

How to Avoid Voice Mail Hell!

By Judith Filek—President
Impact Communications, Inc.

Most of us are forced to leave voice mail messages constantly. In today's business world, it is almost a rarity to speak to a live person. When we go to the trouble of leaving a voice message, our expectation is that we will receive a "call back." The vexing part is that this is often not the case. We frequently are left in limbo. When we don't receive a call back, we are forced to leave a second or maybe even a third message. As a result, important business decisions may be delayed. To insure that your voice mail messages receive a quick response, pay attention to some key principles.

Make it short. When you leave anyone a voice message, be succinct. People listen to voice mails between or while doing other activities—such as catching a plane, eating lunch, or reviewing materials for another meeting. The shorter the message, the more likely people are to get it! Ideally, your voice message should be between 30-45 seconds. If the message is a long message, it is better suited for a "live conversation" or an e-mail. A series of instructions for the recipient are not likely to be followed.

Make it easy for the listener to get back to you. It is very annoying to have to replay an entire message to capture the name and phone number of the caller. Make it easy for your listener by announcing your name, company and telephone number as you begin and end your message.

Be organized. Know exactly what you want to say and be prepared that the person won't be available. People hate when the caller seems to ramble about non-important information.

Be clear about what you want. A mistake that many people make when leaving a voice mail is that they bury their message. If you want a call

back, be specific about when and why it is important. If you need the information by 5 p.m. today so that you can confirm with the customer, be sure to state it. Never leave anything to chance. Never say something vague like, "Give me a call back."

Motivate your listeners. When you leave a voice mail, be sure to include three key ingredients. **Number One:** State how urgent you feel the matter is. **Number Two:** What action step you want the listener to take regarding the message, and **Number Three:** Tell why it would be of benefit to the listener or the organization to respond quickly. So often, we overlook stating the benefits for returning the call. The listener receives many calls throughout his/her day. If you state how this can help him, the account or the organization, you increase the likelihood of a response.

Do not leave multiple messages. If there are several problems you need solved by the recipient of your voice mail, only deal with one problem per voice mail message. If there is another question or problem, send a second message. If you leave multiple messages in a single voice mail, it is likely that the recipient will only respond to one of them. Typically, it is the first or last one the person hears. Out of respect for your listener, tell your listener that a second message will follow concerning another issue.

Use good communications skills. Pause often between your statements. A two-second pause between your points will make them stand out. If you speak too quickly, the listener has to replay the message in order to pick out the salient information. Often, instead of replaying the message, the listener opts to save it. When a message is saved, the chances of it being replayed are considerably lessened. Pausing also allows you to be perceived as friendlier and more confident. Finally, be cautious of connecting one thought to another with a "connector." Make sure your sentences come to definite ends.

People receive many voice mail messages throughout the course of their day. They often feel like they are in voice mail hell. With careful planning and

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good communication skills, our voice mail messages will be received in a positive manner. We will motivate people to take action and return our calls.

Impact Communications, Inc. consults with individuals and businesses to improve their face-to-face and over the phone communication skills. When you have to have impact, phone (847) 438-4480 or visit our web site, www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com.