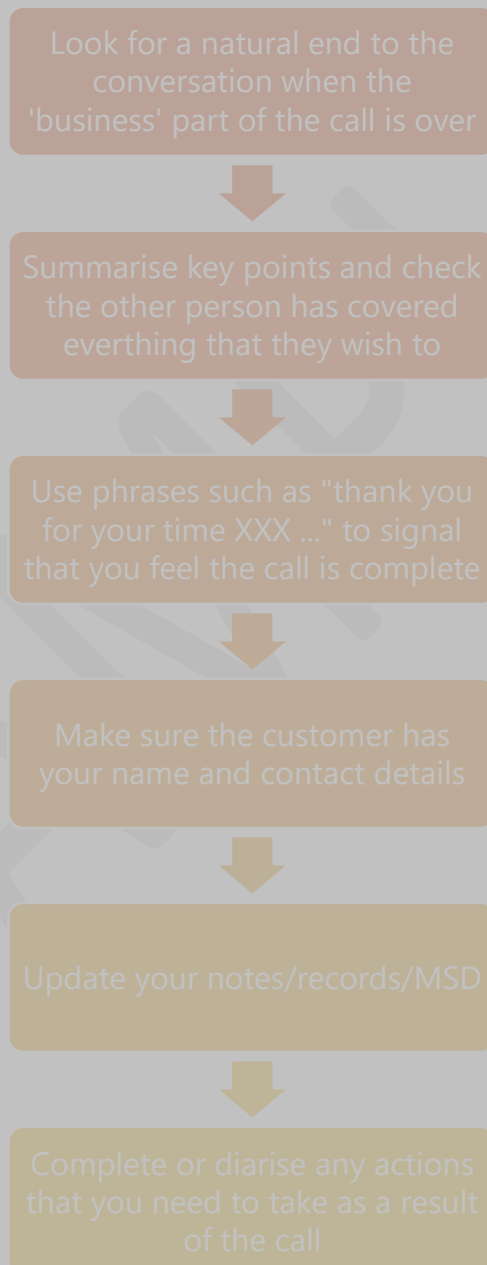
Hold a group discussion on methods they use to listen actively when on the phone when:

- The office is particularly busy with lots of background noise and distractions
- You have lots to do and the caller is a slow speaker

Session Eight: Closing a Call (Page 12, Slide 10) (5 minutes)

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:

Review the following 6 steps:



Session Nine: Call Analysis (Page 13-14, Slide 11-14 AR) (20 minutes)

Explain that we are now going to review everything we have covered by listening and analysing a couple of generic recorded calls. The calls are made to a hotel by a potential customer who wants to book a training event.

As we listen to Call #1 (slide 12) – please make notes on page 13. After Call #1 hold a group discussion to share thoughts on how the call was handled by the receptionist.

Now play Call #2 (slide 14) – ask group to make notes on page 14. Again, hold a group discussion and review the call pulling out key points against the points covered in Structuring a Call in Session 5 and VESPA in Session 3.

Structuring a Call:

- Identify yourself
- Speak slowly and clearly
- Listen actively and avoid distractions
- Ask before placing on hold
- Don't interrupt
- Give verbal prompts that you are listening
- Don't give the impression you are rushed
- Agree next steps
- Take multiple numbers and get time options if required to call back
- Smile!

VESPA:

- Volume
- Energy
- Speed
- Pitch
- Articulation

Boost Wrap-Up and 'Commit to Action' (Page 15, Slide 15) (10 mins)

Take the last ten minutes for a quick review and to answer any questions the group may have.

- Hand out 'Commit to Action' sheets and ask each person to complete and hand back to you. Explain that these will be passed to the relevant line manager for follow up in a few days.
- Hand out personalised Completion Certificates that should be retained for CPD purposes.
- Remind and encourage them to create the Personal Action Plan on page 15 following this workshop.
- Thank the group.