

## ***At the sound of the beep please leave... An effective message***

As salespeople, our job is to meet with prospects, uncover their needs and show them how our products can solve their problems. Sometimes the hardest part of this process is just getting to meet with the prospect. Ideally we like to introduce ourselves to the customer face to face, make eye contact, shake their hand and show them what we have to offer. Unfortunately, this is not always possible, some customers do not have physical business locations, some are absentee managers, and some keep irregular hours. Our only option is to contact the customer by telephone which presents another challenge, the dreaded **VOICEMAIL**.

Voicemail enables your prospects to screen their calls. It is much easier to hit “Delete” rather than call you back. Prospects will only return your call if they believe it is in their own best interest to do so. Here are some hallmarks of an effective voicemail message:

- An effective message must contain a benefit for the customer. “I want to talk to you about advertising” offers them nothing of value, “I can show you how to reach the 12,000 homes in your area that you currently miss” does.
- An effective message must captivate the listener. Use your communication skills when leaving a message. You would not drone out your message when meeting with a customer, so why drone on the phone. Speak clearly and confidently and with energy. Your goal is to sound like someone the customer would like to talk to, not someone who would put them to sleep. Believe it or not, you can hear a smile over the phone line.
- An effective message should be “short & sweet”. If it is too long, the customer may not listen to the entire message. When you dial the phone there are two possible outcomes, either the customer will answer or his/her voicemail will. You must be prepared for either eventuality. If you think about what you will say and rehearse it beforehand your message will be concise and you will sound confident and focused. Do not speak too fast. If you are prepared, you should be able to get your point across in the time allotted. Speaking too quickly often garbles your message.

- An effective message conveys a “sense of urgency” to the prospect. Instead of “I would like to talk to you” or “if you have a few minutes” use strong confident language “It is important that I speak with you” or “I need to talk to you about.” Give the prospect clear instruction “Please call me today at 000-000-0000” “I look forward to speaking with you, my number is...”

The old proverb “If at first you don’t succeed...try, try again” is especially true when trying to get through to a prospect on the phone. Keep a record of your calls to the customer and call back on a regular basis. Try calling on different days and at different times. Remember that many more sales have been lost through lack of persistence than from annoying the customer with frequent calls. You should be sure that each message you leave contains the elements described above. We tell our customers about the benefits of consistent advertising. Think of your voicemail messages as mini “radio” ads targeted precisely at your customer. By repetitively delivering consistent customer benefit oriented messages you will gradually break down the customer’s resistance and convince them to call you back.

To improve your voicemail messages try the following:

- Write out several benefit oriented “scripts” for yourself. This will help you to stay focused when making your calls. Don’t memorize or read the scripts as this will make you sound stiff and canned. Having a benefit in mind before dialing will automatically make your messages more effective.
- Practice leaving messages on your own answering machine/voicemail. How do you sound? Do you communicate value? Would a prospect see the advantage of calling you back? Do you sound energetic? Professional?