

“NO more dreaded silence to your callers”



Less Phone Hang-ups & More Sales with the right Telephone On Hold System for your Business



On Hold Messaging – the '*White Paper*'
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The Top 5 Mistakes people make when purchasing a message on hold system

(compiled from client feedback & industry research)

1] Signing a Dangerously Binding Contract

Look out for contracts that automatically renew for an extended amount of time at the end of the initial agreement period. This isn't a problem if you're happy to continue, however every customer deserves the right to easily discontinue if they wish. Some companies only allow for a limited time window to cancel if you don't wish to continue. If you're a day late or forget to notify them of your intentions during their stipulated time frame, you can find yourself legally bounded for another 2 or 3 years. Also, it's commonplace for some on hold companies to automatically increase the charged pricing rate at the contract renewal time. At the end of the initial agreement period you should ONLY be bounded to continue by your chosen billing cycle or similar, with the option to cancel at ANY time with a reasonable amount of notice given. Always read ALL fine prints – and any company that has tailored a system to lock you in longer than you may otherwise wish to is not working in your best interests and only supplying the service to serve themselves.

2] Paying Too Much

If you only need and will actually utilize no more than 2 or 3 updates per year, why pay extra \$ for 6, 12 or even unlimited updates? This is particular wasteful if you're NOT actually going to take advantage of such an aggressively disciplined updating plan. It's best to start lower than higher when it comes to committing to a yearly updating allowance. Without breaking the terms or being subject to penalties, you should be able to revise the inclusions of your agreement to include more updates if / when required at any time. Always try to opt for a package and pay for what you will actually use, instead of thinking you may need to use more at some point in the future. Other tricks include receiving quotations that exclude GST, are divided into daily or weekly costs to lessen the perceived final costs and other hidden charges not obvious at the quotation level. Typically on hold companies that have oodles of staff, layers of middle management, seriously high overheads and massive marketing budgets can't offer or maintain realistic pricing – so shop around! With that said the cheapest quote provided isn't always the best option either for obvious reasons. However, plenty of smaller operators can provide a fantastic service, at a reasonably price. In fact, many respected boutique on hold providers are renowned for providing more professional and uniquely tailored recordings, together with a more personalised customer experience.

3] Locked into a Conveyor Belt Service

Some on hold companies predominantly invest most of their time, money and resources in building new clients only. Then they churn out a rushed script and recording and hope you sign off on it at the earliest so they can focus on the next client. Once the scripting and recording starts, this is where the real test is! Your script should be creative and fully customised to your organisations marketing plan, customers and unique selling / information points – and not a gimmicky flyer script! You should then be able to choose the best available voices and music to ensure your recording is produced to a commercial radio advertisement standard. Beware of amateurish sounding recordings. You and your callers will definitely hear the difference. Your on hold recordings should always be moving your business forward!

4] Not Understanding the Full Deal

Not knowing what your package actually includes (but assuming its all ok) is a common mistake. Typically you should receive the digital equipment or software system, along with the initial recording which includes around 6 to 10 messages (each message should average 15 to 30 seconds in length). The initial recording should run for approximately 4 to 6 minutes and then commence from the beginning again. If there are regular new message recordings included (known as updates), be very clear on what this actually entails. For example, if you have an allowance of 2 updates per year, this should not mean only 2 x new messages (15 to 30 second in length) can be ordered each year. Rather two times a year (x 2) you should be able to order around 6 to 10 new messages (15 to 30 seconds in length per message), which equates for up to 20 new messages allowed to be ordered each year for no extra charge (if your package includes 2 updates per year).

4] Assuming a FREE Demo equals the Perfect On Hold Company

Free demos aren't a bad idea if used in context. If the sole purpose is to push you into a corner and create undue stress and pressure to sign with a given provider, the FREE Demo is just the cherry in their sales tactic. Research has shown companies investing significant resources into FREE demos charge more on average than companies that don't. A professional on hold company should be investing most of their resources into producing recordings for their actual clients, rather than creating free samples as bait. Any well established on hold company should be able to easily point you to samples from a variety of industries to assist in your evaluation process. This should give you an instant and accurate indication on the standard of recording you can expect for your business. It's easy to say 'oh they made me a free demo so they're the company and such great guys' – failing to review other quotes adequately - making you the perfect candidate to fall for the other top mistakes.

5] Over Judging a Companies Capability

Like many industries, there are plenty of fly-by-nighter on hold companies that are in it simply for quick cash. A well established on hold provider with the right business ethics and values should have been around for at least 6 to 8 years. They should have a healthy client base and live and breathe the opportunity to record the best written, produced and sounding recordings, backed by superior ongoing support to clients. Any company that needs to name and shame a competitor to get their sale over the line is only complementing the company they're knocking down. In most cases when the salesperson says 'don't go with that company ...' is only because that company is actually doing great things so they're threatened by them. As on hold messaging is generally a longer term supplier partnership, you need an official supplier you can rely on to pro-actively assist for many years ahead, as your business and customers change over time. It's far from an order once and it's all over service...no different to most other marketing and customer relation areas.

AND REMEMBER

"It's your callers and your business that you're entrusting to an on hold provider. Ask questions. Get answers. If an on hold provider can't tick all the right boxes and more, don't expect a superior recording, running on a reliable system and backed by outstanding service!"

Telephone On Hold Messaging, Equipment Systems

Useful information to assist with the evaluation process.

What are on hold messages?

Used for some time now by larger companies, Telephone On Hold Messages have been commonplace for informing, educating and entertaining callers that are placed on hold within a business call environment. Research has proven that Telephone On Hold Messages increase the time a caller will stay on the line, while also triggering interest in response to what they have heard.

Telephone On Hold Messages are only now starting to be more prevalent in the business community, due to the fact that the technology required is more readily available, the number of on hold service providers have increased dramatically and the benefits of such systems are more widely understood.

This document aims to provide understanding about on hold messages, equipment options and reasons why all businesses placing callers on hold regularly and at length should pro-actively consider a professional Messages On Hold System.

The legalities of playing music or the radio to your callers...

Many businesses are currently playing either a commercially released CD on repeat or their local radio station down the phone line to callers on hold. Typically it's the easy and logical answer compared to silence, however there are greatly improved ways to capitalise on this valuable hold time. Playing your local radio station on hold often results in your callers hearing less suitable and unpredictable music, countless announcer talk breaks and plenty of advertisements - even your direct competitors!

Additionally, there are broadcast and artist governing bodies who charge license fees for the right to publicly play the radio, music or your favourite singer's CD to callers on hold. From a telephone on hold point of view, these bodies calculate this cost predominantly based on how many incoming phone lines are connected to the business. Typically fees can range from \$250 to in excess of \$1000 each and every year. There are also copyright, licensing and re-broadcast constraints regarding your business playing commercially released music CDs, mp3's and the radio.

Recordings provided by your chosen on hold company should cover the specific legal licensed usage for your business, eliminating any further requirement to pay ongoing fees to any regulatory body.

All on hold messages produced by Evolved Sound are guaranteed to be license free.

Can Telephone On Hold Messages help my business?

Telephone On Hold Messages & Music advertising is one of the most affordable and efficiently targeted marketing tool available today. Every customer contact is highly pre-qualified because the customer has initiated the contact. It's a sales opportunity that no business can afford to ignore!

- It's advertising, which means if produced correctly and professionally will have a direct impact.
- It's no less important than your other advertising avenues.
- It's your image on the line!
- You only get one chance to make a good first impression!

On Hold Messages - The Key Facts

Compiled from numerous industry magazines and research publications.

- 70% of business callers are put on hold.
- 60% of business callers that are placed on hold to silence hang-up.
- 30% of these callers don't call back!
- 88% of business callers prefer professionally produced and personalised on hold messages and will actually listen to what your messages have to say.
- 16% of business callers make purchases based on the on hold messages they were listening to.
- 94% of the average marketing / advertising budget is spent on getting people to call a business, however only 6% of that budget is spent for on-hold marketing. They call you because of your campaign, and then tend to hang up if left to silence!
- Costs spent on your telephone on hold system are fully tax deductible.

“If you have been on hold to unpleasant sounds or even silence in the past, I’m sure you can relate to some of these experiences...its all human nature”

I am only interested in playing music to my callers, can I do this?

Evolved Sound appreciates that spoken messages doesn't suit all businesses. If you fall into this category, you should also have the option to purchase a Music Only On Hold package instead. You should be able to purchase music titles pre-loaded into a digital on hold system as a complete package. Music titles offered should also be license free, so your business won't be required to pay any additional fees to regulatory bodies.

How many on hold message updates are right for my business?

There is no simple answer to this question. Some businesses may choose not to update their on hold messages often at all, while others understand the benefits and importance of having fresh and changing messages and may update monthly, quarterly or a few times per year.

As a general guide, if the products, services and information that is presented to your customers constantly changes and there is medium to high caller activity, it would be advisable to update your on hold messages in accordance with these changes. This will ensure your total message is consistent across all facets of your business. Running the same message for too long can easily become stale or out of date. At a minimum, your on hold messages should be updated 2 to 3 times per year. It is particularly important to undertake more frequent updates if many of the same callers are regularly calling again and consequently placed on hold. You don't want to sound like a broken record for months on end – no matter how well it has been recorded and produced!

How long will should an on hold messages go for?

Typically a standard on hold recording service is based on approximately 6 to 10 messages (each message averages 15 to 30 seconds in length). This equates to a total running time of between 4 to 5 minutes, once the full mix has been produced. It isn't advisable to fall short of 6 messages. Having more than 10 messages in your rotation is fine and is commonly undertaken by business, which can work equally well providing the information remains of value to your callers.

When the message reaches the end will it automatically start again?

Yes. In the case of digital on hold systems, when the message reaches the end, it will automatically loop back and commence from the start again. In the case of software based systems, the messages being played can be prioritised more randomly or with message specific rotations.

Which part of the message will the caller hear?

For example if you had 3 callers on hold, all 3 callers will be hearing the same instance of the message at the same given time. Callers being placed on hold will start hearing messages from a random point within your entire recording. This is why we recommend that each message (segment) isn't too long (15 to 30 seconds in length each on average). Some Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) and other more advanced phone systems, can have the caller hear the beginning of the recorded message each time they are placed on hold.

Can I play different messages to different callers or split the message to different parts of our company?

This option would be subject to the technical capability of your phone system, however this ability is very uncommon amongst most phone systems.

Key Features Your New Telephone On System Must Have

1. Personalised Telephone Messages / Music

Your business should have the ability to choose the music and type of voice that records your scripted custom on hold messages. You should also expect full assistance from your on hold company in writing your scripts, to ensure that your messages have substantial impact to your callers.

Your On Hold Message Recording service should include assistance with:

- Message scripting.
- Suitable voice and music selection.
- Digital recording to your requirements.



The messages scripted and produced recording should be in accordance with your business, customer relationship, advertising and marketing goals. Many businesses can find it hard to get the ball rolling in writing appropriate messages. Your on hold company should be able to easily and professionally craft messages covering scripting ideas that include:

- Running company promotions.
- Answer frequently asked questions.
- Provide seasonal greetings.
- Promote new products and services.
- Advise change of contact details.
- Provide administrative information.
- Thank clients for their patronage.
- Highlight recent company achievements.
- Introduce staff members.
- General hints / tips relating to your target market.
- Present some testimonials from other customers.
- Provide inspiration in your own special way.
- Clearly differentiate yourself to your competitors.

The possibilities are only limited by your imagination!

Beware of scripts which are all gimmick one liners. At the end of the day, they may generate a few laughs, however they often won't adequately convey real substance to your callers in the interest of your business! A tactless script serves little purpose other than being light hearted – but even that goes so far in a professional business savvy environment!

2. Technically Advanced

This goes without saying - systems running out-dated tape technology or an analog system with moving parts should not be purchased. The equipment used to play your on hold messages must be fully digital with no moving parts. You don't want to be manually checking or re-starting anything each morning! If there is a power failure, the system should restart automatically without your involvement. This will ensure maximum reliability, while also offering your business flexible message updating options. On hold messaging technology has come a long way, and there's no reason why you should settle for second best!

3. Package / Purchase Options

Your business should have the option to have periodic message updates. For example 2, 4, 6 or 12 on hold message updates per year. For most businesses, core products and services do change over time, so a minimum of at least 2 to 3 updates per year should be opted for – in accordance with your other marketing or customer relation initiatives. If you have the same callers that are regularly on hold, then it is critical (in the interest of the caller) that your messages remain fresh and constantly changing over time.

Stale and outdated messages can easily have the reverse effect!

Only commit to a package where you will be receiving your full return on investment. Lease or 'Contract' options can be cost saving and working in your favour, particularly when the package includes the full initial recording, a fixed amount of updates per year, the digital system, along with ongoing support and warranty. If you are reviewing options from several On Hold Messaging companies, it is important to understand all your options, ALL costs and beware of hidden fees commonly overlooked at the initial sale level. At the end of the day, some companies out there have been known to misconstrue the facts and do anything to have you sign a contract that benefits them much more than you!

Evolved Sound has no hidden fees or underhanded tactics. Rest assured you're always in great hands!

4. Compatibility

Equipment options should also be fully compatible with the phone system your business is currently running. You don't only need an advanced multi-line phone system to put callers on hold. With new technology there are now ways you can still achieve this with a single line or Voice Over IP (VOIP) phone system.



“How much do you value your callers while they're on hold?”

5. Equipment Options

These are some examples of telephone on hold equipment options. Either of these options would suit your business depending on your current setup, budget, level of IT expertise within your organisation and intended message updating cycle.



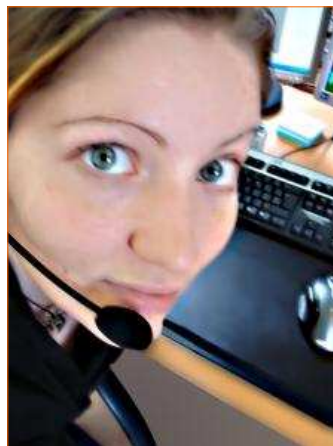
Flash Drive On Hold System



Software On Hold System

Your business should be able to take advantage of the following options to update your recorded message or music content:

- Have updates emailed or provided for electronic download.
- Update your messages by replacing the cartridge.
- Have the immediate ability to add, delete, schedule and prioritise existing recorded messages.



SUMMARY

Implementing a new on hold system for your business is no different to any other serious transaction:

- 1: Do adequate research and ask as many questions as necessary.
- 2: Define your specific requirements and obtain expert recommendations.
- 3: Collate all your pricing and options that closely relate to your requirements.
4. You now have the knowledge to make the right decision to benefit your callers and your business long term!
- 5: Its time to make it happen and Good Luck!

Evolved Sound creatively uses digital sound and the latest technology to increase the:

- Marketability
- Impact
- Professionalism
- Sales
- ...and Ultimately the Profitability of organisations globally!

Contact us today to discover which telephone on hold system and custom messages or music package will suit best.

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