

Getting Prospects to Return Voice Mails

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At one time in the distant past, say 10 years ago, you could count on people to return calls promptly – that was certainly true of clients and if you hadn't made a pest of yourself, even many prospects returned calls.

Today, that's all changed. Given the unrelenting demands on everyone's time, we can no longer take it for granted that prospects will return our calls – and even clients are slower to return calls.



That said, there are two things that can increase the chances of your calls being returned – what you say in your voice mail and how you say it.

What you say

Let's start by agreeing that when you leave a message for a prospect, your voice mail is essentially a sales call – you are selling the recipient on why they should return your call promptly, or in some cases why they should return it at all.

That means that every voice mail has to focus on a short and very clear benefit statement for the recipient, highlighting what's in it for them. To do that, consider using the "because" test. Before calling, in 20 words or less, write down why a prospect (or client) should return your call.

In other words, a prospect should return your call "because" ...

You have a new research report or recent article from a credible publication, pertaining to a concern they mentioned the last time you spoke.

You've recently implemented a solution with clients that addresses a problem they mentioned in the past.

You're hosting clients to a talk on an issue and are calling to invite them to attend.

And as an aside, while this is particularly important when leaving voice mails for prospects, given the jammed schedules of many clients, you'd benefit from having a similar "because" statement prepared to leave for clients.



How you say it

A clear, compelling “*you should return my call because ...*” statement is only part of the key to getting voice mails returned.

The other half of the puzzle is how you deliver that message.

We’ve all suffered through long-winded, meandering voice messages that make us want to reach through the phone and throttle the caller.

When you leave a voice mail message, whether for an existing or prospective client, you need to deliver it with enthusiasm and confidence.

Three ways to do that:

1. *Get ready to leave a voice mail*

An astonishing number of people seem to be shocked when they get a voice mail – and as a result stumble along, leaving dull uninspiring messages.

When you call someone, assume you’ll get their voice mail – and be ready with your message.

2. *Prepare your message beforehand*

One of the keys to leaving tight messages is preparation beforehand.

Before you pick up the phone, identify the one or two key reasons for returning your call. You can do this mentally, you can write down the key points you’ll be making or you can actually script out your message and rehearse it beforehand. That may not be feasible if the call is a one-off, but if you’re going to be leaving a similar message for multiple prospects, taking a few minutes to hone an effective message will be time well spent.

3. *Raise your energy level*

When you leave a voice message, convey a sense of energy and conviction. One way to do that is to slightly increase the pace at which you speak and to put more emphasis on key words – delivering a message in a dull monotone is exactly the wrong way to communicate confidence and motivate the listener to make responding a priority.



It does take more time to prepare your “because” statement and to write down the key points you’ll be making ... So if you measure success by the number of voice mails you leave, then this might all seem a poor expenditure of time and effort.

On the other hand, if you measure success by the number of voice mails **returned**, this is exactly the kind of investment of time that will pay big dividends.

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