

Vinyl Fence *Tip*

Practical and Proven Ways to Sell More Vinyl Fences

From your friends at National Vinyl Products

How To Effectively Talk On The Phone



We all have a few business phone call horror stories!

There are the times when we have been placed on endless holds or disconnected after we waited through a long line of other callers. And there are the times we simply cannot reach the right person to get our questions answered.

Even though we conduct much of our business online these days, there are still plenty of times we need to speak with someone to resolve an issue or to handle a transaction. In each of the above scenarios, the business in question had a serious breach of phone etiquette.

What happened to phone etiquette?

Phone etiquette is a fancy term for using good manners when you are on the phone. Although we should strive to use good manners in all our dealings, they are especially important on the phone.

A study said that communication is 7% the words we use, 38% our tone of voice and 55% our body language.

When you are speaking on an audio-only call, you and the other person do not have the advantage of seeing each other's facial expressions or reading other forms of body language. We only have words and the tone of those words to go on, so using the right ones is essential to positive communication.

The person who answers the phone at your fencing business often provides potential customers with their first impression of your company. When someone from your company makes a call to follow up a lead, it is their phone etiquette that can make or break the sale.

Phone etiquette is too important to leave to chance. You should make sure all your team members know how to make and answer business calls in a friendly and professional manner. Here are 11 phone etiquette rules to serve as a guide.

1. Use a professional greeting

Train your staff to answer your phones with a greeting, the name of your company, and their own name. An example is "Hello! Springfield Fence Company. This is Robin." You can ask them to add a "How may I help you?" if you like.

When they are placing a call, your employees should begin with a similar greeting and then quickly add the purpose of their call. An example is, "Hello, this is Robin with Springfield Fence Company. I am calling to schedule the installation of your new vinyl fence."

2. Maintain a cheerful tone

Ask your employees to speak to your callers as if they are speaking to a friend. One way to keep your tone upbeat is to smile while you talk. The practice just naturally makes you sound more cheerful. It's not necessary to overdo it; just ask your team to focus on being pleasant and accommodating with callers.

3. Avoid rushing the call

Aim to speak clearly and calmly when you make business phone calls. If you are someone who tends to speak rapidly in face-to-face conversations, aim to slow down your temp on the phone so that you can be better understood. Give the other person your full attention, and do not interrupt them when they are speaking. When it comes to telephone calls, effectiveness is more important than efficiency.



4. Listen more than you talk

Experts say that poor communicators mostly listen only enough to gauge what they will say in response rather than to really understand what the other person is saying. Good phone etiquette involves taking the time and energy to listen to a customer's concerns or requests carefully. Take notes if necessary, and then do your best to find a resolution to their concerns.

5. Keep the caller informed

If you need to transfer the person to someone else or put them on a brief hold, make sure you explain what you are doing and when you will be back.

Here is an example. "I am going to need to check to see if we have that type of fence in stock. It should only take a few minutes. Would you like to hold while I do that? Or "I need to transfer you to our installer. If he doesn't pick up, you can leave a message on his voicemail, or you can press "4" to come back to this number, and I will take your message."

6. Make people happy

Even if you are completely pleasant and helpful on the phone, you can still encounter rude callers. It is important to have some phrases in your proverbial pocket to use on these occasions.

If the customer is upset that their order has been delayed, you could say, "I am so sorry you have had to wait so long. I completely understand why you are upset." When you show empathy, you can often dissolve the tension. After the customer has become calmer, you can then brainstorm solutions to their problem.

7. Limit speakerphones

If you want your team to be able to multi-task while on the phone, provide them with hands-free headsets. Speakerphone conversations rarely seem personal, and background noise can make clear communication challenging.

8. Ask questions

If you do not fully understand a caller's concern, ask questions until you do understand. Or jot down a few

notes as you talk, including the person's name and number so you can call them back if necessary.

9. Be mindful of your time

If you are not able to resolve a customer's issues at the time of a call or if the other person simply wants to keep talking (it happens), find friendly ways to end the conversation.

Initiate a follow-up plan. It could be something like, "I will speak with the manager when she returns, and either she or I will call you back later today." Or for a sales call, "I am sorry I wasn't able to help you today. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me."

10. Be mindful of personal calls

Do you have a policy for how your employees should handle personal calls (or personal screen time in general) during work hours? If not, here are a few guidelines to consider:

- Put your personal phone on silent while you are working.
- Keep your phone out of sight to prevent distractions.
- If you must make a personal call during work hours, find a private location away from co-workers and customers.

11. Answer quickly

Answer the phone quickly within a ring or two. Do not let it go to voicemail, if possible. Consider having your main line forward to a cell phone.

The more things change, the more they stay the same. Good phone etiquette is still a cornerstone of running an efficient and successful business. A phone conversation often forms the first impression a customer has of your fencing company.

What's more is that outstanding customer service over the phone can help you stand out from your competitors. Do not leave this important sales and marketing tool to chance. Practice these strategies for good phone etiquette with your team today.



If you have questions about this newsletter or marketing in general, e-mail NVP's marketing expert: marketing@nvpfence.com.



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