

THE TELEPHONE IS FOR *INCOMING* CALLS ONLY



Wait for it. I have some practice management advice at the end of this story.

When I was 11 my mom and dad started ROI Corporation in our family home.

Dad's office was a converted storage room on the second floor; mom had an old metal desk and IBM Selectric typewriter in the basement. I was often found on the main floor in front of an RCA cabinet TV.

They installed the ROI telephone on the main floor so that when a client would call, one of us would be able to answer within 3 rings. It was costly to have a phone on all 3 floors back then.

My father had a strict rule; a maximum of 3 rings for us to answer the telephone.

He taught this golden rule: "Doctors are busy people – respect their time - answer the phone promptly"

My father had other duties at the time. Teaching business at a community college, moonlighting at the University of Toronto, owning a custom design dental cabinet company, representing a line of dental equipment called Vacudent made in Salt Lake City Utah - and of course, ROI.

For a fascinating story about the Vacudent revolutionary reclining dental chair, click here: [Vacudent](#)

My mother was at home in the 1970's with 3 teenaged daughters and me, the last born, only boy.



It was called the **ROI Management** phone. We have that same phone number today. 278-4145.

Back then, it was a 416-area code and now it is a 905-area code, but that was a Bell Canada decision, certainly not one that any smart company would make.

There was a second strict rule for that telephone; **No outbound calls allowed.**

There was no call waiting back then.

There was no voicemail.

If somebody called, and we answered - and if by chance another client called - they would get a busy signal, nothing more, nothing less.

So, I never made outbound calls on that telephone. Certainly not after my mom gave me a stern lecture!

I was given telephone etiquette training at the age of 11.

“When you answer Timmy, ask the caller 2 questions. “Can I have your name and your home phone number and my father will call you back tonight.”

Dentists did not work evenings back in the day. And never a weekend!

I used those pink message slips that the mature folks reading this column might remember.

I took many messages for my father over the years.

Over time, I got familiar with some of the doctors who were calling and was emboldened by my last-born privilege, so I started to gather more data and engaged more and more during my teenage years.

When I reached the age of 16, I got my driver’s license (on my 3rd attempt!) and my father would send me out in a 1969 fire-engine red Pontiac Firebird (my mom’s car) to pick up some documents or perhaps a key for the dental practice.

Then my father quickly realized that I was eager to drive (what teenage boy isn’t?). Mom’s car was HOT!

I enjoyed working late at night. Some of you may recall my recent column about working evenings when I was younger. My dad then sent me out to open the practice door and let the buyers look around.



That’s when the plethora of questions would arise and I always had the appraisal in hand to answer most of them.

I was told to never guess or assume anything. Cocky as I was, my dad taught a remarkably simple lesson; When asked a question you could not answer, you replied:

***“I am not certain, but my father knows.
He will call you back tomorrow evening.”***



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And that is how I was taught to be an honest salesperson because you never lie or guess.

And that is how my career began and that is how it is today.

If you have a question, I probably know the answer.

If I do not have the answer - I know where to get the answer. Quickly.

I am extremely resourceful and well-connected to the leading Canadian dental professional advisors.

I do not charge hourly. I charge a fee for an appraisal if you need one and I charge a 10% commission (aka the "Success Fee") if you need to sell.

I am a tremendous resource. After all, I started answering the ROI phone in 1974. ~ 50 years ago.

The **BOTTON** LINE:

1. Your staff should answer in 3 rings or less.
2. If they frequently answer and say **"dental office, please hold"** without getting my name and phone number first you are understaffed at the front desk and you are losing NP's.
3. If I must be put on hold (it happens) most people wait no more than 30 seconds these days then hang up – another possible lost NP.
4. Outbound calls should be made from cell phones – keep those office lines OPEN at all times.
5. Do not underestimate the power of the telephone! You are in a human relations business - not a call center!
6. Have a friend make a mystery NP call to your office with some simple questions about insurance, and when can they be seen.
7. Listen in and learn what your staff are actually saying. It may shock you.

PS – I called Samsung service today. For a washing machine that is less than one year old. The phone rang 15 times then a machine kicked in and promptly cut me off – dead air! Horrible service!

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