

Developing Soft Skills and Personality
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Lecture - 24
Telephone Communication: Essential Telephone Skills

Hello, hi welcome to back to my course on Developing Soft Skills and Personality. We are giving you this course through NPTEL MOOC at IIT, Kanpur. We are on the fourth week module 6. This is the last module for this week and then if you look at the total number of lectures this is the 24th lecture.

This amounts to the fact that, half of the course is going to be over with this one and it is time to take reassessment of what you have learnt from the course and how you have being benefiting, whether you are following the suggestions that have been given in the course. Now before I actually go to the topic as usual we will be trying to have a quick highlights of what I did in the previous one and in this one what are we going to do, I will just wind up our discussion on telephone communication and this lecture particular I will be focusing on the essential telephone skills, which are like after basic and advanced one advanced ones are needed at professional level, but the essential wants are needed whether you are at a basic or at an advanced level.

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Highlights

Highlights of the Last Lecture

Advanced Telephone Skills

- Effectiveness needs clarity in communication and active listening.
- Enunciate Clearly: Frogs or Frocks; Lab staff or Lap tops?
- Steps involved in holding simultaneous calls
- Organizing yourself; organising the desk, knowing your equipment
- Norms for making phone calls properly
- Ending a call
- Noting important information by using a format
- Facing challenges like delivering bad news.
- IMPORTANT: You should earn the other's respect!**

In the previous lecture I concluded by giving you some ideas about advance telephone skills. So, overall I suggested to you that effectiveness needs clarity in communication, and active listening. By clarity in communication I meant in particular that you should be able to enunciate clearly; words which sounds similar, but has to be pronounced clearly and differently. So, 2 examples I gave one frocks which was heard as frogs. So, instead of bringing the actual animal frogs, frogs the government that is should be owned by the children were sent lab staff was not mentioned clearly. So, it was heard as laptop or the person actually wanted laptop, but he said that in such a manner that what was heard was lab staff. So, this kind of confusion should be avoided especially when you are calling somebody on phone or even receiving some call and then you are taking notes and then when you take notes be clear and then if you do not understand ask some to repeat it there is no harm in asking them to repeat it.

If you are a person who is involved in handling so many phone calls, if you are at a kind of hot seat where you are dealing with so many ones, especially holding simultaneous calls, there again we looked at some of the steps in which you can hold them the way you can begin, continue and then end. I also suggested that in order to do these things you need to organise yourself organise your desk and then you need to know the equipment, the telephone equipment that you use and overall I talked about some of the norms for making phone calls properly and then how you should end a call.

More important I said that noting important information by using a format. So, either professionally or personally if I use a format which includes details like from to whom the message came, the date, time and then the contact number etcetera that comes handy instead if writing down scribbling. So, you can just fill in the blanks, but I also concluded by saying that we normally take it for granted that telephone calls are easy to handle and then we can just talk without any preparation, but then when you reach a professional level you understand that you need to face challenges such as delivering bad news. So, I concluded by giving some tips as how actually you can deliver bad news, but at the same time you should keep in mind that you should be able to earn the other persons respect even when you are delivering bad news.

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Essential Telephone Skills

More Challenges!

Handling Difficult Callers!

Be diplomatic. Give facts. Help to resolve problems.
Offer alternative solutions.

SAY: PLEASE understand **SORRY** for the mistake
THANK YOU for your understanding

Now, having done that let us look at some more challenges and then based on that let us also identify some essential telephone skills which are needed for you. In terms of more challenges I want to tell you that there could be difficult callers in any manner they are angry, they are unhappy, they are frustrated, they are shouting at you or they are just creating problems. Now generally when you handle difficult callers keep this points in mind be diplomatic be talk full. So, like try to know there mind and then give facts give necessary facts appropriate facts and then help to resolve their problems. Offer alternative solutions and say the most important words please, please understand our position, please understand this, sorry for the mistake, thank you for your understanding. So, these three words or phrases are very much important when you are handling challenges.

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Dealing with Anger!

- ✓ Be cool and calm throughout
- ✓ Use comforting silence & understanding pauses
- ✓ Offer help in whatever manner possible
- ✓ Never raise your voice, even if provoked
- ✓ Apologize for any inconvenience caused
- ✓ Identify the problem
- ✓ Offer possible solution
- ✓ Give compensation
- ✓ In case of abusive expressions, don't get hurt!
- ✓ Act Professionally and Proactively
- ✓ Empathise with the caller
- ✓ Get back with more help and better solutions
- ✓ Promise to call back and follow-up
- ✓ Keep the promise!

Essential Telephone Skills

And let us look at the most important challenge that you are likely to face that is people who are angry with you and how do you deal with anger.

Now, most of the skills which you used when you are resolving a conflict or the ones which will need right now when you want to deal someone with anger, but in terms of telephone call. So, let us know certain things more relevant and then more specific in terms of making somebody cool when you are talking to the person on a phone look at these points be cool and calm throughout. Even if the other person is rising the voice or getting completely distressed you remain cool, keep your cool and be calm throughout. Use comforting silence. So, this I mentioned to you in active listening use comfort in silence, the silence that comforts the other person and makes the other person to open up.

Make use of understanding process. So, the person this talking to you and then you are also responding to that and then sometimes you just leave a pause. So, that again the person comes back or you leave something for the person to grasp reflect on. So, give some time to the person to come back to collect herself. Offer help in whatever manner possible, whatever way you can help the person, you just try to offer help.

Even if you are provoked, even if the other person is raising his or her voice never raise your voice. So, keep your cool never rise your voice apologize for any inconvenient caused. So, what are the other person is shouting at and getting angry, apologize for any inconvenient caused and then often the person is calling you and shouting at you on

behalf of your company on behalf of your family on behalf of any responsibility that you have taken without even knowing what is the problem that the person is facing. So, you help the person identify the problem you identify the problem for the person, not only identifying the problem, but you also try to offer some possible solution. Along with the problem you suggest that sir you could do this madam you can try this and if your organisation, your institute, your company or whom out you are representing, his responsible for creating the problem.

So, then you try to give compensation, give some kind of compensation. So, that actually comforts the person who is angry, initially the person may not be able to accept it. Especially if some loss is there and then if the loss is with regard to some kind of respect or dignity any kind of monetary compensation that you give will again provoke the person, but if the loss is again in terms of monetary loss if you give again money.

So, the person will be rather comforted, but overall if you cannot give money you can give some other compensation, which even like giving some free tickets, free flight tickets, depending on your customer. So, free movie tickets even, free tickets for dining in a restaurant, even small things will actually reduce the anger of the person. So, give compensation whatever is possible. It is not like that you cannot give any compensation at all even the company policy is like that you can give something. In case of abusive expressions, sometimes you may be at the receiving it the other person is just using bad words four letter words which you do not want to hear from anybody and which you think that you do not deserve to hear it at all. You feel enraged you want give it back, but do not get hurt, do not take it too hard, do not take it personally, it is the other person who is so low and who is using this kind of words to somebody like you. So you are not going to become low.

So, do not get hurt, act professionally and pro actively. Act professionally, again you can tell that, sir madam you are crossing your limit and I appreciate if you could talk in this manner etcetera, but again if they continue in the same one just try to find out again the problem go back to that and tell them that if that is the problem go with the solution and try to offer compensation. You also try to empathize with the caller when you say things like I understand your problem I could really feel what you will be experiencing at this moment, but at the same time you do not have to let down your organisation or company. You do not have to immediately join sides and then say that yes I know that this is what

my boss does. He is such an irritable guy and then he is really an awful person, he keeps doing this to all people. You do not have to let down your boss or your company, but just show that you are empathetic with the caller.

Get back with more help and better solutions if you cannot give the solution on the spot just take time, get back and then get more help and then come out with better solutions and when you do that you promise the person that you will call back and you also take initiative to follow up, whenever the person is free you call and then update the information and in case you promise either to call back or promise to do some alternative thing or to give some kind of compensation keep the promise, do not break the promise, do not ignore it, do not forget it, if you say something keep it.

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Manage Your Voice

*Your voice can reveal whether you are
Sad, sick, tired, frustrated, angry, annoyed,
bored, disinterested, stressed, impatient OR
Happy, helpful, smiling, cheerful, supportive,
careful, empathetic, considerate, friendly.*

*Many people don't know they have loud voices!
Many are unaware that their voices are feeble!*

*You will gain confidence on practice
Record your voice and listen to it
Make yourself comfortable with your voice
(Saying Sorry, Thank you, Welcome)*

So, that is going to enhance the quality of your call. While you do that, there are other essential skills that you need to develop. One of the key skills that you need to develop is managing your Voice. Voice and Quality of your voice can again indicate so many things to the caller. Your voice can reveal whether you are sad, sick, tired, frustrated, angry, annoyed, bored, disinterested, stressed, and impatient.

In fact, these are all negative qualities and then if you are in this kind of situation you are sad, sick, tired, frustrated it is highly suggested that you should not attend to any call, you should avoid making a call, and if somebody can take the call on your behalf it is better that you give it to that person. Especially when you are stressed that is the time

you are likely to break and that is the time you are likely to brake to show or went out your anger on your someone and the other person could be a very important person and then you just poured out your emotions and other person was not in the right frame of mind to receive it. So, that ends up in the breaking of some kind of goodwill, your company has built up may be for the decades. Your voice can also indicate whether you are happy, helpful, smiling, cheerful, supportive, careful, empathetic, considerate and friendly.

Now, if you have these qualities or these kinds of mind set before calling somebody on phone, that is going to help build up relationships, that is going to bridge any gap in communication between organisations and that is the right frame of mind set that you should have happy, helpful, smiling, cheerful, supportive, careful, empathetic, considerate and friendly. Now the other interesting factor about voice, many people do not know they have loud voices. Many people do not know that when they speak they do not need loud speakers. The other receivers do not have to have to put their call on speakers. So, those others can hear their voice is. So, loud anybody can hear if they are in the hall.

Now, if we are one among them it is important that you need to reduce your voice in terms of the loudness that it causes. The louder it is that is likely to cause annoying to the other person, that is likely to cause stress which is just like a noise pollution, that is likely to trouble the mind of the other person. The softer it is the calm the other person will be and then the other person is generally in a comfort level to negotiate with you, but on the other hand many people unaware that their voices are feeble their voices are too weak to be heard, they need to speak aloud they need to practice.

Now in both cases whether you are too low or whether you are too weak. How will you manage your voice it is only by practice? You will gain confidence on practice. How do you do that? Record your voice and listen to it. Either you record it on a tape recorder or on now days you have recording facility even on your mobile phone, you record it record your voice alone without your picture, record it with video also and then check how is your voice quality make yourself comfortable with your voice before you start talking to someone, feel whether your voice is audible enough or is it too loud or is it too low.

So, decide how you can manage your voice. Record it again and again practice some of the key words you need to practice is the way you say sorry, genuinely sorry. Some people say sorry, but then it does not come from their heart OK, it amongst to a lip service. So, try to say sorry. So, that the other person feels it thank you, when you say that is say it with gratitude and same thing like whenever you welcome a person or whenever a person says thank you. So, you say you are welcome, so that again with kind of warmth. Now practice this with warmth and then if somebody telling you a very bad news and then you have sorry has to be very empathetic. So, it should show the other person that you are showing concern. So, you try to see how you can manage your voice in terms of using these common words particularly the polite once in making a call.

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Essential Telephone Skills

Be an Active Listener
*Show your involvement by listening sounds which substitute nods: **hmm, okay, I see. . .***

Be Cheerful
Feel Good, Sound Good and make the receiver feel Good!

Know Your Caller
*Try to figure out details of your caller: **age, mood, health condition, designation**
Use appropriate title for addressing the caller*

Replace Fear with Confidence
*Use initial fear to energise and stay focussed
Gain confidence by repeating what you fear*

There are other essential skills which you need to know along with this, as I have been telling in the active listening part. You need to be an active listener and I am empathizing this again and again, but then it is the most important thing. In fact, telephone skill is part of active listening skill; it is not more about speaking it is all about listening. So, show your involvement by listening sounds. So, make use of listening sounds because the other person is actually not looking at you and he cannot see whether you are nodding your head or whether you are shaking your head. How are you taking to the other person the other one cannot realise that. So, in order to substitute nodes you can use sounds like or you can say ok or you can say I see.

Now sometimes when I make a call to a person I feel that either the phone is gone died, or the other person is just left the phone and gone some were and then I am to repeatedly ask the other person Are you there? Are you listening? Hello. So, then these are yes I am there I am listening. Now this is the very bad thing on the part of the listener the other person has to give you clues that the person is very much participating involved in the communication process which is taking place on the telephone.

The other thing which I told you differently in different manner in various contexts, but over all remember that you should be cheerful. Feel good when you are making a call sound good and when you feel good and when you sound good, you will make the receiver also feel good. When the receiver places the phone receiver that is the person was made a call when he or she keeps the phone after making the call. So, keep it with the good feeling that he or she talk to you it is important that you give them that good feeling. May be they started with the very bad mood, may be they had a problem when they called you, may be they were angry, but then at the end of it they feel good they feel comforted when the leave the receiver on the phone.

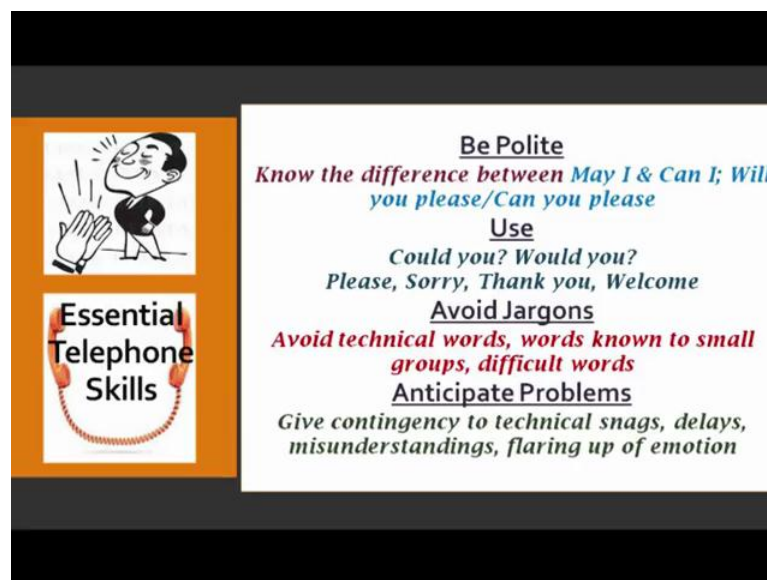
Now, you are caller. So, when somebody is calling you or when you are going to make a call do some homework, if you have the chance, but if somebody is calling even when the call is happening try to figure out details of your caller such as the age because the depending on the age you can guess whether the person is senior or higher officer identify the designation, identify the mood of the person, health condition, accordingly you can raise the level of respectfulness that you need to show to the other person. And if the person has a designation like doctor, professor, sir and whether it is miss or misses. So, you need to use these tittles to address the caller. So, that the person feels recognised and it is one of the things that any caller wants to be recognised and towards the end some of you do not make some calls for the reason that you are afraid of calling someone and then sharing some news. And sometimes you just avoid it because you have some kind of fear.

Now, as it has been told before a little amount of fear is necessary to activate that fighter fight response and then energise you and it will also make you stay focused. Now only when you use that energy that comes out of your initial fear, when you decide to confront talk to that difficult person, talk to that unpleasant person, talk to that angry costumer and fear is there, but then you decide you will talk this manner. Use the tips that have been

given to you and when do that you will gain confidence by repeating what you fear repeatedly when you talk to the person who is angry and then you will master and then people will come forward to have you as the person, who can talk to anybody who is angry and then resolve any conflicts which are involved and then make the other person feel comforted and happy at the end of your talk.

So, try to develop these skills do not be afraid of making calls, when you think that it is embarrassing, when it is unpleasant, when you are afraid of some person because of the intimidating personality because of the fact that he is a higher authority or because of the fact that she may not talk to you. So, or this kind of complexes, but try to replace that fear with confidence and confidence comes only by practice.

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Essential Telephone Skills

Be Polite
Know the difference between May I & Can I; Will you please/Can you please

Use
*Could you? Would you?
Please, Sorry, Thank you, Welcome*

Avoid Jargons
Avoid technical words, words known to small groups, difficult words

Anticipate Problems
Give contingency to technical snags, delays, misunderstandings, flaring up of emotion

Be polite, overall be polite and then when you are polite apart from saying please, thank you and all that know the difference some of the polite expressions particularly these two. Like may I can I, may I talk to you may I speak to you for a movement can I talk to you. So, you can see the difference may I is actually functionally both are kind of request, but may I is real polite much more polite, can I is something that like a senior can ask a junior it is all the time safe how may I help you then can I help you.

So, even if you look at these words you can see the tonal differences that will come, when you use may I and can I. Can I it is like possibility, can you do this, may I is possible, but still I am giving you a chance. So, try to use, may I understand the

difference and similarly when you use will you do this for me can you do this for me. Again choose will you most of the times. And in will you add please, will you please do this for me, will you please fix an appointment with the director at 9 o'clock tomorrow.

So, that will you please makes it polite. Use also in terms of polite markers could you would you now could you is still minor than can you and would you is still minor in terms of politeness than could you. So, to tone down could you, you can again add, could you please do this for me would you please mind doing this for me and then as I said add always these polite makers please, sorry, thank you, welcome. In fact, when you record the voice you try to say this in different manner and then record it and see how it sounds. When you say sorry do you really feel that you are saying sorry and last but not the least Avoid Jargons. So, Jargons are words which are known only two very small groups of people, like journalist they use their own jargons, computer science people they use their own jargons, doctors use their own special words.

Now, even if you are talking to a small group avoid using that. Also avoid using technical words which is difficult for the other person to comprehend. Difficult words do not use try to use simple words, try to be as natural and spontaneous as possible, do not talk in an affected tone do not talk in an artificial manner just be natural and even in formal once you can be natural which sounds little bit informal, but still instead of giving you the image that you are uppish. So, it is rather better to show that you are slightly appearing to be informal, spontaneous, natural, and cool. So, that the other person feels friendly and comforted talking to you.

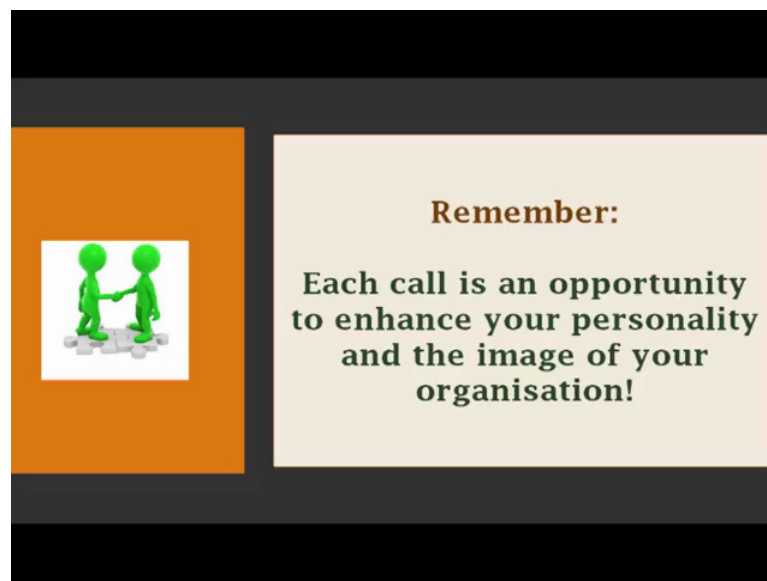
Anticipate problems, not all phone calls are going to end pleasantly for you. Although, you will try to make it best for the other, other person can actually spoil your entire day entire mood for the day some persons can completely spoil your week, some persons talk to you in such a manner you can be completely stressed out.

Call from a credit card vendor and then you know sometimes you have not paid long time due and then calls coming and then just abusing you and then you have nothing to tell at that movement. So, these kinds of calls can actually just get into your nerves and then it can break you. On the other hand, there will be situation where you start politely you never know how it is going, but try to anticipate problems. Problems not only by the nature of the other person you can even give contingency to technical knacks. Suppose

your phone is using a battery, check whether it is working properly, it should not be the time that the charge should run out and important call. Delay sometimes, you are kept long in the waiting. Misunderstandings not because of you, but because of the other persons inability to understanding, maybe your language use or some kind of problem, but again take care of that the worst situation could be flaring up of emotion by the other person particularly.

So, you said something inadvertently it was not your intention to hurt the other person, but the other one took it wrongly and then started shouting at you. Showing anger although the conversation started in a very polite manner at the beginning, anticipate problem especially in professional calls and be prepared for that as it is said. So, to be (Refer Time: 29:14) is to be formed. So, if you know that this person will definitely ask for something creates a problem. So, keep those data on your table when you make the phone call. So, when you know that you are prepared your mind set will be cool and calm and then will be confident to handle it.

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Remember:

Each call is an opportunity to enhance your personality and the image of your organisation!

Last two points just before I conclude, remember each call is an opportunity to enhance your personality and of course to develop your soft skills and the image of your organisation or the image of the people whom you are representing you make a bad call. It is actually reflecting on your organisation or the people whom you are representing.

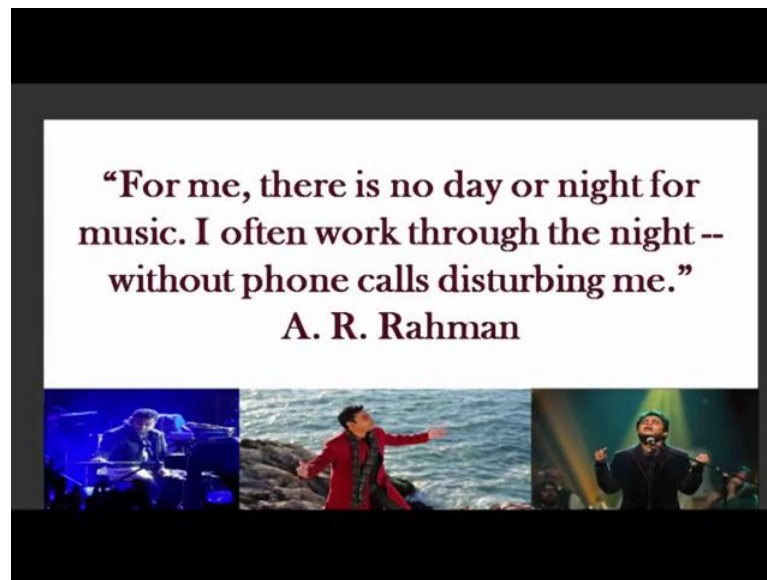
So, they will not say only bad about you, but they will think that the institution the organisation that has higher due is also really bad.

But on the other hand remember that it is an opportunity to enhance your personality and the image by building a good relationship with the other person who has made a call. Make a good call leave that good feeling at the end of it, build up a good relationship. So, that again will enhance the image of your organisation and you and it will help you to develop the personality the other thing that you should remember overall when I am going to conclude this complete module on telephone skills and then almost three modules I have spent on this the last, but not the least and I would say the most important also you should be the person anybody wants to talk to. Remember I started this with the kind of self awareness questions, self reflective questions, where you I asked you whom would you like to talk to and who is that person who are whom you are avoiding to talk to.

So, you should be the person anybody wants to talk to not the one everybody wants to avoid. People should not feel like avoiding you when they see your call on the caller id. So, they tell the children that tell this person that I am away I am not at home. So, I am some where I am on the way, I am in office, do not give my mobile number to this person do not become that person and think about situations why people are avoiding you, what make them avoid you, is it your unmindful talk, is it the fact that you are boring and then including into others time and then without showing any consideration without being empathetic are you so arrogant and selfish when you make the call you demand that the other person always be at your vacant call.

Now, ask these things why people are avoiding if at all somebody is avoiding try to change the situation follow the tips and slowly develop yourself as the person anybody wants to talk to, not necessarily on phone or also in person. Having said this is there a limitation of this telephone as an invention.

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Look at these a famous code from the musical genius A.R Rahman, when somebody interviewed him. So, he said that the time that he uses for music he said – "For me, there is no day or night for music. I often work through the night - without phone calls disturbing me."

So, whether you are good person or bad person whether your voice everything is good there are people like A.R Rahman, who do not want phone calls at all to disturb the creative talent. Now can phone calls be such nuisance, can it really affect somebody creative flow, think about this, this is the theme in which am going to start the next set of modules how technology which is suppose to actually give all benefit's is actually causing lot of harm not only to the environment, but also to our personality and how it is actually affecting in the name of enhancing our soft skills, actually it is trying to hamper the growth of our personality and development of soft skills.

So, with this note let me conclude this it is about half of the entire course you have been with me. So, I thank you for that that is the remaining half is as exciting as this one. I hope you stay with us thank you for watching this video.

Have a very nice day.