

## Voice Mail That Sells

As a business owner, I receive my share of sales calls in a given month. More often than not, I'm away from my desk or out of the office which means I end up listening to the messages instead of speaking directly with the sales person. Here are a few of the common mistakes I notice and how you can correct them.

**Mistake #1** – The message lacks focus or clarity. You are more likely to receive voice mail today than actually connect with the person you are trying to contact. That means you must be prepared to leave a clear, concise message. Business people are too busy to listen to a lengthy message that is not focused and you lose credibility if you cannot state your objective without rambling. The average executive in an organization receives dozens of calls every day and many of them are from sales people trying to sell a product or service. If you ramble on, your prospect will probably press delete without listening to the entire message. Keep the message brief and to the point. Plan what you are going to say BEFORE you call so you are prepared.

**Mistake #2** – The message is difficult to understand. A sales person recently left me a message and he spoke so quickly that I did not understand most of his message. I knew it had something to do with the Internet and getting top placement in search engines but I couldn't decipher his company name and most of his message was unintelligible.

If you have an accent, recognize the fact that some people may find it more difficult to understand you. That means you may have to repeat yourself or slow down in order to be understood. This also applies if you have an unusual name. Make it easy for people to understand you.

**Mistake #3** – Phone numbers are rattled off at lightening speed which makes it next to impossible to write them down. Most sales people state their telephone number too quickly. A general rule of thumb is to actually write down your own number as you state it in your message. This may sound simple but I'm sure you have had to listen to some messages more than once in order to capture the telephone number. Once again, you must make it easy for the person you are contacting to understand your message. If they have to replay the message several times they will seldom call you back.

**Mistake #4** – The message does not compel me to return the call. *"Hi, it's Bob from Human Resources Plus and I'd like to talk to you about your recent merger. We specialize in helping businesses like yours manage the process more effectively."* A message like this does not compel me to call you back.

To stand out from your competition, leave a message that offers some form of benefit to your prospect or customer. For example, *"Hi Mrs. Smith, it's Bob Jones from Human Resources Plus calling. Most companies who undertake a merger experience a significant reduction in employee morale. One way to improve this is to communicate regularly with your team and keep them updated on the progress of the merger. Learn additional strategies by calling me at..."*

I recommend crafting a variety of different messages and offering a different benefit each time you call. Use case studies and tell your prospect about specific results some of your clients have achieved. Make your prospect want to return your call.

Mistake #5 – The message is too generic. Too many sales people try to sell their product or service to anyone who will buy it. Personalize your message by indicating that you know something about your prospect's business and/or industry. Make references to specific challenges they face and give an example of how your product or service can help them. Remember to use your prospect's name, particularly at the beginning and at the end of the message.

Voice mail is a vital tool in today's business world. How you utilize this tool greatly affects your sales results and, in my experience, the majority of people fail to use it properly. Make sure your message is easy to understand and keep it brief. Enunciate your words clearly and spell out your name if necessary. Slow down your rate of speech. State your telephone number slowly so I can write it down without listening to your message three or four times. Give me a compelling reason to call you back. Lastly, adapt your message to my specific business. Personalize it and use my name.

If you want to cut through the clutter and stand out from your competition you must make your voice mail messages work for you.

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