



Hold Please!

It is estimated that people spend several hours every year on hold...time they could be using to do something else, something productive, something *fun*! Instead, they are waiting and waiting, because the person on the other end of the telephone has something more important to do (face it, if the caller were most important, they would be taken care of, right?). What kind of message does this send?!

In a busy office, callers have to be placed on hold!

Absolutely! But, how that is accomplished can make all the difference in the world. If the caller is met with, “Hold please” followed quickly by a *click*, it can leave the caller less than happy. And some callers may become downright angry. We have provided some simple steps to keep in mind in order to make this necessary unpleasantness less, well, unpleasant.

Always ask for permission to place a caller on hold.

As shown in the video vignette, “Hold on a sec,” does not count. “Please hold,” “Hold please” do not count (“please” does not forgive all shortcuts in etiquette). Instead, the caller should be asked, “May I place you on hold...”

But wait! Permission must be given first!

Asking is only half of the process. Permission must be given by the caller before they are placed on hold! (It is surprising how many callers don’t respond to this simple query because they are so accustomed to being “asked” and then placed on hold without giving a response.) By waiting for permission, it creates a situation where the caller *chooses* what happens rather than being *told* what happens.

Oh no! What if they say, “No!”?

It is always easier to understand the necessity of being placed on hold if a *reason* is provided. A caller will be more receptive to the request if it is explained that a chart needs to be pulled, information needs to be gathered, another call needs to be placed on hold.

So, what if they still say, “No”?

Simple. Don’t place them on hold. Complete the call and *then* move on to other tasks. If this is impossible, ask the caller if a call back is more convenient. If it is, make it a priority to get back to them as soon (and as courteously) as possible.

Remember, call backs are a good option.

While it is always more efficient to handle a call immediately versus putting it off, if the caller can’t hold and the office team member can’t complete the call effectively, call backs are a good option. Explain to the caller that appropriate attention cannot be paid to their call at this time, but a return telephone call can be done as soon as possible. Take the caller’s name, telephone number and ask when the most appropriate time would be to return the call. Then the return call becomes a priority!