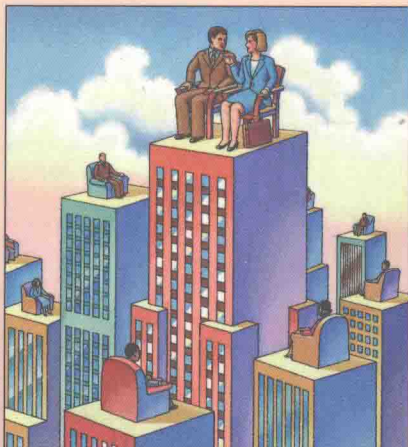


BUSINESS

Skills

EXPRESS SERIES



TELEPHONE SKILLS AT WORK

Judith E. FISHER

Telephone Skills at Work

JUDITH E. FISHER, Ph.D.

The Business Skills Express Series



Boston, Massachusetts Burr Ridge, Illinois Dubuque, Iowa
Madison, Wisconsin New York, New York San Francisco, California St. Louis, Missouri

McGraw-Hill

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Fisher, Judith E.

Using the telephone for business results / Judith E. Fisher.

p. cm.—(Business skills express)

ISBN 1-55623-858-4

1. Telephone in business. I. Title.

HF5541.T4F58 1994

651.7'3—dc20

93-7

Printed in the United States of America

7 8 9 10 11 12 ML 12 11 10 9 8 7

Telephone Skills at Work

PREFACE

Q: “What does it take to run a business?”

A: “A telephone and someone to use it effectively!”

This may be an exaggeration, but it clearly points to the facts. The telephone is the most popular, most widely used business tool. It's no surprise that telephone skills are critical for success in business.

This book focuses on business telephone skills. Whether you work the phone all day—taking orders, selling, handling requests—or simply use the telephone for routine business communications, this book has something for you. If you're new to the business world, it can help you learn the essential telephone skills you'll need on the job. If you're experienced in business, it can help you refine your telephone skills and make your work easier.

Chapters 1 and 2 discuss the role of the telephone in business and the challenges of communicating via the telephone. Chapter 3 examines three key telephone skills: listening, questioning, and speaking. Chapter 4 offers business telephone tips. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 focus on handling various types of incoming calls. Chapter 8 deals with outbound calls for sales and service. The book ends with a review test and recommendations for sharpening your skills.

This book is designed to be used in many different ways. You might be using it as part of a training session at work, or you might be using it in an off-site seminar, or workshop. In those situations, your group leader will give you specific directions on how to use this book.

You might be using this book as part of your own personal job-skills improvement plan. The book is designed for independent self-study, where you are in control of the learning experience. There's no one looking over your shoulder. You decide which chapters of the book you want to tackle. You decide when, where, and how long to study.

To make the most of this learning experience:

- Schedule some uninterrupted time. Set aside half an hour, or tell yourself to finish a chapter you've selected.
- Eliminate distractions.
- Work through this book with a pen or pencil. Read the text passages and do the exercises. Write your answers and record your thoughts in the book. Take notes in the margins or highlight important ideas.
- Ask yourself these kinds of questions: How does this idea fit in with my job? How can I apply this technique? How could I adapt these ideas or techniques to fit my job?

Make the most of this opportunity to put your telephone skills to work for you!

Judith E. Fisher

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Judith E. Fisher, Ph. D., is President of Education and Training Consultants, Inc., in Riverview, Florida. As a consultant, Dr. Fisher specializes in design, development, and production of education and training materials for the adult learner in business and industry. Her client roster includes Hilton Hotels, Inter-Continental Hotels, Marriott Hotels, MCI, Northern Telecom, Xerox, and IBM. Dr. Fisher is the recipient of several awards, including the National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship and appointment to Outstanding Educators of America. She completed her doctoral work in Instructional Design and Development.

About the Business Skills Express Series

This expanding series of authoritative, concise, and fast-paced books delivers high quality training on key business topics at a remarkably affordable cost. The series will help managers, supervisors, and front line personnel in organizations of all sizes and types hone their business skills while enhancing job performance and career satisfaction.

Business Skills Express books are ideal for employee seminars, independent self-study, on-the-job training, and classroom-based instruction. Express books are also convenient-to-use references at work.

Self-Assessment

How do you feel about your business telephone skills? Here's an opportunity to analyze your strengths and weaknesses. Read each statement; then beside each statement, mark the appropriate space. Be honest with yourself!

	Almost Always	Sometimes	Almost Never
1. I answer the telephone promptly.	_____	_____	_____
2. I have a standard way of answering the phone at work.	_____	_____	_____
3. I avoid making personal calls from my business telephone.	_____	_____	_____
4. I identify myself when I answer the phone at work.	_____	_____	_____
5. I try to make my calls brief and businesslike.	_____	_____	_____
6. I have a process model that I use to help handle problem callers.	_____	_____	_____
7. I am an excellent listener.	_____	_____	_____
8. I speak clearly and carefully in telephone conversations.	_____	_____	_____
9. My speaking voice is pleasant.	_____	_____	_____
10. I am a skilled questioner.	_____	_____	_____
11. I use the telephone every day to speak with customers or clients.	_____	_____	_____
12. I know how to overcome the challenges and limitations of telephone communications.	_____	_____	_____
13. I can comfortably use all of the features of the telephone system at work.	_____	_____	_____
14. I use a consistent form for taking telephone messages.	_____	_____	_____
15. I always organize my thoughts before I make a call.	_____	_____	_____

As you probably surmised, there are no right or wrong answers. Your goal is to change all your "no" responses to "yes" responses by the time you've worked through this book. Good luck!

CONTENTS

Self-Assessment	xiii
Chapter 1	1
Business Use of the Telephone	
Chapter 2	7
The Challenge of Telephone Communication	
Chapter 3	15
Key Telephone Skills	
Chapter 4	29
Business Telephone Tips	
Chapter 5	39
Handling Incoming Calls	
Chapter 6	49
Handling Customer Orders	

Chapter 7	55
Handling Customer Problems and Complaints	
Chapter 8	71
Handling Outbound Calls	
Telephone Skills Inventory	81
Post-Test	85

Business Use of the Telephone

This chapter will help you to:

- Describe the importance of the telephone in business.
- Analyze your own business telephone use.

THE ROLE OF THE TELEPHONE IN BUSINESS

The telephone, invented in 1876 by Alexander Graham Bell, made an immediate and tremendous impact on society. Communication has never been the same since.

From Luxury to Necessity

The first long-distance call in 1878—a call from Boston to Providence, only 45 miles away—sparked the development of better telephone technologies. The arrival of mechanical telephone switching in 1879 reduced dependence on human operators. Telephone wires linking house to house and business to business suddenly became status symbols. The invention of the telephone literally changed the world.

It's been more than a century since Bell's first telephone. The telephone has evolved from a status symbol into a utility. We no longer think of the telephone as a luxury—it is a necessity. Fast, direct, and convenient, the telephone has become the most popular, most widely used means of electronic communication in the world.

The Telephone in Business

Which is the most popular means of communication in business: a meeting, a business letter, a facsimile transmission, or a computer data transfer? None! It's the telephone!

Billions of business telephone calls are made each year. It's hard to imagine a business operating effectively without the telephone. When telephone service is interrupted—even for a short time—businesses complain loudly about their losses.

Without telephones:

- Orders would be received by mail or delivery services.
- Customers would have to travel to the business location just to ask questions or to get information.
- Workers on different floors or in different buildings would have to meet face-to-face for every discussion or send endless rounds of memos.



Without the telephone, business would be a mess. Commerce would literally grind to a halt. The slowness of written communications and the time and costs associated with in-person meetings would soon become intolerable. In fact, we've had reliable business telephone service for so long that it has become an integral part of the way we do business.

Think about It**1**

Take a minute to think about your job and your business use of the telephone.

1. How many times during an average workday do you use the telephone? _____

2. What kinds of business activities do you typically handle over the telephone? (Refer to the list in the Chapter Checkpoints for some ideas.)

3. Imagine you are going to be promoted. Think about the job or position you'd like to have.

Will that job involve using the telephone? _____

Will it require more or less telephone use? _____

Will it involve other (or additional) business activities to be handled over the telephone? If so, make a list. _____

Chapter Checkpoints

Who Uses the Telephone?

Review the two lists below. Check off the job titles or positions that typically use the telephone on the job. Then check off the business activities that are done over the telephone.

Jobs/Positions

- ☐ Secretary.
- ☐ Data-entry clerk.
- ☐ Receptionist.
- ☐ Order entry clerk.
- ☐ Service representatives.
- ☐ President or chief executive.
- ☐ Sales representative.
- ☐ Billing clerk.
- ☐ Inventory manager.
- ☐ Bookkeeper.
- ☐ Payroll clerk.
- ☐ Accounts payable clerk.
- ☐ Financial officer.
- ☐ V. P. of manufacturing.
- ☐ V. P. of operations.
- ☐ Training director.
- ☐ Shipping clerk.
- ☐ Warehouse worker.
- ☐ Route salesperson.

Business Activities

- ☐ Taking dictation.
- ☐ Servicing customer accounts.
- ☐ Setting up appointments.
- ☐ Taking customer orders.
- ☐ Answering customer inquiries.
- ☐ Selling.
- ☐ Providing information.
- ☐ Setting up meetings.
- ☐ Handling complaints.
- ☐ Giving directions.
- ☐ Discussing issues.
- ☐ Leaving messages.
- ☐ Providing customer support.
- ☐ Clarifying situations.
- ☐ Sharing ideas.
- ☐ Confirming arrangements.
- ☐ Making travel plans.
- ☐ Ordering supplies.
- ☐ Obtaining vendor services.

Checkpoint Feedback

How many did you check off? You probably have the point.

What jobs or positions require telephone use? **All of them!**

What kinds of business activities are conducted over the phone? **All kinds!**

