

MINDING YOUR BUSINESS

“Why should someone do business with you ... rather than someone else?” ...because you communicate effectively.

By Sam Geist

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We communicate constantly — even when we’re not communicating.

Today’s technology forces us to communicate by proxy. That can be good or bad, depending on its result. Voicemail (*a.k.a. “voice jail,” by those entrapped*) provides a perfect example. While its function is to save time and make us more productive, it also represents us. It quite blatantly reveals who we are, how conscientious, how well organized. It transmits the clarity of our thoughts, the honesty of our intentions, the dedication of our actions. We reveal ourselves in how user friendly our mail system is, how current our message and how quickly we take finger to keypad to respond. Since voicemail is certain to remain one of our pre-eminent communicating forces, let it speak to our advantage. Make it a benefit of doing business with us rather than a curse.

Our web site speaks about us to all those

wandering in cyberspace. It relates who we are, what we do (*and don’t do*) and how well. It is in effect our electronic front window offering passersby a glimpse of our business environment, our capabilities, our innovative ideas, or our neglected “under construction” appearance and abandoned digital debris. Since Internet communication is burgeoning, let’s ensure our presence speaks well of us rather than embarrasses us.

And of course, that long-standing communication device—the telephone forms a perception of our organization in just six seconds. What impression do we give when we speak on the phone?

Customer Service Management Corp. studied how staff talk to customers on the phone. After placing 5,000 calls, their investigation revealed that 80% of companies called didn’t even identify themselves properly. The same percentage did not ask the

customer’s name or phone number, made little effort to determine what the caller wanted and offered no follow-up suggestions. Not encouraging when our customers’ decisions are often determined and certainly always influenced by the people at the other end when effective, accurate communication is so integral to the well-being of our livelihood.

Today more than ever before, if we recognize that “we are” what we communicate, our communication strategies can afford us a competitive advantage — a corporate advantage — a personal differentiating factor — the big reason someone *should do business with us ... rather than someone else.*

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