



17 Tips for Telephone Mastery

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Scott Love is a leading expert and authority in the executive search industry. He writes a monthly column in the Fordyce Letter, has been quoted in the Wall Street Journal and Selling Power Magazine, and is the author of 'The Recruiter's Adventure Book! How to Find Buried Treasure in the World of Recruiting'. Scott has spoken to nearly every major industry group and is a graduate of the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland.

About This Segment

In Scott's presentation, entitled 17 Tips for Telephone Mastery, you'll learn how specific verbiage and your overall psychology can impact your calls, tips, tactics and techniques to improve the outcomes of your calls, and how to address the emotional state of calling, specifically call reluctance.

Week 1 Meeting: "17 Tips for Telephone Mastery" by Scott Love

If you are reviewing this episode with a team, break this episode into two different segments – Part 1 and Part 2 (already broken into two different episodes on the site). Week 1's suggested viewing schedule and exercises are below.

Facilitator: (Begin the video, and watch through the end of Part 1: (26:30)) The first step for improvement of your calls and quality of dialogue is to be aware of the most common areas that most recruiters struggle with on a daily basis. Whether you have the ability to record your calls or not, each of the following areas is probably a potential area of improvement – no matter your tenure in the search industry. Let's break down each of the areas that Scott discussed.

Tip #1: "How are you today?"

Stop saying it. Scott did a great job of articulating why this seemingly innocent greeting puts an immediate wall up for your prospect. In addition to this wall, it takes up valuable time that can be used with more important and impactful information. For those of you who have watched the Rookie Training Program on the Next Level Exchange, you are familiar with what we refer to as "The Backpack Theory". Imagine, if you will, that you are going camping for a week in the wilderness. You have to put everything that you'll need into a backpack. After that, you've got no more room. No carry on luggage, and no shipping additional boxes to the campsite. That backpack has obviously a limited amount of space, and it's your job before you leave to really evaluate everything that goes into that backpack. Every single thing that you pack needs to be evaluated for it's level of necessity and the value that it brings to your trip. You've got to choose between the hair dryer and the pair of jeans. You've got to choose if you bring three sweatshirts, or if only one will suffice. If you don't have room for the bug spray and the hair spray, which are you going to go with?

Think of your opening lines of your call in the same way - as a backpack. You need to carefully select every word that goes in to your introduction, and evaluate it's level of necessity and the value that it brings to your opening dialogue. If you only have a certain number of seconds in which your prospect is deciding whether to continue the conversation with you or not, you need to make sure that every single word and statement in your 'backpack' of an introduction is in there for a clear, necessary purpose.

So if you are going to eliminate “how are you today”, what can you replace it with, if anything? Brainstorm as a group what could replace that time in your opening dialogue, and what you have to gain by the replacements you select. You might ultimately decide to skip straight to your next statement, because you can arrive at your ultimate point in a more succinct manner.

Tip #2: “The reason for my call is...”

Erase that from your introduction as well. Scott’s suggestions are much more direct, authoritative, and put the prospect less on the defensive – how would they work for you?

“Let me tell you who I am and why I’m calling you.”
“Let me take the mystery out of my call.”

If you don’t think these would work, take some time to think about what would. If the purpose behind you stating your purpose is to break down a wall, what could you say that would be interpreted that way on the other end?

If your purpose is to actually state your purpose, remember to eliminate any “filler words” that take up unnecessary room. Instead of stating that *“the purpose for my call today is that it’s my understanding that you have a need for a Commercial Construction Executive”*, you can skip straight to *“it’s my understanding that you may have a need”*.

Last, remember that your purpose should not be why *you* need to talk with this candidate or client – there is no time for *“I wanted to call you today because I wanted to network with you”* or *“I am reaching out because you were recommended to me as someone that might be able to help me with some possible networking leads”*. Make sure your prospect understands what’s *in it for them* to invest some time with you.

Tip #3: Inflection and Pitch

This is a tough one to judge if you don’t have the ability to listen and review recorded telephone calls for training purposes. How your inflection comes across and how you *think* your inflection come across may be two different things. This might require an entire shift in perspective – one that requires you to be aware of your need to seek affirmation, which is what typically is happening when the tone raises at the end of a word or sentence. Although you may not realize it, this upward inflection makes your confident statement an uncertain question, so lower your voice and focus on pronouncing the last syllable of each word before pausing for an answer or moving to the next sentence.

If you don’t have the ability to record you call, simply call your voicemail after hours and leave a message delivering your script or voicemail, and then review.

Tip #4: “Hello, (name)?”

Scott mentions the familiar technique of gathering a series of “yes” answers before asking tougher questions. Not only does this question garner an affirmative answer, it gets the prospect comfortable saying “yes” without possibly realizing the immediate comfort they are starting to feel by getting the first affirmative answer out of the way. They may not even realize the subconscious path they are following when instead of starting the conversation off with *“I can’t talk right now”*, they instead give a “yes”.

Tip #5: “Uh...”

Scott throws himself under the bus here by sharing a story that’s all too real for most recruiters – the need to insert filler words to buy time as they formulate the next thought, or bridge from one sentence to the next. Although this could be understandable for live presentations, or face-to-face interactions, there is no reason this should happen on the phone. We have the ability to script out, in a completely conversational manner, how the opening moments of the call are going to go. Why waste the opportunity we have?

Again, recorded calls are the best way to assess what your individual “filler” may be – it might not be “uh” or “um” – it might be “like” or “so anyways” or “actually” or “kind of” or “sort of”...the list goes on and on! Scott’s suggestion is to focus on pronouncing the last syllable of every word to help with this underlying issue.

Tip #6: “Specifically”

Last tip in this segment - insert the word “specifically”. It reels the prospect back in, and you will make them feel special. Nobody wants to feel like they are being mass-marketed to – so even if that’s the case, inserting the word “specifically” will quickly gain the attention of your prospect and buy you a few more seconds of their attention.

If you are reviewing this episode with a team, break this episode into two different segments – Part 1 and Part 2 (already broken into two different episodes on the site). For homework between the two meetings, have each associate record phone calls and review based on Scott’s feedback and suggestions.

Week 2 Meeting: “17 Tips for Telephone Mastery” by Scott Love

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Tip #7: Gain undivided attention

In the opening moments of a call, our prospects are more focused on *who we are* than *what we are saying*. If they don’t recognize your name, their mental rolodex is whirling with thoughts of “am I supposed to know her, is this someone I owe money to, is this someone who is trying to sell me something, is this someone I met and don’t remember” and so on. Instead of having this candidate not fully engaged in the conversation, we want them to open up and give us their undivided attention and make sure they are ready for that. Some ways to effectively do this:

“You and I don’t know each other...”

“You and I have not talked before...”

“You and I have a common friend in (name) and he suggested I give you a call.”

Tip #8: Use the Assumptive Close

Now, there is a fine line between being arrogant and being assumptive, and it's important to recognize that this approach is one that is best used on the smaller areas in which you are closing. In essence, you are simply assuming that a positive decision has already been made – as an example, instead of saying

“This isn't a good time for you, is it?”

Replace with:

“Do you have a second?”

“Is this a good time for you right now?”

“Do you have a minute?”

“Acting as if” can help make some of the smaller closes less intimidating. Instead of asking for permission, you are simply proceeding as if no decision even needs to be made – and you will find that it will create a much less intimidating process, especially with smaller decisions. Now, the ineffective way to over-use this technique? On the first phone call, after delivering your recruiting presentation, you close with *“so, I assume this sounds like an amazing opportunity to you – it does to everyone else I've talked with – when would you like to meet with them?”* The assumptive close can work well when you are closing on a series of less important, or intimidating, closes – but remember to be conscious of ineffectively implementing the assumptive close and leaving the impression that you were not listening or empathetic to the other individual.

Tip #9: Too Friendly Too Soon

If you only get one chance to make a first impression, Scott suggests that it's best to start with a professional first impression. Even if your personality is one that's larger-than-life, strangers may be taken aback from an overly friendly demeanor. Once you feel some of the barriers breaking down, you can certainly become a little more lighthearted, joke around, and try to connect on a personal level. But if you lead with personality and hope that the rest takes care of itself, you may find that this prospect feels as though he or she has enough friends, or a natural defense mechanism kicks in. Provide something of value on a professional level first, and then connect personally.

Tip #10: Tone of Voice

If you think you can recruit more candidates and close more clients by building better relationships, you are only partly correct. You earn business by bringing value and contribution to your prospect; the best way to win the hearts and minds and loyalty of a client is to deliver value to them first, and let the relationship develop from there. If you focus just on building a relationship and neglect to solve a problem for your prospect, then you might end up becoming good friends with your prospect...and then you can watch how he will buy from your best competitor because your competitor showed how he could solve your client's problem.

Tip #11: Gatekeepers

Have familiarity with the company: When you show that you *have* information, gatekeepers are more likely to *give you* information when you have shown that some already exists.



Pattern interrupt: 99% of the time, the typical pattern of questioning a gatekeeper uses is “*who’s calling*”, “*what company are you with*”, and “*what is this regarding*”. That being said, if you can anticipate that those questions are the standards you will be asked, you can amend your responses to ones that interrupt the pattern of questions being asked.

Gatekeeper: “*ABC Company, this is Glenda.*”
Recruiter: “*Glenda, hi. It’s Scott Love calling back for Jeff.*”

This has redirected the line of questioning, because you didn’t wait for the next question to be asked. Additionally, stating that you are “calling back” sounds like he returned your call, when in fact we can just be calling him back from a voicemail we left last week or a call attempted earlier in the day. Now, what if you get put through and prospect says “*Scott, I’m confused – the receptionist said you were calling me back, but I’ve never called you before?*” An appropriate response could be “*no, no, I called you last week and left you a message and hadn’t heard back, so I was calling you back. The reason for my call is...*” and move forward with the scripted introduction presentation. Notice how those very small changes can make the difference between you being screened out and let through.

Be assertive: Scott points out that like it or not, we train people how to treat us. If you practice being assertive and taking control of how you are being interacted with, a suggested script could be:

“I don’t know if you are having a bad day, but I really don’t appreciate the way you’re talking to me. I know your job is to screen people out, but you really don’t have any idea who you’re talking to right now. I’d appreciate it if you’d transfer me to Jeff please.”

Tips #12 and #13: Voicemails Suggestions

Candidate Script: “*Karen, Scott Love at (phone number). I work for a company called Scott Love and Associates. Our firm specializes in recruiting high-level performers in the healthcare sector. I’ve got a client that has some unique opportunities, and I don’t know what your interest level or situation is right now, but I do know that the strength of this opportunity could justify a four or five minute phone call between you and me. Either way, I also know that you and I both know that we can’t predict the future, and it might be worth it for you and I to get to know each other, because you never know what lies ahead these days. Again my name is Scott Love, and I look forward to chatting with you. (phone number)”*

Follow-up Email: Subject: Time on Schedule?

Karen, I left a voicemail earlier. Check your schedule and let me know if you have time to chat today or tomorrow?

Immediate Value: “*I lead the Commercial Banking Practice which exclusively places senior credit managers and commercial lenders with both national and independent banking institutions. I have built a relationship with one such senior manager and together we have short listed a few organizations that he would like to target. He primarily focuses on new business development with (types of clients) and has landed (# of) accounts in the last 6 months totaling over (\$) in new revenue for the company. I’d like to share with you his brief story and why he is interested in speaking with you – do you have a moment now to talk or at least listen?”*



Referral: *“You and I have a common friend in Steve Smith and he recommended that I give you a call.”*

Ego: *“I do executive search within the (industry) and I also write a blog on leadership within the (industry). I’d love to interview you briefly on my upcoming blog post on how managers are adapting to change. I’d be happy to publish your name and company if I use what you have to say.”*

Tip #14: Stand up!

Energy comes through on the phone, and you can increase yours by standing up. Same with a smile – keep a mirror next to your phone and smile while you are leaving voicemails and engaging in dialogue with candidates and clients!

Tip #15: Five by Nine

Make it your mission to make five calls by 9am! Stand up, don’t sit down between calls, and don’t hang up the phone with those first five dials. That type of momentum can set you up for a productive morning that flows quickly into a productive afternoon!

Tip #16: First to five gets \$10

Make small challenges that can get you motivated and keep you motivated!

Tip #17: Use the Telephone Discipline Tool, available at www.greatrecruitertraining.com

This type of self-management tool works great for recruiters:

Hourly Planner						
7am - 8am						Total:
8am - 9am						Total:
9am - 10am						Total:
10am - 11am						Total:
11am - 12pm						Total:
12pm - 1pm						Total:
1pm - 2pm						Total:
2pm - 3pm						Total:
3pm - 4pm						Total:
4pm - 5pm						Total:
5pm - 6pm						Total:
6pm - 7pm						Total:
7pm - 8pm						Total:
						Goal for the day:
						Total for the day: