

EMPLOYEE E-TRAINING MODULES

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Abstract

“TODAY, there is no economy but the global economy, no Internet but the global Internet, and no network but the global network,” wrote George Gilder, a technology guru, in February 2001(The Economist, 2002). He predicted that firms “will battle for worldwide supremacy, but in a trillion-dollar market, there will be no loser.” Every industry/organization is open to all. Many organizations, whether small scale or large scale, are recruiting people with different qualifications – under-graduates, graduates and post-graduates. Irrespective of the qualification one has, every individual requires training for adapting to the work environment and also for personal development. Now a days organizations are making use of E-Training/Modules providing training by use of Information Technology System. If we take a case of the Telecom industry, quite a lot of training is required for the employees to handle the day-to-day customers. The degree and type of training would vary for domestic or offshore call centers. Access to information is a measure of power in society, and thus reflects how power is distributed. There is a shortage of conclusive research and examples of how ICT can transform the development process. To be used more widely, ICT has to be relevant, easy-to-use and addictive (ITU, 2002). Training and locally relevant content will, therefore, be key factors in bridging the gap. The scales would tilt further according to the diverse cultural background of the country from where the call originates. A training plan has its priorities set according to the requirements and ideally, would be categorized into ‘must know’ (vital information that the trainees need in order to do the job effectively) or ‘should know’ (the knowledge which is useful but not essential to the job. The aim of this paper is to assess the importance of different electronic training modules being used in the telecom sector, like for speech, starting and ending a call, avoiding repetition, use of technical terms and many more by conducting survey through formalized questionnaire.

Key Words: E- Training, Information Technology Systems, Telecom, Modules, Work Force, Employees, Work Efficiency, Work Environment, Information and communication technology

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Introduction

Telecommunication is the assisted transmission of signals over a distance for the purpose of communication. In earlier times, this may have involved the use of smoke signals, drums or flags. In modern times, telecommunication typically involves the use of electronic transmitters such as the telephone, television, radio or computer. Early inventors in the field of telecommunication include Alexander Graham Bell, Guglielmo Marconi and John Logie Baird. Telecommunication is an important part of the world economy. In 2006, estimates placed the telecommunication industry's revenue at \$1.2 trillion or just under 3% of the gross world product (official exchange rate).

On the microeconomic scale, companies have used telecommunication to help build global empires. This is proved by quoting the example of Amazon.com. In cities throughout the world, home owners use their telephones to organize many home services ranging from pizza deliveries to electricians. This is so because the world's population does not have equal access to telecommunication systems. A 2008 survey by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) revealed that roughly one-third of countries have less than 1 mobile subscription for every 20 people and one-third of countries have less than 1 fixed line subscription for every 20 people. In terms of Internet access, roughly half of all countries have less than 1 in 20 people with Internet access.

Concept of E-Learning

Up until about ten years ago, training was not done in front of a computer, but in the classroom with a qualified trainer. As technology improved, companies began to integrate training with the computer and the field of e-learning began to take shape.

In the early 1990s, many companies were using videotape-based training for their employees. At this point, the industry represented a very small market and lacked the 'scalability' that is so important in today's applications. The idea of putting training on video was a good idea, though it was lacking in a few areas (1) Customization based on needs of users, (2) Expensive to maintain and (3) Could not be upgraded easily. There is also the issue of employees having to hunt down the proper equipment in order to watch the videos. These videos often had limited

interactions which lead to the nearly impossible task of tracking progress and assessment (Cooke, 2004).

Since it was obvious that video was not the best solution, a new form of training evolved, CBT or Computer Based Training. Windows 3.1, Macintosh, CD-ROMs, PowerPoint marked the technological advancement of the Multimedia Era (Kiffmeyer, 2004). CD-ROMs could be cheaply produced so that the problem of checking in and out videos was eliminated. Employees would also be able to simply pop in a CD to their personal computer at their desk and complete the training.

Although the CD-ROM Computer-Based Training made advances toward the better, it still lacked the ability to track employees' performance in a central database and was also not as easy to upgrade. All these problems would disappear with the use of the Internet as a means of delivering content. The problem was, when the content was placed on the web, it was simply text to begin with and maybe a few graphics. No one really cared about the effectiveness of this new medium – it was just really cool (Cooke, 2004).

People in the field of e-learning began to realize that you simply cannot put information on the web without a learning strategy for the users. In order for technology to improve learning, it must 'fit' into students' lives...not the other way around. As a result, e-learning was born (Clark, 2002).

One of the first innovations in actual e-learning was the LMS or Learning Management System. The first Learning Management Systems (LMS) offered off-the-shelf platforms for front-end registration and course cataloging, and they tracked skills management and reporting on the back-end. This enabled schools and companies to place courses online and be able to track students' progress, communicate with students effectively and provide a place for real-time discussions (Clark, 2002).

The eClassrooms evolved shortly after, which are web-based synchronous events with integrated CBT and simulations (Clark, 2002). Centra is a great example of an eClassroom that is used quite often today. eClassrooms are often called Live Instructor-Lead Training or ILT. Live instructor-led training (ILT) via the Web can be combined with real-time mentoring, improved learner services, and up-to-date, engaging "born on the Web" content to create a highly-effective, multi-dimensional learning environment (Kiffmeyer, 2004). Online training modules have also been used for research education (Onofrietti, 2010).

E-learning has come a very long way since its early days of being text-based via the Web or CD-ROM. So what does the future hold? There really is no saying where the field is headed. As long as training is continually geared towards the learners and strategies are used in the training, there is no end in sight for e-learning.

Objectives

- To identify and examine the training modules used in the development of the employee.
- To study the relative importance of the training modules.

Methodology

Commensurate with the objectives of the study, two BPO companies, namely, Dell and Sparsh, Mohali, were selected on the basis of convenience. Empirical evidence is critically examined on such questions why people choose particular e-training modules and which modules influence the performance understanding, organizing and pointing what modules need to be proposed further. Study was undertaken by using primary sources by methods of personal interviews and through questionnaire. In this study different training modules were identified used in Telecom industry like *oral communication, rate of speech, pronunciation and mother tongue influence, technical terms, command on language, slang, empathy, recapping and repetition script adherence* and hence the questionnaire was formulated using scaling techniques, conducting survey on an adequate sample and finally analyzing the questionnaire and computing relative importance of these modules.

So keeping the objectives in mind an in depth interview and a self-designed questionnaire were given to respondents working at two different call centers for the sample survey. We tried to conclude what is current requirement of modules that should be existing and whose practical implication is must for the employee's to attain best performance. The aim of this paper was to study and analyze various training modules and relative importance of those modules in reference to each other. Finally, analysis of trend pertaining to different modules was carried out. Other modules language, slang, avoid interruption, recapping and repetition script adherence were also taken into consideration. The paper clearly worked on various objectives.

Limitations

1. Lack of practical knowledge in call centre.
2. Employees were hesitant to participate in filling questionnaire.
3. To identify training modules as modules can be confidential to them and have fear to get exposed to competitors.

TRAINING MODULES UNDER STUDY**Oral Communication**

Oral communication is the spoken interaction between two or more people. However, what oral communication intends to teach, the interaction is far more complex than it. Oral communication is composed of multiple elements which, when taken as a whole, result in the success or failure of the interaction. Not everyone is an effective communicator. In order to function successfully academically and professionally, we need to learn effective oral communication skills. For many, conversational speech comes naturally.

Oral communication is most important in telemarketing field. Developing good telemarketing skills is very essential in sales. Building strong business relationships rely on good communication to survive and prosper in sales environment. Prospecting for new business in today's highly competitive industry is critical for sustainable growth. This requires a must have ability to sell your ideas to the prospective customer. As a sales person, most of us have to deal with difficult people at some stage or another when making a sales call, so it is essential to deal with them effectively, to get the best outcome. When using the phone for lead generation, it is inevitable we will come in contact with irate customers, who are having a difficult day with them and will take their anger out on you. So the only solution is to have a good communication skill to avoid such difficult and uncomfortable situations.

Rate of Speech

Rate of speech means number of words we speak in at a stretch. Average rate of speech is 120 – 130 words per minute. In Telecommunication industry where we often use high rate of speech Not only this other flaws like repetition, interruption, fluency suffers due to high Rate of Speech,

in short known as ROS, it affects both listener and speaker. From speaker's side it affects pronunciation. In hurry or due to high rate of speech, speaker pronounces words in incorrect manner and it has counter effect on listener as well. So it is very important to take care of this high rate of speech.

Pronunciation and Mother Tongue Influence

Pronunciation refers to the way a word or language is spoken and the manner in which someone utters a word. A word can be spoken in different ways by various individuals or groups, depending on many factors such as area in which they grew up, area in which they are currently living, having a speech defect, their ethnic group or family, their social class, their education. Mother Tongue Influence (MTI) comes into picture when we speak a language which is different from the language we think in, the language we are most comfortable speaking and the language we have heard or hear day in and day out.

Technical Terms

Technical terms, also known as Jargons, are used by people who usually belong to a profession. Similarly, group involved in computer field normally talk in terms of hardware and software. Finance group talks in terms of Liquidity ratio, Debt-Equity ratio etc. So it is important to understand where we should use these technical terms or jargon. One should not use these technical terms or jargon with the customers as it will put customers in despair and they may need to refer dictionary for such words; hence, resulting in lost interest of customers in products of one's company.

Command on Language

Your language is referred to as the language which is been spoken by the customers during call. Employees while dealing with the customers should use some of the principles of language which will satisfy customer and build long term relationship with the employees. You can't change others, but you can change yourself. The language we use impacts our thoughts, feelings and behavior, so language is one of the most effective ways to influence a situation. Language is a way of forming deep rapport with others and building lasting relationships. We should not confuse our customers by using our own language. For example, customer is using neutral

English and employee on other side is using U.S. or U.K. English so it will create problem for the customer as it will not be understood by customer and will affect the rapport of the organization and might to a customer loss.

Slang

Slang is the use of highly informal words and expressions that are not considered standard in the speaker's dialect or language. Slang is often highly regional or specific to a particular territory. Professional words should be used instead of using slang or informal words. These informal expressions are important to be avoided as it does not give a professional feel of the executive and organization to the customers and hinders the way of effective communication

Empathy

Empathy is to show understanding for someone's thoughts and feelings. In other words, "Empathy is to see with the eyes of another, to hear with the ears of another, and to feel with the heart of another." It is a platform for effective communication, understanding and building relationships. It is essential to develop the solutions and create win – win situations among customer and employees. It is also essential for handling complaints and retaining customers. Many people confuse between Empathy and Sympathy. But the two are very different from each other. Empathy, as already explained earlier, is to imagine how other person feels or to put one in other person's place whereas Sympathy means feeling corresponding to that which another feels.

Avoid interruption

Interruption is when we do not allow the other person to speak or stop the speaker in between by asking frequent questions. So interruption breaks the continuity of speech of the speaker. To avoid interruption, first step we need to do is to be a good listener. We need to develop listening skills so that we can solve the problem or reply other person in a much better way. Listening carefully is a skill that requires conscious and continuous practice to develop. Sometimes people just hear things and does not listen them. There is a difference between the two, Listening and Hearing. Listening is physical and mental process. It is a skill which is learned over a period of time. We should be active while listening and should concentrate on what speaker is saying. We

should receive information and try to derive a meaningful data or information out of it. If we are listening carefully then we will be able to relate what is speaker is saying to other past experiences and also will be able to discuss a point better if we listen carefully. Hearing, on the other hand, is only a physical process. It is natural for all the people as Almighty God has given this sensory organ to everyone. It is very easy to hear as compared to listen. To know if we are listening or hearing is very important. If we are just hearing then we will be waiting for our turn to talk instead understanding what other speaker is trying to say. Even if we are thinking about your reply before the other speaker has finished, then also we are not listening, we are just hearing other speaker.

Recapping and Repetition

Recapping is giving a snapshot of the conversation at the end of the call. In other words, recapping means briefly summarizing the call. Recapping helps in emphasizing the solution provided in the call, guiding the customer for further course of action, recapturing the alternatives provided to the customer. While recapping, employee should not repeat the whole story of the call. Important piece of information should be summarized which customer might tend to forget. Recapping also becomes a way to end a call while making tele-sales.

Repetition is different from recapping, summarization is not repeating. Repetition refers to act of asking same information again, asking the customer similar kind of questions, creating such circumstances wherein Customer has to repeat details. Show customer that we are talking with our full attention,

Script Adherence

Script adherence means to stick to a pre written format (script). These scripts are pre-written dialogues that employees use while talking to the customers on call. These are always approved by management as well as clients. Script is important for company, especially in telemarketing or tele-sales and also in telecommunication industry, for following reasons: to maintain company standards, to provide employee control over the call, to relax and give employees a certain degree of confidence because they will be knowing what to say, how and when to say and how to handle objections, to provide similar kind of services in all geographic location, to maintain identity and genuineness of the organization

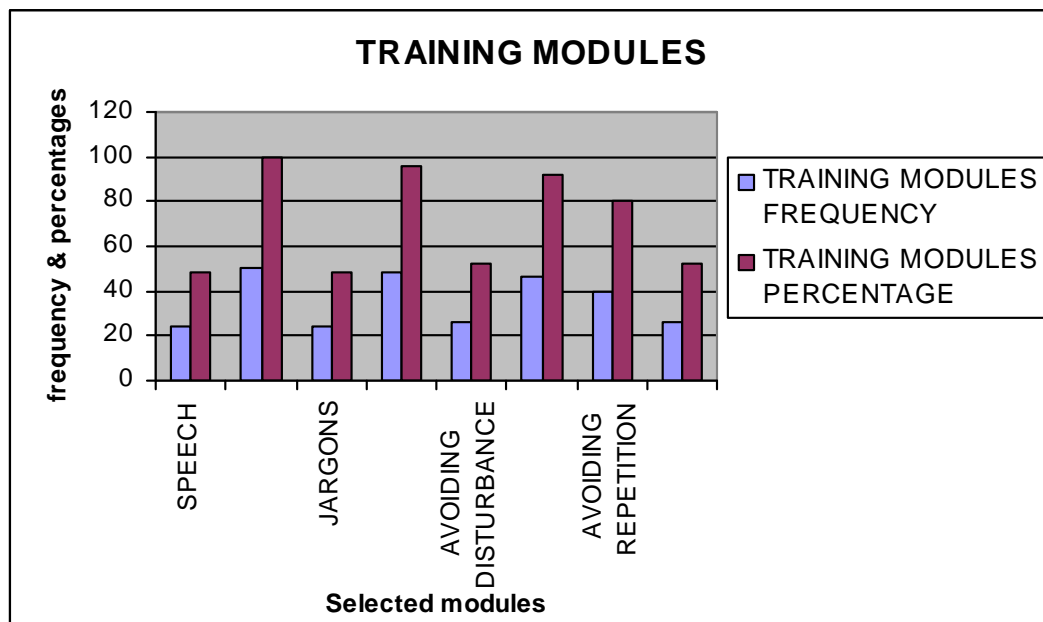
Analysis

This section analyses the impact of training modules and their relative importance by taking a sample of 50 respondents from two companies Sparsh BPO and Dell, Mohali.. Following **Table1** depicts the assessment of different training modules used in employee development. Table specifies the frequencies and respective percentages along with the charts.

Table1

TRAINING MODULES		
SELECTED MODULES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
SPEECH	24	48
PRONUNCIATION	50	100
JARGONS	24	48
COMPASSION	48	96
AVOIDING DISTURBANCE	26	52
STARTING & ENDING A CALL	46	92
AVOIDING REPETITION	40	80
SCRIPT ADHERENCE	26	52

Fig. 1



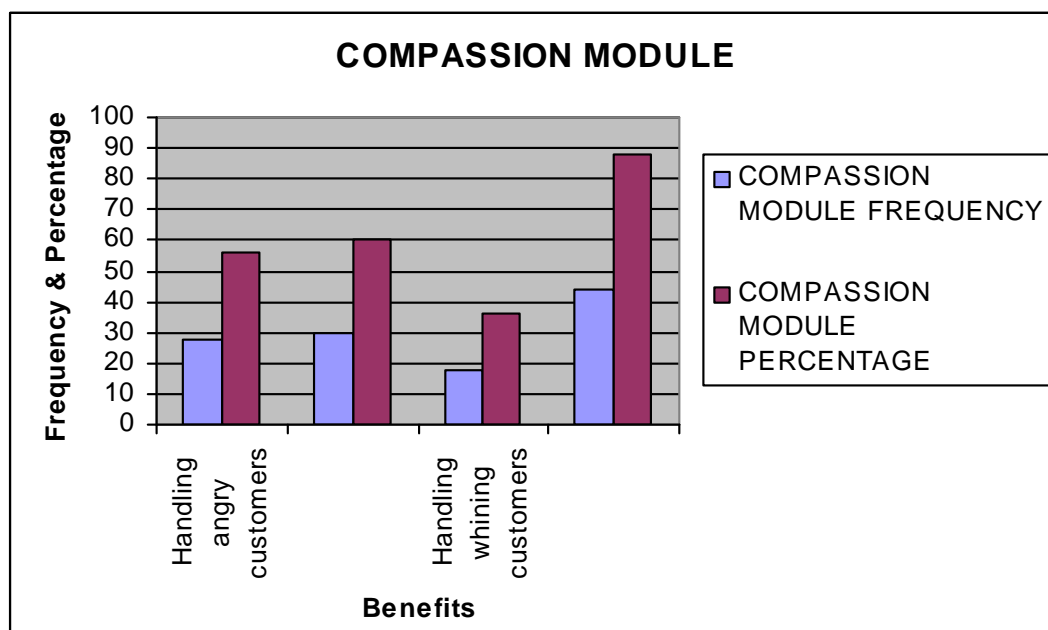
Above graph gives a clear picture about the pronunciation module that it is been taught to each and every employee. All 50 respondents have agreed to it. Pronunciation is very important in telecommunication industry as it makes customers easily understandable about the schemes, plans or imparting of any important piece of information.

Next in ranking comes compassion or empathy module. 96% people agree to it as it helps employees handling angry, frustrated and whining customers. Moreover it helps employees showing genuine interest, respect, helpfulness and understanding. It shows customers that employees care for them and their problems. It is also been shown with the help of following table2 and fig. 2.

Table 2

COMPASSION MODULE		
BENEFITS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
HANDLING ANGRY CUSTOMERS	28	56
HANDLING FRUSTRATED CUSTOMERS	30	60
HANDLING WHINING CUSTOMERS	18	36
SHOWING INTEREST, RESPECT, HELPFULNESS AND UNDERSTANDING	44	88

Fig. 2

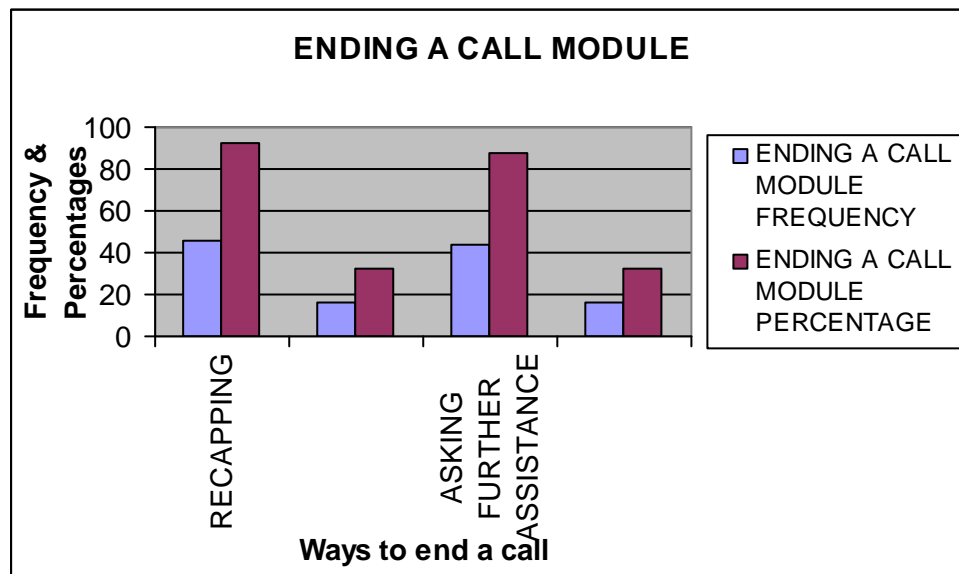


Further in sequence appears starting and ending a call module. Its almost equally important to empathy module as employees need to show empathy while starting or ending a call. There are various ways through which a call can be ended. Employees choose those ways according to the experience they encounter during a call. Even if an employee has a bad experience during the call then also employees need to be empathetic. Frequency and percentages of using such ways to end a call is being shown in the following **table 3** and **fig. 3**.

Table 3

ENDING A CALL MODULE		
WAYS TO END A CALL	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
RECAPPING	46	92
SHOWING EMPATHY	16	32
ASKING FURTHER ASSISTANCE	44	88
USE AVERAGE RATE OF SPEECH	16	32

Fig. 3



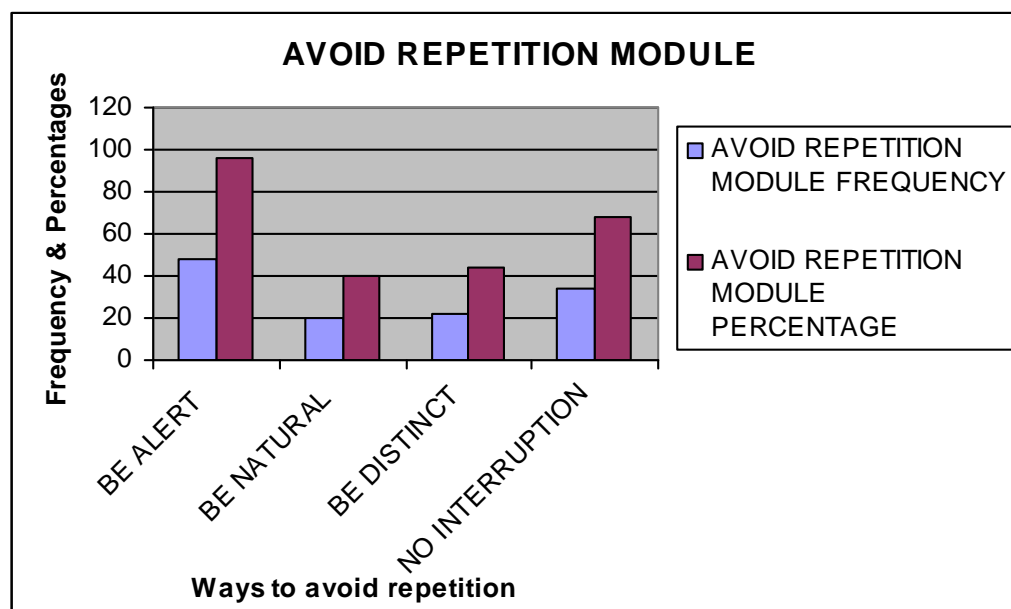
Next rank goes to avoiding repetition module. 80% of the respondents have undertaken training of the module. While working with the professional organizations, it's important not to repeat the things unnecessarily like not being alert or having interruptions like using personal mobile

during a call. Under some circumstances it's also important to repeat things such as providing instructions about a particular process, giving instructions about the settings to be done to activate a connection or if the customer is having a hearing problem. Under such and similar conditions repetition cannot be avoided. To avoid repetition unnecessarily many ways have been suggested. Few are being mentioned in the following **table 4** and charts along with the respective frequencies and percentages.

Table 4

AVOID REPETITION MODULE		
WAYS TO AVOID REPETITION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
BE ALERT	48	96
BE NATURAL	20	40
BE DISTINCT	22	44
NO INTERRUPTION	34	68

Fig. 4



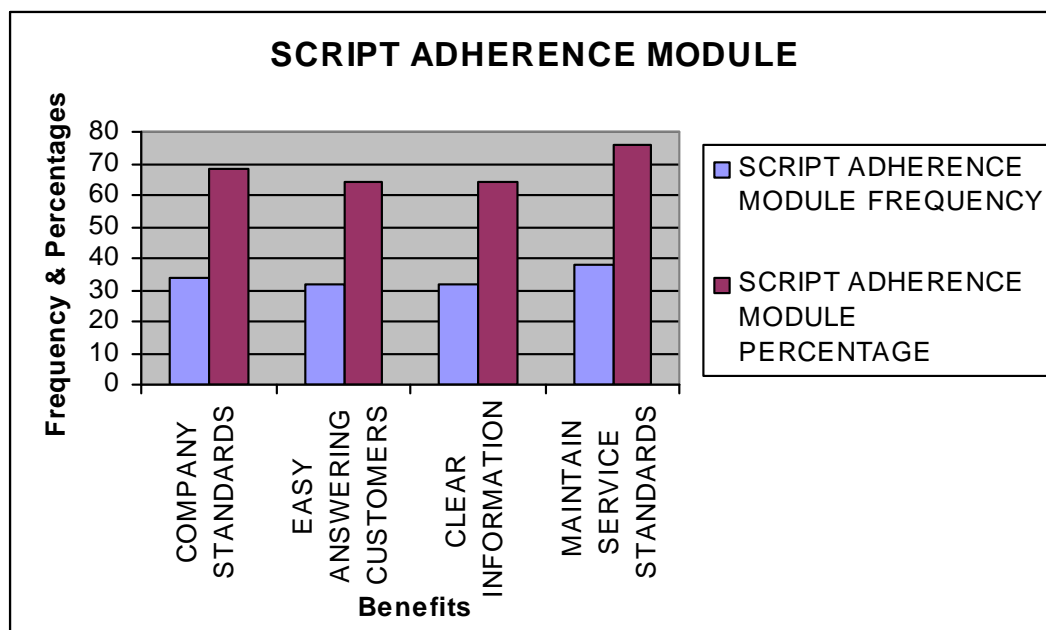
Continuing the sequence appears avoiding avoidance and script adherence module at par to each other. Although only half of the respondents have told that it is been taught to them but it is still very important as it helps in portraying company's image and also maintaining the standards.

Sometimes it becomes important to answer a customer according the situation which might not be there in the script but it adds value to company so respondents feel that it is not taught or should not be taught. But it has its own importance which is shown with the help of following **table 5** and **fig. 5**.

Table 5

SCRIPT ADHERENCE MODULE		
BENEFITS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
COMPANY STANDARDS	34	68
EASY ANSWERING CUSTOMERS	32	64
CLEAR INFORMATION	32	64
MAINTAIN SERVICE STANDARDS	38	76

Fig. 5

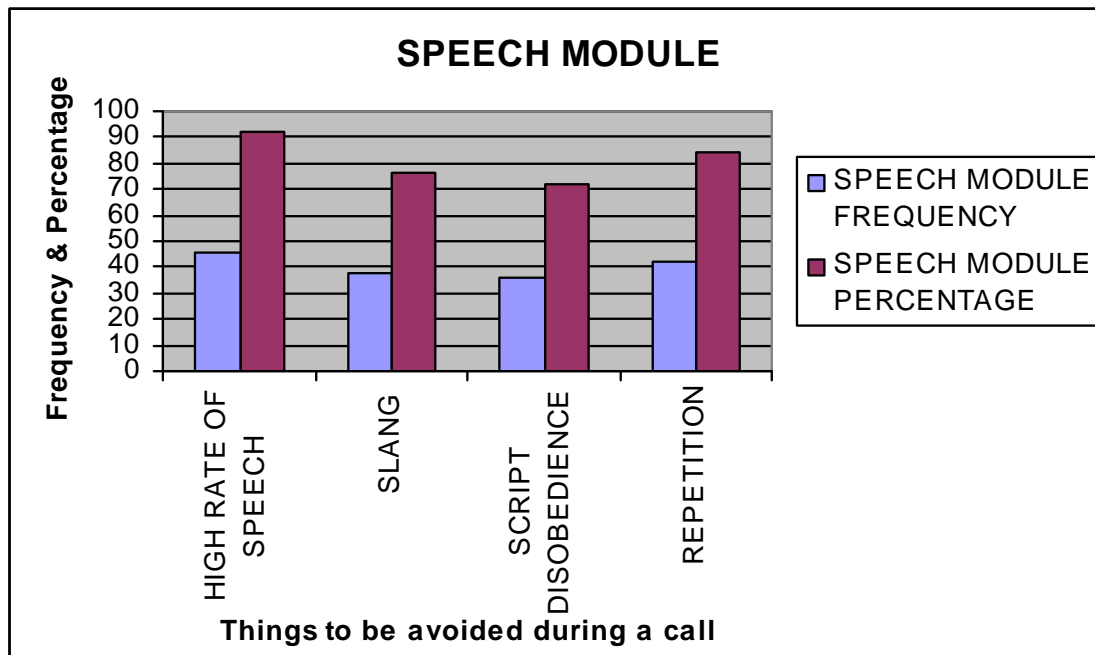


Last in the ranking appears jargons and speech module which are also at par to each other. Use of technical terms or jargons should not be there while talking to the customers unnecessarily. Short terms should not be used as they are not universal but many employees do as they are in habit of using it with their colleagues. Even employees use slang during a call. It confuses customers, words are missed by them and even causes misunderstanding of words. So its

important to train employees so that they do not use jargons when not necessary. Speech is another important module as employees use high rate of speech due various reasons being discussed in earlier chapters. So various things which should be avoided during a call are shown in the following table6 and chart with their respective frequency and percentage.

Table 6

SPEECH MODULE		
THINGS TO BE AVOIDED DURING A CALL	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
HIGH RATE OF SPEECH	46	92
SLANG	38	76
SCRIPT DISOBEDIENCE	36	72
REPETITION	42	84

Fig 6

CONCLUSION

The employee development depends on the type of training, the employee receives and subsequently how he implements his knowledge while working. This becomes particularly important in the Indian context when there has been lot of criticism over the development and training of the call center agents. Nowadays call centers don't think training as a burden but they have a realized positive aspect for their revenue generation and preferred the need for specialist trainers to provide specific training in deficit areas.

By looking at the tables and graphs above, one can say that modules that are being taught to most of the employees and are being ranked according to the data collected from 50 respondents of two BPOS. Out of all pronunciation module got the utmost importance. In telecommunication world, pronunciation is important so that customers understand the instructions well and clear. Words should not be misheard or misunderstood .As it makes customers easily understandable about the schemes, plans or imparting of any important piece of information.

Other modules like speech module, script adherence, avoiding repetition module starting and ending a call module which got low ranking are relative to other modules but are important as well. Employees marked them low as they have not been taught about the module. So, one recommends that all the identified modules should be undertaken by the employees which will help them in developing their personality and thus profitable for the organization as well.

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