

Stand out: better emails and voicemails

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I spend much of my time coaching professionals on how to differentiate themselves and their brand through refining *all* forms of communication.

So, how do we make the most of every communication, build our brand by leaving a good impression, and most finally, get that individual to respond when much of what we have to work with is a one-sided email or voicemail?

For those of you who read my [last article](#), I shared thoughts on what NOT to do when emailing prospects. Here, however, I want to focus on some surprisingly simple, yet critical best practices you *can and should* implement immediately. In fact, after applying these, our clients have found a 75% increase in responses rates.

1. Identify a purpose. Very few deals are closed or issues ever get resolved through an email or voicemail. The purpose should be to take the communication a step further, *not* to replace a

conversation completely. Consider clearly identifying the *benefit* to your client or prospect as to why you're reaching out to them so they know why they should respond.

2. Brevity is best. People value their time, so keep voicemail or email communication short. The general rule for voicemail should be less than 22 seconds, and for email, short enough for one screen,. (The possible exception would be an email that includes information you promised to send and/or that the client *requested*, and if it can be sent as an attachment instead, do so.)
3. Have a format for your email and/or voice-mails. It should include: the purpose that you're communicating about, the reason it is relevant to the person you're contacting, an acknowledgement that they are busy (respect for time), and a plan for following up with them.
4. Check for errors. Use proper grammar when writing, and articulate clearly when leaving a voicemail. Tip: listen to your own voicemail prior to sending (that handy menu at the end of the greeting will give you the option), and re-read your email 2-3 times before hitting the send button. Inarticulate, garbled messages, written or spoken, are deal breakers.
5. Subject lines matter. In a study of over 30 million emails, the subject lines that received the highest open rates (85% or greater) were: *follow up*, *update*, *introduction*, and *checking in*. In fact, as soon as the subject line had more than 3 words, the open rate decreased by 60%!

The most important thing to remember here is that every time you contact a client or prospect, you are leaving an impression. Make it a good one!