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Verbal Power and Presence

By Anna Wildermuth, AICI

Appearance is only the external component of professional presence. What we say and how we say and write it confirm our professionalism. Put the following communication tips in place to ensure that you will be well thought of and respected in all circles.

Voice Mail Welcome

Change your voice mail welcome daily or weekly. Tell callers your schedule for the day or the week. This indicates that your message is current and lets callers know when you will be available. Say who you are and the name of your company or division. Let callers know their message is important and that you will get back to them as soon as possible. Be friendly, concise, and speak slowly. Do not include tips or advertisements in your voice mail welcome. These are tiresome for repeat callers.

Voice Mail Message

Speak slowly, say your name and why you are calling, and ask when is a good time to call back. Repeat your phone number twice. If you have a request, be sure to tell the person when you need it. Never leave a confrontational message.

Returning Phone Calls

Always return phone calls within 24 hours or have your assistant or secretary do so. If you can't, apologize and explain the extenuating circumstances. Returning phone calls, even if you can't help the caller, shows you are courteous and professional. It is rude to leave someone hanging.

Faxes

Always have a cover sheet. Don't count on privacy. Number the pages in your document. Let the recipient know ahead of time if your fax is more than ten pages long. Long faxes should be faxed before or after office hours. Fax only white paper; colored paper makes the print hard to read.



E-Mail

When you send e-mail, be sure to use proper spelling and grammar. If necessary, write your message in a word processing document, proof and spell check it and then copy and paste it into e-mail. Your e-mail will have a life of its own. Do not send e-mail that is off-color or confrontational. Remember that someone else can read it. Do not forward e-mails without permission of the sender. Be sure to delete the sender's address. Save messages you send, especially if is a document

you may need to refer to again.

Cell Phone

Your cell phone should always be on the vibrating mode when you are with other people. Never carry on a conversation in front of anyone else. Excuse yourself when you need to take a call. Never borrow someone else's cell phone. Using a cell phone while driving is dangerous; use care and caution.

Letters and Notes

Your letters and notes represent you. Be sure to spell the person's name and title correctly. Spell check and proof read all correspondence before you mail it. Never send anything in writing that is confrontational. It is very difficult to take something back after it is written. Hand write a thank you note if you have good penmanship.

These verbal and written communication tips are key to confirming your professional presence. Remember; when you are out of sight, your verbal and written messages should bring into view your approachability and professionalism. They should send the message, "I am someone you want to know."

*Anna Wildermuth, AICI is president of Personal Images, Inc. This copyrighted article is excerpted from her new book, *Unlocking the Secrets of Successful Women in Business - Visual and Verbal Power*, due out in late 2000. Visit: <http://www.personalimagesinc.com> for monthly image and communication tips*