



**YOUR TELEPHONE VOICE  
AND PERSONALITY**

ISSUED BY THE AUSTRALIAN POST OFFICE

## Face-to-face or phone-to-phone?

Many of the differences between telephone communication and face-to-face communication are self-evident. Just as many, however, are not so evident. But whether the contact is face-to-face or phone-to-phone both involve a person-to-person approach. Both are — or should be — **PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS**.

Some people tend to think that the telephone is impersonal, with the result that they use it in an impersonal way.

Because they can't see what's going on at the other end of the line . . . because they are distant and remote from the

place of action . . . their attitude towards the telephone may be that it is a substitute, a compromise. This attitude will foster only one thing — second rate results.

The telephone is a method of **PERSONAL COMMUNICATION** with certain unique advantages that are very desirable and can be quite productive.

This booklet advises how to project your voice and personality by telephone. It is mainly directed at today's business world, but we feel sure that it will help all interested in **PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS**.

## Improve your voice quality

Your voice can convey more than most people imagine. A voice can reveal insecurity. It can display annoyance. It can repel and discourage. On the other hand, a voice can smile. It can express confidence. It can inspire and motivate.

So give some thought to improving your voice quality. Is your vocal expression monotonous? Does your voice lack colour and variety? Just being aware of the deficiencies in your voice quality is a step in the right direction. Once faults are recognised corrective action can be taken.

Here are some ways to make your telephone personality more interesting:—  
Be enthusiastic about your conversation — try to reflect some of the interest you feel.

Concentrate on the conversation. If your thoughts are elsewhere, your listener will soon detect this lack of interest in your voice.

Approach your call after proper rest. Fatigue and mental stress tend to dull your voice. You may be sitting but a tired body makes a tired voice.

Make a real effort to vary the pitch of your voice. Place emphasis on certain words, phrases, ideas. Hammer home a point. Whisper a confidence. Let your inflection rise and fall.

### **The fundamentals of good telephone personality**

Use clear phrasing, non-technical terminology and natural vocabulary in telephone conversations.

Be sincere, friendly, considerate and responsive.

Do not sound aloof, mechanical, unreliable or expressionless.

**The Challenge** is to convert these fundamentals into actual practice, translating them into specific suggestions and situations.

The following pages give some answers.

### **Non-technical terminology**

*What do we mean by non-technical vocabulary?*

Conversational words that most people would understand.

Avoidance of professional jargon and special terms common only among people in a certain business or profession.

*What are some examples of technical terms that might puzzle other people?*

Form designations, internal reports.

Long, technical words used around the office.

Abbreviations or contractions used for convenience.

We must also bear in mind that what is technical to a new associate may be “plain language” to a regular acquaintance. Also, some people are faster on the uptake than others . . . a lot depends on their background and experience.

However, it may be unavoidable for you to use a technical term. In that case you will have to educate your listener . . . tell him what it means, so that it can be used and understood in the future.

Technical terms are relative and mean different things to different people.

### **Natural vocabulary**

*What do we mean by natural vocabulary?*

One that fits the personality.

One that strikes the ear as right, easy and comfortable.

One that sounds sincere and real, rather than “put on” or pretentious.

*What are some specific examples that keep the vocabulary from sounding natural?*

Big or unusual words used in an effort to impress or “show off”.

Words spoken too deliberately. The feeling is created that remarks are “canned” or memorised.

Words too technical to be understood by the person at the other end of the line.

*Big Words?*

Some people use big words naturally.

Words that are too big for some people are perfectly understandable to others.

Some people resent the use of big words. They might interpret it as superficial, a “cover” for lack of knowledge.

### **Slang and colloquial expressions**

*For:*

Allows for a friendly, relaxed contact.

Can be used to indicate “know-how” and experience.

Helps avoid “talking-down” or “lecturing” customers.

Seems more natural, less rehearsed.

*Against:*

Might be interpreted as indifference or disrespect.

Might work against your business image and reputation.

Careless speech could suggest equally careless job performance.

Could promote overfriendliness, resulting in too much socializing, small talk, and wasted time.

### **Conclusions**

There is no hard-and-fast rule for NATURAL VOCABULARY, although we have a broad principle:—

Understand the other person, understand the climate of your conversation. Determine how much colloquial or technical language to use in the light of how effective you think it would be in this particular instance.

Talk on the basis of how much you know or can discover about the person you are communicating with: his personality, attitudes, background.

And now let us consider more specifically the ways and means of improving **Voice Quality**.

### **How can we project a sincere quality over the telephone?**

Use natural vocabulary and tone of voice.

Keep your voice clear, inflection up and tone bright.



Avoid extravagant claims and obvious exaggerations.

Relate what you are saying to the other person's needs and point of view.

#### **How can we project a friendly quality?**

Use tone and manner that are warm and cordial . . . smile!

Identify yourself, as well as the other person, with warmth and interest.

Avoid trite or "canned" approaches that sound impersonal.

Give indications (where possible and natural in conversation) that you remember things about the other person — his business, his family, etc.

Do not be formal or inflexible.

Don't rush . . . pace yourself to the other person's tempo.

Be attentive . . . respond to what is said to you.

Be courteous.

#### **How do you show consideration during a telephone call?**

Listen to the speaker's reactions and build on them.

React in ways that show you know and understand how things are **from the other person's point of view**.

If the called person is pressed for time, arrange to call at a time more convenient to him.

#### **On a telephone call, how do you show that you are responsive?**

Answer questions.

Get your facts straight — ask ques-

tions.

Do not sidestep or avoid points raised.

Listen patiently, allowing the other person enough time to have his say.

Do not do all the talking.

#### **How does one avoid sounding aloof?**

Speak clearly and directly into the mouthpiece.

Listen attentively, and contribute to the conversation.

Notice your tone of voice . . . sound interested.

Avoid repeated expressions ("Uh-huh" . . . "Is that so" . . . etc.).

#### **How to keep from sounding mechanical**

Guard against a tired tone of voice, giving the impression of someone bored with doing the same job again and again . . . monotone **is** mechanical.

Vary your wording and phrasing from call to call.

Practice saying the same thing in different ways.

Let your delivery develop, as much as possible, out of the response of the other person.

#### **Some ways to avoid sounding unreliable**

Keep the discussion orderly and easy to follow.

Ask for clarification where necessary.

Do not jump unexpectedly from one point to another, or change the subject abruptly.

Be honest about admitting and correcting errors.

Do not make promises or offers you know are impossible to keep.

Avoid exaggerated claims or statements.

**Ways to avoid an expressionless manner on the telephone**

Avoid speaking in a monotone.

Vary your inflection, as well as the volume and tempo of your speech.

Do not sound as if you are reading something.

Always listen to what you are saying and what it means, especially to the other person.

Do not speed or rush over points familiar to you, but not to the other person.

Avoid soft, low pitch speech . . . it is hard to hear and sounds tired.

For additional copies of this booklet contact the Assistant Director, Telecommunications, (Service Advisory Section), G.P.O., or your District Telephone Manager.