

# The death of the phone.

“When’s the last time you bought something over the phone?” I asked Sharron from our management team. “I don’t pick up the phone” she answered quickly. Have the days of the use of the good ole phone gone wayside? I wonder.

Invested an hour this morning explaining to someone who wants to set up call centers for one of my businesses that it’s a waste of time. He is advocating how this process works, and while exceptionally talented and knowledgeable on this front, the only person I know who has purchased anything from a phone in the last decade was a relative who is nearly ninety and we are still trying to remove her water filter system, and some kind of \$150 a month vacuum filter program.

I guess at the end of the day the #1 thing I see working these days for closing deals is word-of-mouth or face-to-face meetings.

*Flashback...*

It was a few months ago, when I was asked to coordinate a global teleconference for a deal that I was involved in. The founder of the company wanted me to use Skype and I explained that while Skype would be fine in a one-to-one scenario, that in having more than half a dozen people on the call from around the world that audio quality would be compromised. He didn’t listen, and between the one gentleman who was speaking on his phone outside of a pub to another one chewing food, or the other one getting alerts of messages while on the call, the phone call ranked a zero out of ten. Aware that nothing could be achieved (as predicted) in this call, I requested the call end. Ironically, two of the half a dozen people involved in the call deemed my termination of the call unprofessional.

Perhaps, they were right? Maybe the younger generation can chew, drink or work out in a gym and make a deal – I on the

other hand, simply cannot. I require good audio, a focused period to commit to the call plus a writing instrument to take notes. And in best case scenarios, an agenda is useful. And yes, this is a wee bit of sarcasm here because if no one can hear, no one can listen.

In 1994 I briefly worked as a soundman for live concerts. It doesn't matter why or how I ended up in clubs managing bands during this period of my life, but the point is that I learned the benefit of good sound. Better yet, the trick of a great sound engineer is every time a band member steps in front of the speakers, turn them up so that they hear themselves. The same holds true in a call. Our time is valuable, and we either want to speak or hear on a call so someone panting in a gym while commendable for their fitness goals like the one I had this morning – is quite undesirable.

Today, as an investment banker, an entrepreneur and publisher, I insist on having two land lines, and as often as possible, use these over my cell line to ensure that that I hear the speaker clearly.

The moral of this story? Well simply stated, sales by phone these days take more than a professional voice and real content – they take real moxie, courage and an understanding of multi-generational courtesies. Allow me to share my tips on how to use a telephone...

1. Never answer a phone call when you cannot take it. In my experience, no matter how lovely the gracious “I am unable to speak” commentary is, the person on the other end will never get off fast enough.
2. When dialling, always confirm that the other person on the other line can take your call and let them know once you have confirmed that they may speak how long you anticipate the conversation to be. For instance, I love teleconferences where someone on the phone explains that there is a “hard stop in 30-minutes”.

3. The length of any call should never exceed 20-minutes. If a call requires more than 20-minutes, it means that a face-to-face or Skype is required.
4. When a call is scheduled, do not take this call in front of a computer or television as its too easy to be distracted. For that matter, avoid eating or you will find yourself overeating or for some, overdrinking.
5. In training sales professionals over the years, I cannot stress enough the value of ensuring that you are in a good mood when you dial. Never call anyone when you're in a bad mood or frustrated as you will affect the other person negatively, and no one sells anything when you upset the other person.
6. Avoid speaker phones at all costs, the audio is never good.
7. This is my favorite tip as I fail to do this from years of discussions with brokers and this was pointed out to me a year ago...always say 'goodbye' or acknowledge the end of the call.

Indeed, many of us have 10,000 hours on phones, so share your comments please...but at the end of the day, everyone deserves to be heard.