

"Back to the Basics of Business Communications"

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"XYZ Company, please hold."

The banker, calling to inform the CEO of the approval of their \$2.5 million company-saving loan, hadn't even had a chance to get the first word out of his mouth before he was left to dance cheek-to-cheek with Kenny G. After patiently holding for several minutes, the obvious happened—he was cut off.

When he attempted to redial...you guessed it. An encore of "Songbird"! When finally, after three choruses, he was privileged enough to speak with a living, breathing, intelligent(?) human being, he was simply told the CEO "is around. I saw him a while ago, but I don't know where he went. Why don't you try him back later." No message taken nor was an offer made to take one.

An exaggeration? Unfortunately not. Scary? You bet. So much so that the banker, even after calming down, began to have second thoughts about the loan. He reasoned that if this was the way the company handled something as basic as the phone, no wonder they were in trouble. With the demand for loans as great as it is, why take a chance giving \$2.5 million to an outfit that displays such little regard for what could have been a potential customer? He related his feelings to the loan committee, and the approval was rescinded.

Could something like this happen at your office? God forbid, let's hope not. The point I wanted to make with this true story is this: **DON'T TAKE THE FUNDAMENTALS FOR GRANTED.**

Every year, ballplayers go to spring training to practice and reinforce the basic skills that they've been taught since they were kids. It's one of the ways they remain professionals, and as businesspeople, we need to do the same thing.

The way you look, your dress, the graphics of your business card, the way in which your people handle the telephone, the copy in your corporate brochure, your advertising and PR, even the landscaping outside your corporate offices—each and every one of these (plus innumerable others) contribute to how you and your organization are perceived by others—and, whether you realize it or not, how successful your company is in achieving its goals.

Business communications are, to a great extent, common sense. The problem, however, is that businesspeople, from the receptionist right up to the president, often get so caught up in their day-to-day activities that they lose sight of the fundamentals. The greatest products or ideas will fall flat on their face if presented improperly; while the worst ideas and products can be immensely successful if properly promoted.

Make it a point to regularly remind yourself of the basics of business communication, to pay attention to those areas we often mistakenly take for granted. See that every individual in your office knows just how important excellence is in these matters. Maybe you can even do such a good job that our friend, the banker, offers you the \$2.5 million he snatched away from the bumbling music lovers!

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