

Voice Mail: Is It Convenience or Selective Response?

What a fabulous technological advancement the answering machine and then Electronic Voice Messaging was for those of us that needed to receive and have access to every business phone call. We marveled at how convenient it would be to never lose or miss a phone call (those callers that didn't have the time; holding on the line until we finished a phone call) or those that had an interesting thought and just had to call during non-business hours. The tool was to make our lives more efficient, juggling our time managed schedules and assisting callers with 24 hour availability. We visit this aspect of doing business with an attempt to unravel the mystery of where all of the unreturned phone calls go, and how a little Voice Mail etiquette can benefit everyone.

As a Job seeker, you have been recruited to work for XYZ Corporation and have successfully advanced through the interviewing process. The hiring managers parting words (confirmed with the professional handshake): "We will be in touch within the next week with a final decision". You have prepared and mailed the cursory thank you letter and look forward to the next step, the follow-up phone call. The week comes and goes without a message; you decide that the hiring manager is busy, perhaps time has gotten away from them or they were called out of town at the last minute (a couple of days isn't that big of a deal, they surely still want to hire me). Several days pass and you begin to doubt your recollection of the final meeting; "Was I supposed to follow-up with them?" "Did they uncover something about me that takes me out of the running for the position?" You begin to worry and decide that you should make the phone call to find out one way or another whether or not you are a contender. This is where the frustration begins; your apprehensive phone call is taken by an automated Voice message system. Using sound judgement, you leave an extensive message asking that your call be returned regarding the position (a perfectly proper and acceptable action plan).

Week 2 finds you waiting and wondering if XYZ Corporation has filled the position because you haven't heard from anyone. Anxiety builds and the decision is made to make another follow-up phone call to the hiring manager and then one to the human resources department; perhaps they know what the status of this position is. No one answers their direct line and again voice mail messages are left (no indication is given on the voice mail message that they are out of the office). By the end of the week, you still haven't received a phone call. You know nothing about the status of the job vacancy. The dilemma begins and self doubt begins to destroy your confidence. The biggest problem of all; how many more times should you call and should you begin to pursue other opportunities? Is this the message the human resources department or the hiring manager want to send to the interested candidate about how XYZ Corporation makes decisions? When will the phone call be returned or will it land in the black hole of voice mails..... Shame on you people that do not return phone calls.

As we scratch our heads and ponder the success of voice messaging, we wonder whether or not we will ever speak with a "Live person" again and defend those business' that still take hand written messages. In this technologically advanced world armed with pagers,

car phones, cellular phones, automated menus, wireless email and voice mail, why aren't people communicating by returning phone calls? Would smoke signals be more effective? At least they would be a response.