A phone for the twenty-second century

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The audience

- Anyone who gets more calls/e-mails/IMs/texts than they can handle:
  - recruiters
  - campaign managers
  - organizers
  - socialites
  - reporters
  - consultants
  - attorneys
  - receptionists
  - professors
  - me
The motivation

- Home phones aren’t so useful anymore: I’m rarely there to pick it up

- When I first got my phone, I kept my number private. The few people who had it had a good reason:
  - family and (some) friends
  - consulting clients
  - credit card company

- In college, it became my primary phone...
  - Now I have to give to anyone who needs a number (recruiters get it through ECS, student organizations...)
  - ...and it went on Facebook. Someone I haven’t seen in years (and never had my number) calls me only for technical support
The motivation

- My communication systems have different response times:
  - Fastest: phone: I'll almost always answer – and I get back to voicemail quickly.
  - Text messages: I'll grudgingly reply quickly if and only if it’s warranted (I don’t have a plan, so I won’t respond to spurious messages.)
  - IM: Immediate response when I’m at my machine.
  - IRC: Next time I log in, if the sender is around.
  - E-mail: Reasonably quick response if necessary – and for less messages, within a few days.

- I like e-mail best: I can choose when to respond based on how urgent the message is.

- I don’t like the phone: you’re raising a non-maskable interrupt. I hate playing phone tag, too.

- But I’m sure my cell phone number will be available to everyone soon (Grand Central is already pushing for convergence: one number for all your phones)
Design: the big idea

- I want to choose when I respond to incoming requests (phone calls, e-mails, IMs, texts). I can’t do that for phone calls now, and as my number spreads, I think the phone will be my primary medium.
  - I got a call from a recruiter at a bar last Friday night. Ack.

- Big idea: treat incoming calls as requests, not immediate demands.
  - Requests include a timeframe for a response.
  - You can respond immediately or respond with “in x minutes” for some x.

→ Allows us to manage constant contact.
A mock-up

The tiny controller (which also acts as a dialer and address book) lets you discreetly choose a response time. The unobtrusive headset connects wirelessly. (Voice control would force you to announce your decision to those around you.)
A scenario

At about 1:30 on Friday, a recruiter called me to schedule a trip. I was in (this) class, so I couldn’t answer it immediately – but I knew I’d be available in fifteen minutes and that her call was urgent. It was almost noon for her; if I called her back after class, I would probably have missed her. Since I was in class, I needed a quiet way to say I’d call her back soon.
A scenario

With this phone, I’d pull the vibrating controller out of my pocket, hit the “15 minutes” button, and the caller would be notified of the delay. This required only a single button press. The phone would automatically remind me of the call in about twelve minutes. The caller would also see the history of how quickly I’ve returned her calls, so she has a better idea of how reliable my estimate is.