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Stuff that matters to Wayne

Phone with Etiquette or No Phone At All?

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Yesterday a friend of mine sent a list of phone etiquette to make sure that we are being as respectful and professional as possible in the way we represent our company and ourselves as individuals. I am thankful for the list and I made a mental note of all the suggestions and implemented the changes that I could. However, before presenting the list, I thought it was interesting timing that it was sent to me on the very same day that I published [this article](#). Perhaps, since the telephone itself seems to be a dying form of communication, more efforts should be spent on putting the last nails in its coffin rather than focusing energies on doing it better. This was a point presented to me. A conversation started about my article was about voice mail, for example. Here is a copy and paste from our email dialogue:

me: There is one person who calls me all the time. I mean all the time. Then, what's more funny is they always leave a voice mail and the message is always the same "call me back when you have some time." "Call me back when you have some time??" I just spent 2 minutes checking my voice mail to find that?? friend: This is exactly the use case for having someone else answer your calls. That person obviously:

- Wants to talk to someone,
 - Does not value your time,
 - Doesn't get the basic etiquette of leaving detailed messages,
 - Frustrates you.
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While we consider whether the phone is an interruptive technology that breaks focus and sucks our productive time, or whether it's legitimate, relevant and useful we will continue to debate. In the meantime, here is the phone etiquette list that he sent me, with his comments [and my comments in these nice square brackets], that I think is good to adhere while we await the cultural and social shift to complete:

Phone off the table.

It's usually a no-no. Shows lack of respect as you're not giving the person 100% of your attention.

Ringtone.

Get a normal ringtone. Something professional sounding like a regular phone ringing or something not large and different. Your current ringtone is jarring when it goes off and it doesn't sound professional. It should not be jarring. it should not be obnoxious. [I thought my hip-hop bass loop was dope...?]

Voicemails.

Keep them short.

[I would add to not leave one at all if it doesn't contain specific information that will justify the 1.5 minutes they will have to spend to retrieve said message]

Meetings.

Don't answer your phone in a meeting with a client or vendor unless you absolutely have to. By keeping your phone out of sight it makes it a lot easier to keep to this rule.

[I would add that by turning it off completely would assure focus. Perhaps if someone around you was gravely ill or giving birth you might be justified but clearly explain this to the person you are with in advance]

Announce your name / company name when answering.

[this works well and is recommended unless you, like me, have multiple businesses running through the same phone number.... another good case for VOIP technology over the phone]

Speakerphone.

Let people know if they are on speaker phone.

[unless you are recording them for future incriminating evidence for court]

[lol?]

The above list is good for business, but I would say that this list should also be applied to any social gathering. It's quite sad to watch a couple checking their emails with wine and candlelight in an expensive restaurant. It speaks to our sad state of disconnectedness and we should be ashamed...

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