

Use Messages On Hold To Grow Your Small Business



How to use messages on hold to grow your small business.

Transcribed from the September, 2016 Tom Borg Business Builders Tele-seminar.

<http://tomborgconsulting.com>



Tom:

Hello everyone, and welcome to our Business Builders Tele-seminar. My name is **Tom Borg**, the **small business customer profitability expert**. As you know, I'm always on the lookout for ways to make your small business more successful and profitable. Really excited today because we have Mr. **Tim Brown**, the Vice President of **Easy On Hold**. Tim, welcome to the program.

Tim:



Tom, thank you. Thanks for inviting me.

ABOUT EASY ON HOLD

Tom:

Tell us a little bit about your company **Easy On Hold** and what does it do.

Tim:

Easy On Hold delivers **custom music and messages on hold**, that is voicing and music packages and programs through telephone systems to customers to help them spend more money or create more satisfaction through a dazzling on hold message experience while they call your company.

The fact is Tom, about 70% of calls get put on hold. Of course, it might be more or less at your business, but when you have that many people, even if it's for 10 or 20 seconds waiting on hold, what they hear will say a lot about your company. If I could tell you about a little story that got us kicked off when we started the business.

Tom:

Sure.

Tim:

I was calling a restaurant to make a reservation. This was 19 years ago right before we started this company. They were busy restaurant. They put me on hold.

While I was on hold, they had a radio station playing, and it was interesting because the radio station that they were using was *playing a commercial for another restaurant*. It sounded so good, I hung up the phone and I went there.

I don't think they had any idea that they were advertising for their competitors.



We'd never say, "I'm a little busy right now, stand over here and no one will talk to you."

Tim Brown – Easy On Hold

That's really one of the reasons we started the company was because we realized this is such an underserved area. It's like putting your customers in a waiting room with the lights off if you think about it.

We would never do that to our customers. We'd never say, "Well, I'm a little busy right now, stand over here and no one will talk to you." No, you want them to feel engaged. That's why we have signage and other things, magazines, whatever it is in your business or your office to try to keep people entertained and kind of hanging in there. It's even better if it can be about you.

What can we do during the 10, 20, 30 seconds or two minutes callers are giving us when they're waiting on hold? You've got a captive audience!

Tom: It makes total sense. As you know, our **small business** listeners are always looking for ways to make their business **more profitable**. Smaller companies don't always have as many people as they might need, so how can the phone system be best used in the small business environment?

Tim: Small business owners have a difficult job because they have to be the face, the voice, the personality of the company on top of all of the administrative, organizational and selling activities.

AUTOMATED ATTENDANT VS. MESSAGES ON HOLD

With a smaller staff, a company may want to use an automated attendant, which picks up incoming calls. For example, "Thank you for calling ABC company." That is automated attendant, not messages on hold.



- **HOLD QUEUE**: Someone has pressed the "hold button".
- **AUTO-ATTENDANT**: Phones are not answered by a human.
- **TRANSFER QUEUE**: Audio played while call is being transferred out of the Auto-Attendant, before it is picked up by an extension.

The difference between the auto attendant and the message on hold is that the message on hold is only activated by the hold button.

Some have a particular internal audio file that can be loaded that will help with that transition. It could be music. It could be a little statement such as, "Your call is being transferred."

Let's say that I'm a bicycle repair shop. Somebody calls, they want to find out, "Is my bike repaired. Can I come and pick it up?" "Well, let me look."

That hold button just got engaged. That's what we're talking about for on hold. **That hold button is the waiting room**, so you're waiting. That bike shop might be saying right now before the end of the season is a great time to buy our clearance bike shorts and helmets. The caller hears a message that relates to the current season.

Seasonal businesses need current messages on hold. We serve a lot of garden centers. The garden center will always have a seasonal message because the more relevant the message, the more effective it'll be.

Think about your business and take a look at when is the hold button pressed. Do a little self-audit. (You don't have to take too many statistics to figure it out.) How many calls are being put on hold and how long they're being held?

Most businesses will tell you, 'We don't put customers on hold', but sorry, I find that hard to believe. With an open mind consider, 'Am I putting customers on hold?', and then the next question is, 'Is it really 20 seconds or is it more like a minute, or is it two minutes?'. A lot of times, you have a technical department or support department that has a longer hold time than say a sales department or customer service area.

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE MESSAGE ON HOLD SCRIPTS

You may want to match the type of message with the length of the hold time. If your callers are on hold for a short amount of time, hit them with one tiny little idea. I always ask how much can you remember in 20 seconds? How much? Make one little idea followed up with a call to action, and that's a message.



*The most important quality of a company is the
ease of doing business.*

Larry Steinmetz, Business Author

We believe that can be done in 50 words or less. Messages that are 20, 25 seconds are always going to be more successful (in terms of responses) than a longer message. You want to make it like a short conversational idea.

Tom: Yes, makes total sense. What are some of the ways small business can use messages on hold or voice messaging to improve their **customer service**? Because I think that's where a lot of small businesses can have an added advantage over their competitors, which are larger if they really give good service, good customer service. How can your business help someone like that with that idea?

Tim: I've looked at a number of different studies. There is a sales book that was produced by Larry Steinmetz. He has written on what it is that buyers find important.

What are customers most interested in when they are choosing a company? The most important quality of a company is the **ease of doing business**. What is it that makes doing business with you easy? I can get onto a couple of topics regarding specific companies.

I'll give you an example. We do a lot of work with transportation.

In the transportation area, we talk about certifications. It gives people confidence. We talk about the excellence of our drivers; whether they're uniformed, what their training is. It puts people at ease.

Assisted living is a growing area and it's important to make callers feel comfortable by being warm and personal. The **music can help** here too. Blend the music that fits your style.

A lot of these salons have either a really high energy, edgy feel, or it might have a very laid-back personal kind of jazzy cool approach. You can set the tone with the music as well and you can also choose whether it's a male or a female voice to see what's working.

I find that a lot of times, Tom, what we're doing with this is we're making people feel comfortable with the company that they've chosen **because if they're on the phone with you, they are either choosing whether to continue to do business with you or whether they do business with you for the first time.** In both of those cases, I think it's really important to put them at ease.

Tom: As you're speaking there, that brought up a good point, the idea of putting people at ease. Certainly, if they don't feel comfortable working with you or the employee, that's going to give them just one more reason to not to come back or not do business at all that day.



Talk about what specifically you can for somebody. That gives you a lot of credibility.

Tim Brown, Easy On Hold

Tim: Since we're really talking about script content right now, could I get to some ideas on scripting?

One of the things to work on in our messaging is building credibility through specificity. For example, we had a client with a script that said, 'We have the best record in the service industry'. When you hear a general claim like that, ask yourself, 'Can this claim or the statement be used by any other company in any other field?' 'We have the best record in the service industry.' What does that mean? That statement can easily be used by somebody else.

We changed the script. We did a little research for the company. We changed it to say, 'Out of 72 emergency calls last year, 71 of them were completed within 10 minutes. One was completed in 5 minutes.' When we use numbers, examples and people do this, it builds credibility. Talk about what specifically you can for somebody. That gives you a lot of credibility.

CONVERSATIONAL TONE IS KEY

Tim: As far as script content is concerned, we are always talking about how to make it **conversational**. Instead of sounding like a company brochure, with this kind of corporate speak, think about being conversational.

We came out with a list a few years ago of banned or banished words or phrases for on hold or any other communications. For example, we hear a lot, "We will be back momentarily." People really don't say momentarily very much in their common speak. They say, "In a minute," or "Right back," or "Hang on." They say something simple and conversational.

I would encourage all of your listeners, Tom, to focus on some of the materials that they use in their marketing and see if that corporate speak can be transformed **into common-speak** or **friendly-speak** and use it like you're having a conversation with somebody.

MONEY MAKING IDEAS FOR PHONE ON HOLD

Tom: Excellent. Here's a question for you, how can the voice messaging help a small business increase its sales?

Tim: Let's say that you've got a company that delivers technology. Now, perhaps your customers have you do all the basic work but are not under a monthly maintenance contract. Give them the idea while they wait on hold.

The money-makers can be talked about in the on-hold message.

We had a credit union that offered a loan program. Now, they decided that they were going to use three methods promoting their loan program. One was the tellers. It's important that everybody in your business—whether you're selling tractors or mowers or home loans—that your people have the messaging ready to go.



Don't throw your customer off track by introducing an irrelevant topic. Keep it all aligned.

Tim Brown, Easy On Hold

You're telling them, "Oh have you heard about our loan program? Here's a little card that tells you about it." The next step they did was to use a mail piece that they put in their monthly statements. It wasn't really an extra cost. They just added it to a piece of information they were already mailing to the client. The third method that they used was the message on hold. Therefore, if somebody was calling for a reason other than a loan, they would still hear

about the loan. If they were calling to respond to the piece that they got in the mail, they would get that message reinforced.

You have to hear a message a number of times before you can really get a response. When the reinforcement takes place, all those steppingstones lead right to your cash register. Those stones have to be placed in a row and all line up the same message. Don't throw your customer off track by introducing an irrelevant topic. Keep it all aligned. That credit union tripled their loan volume in that quarter, tripled the loan volume. It was just focus. It wasn't an increase in expense. It wasn't a big deal for them. All they did was cut out the noise, reduce the number of topics that they were talking about and for that period of time really aim for that specific idea. Let's take it all the way and make sure we don't leave any money on the table.

Tom:

Tim, these are the kinds of things you can help small business owner strategize and that is put together a program that's going to help them sell more through messages on hold with some of the other services you offer. This is something you can coach someone and help them develop, is that right?



I know that sometimes you've got location and hours and things that are important, but what you really want is get your main profitable topic heard.

Tim Brown, Easy On Hold

Tim:

On our website, easyonhold.com, we have a button called samples. Under that is samples by industry. We've laid out several different industries from orthodontics and restaurants to apartments, education, real estate, salons, technology, tax consultants, tax accounting.

If you run a coffee shop, we've got a restaurant page and it's broken up by pizza, bar and grill, café, Italian, so on. It just gives you marketing ideas. For instance, let's say you do catering. Yes, you make more money on catering than being open during the lunch hour so let's put our money behind a good catering message.

I know that sometimes you've got location and hours and things that are important, but what you really want is get your main profitable topic heard. My advice is to make sure you know where your profit is coming from, and make sure people are hearing all about it.

Tom: Yeah, that makes so much sense. Tim, I know we're just about out of time right now but if our listeners want to get a hold of your company, get a hold of you, what's the number they should call or website they should go to.

Tim: Sure, sure. Well, easonhold.com, E-A-S-Y-O-N-H-O-L-D dot com. We built a very comprehensive site that talks about all the different ways to deliver your message. We also have information about phone systems.

NEW STREAMING TECHNOLOGY

One of the innovations that we've created is a custom live stream which plays live into your phones. Now, it doesn't work with every phone system (think about how many different phone systems are out there) but many, many phone systems. We can do a live audio stream, like Pandora or Spotify, so if you are that restaurant for example, you can talk about lunch during the morning and dinner during the afternoon.

If I call you at two in the afternoon, I'm not going to hear about breakfast. I'm going to hear about dinner, "Hey come in tonight, we've got great offering this evening," or perhaps you're calling and you've got a little break in your message that says good morning, good afternoon. Christmas music can play in December, but you don't want Jingle Bells in January, right?

Tom: That's right.

Tim: It's maddening for some people to know they have yet one more thing to remember to go fix, go change. Well, our streaming service is completely scheduled, so you don't have to do that.

Phone on hold messages are a very simple yet kind of exciting way to advertise because they're so powerful. And it's probably your cheapest form of marketing. This is a few bucks a day we're talking about. You're going to have a reach that hits only the people that really matter. You're not going to waste a moment or a dime because everybody who is on your phone is in the decision-making position. That's what you want is the message at the right place, the right time.

Tom: Excellent, excellent. This is fantastic. Tim, I got to believe that any small business out there wants to maximize their return on investment. That service that you offer here has got to be part of that strategy. I want to thank you so much for being on our program today. Again, could you give us that

phone number and the website again if people want to contact your company?

Tim: Sure, 888-798-HOLD, 888-798-4653. We have many very wonderful people here who will always take your call and ask you a number of questions to get the feel for what your business is all about.

TIP: USE A "CALL TO ACTION"

One last tip now if I could: If you want a response, ask for it. Always include a **call to action** even if your messages are very brief; even if we're talking about a tweet or a Facebook post, anytime you can put in a call to action, people want to know what to do. Now that you've given me a reason; what is the next step? Take the next step and let's work on those calls to action because I think that's where that **profit** is going to really, really come into play.

Tom: Excellent. Excellent advice for all of us here today. Tim, I want to thank you again so much for being on the program with us and we're going to encourage our listeners to give them a call or to go to their website and check them up because I think there's some real value there that can build your small business in a hurry.