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Be a Good Voicemail Salesperson/Analyst

Pocket Guide to Success

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Introduction

The technology of using voicemail to screen incoming calls is no longer a new concept. The use of voicemail started in the US back in the early 1990's and is now used globally by the financial community to screen incoming calls.

In many cases voicemail has replaced the two-way telephone call altogether. The only time a salesperson gets to talk to their client is at an event that brings them together. For most however there is still an opportunity to talk to their clients person to person.

Whatever the situation the importance of voicemail has increased considerably.

The ability to leave a clear, concise and interesting message has become a critical skill for salespeople and analysts if they are to build credibility and increase the chance of a follow up two -way call with the client.

The reality of life is that clients do not listen to all their voicemails, like junk mail they will just delete many of them. Those that they do listen to will be screened for relevance and usefulness, typical this process takes between just five and ten seconds. If the message does not pass the test it will be deleted without another thought.

Consistently poor messages will over time develop a negative perception of the caller in the mind of the listener that will lead to them immediately being deleting without the message ever being listened too.

The consequence of this is a lot of wasted time and effort and a deteriorating relationship with the client.

This therefore reinforces the importance of being a good voicemail salesperson or analyst

Why people do not like Voicemail

It is not surprising that people do not enjoy leaving voicemail messages and consequently do not do a very good job. As a preference people would rather hang up than leave a message; preferring to call back later.

It is no different in peoples private lives, people seem to freeze when confronted with an automated message asking them to leave a message after the bleep. Once they regain their composure they generally leave a convoluted rambling message that seems to go on for ever.

The reasons people do not enjoy leaving voicemail messages is that we do not find it natural to speak to a machine; it is almost like having a conversation with ourselves. We typically like to interact with another human being not a machine. We also feed off the reactions of the other person, not just what they say but the urns and ars. We feed off their responses and it keeps the conversation flowing. Voicemail is the same as talking to someone who is not responding after a little while we stop talking and ask are you still there. Voicemail has the same affect on us we soon dry up and find it difficult to keep speaking without the necessary feedback feedback.

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It is important to appreciate that in the world of finance voicemail is now an established way of communicating and that clients' are using more and more to screen incoming calls. The salesperson and analyst has to accept and embrace this form of communication.

Blast Mail Technology

One of the biggest problems of voicemail is maintaining the correct energy levels to leave a consistently informative and interesting message, understandably over time the quality drops as our concentration and energy levels fall.

The introduction of blast mail has helped to overcome this problem by allowing the salesperson/analyst to perfect and record their message just once and then download to all the designated clients.

It is important though when using this technique not to allow the message to sound too impersonal as it will resemble junk mail and be immediately deleted.

It is still important to adhere to the best practices to constructing and delivering informative and interesting voicemail messages in order to be successful in achieving your objectives.

The Problems with Voicemail

■ **No response or feedback**

The lack of feedback affects us in two ways;

1. Human beings feed off the feedback that they receive from others helping to maintain our energy levels, if it is a case of all giving/talking our energy levels fall and we become flat and monotone.
2. We can not gauge how our message is being received and change track if required.

■ **Easy to misinterpret, cannot clarify**

It is easy for the listener to misinterpret what is being said and therefore not get the point or the logic behind what is being said. With voicemail we do not have the opportunity to ask questions to check if we are being understood correctly.

■ **Harder to retain listeners attention**

Because the voicemail is a one way monologue it is easy for the listener to lose concentration and stop listening to what is being said. Typically we would ask questions to maintain the other party's interest in the conversation; with voicemail we can not do this.

■ **Easy to ignore, miss important information**

It is easy for the listener to miss important points, we have to rely on them concentrating and listening intently to the message to ensure they get it all. With voicemail we do not have the opportunity to check that they have received and understood all of the relevant points.

■ Distractions

It is very easy for listeners to be distracted when listening to voicemail as they are playing a passive role. Unlike with the two-way call we can not sense if the listener is being distracted and re-engage them in the conversation. Once a listener gets lost they usually stay lost.

If we are to be successful when leaving voicemail messages we have to be able to overcome these barriers and master the art of leaving informative and interesting voicemail messages.

The Art of Voicemail

So what is the art of leaving voicemail; it is the ability to leave a useful and interesting message in a way that sounds as if you are talking personally to the listener and not like a monotone robot.

It is the ability to leave a clear, concise and easy to understand message. It is the ability to get the ideas out your head into the heads of the listeners in a way that they understand your message and the logic behind what you are saying in a very short time frame.

Experience has proved that the ideal duration of a voicemail message is between 40 and 60 seconds, any longer and it starts to lose its impact and the listener's concentration dissipates.

Bearing in mind these constraints and our objectives voicemail provides a real challenge in our working lives.

To help us in our challenge we need to master the two core components to leaving clear, concise and effective voicemails.

The two core components are:

1. Planning & Preparation

- **Contents & Structure**

2. Delivery Techniques

- **Using vocal behaviour to enhance the message and create interest**

1. Planning & Preparation

When planning & preparing the voicemail message it is good to start by thinking about the message from the listener's perspective;

- What is important to them
- What will make them listen,
- What will they want to get out of it

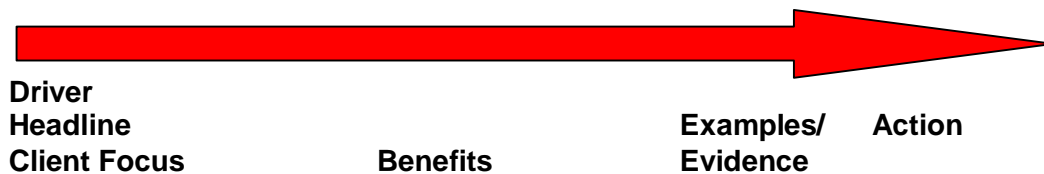
Experience has show that almost everyone goes through the same internal thought process when receiving a telephone call or voicemail message. They are listening out for the answers to the following:

- Why are you calling?
- What is in for me?
- Convince me of what you are saying
- What should I do next?

When preparing the message we need to take this thought process into account and plan to address these points.

Client Psychology – Building Your Case

Why Are You Calling? What's In It for Me? Convince Me What Next



The next thing we need to do is ask ourselves what is my objective for leaving this message.

It is important to note that it is unlikely that we will persuade the client to follow our recommendation from a 40 - 60 second voicemail. The aim of the voicemail call is to gain their interest leaving them wanting more information. This should increase our chances of them picking up when we place a call later in the day.

For the purposes of planning the message typically objectives will be as follows:

- Buy recommendation
- Sell recommendation
- Provide information, update (There should be a purpose to the information, update and not done just for the sake of it, i.e. help with decision making process)

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Defining your objective will provide focus and help with the content.

Having defined the objective the next question is; what do I have to say to achieve my objective?

I only have approximately 40 - 60 seconds so I can not say too much.

The rule of thumb is to have three supporting points behind your recommendation.

To achieve your objective you will need to consider; what are the three most compelling points that support my recommendation.

The three points then make up the body of the message.

Taking into account the clients thought process and our objectives we start to form the structure of our message

■ Introduction

Why we are calling
Address WIIFM factor

■ Main Body

Supporting points
Logical argument to convince
Evidence

■ Conclusion

Proposed action

Structuring the Voicemail Message

Introduction Attention Grabber	Building credibility in proposal/Generating interest	Conclusion to call
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Name/company■ Why are you calling, Headline, driver■ Recommendation■ Target price■ WIIFM factor, Potential upside/movement■ Hook	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Convince me■ Supporting points■ Logical argument■ Evidence■ 1■ 2■ 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Reiterate recommendation■ Action suggested■ Name & number

Now that we have the structure we need to develop the content

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Content

When a client listens to a message they are immediately screening to see if it answers their key questions. It typically takes between 5-10 seconds before a client decides if they are going to bother to continue to listen.

You have this long to hook them and keep them listening therefore you have to have a strong introduction

Don't waste valuable time with small talk or a long introduction to your main point.

Get straight to the point so that they are clear why you are calling and what they can potentially get out of listening to the call.

Example

Hi John this is John Doe from XYZ Bank
On the back of stronger than expected profits for company x
We have reiterated our buy recommendation with a target price of EURO 500
This gives a potential upside of 50% from today's levels
There are three key reasons behind our recommendation

When constructing the three supporting points; ask yourself would this convince me, is it logical.

Also make sure you do not just quote facts. Facts are typically in the public domain and therefore by themselves not necessarily interesting or useful to the client.

To be convincing you have to provide you interpretation of the facts and how this will affect the company and share price.

Example

Supporting Point One

Fact - Company x has demonstrated good progress in reducing its debt through the sales of non-core businesses such as

Opinion- We believe that this will lead to an annual saving of (y) which will contribute to the net profitability pushing the share price up over the next 6 months

In order to make the points clear use a bullet approach, use short sentences and as few words as possible to get your point across.

Conclusion

You may have gathered by now that even though the voicemail message is only 40 - 60 seconds long it still has the same structure as a more conventional presentation i.e.

- Tell them what you are going to tell them
- Tell them
- Tell them what you told them

Whilst this may seem strange typically have to say things three times for them to sink in.

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Equally people tend to remember what is said last, so it is important to leave them remembering our key point

Buy Company x it is going up

Taking this into account the conclusion will be as follows:

In conclusion we reiterate our buy recommendation of Company x with a price target of EURO 500 which gives you a potential upside of 50%

For more information please call me on tel number

John Doe
XYZ Bank

2. Delivery Techniques

Using vocal behaviour to enhance the message and create interest

There is no point in having a great idea if it does not sound like a great idea, or that the listener can not hear the idea because it is being drowned out by so much surplus noise.

The way we deliver the message in many ways is more important than what we actually say.

I have had examples of clients calling people back saying not sure what you were saying but it sounded really interesting.

We use our voice to convey meaning such as enthusiasm and caution.

The skill of leaving a successful voicemail message is to convey the right meaning to support what you are saying.

If it is a good idea sound enthusiastic.

If you are concerned about the markets you need to convey a cautious tone

When preparing to leave the message you need to consider how you want to be received and adopt the appropriate tone.

If the tone of the message does not support the content the listener it will confuse the listener.

Human behaviour is such that people put greater emphasis on how things are being said than what is being said.

You need to communicate in a congruent way if you are to get your message across successfully.

Speed of Delivery & Pauses

Speed of delivery is a common problem when leaving a message because people feel that they have to talk quickly in order say what they want to say in a short space of time.

The consequence of this is that there are no pauses between the sentences or delivery of ideas.

The message then becomes one long download of information which is difficult to take in and understand. In summary the main message gets lost in the mass of detail.

When leaving a voicemail message (communicating) we are in essence sharing our ideas which are intended to provoke thought, stimulate interest and gain-buy in. If the delivery rate of ideas is too fast it is impossible for listener to take in each idea, evaluate them and keep up with what is being said.

When this happens most listeners just give trying to keep up and switch off. (Delete/fast forward the voicemail)

When leaving the voicemail message you need to break the content up into individual ideas and impart them one at a time. Pause between each idea to allow the listener to take it in and then move on to the next idea.

This reinforces the point of using as few words as possible to communicate our ideas keeping the sentences short and concise.

Word Choice

When preparing the content it is important to remember that people think in pictures. People try to visualise what is being said in order to gain a greater understanding. I see what you mean being a common expression to support this human behaviour. If people can not see what you mean the message will lack impact and not achieve its objective.

Therefore you want to use words that will help the listener to visualise what you are saying. This will enable them to get a greater sense of what is being said, and its importance.

- We expect to see the share price going **significantly higher** from today's levels
- We see this **stock taking off** as a result of the companies latest results
- Due to poor recent performance we see the **share price falling off a cliff** with no support levels in sight
- This companies **earnings are solid as a rock** and we are confident that they will continue to post robust profits through out the year
- There is a **stampede of investors clamoring** to get into this stock

Do not over do the colourful language it should be subtle, nudging discretely at the listener's subconscious.

Emphasis

People do not always remember everything they hear even a short punchy 40 second voicemail message. To help the listener remember the key points of the message you need to put a little extra emphasis on these points. This makes them stand out and more likely to be remembered.

Example three Key Communication Points

- Buy
- Upside potential (WIIFM)
- Key driver of share price

Mental preparation, thinking and speaking

Another common problem that people experience when leaving a message is that they are still thinking about what they are saying as they are saying it. This makes them come across as being distracted and not sure of what they are saying.

Some people also introduce new points when leaving the message which destroys the structure and flow.

To be successful when leaving a voicemail message you have to plan what you are going to say and then be disciplined to stick to what you have planned when delivering.

Plan the message then execute. No more thinking

To help with this you have to get mentally prepared when getting ready to leave a message. Block out what is going on around you focus on the message and deliver.

Projection and Articulation

When you are leaving the message make sure you projecting your voice rather than sounding as if you are talking to yourself. Even though there is no one on the other end of the line try to visualize that you are talking to someone.

If you do not project your voice will lack power and conviction.

It is critical that you articulate your words so that people can easily understand what you are saying. If they have to struggle to understand you they will switch off.

Rehearse

There is no substitution to rehearsing, it is not until you try to deliver the message that you will know whether it will work or not; is it easy to say, does it flow, is the structure right, does it make sense when said out aloud, is it logical.

Where possible take two minutes to rehearse the message it can save you a lot of time in the long run.

If you do not have time to rehearse it all make sure you rehearse the introduction; get off to a good start and the rest should flow. Poor introduction and you will struggle through the rest of the message.

Summary Best Practice for Leaving Effective voicemail Messages

- Maximum duration of call 40-60 seconds
- Plan & structure the call, set objective, logical sequence
- Think what will differentiate this call from others
- Use impact words, visual
- Content, not too much - Keep it simple
- Tailor to client's needs, benefit, hook(WIIFM)
- Make sure they know who is calling
- Open strong - Headline should be an attention grabber
- Don't rush your message - Allow the client to follow & digest your key points
- Avoid non-words

Use pauses/silence to intensify impact of ideas/statements
Strong ending, restate benefit, name and number

I hope you have found this pocket guide helpful. If you would like any further information on being a good negotiator please do not hesitate to call me.

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