

## Best Practices: call for submissions until October 31

### SHARE your training best practice and win a prize

Have you attended a training session that bowled you over for its effectiveness and lessons learnt? Or do you, as a company, provide just that gem-of-a-training programme that you would like to highlight? To improve professionalism in the industry, share your best practices on training.

This initiative is brought to you by TTG Asia and Think 8.

The best practice picked will not only be featured and saluted in TTG Asia, you (or the company) will also win a free half-day training session by Think 8's Mr Ray Bigger.\*

#### Send your entry by providing the following details:

- Company
- Address/Tel
- Issue/Problem/Challenge
- Existing Performance Level
- Strategy to resolve
- Action steps taken to resolve
- Who was involved
- When solution implemented
- Result achieved
- How can the result be verified
- Any other comments/documents to support this entry.

#### How to submit your entry

**Email:**  
TTG Asia/Think 8 Training Best Practices  
ttgnewsdesk@ttgasia.com and  
ray@think8.net

**Or, mail to:**  
The Editor  
TTG Asia/Think 8 Training Best Practices  
TTG Asia Media  
6 Raffles Quay  
#16-02  
Singapore 048580

\* This can be a standalone session or combined with other training the winner is running. If the winner is not from Singapore, his only cost is air fare/accommodation.

## MENTORING



**Q I am getting frustrated because my boss is very dictatorial and just doesn't listen. I could enjoy my job a lot more if this could be resolved. I run a small team and they can see the problems as well. Any tips would be helpful. Name withheld, Hong Kong**

THE answer lies in how you manage your boss. It is worth writing down the issues as you see them. Try to be objective and think of specific examples that have occurred which caused a problem. I'll explain why you will need these shortly.

Next, think objectively about how you communicate with your boss. Are you a problem presenter or a solution provider? For example, do you outline the problem as you see it, quickly recap the steps you have taken and finish with some options and a recommendation? That will signal to your boss you are thinking things through and helping him make a decision, or helping him to help you make a decision. In this example, you are a solution provider and this will help your boss develop a mindset that you have the capability to take some of the issues off his shoulders.

Also, give some thought as to how his personality plays a part in his role. Would you describe him as a big picture guy or a details guy?

If he is the latter, then you will need to provide lots of information to support any issues you are discussing with him.

Finally, to bring this together, you will need the examples I referred to earlier.

I suggest you ask your boss to set aside some time for a meeting to discuss your development. One of the first things you need to establish is what are his expectations of you in terms of your role ie goals, reporting, managing, communicating, workload, procedures and you can say: "How would you like me to manage my approach to you better for mutual benefit?" "What am I doing that frustrates you and what am I doing that helps you?"

If you have a performance review coming up, this is the perfect opportunity.

Maybe these issues were raised in a review but have lost traction and you want to revisit them in a follow-up meeting.

You should use the examples to demonstrate where matters can improve, not as a criticism of your boss, more to show what you mean by you getting frustrated. Above all, you need to put these points in a calm and professional manner and not make them sound like a moaning session.

Differences with bosses are part and parcel of any career and can be an uplifting experience in further developing personal relationships. What you say is important, how you say it is key.

Maintain a positive mindset throughout. Be ready to provide solutions which are what all customers are looking for, whether they are external or internal ones.

Good luck and if you hit a road block you can call me on (65) 6875-0104.

# The basics

YOUR telephone manner reflects well, or badly, on you, your company, your brand and your competition – the latter is often disregarded.

Many people who pick up a call are blissfully unaware that, in just nine seconds, they are creating or killing business opportunities. These thoughts will help you project your personality and professionalism in your job and the all important professional image of your company.

The most successful approach to telephone use is to place the caller at the top of your mental list, not you.

Always be courteous and helpful so the caller will feel good about calling and talking to you. You and your voice make the difference, an obvious understatement and again too often forgotten. You do not have the advantage of visual

contact, hence the listening skills have to be sharper than normal. When you take a call, speak clearly. Ensure your voice projects an attitude of being cheerful and helpful. State clearly your name and say: "How can I help you?"

Whatever the caller's purpose, deal with it as far as you can take it. First get the caller's name, company and telephone number. Why? You might get cut off and you may lose a sales opportunity. Ask how they would like to be addressed, that shows courtesy ie Mr XX or their first name. If the person who can deal with the enquiry is not available, do not say blandly: "They are out/engaged/busy/not around." with no further explanation. Take a message and say you will get Mr XX to call back. If the right person is, say, on the phone give the

**It takes just nine seconds to create or kill business opportunities.**

Amex HK  
(CBTF) 18x6  
cols

# of the first nine seconds

*Getting client relationships over the telephone right*

COACHING



caller the option to hold or say: "Rather than have you waiting at your expense I'll get Mr XX to call you back. Would that be ok?". If you put the caller on hold, do not leave them there in space. Go back every 30 seconds and see what the caller would prefer to do – continue waiting or call back?

A rare occurrence and a missed opportunity to demonstrate professionalism is the "seeking permission" aspect of an interaction. It is simple yet overlooked.

Let me illustrate with a couple of examples. You explain to a caller you are going to put them on hold while you track down Mr XX. Ask: "Is that ok with you?". A client has given you a lot of information and you say: "So that I have understood what you have told me I would like to recap those points." Again ask: "Is that ok with you?". A caller has made enquiries and raised a number of issues they want information on. You explain to the customer that you propose to deal with his enquiries in a certain order: "Are you agreeable to that?" or "Does that sound ok to you?". Reverting to a sales scenario where a customer has voiced an objection to a part of your proposal or recommendation, you might/would say: "If we can resolve these issues satisfactorily, do we have an agreement?" As I said a small step but a huge impact on a customer.

It is estimated that people who have had a bad experience tell 15 other people whereas with a good experience they tell just four. That alone should be sufficient reason to be grateful when you receive a complaint and handle it professionally. It also gives your business feedback on how you are performing.

If you are dealing with the complaint on the telephone, make

it clear from the outset that you are there to help.

Secondly tell them you are sorry they have had cause to raise these issues.

In the event issues need to be checked out, tell the customer you are going to listen to the problem without interruption, save for information you wish to clarify. Nothing irritates a customer more than constant interruptions.

Then get their permission: "Does that sound ok to you?". Then proceed. Depending on the nature of the problem, for which you will undoubtedly have to check the facts, give the customer a timeline when you will get back to them.

Better to say you will respond in 48 hours and revert in 24 hours rather than the other way round.

Most complainants are emotional to varying degrees. As soon as a complaint surfaces, deal with it fast. If it can be resolved on the spot, because you are empowered to do so, then do it. Whoever is dealing with the complainant must establish some rapport and empathy quickly, and that doesn't mean putting the process before the person.

Having got all the information, it is imperative you summarise the points by saying something like: "So that I have understood everything you have told me correctly, let me

summarise". If there are a lot of points, then ask: "Have I got this correct so far?" after three or four points and complete the rest of the points in the same manner.

Finally remember your voice. Vary the pitch and tone so you do not sound monosyllabic and thus boring. Listen to

colleagues you talk to over the telephone and mentally mark them on whether they sounded interested and sincere.

Customers, clients all want a degree of help when they call you. If you are unable to deliver a credible first nine seconds then your competition just might – think about it.



Mr Ray Bigger is a director of Hospitality Strategies Asia Pacific and founder and managing director of Think8, a leading coaching, consulting and training company headquartered in Singapore. He has more than 25 years of sales, marketing, people and team development experience. Mr Bigger is a former English Premier League and Football League referee.  
Tel: (65) 6875-0104, website: [www.think8.net](http://www.think8.net)

Have a work-related issue or problem? Write to Ray ([ray@think8.net](mailto:ray@think8.net)).

# Novotel Citygate 28x4 cols