

## Quick Guide: How To Handle Tricky Phone Calls

Do you ever get tricky phone calls either from colleagues or clients? Our natural reaction is to defend ourselves or our bosses but this often comes across as aggressive. Here are the **top ten tips** to help you to take control of yourself and handle tricky situations assertively on the telephone:

- 1. Let the caller have their say.** When someone is angry or upset, it is helpful for them to have the opportunity to "let off steam". It also indicates to the caller that you are willing to take the time to listen.
- 2. Say you are sorry to hear what has happened.** This does not mean you are admitting that you or the firm is in the wrong, but that you are sorry the caller thinks this is the case and is upset.
- 3. Listen actively.** Show that you are listening; to check your understanding reflect back what has been said.
- 4. Get at the facts by questioning effectively.** Make sure you get to the heart of the problem. Often there can be more than one problem - make sure you get to all of them. Remember that the caller may not always voice them in order of importance.
- 5. Keep an open mind.** Do not make assumptions!
- 6. Do not argue or be defensive.** Concentrate on the situation not the personalities.
- 7. Try to find out what outcome the caller wants.** Do they want someone to visit and talk through the problem or just a quick reminder? Try to build on the caller's ideas and suggestions.
- 8. Explain what you cannot do and concentrate on what you can do.** For example: I am not able to access the file/network at present however I can help you achieve the task by doing X or Y.
- 9. Do not impose your own solution.** You must reach a solution that the caller finds acceptable. Ask them which solution they would prefer.
- 10. Always summarise.** Remember to check that the caller understands and agrees.

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