

How to Leave Effective Voice Mail Messages

Want to make the most of the ubiquitous voice mail universe? Put the following tips into practice to maximize the effectiveness of the messages you leave.

- 1.** Make your message last 40–50 seconds. Too short, and it may seem insignificant. Too long, and you may rile the other party.
- 2.** Say your name and your organization or where you're calling from, and then slowly leave your phone number followed by a short message.
- 3.** Pretend you're writing your phone number in the air as you recite it. Too many callers speak much too fast, which forces recipients to replay the message repeatedly.
- 4.** Speak louder than usual, enunciating as you

speak. Your recipient may retrieve your message in an airport or other noisy place.

- 5.** Let the other party know if your call doesn't require a return message.
- 6.** Be generous when offering times and dates when you can be reached.
- 7.** Be friendly, engaging, and personable. You'll stand out like few other callers that day.
- 8.** If you receive no reply after five working days, leave a quick repeat message, saying, "I'm calling to follow up the message I left on Tuesday."

—Submitted by Jeff Davidson, a professional speaker from Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and author of *Breathing Space: Living and Working at a Comfortable Pace in a Sped-up Society*. E-mail: jeff@breathingspace.com ▶