

## The Importance of Returning Calls

During my very first job out of college, I remember an incident that took place when I went out on a sales call with one of my company's senior account managers. When he introduced me to the customer, the customer didn't point out the account manager's great personality or depth of product knowledge. But she did make a comment that stuck with me for years:



"I like Lyle. He always returns my calls right away."

What I learned back then—and what holds true to this day—is that far too many people don't take the time to return calls at all, let alone in a timely manner. This may be due to the fear of being told "no," too much work or even sheer laziness. Whatever the excuse, the message sent to a prospect or a customer is, "I don't have time for you," or "your call isn't important to me."

Instead, make it a simple rule to return calls within twenty-four hours, sooner if possible. After all, a lot of things can change during that time period.

- A client may want to place an order, but may change their mind and decide to not place an order if they wait too long.
- A customer may have a shipment that has not arrived and desperately needs to be there to meet a particular requirement.
- A client may have a last need that must be filled in order to consider your proposal over a competitor's proposal.

Not returning calls in a timely manner can lead to hurt feelings, damaged relationships, lost opportunities and worse. What's more, in today's computer-driven age, customers have shorter attention spans and less patience. In short, by not returning calls quickly, you only hurt yourself.



So the next time you walk into your office and see that red "voice mail" light blinking, take the time to pick up the phone, write down your messages and return those calls. You'll be keeping yourself fresh in the customer's mind, helping to strengthen relationships and ensuring that you're on top of any new opportunities that might come your way.