



Relax! Business Messaging Tips for a Tech-Free Vacation



Let Voicemail Work For You While On Vacation



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In the excitement of summer vacation – or really any vacation – people become, well, thought-less. This can leave customers and prospects stranded while we are away and create misunderstandings and missteps that add to our workload the moment we return.

While it's true that there's nothing like that last day of work before a holiday – the focus we have as we "tie up loose ends" and that moment when we're ready to walk out the door, embrace our well-earned time off. I'm guessing that this moment, the one just seconds away from freedom, is the one in which most of us remember our voice mail – and the need to change the message.

I've listened to a lot of vacation messages in my time. Most of them were delivered at the speed of light, many were impossible to understand, several lacked any valuable information and one had so much information I had to call back three times to get all the details.

This has got to stop! All of us hate reaching lousy voice mail messages; all of us are capable of creating great ones.

Here are a few tips that will help you create a vacation message that will serve your clients and prospects – and let you embrace every second of your well-deserved time off:

1) Skip all the dates. You know what I mean – "I'm

on vacation from ... through to..." It causes confusion. Instead, simply state when you will be back at work, i.e. "I'll be back at my desk on Monday July 25..."

2) Be honest. You are going on vacation and you deserve to enjoy it without work interruptions. We all deserve this and it's essential to our health and our creativity. So ... don't say you are monitoring and returning messages unless you mean it. The tone of your voice betrays you when this isn't true and I know you're not going to call me back.

3) Speak slowly – and repeat. Many vacation messages include the option to contact someone else, which is great customer service. But it's totally defeated if the information is given so quickly that neither name nor phone number can be understood. As a rule, we are not prepared to "take a message" when we make outbound calls. Take this into consideration, stating names and phone numbers slowly and clearly, at the same speed it would take you to write them down. Then say them again so your caller can check what they've written down.

4) Sound happy. After all, while I'm listening to your message you are on vacation!

Enjoy your phone work – and your vacation – everyone.

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5 Ways To Handle Social Media While You're On Vacation



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Everyone needs to take a break sometime, and especially a break from social media! Whether you want to take your fans along on your vacation or you want them to be oblivious to the fact that you're gone, there are a few different ways you can handle your social media accounts.

The best tool you have for finding time off is planning ahead. Whether it's a day off, or a week, find a tool that will schedule your content to post while you're away. Hootsuite and Buffer each offer a free account that will accommodate up to three social networks and 10 scheduled posts. If you're only using Facebook, the built-in scheduler is your best option. Keep in mind, content you schedule should be evergreen and should not play on events you EXPECT to happen (in case they don't).

Perhaps you can schedule a few things to post while you're on vacation and only check in once a day for comments? Or maybe you are a morning person and want to get up early, work for an hour and have the rest of the day to relax? There are ways to keep your work to a minimum while you're away if you can't simply turn it off.

If you're not already a scheduling-type person, and do most of your social media manually, the best option might be to simply

tell your fans you're taking a day off and then share a picture. All entrepreneurs need a reminder that it's ok to take a day off once in a while. Of course, you need to be careful about announcing you're out of town for a week and your house is completely empty.

There's always the option to hire someone, or delegate, to manage your accounts while you're on vacation--perhaps an assistant, intern, or other staffer. Provide guidelines and let them have fun with it for a day or a week. Maybe you'll discover they're better at it than you and you'll never have to touch Facebook again!

Or, there's always the option to simply let your Facebook and Twitter profiles remain silent for a day (or a week). It's ok... most people understand the need to take vacation and quite honestly, most of you dear readers aren't in the type of business that people expect you to be there 24/7 to answer their questions.

Whether you choose to "announce" your social media vacation or not is completely up to you. It can make it easier for fans because they'll see you won't be responding until Monday. On Facebook you also have the option to set up an autoresponder (similar to email responses) to let people know you're away.

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Your Out-of-Office Autoresponder is Your Auto-assistant



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Like recording your vacation voicemail message, your out-of-office email auto-responder can also talk to customers, colleagues and prospects when you can't. Here are pieces of info to include in the text of your auto-responder:

When will you be replying to emails? It doesn't matter when you left or when you'll be back, the important info is when people can expect a reply. "You can expect a reply on..."

Who is subbing for you? If someone is stepping in to help while you're away, include the best way to reach them and when a response can be expected. Consider whether you need a person if they will only be taking messages. Your email (and voicemail) will work fine, and maybe better.

What can people do in the meantime? Anticipate inquiries and get info to people right away by including messaging and links. "Find answers to FAQs here." Make sure to include links to your social profiles, blog, newsletter, current promotions, giveaways, and so on.

If you work from home, be cautious about saying you'll be away – you don't want to advertise an empty house. Likewise it's not a good idea to say where you're going – even if you want to brag about the cruise you won!

One more warning... if you're scheduling bulk email (newsletters, blogs, promotions) to send while on vacation, you'll want to make sure to have your email auto-responder turned off for about an hour when those emails go out. If not, your readers' auto-responders will be bouncing back-and-forth with your auto-responder and, well, email hell.

Enjoy time away from your inbox knowing your email auto-responder has you covered.

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