

Who's Got The Voice Mail Blues?

Quite a few quick printing salespeople have told me that they don't like voice mail. They say it's getting harder and harder to get a prospect on the phone. Here's my reaction...I don't think that phenomenon is completely related to voice mail in the first place. And I think that, on balance, voice mail offers more positives than it does negatives.

Let's look first at the issue of getting people on the phone. I have the same situation that so many printing and copying salespeople do. I find that the people I want to talk to are far less frequently in their offices waiting to hear from me. They're in meetings, back in the plant, or out on the road someplace.

Here's what you need to understand. They're not away from their desks because they don't want to take calls from salespeople. They're away from their desks because they're being asked to do more *in their own jobs*. That's what business is all about today, and voice mail provides a technological edge that can help make it happen.

A Real Opportunity

This is where voice mail gives you a real opportunity. In the old days, you might have left a message with a secretary. *"Please have Mr. Jones call Joe Smith from ABC Printing."* It's always been tough to get a receptionist or secretary to accept a message any longer than that. But if you *still* leave messages like that on people's voice mail, *you* are not taking advantage of the technological edge. Whenever voice mail answers, you've been given an opportunity to tell a person *exactly* why it would be in his or her best interest to call you back and talk some more.

My advice is to sit down and write yourself a 1-2 minute long voice mail presentation. Tell the prospect who you are, and give some idea of what you have to offer. Remember that your goal is only to get the prospect to call you back, so don't "oversell." Try to tell the prospect just enough to spike some interest.

If you're unsure of what to say, here's an example of the sort of voice mail presentation I'm talking about. This might be something that you could modify to meet the specifics of your own situation.

"Ms. Jones, my name is John Smith, and I'm calling on Monday the 3rd at about 9:00 AM. I'm a sales representative for ABC Printing. We're a local, full-service printing company, and I'm going to take advantage of the opportunity that your voice mail system offers and leave this message that will tell you a little bit about ABC Printing. Before I do that, though, I want you to know that my primary purpose in calling today was to see if I could arrange an appointment for us to get together, so I could learn about your company. I think you'll agree that the best way for me to provide better service than anyone else can give you is to have a better understanding of your needs.

As I said, we're a full-service printing company. That means we're capable of handling anything from photocopy work to full-color printing. I doubt that you'd need us for relatively simple, day-to-day copying, but I do want you to know that we're equipped with a high-speed XXXXX 1001. That's the perfect machine for long-run copy jobs, or complicated copy-and-collate projects.

We're also equipped with a XXXXX color copier, which allows you to make full-color copies from color originals. At some point, I'd like to talk to you specifically about the capabilities of this machine. Many of our customers have just fallen in love with what our color copier lets them do, things that were never possible before, at least not without spending an arm and a leg to duplicate small quantities in full color.

In terms of traditional printing, we can handle almost any combination of size, color, and complexity. In the past, many people thought "quick printer" meant something less than real printing or real quality, but that really hasn't been true for a long time. It is true that we tend to focus on projects that involve smaller quantities and fast turn-arounds. But we're fully capable of handling almost any project for you, from business cards to business forms to brochures and catalogs. And if there's ever something you shouldn't use us for, we'll tell you that right away and not put you at risk.

We can help you with the design of any project if you need that kind of help. We have complete typesetting capabilities, and we can also work directly from your disks if you have developed your own desktop publishing capability. I think you'll find us very easy to work with, in every way.

As I mentioned, my primary purpose in calling today was to arrange for an appointment for us to get together and talk more about your company. I hope that this brief description of our capabilities will help you to decide that that's a good idea. Please give me a call at XXX-XXX-XXXX. I'll look forward to hearing from you...and thanks for giving me your attention today. Again, my name is John Smith, from ABC Printing, and the phone number is XXX-XXX-XXXX."

Remember, voice mail doesn't have to give you the blues!