



Phone, Email & Business Etiquette

Voice Mail Etiquette

Voice mail is this decade's answering machine. It is an efficient way to communicate valuable information. Statistics show that only 70% of phone calls are ever completed on the first try, therefore voice mail is an important communication tool. Here are eight tips to ensure that your voice mail messages are effective and do not create professional problems for you.

- Keep messages short and to the point.
- Never leave a harsh or negative message on a voice mail. This can lead to major problems. Unlike a conversation the receiver can redirect it to other people.
- Don't record anything that can be misinterpreted or is confidential.
- If you find yourself reading a prepared memo or announcement over the phone stop. It is better to best send the memo out.
- Always be prepared to leave a message. Statistics show that 70% of the time the individual you wish to speak with will not be available.
- Avoid flippant messages, even in jest.
- Remember to check your voice mail at least twice a day, especially if you receive time sensitive messages.
- Don't leave messages from noisy restaurants etc..., background noise can be heard clearly.

Encourage people to leave detailed messages. Voice mail is more effective if callers leave detailed messages.

Tell people who call you frequently that they can press # on their key pad to bypass your greeting and bring them right to the tone to leave you a message.

Instruct people who call you to press 1 at the end of their messages, so they can review the message before sending.

Change your greeting often. Update greetings to reflect your schedule. Callers should be able to determine an expected call back time frame by the greeting they hear!

Email Etiquette

DELETE THAT E-MAIL-You have several choices: scan headers and delete everything you don't need to know or act upon materially. It's ok to ignore an email the same way you might a letter or phone message. And when you're sending messages, remember that they should be short and informal, and that they can't replace a phone call.

BREAK FREE FROM ATTACHMENTS-An enormous amount of time and energy is wasted in the world by people struggling with incompatible formats, files that never arrived, and attachments that got garbled or stripped off the message. On the receiving end, of course, exercise extreme care in opening files from strangers, to avoid problems like the Melissa virus.

COUNT TO 10. THEN SEND-Don't send email when you're tired or furious. Email can easily be angry, hurtful or critical, and it takes a lot of time to undo the damage. Treat mail like letters and phone calls; wait for a calmer moment to respond.

THERE'S NOTHING LIKE THE REAL THING-Never substitute email for a necessary face-to-face meeting-----especially when it comes to reprimanding, rewarding, or firing someone. Also remember that misdirected messages can get messy, especially when they are of a personal nature.

A STITCH IN TIME-Take advantage of the timesaving bells and whistles your email program offers. Keep an up-to-date address book and never delete names and addresses. You never know when someone will come back into your digital life.

BREAK THE CHAIN-Chain email is very tacky. These beasts with monstrous headers and massive footers should be squelched at all costs.

RUMOR, GOSSIP AND HERESAY-Don't pass on rumors or innuendo about real people. This could come back to haunt you. Email can be easily forwarded to the wrong person, or worse, to the subject of your non-affection. Not only does email have an uncanny ability of being resurrected – just ask Bill Gates – it can also be used against you in a court of law.

DO UNTO OTHERS-Flaming – sending an abusive or insulting email – is usually a mistake. Would you say it in person? If not, don't send it.

PERSONAL BANDWIDTH-Remember the hierarchy when it comes to communications. First there are face-to-face meetings, then phone calls, then voice mail, and then email. Face-to-face meetings have the most impact and email has the narrowest communications bandwidth.

NO ONE IS PERFECT-If it absolutely must be perfect, then don't email it. Email can be the Bermuda Triangle of writing. Punctuation, spelling and grammar get mysteriously lost. If your message must be error-free, it should be sent by another medium. If you insist on sending it via email, print it out and go over it line by line for errors.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS COUNT

The First 12 Words you speak should include some form of thanks if appropriate. When meeting someone for the first time, express your gratitude. Examples: Thank you for scheduling this meeting (or) It is a pleasure meeting you (or) I appreciate the time you have taken to arrange for us to meet.

The First 12 Steps you take should be those of confidence. Whether you're walking from the parking lot to an office building or down a hall corridor, walk with a purpose. People who walk 10% faster than they normally do are perceived as getting more done. So quicken your pace!

The First 12 Inches from you head down should feature impeccable grooming. Your hair, collar, tie/scarf and other accessories should be a reflection of the quality person you are.

The Last 12 inches from the floor to mid-calf should be very well-maintained. That includes shoes that are polished and look like new, even if they're not. It also means stockings that blend with your outfit, rather than detract from it. As George Frazier, columnist for THE BOSTON GLOBE puts it, Want to know if a person is well-dressed? Look down.

Business Etiquette IF YOU DON'T HAVE IT, GET IT

Employers have revealed the following professional attributes as most widely sought after by decision makers: A sense of self-worth, if you don't believe in yourself, how can your employer expect you to do a good job in representing a company? Give yourself credit for your strengths and work on your weaknesses?

The ability to communicate. Be convincing, be eloquent in your speech and be a good communicator. Asking questions and listening to the person answering them is an important part of communication.

Speaking skills. One of the greatest fears of people is speaking in front of a group. When speaking or making a presentation to groups of 30 or 300, be prepared, be confident and be yourself!

Writing skills. Whether you are speaking to someone or corresponding with the person the first 12 words you use should include a form of thanks. Give your writing style a conversational tone. Limit sentences to 10-12 words. Your cover letter and resume should be held to one page.

Giggling. Many people laugh to fill silent moments, rather than merely pausing. This is a distracting and unprofessional habit.

Hand gestures. Your hands should be used to enhance what you are saying rather than to detract from what is being said. Tests have shown that hands above-board (visible) rather than in pocket project a more positive image. The only legitimate form of touch in business is the handshake. A pat, nudge or touch of the arm can be perceived as being too friendly.

Throat clearing. To fill a silence, many individuals clear their throats rather than swallowing. Do you?