

Give Callers Something To Listen To While On Hold



from Daniel Kerher

Dear BizBest: We try not to put callers on hold, but when we're busy, it happens. Right now, they hear nothing. Some companies I've called myself have messages about special offers, hours and events that sound really professional. How do we get something like that? -- Holding

Dear Holding: Delivering sales and marketing messages on hold is an idea that's been gaining momentum lately among small businesses.

Sure, you want to avoid putting anyone on hold. But if you must, you might as well try to make the most of it. Why waste that time with sleepy music, radio stations (which carry someone else's ads!) or silence. Might as well use the opportunity to "tell and sell."

Ads on hold can make a small company sound big, with the right combination of information, voice and music that can help transform "dead time" -- however brief -- into sell time or customer service time.

In today's fast-paced, highly competitive markets, music just doesn't cut it. It leaves the marketing potential of your hold button untapped. Do customers on hold just want to be entertained? Most say no. Cute and funny messages get stale quickly. Providing informative content benefits both sides.

Not just any on-hold message will do. Professionally written and produced messages are essential to gain the proper balance of interesting, helpful information about your company and phrases that encourage callers to keep holding.

Add professional voice talent and specially licensed music blended in, and on hold messaging can really work. Callers are less agitated and more likely to show interest in a product or service mentioned. And most callers say they'd rather hear information than music or nothing.

Studies show that the average hold time is about 45 seconds -- a more than adequate opening for your business to pass along information helpful to building customer relationships. A strategically written on hold marketing message can also reduce hang-ups.

Some businesses use hard-sell messages, while others are soft-sell or no-sell. A few examples:

- Hours and location: Your message can include business hours and your Web site address -- the very information some callers may have wanted.
- Cross-selling and impulse buys: A caller on hold to a hair salon could hear about a new hair care product just in, or a weekly special.
- Branding: Tell callers what your business is all about; things you do they might not know about.
- Testimonials: Let customers hear what other customers are saying.

Prices vary greatly depending on the number of messages you want and the type of service or equipment you choose. You can install your own equipment or use the vendor's. A single four-minute on hold music and voiceover production costs about \$300-400.

Be sure to consider how many messages you'll need during the year. If you expect to change often, look for package pricing to lower your cost.

- Easy On Hold offers a range of quick and simple message on hold solutions for small businesses. They'll even create an original on hold message just for you as a free demo so you can hear exactly what it will sound like. Visit www.easyonhold.com and hear demos online or call (888) 798-HOLD.

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