Telephone Etiquette

Proper telephone etiquette is an important facet of communication, since you represent not only yourself, but often your department and the University. Remembering to use proper telephone etiquette, whether answering or making calls, leaves your respondents with a favorable impression of you, your department, and Lehigh in general. The following suggestions are helpful for making your phone conversations more effective.

- Using phrases such as “thank you” and “please” are essential in displaying a professional atmosphere.
- Listen actively and listen to others without interrupting.
- Don’t make people dread having to answer their phone or call your department.

Answering Calls

- Try to answer the phone within three rings. Answering a phone too fast can catch the caller off guard and waiting too long can make the caller angry.
- Answer with a friendly greeting. (Example - “Good Afternoon, Lehigh University, Telecommunications, Lizanne speaking, how may I help you?”).
- Smile - it shows, even through the phone lines; speak in a pleasant tone of voice - the caller will appreciate it.
- Ask the caller for their name, even if their name is not necessary for the call. This shows you have taken an interest in them.
- If the caller has reached a wrong number, be courteous. Sometimes a caller is transferred all over campus with a simple question and the caller gets frustrated. If possible, take the time to find out where they should be calling/to whom they should be speaking.
- Use the hold button when leaving a line so that the caller does not accidentally overhear conversations being held nearby.
- When you are out of the office or away from your desk for more than a few minutes, forward your phone to voicemail.

Making Calls

- When you call someone and they answer the phone, do not say “Who am I speaking with?” without first identifying yourself: (Example - “This is Lizanne from Lehigh/Telecommunications. To whom am I speaking?”)
- Always know and state the purpose of the communication.
- When you reach a wrong number, don’t argue with the person who answered the call or keep them on the line. Say: “I’m sorry, I must have the wrong number. Please excuse the interruption.” And then hang up.
- If you told a person you would call at a certain time, call them as you promised. If you need to delay the conversation, call to postpone it, but do not make the other person wait around for your call.
- If you don’t leave a number/message for someone to call you back, don’t become angry if they are not available when you call again.

Handling Rude or Impatient Callers

- Stay calm. Try to remain diplomatic and polite. Getting angry will only make them angrier.
- Always show willingness to resolve the problem or conflict.
- Try to think like the caller. Remember, their problems and concerns are important.
- If you are in a non-supervisory position: Offer to have your supervisor talk to the caller or call him/her back if the caller persists.
- If you are supervisor: Be willing to handle irate callers. Speak slowly and calmly. Be firm with your answers, but understanding. Sometimes the irate caller just wants someone in a supervisory capacity to listen to their story even if you are unable to help them.

Placing Calls on Hold

- Please consult Campus Cisco Phones and select your type of phone under Telephone Feature Guides for Hold instructions.
- When putting a caller on hold, always ask permission. Examples: “Would you mind holding while I check?” or “Can you hold briefly while I see if Mr. Jones is available?” When taking a caller off of hold, always thank them for holding.
- Sometimes you may have other lines ringing too. Remember to write down the names of callers holding so you avoid asking who the caller is holding for more than once.

Transferring Calls

- Please consult Campus Cisco Phones and select your type of phone under Telephone Feature Guides for Transfer instructions.
- If the caller needs to speak to another person or department, transfer the caller directly to the desired person’s extension rather than the operator. This will save the caller having to explain his/her requests another time, and it will cut the number of times the caller needs to be transferred.
- When transferring a caller, tell them who you are transferring them to, and announce the caller to the person you are transferring them to.
- If the called party does not wish to take the call, return to the caller (Example – “He/she is out of the office, may I take a message or would you like his/her voicemail?”)

Taking Messages

- Be prepared with pen and message slip when you answer the phone.
- When taking messages be sure to ask for:
  - Caller’s name (asking the caller for correct spelling.)
  - Caller’s phone number and/or extension (including area code)
  - If the caller is a student, ask for the Student ID# (if appropriate) and ask about the subject of the call.
- Repeat the message to the caller.
- Be sure to fill in the date, time, and your initials.
- Place the message slip in the called party’s inbox or in a conspicuous place in their office, such as their chair.
- Don’t forget that you can transfer them to voicemail instead of taking a paper message, but don’t forget to ask, “Would you like me to transfer you to his/her voicemail?” Do not assume that the caller would rather go to voicemail. Always ask first.

Ending Conversations
There are several ways that you can end a long phone call without making up a story or sounding rude:

- Leave the conversation open, and let the other party end the conversation.
- Promise to finish your discussion at another time.
- End on an "up" note.
- Tell the person how much you've enjoyed speaking with him/her.
- Before hanging up, be sure that you have answered all the caller's questions
- Always end with a pleasantry such as: "Have a nice day" or "It was nice speaking with you"

As long as you are honest and polite with the other person, you shouldn't have any problems getting off the phone and onto something else.

Voicemail Etiquette

Voicemail has many benefits and advantages when used properly. However, you should not hide behind voicemail. If callers constantly reach your voicemail instead of you, they will suspect that you are avoiding calls. Following are some helpful hints that will help you and your callers benefit from voicemail.

Voicemail Greetings

- Record your own personal greeting; try to avoid using the standard default greeting or having another person record your greeting. People tend to feel that they have already lost the personal touch because of voice mail. If a female voice says that "John Doe is not available", the caller will not be convinced that you listen to your voicemail.
- In your greeting, include your name, department and date so that people know they have reached the correct person. Note: If you know that you will be on vacation for a few days or leaving the office early or have different hours temporarily, you should record an extended absence greeting to let callers know this. Callers will know not to expect a callback for a few hours or a few days. (Please consult Voicemail Info for information on recording voice mail greetings.)
- Use the attendant feature! This feature allows the caller to reach another person in your department from your voicemail. For example, if you were out of the office on a Friday and a caller needed an answer immediately, the caller could dial 0 while listening to your voicemail message and be transferred to someone else in your department.
  - You have to select an attendant yourself, it is not done automatically; notify Telecommunications Services at x85300 with the extension to which your calls should go. Try to select someone who would know your schedule and be able to take messages for you such as a coordinator, receptionist or assistant.
  - If your greeting is rather long, you might consider informing callers of the option to press # (unless you have an extended absence greeting recorded) to bypass your message and to start recording their message to you.
  - When you leave for the day or will be away from your desk for an extended period of time, forward your line to your voicemail using the call forward feature as a courtesy to your callers. Call forwarding means that your callers don't have to wait through an entire ring cycle (4 rings) before leaving a voice mail message for you. (Please consult Call Forwarding instructions for campus Cisco phones.)

Checking Messages/Returning Calls

- Check your messages daily and return messages within 24 hours. If it will take longer than 24 hours, call the person and advise him/her. Callers should feel comfortable that you are checking your voice mail daily.
- If you forward a message, be sure to explain to the person to whom you are forwarding the message why you are sending it to them. (Please consult Campus Cisco Phones for information on Checking Voice mail and Message Review Options)

Leaving Voice mail Messages

- Speak clearly and slowly.
- Be sure to leave your name and extension number. It's best to say it at the beginning and end of your message.
- Leave the date and time you called in the message.
- Let the person know the best time to call you back.
- Keep messages short and to the point. Cover one topic in one message; specify what you want the recipient to do. Remember that you want to leave the person you are calling with a good impression of you. (Please consult Campus Cisco Phones for information on Sending Voice mail.)