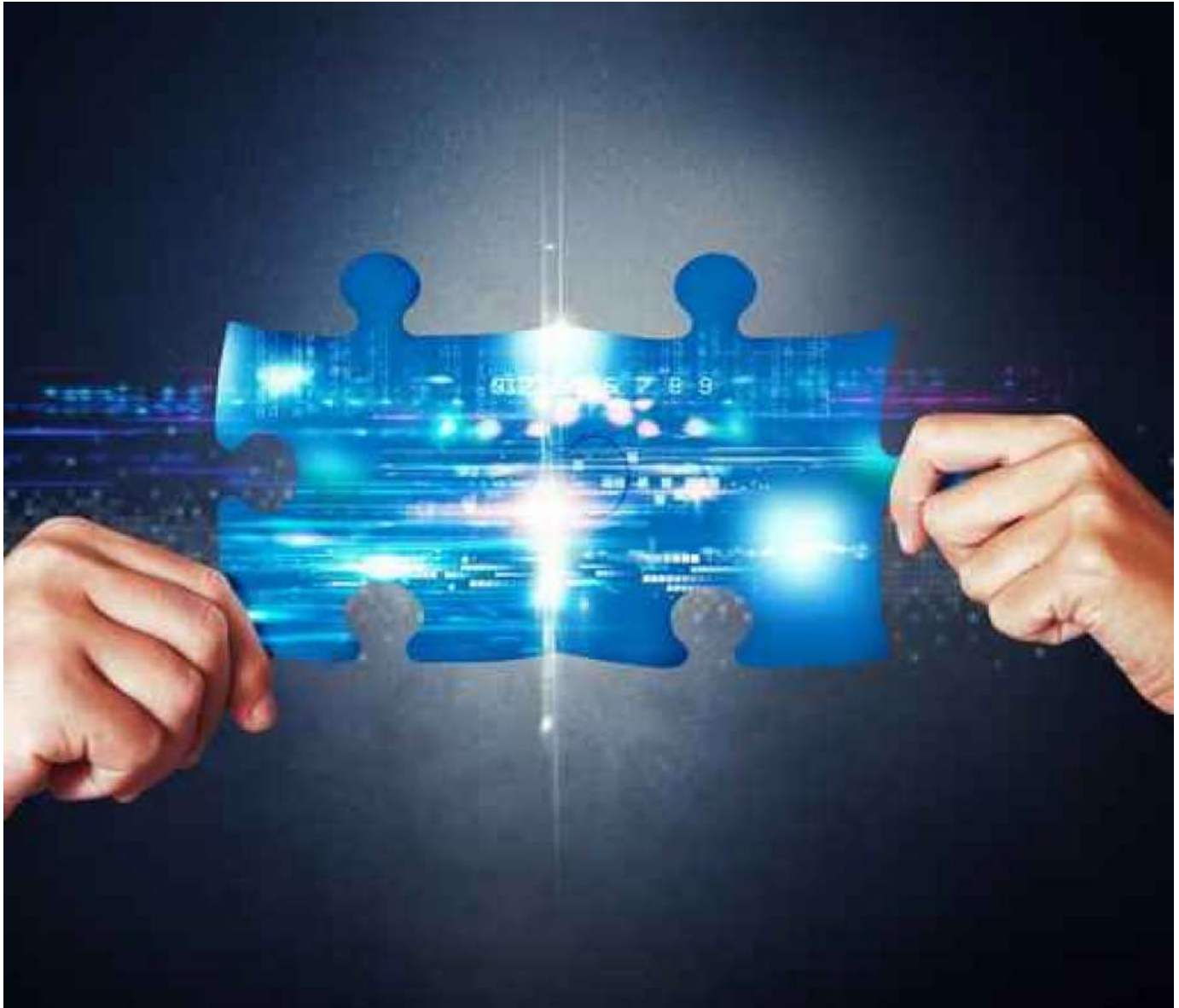


B2B Phone Sales Tips: Beating the Voicemail Gatekeeper

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When to Avoid the Voicemail Time-Trap

There are times when the last thing you can afford to do is wait through a prospect's voicemail greeting so you can leave a message of your own...a message that probably will be deleted and ignored.

But before you can make the right call on whether you should hang up and move on to the next name and number on your list, you need to consider the variables. Hang up and move on:

- If you're inviting people to attend a one-time event or drop by your booth at an upcoming tradeshow
- If you have a list of several 1000 names and numbers to get through
- If you have limited resources available to make outbound calls
- And if your objective is to have as many brief conversations with people as possible

Time is money, and your best bet is to spend it seeking out the low-hanging fruit. Personally invite everyone you reach, but should voicemail kick in, go to the next name on your list.

Initiate a Relationship with Voicemail

When your goal is B2B sales and you're following up on leads to begin a conversation, you need to build relationships with prospects. Instead of grabbing the low-hanging fruit, you're slowly, steadily shimmying your way to the top of the tree.

If you have 25 to 50 highly targeted, marketing qualified leads (MQL), inside sales can turn prospects into sales qualified leads (SQL). And if you turn even two or three SQLs into clients, you can have a substantial impact on your bottom line. So treat each one like gold.

The odds are that your call will go directly to voicemail, but don't hang up. Leave a brief message that 1) introduces you and your company, 2) demonstrates your command of the industry and issues and 3) gives the prospect a good reason to return your call.

When you send out a direct mail campaign and get a response rate of 1% to 3%, you're happy. Use the same reasoning with every B2B sales call. Every contact has the potential to be your next important client. And every message you leave has

the promise of bringing you closer to your goal: Engaging the prospect, opening a dialogue, moving them farther along the buyer's journey and, ultimately, buying from you.

In B2B sales, don't view voicemail as a technological gatekeeper. It's a useful communication medium—just like email and direct mail.

To keep on track, you need to measure results the same way you would any targeted marketing campaign. To do so, you need to be consistent and leave messages 100% of the time. Then celebrate when you receive a 1% to 3% response rate to your voicemail messages.

7 Tips for Leaving Good Voicemail

When voicemail is a strategic component of your telemarketing or telesales campaign, don't wing it. Without a plan, voicemail can leave even the most articulate, silver-throated sales rep tongue-tied and blathering aimlessly. Here are seven tips for leaving a powerful voicemail:

1. **Don't Sell on Voicemail:** You can't cram your entire sales pitch into a phone message, so don't try.
2. **Spark Your Prospect's Interest:** Show that you understand your prospect's business issues or challenges. When you deliver your message as a question or a tease, you raise your prospect's curiosity. Leave them wanting more.
3. **Don't Script Your Messages:** Few people can recite a scripted message that sounds fresh and engaging. By thinking through what you want to say and practicing your delivery, you'll be able to speak with confidence.
4. **Be Professional:** Start by introducing yourself. State your name, company and phone number. Enunciate your contact information—slowly and clearly—and speak with authority.
5. **Remember, Less Is More:** Keep your message short and to the point. When you know what you need to say, you should be able to say everything in less than 30 seconds.
6. **Close with a Simple Call to Action:** Give your prospect a reason to call you back. Whether you have a new solution, special pricing, a research report or new white paper, make it clear that there's something in it for them.
7. **Keep Your Message Fresh:** If you follow up every week or so, make each voicemail new and intriguing. Build on your message. And if you want to

perfect your message, try A/B split testing—with half of your recipients receiving Message A and the other half Message B. Track your results to see what works best.

So stop looking at voicemail as a barrier. Instead, understand its advantages and use the B2B phone sales tips to open doors to new sales.

Then, of course, there is the whole discussion of using technology for leaving voicemail, but we will leave that for another day.

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