

Five Frustrating Voice Mail Phrases

Eliminate these useless expressions.

BY NANCY FRIEDMAN

Normally, I bet my audiences the cash that's in their wallet that they have one or more of these phrases on their cell or office phone at that moment. I've never had to pay! When was the last time you checked your own voice mail message? It's probably been a while. Well, now's the time to double check it. Because I'm betting you have one or more of the frustrating phrases on your voice mail. I don't. If you don't, congratulations! Here they are:

1. Hi, I'm not here right now.

Duh? Well, that's a hot lot of news. What a boring, semi useless statement. Live a little. Let your callers know where you ARE—not where you're not. Tell them, "I AM in the office all this week" OR "I'm in a sales meeting till 3 pm." Let them know if you do or don't check messages. Let them know when you will be back. No one is terribly interested where you're NOT. They are interested in where you ARE.

2. Your call is very important to me.

OMG. Seriously? A big time waster. The caller is thinking, "Well, if I'm so darn important, where the heck are you?" And then again, think about it. Maybe the call isn't so important to you. You don't need this phrase. Semi-useless.

3. I'm sorry I missed your call.

How dull. How average. Of course you're sorry you missed the call. (Although, there may be some calls you're not so sorry to have missed.) It's OK to leave this phrase

out! It's a given. Use the time and space for something more valuable. Like where you are and when you will return. Or, who they can call for more information.

4. I'll call you back as soon as possible.

Well, what's wrong with that? Everyone has it. Not everyone. Not me. Not my husband. It's not interesting and not fun. Mainly because your "as soon as possible" and my "as soon as possible" may not be, and probably are not, the same. The truth is most people aren't returning their phone calls in a timely fashion (if at all). If you're telling your callers you'll call them back, make sure you do. Don't wanna return the call? Have it returned on your behalf. Not returning a phone call is like not using your turn signal when changing lanes. RUDE! Be classy. Don't be a 'no show.'

5. No escape.

Offer the caller another name or extension. The main point here is to offer an alternative when you're not available. Plus, you've bought back some time to say something more interesting or helpful to the caller. Well, Ms. Smarty Pants, what should be on my voice mail? Good question.

My first thought is: When is the last time you actually called your own cell phone, and heard what your callers are hearing?

When I ask that question in our programs very, very few have called themselves. Do that before you read on.

If you used any of the 5 Frustrating Cell Phone Phrases—shame on you.

Well, now what? Bottom line, use your imagination. Don't worry..... not too much is needed.

Your voice mail message simply needs to be .. well.. that's right, simple.

Here's mine: *Hi, It's Nancy—Thanks for calling. Go ahead and leave your name and number and I will return the call. If you need the office, it's in St. Louis 314-291-1012. Thanks. Make it a great day. Yup—that's it. (Oh and I smile while talking)*

I get my messages or they call the office. One and done.

Don't overthink it. Don't put the sequel to *Gone with Wind* on your voice mail outgoing message.

What do I think of folks who don't return their phone calls? Answer: Not very much.

Not return a phone call? Or have it returned on your behalf? Who are you? Bruce Springsteen?

Oh, you get a lot of calls, you say? Know the answer to that? THANK G-D—Are you complaining because people like you, need you? Get a life. You're in business. The telephone is an instant, synchronous way of reaching you. Long live the telephone. **PM**



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