

VOICEMAIL PLAYBOOK

Making outbound calls is a tough gig. On a good day, you may speak with 10% of prospects that you call, most of whom scurry off the phone before you even finish introducing yourself. The reality is that most calls go to voicemail, and the vast majority of those voicemails are never returned.

So should you even leave a voicemail? Yes. It may seem like a fruitless effort, but voicemails should be a key component of your sales process.

WHY SHOULD YOU LEAVE A VOICEMAIL?

1 INCREASE YOUR CONVERSION RATE

Assuming you are compensated on your production, you'll make more money if you leave voicemails. If you make 100 dials and leave 75 voicemails a week, you'll have left approximately 3,750 voicemails by the end of the year.

According to Salesforce, the call-back rate for the first voicemail is approximately 10%. The second voicemail yields a call-back approximately 20% of the time. Even if you assume a conservative call-back rate of 5% for 3,750 voicemails, you'll receive about 190 call-backs, which you can then use to hit quota.

If you don't leave a voicemail, your call-back rate is guaranteed to be 0%.



2 IT'S EFFICIENT

As discussed below, it should only take 30-60 seconds to complete the entire voicemail process (including listening to their voicemail prompt). If you leave 75 voicemails a week, your commitment to leaving voicemails only costs you about 1-1.5 hours. Voicemail automation could reduce the commitment time even further.

4 DON'T MAKE ASSUMPTIONS

The fact that you rarely check your voicemails and never return them is irrelevant. You aren't leaving a voicemail for yourself. You're most likely calling someone who you don't know very well, if at all. They could very well be exactly the type of person who checks and returns voicemails. This especially varies by generation.

3 DON'T OPT THEM OUT

For the majority of reps making outbound calls, the goal is to fill the top of the sales funnel and to advance the ball to the next stage of the sales process. Callers who don't leave a voicemail are ignoring a simple, easy tool in their toolkit and effectively opting the prospect out of the sales funnel.

5 ATTACH AN IDENTITY

It's a reality that most people screen their calls. Their phone rings, they see an unknown number, and they likely decide not to answer. If you don't leave a voicemail, the only rational conclusion is that this mysterious phone number was spam or otherwise unimportant. You reinforce this association if you continue to make follow-up calls without leaving a message, further degrading your chances of connecting with the prospect.

HOW TO LEAVE AN EFFECTIVE VOICEMAIL

You've probably received training on how to make effective outbound calls. Perhaps you even received that training from Applied Concepts. However, considering that 90% of calls go to voicemail, you need to have a well thought-out plan to leave effective voicemails, otherwise you're ignoring the lion's share of outbound sales. Here are some best practices.

1 REMEMBER THE GOAL

The goal is to get the prospect to call you back or, at least, leave a positive brand impression. The goal is not to deliver a pitch over the phone. When the prospect listens to your voicemail, they are not deciding whether to buy from you. They are deciding whether or not to call you back! Rolling out your pitch in the voicemail is by far the most common mistake and almost certainly sends a signal that the prospect can stop listening.

2 EASY TO TRANSCRIBE

Most cell phones transcribe voicemails, and many consumers will read rather than listen to your voicemail. Keep this in mind as you leave your voicemail. Use very clear language, avoid filler words, don't mumble, insert pauses, avoid jargon, and speak slowly.

3 20-30 SECONDS IN LENGTH

The sweet spot for a sales voicemail is 20-30 seconds. A voicemail in this time frame sparks curiosity without demanding too much time.

4 USE NAMES

Most sales people know that use of your prospect's name is correlated with better outcomes. This translates very well to voicemails.

5 INTRODUCE URGENCY

Don't shoot yourself in the foot by saying things like "just wanted to check-in" or "call me back whenever you get a moment." Put yourself on their to-do list by introducing an element of urgency.

6 SLOW AND STEADY

People have a tendency to mumble and fly-through their phone number and name because they have it memorized. This is perhaps the most important information. So say it slowly and steadily. This will also help with the transcription.



7 HAVE A PLAN AND PRACTICE IT

Have a plan (like this one), keep it handy, and practice executing that plan. This means creating a routine that offers ample opportunity for repetition and review.

8 SMILING THROUGH THE PHONE

We get it, leaving a voicemail is awkward. It feels like you're talking into a black box. But if you feel awkward, that feeling will be reflected in your tone and energy on the voicemail. Smile, and be engaged.

9 LEAVE MULTIPLE VOICEMAILS

We're not recommending bombarding prospects with pointless outreach, but you can leave 3, 4 or 5 voicemails provided that you tell a coherent story that is actually designed to pique interest and deliver unique value on each call. This will significantly increase your call-back rate.

Call Back Rates by Attempt:



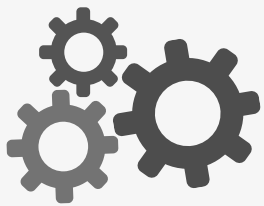
Source: RingLead; Salesforce

10 IT'S NOT A SPOKEN EMAIL

Don't treat voicemails as a "spoken email". They're different. Voicemails include tone, energy, etc. in ways that emails never could. In voicemails, you have the opportunity to get very specific and very personal in a way that you are unlikely to do in an email (which tend to be more generic, template-driven).

ADVANCED CONSIDERATIONS

This playbook is not advocating for a one-size fits all approach. Each customer's situation is a bit different. Each sales person has a slightly different approach and mentality. And sales processes can vary widely. Below are some advanced considerations to keep in mind as you develop your own voicemail approach.



5 MORE TIPS

1

COORDINATED APPROACH

A sophisticated sales process requires coordination of multiple sales channel. For example, there's evidence that a voicemail that is followed by an email or text message has a significantly higher conversion rate. What works best for you will vary based on your situation, but you should try out multiple methods and measure the results objectively using A/B tests.

2

INCORPORATE YOUR PROCESS

Based on your coordinated approach, consider using your voicemail as a way to keep the conversation going by letting them know that you'll follow-up your voicemail with an email/text. This gives your customer two ways to respond: call you back or respond to your email/text.

3

TIMING: END OF THE DAY

Voicemail callback rates usually go up as the day progresses and your prospects' day winds-down. So schedule your outbound phone activity toward the end of the day (accounting for your prospect's time zone). Avoid leaving voicemails when people are most likely to be busy, such as Monday mornings and weekend afternoons.

4

TWO VOICEMAILS (IN A ROW!)

Consider leaving two voicemails in a row. The first voicemail should be a "normal" voicemail. The moment you hang up, call back and leave a second voicemail that quickly (10 seconds or less) conveys some information you neglected to mention in your first voicemail. "Hey John, I forgot to mention that we can actually offer 0% financing on that too. Give me a call back at 407-333-7300."

5

BUYING JOURNEY

Where the customer is in their buying journey matters. A prospect with whom you've had multiple interactions should be handled with greater care and specificity. For example, this is a great time to use very tailored calls-to-action, like "Next time we talk, you have to tell me more about the trip to London you just go back from" -or- "You said something earlier about X, and I did some research on that topic that I'd like to discuss with you."

Compare this to a prospects who merely made an internet inquiry. In this circumstance, you have a lot less information to go on, and your voicemails should be more "down the middle".

ADVANCED WORD TRACKS

"Last time we spoke, you were concerned about X. I sent you an article about X via email and was calling to hear your thoughts."

This word track builds rapport and delivers actionable value to the customer. Used for actively engaged prospects.

"We ran out of time the last time you were in to talk to me, but I'd love to continue the conversation on [date]."

Useful for customers you haven't heard from in a while that directly asks for a follow-up appointment.

"I've been trying like crazy to get in touch with you by the end of the week before [deal] expires. Call me back quickly please at [number]."

Add in a bit of urgency, but only do so if there is actually real urgency to back it up with.

"Hi Jim. It's John at [phone number]. Again, I'm at [phone number]. Give me a call back."

A mysterious voicemail can leave the prospect with a sense of urgency or a fear of loss. By contrast, an voicemail that provides all of the key information arms your prospect with enough information to help them decide whether they need to call you back or not. Once they have the information, do they really need to call you back?



HOW CAN WE HELP?

Since 1983, Applied Concepts has been empowering sales reps to more effectively use the phones as a sales channel by providing training, data, accountability, and expert insights to drive lead conversion and sales.

Let us help you and your team step their game up using our **Voicemail Scripts** and **Voicemail Coaching**.

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