



The Telephone Guru Newsletter

Issue no 18 – December 2005

The Telephone Guru is a monthly newsletter full of sound advice and tips on how to get the most out of your business telephone lines ... and a wine pick that you can use to impress your clients or yourself.

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Opening Remarks:

The year has come to (or is coming to) a close. Time for New Year's resolutions, promises and the eventual breaking of both. The reason that many of us do not follow through on what we say at this time of year is our fear of change. This got me thinking about your on-hold message ...

Some office fun for the holidays ...

Put mosquito netting around your work area and play tropical sounds all day.

Feature: Are You Afraid of Change?

In the October newsletter we touched upon the music being played for your customers while they are on-hold ... at that time I mentioned Paul Anka's new album (*Rock Swings*), on which he performs well known rock tunes done in a swing style. In the liner notes of the album Mr. Anka makes reference to the fact that he has been doing his generation's pop standards his whole life – and he thought that maybe it would be interesting to move forward and do the next generations standards in his style ... swing. I thought the experiment was rather cool; my girlfriend found the whole thing appalling; while my mother was unmoved. If you can, just for a moment, allow yourself to imagine Paul Anka swinging and lounging his way through such popular rock songs as Van Halen's *Jump*; Bon Jovi's *It's My Life*; Oasis' *Wonderwall*; or even Nirvana's *Smells Like Teen Spirit* (admittedly it's the first time I have ever understood the lyrics). While my girlfriend proved herself to be a purist; and my mother uninspired; I found familiarity in the lyrics while relishing in the new melody and vocal-styling.

The same kind of thinking can be used for your on-hold messages. Most companies that have on-hold messages have a continuous piece of music as the bed: messages are then salt and peppered in every 30 seconds or so. Of course don't forget about the obligatory apology, thanks for holding, and "we'll be with you shortly" that are also seasoned throughout. This has been the standard for on-hold messages from the beginning of time. To keep with our musical theme: it's the original song by the original artist.

On-hold messages should be dynamic, change easily, provide callers with relevant information and avoid lulls in message content. Imagine your favourite radio station playing the same musical bed under each and every one of it's commercials – that would sound pretty bland and boring - it would get monotonous, and furthermore your message would be drowned out in a sea of sameness. *Your* message, your competitor's message, the guy that's selling Ginsu knives and Ronco rotisseries would all have the same weight applied to their message, creativity is stymied and you'd be lucky to get any response, if your message gets heard at all. Most callers when they hear the same piece of music assume they are hearing the same message. In musical terms: it's a cover version that sounds like the original.

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Just like on radio, every one of *your* messages should have a unique piece of music under it – that way the listener will pay attention to it, and you avoid the sea-of-sameness in your messages. Your messages should also change regularly, even if it's the same information being provided, a new sounding message *is* a new message as far as your callers are concerned. So, even if you have nothing new to say you can keep the same verbiage in your messages but change the music – the new music will give your messages a different sound and your listener will *think* it's different (even if it is the same words). And by making each message it's own stand alone commercial it's easy to remove, replace or re-edit new stuff into the mix. Sticking with our musical terminology: it's a cover song where the tune has been changed and only the lyrics stay the same.

Here's another musical example going back a few years, which convinced me to listen and evaluate "cover tunes" on their own merit. I once heard an Elton John tribute album called "Two Rooms", I hated it, none of the songs sounded like Elton ... more like bastardized versions of the songs I loved. Then I heard what Sir Elton had to say about the album ... he loved it. He loved hearing how others interpreted his music, he found it fascinating what they had come up with, and some had even made the songs more accessible to their specific audience (those who would not normally listen to Elton John).

Apply that same philosophy to your on-hold messages – you have a diverse audience, some will like your messages and some will not (you can't please all the people all the time) ... but if you keep playing the same stuff those who like it will continue to like it (and call). Those who don't like it will always dislike it and will stop calling, in essence never hearing your messages. If you change it up a bit each time you'll find you hit upon more people who like what you're doing and will continue to call in ... and in some cases they'll call just to hear the "cover tune".

Shameless Plug

Custom Sound Impressions does on-hold messaging as it should be done – using your messages as your own private radio station. Each message has it's own unique theme and bed of music, differentiating it from your other messages.

Signs that you have grown up ...

"I just can't drink the way I used to," replaces, "I'm never going to drink that much again."

Mike's Wine pick: Croft's Indulgence Port - \$16.75

Cold winter months outside cry out for warmth inside ... we Canadians either play outdoors or hunker down at home this time of year. When the sun goes down and the wind is howling outside, light a roaring fire (in the fireplace of course) and pour yourself a nip of this incredible, sweet red. 'Indulgence' is ripe with the taste of blackberries and plums ... the alcohol heat (20%) works it's magic to help heat you up ... and a warming sensations flows through you from your lips to then tip of your toes ... a full body experience. This is one enjoyable wine. Long live winter, as long as I can indulge in this. Happy Holidays.

As you might already be aware I also write a wine newsletter, for www.ontariowinereview.com, about Ontario wines and wineries. The newsletter you are currently reading has a review about wine from other parts of the world. If you are interested in learning more about wine I invite you to check out www.ontariowinereview.com and sign up for the free bi-weekly newsletter.

Final Thought

Next month we'll discuss getting sales in the cold, dry, winter months using a combination of outside and inside advertising; until then stay warm, be healthy and happy New Year.

Feedback ...

We invite your comments and feedback on the highlight article or any other part of this newsletter. Send to guru@customvoicing.com

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