

Six-Time Rewind: Voicemail That Enhances Professionalism – Kathi Guiney, SPHR, GPHR, SCP, President YES!HRSolution

Six times rewinding this voicemail, and you are no closer to deciphering the woman's name. Ella, Bella, or Stella? You shouldn't have to call back with a tentative, "Um, hi," or the ever-popular, "Someone left me a message" all because she can't enunciate! And why doesn't she do something about the marbles in her mouth anyway?!

That's how a 10-second voicemail turns into a 5-minute battle that ruins someone's professional image. And it could have been avoided with these common voicemail courtesies that send the right message.

- **Keep it brief.** Effective voicemail provides a quick answer or invites further conversation. It is not the place to detail your three-pronged budget-reduction strategy. Use organized thoughts that respect the recipient's time.
- **Talk slowly and steadily.** A speedy or wavering voice will not speak well to your professionalism. So think about what you'll say before you call, and deliberately slow down, especially if you're nervous. Repeat your name and phone number at the beginning and end of the message.
- **Speak loudly enough.** The key to volume is balance: Too loud, and you sound abrasive or demanding. Too soft, and you sound timid or unconfident. And be careful where you're calling from; freeway noise and the sound of the barista making your latte are a nonstarter!
- **Listen to your message before sending.** Many messaging systems let you replay your voicemail before you send it. Take advantage! Are you babbling? Speeding? Shouting? Are your name and phone number clear? If your message doesn't come across as intended, erase it and try again.

Next time you leave a perfectly polished voicemail, think about the public service you're doing: saving your listeners from frustration and despair, and saving their rewind buttons from six times the angry mashing. Your listeners and their phones appreciate your professionalism.