

Voice Mail, E-Mail: Friend or Foe?

In 1982, a common question in our seminars was, “Tom, how do I get around the gatekeeper so I can talk to the decision maker?” In 2015, a common question in our seminars is, “Tom, how do I get around voice mail so I can talk to the decision maker?” It is the same problem, thirty years later. The difference is that technology has added another dimension: e-mail.

I like e-mail. I like voice mail. I prefer both to a live assistant who may or may not get the message correct. The advantage of both mediums is that you can communicate precisely what you want to say exactly the way you want to say it. Where is the downside? Why would either of these be a foe? I see a friend, a technology ally.

Those who dislike either or both have a messaging problem. They are not putting their best stuff to words. To make the most of voice mail and e-mail, practice the 3 P’s of messaging: Personalize the message; have a purpose; and make your communication a priority.

Personalizing means that your message (e-mail or voice mail) must read and sound like it was created solely for this person. Anything that smells of bulk e-mail or robo calls will get dumped quickly and should be. Reading my emails is one of the quickest things I do every day. Why? The most used key on my keyboard is the delete button. If I don’t know the sender and the subject line is not personalized, I delete it. Rarely do I miss anything important. If it is not written for me or recorded for me, I ignore it.

Having a purpose means you know what you are trying to accomplish. What do you want to happen as a result of your message? Get an appointment? Sell a product? WRONG! Your purpose is to have the other person respond to your communication. Period. You can sell the appointment or the product when you have the conversation. For now, go for a response.

Making your communication a priority means that it must be important and compelling for the customer. Addressing a specific and pressing need that is relevant to this customer is more compelling than telling the customer that you want to discuss your new product. In persuasion, it is the need first then the pitch.

If you dislike leaving a voice mail or feel rejected when someone fails to respond to your e-mail, check your messaging. If you were the customer, would you respond to it?

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