**Telephone Etiquette**

**Leaving Messages**

Don’t you just hate it when someone leaves you a telephone message and doesn’t leave a callback number, or says his name so fast, you can’t understand it? What are your thoughts about that person? In business it could mean a missed opportunity.

When you leave a telephone message, pause between your first and last name, especially if you have a complicated name. Spell your name to make it easier for the recipient to be clear about your name.

Say your telephone number slowly at the beginning and end of your message. Many people do not have a pen or pencil handy. By repeating your number, you do the recipient a favor by giving him an opportunity to write your number. Cell phones capture telephone numbers, so your recipient can just do a callback on your number, but what if you want your recipient to call you at another number? Make a habit to repeat your telephone number. When you give your telephone number, pause between the area code, prefix, and last four numbers. That way, your recipient won’t have to replay your message to capture your telephone number.

**Placing a Telephone Call**

Unless you are making calls to good friends who automatically recognize your voice, ask, “Is Pat there?” and immediately identify yourself: “This is Ann Vandelhein.” This sets the tone for you as being polite. Never assume the person on the other end knows who you are.

**Cell Phones and Pagers**

Cell phones and pagers offer a tremendous amount of flexibility that people enjoy every day. With this technology come rules to ensure that you, as a user, should follow to avoid annoying others and appearing unprofessional.

Shut off your cell phone and pager (or put them on vibrate) at the movies, the theater, and the opera. Paying customers are at these events to enjoy themselves and get extremely annoyed when a cell phone or pager goes off. This situation is even worse at a live performance. Unless there are exceptions, turn off your cell phone and pager in business meetings.

Be considerate of others when using a cell phone in a public place. Don’t cross the personal space boundary. Find an isolated spot so others don’t need to hear your conversation.

For safety’s sake, act responsibly when walking or driving while on a cell phone. Some states have outlawed using your cell phone while driving. While you are focusing on your call, you diminish your attention toward driving and walking.

Don’t shout into the telephone. Keep your conversation private.

Respect the rules of establishments and airlines if asked to refrain from using cell phones and pagers.

**Speakerphones**

For business calls, a speakerphone is a handy tool that allows multiple people to sit in one room and hear the call. The call leader should identify all persons in the room and have all participants on the call identify themselves.

Do not chew gum or eat while on a call. Everyone on the call can hear this disruptive noise. Make sure your speakerphone is on mute if you have to eat. Some business continues to get done while on speakerphone calls. This usually means that participants type while listening to the call. Once again, make sure you have your speakerphone on mute while you are typing. Verify that music does not play while your speakerphone is on mute.

**Office Telephones**

Avoid lengthy personal phone calls in the office. Sometimes you can’t avoid a personal call, but long chatty conversations are not only out of place, but can get you in trouble. Your chatter annoys other people in the office or cubicles who cannot help overhearing and interrupts the routine of office procedure.

**Electronic Answering Systems**

Businesses have cut back administrative positions and installed computerized systems that answer calls electronically. Sometimes, the most annoying aspect of these systems is having to listen to a menu of options to reach a department or person, only to get yourself into a loop or lost trying to make your call. You can press “0” to reach a live person. Do not take out your annoyance on the person who answers. He has nothing to do with the installation of the system. Remember to be professional because if anyone overhears your conversation, you want to make sure you don’t come off as a hothead.

**Cellular Providers in the Area**

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| U.S. Cellular |  (919)778-6900 |
| Verizon Wireless |  (919)751-0511 |
| AT&T |  (919)751-0656 |
| Suncom |  (252)985-3434 |

Hill, Sharon A. *Wild Woman’s Guide to Etiquette: Saving the World One Handshake at a Time*, 2005.