



Mutare

Eliminate Voicemail, Improve Communication: 3-Point Strategy



Poor response to voicemail is costing companies millions of dollars in lost customers and squandered marketing returns. Companies around the world are struggling to reconcile the needs of a text-centric generation of employees with that of customers who still largely turn to the phone when they have important information to discuss. This paper makes the case for a transformative call completion strategy that replaces voicemail without displacing callers.

Introduction: The Decline of Voicemail

When voicemail was first introduced in the early '80s it was universally embraced as an indispensable, productivity-enhancing business tool. But with the introduction of cellular communications and the associated advancement of text-based mobile messaging, the perception of enterprise voicemail's value has declined over the years and now, for many, has tipped into active aversion. Today's emerging employee population sees business voicemail as a redundant, cumbersome time-waster used only by telemarketers or "people I don't want to talk to anyway." ([12 Things Everyone Thinks When They Get a Voicemail](#)).

Efficiency of Text-Based Communication

In an article for the New York Times, "[You've Got Voice Mail, but Do You Care?](#)" author Jill Colvin references data from uReach Technologies that shows over 30 percent of voice messages linger unheard for three days or longer and that more than 20 percent of people with messages in their mailboxes "rarely even dial in" to check them.

By contrast, 91 percent of people under 30 respond to text messages within an hour, and they are four times more likely to respond to texts than to voice messages within minutes. The reason is obvious. Dialing in and listening to a string of voicemail messages is a cumbersome, multi-step process that often yields little of value, whereas the content and importance of a text-based message is immediately discerned at a glance. And in the business world, that translates into reduced frustration, increased responsiveness, and improved productivity for the worker.

But how does the changing employee attitude toward voicemail affect a company's relationship with its customers?

The High Cost of Ignoring Voicemail





In May, 2016, Chicago-based information technology software developer Mutare, Inc., conducted a one-month survey of more than 3,600 calls processed by the company's Smart Voicemail hosted unified communications service and found that 90% of those callers left a message. "And that," says Mutare CTO Roger Northrop, "points to the fact that voice messaging is not going away any time soon." What's changed, he notes, is customer expectations for response time.

"When there is an important matter, Customers are still turning to the phone, but they expect their call to be treated with the same level of urgency as it was delivered."

According to Forrester Research, 75% of callers who leave voice messages expect a return call within an hour – an expectation fueled, no doubt, by the comparative immediacy of text and IM conversations. “The fact remains, when there is an important matter to convey, customers are still turning to the phone, but they expect their call to be treated with the same level of urgency as it was delivered,” Northrop says.

Underlying that point, a British Telecommunications Business study involving 1,600 SME decision-makers and IT service providers revealed that 85% of callers who can’t reach a company on the first try will not call back, and that translates into lost opportunity. In fact, the study goes on to reveal the **average cost for each missed call is approximately \$1,500**. If the call recipient remains “beyond contact” for more than a 24-hour period, that average loss to the company skyrockets to anywhere from \$11,000 to \$25,000 per call as disappointed customers take their business elsewhere, share their displeasure through social media, and undermine the value of sales and marketing efforts designed to create and sustain a loyal customer base.

Average cost of a missed call is \$1,500* due to compounded effect of:

			
CUSTOMER DISSATISFACTION	LOSS OF CUSTOMER TO COMPETITOR	NEGATIVE REVIEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA	UNDERMINED BRAND EQUITY

Thus, the dilemma: On the one hand is a significant population of customers and business associates who still want the convenience of a phone call to deliver their most important messages – as long as those calls are returned quickly. On the other is a growing population of employees who are simply not retrieving voice messages in a timely manner, forcing employers to consider its elimination in the interest of cost savings and improved productivity. But is that really good business?

A growing body of evidence says no – but what is the alternative?

A Paradigm Shift – Next Generation Smart Messaging

At a recent international conference of Avaya users, Mutare, Inc., introduced a unique, disruptive solution for replacing voicemail without displacing callers.

SAM (Smart Assist by Mutare) is a call completion application that eliminates the voice mailbox and all related voicemail management chores while still accommodating the caller who wants to leave a message. SAM intercepts missed calls, lets the caller leave a voice memo, and delivers a notification with caller ID, timestamp, audio file and text transcription to the intended recipient via his/her preference(s) of email, SMS text, Lync Instant Message or through Mutare's secure, HIPAA-compliant Vital Link client. What's more, when integrated with the organization's CRM, such as Salesforce, SAM taps the stored information related to the caller ID (name, title, company, email address, account numbers etc.), and appends that information to the message delivery, turning burdensome, low-information voice messages into data-rich, text-based smart messages. Even hang-ups are transformed into valuable contacts as SAM records the caller ID, dips into the company CRM for any additional data or history related to the caller, and delivers that in a single package to the intended recipient, providing the opportunity to quickly re-engage even the most impatient caller.

Once implemented, SAM is all that is required to fulfill the following three commitments resulting in happier employees, better served customers, and significant value added to the company's bottom line.

1. Serve employees by eliminating voicemail retrieval and management.

With traditional voicemail, call recipients need to take the time to dial in, listen to messages, separate out important calls, record important information and then try to reach back by phone, setting up what often results in a frustrating cycle of unanswered call-backs.

With SAM, call recipients know immediately when a message is left, quickly discern which calls are important and which are SPAM, and respond through the most appropriate vehicle – call back, text, IM or email. In addition to message transcription, the SAM solution has the added advantage of providing more detailed caller information in the text of the delivery drawn from the caller's CRM record and can identify caller gender and sentiment, giving the call recipient a fuller picture of the nature of the call for a quicker, more targeted response. To address the increasing problem of SPAM and robocalls, users can also mark messages as "SPAM" through a simple click on a link so future calls from that phone number are ignored by the system and an announcement is played letting the caller know that no message will be taken at this time.

2. Serve callers and be responsive.

With a smart call-completion application, there is no need to turn away callers. They still have the convenience of leaving a voice memo and are unaware that the person they just called no longer has a voice mailbox. SAM call completion has the added advantage of delivering notification of a missed call with caller ID even if the caller simply hangs up, giving the call recipient the opportunity to reach back and make sure any caller issue is resolved. Of course, if employees prefer simply receiving a missed call notification without the appended message, the system can be set to let callers know they should not leave a message but the intended recipient will be notified of their call.

3. Reduce costs by replacing voicemail with call completion.

SAM integrates seamlessly with the organization's current communications infrastructure and is virtually maintenance-free. It is a simple one-time setup with no user training required. Once enrolled in the SAM system, employees simply begin to receive notification of missed messages like any other IM, email or text. What's more, the SAM system can be synchronized with an organization's Active Directory for automatic employee enrollment and contact updates. Savings from improved workflow and reduced administration alone pays for the system in a short time and, with the elimination of much of the overhead expense associated with traditional voicemail systems, those cost benefits are ongoing. What's more, SAM CRM integration extends the value of the data stored in a company's current Customer Relationship Management system by marrying stored data to the transcribed voice message delivery, giving call recipients one-stop access to everything they need to respond to calls quickly and intelligently.

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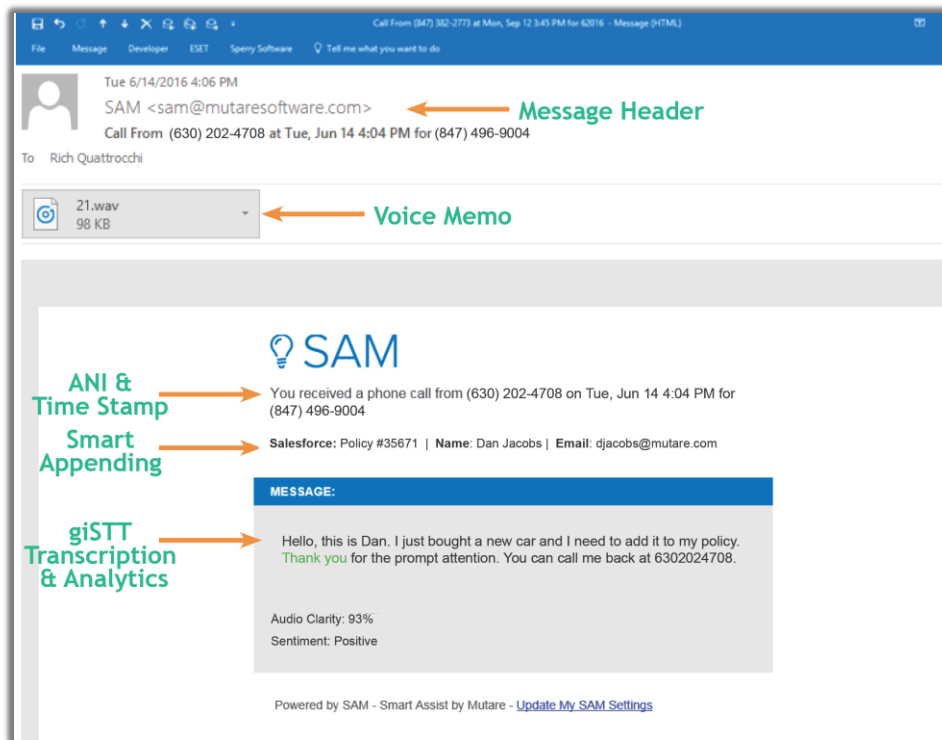
SAM fits seamlessly into the digital workflow, which means employees spend less time managing messaging and more time responding to high-value customer contacts.

Everything in One Message

The following are examples of smart messages that can be used by customer-facing employees to increase sales and eliminate the costs associated with analog voicemail workflow.

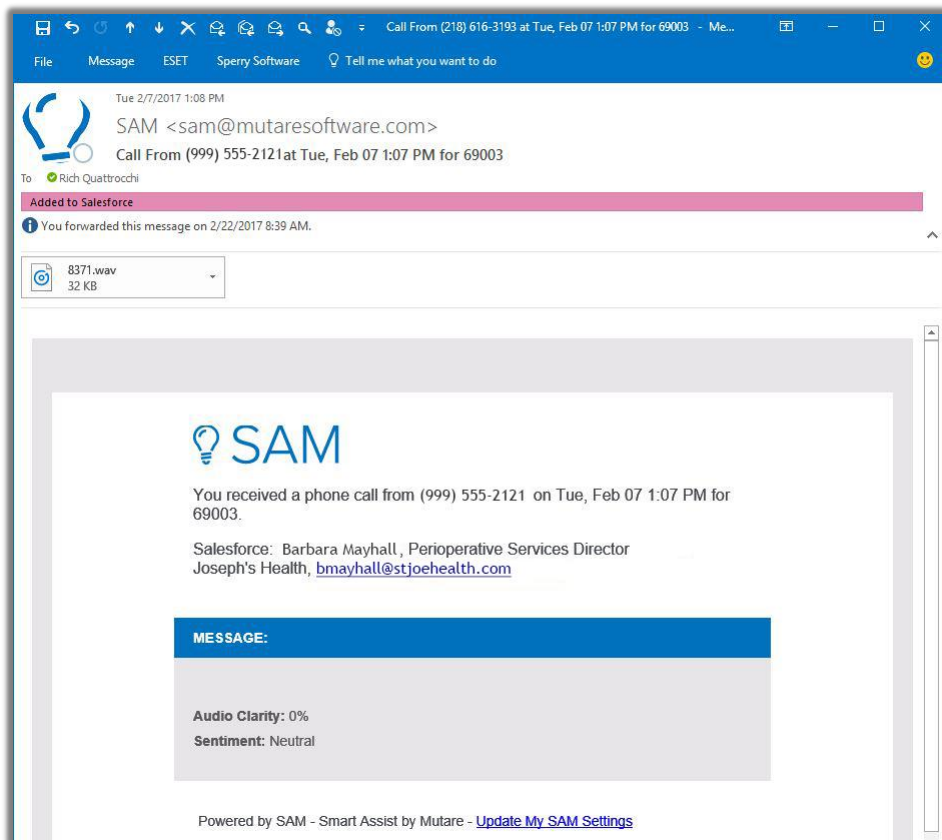
Email Delivery with Transcribed Message

Includes caller ID and timestamp of the call, text transcription of the caller's message with original audio attached, and related information about caller retrieved from Salesforce CRM.



Turning Hang-Ups into Opportunities

Even if no message is left, SAM was able to use the caller ID to retrieve related information stored in the company's Salesforce CRM and send it to the intended call recipient, allowing for a quick call-back and opportunity for re-engagement.



Conclusion

“The emergence of this new, smart, digital call completion technology is redefining how businesses should manage voice messaging now and for the foreseeable future,” says Rich Quattrocchi, Vice President, Mutare. “SAM mines the full value behind every call, delivers that information in a single text-based package through the vehicle of choice for each end user, and gives callers the assurance of a quick resolution to their important calls so they have no need to go elsewhere. What’s more, it’s so simple. People like it, they use it, and in the end, that is what makes it such an incredibly valuable voicemail-replacement solution that operates the way a modern workforce does - digitally.”

For more information, visit www.mutare.com or email info@mutare.com.