

That Vital Telephone First Impression

If you live with teenagers you know their fascination with the telephone. Every ring brings the joy of anticipation. What interesting, attractive person is on the other end of the line? Will that unseen and as yet unrecognized person offer the opportunity for fun, excitement and good times?

It's probably impossible for you to ever recapture this kind of enthusiasm for the telephone, and the promise it holds to change your life. But every breeder of registered Angus cattle should look to the telephone as offering potential for improved business, every time it rings. That's why it is important to use the telephone properly and make it an effective marketing tool.

When you are in the house or farm office, always turn off the answering machine and take calls personally. D.J.Reindl, writing in *Telephone Techniques*, a Dartnell publication, offers five tips that can help you make a crucial goodfirst impression on the caller, and generate sales.

1. **Answer quickly.** Surveys show that a telephone can ring for up to 30 seconds, but after that the caller becomes anxious. However, avoid answering on the first ring. That doesn't give the caller time to get settled and ready to talk.
2. **Make your first words a friendly greeting.** "Good Morning," is a pleasant way to greet someone, and then follow with your name. Customers want to know who they are talking to.
3. **Speak clearly and naturally.** Some people have the annoying habit of not speaking into the mouthpiece. Others speak too softly on the telephone to be heard easily. Test your phone voice on an extension phone to see if it's pleasant and understandable.
4. **Ask for the customer's name early in the conversation.** If it's not someone you know, write their name down for quick reference. People appreciate your interest and consideration, and it makes them feel like they are appreciated.
5. **Treat every caller like a best customer, even if you have never met the person.** Callers start forming impressions from the time the conversation begins. Make the first few moments comfortable and informative for the caller to start making a favorable impression.

When you talk to a customer or potential customer remember the best customer service involves selling, says Michael Brodner, in *Telephone Techniques*. If you believe in your Angus herd, and the benefits it can offer another cattle producer, then it's appropriate to let callers know how you can serve their needs.

Never act rushed, even if you are. Make the caller feel like he or she has your full attention. And never say, "I can't." Always say, "I'll try." No matter what the caller asks for, try to provide it



or a substitute. The caller who first insists on a bull with a minus 5 pounds birth weight EPD may not understand Angus EPDs. Once you know what he or she wants, a plus 2 or 3 EPD may serve the purpose.

Keep a smile in your voice as you work to solve the caller's problems. In the end you'll generate a sale, convince the person to stop by your place and take a look at your cattle, or at least leave them with a favorable impression of you, which could stimulate future business.

In these busy days, more and more people look to save time by doing business over the telephone. The better your telephone skills, the better the chance of getting their business.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Keith Evans".

Keith Evans, Director of Communications & Public Relations