

Phone Etiquette: First Contact Marketing Part 1

The phone rings, you're literally up to your arms in suds, the baby birds are crying to be fed, and the person on the phone wants to know if you will sell a hand-fed budgie for a buck!

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You're working, it's hot and you have things to do. The phone rings, you're literally up to your arms in suds, the baby birds are crying to be fed, and the person on the phone wants to know if you will sell a hand-fed budgie for a buck! You want to reach through the phone and throttle them! You're bound to know the feeling. How many weird calls can you get? From, "My bird flew away. How do I find him?" to "I think my bird died. What can I do?" It is frustrating. Bird breeders have to deal with so many ill-informed people, in addition to people bargain searching. With so many weird phone calls, it's very easy to begin to look at the phone as your enemy. More importantly, you begin to view the people calling you as a nuisance. We have so many more important things to do than educate the uninformed, right?

Keep The Gateway Open

Let's not be too hasty. No phone calls, no business! Phone calls are important. We have to sift through a ton of junk ore to find that one nugget of gold. That goes with the territory. Does your teenager hog the phone? If a prospective buyer calls, does your teen ignore call waiting and continue talking to their friends? Or do they just dispose of the call with a curt "No, we don't have any birds to sell," when, in fact, you do? The phone is the gateway to your money. If the prospective buyers can't pass through that gateway, because you're too busy to answer calls, teenagers are not taking messages (a problem in my household) or messages are not returned, you're going to make far less sales than you would otherwise.

Polishing Your Presentation

I know how frustrating it is to spend a great deal of time on the phone with a prospective buyer and then have them go buy their birds elsewhere. I am not sure there is much you can do about that. One thing you might try is establishing a relationship with them over the phone. Invite them over, and explain to them your expectations in a nice way. You're going to spend a great deal of time with them, and you expect them to remain loyal purchasers. If they think they are going to purchase a bird from another breeder, request that they get back with you one last time to discuss what you offer versus your competition. I am a strong proponent for everyone writing their phone sales presentation. I like to use big print, usually a font of 20 points, double-spaced. Read it into a microphone, and listen to yourself. There is nothing more important in making a bird sale than your first 30 seconds on the phone. How do you come across, like a belligerent aviculturist with a chip on your shoulder, expecting your customers to grovel before purchasing a bird from you? I really hope not! I try to come across (and coach my family) to be syrupy sweet, nice, nurturing and very helpful. I think prospective pet bird buyers want to be pampered and nurtured. I think they typically want to be friends with the breeder and have a long relationship.

One Of The Family

I am convinced most bird breeders don't realize their customers aren't buying a pet, but rather, they are adopting a family member. They want to know that you, as the breeder, are compatible with their family as well, because this is your baby that will now be their baby and will become part of their life. When we consider that the customer is now adopting a new family member, you can begin to see the importance of nurturing. They need to know they have a place they can come back to and, more importantly, call if a crisis develops or they have questions. In your first 30 seconds, you need to convey this sweetness and nurturing through the telephone, which can be quite a challenge. I feel that, through careful uses of tones and using a telephone presentation that you have written, worked on and modified, you can really convey the impressions that you intend.

Telephone calls can be very distracting. It is very easy to be harsher than we intend when we have so much going on. We must realize though, the telephone is the gateway to successful breeders, because you have to have customers. Remember, they aren't buying pets, they are adopting family members. You will be part of that family, so stress nurturing, tolerance and be kind. Practice your telephone presentations, and be sure that all members of the family are correctly handling these valuable and important telephone contacts. Without good phone skills, the best breeder in the world is doomed to mediocrity.