



MOOD:MEDIA

ON-HOLD MESSAGING FOR RESTAURANTS 6 BEST PRACTICES

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With greater focus on mobile access, delivery apps, online reservations and social media here in the digital age, many restaurants may be overlooking a fundamental tool in their marketing mix: on-hold messaging.

Even with all of the useful technology available today, the fact is that the phone is still one of the most important ways for potential customers to reach you before they visit your restaurant. Why?

- + Picking up the phone and talking to someone is often more efficient than web- especially when you consider how easy it is to “click-to-call” when your restaurant appears in search and on any number of mobile apps or third-party review sites.
- + Your potential guests may browse your site (which is typically done from their phone anyway) to try to find your hours of operation or book an online reservation. Or at worst, your potential customer visits your site only to find that they still have to call in order to make the reservation.
- + Don't forget that many customers still prefer the “old-school” practice of calling ahead, especially older clientele. They're more likely to trust a human voice saying, “We have you booked for a table of 2 at 7:00 PM” than an email confirmation. Even if they book a reservation online, they'll often call the restaurant ahead of their reservation just to be sure.

1 KEEP MESSAGES SHORT, BUT PURPOSEFUL

Imagine if you only had 20 seconds to talk to your customer – what would you say? How would you want them to feel? What kind of impression of your restaurant would they develop? These are all important considerations to keep in mind as you determine the objectives of your messaging strategy.

It may go without saying, but don't try to accomplish all of your objectives in each message. Aim for brevity (7-20 seconds) and focus on one primary purpose in each message. Common objectives include, but are not limited to:

- + Being helpful - providing hours of operation, parking/valet info, reservation info, etc.
- + Showing appreciation - “We appreciate your call and apologize for the wait”
- + Promotion - highlighting daily/weekly specials, upcoming events, promoting sister restaurants, etc.

With all that said, the point we're getting at here is this:

WHAT YOUR CALLERS HEAR WHILE THEY'RE ON HOLD STILL MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE IN WHETHER OR NOT THEY ACTUALLY ENTER YOUR DINING ROOM.

Silence is deadly for your customer experience. In fact, more than 85% of callers prefer on-hold messages over silence. Customers who hear silence while on hold are more likely to hang up, and those who might hang on are likely to be frustrated and confused as they wonder whether or not they've lost their mobile connection.

No one likes to put customers on hold, but it's important to recognize the opportunity that goes along with the risk. The on-hold experience provides a chance to connect directly with your target audience and reinforce the key messages you need to get across.

To help you ensure that you make the most of the opportunity and that more of your callers become guests, we'll break down some important best practices for restaurant on-hold messaging.

Your messaging should aim to serve as a preview and as an extension of the great experience your callers can expect at your restaurant.

2 CHOOSE THE RIGHT VOICE

We all know that having to wait on hold is an inconvenience, but it doesn't have to feel that way for your callers. The idea is to engage them with a professional voice talent or two that truly expresses the personality and energy of your brand.

Imagine how your brand would sound if it could talk and try to personify it the best that you can. If you need help, reach out to a dedicated hold messaging specialist. These experts understand the art behind on-hold and they can help you pick the right voice talents for your unique brand and the experience you're trying to create.



3 INCORPORATE THE RIGHT HOLD MUSIC

Countless studies have shown that your callers are more likely to stay on the line when they hear hold music. However, you shouldn't just use any old on-hold jingles – you should select a professionally-designed music bed that supplements the energy and tone of your messaging production. You'll not only keep your callers engaged and on the line, but you'll set the stage for the great dining experience they can expect at your restaurant.

Also, make sure that the music you use is licensed for business use. Otherwise you'll have to pay the licensing fees on your own, which can be costly. You can learn more at us.moodmedia.com/sound/music-licensing/.

4 REINFORCE YOUR CONCEPT, VALUES AND POINT-OF-VIEW

What makes your restaurant unique? Why should potential guests choose your place over a similar concept down the street? Are there important values that you stand for that will resonate with your target clientele? Think about these values and key differentiators and don't hesitate to highlight them in your messaging.

5 PROMOTE SOCIALS

Thanks to the rise of social media and restaurant review applications, word of mouth is more powerful than ever before. Use messaging to encourage customers to like you on Facebook, write reviews and share their great experiences.

6 UPDATE REGULARLY

For starters, your regular guests won't appreciate hearing the same old messages every time they call to book a reservation. Secondly, it's prudent to ensure that your messaging is still relevant to your menu, daily specials and any promotions that you're offering. Highlighting surf n' turf specials in November when they ended in August isn't going to make a great impression on callers. It may also set them up for an unpleasant surprise if they try to order that entrée when they show up. We suggest updating your messaging monthly, though no less than every quarter.

On-hold messaging is still a highly effective tool that restaurateurs can use to boost their bottom line. Following these best practices will help you create a great foundation for your messaging strategy.

To learn more about On-Hold Messaging, **[contact us today](#)**. Our Brand Messaging Specialists are happy to answer any questions and show you the many possibilities for implementing a successful solution for your callers.