

# WHITE PAPER



ON-HOLD MARKETING FOR CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT



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## ARE YOUR CUSTOMERS HEARING YOUR MESSAGE?

**“In the rush to establish visual brand awareness, businesses are shooting themselves in the foot by failing to take advantage of the power of On-Hold Marketing.”**

*Dave Clark, Marketing Director, Business On-Hold US*



Despite the ever-expanding list of channels where clients or potential clients can engage with businesses online, **88% of Americans say they still prefer to pick up the telephone [1]** –and yet poor call handling remains a major source of complaint for consumers.

Today, clients are faced with an overwhelming choice of providers, all vying for their attention. Customer service is more important than ever, and the key to a business standing out from a sea of competition.

While marketing budgets focus on visual advertising and social media, there is one crucial area of customer engagement that is being overlooked: **the telephone call.**

Regardless of how effectively your online campaigns persuade customers to pick up the phone, that investment of time and money is lost if little consideration is given to what they hear when they are put on hold.

The age of amateur voice in-house recorded voice messages or random melodies on loop is over.

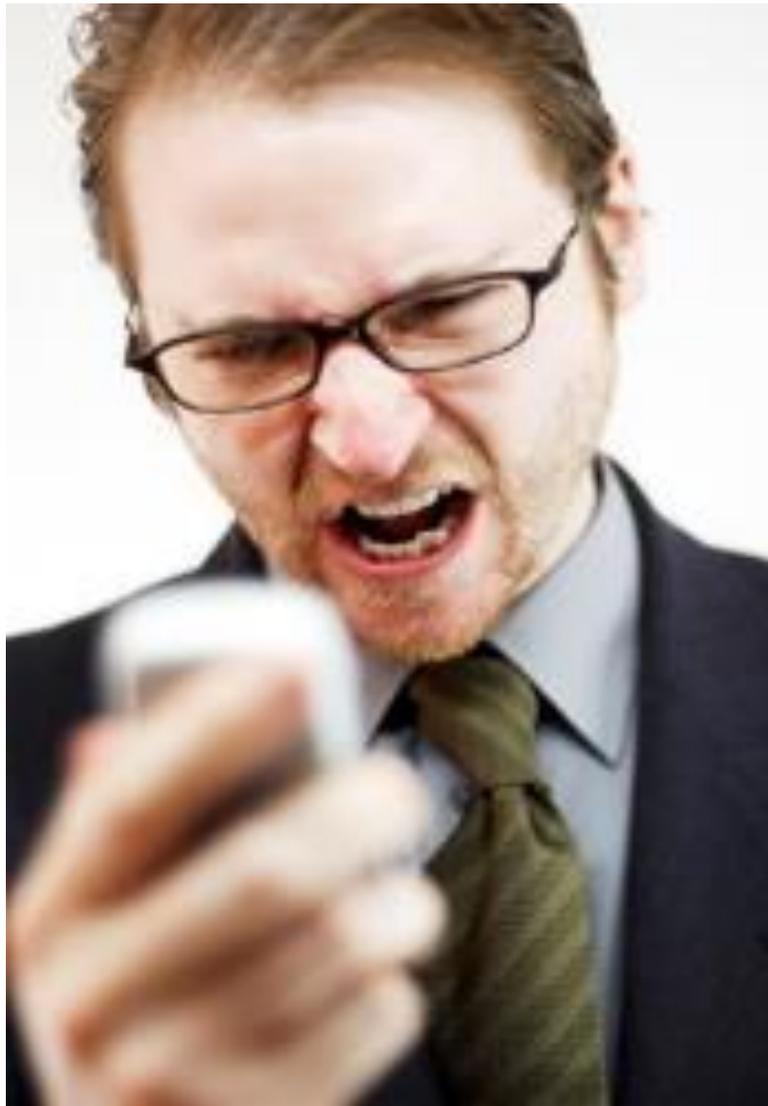
**Professional audio marketing offers a simple, win-win solution** to reduce customer hang-up rates, increase sales conversions and build brand awareness.

**TWO THIRDS** of Americans express dissatisfaction with how businesses handle their calls. [2]

## HAS YOUR COMPANY LOST ITS VOICE?

A recent study by AT&T, revealed that over 70% of business calls are put on hold for 45 to 60 seconds. [3]

That may not seem long on paper, but it is longer than most TV commercials. Neglecting to optimize that time is, at best, a missed opportunity and, at worst, a lost customer.



## “YOUR CALL MATTERS TO US”

No company worth its salt would allow a potential client to enter its premises without at least a friendly greeting or a welcoming reception area, and yet many businesses are failing to extend that common courtesy to their telephone callers.

Not only are they losing potential clients who hang up without ever speaking to a company representative, they are missing out on a golden opportunity to create a great first impression.

It has been estimated that 34% of callers who hang up will not call back.

In addition, those callers who do stay on the line, but experience boredom or frustration, are less likely to be favorably disposed to receive the company's message or offer when they eventually do get through to speak to a representative.

The effort and budget allocated to capturing the attention of potential clients and a call to action to pick up the phone is simply squandered, if that action results in a bad customer experience and falls at the first hurdle.

**94% of all marketing budgets are spent on inducing a customer to call, while only 6% is spent on handling the call once it is received."**

*-Inbound Telephone Call Center*

Of course many businesses are striving to reduce on-hold times by responding to calls faster and introducing good working practices for their staff to ensure that wait times are kept to a minimum.

However, even with the best will in the world, and large sales teams, waiting times cannot be avoided, leaving a clear need for an effective on-hold marketing strategy to address the customer experience.

## SOME SOUND IS BETTER THAN NO RESPONSE AT ALL –or is it?

In a study conducted by North American Telecom, it was reported that callers listening to music on the call, rather than left in silence, will remain on the line 30 seconds longer. [4]

In addition, UK consumers surveyed on behalf of the audio branding specialists P.H. Group expressed a desire to hear something other than just beeps or silence when put on hold.



**"In the US, 70% of callers  
left holding the line in silence  
hang up within 60 seconds"  
- CNN Survey**

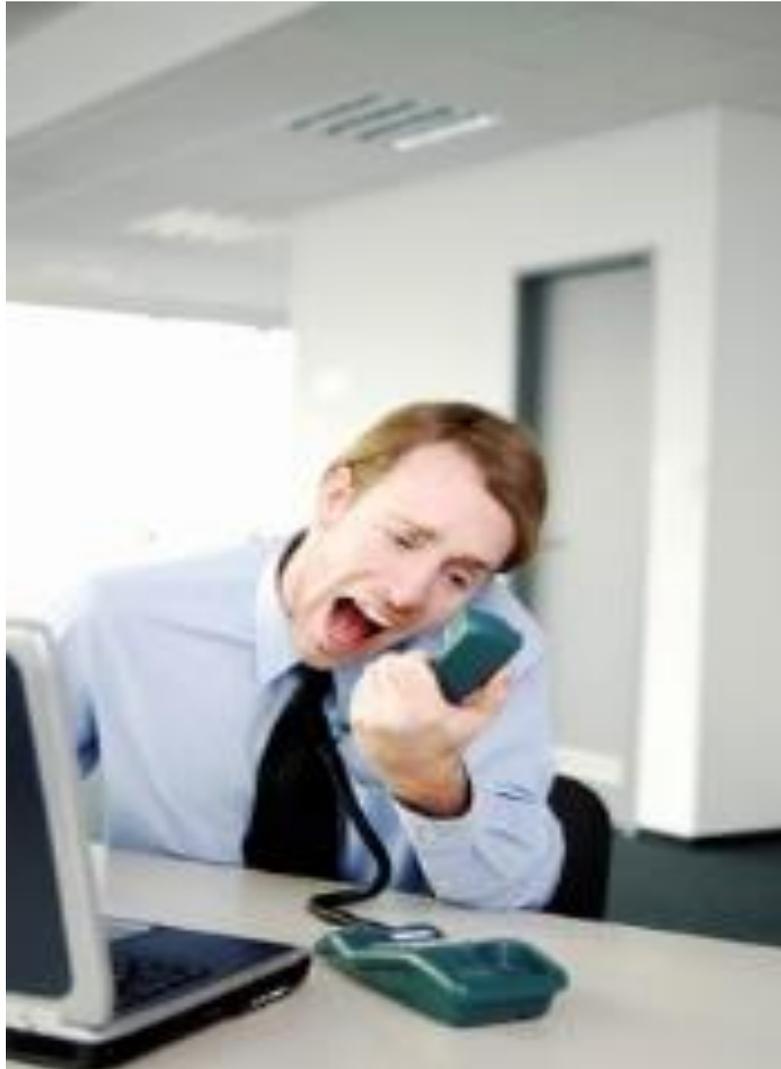
With that in mind, most companies are aware of the importance of filling the on-hold silence, however, many have gone no further than the 'something is better than nothing' approach, and fill the silence with an apparently random tune or pop song, or a basic voice recording of opening times, recorded by a member of staff.

With so much deliberation and investment afforded to presenting the company's visual marketing, it is surprising how little thought or effort has been applied to the company's audio message.

In the words of the Harvard Business Review "There's one powerful branding tool that has been generally overlooked –or perhaps undervalued- by most marketers – **sound**. With our increasingly audio-enabled media environment, the strategic use of sound can play an important role in positively differentiating a product or service, enhancing recall, creating preference, building trust, and even increasing sales..."

## WHY DO CALLERS HANG UP?

An important consideration when designing an on-hold message is understanding why customers are dissatisfied with their telephone experience and why they hang up.



Targets to reduce on-hold waiting times may seem satisfactory on paper. In fact, the AT&T survey findings that 70% of business phone calls in the United States are placed on hold for 45 to 60 seconds doesn't look too bad, but when combined with the PH Media Group findings that 70% of consumers are put on hold for more than 50% of their calls, the seconds soon add up in perceived time loss and frustration to the consumer. Even more so for the time-strapped executive –calculated to spend 15 minutes a day on hold.

## Every year, US Executives spend a staggering 68 hours on hold!

60 seconds may not seem an unreasonable time for a caller to wait, after all most people are prepared to wait for much longer in other environments. But telephone wait times present a particular situation in which the real cause of boredom and frustration is the *perception* of how slowly that time passes in the absence of any engagement of the mind or stimulation – the old ‘watched pot never boils’ phenomenon where time drags when the mind is not engaged.



With this knowledge in mind, the smart solution is to address the customer’s experience of how that time is spent. The real challenge here is to **reduce caller boredom**.

That means the on-hold message has a requirement to entertain.

However, ‘one man’s meat is another man’s poison’, so the task of selecting a piece of music that appeals to the entire population is virtually impossible. In the effort to calm frayed nerves and appeal to as many callers as possible, many companies have opted for inoffensive background tracks. This can be counter-productive and, rather than engaging the mind, lead to the same symptoms of boredom, with irritated callers complaining of ‘banal, elevator music’!

## WHY ON-HOLD MARKETING IS THE OPTIMUM SOLUTION

In the same study that reported that callers will stay on hold 30 seconds longer if hearing music, it was found that **callers hearing commercials will stay online for up to 3 minutes longer!**

Not only does this present an effective way to engage and entertain callers, and alleviate boredom and dissatisfaction, it introduces an excellent opportunity for the company to present itself to the potential client, as a captive audience, and to increase brand awareness through sound.

While providing content for the brain and soothing irritation, a carefully designed audio message allows the caller to hear further information about the company, new offers or promotions.

## WHAT EXACTLY IS ON-HOLD MARKETING?

On-hold marketing is a specialized branch of audio marketing, designed to make the best use of a company's audio branding by raising brand awareness and delivering company offers in a way that captures the attention of the caller and reduces hang up rates and customer frustration.

**The Harvard Business Review describes audio branding as “the creation of an entire audio language for the brand based on its essence, values, promise, and personality”.**



## THE INGREDIENTS FOR A GREAT ON-HOLD RECORDING

The recipe for an effective on-hold audio message that entertains, is appropriate to the customer base and appeals to as many callers as possible is comprised of the following:

- **A good script:** while many companies will be tempted to use the marketing opportunity to list their sales, quality or longevity in the industry, it must be borne in mind that a critical purpose of the recording is to provide interesting content. This calls for the experience and skills of a good copywriter who knows how to present the business from the perspective of what it can do for the customer. The copywriter's art lies in selling without being 'salesy', and is just as important in audio as in visual marketing.
- **The Right Voice:** it goes without saying that some voices are simply more appealing than others. That's why it pays to hire a professional voice-over actor to deliver the script, and to have it recorded in a studio.

- **Music Appropriate to the Service:** often on-hold music reflects the taste or personality of a member of staff. To be effective in audio marketing, it is important to match the tempo and tone to the service or products provided. Upbeat and dynamic is great for a fitness center, but less appropriate for a spa or a hospital. Length is also a consideration – having a short piece on a continuous loop can be irritating. A good quality recording, matched seamlessly with the professional voiceover, reflects the quality of your brand.
- **An Element of Surprise:** it's not enough to upload one recording and leave it there forever. Just as social media and visual advertising needs fresh content to keep it current, your recording will benefit from fresh content, from time to time, in order to keep your customers interested. Updates need not be much more than a change of music or a seasonal message or promotion.
- **Professional Compilation and Production:** the **quality** of your recording influences the **perceived value** of your services.

**The Process:** Collating the components to produce a polished and professional audio track that captures the voice of your company and appeals to your clientele is an art form, selecting music, finding the right tone, selecting an appropriate voice actor, hiring a recording studio, not to mention recording, cutting, and editing time.

The whole process can seem overwhelming. On Hold Business offers a bespoke service with all the components – from script writers to marketers to voice actors and equipment already in place, to ensure a timely and optimized solution, to ensure minimal intrusion times and greatest flexibility.

## THE COMPLETE SOLUTION FOR YOUR ON-HOLD MARKETING

The case for the implementation of a professional audio marketing strategy is compelling.

The audio branding of your company is too important to be left to chance and requires the experience and expertise of a bespoke audio marketing service to bring your audio marketing in line with your visual marketing.

**Business On-Hold US** is a team of experienced on-hold marketing professionals, offering a cost-effective one-stop audio package to ensure that your dedication to customer care and quality is reflected in your company voice, resulting in optimum caller retention and customer satisfaction.



**...the science of caller engagement**

## APPENDIX I: REFERENCES

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