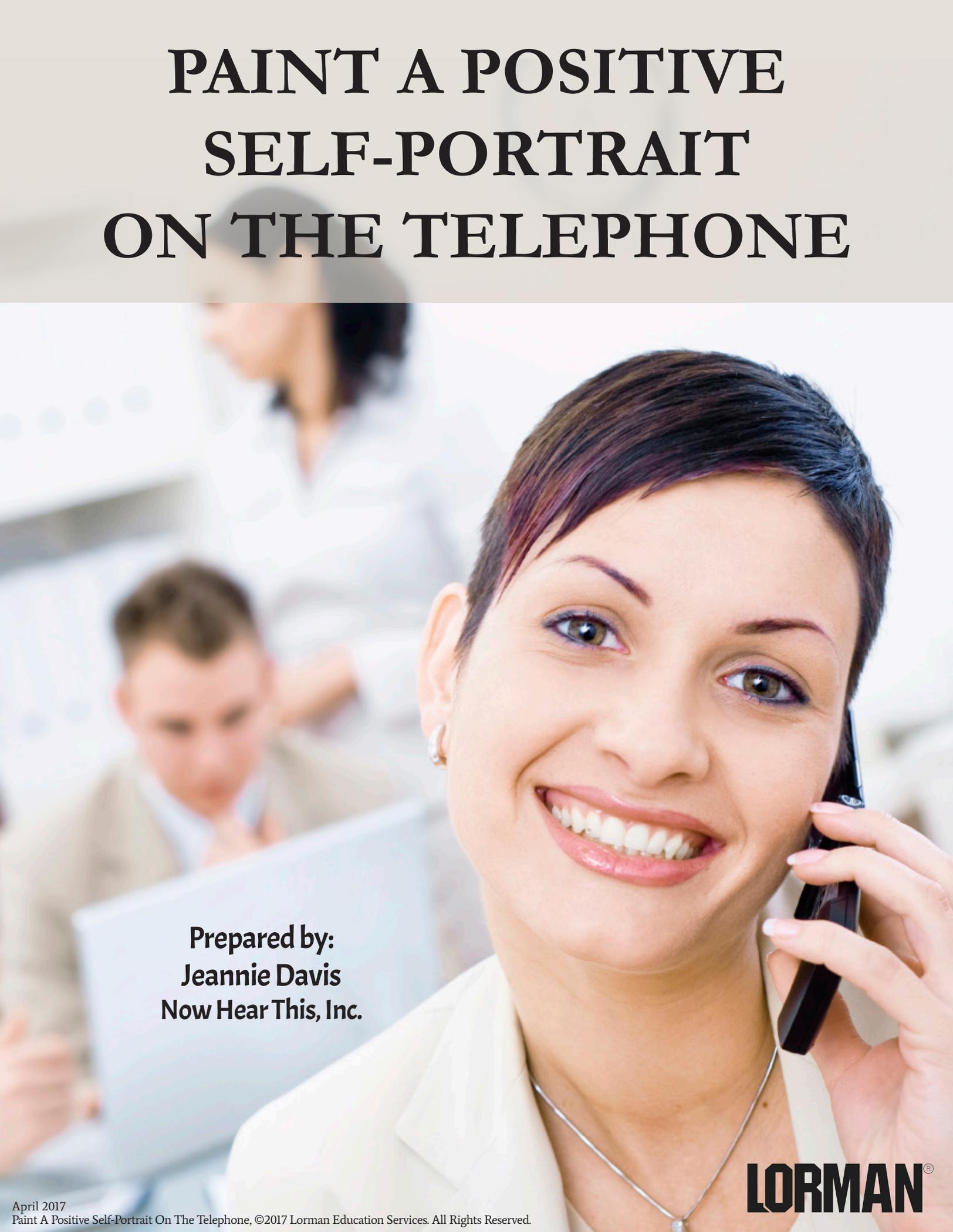


# **PAINT A POSITIVE SELF-PORTRAIT ON THE TELEPHONE**

A close-up photograph of a woman with short dark hair, smiling warmly while talking on a black mobile phone. She is wearing a light-colored blazer and a necklace. In the background, a man in a suit is looking at a laptop, and another woman is partially visible, also in a professional setting.

**Prepared by:  
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Now Hear This, Inc.**

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## Paint A Positive Self-Portrait On The Telephone

Most of us draw mental portraits of our customers or prospects on the telephone, often establishing long-term working relationships without ever meeting face-to-face. When we finally do meet, we're usually surprised their image doesn't match the portrait we painted of them. It seems we're quick to visualize the person on the other end of the telephone, never realizing they're visualizing us as well.

It's important to remember that telephone communication doesn't offer the benefit of a friendly, firm handshake; smiles can't be seen; body language can't be read; and facial expressions can offer no clues. What you visualize depends upon what you hear. As a result, good telephone skills are necessary to paint a positive self-portrait for every customer.

How do your customers see you? Do you demonstrate characteristics that create an image your customers will remember with pleasure? Do you project professionalism? Are you understandable? Do you give the impression you'll go the extra mile for every customer? Have you thought about how your physical postures, voice inflection, courteousness, vocal tone and rate of speech may influence the portrait you paint of yourself for the customer?

Using the word **PICTURE**, consider how the following characteristics can work to help you create a self-portrait everyone will remember with pleasure and won't be surprised to see:

- **Posture.** Adopt the same posture you would if the caller were physically in front of you. Be aware of "open" and "closed" postures. Assume a comfortable position while seated-one that says, I'm all ears and ready to help. Identify how your attitude impacts body language and vocal tone while talking with customers.
- **Inflection.** Adding inflection to your voice helps you sound more friendly and conversational. Use feeling in your voice to express an idea or a mood and speak in a manner that demonstrates a high energy level. You don't want to sound disinterested, boring or monotonous.
- **Courtesy.** Treat others the way you expect to be treated. Your customers know when you're genuinely interested in them and people respond in kind to people who are kind. When you put yourself in the customer's shoes you're more likely to create a loyal, long-standing relationship.
- **Tone.** Your vocal tone can set the stage for customer conversations. When you sound warm and friendly, your ability to establish a rapport with customers can increase significantly. Your voice needs to sound professional, yet approachable. Customers will not only react to your tone-in most instances, they'll mirror it.
- **Understandability.** It's normal to think that everything you say is understandable, but don't be caught mumbling, stumbling, or rambling. Your self-portrait should depict someone whose enunciation, diction and pronunciation is clear and easy to understand. You shouldn't constantly need to repeat what you say.

- **Rate of Speech.** On average, we speak at the rate 120-130 words per minute. You may have a tendency to speak too fast, or may take special care to process your thoughts slowly before speaking. Make a conscious effort to practice slowing your speech when necessary, yet be aware that a slow talker often irritates a listener.
- **Extra Mile.** It's important to remember that customer perception determines quality service. Going the extra mile for your customers means more than meeting their expectations- your challenge is to exceed them! Look for opportunities to make a significant difference in their perception of you and your company.

The telephone is your #1 business communication tool. The most memorable gift you can give your customers is a positive first impression. Keep in mind that first impressions create lasting memories, whether they're positive or negative.

Jeannie Davis is president of Now Hear This, Inc., a Colorado-based communications training company specializing in professional telephone skills workshops, seminars and keynote presentations. An expert in the field of telephone communication, she is the award-winning author of Beyond "Hello:" A Practical Guide for Excellent Telephone Communication and Quality Customer Service. Davis has worked with many Fortune 500 companies and trained thousands of people to maximize the profit- and image-building power of their #1 business communication tool. For additional information about on-site training programs, reach Jeannie at 1-800-784-5525 or visit online at [www.phoneskills.com](http://www.phoneskills.com).

