

# Create a Professional Image with an Effective Voice Mail Greeting

by Mike Mitchell

Creating a proper voice mail greeting may seem like a small detail, but it tells your callers a lot about you. Perception is very important in establishing rapport and maintaining relationships. When you record an informative voice mail greeting and use call forwarding properly, your callers will perceive that you are considerate of their time, conscientious in your responsibilities, and care about your professional image.

## Your vocal presentation

It's always a challenge to provide just the right amount of relevant information within a brief voice mail greeting. I've heard too many talkative greetings that gave irrelevant information which lasted over 60 seconds. Many more greetings use the lazy factory default "record at the tone" greeting. A good guideline is to keep your greeting between 5 - 15 seconds.

Speed of delivery and diction are also important. Speaking too fast, poor pronunciation, and awkward word choices can cause misunderstanding and confusion for the caller. Speaking too slowly can also frustrate your caller.

Achieving the right balance of the following elements will create an effective voice mail greeting.

## Create a professional and informative greeting:

- Select the right words
- Use inflection in your voice
- Give only relevant information to your callers
- Speak in a cheerful and uplifting manner

## When you are out of the office or on vacation, your greeting should inform callers:

- You are out of the office, not what you are doing
- The date that you will return to your office (or the hour if you're away only briefly)
- When you will return caller's message (if possible)
- A contact for urgent requests (say the name and telephone number twice)

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## **Consider the type of call forwarding you use. Forward when:**

- Your telephone is busy (call immediately goes to voice mail)
- You don't answer (call rings three times then goes to voice mail)
- You don't want to be disturbed (call immediately goes to voice mail)
- You are out of the office for any reason or even just away from your desk (call goes immediately to voice mail)

## **Advantages of a professional voice mail greeting and appropriate call forwarding:**

- Decreases the duration of a call showing consideration for your callers
- Reduces frustration for your callers
- Provides useful information to your callers
- Creates a professional image for you and your company

There is no better way of conveying a professional and positive image than by using a sincere personal touch for your voice mail greeting.

-Mike