



Eliminate Voicemail, Improve Communication: 5-Point Strategy



With Coke and Chase leading the way, companies around the world are opting to reduce or eliminate voicemail - but at what cost to their important callers? This paper explores the reasons eliminating voicemail makes sense as long as there is a new, better alternative 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 tools, 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](#)).

In response, companies across the country are contemplating the risk/reward of removing voicemail all together, with [JP Morgan Chase and Coca-Cola](#) taking the lead through their mutually provocative decision to eliminate voicemail for large blocks of employees.

While cost-containment was cited as a factor, the real motivator, according to Coca Cola Chief Information Officer Ed Steinike, was "to simplify the way we work and increase productivity."

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 translate into reduced frustration and improved productivity for the worker as well as quicker response to the caller. It is no wonder that, when presented the option to keep or dispose of their voicemail, only 6% of Coca-Cola's Atlanta headquarters staff chose to retain it.

Conflict of Needs for Callers and Called

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 CTO Roger Northrop, flies in the face of those who claim people will simply hang up and find other means of contact rather than leave a voicemail message. "The fact remains, when there is an urgent matter to convey, callers still turn to the phone, and the vast majority of those calls go to voicemail," he said.

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. On the other is a growing population of employees who are simply not retrieving those messages, assuming they can change their callers' behavior by forcing them to use text messaging or email. Coke and Chase have essentially followed in line, giving callers the equivalent of an electronic stiff-arm with the assumption that it is less damaging than having thousands of voicemail calls left unattended.

But is that really good business, and is it really their only choice?

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A Better Alternative

"Frankly, we think Coke and Chase made the *Right* decision to get rid of voicemail," says Northrop. "The problem is, they asked their employees the *Wrong* question. Just about anyone will tell you they hate voicemail. But on closer examination, it turns out they're not talking about the messages, but rather the process of **checking** voicemail. Employees still want to know who called, when they called, and why, but they don't want to deal with the time and workflow disruption of voicemail management."

Voicemail Replacement Strategy for Better Workflow, Happier Employees, Satisfied Customers

HR Department and IT Managers across the country are now struggling to reconcile the conflict between their employees' frustration with voicemail and the needs of important callers to be heard. At a recent international conference of Avaya users, Mutare introduced a surprisingly simple yet revolutionary new solution that replaces voicemail without displacing callers.

SAM (Smart Assist by Mutare) is a call completion service that answers missed calls, lets the caller leave a voice memo, and delivers a notification with caller ID, timestamp, audio file and text

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transcription to the intended recipient via his/her preference(s) of email, SMS text or Lync Instant Message. Once implemented, SAM is all that is required to fulfill the following 5 commitments that will result in happier employees, better served customers, and significantly improved workflow:

1. Serve all callers and be responsive.

With SAM there is no need to turn away callers. They still have the convenience of leaving a voice memo knowing that it will be instantly delivered to the call recipient. Call recipients, meanwhile, can see immediately which calls are important and which are SPAM without the hassle of dialing into voicemail, so responding to the calls that matter is simple and seamless.

2. Serve employees by eliminating the need to manage greetings and dialing in to retrieve messages.

SAM is a set-it forget-it application that automatically intercepts unanswered calls, directs callers to leave a voice memo, and delivers the message (or an alert with caller ID if no message is left) to the intended call recipients without any effort on their part. There is no dialing in for messages, no greetings to maintain and no passwords to manage.

3. Notify employees of calls by their choice of email, SMS or IM.

SAM gives employees a choice in the method they prefer to be notified – email, text, IM, or any combination, giving each individual full control of how he/she manages messages. Whatever the choice, employees are certain to see and respond to a text-based message far quicker than voicemail. SAM works with all business phone systems, even in mixed environments, as well as all mobile devices.

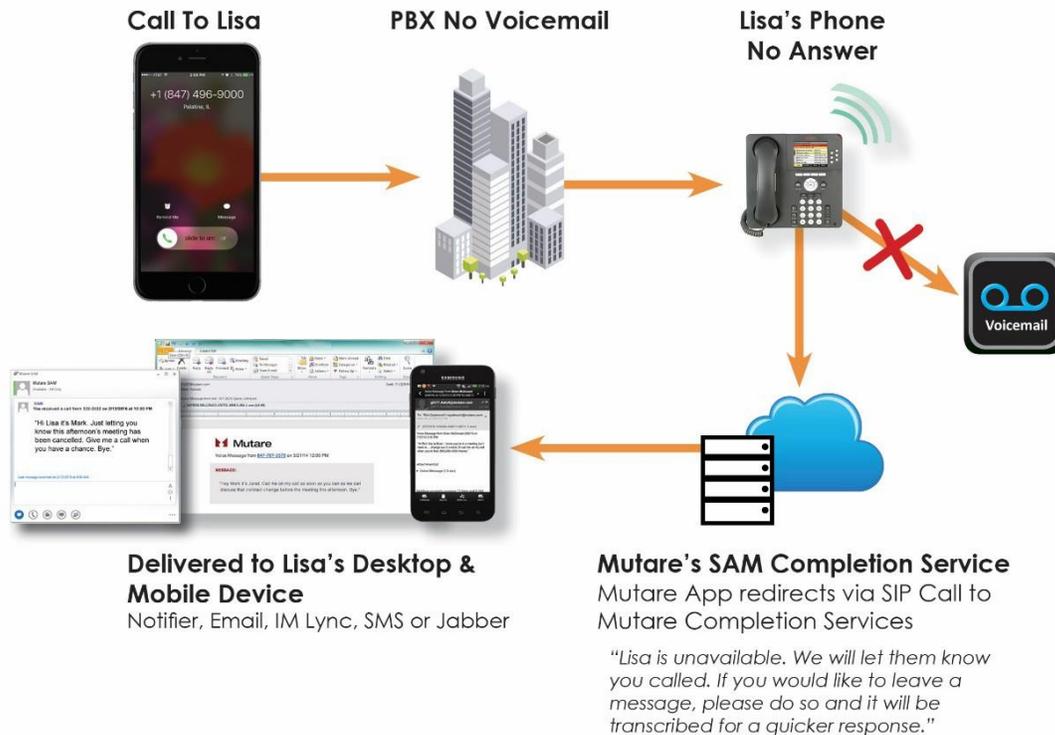
4. Convey the gist of the message with a transcript and eliminate the message waiting light, enabling employees to distinguish between SPAM and urgent calls.

SAM effectively eliminates the annoyance of the message waiting light as calls are no longer deposited in a voice mailbox. And because each notification is delivered with caller ID and a text transcription, employees can see immediately which calls are important and require quick response and which are SPAM and can be deleted without wasting time listening.

5. Lower service, maintenance and admin costs by replacing voicemail with call completion.

SAM is virtually maintenance-free. It requires a simple one-time setup with no user training. 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 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.

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Mutare launched a national roll-out of its SAM solution in May 2016 and expects the uptake to be brisk as companies embrace the win-win-win for their employees, customers, and bottom line.

"The real beauty of this application is in its simplicity," says Mutare Vice President Richard Quattrocchi. "People like it, they use it, and in the end, that is what makes it an incredibly valuable, cost-effective communication tool."

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