

Leaving a Voice Mail Message

Given everyone's busy schedule, leaving voice mail messages is an unavoidable business practice. However, voice mail is a tool.

Here are some suggestions from Diane Diresta, a professional speaker, coach and author on how to make your voice mail more effective.

- 1. Plan your message.** Think about what you want to say before you leave the message.
- 2. Get to the point.** Stream of consciousness doesn't work.
- 3. Be brief.** Aim for a 15- to 30-second message.
- 4. Speak slowly.** The recipient needs to process the information and write it down.
- 5. Enunciate clearly.** Bear in mind that a telephone distorts certain sounds.
- 6. Be "up" in your voice.** A monotone lacks enthusiasm. Smile as you leave your message.
- 7. Modulate your volume.** Too loud is irritating. Too soft can't be heard. Don't cradle the phone between your neck and shoulders.
- 8. Monitor your time.** Avoid sarcasm and irritation if you want your call returned.
- 9. Avoid telephone tag.** Give the recipient options as to when you can be reached.
- 10. End with the telephone number.** Say your number two times slowly.

When used properly, voice mail can improve communications dramatically. Be sure you use it to improve communications, and not to avoid communications.