

How to Nail Voicemail

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How many times has one of the following happened to you? You call someone and get their voicemail telling you that they will be out of the office until July 26th. The only problem is it's September 8th when you place the call. Or you call a big organization but still can't get in touch with a living, breathing person no matter what combination of buttons you push, and you've already left three messages and received no returned phone call.

If you want to make it easy for people to do business with you and make a more profitable phone impression, keep reading. Sometimes your voicemail is the first impression someone gets of you – make it stellar, and it will make a difference.

Before you start recording your voicemail

– SMILE! On the phone? Yes, on the phone! Can people really tell if you're smiling when you're on the phone? Absolutely!

Think "HOW DO I WANT MY CALLERS

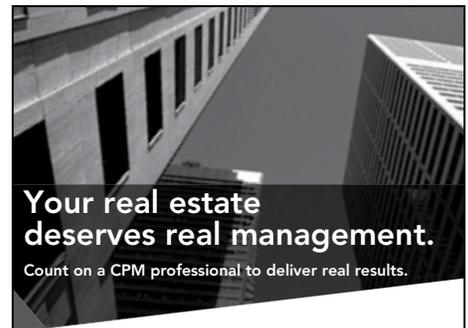
TO FEEL?" This change in focus will do remarkable things for your business because when you focus externally on the caller, you are now in the service mode. Do you want them to feel welcomed? Then say, "I'm so glad you called!" Do you want them to know you have integrity? Then promise in your message to call them back. Then call them back! Do you want them to know you're high energy

and creative? Put a message with a high level of energy and a creative twist on your outgoing message, and the caller will be more inclined to leave a message and do business with you!

MAKE IT PERSONAL. I always record the outgoing message myself and do not let my assistant or anyone else record it for me. I introduce myself and give them confidence that I will call them back as soon as possible. I used to say "Your call is important to me", but then how many times do we hear that when we call the customer service line for a service provider? Our call is important all right, yet we are frustrated because we have heard that five or ten times in the last 30 minutes we've been on the phone holding. Now I say, "Talk to you soon" or "I will call you back just as soon as possible."

DON'T STATE THE OBVIOUS! Don't tell them what they already know and don't tell them to do what they already do. They already know you're not there otherwise you would have picked up the phone. Or leave a name and number at the beep. Really? Now, if you're thinking to yourself right now – "I only do that because people forget to leave their number or people talk so fast I can't get the information." That may be valid, but it's not your problem. For the one or two people who do forget to leave their name and number or talk too fast, don't make the rest of them listen to stuff they don't want to hear again and again.

CALL THEM BACK. What frustrates callers isn't always the fact that they have had to leave a voicemail, but that their calls were not answered "promptly." The number of times you check voicemail each day



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will vary depending on your job function. However, if you have not told people differently, at a minimum you should check messages once a day and return those calls.

Call yourself tonight. Listen to your outgoing message. That voicemail message is the first impression someone has of you. Ask yourself, "Is that the best first impression I can make?"