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Voice Mail Etiquette

By Richard Lowe

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I am a busy executive of a multi-billion dollar company. As such I am incredibly busy and must choose where focus my energy and efforts with great care. Thus, I am always looking for those things that steal time.

One of those time stealers is the phone. In fact, next to meetings and email, it is probably the worst time stealer of all. Phone tag is a complete waste of time, and I generally simply refuse to play the game at all.

Voice mails, like email messages, can be major time wasters. I know you've gotten at least once voice mail in your life that goes on and on, with the callers phone number mumbled at the end. You just wasted five or ten minutes!

So what I do is simple. Unless the voice mail message is from my boss or someone very important (like my wife), I will ignore it unless it follows most of the voice mail etiquette rules listed below.

Tell me who you are – I hate playing the guessing game. If you leave a message without leaving your name (first and last is best), then I'm not going to spend a lot of time trying to figure out who you are.

Leave contact information – Look, I'm pretty good at what I do but I don't have every phone number in the world memorized. In fact, believe it or not, I may not have your phone number even listed in my address book. Even if I do, you've given me another reason not to call you back – you've annoyed me by forcing me to have to search around for your number. This wastes time, and unless your call is important to me you are probably not going to get a return call.

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Be polite – Believe me, my day is hard enough without listening to a hostile voice message. You want to make I don't call you back (unless you are the boss or the boss's boss), then leave a very emotional message. You'd be amazed at how quickly I'll delete those that are hostile or somehow upsetting.

Tell me what you want – I'm highly unlikely to call you back if you call out of the blue and leave a voicemail like "this is Joe, call me". Unless I already know what you want (or suddenly develop telepathy) I am not going to return your call.

Be brief – Don't leave a fifteen minute message. I can guarantee you that unless you are my wife or a rich uncle leaving me a million dollars I will have erased it long before. If you've got something long winded to say then presumably you've done business with me before, so send me an email instead.

Give me the information in order – Tell me who you are first, then, if necessary, what company you work with. Now tell me your phone number, then tell me what you want. That's the best way to get me to return your call.

Tell me the phone number slowly – The best thing to do with a phone number is say it slowly. A second between each digit is best. This gives me time to write down the number. Also, don't mumble your phone number. Speak it clearly and precisely. It's also a good idea to repeat at the end of the message just to make sure I've got it.

Generally, as I said at the beginning of this article, I will not even attempt to return phone calls unless they follow these rules. And believe me, it does not take long to "train" regular callers – they want me to call them back.

Follow these suggestions and you will get a prompt call back with the answers or service that you need. This saves everyone time, which improves our productivity.

Richard Lowe Jr. is the webmaster of Internet Tips And Secrets at <http://www.internet-tips.net> – Visit our website any time to read over 1,000 complete FREE articles about how to improve your internet profits, enjoyment and knowledge.

Business Etiquette

By Neil Payne

Business etiquette is in essence about building relationships with people. In the business world, it is

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people that influence your success or failure. Etiquette, and in particular business etiquette, is simply a means of maximising your business potential.

If you feel comfortable around someone and vice versa, better communication and mutual trust will develop. This comfort zone is realised through presenting yourself effectively. Business etiquette helps you achieve this.

Business etiquette revolves around two things. Firstly, thoughtful consideration of the interests and feelings of others and secondly, minimising misunderstandings. Both are dependent upon self conduct. Business etiquette polishes this conduct.

Business etiquette varies from region to region and country to country. For the international business person, focusing too deeply on international business etiquette would leave no time for business. However, there are some key pillars upon which good business etiquette is built.

Behaviour

Your manners and attitude will speak volumes about you. They will point to your inner character. If you come across selfish, undisciplined or uncouth your relationship is unlikely to prosper. Appropriate business etiquette promotes positive traits.

Honesty

A reputation for delivering what you say will deliver goes a long way in the business world. Remember, a reputation for integrity is slowly gained but quickly lost. Understanding a particular country's business etiquette provides a framework in which you can work without fear of crossing boundaries in terms of agreements, promises and contracts.

Character

Your character refers to what you as an individual bring to the business table. Proper business etiquette allows you to exhibit your positive qualities. For example, knowing when to be passionate and not emotional or self-confident without being arrogant. Just through learning another's business etiquette you demonstrate an open-mindedness which will earn respect.

Sensitivity

Sensitivity and consideration underlie all good business etiquette. Being prepared for foreign ways and methods and responding thoughtfully is achieved through experience and business etiquette know-how. By avoiding misunderstandings and misinterpretations through business etiquette you lay

foundations for a strong business relationship.

Diplomacy

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Avoiding thoughtless words and actions protects you from negative consequences. Impulse often leads a business person astray. Business etiquette encourages the careful thought of the interests of others and choosing acceptable forms of expression.

Appearance

Dressing appropriately, standing and sitting in the right place at the right time, good posture and looking physically presentable are all elements in making a good impression. Business etiquette teaches you how to suitably present yourself and what to avoid.

Analysing, understanding and implementing the above will help you recognise what business etiquette is and how it should be employed within the business world.

For the international business person business, etiquette acts as a key. It locks the doors of poor communication and misunderstandings and opens doors to successful business relationships.

Neil Payne is Director of

Business Etiquette

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