

8 Phrases You Should Stop Saying in Sales Voicemails Immediately



The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.

This principle applies to sales voicemails. If you're leaving message after message on prospects' voicemails and none of them seem to be prompting a call back, the answer isn't doubling down on what's clearly not working. Instead, you should try to figure out where you're going wrong.

Start by learning the eight treacherous lines that will give prospects an automatic reason to delete your message halfway through. Once you've erased these from your script, your message will likely make a better impression on buyers -- and so your chances of an eventual connection or even a call back may improve.

1) "Hello Mrs./Mr. [prospect's last name]."

Greeting your prospects by last name sounds awkward and overly formal in an era where most people don't even call their bosses by their last name.

As a rule of thumb, talk to prospects like you'd talk to your friends. Striking a natural tone will put them at ease and encourage them to drop their guard.

For example, HubSpot reps usually address prospects by their first name, like “Hi Miriam,” or “Hey Andrei.”

2) “I know you’re busy, but ... ”

You might think using this phrase is empathetic -- it shows the prospect you understand they’ve got a full plate. However, they might interpret it as “I know I’m bothering you, but ... ” Not only will you sound defensive right out the gate, but presenting yourself as an intrusion will make them doubt whether or not you’re worth their time.

Want to show respect for their schedule without casting your ability to add value in doubt? Cut this line. You’ll get to your point roughly five seconds faster -- meaning you’ll have a better chance of grabbing their attention and motivating them to call you back.

3) “My name is Jane Smith, and I work for Vacuums ‘R Us.”

If you want people to listen to your voicemails, don’t use this line. Most prospects will recognize that you’re trying to sell them something and immediately hang up.

While it’s true that you are eventually trying to sell your product or service to this buyer, a deal should never be the goal of the initial call or voicemail. Instead, simply start a conversation, with the goal of getting them to engage with you.

To earn their attention, you need to begin with information that actually matters to them. That might be a specific challenge they’re likely facing, or an offer related to a piece of content they downloaded. The key? Make your intro about your prospect, not you.

For example, you could say, “After doing some research on [company], it seems like you’re dealing with [business pain].”

4) “We’ve got this great feature ... ”

Reps should never pitch product features during a voicemail. Again, the goal is to begin the sales conversation or restart a stalled one -- not convince your prospect to buy. Save the features talk until after you've sparked their interest in what you have to say and earned their trust by providing value in some way.

Plus, good voicemails are 30 seconds or shorter, according to sales trainer Jeff Hoffman. You simply don't have the time to explain features within the time constraints.

5) "I checked out your website -- really interesting."

This boilerplate line could apply to almost any company in the world -- which tells the prospect you didn't bother to do any research. If you don't care about who they are and what they do, well, they're probably not going to be interested in you either. Your voicemail will be far more compelling if you include details about their company you could only know from doing your homework.

For instance, you could say, "I checked out your website and noticed you have a 50% promotion deal going -- are you finding that it's hard to keep up with additional orders?"

Or mention a trigger event, such as, "I saw that your organization [recently launched a new product, hired a new CEO, closed an office, closed another round of funding, etc.]"

Your third option is asking a question that's so specific it could never be intended for someone else. According to Hoffman, "The more personal and specific the question, the more likely it'll get a response."

Hoffman says if he was selling financial management technology, he might ask the voicemail recipient which financial software they use today, or if all of the company's financial analysts work out of the central office.

6) “This is the second voicemail I’ve left you.”

Mentioning how tough it’s been to reach your prospect is an ineffective tactic at best and an annoying one at worst. Making buyers feel guilty doesn’t usually make them rush to respond.

“Guilt won’t sway people who feel no obligation to you,” Caputa writes.

Rather than shaming prospects for their inaccessibility, Caputa recommends building relationships with them instead. Doing your research, making your outreach efforts timely and relevant, and offering value before you ask for anything in return leads to genuine, mutually beneficial connections. You’re far more likely to get a call back when your prospect likes and trusts you.

7) “We’ve never spoken before.”

Why waste your prospect’s time stating the obvious? Some might even delete your message immediately upon hearing this line.

Instead of emphasizing the fact that you’re a stranger, focus on adding immediate value. When buyers realize you can make them more successful, they’re typically eager to get to know you.

8) “I’d like to take 15 minutes of your time ...”

This line is horrible on multiple levels. First, you should never use “I want” with prospects -- after all, they’re focused on their own needs, desires, and agenda, not yours. Hearing this will make them think, “So *what?*”

The word “take” is also cringe-worthy. Even if it’s just a figure of speech, you should always position yourself as a contributor. Salespeople have reputations for being self-serving and aggressive -- make it clear you don’t fit the stereotype.

Finally, if this voicemail is one of your first attempts at reaching your prospect, it’s too soon to demand time on their calendar. Instead, offer to run a consultative call with them on a challenge they’re likely experiencing, or say you’re going to send them a relevant piece of content.