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Breaking The Voice Mail Barrier

By C.J. Hayden

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Even if you never place a cold call, you still have to reach people by phone. That customer who was so interested last month never called you back, and now you must call her. You call once, twice, three times, but you can't get her in person. How can you manage to close a sale if all you ever get is voice mail?

Doing business in the age of voice mail can be extremely frustrating. While it is true that some people leave their voice mail on all the time, you can sometimes get through by calling off hours. Try calling before 8:30 or after 5:30. You may also find people at their desks during the lunch hour.

So should you keep calling or leave a message? Actually, you should do both. Assume that most people won't call you back, so just keep right on calling them.

Josiane Feigon, principal of the telesales training and coaching company, Telesmart Communications (www.tele-smart.com), suggests that you try pressing "0" or "0"# to transfer to the receptionist. That way you can verify that the person you are trying to reach is still in the same job position, and find out when they are expected to be in.

Whether you reach your prospects or not, never make them wrong for not returning your calls. Rather than saying, "I haven't heard from you," let them know you are eager to speak with them, and wanted to try again while you were in your office. Feigon recommends, "As a rule, try not to leave any more than three voice mail messages over a 10-day period of time and then lay off for a month."

Speaker and trainer Melinda Henning of Doing Business by Phone (www.unforgettablelearning.com) says that the way to deal with voice mail is to use it as an advertising medium. In other words, leave a voice mail commercial. Especially if you are cold calling, Melinda suggests that you compose a series of different commercials, each one revealing some new and interesting fact about your business, and

another reason for someone to speak with you.

Whenever you leave a message, include some incentive for the person you are calling to have a live conversation. "I would like to introduce myself" is not a reason for prospects to talk to you. Why should they care? Tell them what it is you think you can do for them in their own unique situation. And do it in 30 seconds — no one likes long voice mails from strangers, and the delete key is at their fingertips.

Look for some connection between you and the person you are calling that you could put in your message. A mutual acquaintance, membership in the same association, or having attended the same event are all worth mentioning. If you have seen them speak, or read about them in the news, compliment them on it. Be warm, friendly and upbeat, so your message is a pleasure to listen to.

If you have called, left messages, and still can't get through to the person you want, send an e-mail. Many people will quickly respond to e-mail because it is easy. If you can interest them in what you

have to offer (without revealing all the details), they may be willing to set up a phone appointment with you to find out more. When you don't have the person's e-mail address, try finding it on the company's web site or asking the receptionist.

Should you ever stop calling? That depends on the value of the potential sale. A \$1000 sale might only be worth two or three calls to you, but a \$10,000 sale would certainly pay for many more. Every salesperson has a story about a customer who finally said yes after the 17th phone call, so if it seems worth it, don't quit!

C.J. Hayden is the author of *Get Clients NOW!* Since 1992, C.J. has been teaching business owners and salespeople to make more money with less effort. She is a Master Certified Coach and leads workshops internationally. Read more of her articles at

NEW TECHNOLOGY ELIMINATES COLD-CALLING STRESS AND ELIMINATES VOICE MAIL AS

A SELLING OBSTACLE

By Mason Duchatschek

Salespeople hate to make cold calls and business owners hate to take them. Now there's a way to eliminate stress on both ends of the line. Until now, voice mail had been a barrier between salespeople and customers. It can now be an advantage for both, thanks to a new sales approach called Direct Voice Mail Marketing.

An electronic device attaches to a phone to make it possible for inexperienced sales assistants to deliver pre-recorded messages into voice mail boxes of prospective clients that sound like the salespeople made the calls themselves. When used correctly, customers' voice mail boxes offer chances to leave uninterrupted commercials for even the most hard-to-reach decision makers.

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This approach to selling eliminates a salesperson's exposure to rejection and expands the amount of contacts a salesperson can make in a day. Prospective clients can listen to the messages and decide if they are interested without being interrupted or pressured. Interested customers call back to request information or schedule appointments.

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