

Front Desk Help: Dealing with Background Noise

My interest in phone skills began way back in 1979. I was working part-time at a real estate office in Toronto while going to university. I sat at the front desk near a large picture window overlooking the Danforth. While there was always filing and typing to do, my most important task was answering the phone and making sure that anyone wanting to buy or sell a house spoke to one of our agents.

There were always challenges to overcome. And, 42 years later, one of them remains a challenge for front desk staff, for many working in open offices – and even those working from home.

In addition to answering incoming calls, front desk staff are usually responsible for welcoming visitors to the office. They sit near the door; they're seen by everyone who arrives. It isn't only visitors who see them but also staff who come and go during the day.

Like any entranceway or foyer, people tend to stop. Perhaps it's to get organized before they leave. Or maybe it's to have a quick conversation with someone or to answer a call on their cellphone.

Whatever the reason, they completely forget that they are at the front desk. They speak at full volume, laugh loudly, and sometimes even yell. This is a tremendous distraction for front desk staff ... and the customer on the phone.



Even though I've been that front desk person, I can still forget to remain considerate while saying goodbye in a reception area. I always appreciate a reminder to be quiet ... and so will everyone else.

Create a Sign

Print the sign attached, reinforce it with cardboard, and attach it to a ruler, popsicle stick, or something similar.

This is a very simple way to alert people gathered near that a phone call is in progress. As soon as the noise begins, raise your sign. Wave it if necessary. Use it to get the attention of those doing the loud talking. They'll appreciate the reminder and move away from your desk.

Find more great customer service tips on my blog: thephonelady.com/blog/

A red octagonal sign with a grey border. The sign contains the text "Shhh!" and "call in progress" in white.

Shhh!

call in progress