



Tips for Creating Effective Voice Prompts

Purpose:

The following is one in a series of tip sheets you might use as a guide for preparing cost-effective voiceover scripts.

Outcome:

No matter the type of script you're preparing, you can reduce recording and talent costs by consistently sticking to a few basic rules in preparing your voiceover copy for the engineer and talent.

First impressions are lasting.

Whether you are a small business with a handful of mailboxes, or you are large enough to employ IVR (Interactive Voice Response) -- first impressions are lasting. The voice your callers hear may be the first contact they have with your company. Put as much thought into that first impression as you would your other branding elements. No matter the size of your organization it is critical that the quality of recording is top-notch.

I haven't got all day!

Don't waste your customers' time. Frustrated callers translate into hang-ups, lost dollars and lost business. Also, be aware that you may have non-English speakers calling, and adjust your greeting and options accordingly. State the company name and thank the caller for their interest. Make your opening friendly, clear and *concise*.

Keep it simple.

Get your callers where they need to go quickly. Bigger companies tend to use five menu options (or more) but three options are optimum. No one likes wading through long menu lists with multiple branches. This becomes especially important if your clients are older or in need of medical information. If you can't afford a professional to create your message map, have some of your employees test out the user-friendliness of the system to see if it works in a logical manner.

Help—I'm lost in the maze!

Create a way for your callers to quickly find help if they don't hear a helpful option. There's nothing worse than calling a company for basic information and not being able to access a real person when the menu options don't address your needs. Again, make your menu as simple as possible. Present caller options in as clear and logical a fashion as you can. What happens if a caller selects the wrong option? Is there an "exit strategy" for them? Don't make it impossible for clients to bypass your menu and easily reach an operator. However, if your menu is well-constructed - you'll save money on misrouted calls, so caller-bypassing shouldn't be an issue.

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Sorry, I'm not in.

Decide if you want a single voice to introduce each individual employee's mailbox. Some people also prefer a professional to voice all outgoing message for employee-missed calls.

Hold the music.

On-hold music can either be annoying or keep the caller occupied and engaged. Choose something tasteful and appealing to your target audience that also has a marketing overlap with your product or service – remember, never lose an opportunity to reinforce your brand. Is your audience young? What music will keep them in tune with you? Consider using classical music to create a sophisticated impression for a more mature audience. If you *don't* incorporate music, make sure your recording tells the customer what to expect: Will they hear anything after the automated call pickup while they're on hold? Whether you choose music or not, give the customer intermittent prompts to let them know they're still in the queue, and make sure you let them know you appreciate their patience *and* their business.

I'm still waiting.

Extended on-hold times cost you money, reduce satisfaction, create angry clients, and reflect badly on your business. You might consider giving callers the option of getting information at your web site. Give an approximate hold time during busy times, and/or an option for the caller to leave a message. Ensure that calls are returned promptly.

Dulcet tones.

Hire the right voice to connect with your audience, keep them engaged, present their choices and get them where they need to go. This makes the difference between being heard with impact and being forgotten. Grab your listeners from the get-go with style, a professional reading and great copy. Remember: Sound-as-branding. It's a critical element of your presentation. A professionally trained voice puts your business in a professional light. It's a lot more than just reading words off of a page.

*Did you find this information useful? Find other tips in the **Making Impact Series** at www.panright.com on the **ARTICLES** page.*

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