

Title:

Got Voice Mail?

Word Count:

448

Summary:

Use voice mail appropriately and it can be an incredible asset for your business. Use it the wrong way and it will drive your customers away.

Keywords:

business,voice

mail,customers,clients,telephones,communicating,communication,greeting

Article Body:

"There's not anybody who really cares about using voice messaging the way I envisioned it." According to Gordon Matthews, the inventor of voice mail, he never anticipated that his automated message system would be used to confuse and frustrate business callers. He didn't foresee how many ways businesses could devise to misuse his system.

When asked what aggravates them most about modern phone communication the majority of people will say that it is voice mail. Pressed for details, they explain that it is the automated answering process that companies use to screen and direct calls that bugs them, not the basic messaging-taking function.

Companies are spending large sums of money to antagonize their customers and it only seems to get worse. When a person needs help with a problem and can't reach another human, the situation deteriorates rapidly. Using the numbers on your touch tone pad is fine when you want to verify your bank balance, pay a bill or have a dry newspaper delivered; but when your pipes are backing up, your new computer just crashed, or a tree just fell on your brand new SUV, call processing may not be the answer.

There are advantages to an automated system. It saves money in salaries and benefits. It prevents old-fashioned phone tag by allowing people to leave detailed messages in their own voice with clear and correct information. Voice mail crosses all time zones so people can leave and retrieve messages at their convenience.

The disadvantages are that people can hide behind voice mail, often the prompts

are confusing, working through the menu can be more time-consuming than speaking to a "live" person, and some people just don't like talking to machines.

If your company uses an automated system to process calls make sure it provides the best customer service by following these suggestions:

1. Keep your greeting short and sweet. (No one cares that your menu options have changed. They only want to know what options they have now.)
2. List your menu options according to popular usage.
3. Tell callers how to reach another human early in the process.
4. Think twice before using voice mail for customer service issues.
5. Survey your customers from time to time to see how they feel about your voice mail system.
6. Try calling your own system occasionally and find out first hand what your customers are experiencing.

Voice mail can be either an incredible asset to your business or an incredible pain for your customers. Don't force innocent people to spend their valuable time in your voice mail jail.

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