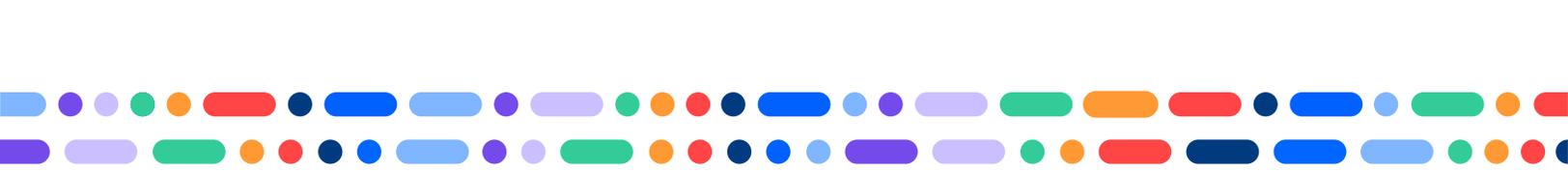


EVERY WORD COUNTS

What To Avoid When Leaving Sales Voicemails





Introduction

Sales reps spend an average of 25 hours a month, 15% of their total selling time, leaving voicemails.

With pickup rates hovering around 13%, the majority of sales calls go to voicemail, and sales best practices suggest that salespeople should always leave voicemails.

Regardless if sales reps are calling leads, prospects or customers, [these messages need to be concise and offer clear value to the recipient.](#) The time to leave a voicemail is limited – this means salespeople need to select their words carefully. It's equally as important to know which words to omit when crafting an effective voice message. Because every word impacts the result. can help close the quarter.

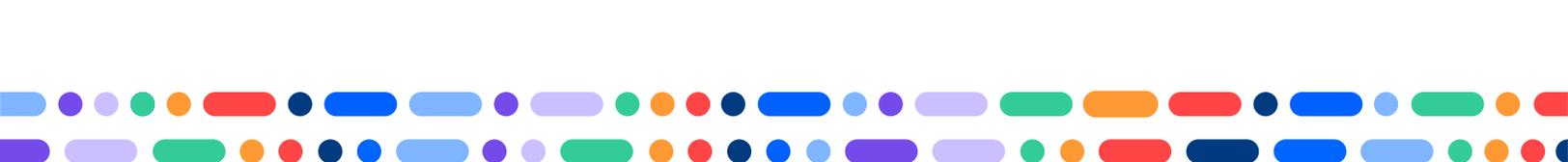
Not only designed to generate a return call or [email](#), business voicemails are part of the company brand message and experience. In many cases they are the first brand experience a prospect will have.

Like it or not, recipients will make judgements about the company's product or service based on voicemail, so it is important to design them to build trust and demonstrate value.

To that end, it is worth embracing best practices, including avoiding certain words when leaving voicemails.

Of course, not all voicemails are the same. The strategy for the first voicemail with a cold prospect will most likely be different than one left for someone you know. The best practices we list below represent risks; with a cold prospect, we should avoid them, with someone we know, we should consider who we are calling before taking the risks. With each interaction, salespeople learn about preferences and their messaging will adapt.

Check out the examples of what words not to use to improve the quality of your voice messages.



Be Mindful of What is Considered Unprofessional or Overly Casual

HEY! Avoid casual language in the initial voicemail. That doesn't mean don't be friendly. Present yourself in a friendly tone of voice, and speak with confidence. But starting a message with something as simple as "Hey (prospect name)" sets the tone for the rest of the message, and risks some people finding this unprofessional or disrespectful. Maybe your prospect prefers casual language, but you don't know that early on, and the risk of offending them is not worth it.

If you aren't saying something positive, mentioning a competitor's name will come across as unprofessional. Odds are, you won't have anything positive to say about a competitor, so it is best to avoid referencing them in a voicemail at all. Focus on the value you can offer, not what's wrong with the competing solution. Plus, if the prospect isn't aware of the other brand, you could create [unnecessary competition](#) for yourself.

Ultimately, your goal should always be to achieve the level of trusted advisor. The Bistriz & Read book titled *Selling to the C-Suite* highlights a few characteristics of trusted advisors, including "Trusted advisors determine what their [prospects] want to hear. They know what these people want to hear because they are consistently better prepared and better informed than their rivals."

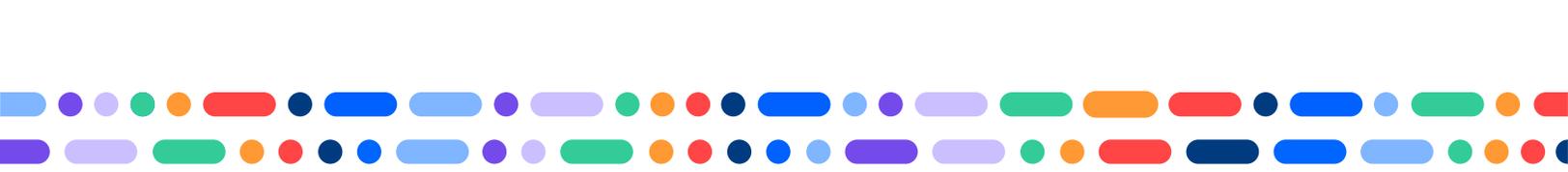
On a cold voicemail, the salesperson does not know what level of professionalism the prospect expects, so it is best to take the path of least risk.

[Sound professional, sound eloquent, and get to the point.](#)

Avoid Filler or Indecisive Wording

Conversations are nuanced, complex experiences. Voicemails are no different. In a [recent Quotable podcast](#), Howard Brown points out that seasoned generations tend to view the word "like" negatively, while millennials and younger perceive it as a signal term that helps them relate to one another.

That said, filler words such as just, um, and like have a good chance of making reps sound unsure and lacking confidence. Indecisive words such as might, hopefully, actually, kind of, and perhaps weaken the message, reduce clarity, and ultimately waste the precious limited time of a voicemail. Removing these words will create a more definitive message with more impact.



Leave The Door Open to the Next Interaction

Saying “bye” or “goodbye” at the end of a voice message closes the door on communication. Instead, close the message with an invitation to call back or to take some action. Examples are speak to you later, talk soon, talk to you next time, check out our new report on X and join our upcoming webinar on Tuesday. This subtle cue suggests that the interaction is just beginning, and there will be a next time.

Don't Be Vague or Confusing

Be judicious with your use of jargon or buzzwords. If you are going to use these terms, be confident that your intended listener will understand them. The best policy is to always use clear, easy-to-understand verbiage, and understand your prospect. The goal should be to provide value by educating the prospect. So speak a language they'll understand, that won't confuse them.

This is a balancing act, because in order to demonstrate value, it is important to come across as knowledgeable, but using too much jargon can alienate someone who doesn't understand or finds jargon annoying.

Avoid Permission Words

Permission words are terms and phrases that imply you have no right to be asking for what you are asking for. These are under-recognized rhetorical plays that flow through our everyday use of language. For example, consider the word just. When used in a sentence such as, “I just wanted

to ask you...” it is a filler word that weakens your message and diminishes its value. It projects a meek or bashful demeanor, which affects your confidence and undermines the value of the message.

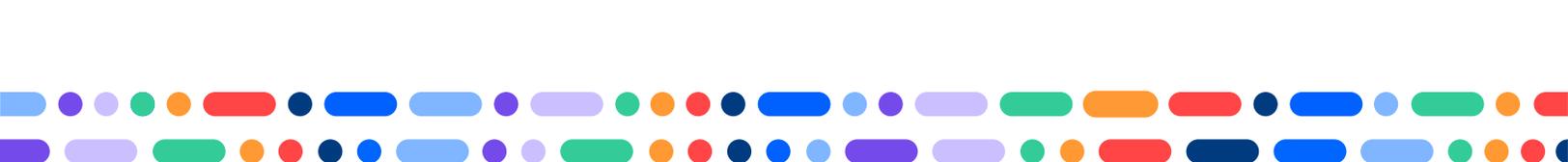
Another permission phrase is “Can I...” “Can we...” that often gets paired with just. “Can I just get a few minutes of your time?” This is another example of non-definitive, permission language that presupposes that the speaker should not be “in the room” with whoever the voicemail is for.

Don't Shame The Recipient

Saying, “Sorry if I've disturbed you” or “I know you're busy” indicates you think you're bothering the prospect and devalues your message. It makes you sound defensive by presenting yourself as an intrusion. And it comes across as being insecure in the value of what's you're offering.

Shaming prospects and customers by reminding them of previous messages is ineffective, annoying and doesn't encourage a response. This reminds the prospect that they [ignored previous voicemail\(s\)](#), so why shouldn't they ignore this one.

Voicemail is one of the most important tools in your [toolbox](#). As a rep there is not a single day that will go by where won't leave a voice message. When you have to leave one, use it to your advantage. The right voicemail can actually help you make a sale, build a relationship, or retain a customer.



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