



DON'T CALL ME!

OVERCOMING TELEPHOBIA

In a world dominated by smartphones, it may be surprising to learn that telephobia is a growing problem, especially for those younger members of your team who would rather communicate via email or texting where they have the opportunity to edit their messages. Face for Business reported that 68% of employees say phone calls are their least preferred method of communication and that 50% of 18-24 year olds, 73% of 25-34 year olds and 70% of 35-44 year olds had experienced phone anxiety in the last 12 months.

Telephobia isn't a fear of telephones but a term for phone avoidance where people fear saying the wrong thing, dealing with a difficult customer or not being able to close a call. The spontaneity of a call can be overwhelming, stressful and cause genuine apprehension.

In most businesses calls are part of the

daily routine so employers should treat telephobia seriously and with care, just as they would social anxiety or nervousness about presenting. We've come up with a few tips to help if you are suffering with telephobia.

1. PRACTICE. If you find talking to strangers difficult, start by calling friends, family or colleagues with short calls. Instead of ordering or making an appointment online, call instead. Keep practicing and it will instil some confidence.

2. PREPARE. Just as you would for a business meeting, prepare a summary of what you'd like to achieve on the call and the points you'd like to discuss. This will help you stay on track and ensure you don't forget anything.

3. A FRIENDLY START. To ease your jitters, start the call with a friendly opening such as "How was your weekend" or "What is the weather like". This will help ease your nerves and

foster a more personal relationship with whomever you are calling.

4. A SMILE GOES A LONG WAY. Speak as you'd like to be spoken to. Think back to a rude customer service agent and how it made you feel, a smile for your caller will create a much happier experience.

5. ASK FOR HELP. According to Face for Business, 65% of UK office workers experienced some level of phone anxiety in the last 12 months and more than 40% of office workers have avoided answering a work call due to anxiety. You're not alone and by asking for help from your manager, you may not only be helping yourself but also your colleagues who may also be feeling uncomfortable.

Telephobia could harm your career prospects in the long-term as dealing with phone calls is an essential part of a successful business. Your voice is important so let it be heard.