

Thank You For Holding

By Alison King

I ring up to book my son in for his 6 monthly dental check up and the girl on the front desk politely asks if I mind holding. Not a problem, I reply. But am I on hold? Silence..... nothing, no beeps, no music... nothing. Do I hang up? Do I wait? How long do I wait for?

I am sure we have all been presented with this same situation and revelled in the lack of professionalism. Maybe you have listened to the radio whilst onhold and heard a better offer on the product you were enquiring about.

An onhold message will not only provide your practice with a more occupied patient while you attend to their call but will add that finishing touch of professionalism to your practice.

At some time you'll have to put your callers on hold, no matter how efficient you and your team are. You can control what your patients are listening to when they call you by recording a personal on hold message that relays information about your practice, your team and the services you provide.

Let's look at the facts...

Businesses spend approximately 92% of their marketing budget on getting customers to call. Only 8% of their budget is used to handle the incoming call. Even with expensive and sophisticated telephone systems, this initial contact with customers can be handled poorly.

- On average, 7 out of 10 callers are placed on hold*
- 88% of callers prefer messages on hold to any other option*

So how does an onhold message enhance your practice image?

Most practices are now investing heavily in their marketing, their image and their overall presentation. With the levels of service expected from the dental profession getting higher, it is important for the image to follow through from the sign outside the front of your practice and your business cards to the message that your patient's and prospective patient's will hear when they call.

Remember the advert on TV with Xena? Placing a very important client onhold whereby heavy rock music blasted through the phone? Funny at the time but what must the client be thinking. An extreme example I know, but every one of your patient's are important and the message they hear should be one that represents you, not the music choice of your front desk or deadly silence.

Normally appearing between a selection of music, a personalized onhold message relays professional messages about pertinent issues within your practice to keep your patient's informed and entertained while holding. They may be new services, special discounts, extended hours or a new patient finance facility.

Did you know that we are now open on Saturday morning? 8.30am until 12pm for your convenience. Ask us for an appointment when you come off hold....

Do you enjoy surfing the Net? Check out our new website at www.greatdentist.com.au. You will find exciting details about all the services we can offer you and your family....

Are you suffering from neck and back pain? Did you know that this can be related to your dental health? Ask us how we can help with this pain when you come off hold....

Do you need extensive dental treatment and would like to pay for it weekly? Ask us about our SmileCard facility that let's you smile now, pay later!

The music that you choose and the messages that are recorded are also important when thinking of the state of mind you wish your patient to be in. Play 'boof boof' music with a harsh voice telling your patient's that your environment is welcoming and relaxing, will have a negative effect on your callers. Agitated, irritable,



annoyed... just some of the feelings that can come from being bombarded with sounds that are unpleasant to the ear.

If someone whispers in your ear, you want it to be pleasant, calming and gentle. An onhold message does exactly that, whispers in your caller's ear. Choosing a soothing melody with a voice that will keep your caller's attention and patience while listening to information on your practice and your services is the ultimate goal of an onhold.

Worried your message may become stale?

Don't be! With an onhold message you will be able change your message regularly. With the new digital technology available today, you are able to keep your message up to date and your patient's informed. If you have a special on your whitening treatment you may want your callers to know- simply change the message and use your onhold message to advertise for you.

Inform your patient's of new services

If a patient doesn't ask, do you tell them? If a woman visits you on a regular basis and has good dental health but her husband's teeth are in need of some work, how will she know that you can help him? It may be a long shot but when advertising the services you provide on hold, the occasional patient may just think 'well, I didn't know they offered whitening' and provide you with an additional six family members that all want their teeth whitened for a wedding.

If you have the radio on, who could be advertising? Don't let your competition benefit from your hard work.

Welcoming new patients

With the increase in marketing within the dental industry it is probably quite likely that at some time or another, you advertise your practice looking for new patients. When that patient calls in, they have no prior knowledge of your practice, your environment or your professional edge. If they are placed onhold and hear nothing, well that gives them one image. If they are placed onhold and hear music along with messages explaining who you are and what your practice philosophies are, do you think they are more likely to feel comfortable entrusting you with their dental treatment? Your onhold message can be just as powerful as the caller walking through the door and experiencing your practice with their own eyes.

If you are spending money on advertising and marketing, you need to remember that first impressions last much longer than the flyer that gets distributed or the advert in the local paper that will eventually be thrown away.

One final piece of information....

- Up to 20% of callers hearing a message while on hold will make a purchase based on that message**

.... *Now that is worth considering.*

For more information on creating your on hold message simply call IDM. They will help you with the script, discuss the most pertinent aspects of your practice and the best way to explain them in a short message with the greatest impact. They have access to a variety of different musical choices to suit your practice and your patient, creating the perfect individual package for you. Call 02 9211 1477 or email info@dentalmarketing.com.au.

* Source: Sales & Marketing Magazine

** Source: MaxiMarketing Research

