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### **Don't Touch That Phone!**

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Do you make just one more phone call, when you do not have the time to do so? Do you answer the phone, when you know that it will make you late?

Are you creating barriers to effective communication with your telephone manners? Take immediate action to eliminate obstacles to successful communication.

This is an easy fix. Don't touch that phone! It really is that simple.

Create an opportunity to overcome barriers to effective communication. Determine what time you must leave to adhere to your schedule and then honor that time. Do NOT touch that phone. Do not make just one more call. Do not answer just one more call.

What happens when you try to squeeze in just one more call? You are expecting voice mail, but you reach a person. You must now communicate -- not just leave a brief message.

However, you are in a hurry so you do not adequately present your information. Or, the person has questions for you, and you are not prepared. You have just annoyed the person you called!

If you are frequently late for appointments, do you realize that making a phone call to announce that you will be late is not conducive to effective communication. Remember it is much easier to communicate with someone that you have not irritated!

What if you pick up the ringing phone when you know that you must leave or have someone waiting? How well do you listen to the caller? Do you exchange information or do you create more problems for yourself because of your lack of focus?

If you are thinking, “you don’t understand, I have to make or take this call”, consider how satisfied you are with your life. Are people frequently frustrated with you? Do you have misunderstandings caused by poor communication?

A woman in one of my workshops shared how discouraged she was because she worked extra hours every single day. She explained that phone never stopped ringing and she continued to answer even through her work day was finished.

Apparently, at some point each day, she would accept the fact the phone would ring all night long and that she might never leave unless she stopped answering. Understand that she was not staffing an emergency line!

People had come to expect her to answer after hours. She was in danger of major burnout. What action did she take? She set a time to stop answering and honored that time. This is a simple, but not easy, action to implement. Habits require time to change!

Normal hours ended at five o’clock but she frequently worked past seven every day. She started off by deciding that she would stop answering the phone at six-thirty. When she was comfortable with that, she moved the time back to six, then five-thirty and eventually five o’clock.

Change of behavior improved her communication with customers. It became easier to listen when she was not upset about the late calls. This change also improved the quality of her personal life since she was not so exasperated with her professional life.

What are you going to do today to establish your telephone policy? What steps are you taking to overcome barriers to effective communication?

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