

SECTION 5

TELEPHONE

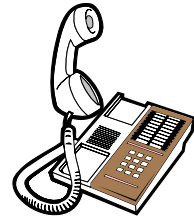
SALES



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INTRODUCTION TO TELEPHONE SALES

A telephone call is an **opportunity** to tell potential residents about the property we manage. Your telephone image is the most important factor in a prospect's decision to visit the property. What is telephone image? It is made up of voice, attitude, what is said, and what is not said.



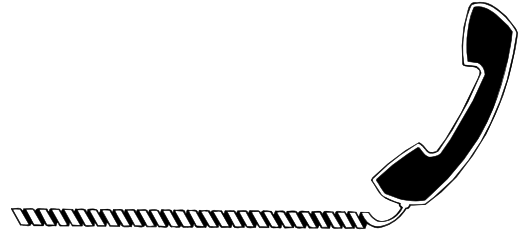
**GOOD TELEPHONE IMAGE = MORE TRAFFIC
MORE TRAFFIC = MORE LEASES**

The telephone sales process is made up of four parts:

1. Answering the Telephone (*Greeting*)
2. Determining Needs (*Qualifying*)
3. Creating Interest (*Demonstrating*)
4. Making an Appointment (*Closing*)

TELEPHONE GREETING

When the telephone rings, there is no way for you to know who the caller is. Assume it is always a prospect, and treat each caller with the same warmth and interest. This is an opportunity to help someone feel better about his or her day.



The proper telephone technique consists of:

- ☐ Being prepared. When you have all of the information at hand including a pen and the telephone log and know your product (the exact location and appearance of the show apartments), you will be relaxed and will handle the telephone prospect with ease and confidence.
- ☐ Answering the telephone right away / as quick as possible.
- ☐ Being ready to begin the conversation when the telephone is answered. In other words, do not pick up the receiver while continuing a conversation with someone in the office. Prospects must feel that they are your TOP priority!
- ☐ Answering with a “smile” in your voice. The key to using the telephone successfully is in your personality. Prospects cannot see you, but they hear everything you say. This makes a lasting impression.

People can “hear” a smile over the phone! **SMILE**

- ☐ Using an appropriate greeting. Have an upbeat, short greeting, such as, “Thank you for calling. This is (**your name**).” (By giving prospects your name, they are more likely to offer theirs. If not, ask. You need to know the prospect’s name early in the process. Then, by using the prospect’s name while asking questions, you can create a more personalized and relaxed discussion.)

Remember that you are not merely an information center. Create a desire in the prospect so that s/he will ***want*** to see what you have to offer keeping in mind always that your ***goal is to make an appointment for the prospect to visit the property.***

NOTE: If you are alone in the office and absolutely cannot give the prospect the attention s/he deserves, it is permissible to return the call. Make sure you handle this response warmly and follow up as quickly as possible.

Remember:

- ☐ **Be prepared.**
- ☐ **Answer promptly with a smile!**
- ☐ **Make the prospect feel that s/he is your top priority.**

DETERMINING NEEDS



The second part of the call is where most sales are won or lost. This is the “qualifying” phase. Qualifying is actually determining the prospect’s needs.

Your next objective is to determine the **WANTS** and **NEEDS** of the prospect. In addition, work toward building rapport with the caller.

Then, by using the caller’s name while asking questions, you create a more comfortable situation. Everyone likes for people to use their name. Don’t you?

**To accomplish your goal
of determining the prospect’s wants and needs, you must**

STAY IN CONTROL OF THE CONVERSATION.

Tips for staying in control of the conversation include:

- Following the questions listed under, **Question/Question.**
- Overcoming the price question. (**Question/Answer/Question**)
- Showing genuine interest in the prospect’s response.

30.1 Question/Answer/Question

When the prospect asks a question, you should answer and then ask a question.

Example:

“Mr. Jones, we have several different styles, one of which I know will be perfect for you. I just need to ask you a few questions to help me determine exactly what you are looking for, and then I will tell you all about the apartments and our incredible community. Okay?”

This allows Mr. Jones to relax because he now knows that you will eventually tell him everything. **You are controlling the conversation.** Do not make the prospect drag the information out of you, but achieve your goal of staying in control by giving the information in increments.

30.2 Question/Question

The questions to ask...

- ☒ How soon do you need to move into your new home?
- ☒ How many people will be occupying the apartment?
- ☒ What size apartment home do you prefer?
- ☒ From where are you moving? Which apartment community do you live in now?
- ☒ Why are you moving from...?
- ☒ What kind of features does your home now have that you must have in your new home?
- ☒ What features do you not have in your current home that you would like to have?
- ☒ Do you have a preference in terms of location or color scheme?
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30.3 Hot Buttons

Sales people know to stuff their pockets with all kinds of tools to be used later. These tools are called ***HOT BUTTONS!***

Hot Buttons are things your prospect wants/needs in his/her new home. However, before you proceed, you should find at least 3 Hot Buttons, and you can have more.

Hot Buttons might include:

- ◆ Carpet color
- ◆ Location i.e. third floor/second floor/by the pool
- ◆ Gas heat
- ◆ Washer/dryer hook-up
- ◆ Large living room
- ◆ Pool
- ◆ Fitness equipment
- ◆ Electric/gas cooking
- ◆ School district
- ◆ Business center
- ◆ Laundry facilities

How do you determine the difference between what a prospects WANTS and what the prospect NEEDS?

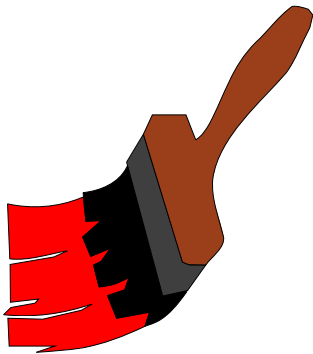
- *A WANT is a desire such as carpet color, fireplace or second floor location.*
- *A NEED is a requirement such as number of bedrooms, price or school location.*

CREATING INTEREST

Before demonstrating, the prospect needs to be prepared for the information you are about to give them.

Example:

“Okay, Mr. Jones...Got a pencil? Because I’ve got a lot to tell you, and I know that you will want to write some of this down!”



**PAINT A PICTURE.
CREATE A DESIRE.**

If the goal of the phone call is to set an appointment, remember that no prospect is going to want to tour the property if you do not get them excited about seeing it.

Your product knowledge is the key to painting pictures and creating a desire. Be clear about the exact vacancy that is perfect for the prospect. Describe it in such a way as to create a ***real desire*** in the prospect. Paint word pictures. Use words that enable the prospect to visualize the apartment.

Consider a conversation such as:

“Ms. Jones, the perfect apartment is coming available just when you need it! It is one of our largest apartments. You’ll find it feels more like a home than an apartment. The carpet is almost new—I know that is important to you.

This particular apartment is on the end of the building, so it has more windows plus you can actually see the sun set from your balcony!”

Only if you have walked all of the show apartments can you have such a conversation. **Know** your product and then **create a desire**.

If you cannot meet the prospect's needs such as in cases where the prospect does not meet the Rental Policy and Occupancy Guidelines, it is important that you clearly explain the reasons. **Consistency is required by law**, but it is also required that you be specific. Learn your standards. Make sure you know the Rental Policy and Occupancy Guidelines.

If the prospect has a pet that does not meet your standards, or if there are more occupants than allowed by your occupancy guidelines, you should inform the prospect that s/he does not qualify at the present time. Encourage the prospect to make other arrangements for their pet and/or consider a different size apartment.

It is always a good idea to close on a positive note. You might say something like:

"Mr. Smith, if for any reason your situation changes, I hope you will call us again."

**Always be consistent.
If you say this to one prospect,
you must say it to everyone.**



MAKING AN APPOINTMENT

Once you have created a desire for the apartment, you should close the telephone call by attempting to make an appointment. Standard closing skills typically result in a 50% conversion of calls to traffic. This should be helpful as you evaluate your progress.

Offer the prospect a choice of day and time rather than just asking when he or she wants to visit the property. Say something such as,

“Would this afternoon at 3:00 be a good time for you?”

Often, the prospect is reluctant to set a specific time, but usually he/she will agree to come during a time period—such as between 2:00 and 5:00. (Be sure to ask for the prospect’s phone number in case you need to reach him/her before the scheduled appointment.)

Make the prospect feel a sense of obligation to keep the appointment. Tell the prospect that you will be expecting him/her at that time and that you look forward to seeing him/her.

Remind all prospects that they will need a photo I.D.

Remember...When making an appointment:

- ✓ Repeat the date and time of the appointment back to the prospect.
- ✓ Offer directions. Ask, “Where will you be coming from?”
- ✓ Remind the prospect to bring their checkbook!
- ✓ Explain that they will need a photo I.D.
- ✓ Repeat how excited you are to meet them and always thank the prospect for calling.

50.1 Closing The Telephone Call

Ask if directions are needed. Begin those directions with, “Where will you be coming from?” Step-by-step, direct the prospect to the office if assistance is needed.

After making the appointment and giving the prospect all needed information, tell the prospect your name again. Warmly close the telephone call by expressing that you have written down the appointment and are anxious to meet him/her.

Documentation of every telephone call from all prospects is extremely important.



NOTE: Make sure you remember the appointment. If for some reason you have to leave the office, make sure someone else knows to expect the prospect and has the appropriate information.

Immediately transfer your notes to the Telephone Report if you have not done so already.

50.2 Sample Telephone Conversation

What follows is a sample telephone conversation so that you can see how all of these components of the telephone sales call work together. Have your Leasing Portfolio, your Telephone Log and a pen ready. Now take control of the conversation:

Caller: How much are your one-bedrooms?

Consultant: Is the apartment just for yourself?

(You have begun to QUALIFY the caller to better determine caller's needs. You don't know anything about the caller at this point.)

Caller: Yes, it is just for me. Do you have anything?

Consultant: We have a great one-bedroom apartment. When do you need it?

(Another qualifying question. You are controlling the conversation by leading into your description of the apartment.)

Caller: I have given my notice where I live now. I need to move by the end of the month.

Consultant: That's perfect! That will give me just enough time to make sure everything in the apartment is ready for you. Again, my name is Lisa, and yours is ...?

(We are enthusiastic that the caller has called and we suggest that we will personally oversee the process of getting the apartment ready. Personal service, in other words. We now identify ourselves again after we have established some rapport with the caller which leads us to comfortably ask the caller's name.)

Caller: My name is Carla Smith.

Lisa: Great, Carla, I am so glad you called! The one-bedroom that I have available is in a good location near the tennis court and has a beautiful southern exposure overlooking a courtyard. Do you enjoy plants, Carla?

(Look what we have done here! We are enthusiastic. We have told Carla that we are interested in her. We have used her name, asked another qualifying question, and we are about to go into our "feature/benefit" selling.)

Carla: I would but my cat seems to enjoy them more than I do.

Lisa: Boy, do I understand that. My mother's cats were always digging in the potted plants. Well, even if you don't have plants, Carla, this southern exposure would be a great place for your cat to sun itself in the afternoons. All of our apartments have mini-blinds, too, so you don't have to worry about cat hair on the drapes. This apartment has a beautiful taupe carpet. That will work, won't it?

(Feature/benefit...southern exposure/cat can sun; mini blinds/you don't have to worry about the cat damaging the drapes. See how we have made the carpet color more glamorous and tried to get Carla to give an affirmative response?)

Carla: I feel more secure if I am upstairs.

Lisa: I was hoping you would say upstairs because I have an apartment available that I think would suit your needs and it is upstairs. Carla, how soon do you need an apartment?

(We are now going to lead into setting an appointment for Carla's visit.)

Carla: I need to move on the 1st of next month. I think I am going to make my decision right away. Shopping for apartments is not my favorite thing to do.

Lisa: Well, do you think you could make it out today to look at our community or would Saturday be better? Saturday could be a little hectic—we are having a cookout by the pool for the residents. Besides, I would really like for you to see the apartment before someone else leases it.

Carla: I think I could make it out this afternoon.

Lisa: Oh great! I have an appointment at 4:00. Would it be better for you before 3:30 or after 4:30?

(We have given Carla an alternative of choices again.)

Carla: Probably after 5:00 when I get off work. Is 5:30 okay?

Lisa: Of course, I am here until 6:00. Oh Carla, I need to tell you that a deposit on this apartment is \$_____, and we do have a non-refundable application fee of \$15.00. May I ask how you heard about the Equity Real Estate?

Carla: I drive by there every day on my way to work.

Lisa: Well, this must be more convenient for you than where you live now. Carla, one more thing, in case something comes up, may I have a phone number where I can reach you today?

Carla: It is 972-555-7575 and my cell number is 972-612-8868.

Lisa: That is 972-555-7575 and 972-612-8868. Now let's see, you will be here at 5:30 to see apartment 2045, our one-bedroom upstairs near the tennis court with taupe carpet that leases for \$750 and you need to move in before the end of the month. Did I forget anything, Carla?

Carla: No, Lisa, I can't think of anything else.

Lisa: Okay, I am looking forward to meeting you. Goodbye Carla.

Carla: Bye. See you later.

(Lisa knows that Carla's lease is almost a sure bet.)

DISCRIMINATION AND THE TELEPHONE

Fair Housing Footnote

It is unlawful to provide inaccurate information about the availability of an apartment for rent.



A fair housing complaint can be filed based solely on a telephone conversation between a prospect and a site employee.

How can you protect yourself against this kind of complaint?

Follow procedures established on the previous pages in answering the telephone. Make sure these procedures are followed on a consistent basis and that each prospect is treated professionally and fairly.

Recent rental audits performed by H.U.D. in many U.S. cities often indicated discrimination is still an on-going practice.

- Very frequently, African American and Hispanic tester's phone messages were screened and simply not returned, whereas Caucasian tester's phone messages were returned promptly. When the protected class did get through to someone, they were put off before being given an appointment. Another delaying tactic involved the African American and Hispanic tester being told to drive by the unit first and to call back if still interested, even after they had requested an appointment. The Caucasian tester would be given an appointment immediately.
- Even though some persistent African American and Hispanic testers were able to schedule an appointment, they sometimes were unable to obtain rental applications from agents who freely provided the application to Caucasian testers.
- It is the policy of our company to treat all clients in a fair, professional manner, without regard to race, color, religion, gender, familial status, disability or national origin.



**NEWS
UPDATE**

TELEPHONE REPORT

The **Telephone Report** is the ideal tool for recording all phone contact with prospects. The report will record at a minimum:

- ☐ Date and time of the conversation
- ☐ Name
- ☐ Information provided
- ☐ Name of Leasing consultant who took the call

Is documentation enough? NO! CONSISTENCY is the key to avoiding fair housing complaints. Should you attempt to set an appointment with several prospects and fail to do so with one prospect, this could be viewed as a discriminatory practice. Subsequently, if you ask and use one prospect's name, but fail to do so with another, this could put you at risk for non-compliance practices.

Remember: A shopper might record your conversation!

Page ____ of ____

TELEPHONE REPORT

Community: _____

Week Ending: _____

Prepared by: _____

Record all leasing inquiry phone calls.

	Date	Time	Name	Phone #	Source	Size	Date Needed	Pets	Comments Appt. Time / Date Special Needs?	Did Caller Visit?
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										
7										
8										
9										
10										

Name	Leasing Consultant
A. Total calls for week per Leasing Consultant.	
B. Calls converted this week?	%
C. Visits by callers from previous weeks?	
D. Total visitors from calls? (B + C)	
Conversion Percentage (D/A)	%

TELEPHONE ACTIVITY & CHECKLIST

The Telephone Activity is provided to enable you to study and evaluate telephone image. Contact four management companies to study the telephone image projected. Choose at least two companies that you believe will project a positive phone image.

The Telephone Call Checklist is provided as a “self-evaluation”. How do you compare to your competition?

80.1

Telephone Activity

Evaluate each telephone shop in the following areas, rating each from:
5 (outstanding) to 1 (poor).

	Comp 1	Comp 2	Comp 3	Comp 4
Answered before 3 rd ring? YES or NO				
Image				
Consultant's interest				
Voice quality				
Asked your name? YES or NO				
Description of property				
Set appointment? YES or NO				
Directions given				
Asked for your phone number? YES or NO				
Would you visit the property? YES or NO				
Consultant's Name				

80.2

Telephone Call Checklist

	Yes	No
1. Do you answer the phone promptly?		
2. Were you prepared with your Telephone Report near the phone when you answered?		
3. Was your main goal to get an appointment with the prospect?		
4. Did you smile and present a business-like air when in discussion with the prospect?		
5. Did you answer with your specific greeting?		
6. Did you give the prospect your name?		
7. Did you get the prospect's name and continue to use it during the conversation?		
8. Did you ask for the prospect's telephone number?		
9. Did you find out what the prospect's needs were?		
10. Did you ask if the prospect needed directions to the property?		
11. Did you create a desire to see the apartment?		
12. Did you thank the prospect for calling?		
13. Did you leave the impression that you really cared about the prospect and wanted him/her to come see your property?		
14. Did you find out how the prospect heard about your apartments?		
15. Did you treat each prospect the same?		