

## Technology

# Resolution 2016: Listen up: Voice mail is done

Using this not-so-modern technology may mean your company is stuck in the (fax machine) past

By **Daria Meoli**, January 4, 2016 at 2:14 PM



Fax machines ... floppy disks ... voice mail?

As smartphones have become a round-the-clock appendage, voice mail, which was once considered a technology of convenience, may be headed for extinction.

Texting is faster and email often is more convenient. Forwarding calls from a landline to a mobile phone can save time because, with the press of a button, a user can return a call, rather than sitting through a long-winded audio message just to write down those same callback digits.

So, when JPMorgan Chase made voice-mail optional for all non-customer-facing employees, staffers rejoiced. In some departments, such as technology and controls, 90 percent of employees opted out of voice mail.

While workers appreciated the opportunity to 86 this redundant communication tool, JPMorgan Chase is happy about the significant savings it is realizing from cancelling voice-mail service.

“Many of our employees have their calls forwarded to their personal devices when they’re not in the office,” said

Alma DeMetropolis, managing director and New Jersey market president for JPMorgan Chase. “Voice mail is being used less and less as a result. Eliminating voice-mail just made sense in certain cases, and we were able to save the firm over \$3 million a year following the initial move, while not impacting the way our employees are operating.”

JPMorgan Chase is not the only major corporation to fire voice-mail. In December 2014, Coca-Cola Co. pulled the plug on voice-mail for employees at its Atlanta headquarters.

### **And lose the jargon, too**

Whether the unicorn has a value proposition in a blue sky session or a game-changer was run up the flagpole and found synergy, 2016 should be the year to stop using office jargon.

“To me, a person’s use of jargon indicates that he or she wants to be part of an exclusive club of people whose experience in a particular profession or industry gives them the ability to speak/write in a language that only the ‘elite’ in the field understand,” said Jack Appleman, author of “10 Steps to Successful Business Writing” and principal of Parsippany-based Successful Business Writing. “Some believe that jargon elevates them and underscores their expertise.

“Yet, in my observations and experience, the vast majority of people in the corporate world don’t want to read jargon — they want you to get to the point with straightforward language.”

If it’s about time to do a deep dive on your communication skills, put down that TPS Report and try Appleman’s tips for editing jargon:

- Put yourself in the audience’s shoes. Do you really want to read or hear a jargon-filled message, especially if you’re not part of that “elite club” of people who understand it?
- Ask yourself if it distracts the reader from your key message.
- To cut jargon from your writing, read your text out loud. If it sounds too fancy or tacky to you, it will probably come across that way to the audience.

So, the next time you schedule a bilateral to discuss transparency between the channels, consider just having a meeting with a colleague to talk about how you can communicate more effectively with other people in your business. — Daria Meoli

But Clark Peterson, president of the Business Solutions Group of Holmdel-based VoIP provider, Vonage, isn’t so sure voice-mail is on the way to its grave.

“I was asked if voice-mail was going away back in 1991,” Peterson said. “That is when everyone started getting cell phones. Since cell phones enabled you to reach anyone, anywhere, people wondered why voice-mail would be necessary. Here we are 25 years later and voice-mail is still around. While technology evolves, we don’t always replace things as quickly as we might think.”

Peterson cited voice-mail transcription service as part of voice-mail’s evolution. At Vonage and other VoIP service

providers, the cloud-based voice-mail service is tied to cloud transcription services. When a caller leaves a message, that message is transcribed into an email that can be read and even forwarded on the smartphone.

As more millennials enter the workforce, voice-mail will have to continue to evolve in order to survive.

“Our workforce is changing so drastically,” Peterson said. “Forty percent of our workforce right now is made up of millennials and the projections for 2025 say that will increase to 75 percent of workforce. This is a group that lives on their devices. They are used to having all their content in the cloud and available to them with any device. They don’t have CDs or DVDs because they use iTunes, Hulu and Netflix. Voice mail has to follow those same rules. It has to be associated with the individual, not the device.”

Looking to the future, Peterson sees the human voice making a comeback.

“Apps that allow people to communicate in a medium that lies somewhere between a voice-mail and a text are becoming increasingly popular,” Peterson said. “Voxer’s walkie-talkie app, for example, allows people to send short voice chats to one person or to a large group. Voice mail will come in multiple flavors depending on the type of communication that is needed.”

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