

KEYS FOR BETTER TELEPHONE COMMUNICATION

FUNDAMENTALS

Prepare carefully for each call

Define your goal, your approach and your conversational plan. If necessary, write it down for your orientation → «Content of the call»

Call when you are relaxed and in a good mood

Begin with an easy telephone call

Prepare the documents

- Dossier, notes
- Calendar, agenda, block of notes, writing utensil

Avoid making too many telephone calls one after the other. Plan for relatively short telephone calls

Select the best time for each call, e.g.

- Friday morning
- 3 days after sending a letter
- Not before 9:00 a.m.

Relax before or between the calls by

- Standing up and breathing deeply
- Walking around and thinking about something else

PREPARATORY WORK FOR THE CALLS

Define your goal, your approach and your conversational plan. If necessary, write it down for your orientation → «Content of the call».

The first 10 to 15 seconds will determine the rest of your conversation. Your first sentence determines your image (your vocal image) which will either awaken the interest of your conversational partner or stifle it.

A good conversation starter consists of three parts

1. Personal introduction
2. Creation of a positive contact
3. Awakening interest in your call

Be succinct and precise. Don't say: «I wanted to ask whether... », but rather: «I'm calling because ...»

Try to «loosen up» the situation for your conversational partner. You can do this in different ways:

- With a friendly comment
- Stating the name of a mutual friend / acquaintance
- Thanking your conversational partner politely for his time
- Clearly explaining the purpose of your call

The beginning of a call is more effective if you can make reference to a mutual acquaintance who has recommended you and you can give the reason for the recommendation.

CONTENT AND PURPOSE OF THE CALL

It is important to keep in mind that the only communication vehicle is your voice, i.e. your words. Thus, you must carefully select your words and sentences.

Your first call demands the most preparatory work. The more often you make calls, the better your technique will become. You will become more self-confident and more persuasive.

The main goal of your preparatory work for a telephone call is to save time – your time and the time of your conversational partner. You will give a professional impression and create a positive atmosphere.

There are five phases of the preparatory work for a telephone call

- Definition of your goal
- Definition of a good conversation starter
- Definition of your arguments
- Definition of your questions
- A confirmation and expressing thanks

A successful telephone call consists of

- The personal introduction
- An initial comment to "loosen things up"
- The reason for your call
- The explanation as to who you are and what you want
- Short questions
- A confirmation and expressing thanks
- Possibly a confirmation letter and a letter to express your thanks

Define the purpose of your call

- Follow-up to a letter
- Introducing yourself before you write a letter
- Agreeing upon an appointment
- Requesting information
- Giving information
- Updating of facts
- Maintaining contact

In general, the goal of a telephone call is a combination of some of the aforementioned points.

DURING THE CALL

Body	Pay attention to your body position. You should have a relaxed, but dynamic posture: Relaxed stomach, shoulders down, head facing straight ahead, sitting firmly upon your chair.
Breathing	Inhale through your nose, exhale through your mouth. Avoid pausing between individual sentences so that your conversational partner cannot make any objections.
Smile	Your voice will be warmer and more pleasant.
Voice volume	The key to this is correct breathing. Before making a call, breathe deeply and slowly with the diaphragm.
Pace	Speak more slowly in order to be certain that your idea was understood before you go on to the next idea.
Articulation	Speak clearly. The telephone can muffle or alter certain sounds.
Intonation	Avoid speaking in a monotone and do emphasise important words.
Clarity	Select simple and precise words in order to facilitate comprehension because gestures and non-verbal signals are missing.
Approval	Ask your questions in such a manner that the answers to be expected would be positive. This will more likely result in a «yes» if you try to set up an appointment.
To avoid	Delete negative words from your vocabulary such as, for example: «always», «never».
Active listening	Don't interrupt, but rather allow your conversational partner to know that you are listening to him by occasionally saying: «Yes, I understand», «aha».

- Repetition** Briefly repeat your conversational partner's statements in order to show that you have correctly understood. This will encourage him to continue speaking.
- Visualisation** Describe what you are doing: "I'm just taking out my notebook, here it is" so that you achieve a visual presence with your conversational partner although he cannot see you.
- Time expenditures** Be succinct and precise. On the telephone, the time appears to be longer and you could be disturbing your conversational partner. Remember that the goal of your call is to receive an interview.

ENDING THE CALL

Repeat the most important information and that you will be following up in the future.

Before you hang up,

- Confirm the next step, e.g. the date, time and place of your interview. Thank your conversational partner for his interest and assistance.
- Never show your irritation or displeasure when you receive an unpleasant response or a rejection. When this happens, remain polite.
- Direct contact by telephone without a prior introductory letter can be very effective, but it requires very extensive practice in the art of making telephone calls.
- A telephone call must awaken interest: Firstly, the interest of the person who answers the telephone (telephone operator or secretary) and, secondly, the interest of the person whom you are calling. Mentioning the name of a mutual acquaintance is a good start. A "cold" call without a recommendation is more difficult and doesn't always work. Also keep in mind that there are people who won't want to speak with you even if you are good on the telephone.

AFTER THE CALL

Record the date and result of each call. Plan a follow-up for each call.

CALLING AFTER HAVING SENT A LETTER

After you have introduced yourself, it is recommended that you open the conversation with three questions

- «Did you receive my letter»? → If the answer is negative, ask your conversational partner whether he would have a few minutes of time and briefly summarise the content of your letter (which he probably did indeed receive).
- «Is the reason for my letter clear»? → If the answer is negative, find out what is unclear and explain it in other words.
- «Would you have 15 – 20 minutes of time for me next week»? → If the answer is negative, say: «I know that your time is valuable. Would the week after next be possible»? If the answer is again negative, request that he listen to you a few more minutes and immediately ask the questions which you would want to ask in a personal interview. By so doing, you may perhaps still succeed in awakening interest.