



Call F.A.Q. for Parents

Do you have a question about the ALERTNOW system? Below is an overview of common questions and issues that may be asked prior to and after a call broadcast has been completed.

How does the ALERTNOW system determine if it is a live person or an answering machine that picks up?

If there is an initial answer followed by silence, then the system treats this as a live answer and begins to play the message.

If the initial answer duration is more than a few seconds, the system treats this as an answering machine and will wait for a pause in the talking before playing the message. Usually the first pause is after the beep.

What if someone's phone line is busy or there's no answer?

The ALERTNOW system will make five attempts to reach each number, with three minutes in-between each call. If the message is not delivered by the fifth attempt it is considered a failed number. Failures happen when a phone number is busy, disconnected, out of territory, etc.

I said hello and no message played. Why?

Errors can occur if a person answers with noise in the background. It is possible that the system was unable to detect a greeting or a pause due to the noise, so the message was not played.

Also, if the person says hello every few seconds, the message may never play either. We have run tests before with users where we called their cell phone and their desk phone. If the user answered one of them, and allowed the other to continue ringing, the message did not play until the ringing stopped.

My answering machine recorded only half of the message. Why?

If the answering machine message has a short duration of sound, then a period of silence, then starts up again, the system will read this as a live person and begin playing the message, even though the machine is not recording yet. This will result in a recording of silence (if the ALERTNOW message finishes playing before the machine begins recording) or of just the last portion of the ALERTNOW message. The recommended solution is to have parents re-record their outgoing message so that there are no pauses in it.

If a recipient's answering machine is set to record for a specific amount of time (e.g., 30 seconds) and the ALERTNOW message runs longer than that, this will result in the message being cut off on the answering machine. The recommended solution is to have parents to set their machines to record for a longer period of time.

In voice mailboxes where it is necessary to enter a mailbox number, ALERTNOW is unable to leave a message. However, as soon as there is a period of silence, the message will be played to dead air space.

I got the caller ID from the call, but there was no message in my voicemail, why?

If there is a break in the outgoing message, the system determines it is a live answer and begins the message prior to the answering machine recording.

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Why doesn't the school's phone number appear on the caller ID?

ALERTNOW passes on the caller ID information to the local telephone carriers, but it is up to those carriers whether to pass it along to their customers.

The school's phone number appears on the caller ID, but not the school's name. Why not?

Different local telephone companies process caller ID information differently. Some provide the name associated with the number, while others do not. For example, a telephone company may require an individual to subscribe to "advanced caller ID" in order to receive the school name along with the phone number on a call. Unfortunately, we have no control over this feature.

Will the system call numbers with extensions?

The ALERTNOW system cannot call numbers that include dialing an extension after dialing the primary number.

I have a telemarketer screening device. How will that affect the call?

If a contact has a device on their telephone line designed to prevent automated phone systems from connecting (e.g., TeleZapper or Privacy Director), they will not receive the call. For example, with Privacy Director all incoming calls are rerouted and the callers must identify themselves for the call to go through. Because our system is automated, it will not identify itself; thus the call will not get through to the phone number.

Additional Information on the ALERTNOW Service:

There is a slight two- to three-second delay once the phone has been answered. The system needs that time to register whether a live person or an answering machine has picked up the call.

The system will leave a message on the contact's voicemail or answering machine. However, the system is set to ring each line six times. If your answering machine is set on seven rings, a message will not be delivered to your machine. We encourage you to set it at six rings or fewer.

More information is available at www.alertnow.com