

Asterisk Voicemail User Reference

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by Jeffrey C. Ollie

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Chapter 1. An Overview

The Asterisk PBX offers a highly flexible, highly capable voice mail system. Among the features that it offers are:

- Three different types of greetings.
- Notification of new messages through email. The notification message may also include an audio file containing the complete message.
- Ability to organize messages into folders.
- Mailboxes may be password protected.
- Can optionally allow callers to review and re-record messages.

1.1. Types of Greetings

A greeting is a short message that plays before the caller is allowed to record a message. The greeting is intended to let the caller know that you are not able to answer their call. The greeting can also be used to convey other information like when you will be available, other methods to contact you, or other options that the caller can use to receive assistance.

The Asterisk PBX has three types of greetings:

Types of Greetings

Busy Greeting

If the Asterisk PBX thinks that you are on the phone, the caller will hear your “busy” greeting. Your busy greeting can either be a generic message, like:

- The person at extension *number* is on the phone.
- *recorded name* is on the phone.

or the busy greeting can be a message that you record.

Unavailable Greeting

If the Asterisk PBX thinks that you are unavailable (e.g. you don’t answer the phone or your phone is not connected to the network) the caller will hear your “unavailable” greeting. The unavailable greeting can either be a generic message, like:

- The person at extension *number* is unavailable.
- *recorded name* is unavailable.

or the unavailable greeting can be a message that you record.

Temporary Greeting

You can also record a temporary greeting. A temporary greeting will always be played regardless of your “busy” or “unavailable” status. This could be used, for example, if you are going on vacation and want to inform people not to expect a return call anytime soon, but you do not want to re-record your busy and unavailable greetings when you come back.

1.2. Folders

The Asterisk PBX allows you to save and organize your messages into folders. There are ten folders:

Folder Names

- New
- Old
- Work
- Family
- Friends
- Folder 5
- Folder 6
- Folder 7
- Folder 8
- Folder 9

When a caller leaves a message for you, Asterisk will put the message into the “New” folder. If you listen to the message, but do not delete the message or save the message to a different folder, the Asterisk PBX will automatically move the message to the “Old” folder.

When you first log into your mailbox, the Asterisk PBX will make the “New” folder the current folder if you have any new messages. If you do not have any new messages the Asterisk PBX will make the “Old” folder the current folder.

1.3. The Directory

The Asterisk PBX voicemail system can provide a directory of the users on the system. Contact your administrator for information on accessing the directory.

Chapter 2. Leaving a Message in a Mailbox

If you are not able to answer a phone call, your administrator may have configured the Asterisk PBX to allow the caller to record a message that you can listen to later. Depending on how the Asterisk system was configured, the caller may first hear a greeting and/or some instructions before being allowed to record a message. The process of leaving a message looks like this:

1. Play the appropriate greeting. See Section 1.1 for more information on which greeting will be played. The Asterisk PBX administrator can control whether a greeting is played or not and can also control whether the busy or unavailable greeting is played (if you record a temporary greeting, the temporary greeting will always be played if the administrator does not turn off greetings).
2. Play some short instructions. Again, the Asterisk PBX administrator can control whether the instructions are played or not.
3. Play a beep.
4. Record the message, and optionally allow the caller to review the message.

While listening to the greeting or the instructions, the caller can press any of the following buttons:

- “#” Skip the rest of the greeting and instructions and immediately begin recording the message.
- “*” Transfer out of the message recording application.⁷ Typically used by the Asterisk PBX administrator to allow users to access their mailboxes.
- “0” Transfer to an operator⁷.

After the greeting and the instructions have played the caller will hear a beep and then the system will start recording a message. To end the recording, the caller can hang up the phone or press the “#” button.

If the caller hangs up the phone to end the recording, the Asterisk system will put the message in your “New” folder.

If the caller pressed the “#” button to end the recording and the Asterisk PBX administrator has configured the system to let the caller review the message, the caller will be presented with the following options:

- “0” Transfer to an operator.⁷
- “1” Save the message.
- “2” Review the message.
- “3” Re-record the message.

If the caller presses “1” the message will be placed in your “New” folder. If the user presses “0” the message will be cancelled and the user will be transferred to the operator.

Chapter 3. Accessing Your Mailbox

3.1. Logging In

Asterisk allows your administrator a lot of flexibility so there is no single answer to how to log into your mailbox. Contact your administrator for details on how to access your mailbox. However, below is a discussion of several popular methods for accessing mailboxes that your administrator may have chosen.

By pressing a button on your phone.

Your phone may have a special button on it that has been configured to allow access to your mailbox. Consult the documentation that came with your phone and your Asterisk PBX administrator for details.

By calling your extension and pressing the “*” button.

If you call your own extension and are redirected to the voicemail system to leave a message, you may be able to press the “*” button to switch from leaving a message to accessing your mailbox.

By calling a special extension.

Your Asterisk PBX administrator may have configured a special extension that can be called to access your mailbox. Contact your Asterisk PBX administrator for details.

Before you are allowed to listen to your messages, you may be asked to enter your mailbox number and a password.

3.2. The First Time You Log In

The first time that you log into your mailbox, you may be required to change some settings. In particular, you may be required to:

- Record your name.
- Record your busy greeting.
- Record your unavailable greeting.
- Change your password.

3.3. Menus

This section contains a detailed discussion of the menus used to access your mailbox.

3.3.1. Main Menu

The main menu will be the first menu that you are presented with once you have logged in.

- “1” Listen to messages in the currently selected folder.¹ See Section 3.3.4 for more information.
- “2” Change folders. See Section 3.4 for more information.
- “3” Advanced options.
- “0” Mailbox options.
- “*” Repeat the menu options.
- “#” Exit from the voice mail system.

3.3.2. Advanced Options in Main Menu

The following buttons may be pressed in the “Advanced Options” menu that was accessed from the Main Menu.

- “4” Place an outgoing call⁷.
- “5” Leave a message for another user on the system. See Chapter 2 for more information.
- “*” Return to the main menu.

3.3.3. Mailbox Options

- “1” Record your unavailable message.
- “2” Record your busy message.
- “3” Record your name.
- “4” Record your temporary greeting.
- “5” Change your password.

3.3.3.1. Recording a Temporary Greeting

If you do not have a temporary greeting set, you will immediately be asked to record a temporary greeting. If you do have a temporary greeting set you will be presented with the following menu:

“1” Record a temporary greeting.

This will allow you to record a new temporary greeting.

“2” Erase temporary greeting.

Once your temporary greeting has been erased callers will be presented with either your busy or unavailable messages, depending on your status.

“*” Return to the main menu.

xxx

3.3.4. Listening to Messages

3.3.4.1. The Message Envelope

The voice mail system will play back the message “envelope”. Depending on how the voice mail system has been configured, the message envelope may consist of the following items:

- Position.
- Date and time that the message was received.
- Caller ID information.
- Duration of the message.

Pressing “1” any time during the playback of the message envelope will skip to the message playback. The voice mail system will then play back the message.

3.3.4.2. During Message Playback

During the playback of the message, any of the following buttons may be pressed:

- “*” Rewind the message by 3 seconds².
- “#” Fast forward the message by 3 seconds².
- “0” Pause the message playback. Press any other button to resume playback.
- “1456789” Pressing any of these buttons will halt the playback of the message and perform the corresponding action from the post-message playback options.

3.3.4.3. After Message Playback

After the message has been played back, the system will play a prompt and wait for you to press a button:

- “1” Go to the first message in the current folder³.
- “2” Change folders³. See Section 3.4 for more information.

- “3” Advanced options. See Section 3.3.4.4.
- “4” Go to the previous message in the folder⁴.
- “5” Replay the current message.
- “6” Go to the next message in the folder⁵.
- “7” Delete or undelete the message⁶.
- “8” Forward the message to another user on the system.
- “9” Save the message to a different folder⁶.
- “0” Mailbox options³.
- “*” Replay the prompt.
- “#” Exit the voice mail system.

3.3.4.4. Advanced Options After Listening to a Message

The following buttons may be pressed in the “Advanced Options” menu while you are listening to a message.

- “1” Record a message and send it directly to the mailbox of the person that sent you the current message.
- “2” Call the person that left the message back⁷.
- “3” Play the message envelope.
- “4” Place an outgoing call⁷.
- “5” Leave a message for another user on the system. See Chapter 2 for more information.
- “*” Return to the main menu.

3.4. Changing Folders

If you select the option to change folders the Asterisk PBX will present you with the following options:

- “0” “New” messages.
- “1” “Old” messages.
- “2” “Work” messages.
- “3” “Family” messages.
- “4” “Friends” messages.

- “5” “Folder 5” messages³.
- “6” “Folder 6” messages³.
- “7” “Folder 7” messages³.
- “8” “Folder 8” messages³.
- “9” “Folder 9” messages³.
- “#” Cancel the change folder operation.

Notes

1. Option is not announced if there are no messages in the current folder.
2. The amount of time that a message may be rewound or fast forwarded is configurable by the administrator.
3. The prompt does not mention the availability of this option.
4. If you are listening to the first message in the current folder the prompt will not mention this option.
5. If you are listening to the last message in the folder the prompt will not mention this option.
6. The administrator may configure the system to automatically go to the next message when you save or delete a message.
7. This option is only available if it has been enabled by the administrator.

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