



# HHBC

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# Telephone Skills



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And, unfortunately, the chances are that ...

# YOU

are unwittingly contributing to such fantastic statistics.

## THAT LOVE-HATE RELATIONSHIP

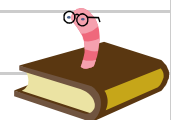
### **You love the telephone when it:**

- Saves you time
- Makes your job easier
- Keeps you in touch
- Helps you stay in control
- Makes you feel popular
- Keeps you up to date
- Gives you instant access to people and information
- Helps you to get things done
- Acts as a life-line

In fact, there are times when you feel you couldn't live without each other.

### **You hate the telephone when it:**

- Demands your attention
- Disrupts your train of thought
- Forces you to reorganize your plans
- Makes you late
- Increases the pressure
- Invades your space
- Wastes your time
- Doesn't give you a moment's peace



## ARE YOU ALWAYS A SUPER-USER?

Attitudes, telephone manners and techniques differ widely.

Maybe you're a Super-User:

**Attitude** - The phone is a useful tool that must earn its keep

**Manner** - Courteous and efficient

**Technique** - You know what you want to achieve

- You know what you want to say
- You get straight to the point and keep to it
- You know when to say goodbye

## OR SOMETIMES A USELESS USER?

**Attitude** - The phone is a threat or a worry

**Manner** - Timid and nervous

**Technique** - You have no technique

- You're unsure of what to say
- You clam up when faced with an answering machine

## YOUR TELEPHONE SKILLS

Have you ever:

- Continued doing other things while on the telephone ?
- Said you'd call back - and then didn't ?
- Let the phone ring unanswered ?
- Had to make a second call because you forgot to ask about...?
- Pretended you've been cut off ?
- Made faces to your colleagues about the person on the other end of the phone ?
- Lost callers while transferring them to another extension ?
- Claimed to be someone else ("Sorry, everyone seems to have gone home - I'm only the cleaner") ?
- Asked the caller to hold while you fetch a pen and paper ?
- Been caught out because you 'didn't confirm it in writing' ?
- Lifted a ringing receiver and replaced it at once ?
- Had to ask callers to repeat themselves because



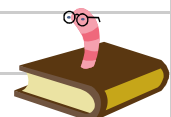
## SUPER-USER VS USELESS-USER

So, Super-User or Useless-User, which is it to be?

After all, what have you got to lose:

- Customers?
- Orders?
- Opportunities?
- Business?
- Credibility?
- Promotion?
- Your job?

The big question is, 'Can you afford not to be a SUPER-USER?'





# You as Communicator

## WHEN COMMUNICATION FAILS

- Mistakes are made
- Misunderstandings occur
- Time is wasted
- Problems are created
- Relationships are strained
- Orders are lost
- Information is incorrect
- Instructions become misleading
- Reality is distorted
- Confusion arises
- Opportunities are missed
- People complain
- Customers change suppliers



## When you're on the phone have you ever:

- Been asked to repeat something you've said?
- Lit up a cigarette or continued 'snacking'?
- Had to ask for information to be repeated because you weren't listening?
- Tried to make a sales call when you weren't feeling at your best?
- Misunderstood someone?
- Started to speak at the same time as the other person?
- Purposefully responded in a leisurely and laid-back way to a caller who was obviously in a great hurry?
- Taken down information incorrectly - maybe an incorrect phone number?







## YOUR WORDS

- Choose your words carefully because the listener hasn't got the benefit of being able to see you
- Use words that will put the listener in the picture
- Avoid ambiguous words
- During the conversation, check from time to time that the listener understands your meaning
- Spell difficult or confusing words - 'Joe Easton' can sound like 'Joe Eastern'
- Repeat and check names, phone numbers, instructions and directions - '6 to 8' can easily be mistaken for '68'

## YOUR VOICE

- Speak clearly
- Speak directly into the mouthpiece
- Your posture affects your voice - don't slump in the chair
- If you need to sound more assertive, stand up
- Use emphasis in your voice to reinforce your words
- Be efficient but friendly - efficiency without friendliness can make you sound brusque
- If you cannot hear your caller's voice clearly, tell him/her

## YOUR BODY LANGUAGE

- Use body language even though it can't be seen - without it you will sound wooden, stilted, lifeless
- Smile - even though it will not be seen, it will be 'heard'
- Focus your eyes in the mid distance or on something that will help you to concentrate on your communication
- Learn to listen for body language



## BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

The biggest single barrier to effective communication on the phone is that with most equipment we can't see each other.

However, there are other barriers:

- Noise - on the line, in the background or around you
- Distractions - you try to do something else, or someone attracts your attention while you're on the phone
- Language - the use of jargon, acronyms, poor enunciation or an unfamiliar accent can lead to misunderstandings

**As a Super-User you can reduce the barriers by:**

- Keeping the noise around you to a minimum
- Turning your back on any activity or distraction
- Focusing solely on the phone call
- Speaking plainly and clearly
- Checking for understanding

## THE PRACTICE

### CALL WHEN YOU'RE AT YOUR BEST

- Whenever possible, make calls when you feel and look your best; some people are more alert in the morning, others prefer the afternoon
- Make sales calls when you feel positive
- Remember, if you're calling from home it can be difficult to sound businesslike when you're slouched on the sofa



## USEFUL TYPES OF QUESTIONS

**Open questions are used to gain more information:**

- “How long will it take me to...?”
- “What information will be needed if...?”

Open questions usually begin with the words:

***Who, What, Why, When, Where or How***

**Closed questions produce a “yes”, “no” or short, direct answer.** They’re useful for establishing facts. Examples:

- “Does your company have a training department?”
- “Will the goods be delivered on Monday or Tuesday?”

**Probing questions search for details:**

- “Exactly how did this happen?”
- “What steps did you take?”

**Reflective questions are formed by repeating or summarizing what someone has said.**

They show that you understand. For example:

- “So you’re really not happy with the way this has been handled?”
- “You’re not comfortable with the new arrangements?”

Use them:

- When solving problems
- To help defuse emotional situations



# LISTEN ACTIVELY

Hearing is passive. Listening is active; it involves:

- ① Receiving    ③ Interpreting    ⑤ Responding
- ② Assimilating    ④ Checking

**Example:**

“Have you any rooms available?” **(Receiving)**

Well we do, but that’s not the real question I’m being asked.

**(Assimilating)**

I expect they’ve got specific dates in mind and particular facilities too. I’ll start by checking the dates. **(Interpreting)**

“What dates did you require, Mr. Fraser?” **(Checking)**

“We have single and double rooms on those dates. Which are you interested in?”

**(Responding)**

**To help you listen actively:**

- Avoid distractions
- Make notes, to give you a point of focus
- Make sure you’re comfortable

**To show you’re listening actively:**

- Use terms like “Uh huh” and “mmm”
- Don’t interrupt

**To check for understanding:**

- Ask questions
- Summarize and repeat key points

**To show that you’ve understood:**

- Use phrases like “I see”,  
“Of course”
- Paraphrase what’s been said,  
“So you want me to...”

Communication can be difficult enough when you can see the other person. So when you’re on the phone it’s even more important to check that you understand and that you have been understood.



A large vertical orange rectangular area with horizontal light blue lines, serving as a workspace for notes.



## SPEAKING AND SIGNALLING

When we communicate face-to-face, we use eye contact to tell others that it's their turn to speak. On the telephone we signal with a pause or a question.

When you give the signal, allow time for the other person to:

- ❶ Assimilate what's been said
- ❷ Recognize the silence signal
- ❸ Respond

Once you've given the signal:

- ❶ Wait - be patient
- ❷ Don't override it
- ❸ Don't add a subsequent comment or question

Be prepared for a longer silence when:

- You're negotiating
- You've asked a question
- You've put forward a proposal or made a suggestion

### REDUCE PACE TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION

Sometimes communication is difficult because people talk too quickly on the phone.

They forget that you may need time to assimilate what you've said, or to make notes.

When you need to understand callers more clearly:

- Ask them to speak more slowly
- Paraphrase what's been said
- Take the lead in conversation; this will enable you to set the pace to suit yourself

When you need to write notes:

- Ask callers to slow down so that you can make notes; they'll usually adjust the pace to give you time
- If they're still going too fast, start repeating what they say at the speed you're writing



## USE POSITIVE LANGUAGE

Choose your words carefully.

Compare the impact these words will have:

“The department doesn’t open until 9, so I won’t be able to do anything until then” ...

... with these words:

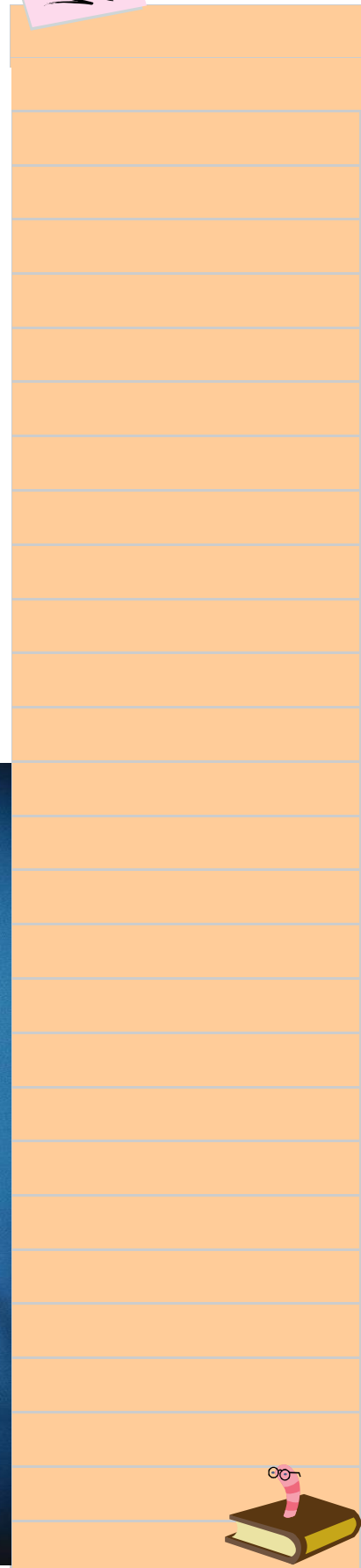
“The department opens at 9, so I’ll contact them first thing and get straight back to you”

And: “I don’t know”

With: “I’ll find out for you”

“Sorry to keep you waiting” encourages a mental response from the caller of “So you should be!”.

“Thank you for holding” encourages a mental response of “That’s all right”.

A large vertical orange notepad with horizontal lines. At the bottom right corner, there is a small icon of a stack of books with a pink bookmark and a pair of glasses.

## You as Receiver of the Call

You can boost the business of your competitors:

- 9 out of 10 customers who experience a badly handled call would prefer to stop dealing with the offending organisation

Or you can boost your own:

- In a single year over 11 million people recommended companies to other prospective customers because they had experienced good telephone service

### 10 WAYS TO GIVE CALLERS A BAD EXPERIENCE

- ✗ Make it difficult for them to find your number
- ✗ Be constantly engaged
- ✗ Pass them from department to department
- ✗ Make them repeat their story each time you transfer them
- ✗ Put them on hold and force them to listen to music they dislike
- ✗ Treat them as a 'nobody'
- ✗ Tell them it's not your job/fault/policy/problem
- ✗ Make them feel as though they're being 'processed'
- ✗ Don't give them a satisfactory solution
- ✗ Forget to do what you said you would do

### KNOW WHAT YOUR CALLER WANTS

We know we have choice and we become more demanding.

We develop a philosophy which says that if you don't meet our needs, we'll find someone who does.

So what do they want? All callers want **C.A.S.H.**

**C**onvenience

**A**ction

**S**peed

**H**assle-free



## CALLERS WANT C.A.S.H.

**C**onvenience - Minimum effort

- Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

**A**ction - Results are required (people don't often make calls out of idle curiosity; they generally need something; they expect action)

**S**peed - The call is answered promptly

- They get through to the right person easily
- Their call is treated with urgency
- The call results in immediate action

**H**assle-free - Calls are often made because there is a problem; the caller wants you to take responsibility and to deliver results in a hassle-free manner

## 10 WAYS TO GIVE CALLERS A GOOD EXPERIENCE

- ✓ Treat them as an individual
- ✓ Listen to them
- ✓ Show understanding and empathy
- ✓ Make them feel they're important to you
- ✓ Deal with their call efficiently
- ✓ Accept responsibility
- ✓ Respond promptly and act immediately
- ✓ Give them the result they want
- ✓ Make a follow-up call
- ✓ Exceed their expectations

**In short, treat your callers as you'd like to be treated!**





## EXCEED THEIR EXPECTATIONS

### Add value

- Go one step further; make a special effort; do something extra - “While you’re on the line would you like me to...”

### Under promise, over deliver

- Allow for it to get to them by the end of the week and then make sure it gets to them by Wednesday

### Call them

- Check that everything went according to plan; find out if there’s anything else you can do

## ANSWERING THE PHONE

**An unanswered phone or one that is left to ring for a long time may be:**

- A lost opportunity
- A way to upset the caller

**Answer a call promptly. Three or four rings of the phone will give you time to:**

- Stop what you’re doing
- Prepare to answer the phone
- Pick it up and announce yourself

**Answer a call efficiently:**

- Have a pen and paper ready to take notes
- Announce yourself clearly



## ANNOUNCING YOURSELF

### WHAT YOU SAY IF IT'S YOUR PHONE

Just saying “Hello” can waste time:

“Hello”

“Is that Ponds Corporation?”

“Yes”

“I want the sales department please.”

“This is the sales department.”

Announce yourself using a combination of:

- A greeting - “Good morning/Good afternoon”
- Your company name or department
- Your own name

Use two of the above options. Using all three is trying for the caller and for you. If you need to repeat all three regularly it becomes difficult to say with enthusiasm.

### WHAT YOU SAY IF IT'S SOMEONE ELSE'S PHONE

When you answer someone else's phone you will almost certainly need to take a message, so:

- Get a pen and paper first
- Then answer the phone

Let the caller know that you're answering on behalf of someone else:

“Megan Tudor's phone, Penny Lloyd speaking.”

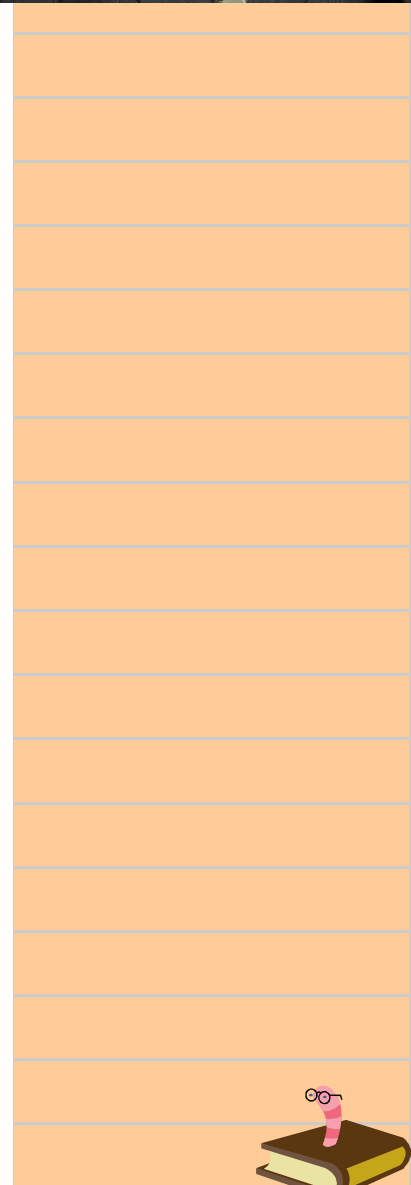
### HOW YOU SAY IT

Even when the phone is answered with “Hello?” you can tell if that person is happy or sad, bored or busy, hassled or pleased to get a call.

How will **your** announcement sound?

Smiling when you announce yourself can help to make you sound pleased to receive the call.

Remember, you don't know who is on the end of the phone and first impressions count.



## TAKING CALLS FOR OTHERS

When you're asked to take calls for others make sure you're properly briefed. Find out:

- Where they're going (for your information only)
- If there are any circumstances in which you should contact them and how you can do this
- When they will be back
- Who they may be expecting calls from
- How they would like calls handled
- How they would like messages passed on

## TAKING A MESSAGE

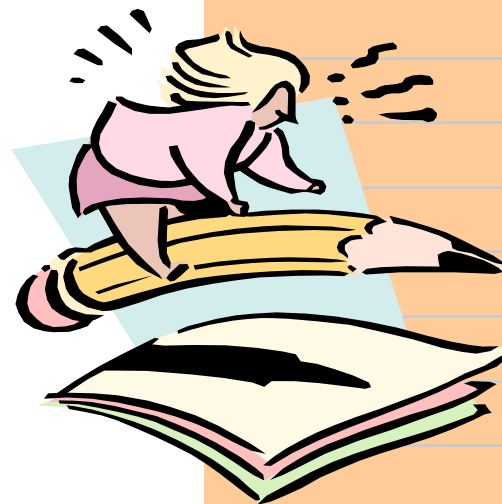
### ESTABLISHING THE DETAILS

- Find out:
  - the name of the caller
  - their organisation
  - their contact details
  - a time when they can be contacted
  - the message
  - specific action required
- Repeat this information back to the caller
- Double-check spellings and contact details

A phone message pad can be a useful reminder of all the details you need.

## DELIVERING THE MESSAGE

- Write the message down clearly; in addition to the details you've established, add:
  - your name
  - the date and time of the call
- Deliver the message; if you need to leave a message on someone's desk, or in a message book, check later that the message has been received
- If necessary get back to callers yourself to give them a status report; "Dr. Zhu has been delayed and won't be available until tomorrow. Would you like to speak to anyone else?"



## WHEN THE CALL IS NOT FOR YOU

Don't apportion blame:

- "You've got the wrong department" means that the caller's at fault
- "You've been put through to the wrong department" means that the person they dealt with before is at fault

Neither statement is helpful. Just:

- Establish the caller's situation
- Advise who the caller needs to speak to and offer to find out if that person's available
- If possible, transfer the call

### TRANSFERRING A CALL - STEP 1

When you find that a call should be handled by someone else:

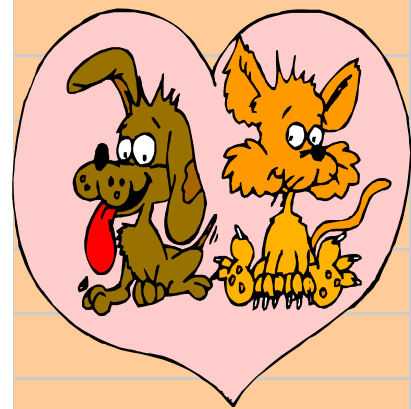
- Give the caller the name of the correct person and offer to find out if s/he is available
- Explain to the caller what you are about to do (put the call on hold, go to the next office, etc)
- Tell the caller what will happen next (hear nothing, a regular bleep, etc)
- Give the caller a realistic estimate of the time you will take

### TRANSFERRING A CALL - STEP 2

If the person the caller needs to speak to is able to take the call:

- Pass on full details of the caller and caller's situation
- Tell the caller that you are able to transfer the call and that you've explained the situation
- Give the caller the name and extension number of the person about to take the call, in case the transfer fails
- Transfer the call

If the person the caller needs to speak to is not able to take the call, offer to take a message, or provide contact details so that the caller can try again.



## GETTING CUT OFF

If you get cut off during a call, remember that:

- The person who made the call should dial again
- The person who received the call should put the receiver down and wait for the caller to phone again
- If you're dealing with a system that uses a switchboard and you're cut off when transferring a call, let the switchboard operator know; the operator will be able to deal with the call more efficiently

## FIRST/LAST IMPRESSIONS

First impressions

- Greet people as though you were meeting them face-to-face - smile and give a verbal handshake
- Make them feel the call will be worthwhile

Last impressions

- Sign off with the equivalent of a warm friendly handshake - use their name
- Smile as you speak
- Thank them
- Don't put the receiver down until they've said goodbye too!
- Are you easy to contact?
- Is the line always busy?
- Does the phone ring for ages?
- Is your message-taking system effective?
- What do you sound like on the phone?
- How do you come across to others?
- When did you last attend a telephone training session?
- What annoys you most when calling others? Do you do this to people who call you?
- Ask your friends and colleagues what they like most and hate most about dealing with you on the phone.



# TURN COMPLAINTS

Our society is becoming more confident about complaining. We no longer quietly accept the fly in the soup or the train being late. We do something about it. We complain. If the customer complains, you've got a chance to put it right. And the satisfied complainant is more likely to return than the non-complainant. If they don't complain, they simply vote with their feet.

## RECEIVING A COMPLAINT

### WHAT NOT TO SAY OR DO

#### Don't say:

- ✗ "I don't see what the problem is."
- ✗ "I'm going on holiday tomorrow."
- ✗ "Could you call back tomorrow?"
- ✗ "I'm new here."
- ✗ "It's not our policy."
- ✗ "It's not my job."
- ✗ "There's no one here who can help you."
- ✗ "You're not the first person to complain about that"

#### And don't:

- ✗ Justify the problem - callers are not interested in your problems, just what you're going to do about their problem
- ✗ Make excuses - acknowledge the problem, then get on and solve it
- ✗ Make unrealistic promises
- ✗ Take it personally or allocate blame - it will result in



A large vertical orange area with horizontal lines, serving as a workspace for notes or messages.



## RECEIVING A COMPLAINT

THE BUILDING BLOCKS FOR SUCCESS (4 As)

### Attitude

- A complaint is an opportunity to improve; a positive attitude will help you handle it successfully.

### Acknowledgement

- How would you feel if this happened to you?  
Listen actively, ask open questions, check your understanding, acknowledge there is cause for complaint, show empathy.

### Agreement

- Discuss possible solutions; offer choice, reach an agreed solution which is satisfactory from the caller's viewpoint.

### Action

- Keep the customer informed at all times; implement what you've agreed, call the customer to check that the solution has been satisfactory.

## MANAGING AGGRESSION AND RUDENESS

### Aggression

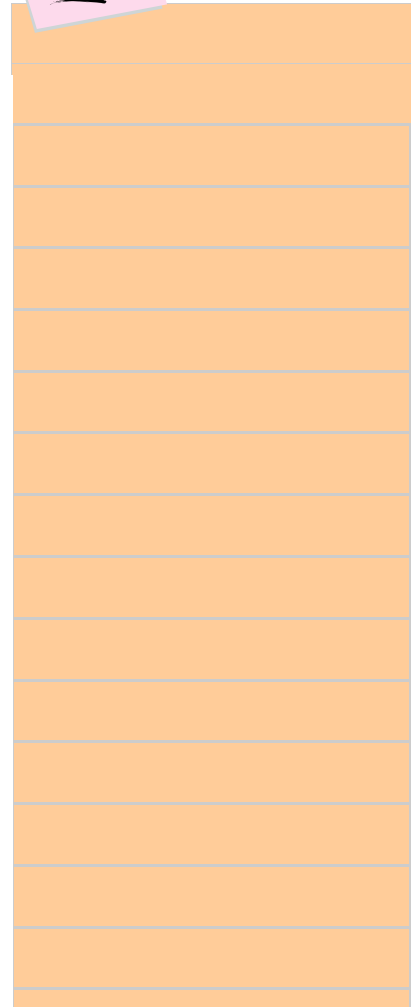
- Don't enter into an argument
- Allow the caller to let off steam
- Don't interrupt
- Put the 4 As into action

### Rudeness

- Ignore the rudeness
- Don't retaliate
- Don't take it personally
- Put the 4 As into action

### The 4 As:

Attitude; Acknowledgement; Agreement; Action.



# You as the Caller

## THE FACTS

Three out of every four calls to businesses do not achieve their objective on the first attempt.

Are you one of these callers?

Do you:

- Ever have to make a second call because you didn't ask about ...?
- Find it difficult to get through to the right person?
- Leave messages for people to call back - and they don't?
- Ever get ignored on hold or felt lost in a queuing system?
- Always get the information you need, or the outcome you want?
- Need to 'chase' people on the phone?



A large vertical area with a light orange background and horizontal grey lines, resembling a notepad or a list of notes.





# MAKING THE CALL

## 1. Preparing. Before you pick up the phone make sure you know:

- What you want to achieve
  - How to get through to the person you need to speak to
  - What you'll do if the person is not in
  - What message you'll leave if you're greeted by an answer machine
  - Your opening words
  - How you'll introduce yourself
  - How the conversation might go: facts you must establish or give; objections that might be raised; how you might overcome those objections; etc
- And have:
- All the information you might need to hand
  - Facilities to take notes

## 2. During the call make sure you:

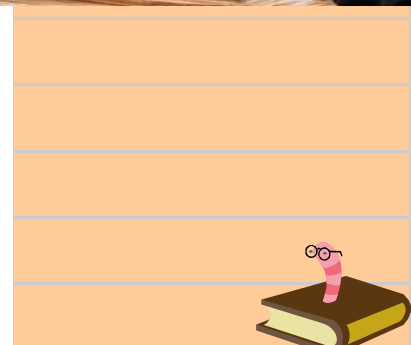
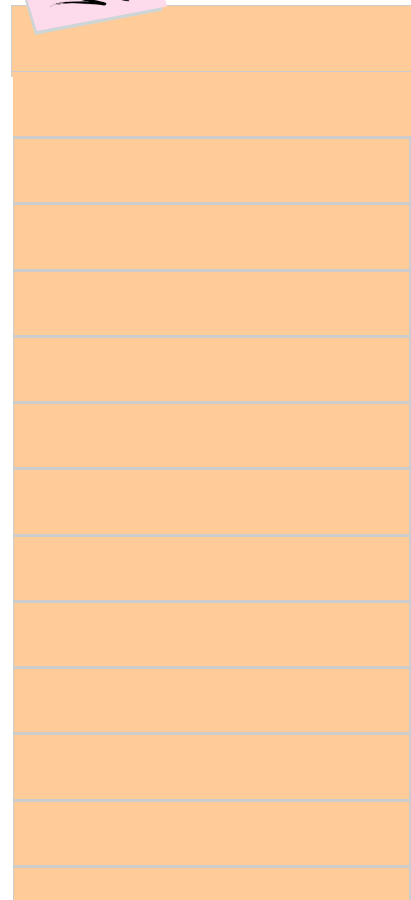
- Build rapport
- Listen actively
- Give feedback
- Ask questions
- Check for understanding
- Make notes
- Use your preparation notes
- Don't get distracted
- Keep focused on your aims

## 3. At the end of the call:

- Summarize the main points
- Agree actions
- Confirm the outcome

## 4. After the call:

- Check your notes for things to do
- Expand and clarify notes if they're to be kept for reference
- Take action as necessary



## OBTAINING INFORMATION

### Prepare for the call:

- Decide what you want
- List the questions you need to ask
- Make a flow chart for the call - if the answer is “yes” to this, then ...; if the answer is “no” to that, then ...

### Make the call:

- Establish the right person to speak to
- Follow your flow chart
- Check for understanding by summarizing and paraphrasing
- Make sure you’ve covered all your points before you end the call

## GETTING WHAT YOU WANT

Make sure you’re dealing with the right person then, sticking to the facts and without emotion:

- State what you want (payment of an invoice)
- Find out what has to happen for you to get what you want (the manager needs to sign the cheque and she’s away until Friday)
- Convert this into specifics about who will take what actions and when they will be taken (“So when the manager returns, you’ll ask her to sign the cheque and I’ll get it first thing on Monday morning?”)
- State what follow-up action you will take to make sure this happens (“You’re probably busy so I’ll ring on Friday just to remind you”)
- Keep a progress record and, where necessary, follow-up calls in writing
- Stick to your plan - persistence pays (ring first thing on Friday and find out what time the cheque will be signed; then call again at the time it should be signed - and if you feel it necessary, call once more just to check that it will make the post that day)
- Make a call to acknowledge receipt and to say thank you



## MAKING A COMPLAINT

### Prepare for the call:

- Write down the facts
- Write down the solution you want

### Make the call:

- Speak calmly and be assertive (see page 96)
- Don't get personal - refer to the department/organisation/system, etc
- Stick to the facts
- State your desired solution
- Agree a solution - if necessary, follow it up in writing and chase it to a satisfactory solution

## NEGOTIATING

Most negotiating situations are best dealt with face-to-face where you can see and use body language. However, if you have a strong case to present and you're concerned about being swayed by the emotions of the other party, you may find it easier to negotiate on the phone. It will help to increase the objectivity of your communication, and keep the emotional content to a minimum. **AND**, remember that the result of effective negotiation is a situation where both parties are happy with the outcome. It should be a win/win situation.



# Building Rapport

## THE COST

It costs eight times more to recruit a new customer than to retain an old one.

Telephone Super-Users help maintain customer loyalty.

### 10 EASY WAYS TO ALIENATE

#### When you receive a call:

- ✗ Be apathetic
- ✗ If they don't ask, don't tell them
- ✗ Address them incorrectly
- ✗ Tut and sigh to show that you think they're ignorant
- ✗ Lie to them

#### When you make a call:

- ✗ Be aggressive
- ✗ Show no respect
- ✗ Be impatient
- ✗ Be demanding
- ✗ Be rude



### RAPPORT = RESULTS

#### People:

- Buy from people they like
- Will recommend people they like
- Do things for people they like
- Will go one step further for people they like

Whether you're making or receiving a call your relationship with the other person will affect the outcome.

#### Building rapport establishes a relationship which says:

- You are important to me
- I value you
- I will treat you as an individual



# USING RAPPORT

Use rapport to:

- ✓ Increase customer loyalty
- ✓ Build long-term relationships
- ✓ Show you care
- ✓ Help relax a nervous or flustered caller
- ✓ Defuse an angry caller
- ✓ Ease a difficult conversation
- ✓ Calm an emotional caller
- ✓ Make the caller feel special
- ✓ Generate a positive image
- ✓ Get results

## WAYS TO BUILD RAPPORT

**Build rapport on the phone by:**

- Answering the phone promptly
- Giving a genuine greeting
- Reinforcing your words with gestures (eg: smiling)
- Using the caller's name
- Treating the caller as an individual
- Showing an understanding of the caller's situation
- Giving the caller undivided attention
- Thanking the caller - for time/call/understanding/actions/
- Being proactive; call back, seek feedback

**To build rapport with someone you know you can also:**

- Add a statement of recognition to your greeting
- Ask about the caller's circumstances

### ***SAYING "THANK YOU"***

Saying "thank you" is a simple way to build rapport and leave a positive image. Find a way to say "thank you" for each call. Some may be harder than others, but they all need to be genuine.

Try to extend and reinforce the "thank you" when the call is over. Put your thanks in writing - send a letter or a card.



# Super User

## Super User's Oath

“I WILL BE IN CHARGE AND MAKE THE  
PHONE WORK FOR ME”

### 1. Get organized

Organize your phone environment:

- Make the phone accessible
- Keep the area around the phone clear
- Position the phone to give as much privacy as possible
- Place it in a quiet area, away from noise
- Keep a notepad and pen beside the phone

Position your phone so you can be comfortable:

- Make the phone easy to reach
- Discomfort will distract you
- Your posture will affect your voice

### 2. Use all the features

Use all the features your phone provides. Just using pre-programmed numbers and last number redial facilities can easily save an hour in a busy week. Features include:

- Last number redial
- Memory store for frequently used numbers
- Automatic dialing
- Mute/secrecy button
- Transfer and recall
- Remote pickup
- On-hook dialing
- Hands-free speech
- Ringer volume control
- Speaker volume switch
- Taping or electronically recording the conversation





### 3. Use the technology

The telecommunications industry moves quickly. Keep up-to-date with new services and products. Useful phone services include:

- Call return
- Reminder call
- Call diversion
- 3-way calling
- Call waiting
- Charge advice

Use products such as mobile phones, answering machines that can be accessed remotely, and voice mail to help you make the most of your time.

### 4. Use a mobile phone with care

No, this is not a health warning - although you should be aware that increasing attention is being paid to research in this area. This is a warning about the mobile phone and your image. Mobiles are great when used in the right circumstances. However, by their very nature, they encourage us to break every Super-User rule in the book:

- You answer them and make calls from them while you're on the move and when you're doing other things
- Pen and paper are rarely to hand
- You allow them to interrupt you
- You answer by saying "Hello?"
- Background noise and weak signals can make communication difficult and sometimes even tiresome for the person you're calling
- It can be difficult to answer promptly - first you have to realize it's your briefcase that's ringing, and by the time you've dealt with the security lock on the case, the 90 caller has rung off!





#### 4. Use a mobile phone with care (cont'd)

For all its amazing, 'wouldn't-be-without-it' attributes, a mobile phone can seriously damage your image if you don't treat it with respect. A few simple guidelines:

- Be considerate to others around you
- Don't shout into the mouthpiece
- A poor connection does nothing for your image
- When you're going into a meeting switch the phone off or leave it outside with a colleague
- Be aware of the cost
- Don't let your mobile rule your life - plan some time without it

“I WILL SEEK OUT TIME-EATERS .....”

Be aware of how you spend your time on the phone. Keep a diary for at least a week to make a record of:

- The number of incoming and outgoing calls
- Who you call and who calls you
- The time you spend on the phone
- When you make calls and when others call you
- The type of calls you make and receive
- The purpose of the calls
- The result of the call - conclusive or further action

Use this information to identify what eats your time.



A large vertical rectangular area with a light orange background and horizontal grey lines, serving as a space for taking notes or a diary.





## “...AND DESTROY THEM”

### Too much time spent on the phone:

- Prepare for the call
- Decide how much time it should take
- Tell the other person that you have limited time for the call
- Keep a watch, clock (or egg timer!) in view
- If you don't need feedback, call when the person's out so that you just leave a message
- If you do need feedback, call just before you know the person's going out - allow just enough time, but not too much; use this technique sparingly
- Gain and maintain control

### Frequently interrupted by calls:

- Create dedicated times for using and not using the phone
- Tell regular callers when to call
- Use an answer phone or ask a colleague to take your calls

### Troubled by time wasters:

- Take the lead to keep ramblers and chatterers to the point
- Redirect callers you should not really be speaking to
- Terminate the call:
  - be polite, thank them for their call
  - be firm, tell them that you're not interested
  - be gone, say goodbye and replace the receiver

### Making lame excuses or using delaying tactics only:

- Gives callers the right to call again
- Makes it harder for you to say “no” and mean it



## “I WILL USE SUPER-USER CONTROL TECHNIQUES”

### 1. Plan

Thinking before you get on the phone saves time, money and face, so use a call sheet. Using call sheets:

- ✓ Saves time
- ✓ Increases chances of achieving aim
- ✓ Provides a record of the call
- ✓ Reminds you of actions to be taken
- ✓ Improves call technique

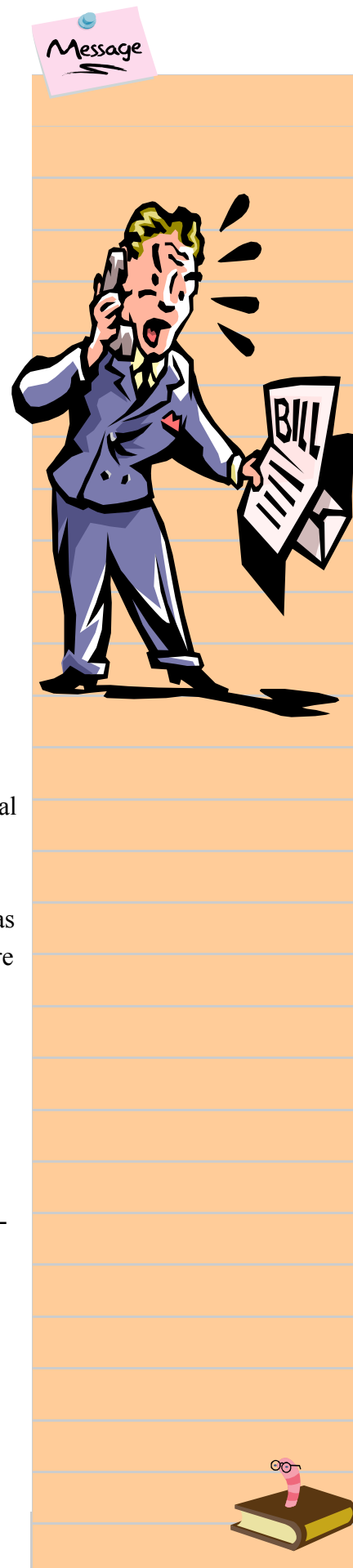
Design your own call sheet and include headings such as:

- Name; company; date; time
- Purpose; content; structure
- Response; objections
- Outcomes; actions

### 2. Be equal

Calling people ‘sir’ or ‘madam’ while they use your first name makes them more dominant and gives them more control. Getting on first name terms is a way to give you equal status on the phone. However, social etiquette, cultural differences or company policy may mean that it’s not appropriate for you to be on first-name terms with your caller. In these circumstances use other mechanisms, such as asking questions, to take control. When you need to be more assertive on the phone try:

- **Standing up** - your voice will sound stronger; you will feel more in control
- **Using body language** - gestures and movements emphasize your words and bring meaning to them; use them on the phone too
- **Repeating caller’s name** during the conversation to reinforce equal status
- **Giving yourself time to think** by reflecting back what’s just been said; alternatively, establish the facts, arrange to get back to the caller, and get off the phone



### 3. Reduce stress

- Use a phone with a pleasant ring - some tones jar or grate
- Adjust the volume of the ringer to make it softer and less intrusive
- When the phone rings, finish speaking/writing your sentence before you pick it up
- Don't put off difficult or important calls
- Organize your environment - aim for comfort; reduce clutter and distractions
- Be prepared to receive calls - always keep a pen and paper to hand
- Be prepared when making calls - organize yourself before you dial
- Take a break after a stressful call
- Plan times away from the phone

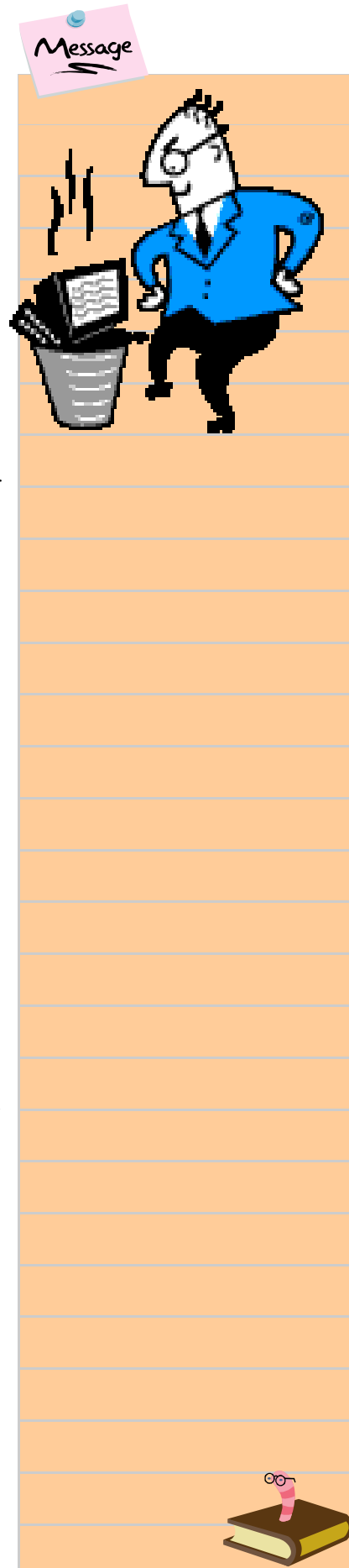
### 4. Control interruptions

When you're on the phone reduce interruptions by:

- Making your calls where you will not be distracted
- Telling others that you will be unavailable
- Arranging for someone to cover for you
- Shutting your door, if you have one
- Displaying a 'do not disturb' sign

If you do get interrupted when you're on the phone:

- Wait for a convenient break in the conversation
- Excuse yourself to the caller
- Use the mute/secrecy button so the caller doesn't hear you
- Write down a word/phrase that will enable you to pick up your conversation again quickly
- Make arrangements to deal with the interruption - don't deal with it there and then, it will only encourage people to continue interrupting you
- Thank your caller for waiting (don't apologize) and resume your conversation





#### 4. Control interruptions (cont'd)

If you're in a meeting or don't wish to be disturbed, reduce interruptions from phone calls by:

- Asking someone else to take your calls
- Arranging to re-route your calls to someone else's phone
- Using an answer phone to take calls for you

If you do get interrupted by a phone call:

- Tell the caller that it's not convenient to take the call now
- Arrange a suitable time to return the call

#### 5. Delegate

**Brief** well, make sure you tell them:

- Where you're going, when you'll be back and how to contact you
- In what circumstances you can be contacted/interrupted
- Who you are expecting calls from
- How you would like calls handled and messages dealt with

**Empower** the person:

- Give enough information to enable the person to be more than just a message taking service

**Encourage** responsibility:

- Encourage the person to deal with the calls where possible - it will be more satisfactory for the caller and will save you time

**Reciprocate** the arrangement:

- One good turn deserves another

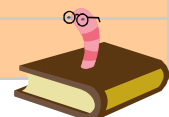
#### 6. Take the lead

On outgoing calls:

- Be prepared
- Structure your call

On incoming calls:

- Listen to the caller
- Establish the purpose of the call
- Assess the situation
- Direct the conversation



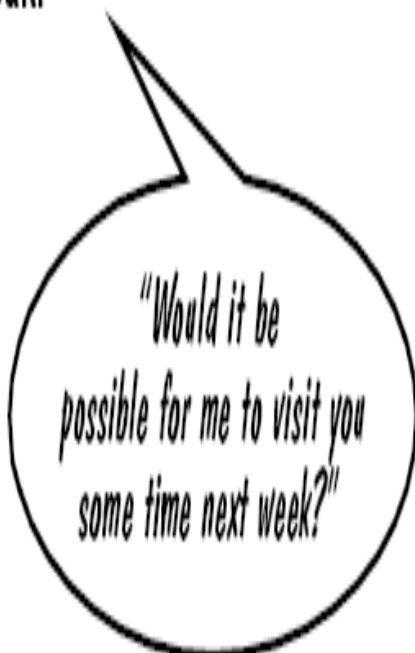
### 7. Ask questions

The person asking the questions is the one in control of the conversation. Use questions to structure and control your conversation. It may be like this:

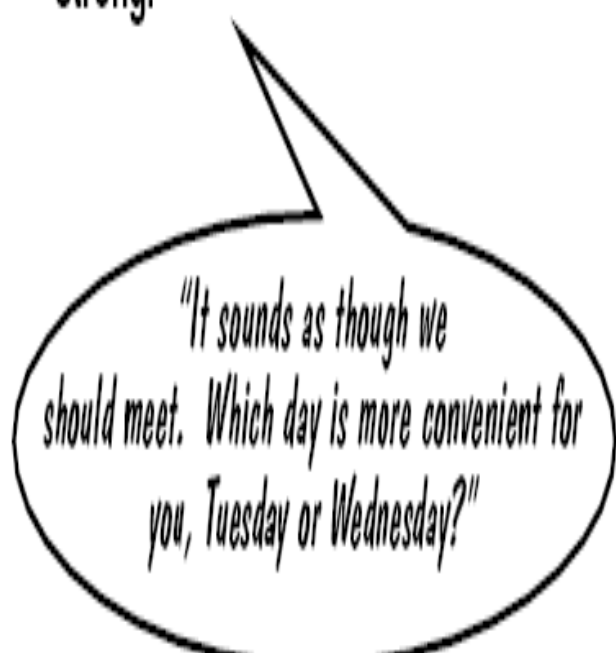
Type of question	When receiving a call	When making a call
<b>Closed</b>	To establish or confirm information	Establishing you're talking to the right person or that it's a convenient time to call
<b>Open</b>	Establishing the nature of the call	Getting the conversation going
<b>Probing</b>	Gathering specific details of requirements	Narrowing the conversation to specifics
<b>Reflective</b>	Checking for and showing understanding	
<b>Closed</b>	Finishing the conversation	

The way you phrase your questions is important. Choose your words carefully. Strong questions make you sound in control and help you to achieve your aims.

**Weak:**



**Strong:**



### 8. Use precision endings

When you need to end a call: Signal Indicate that the call is coming to an end Summarize Briefly recap agreements, decisions, etc Sign-off Say “goodbye” and be gone A signal must be given in time for:

- The receiver to respond accordingly
- A summary
- A sign-off

Short calls: signal at the beginning of the call Longer calls: signal when you have a few minutes left Once you’ve given a signal, stick to it. A false signal is like crying wolf - your callers will learn to ignore them. Either excuse yourself or excuse them.

**Excusing yourself** (“I’ve only got a few minutes...”) puts the onus on you. Be aware that your tone of voice and choice of words can either indicate that the call is important or that you have better and more important things to do.

**Excusing them** (“I know you’re busy so...”) may appeal to their ego but in the wrong tone of voice may sound patronizing.

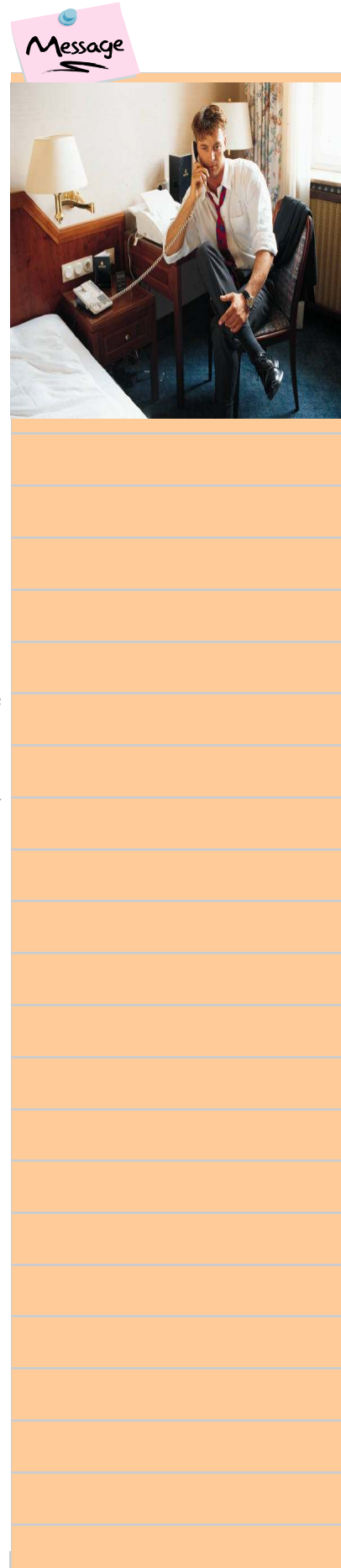
### 9. Call them before they call you

You lose control when you:

- Put off a difficult call
- Wait for someone to call you back
- Are ‘too busy’ to phone

Calling them before they call you means that you can:

- ✓ Prepare for the call
- ✓ Be in control
- ✓ Maximize your chances of achieving your aims







**Call HHBC**  
**512 6253 1773**