

The Right Way To Leave A Professional Voicemail

When it is easier to email someone instantly than spend time ringing them up, the act of leaving a proper voicemail can become a forgotten art. But if you, like me, have ever panicked after the “beep” and fumbled through a rambling introduction on the phone, you recognize that it is still a needed skill for today’s professionals to master.

Whether or not this is a part of your daily workflow or you need to track down a contact, here’s how to do it right without embarrassing yourself:

State your case and then hang up

To leave a good work voicemail, first recognize why you are leaving one in the first place —to get a callback, not to blabber. You need to get in and get out. The goal is to concisely state who you are and why you are calling so that you can talk about the goals of your conversation at a time where both people are available to chat.

Identify yourself after the “At the tone” signal to start talking. State your name and number right out of the gate with a, “Hello, this is [name], I’m calling from [your job] to [reason for this call]. My number is xxx-xxxx.” Then as you’re wrapping up, repeat your name and number once more for good measure.

As Tori Keith wrote for the women lawyer’s advocacy group Ms. JD, “A good rule of thumb is 40 seconds. Anything longer risks getting deleted or ignored. Repeat your name and number at the end of the message too, as sometimes a message will cut out or be hard to hear.”

Nowadays, smartphones make it easy to scan a voicemail by providing readymade transcripts of the call, so if you do not want your embarrassing “uhh” and “umms” to make the record, practice beforehand. Take advantage of the fact that you can write down notes of what you want to say. It is easy to get nervous when there is no one there to cut you off, so remember to not rush your name and number.

Speak slowly but not too slowly.

Mastering the art of relaying information over the phone will serve you well at any stage of your career or life. The key to understanding voicemail etiquette is being respectful of the other person’s time. You would not want to receive a long-winded, rushed voicemail, so take care not to send one.

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