

Editor's Note: It's important to stay on top of on-going communications with prospects without becoming a nuisance. How frequently to initiate contact; whether to make contact via phone, e-mail or postal mail; whether or not to leave a voicemail on unanswered calls – your actions reflect your professionalism and make an impression, one way or the other. There's more than one right answer. In this article, author Kendra Lee provides some suggestions for consideration. JLM

No Voicemail = A Missed Opportunity

By Kendra Lee

Leave a voicemail? Don't leave a voicemail? This is a question that sellers are passionate about. Many suggest not, but isn't that a missed opportunity?

I always leave a message because how else will they know that you want to speak with them? In today's world where it's acceptable to screen calls, you may never reach your prospect if you don't. Add to it that a message allows a prospect to hear your interest in talking with them and your professionalism.

So why not do it? Take advantage of the 40 seconds or so to grab attention, leave a positive impression, and start relationship building. Here are a few tips to increase your success rates.

- **Have an idea to go with the triggering event.**

The core of your message should be about a triggering event or business issue they're most likely grappling with. Don't talk about your offerings or the latest special deal. Focus on their issue and mention that you have some thoughts or an idea about how to address it based on work you've done with similar companies. It's the opportunity to get a new idea that'll make them want to speak with you.

- **Request a specific time.**

Don't stop with a request to call you. You'll end up playing phone tag, and they probably won't take the time to type in your email address even if you leave it. Instead, make it easy to connect by requesting a specific date and time to talk.

It sounds something like this: "I wanted to schedule 15 minutes to discuss my idea with you. By chance are you open Thursday at 2:30? Let me know. My phone number is 303-773-1285 or email me at klee@klagroup.com. I look forward to our discussion!"

- **Do it again via email.**

Clearly you aren't expecting a response. Picking up the phone during a busy day is hard. If you have your prospect's email address, promise to send an email "in case that's an easier way for you to respond." Then send an email that says the same thing as your voicemail, including the time to talk. Don't attach anything or include any additional links beyond what you have in your signature. Keep it concise and to-the-point.

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- **If you don't get a response...**
Call Thursday at 2:30, further demonstrating your professionalism and interest in talking with the prospect. Leave a voicemail that you'd promised to call and reiterating what you wanted to talk about. Suggest a new time to talk and do it all again.
- **Switch it up.**
In today's environment it can take 9 times to get a return call, so don't get discouraged. After the third call approach the gatekeeper to schedule a time scheduled on the prospect's calendar. Use your value proposition and let his or her assistant know you just wanted to share your idea.

The secret to success with this approach is to have real ideas to share about how to help your prospect address the business issue you mentioned. When you do that, your prospects are glad they took your call. They appreciate the value you provided. If all you do is spew on about your offerings, you didn't meet the commitment you made in your voicemail – and you'll never get a second chance.

About the Author

Kendra Lee is author of Selling Against the Goal and president of KLA Group. Specializing in the IT industry, KLA Group helps companies rapidly penetrate new markets, break into new accounts and shorten time to revenue with new products in the Small & Midmarket Business (SMB) segment. Ms. Lee is a frequent speaker at national sales meetings and association events. For more information, contact the company at +1 303.741.6636 or klee@klagroup.com or visit <http://www.klagroup.com>.

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