

by The Public Relations Committee

DOES YOUR TELEPHONE PERSONALITY REFLECT YOUR TRUE IMAGE

Editor's Note: This is the first article in a series devoted to developing good Public Relations between the Ontario Land Surveyor and his client and also between our Association and the Public. It is offered as a guide without placing any limitation on individual initiative and ingenuity. It is hoped this series will assist in better understanding the important responsibilities which the Surveyor and our Association have toward the public. It is adapted from a publication prepared by a large public utility for guidance in dealing with the public.

Why Public Relations? What's It To You?

The answers are simple.

It is the client who determines the success of your practice. The balance of this success depends on the impression of Surveyors in the public mind.

Clients form their impressions of our Association through contacts with individual Surveyors. And some of us may not even realize that helping to build and maintain good public relations with the public is part of our professional responsibilities.

We cannot afford to have clients who are anything less than the best of friends. Friends can be depended upon for understanding, for sympathy, or for support. We need them all. If we make friends of our clients they will always give us a fair hearing. Our Association doesn't need anything more - but it can't settle for less. That's why we need PR.

PR On The Telephone

People with poor telephone habits don't intend being discourteous - they just don't know how to use the telephone properly. Yet you can make a friend out of a client, just by treating him or her courteously over the telephone. Telephone technique is not something that just happens - it has to be studied. And it depends on you - the people who answer the telephone - whether their reaction is favorable or otherwise.

Because the telephone plays such an important role in your everyday business transactions, this article will be well worthwhile if it helps you improve just one point of your technique.

Your voice carries the same authority to the client as if he were reading a formal letter signed by you. So the better your telephone technique, the better it is for you and your client. All a good telephone technique requires is the ability to use your voice to impress strangers with your personality.

The mechanics of talking over the telephone are simple - but you have to be conscious of them all the time to make sure you apply them. Hold the mouthpiece directly in front of your mouth, about half an inch away from your lips, and the customer can't help but hear you. That's if there are no obstructions - such as pencils, gum, candy, cigarets, pipes, cigars. Any person using these on a business call might do just as well by shouting out of the nearest window.

Aside from the mechanics, telephone technique depends entirely on your own vocal equipment and personality. There's no difficulty in developing an effective telephone voice - a few minutes spent each day on grooming your voice will pay off in improved speech habits. Once you remember to ask yourself how you sound on the phone - are you one of the "I see's", "uh-huh's", or "yes" men - you've taken the major step towards self-

improvement. A little effort and a lot of practice go a long way to clarify the muddiest speech. If you speak clearly, you won't have to worry about talking too fast.

As a professional, you are anxious to serve. And the person who really wants to serve, to be of help to a client, naturally expresses himself warmly and cheerfully. You've probably noticed that speech mannerism - such as "you know" - sounds quite ordinary in face-to-face conversation, but this becomes extremely noticeable over the phone. Your attitude is also amplified over the telephone. It comes out much more strongly to the person on the other end of the line than you realize.

We've all got our share of problems - but it's of the utmost importance that they don't overwhelm us so that we forget the cardinal rule of showing a genuine interest in other people and their needs.

Check Your Own Technique

No two telephone calls are ever the same. But there are certain things we can do to make sure we are using the telephone effectively. Check yourselves against these questions:

Do you usually lift the receiver before the second ring?

Do you speak clearly and in a conversational tone?

Do you identify yourself and your firm?

Does your voice have a smile in it?

Do you take care to get the client's name correctly and afterwards call him by name?

Do you try to size up your caller so that you may determine what approach will be the most helpful?

Do you answer callers' questions accurately and completely?

Do you close the conversation courteously and tactfully?

Do you allow the caller to hang up first?

Do you make the conversation as brief as possible, but not at the expense of seeming abrupt or to detract from the client's complete satisfaction that he has achieved the purpose of his call?

Are you helpful when a client or a fellow professional calls you by mistake?

Do you try to avoid interrupting?

Do you write down all messages and make a note of facts which you may need later?

Do you avoid technical jargon? This often confuses clients - they won't appreciate a discourse on the Surveys Act just to know they need a survey?

Do you regard the telephone as a friend - as a very efficient aid in winning customer goodwill?

Something to Think About

A "yes" to all these means you're the perfect telephone contact, - and nobody's that perfect. But if we bear all these things in mind, we have a wonderful opportunity of turning clients into friends.

It's not always easy. You'll still suffer sharp criticism from the never-ending stream of people whose main object in life seems to be to complain. But in the long run it will pay off, in benefits to the client, you, your business, and our Association.

The client will be left with the lingering impression, you are doing everything to give him the finest service. Your work will be more enjoyable and rewarding. You will have used another medium effectively to cement relations with the public you serve.