



**OBTAIN THE GREATEST VALUE
FROM BUSINESS TELEPHONES**

ISSUED BY THE AUSTRALIAN POST OFFICE

A MESSAGE TO MANAGEMENT

Modern business practices demand that firms and organisations plan their outward appearance with the aim of creating a favourable impression on the customer or client. To achieve this you no doubt insist on —

Letters being composed with care and typed with scrupulous attention to detail.

Letterheads being attractively designed in accord with the style of business in which a firm is engaged.

Reception rooms being neat, clean and efficient.

Staff required to meet customers being meticulous in dress and personal appearance.

... but what is the impression offered to the telephone caller?

Today, more than ever, the **TELEPHONE** is a front door of the business world, and the company image will suffer if callers do not receive courteous, efficient telephone service. On the other hand, polished telephone techniques add to company prestige.

Unfortunately, it is not always appreci-

ated that good telephone service is a product of efficient management, just as much as the handling of correspondence. The big difference is that efficient telephone service depends on **ALL** users of the company's telephone — be they top executives, switchboard operators or junior clerks.

The acknowledged advantages of telephone calls are instant communication and convenience. But good telephone techniques can also:

Add clarity and exactness.

Increase prestige and goodwill.

Make communication quicker and easier, and — in the case of trunk calls — cheaper.

Save frayed tempers.

Remember . . .

Business goes where it is welcome and stays where it is well treated.

Now let us get down to cases. First, we will consider the management of a telephone switchboard, and then pass on to aspects concerning everyone on your staff who uses the telephone.

The Switchboard Operator

The first point of contact between a caller and your firm is often the switchboard operator. First impressions are lasting, so the way she deals with the call is of real importance. Her manner should be courteous, alert, interested and cheerful. She should convey the impression that she knows her job and that she enjoys doing it.

Very rarely will a girl be naturally endowed with all these qualities. Most operators need to be **TRAINED**. Not simply in the mechanics of handling the switchboard, but in their telephone manner. It is anomalous that commercial training covers typing, shorthand, and letter-writing, but rarely covers the correct use of the telephone or its facilities.

The Post Office can provide you with expert advice on training methods and switchboard management. We will also be pleased to supply copies of two booklets called "Managing Your Telephone Switchboard" and "Your Voice Is Your Livelihood", which are specifically designed to help switchboard operators.

Operating Conditions

No matter how well trained your operator is, she cannot be efficient if the conditions in which she works are wrong. **IDEALLY, AN OPERATOR SHOULD HAVE NO DUTIES OTHER THAN THE TELEPHONE.**

Where it is unavoidable that she have additional duties, they should be of a simple nature that will not distract at-

tention from the switchboard, and can be dropped in an instant.

It may seem obvious that operators work better in good light, but all too often switchboards are tucked away in badly lit corners. Over the years, misoperation due to bad light can cost more than the price of adequate lighting. Switchboard operating under bad light is literally a headache to your operator.

Avoid placing the switchboard in a noisy situation. This makes it difficult for both the operator and the caller to hear. Complications quickly follow.

Staffing

Have sufficient operators to ensure a swift **SPEED OF ANSWER** to incoming calls. From the customer's viewpoint, one of the most telling aspects of telephone service is the speed with which he is attended. Just think — how long do **YOU** like to be kept waiting for an answer?

Make sure that other staff members are trained so that they can provide relief on the switchboard. Too often, service slumps during a regular operator's luncheon break.

Operating Aids

Provide your operator with a comprehensive list of extensions and personnel in your firm. If possible, include alternative numbers for use when the normal extensions are busy. It is a good idea to mark on this list the persons within your firm who are authorised to accept reversed charge trunk calls.

Arrange for your operator to meet as many telephone users in the firm as possible. This is good staff relations

and helps foster the attitude that the operator is part of your team, and not left in splendid isolation on the switchboard.

Provide also a list of frequently called numbers such as regular customers and suppliers.

Your operator should not be tied up answering "Enquiries". If these are plentiful, special extensions should be provided to handle "Enquiries" and so leave the operator free to attend to other calls.

Looking up Telephone Numbers

An operator should not be expected to look for telephone numbers.

If she is looking for a number, she may be neglecting a waiting caller. Are you prepared to let a prospective customer wait?

The Post Office provides a telephone directory for every telephone in your premises. So encourage your staff to look for numbers themselves and keep their own frequently-called-number lists.

Messages

Calls cannot be attended to promptly and efficiently if your operator is occupied in taking messages or — even worse — is used by your staff to transmit messages.

However, if the practice cannot be avoided entirely, see that she has facilities for handling the messages without leaving her position.

Your Correspondence

How can this help your switchboard operations? It's simple — arrange for

the telephone extension number of the person who is dealing with any particular matter within your firm to be indicated on outgoing letters. Telephone calls relating to the matter can then be directed quickly to the correct extension.

The Telephone Directory

See that your entries in the telephone directory adequately identify the activities of your organisation.

Special block entries can be arranged, at small cost, so that it is easy to find your company's telephone number. The Post Office will be pleased to advise you on all directory matters.

Have you enough Telephone Lines or Extensions?

It may not be a good sign if your firm's switchboard is extremely busy. Certainly, it is gratifying to know that your firm is in demand, but think of the caller who may be kept waiting in a state of frustration while your number or an extension is busy. Inevitably, it is the potential customer who does not bother to wait.

Make a periodic check on the incidence of telephone calls received and the adequacy of your extensions. You will find it well worthwhile.

This concludes the section relating to management aspects of your telephone switchboard, but **PLEASE READ ON.**

The remaining sections relate to all telephone users in your firm, but acceptance of the principles outlined is

SOME SUGGESTIONS TO ALL TELEPHONE USERS

Speaking on the Telephone

Take as much trouble over the way you telephone as over the way you dress, or compose your letters, for the simple reason that you — and your firm — will be judged as much by your telephone manner as by your dress, your letters, or your behaviour over a desk, a lunch table, or a conference table.

A simple rule: Speak directly into the mouthpiece of the telephone. The instrument is so designed that best results

are obtained when the mouthpiece is not more than half an inch from your lips and directly in front.

Speak naturally, clearly, and sincerely, and do not raise your voice above its normal level. A medium tone at a fairly low pitch is best. Let your voice indicate a spirit of interest and helpfulness.

You may consider that you already do just this, but be warned! It is fairly easy to sound vague, bored, or even rude on the telephone.



MAKING TELEPHONE CALLS

Originate Your Own Calls

A basic principle:

TELEPHONE AS YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE TELEPHONED TO.

Experience has shown that one of the most frequent causes of poor telephone service in business organisations is the loading of switchboard operators with the responsibility of originating calls for those who could make the calls themselves.

For example, some executives order their calls through the operator. It is better to have a secretary or assistant to handle these requests than occupy the time of your switchboard operator. Even so, **STAY ON THE LINE** while the call is being made. It is obviously bad business for your secretary to contact a customer or business acquaintance and then keep him waiting until you are ready.

Your sense of good manners and good business policy will dictate your behaviour in this matter but it all comes back to: **TELEPHONE AS YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE TELEPHONED TO.**

Not only should people make their own local calls but they should also originate their own trunk calls. Most trunk calls can now be dialled direct by S.T.D. or connected by a Post Office operator while you wait. You will be advised if there is likely to be any delay, so you can then advise your switchboard operator of your likely whereabouts.

When booking your call, first give the name of the wanted exchange and

number, then your own telephone number.

Dial Correctly

Careless dialling results in wrong numbers.

The telephone dialling system is a mechanism which cannot be hurried by the temperament of its user. Careful dialling is essential for a high grade of service. The important points are:

- listen for dial tone before dialling;
- don't use pencils or other instruments likely to slip in the dial;
- allow the dial to return unaided to its normal position;
- allow a short pause between each operation of the dial.

Be Ready to Talk

When you make a call, be ready to talk. The other person's time is probably just as valuable as yours and you may be asking him to do something for you.

Identify Yourself

When making a call, announce your own name immediately you get an answer, and then state your business.

For example —

“Jackson speaking, of XYZ Limited, I wish to . . .”

It is extremely frustrating to answer a telephone and, while listening to the caller's opening remarks, have to try and guess whom he might be. Don't you agree?

ANSWERING TELEPHONE CALLS

Answer Promptly and Identify Yourself

It's annoying to be kept waiting. Answer calls promptly and state politely your number, name, extension or firm. For example —

“Commerce Department, Jackson speaking . . .”

“80 4319, Jackson speaking . . .”

“XYZ Limited, Miss Brown speaking . . .”

“Extension 34, Jackson speaking...”

Avoid the habit of answering with a “Hello”— this is unnecessary, time-wasting and obsolete.

Correct telephone answering phrases assure the caller that he is connected to the right place and, from the outset, create a favourable impression of business efficiency.

Be ready

Be ready to provide attention when you answer the telephone. Pad and pencil should be nearby — memory can betray you.

Let the caller know that you understand him. This will save his time and yours; otherwise, he will have no confidence that his call has been worthwhile.

If you have to leave the caller, keep him fully informed on what you are doing. Minutes of silent waiting on the telephone seem like hours and, in any case, the caller may prefer to ring back later, particularly if he is on a trunk

call where time costs money.

This is even more important when your caller is dialling his own trunk call under the Subscriber Trunk Dialling (S.T.D.) system. The meter will be ticking over while you keep him waiting!

Who's Calling?

Perhaps it is necessary to enquire about the names of callers requiring executive officers. But do not ask “Who's calling, please?”

This can offend a caller by implying that he may not be important enough to gain attention from your executive officer. This may well be so but be diplomatic and ask —

“May I tell Mr . . . who is calling, please?”

The end result will be the same, but courtesy has prevailed.

Called in Error

This does happen sometimes, but remember that it isn't done on purpose. A remark along the lines of —

“I'm sorry, but you have the wrong number . . .”

is far better than a blunt —

“Wrong number”

and helps keep blood pressures down.

Of course, if your operator has connected the wrong extension, be as helpful as possible in seeing that the caller is reconnected to the right extension.

SOME POINTS FOR ALL TYPES OF CALLS

Observe the common courtesies. A “please” or “thank you” in the appropriate place is a reflection of your own personality in the company image. Never try to match rudeness with rudeness. The close of a telephone conversation

is as important as its beginning. Abrupt endings leave wrong impressions.

Close with a happy ending.

Let the caller hang up first.

Replace your receiver gently, otherwise it's like slamming the door after the interview is over.



SOME POST OFFICE TELEPHONE SERVICES

Credit Cards

With a Telephone Credit Card you can make trunk calls and send telegrams and have the charges debited to your own telephone account.

Special International Telephone Credit Cards are available for use in certain countries overseas for calls back to Australia.

Reverse Charge Trunk Calls

If the person answering the called telephone agrees, you can make calls to his number and "reverse the charges". An additional fee is charged for this service. All charges are debited to the called subscriber's account.

Particular Person Trunk Calls

Under this system the Post Office operator will endeavour to obtain the person you want on trunk calls. The trunk charges do not begin until you start talking with the wanted person or an acceptable alternative.

Provided an answer is obtained from some person at the called number, a small service fee is charged on each particular person call.

Fixed Time Trunk Calls

For a small additional charge you can book a trunk call for connection at a specified time. Nominate the time when booking your call.

International Calls

New cable and satellite circuits are rapidly extending a high-quality telephone service to overseas countries. The operator handling International calls will gladly give you details of available services and charges.

Time of Day

For the charge of one local call you can obtain the correct time. Check your telephone directory for the number to dial.

Telegrams by Telephone

Save time and lodge your telegrams by telephone. The usual telegraph charges, plus a phonogram fee for each message, will be debited to your telephone account. Telegrams **ADDRESSED** to a telephone number will be quickly phoned through to that number by Post Office operators.

Early Morning and Reminder Calls

Arrangements can be made for Post Office operators to call you for that early start or to remind you of that important engagement.

Service Difficulties and Faults

Report these to the number shown in the telephone directory. Please be as brief as possible, but provide sufficient information so that technicians can identify your service.

A FINAL REMINDER

Whatever position you occupy you are, throughout your telephone contacts, a direct representative of your firm. Your telephone manners reflect not only your own personality but your firm's standard of courtesy, efficiency and service.

Need we say more?

Additional copies of this booklet may be obtained by telephoning or writing to:

Assistant Director, Telecommunications Division,
(Service Advisory Section), G.P.O.
(Capital City),
or your District Telephone Manager.