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\$MSTAR 10:46 AM (EST)

	3,160
	3,151
	3,143
	3,134
	3,125

20 Minute Updates

Chg	%Chg	Value
Morningstar	-34	-1.1
		3,126

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VOL. 126 | NO. 229 | Wednesday, November 23, 2011

Guerrilla Sales & Marketing

Breaking Through The Voice Mail Barrier

By Lori Turner-Wilson

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Lori Turner-Wilson

Thirty years ago, prior to caller ID and voice mail, we actually answered our phone to find out who was on the other end. Eek. Gasp. The horror.

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While those days are long behind us, savvy sales reps view caller ID and voice mail as vital selling tools rather than agonizingly restrictive systems used to prevent sales people from ever reaching a live prospect.

Consider these strategies for winning the voice mail battle.

A live first connection is always ideal. Call just before or after office hours, or over the lunch hour, when busy professionals are often in the office and not yet in meetings. Befriend the gatekeeper to learn the best time to reach your prospect. If you're unable to successfully connect on multiple occasions, it's time to prepare to leave a voice mail.

Less is more when it comes to content – keep your message between eight and 14 seconds. That doesn't allow for anything less than a concise, well-crafted message. So don't wing it. Script it and then leave the message in your own voice mailbox. Listen to it. Would you return your call?

To leave a strong impression, speak slowly with confidence and authority. Fast talkers come across as unsure and absent influence. Avoid passive phrases such as "I'm just calling to ..."

Call the prospect by his first name only for a more personal message. Provide a meaningful reason your prospect can benefit from talking with you. "We have a mutual friend, Bob, who suggested we connect. We've put some creative strategies in place at his operation, which are driving significant revenue. Let's talk to see if we can do the same for you."

Avoid saying too much. Your objective is simply to pique your prospect's interest enough to take your call. Say too much and you risk giving him a reason not to meet with you.

Increasingly challenged to get more done, successful business people must prioritize the calls they'll return. So when they don't call you back, don't take it personally. Absent a prior relationship, assume they won't and manage accordingly.

Know your message is the first in a multi-pronged strategy to land a first meeting. If you have a strong case study outlining how you've helped similar companies, mention in your message that you'll be sending it for review prior to your next call. Then give a specific time window in which you'll call back.

Know before you call what your next steps will be. To send a message that you're persistent but not too aggressive, consider leaving three messages with varying content spaced three business days apart supplemented with email or direct mail.

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MORTGAGES	101	304	21,386
FORECLOSURE NOTICES	0	70	9,038
BUILDING PERMITS	0	289	36,440
BANKRUPTCIES	67	239	17,417
BUSINESS LICENSES	17	51	5,455
UTILITY CONNECTIONS	79	337	25,613
MARRIAGE LICENSES	0	41	5,371

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Morningstar	-83	-1.8	4,675
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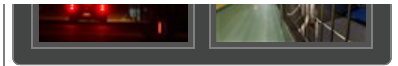
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Voice mail doesn't have to be a dead end. Demonstrate you have value to offer, and you'll ultimately break through the voice mail barrier.

Lori Turner-Wilson is an award-winning columnist and managing partner of RedRover Sales & Marketing, www.redrovercompany.com. You can follow RedRover on Twitter (@redrovercompany and @loriturner) and Facebook (facebook.com/redrovercompany).



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