

Client
Fairmont

Title
Controlling Customers' Inferences – Telephone

Purpose
Training material instructing call center employees how to control customers' inferences using their voice, words and equipment

Prepared By
Jason Trost

CONTROLLING CUSTOMERS' INFERENCES

You can control the inferences customers draw about you, the bank, and bank products, policies, and procedures while on the telephone by effectively using the three nonverbal telephone communication tools:

- ✓ **Voice**
- ✓ **Words**
- ✓ **Equipment**

VOICE

The first major tool you have in controlling the inferences others draw during your telephone communication is **VOICE**. Your voice sets the tone of the conversation through your:

- ✓ **Projection**
- ✓ **Articulation**
- ✓ **Rate**
- ✓ **Tone**

Projection

Proper projection is setting the volume of your voice so that it is pleasant to the ear and easy to understand. Your volume should not be so loud that it offends the listener nor so soft that you cannot be understood.

Projecting your voice does not mean yelling or simply adding more air for a “breathy” quality. Anyone can have a speaking voice that resonates and carries simply by following a few basic guidelines:

- ✓ **Sit upright, feet evenly spaced, weight evenly distributed.**
- ✓ **Keep shoulders square, eyes straight ahead, chin tucked in slightly.**
- ✓ **Relax.**
- ✓ **Inhale to fill the lungs.**
- ✓ **Exhale to push the air out of the lungs.**
- ✓ **Volume should be pleasant and easy to understand.**

Articulation

Articulation refers to how we enunciate and pronounce the words we speak. Proper articulation on the telephone requires that we speak distinctly so that the listener can clearly hear and understand each spoken word.

Americans are notorious for mumbling and speaking through a fairly closed mouth. Anyone who has ever studied a foreign language can probably attest to how much more the mouth works when speaking a language other than English. Proper articulation can be achieved by following a few basic guidelines:

- ✓ **Listen to yourself critically and become aware of your current speech qualities.**
- ✓ **Open your mouth fully.**
- ✓ **Clearly enunciate syllables.**
- ✓ **Give weight to words of importance.**
- ✓ **Notice how the lips, tongue, and teeth work together to create different sounds.**
- ✓ **Work to create a “standard” sound.**

Rate

Proper rate involves setting the speed of your speech so that it is easy to understand, with enough variation to avoid monotony and proper pausing to avoid confusion. The speed of your presentation will control the tempo of the conversation. If you speak too slowly, the conversation will become listless; if you speak too fast, the listener may not be able to process all the words being spoken, losing the meaning.

The challenge with rate is that most Americans speak too quickly. We live in a fast-paced society in which a great deal of information is communicated to people who feel that they never have enough time. To successfully utilize rate, we need to find a balance. A rate that is suitable to our telephone communication can be achieved by following a few basic guidelines:

- ✓ **Slow down!**
- ✓ **Keep the conversation progressing at a rate appropriate to the listener's understanding.**
- ✓ **Treat every conversation as if it were the first time you were having it.**
- ✓ **Take extra time for new information.**
- ✓ **Use a slower rate with words of importance.**

Tone

Tone of voice refers more to the thoughts and feelings of the speaker than to the mechanical aspects of voice previously discussed. It is reflective of the emotions and attitude of the speaker, often without the speaker's awareness. As humans, our feelings are quite easily and naturally expressed through our tone of voice. An acceptable tone for our telephone communication can be achieved by following a few basic guidelines:

- ✓ **Be aware of your current state of mind.**
- ✓ **Have positive inferences regarding your service and sales role.**
- ✓ **Have positive inferences about customers.**
- ✓ **Have positive inferences about bank products.**
- ✓ **Know what you're talking about.**
- ✓ **Understand the words you use with customers.**

Your objective is to use the nonverbal tools of voice to engage the listener. Information will be conveyed more clearly when this is accomplished successfully. Focus on employing these skills and actively using words to express what is being said rather than blankly reciting the lines of a script.