



## BUSINESS PROFILE

# Silence is golden for on-hold messaging company

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Of course the local hardware store has nuts and bolts, screws and nails. But what about bottled water, window screen repairs and lawn care advice? You might not know these things exist. Unless, of course, you're put on hold.

Callers to Soukup's True Value Hardware in Hinsdale learn about the store's many services while waiting for their call to be answered. Soukup's is one of thousands of companies that uses the services of Hinsdale-based Profit-Tell International Inc., a company that's found a way to use on-hold time to the advantage of both company and customer.

"Our service is hard to find," said Hinsdale resident Dave Hearld, president and founder of the 11-year-old company that employs about 15 people at its Spinning Wheel headquarters.

Hearld was his own first customer. While running a company committed to putting troubled businesses back on their feet, Hearld installed a recording that played as callers

to his office waited for their call to be answered. The friendly greeting offered information about his business that callers might not otherwise have known.

"It made me more professional," Hearld said.

He soon started offering the on-hold messages to his clients as one more way to improve their business. Today, it is his business.

Hearld said Profit-Tell's on-hold messaging is affordable to even the smallest operation. Soukup's owner Steven Clark has found a way to cut the cost, about \$3 to \$4 a day, even further. By mentioning Toro, Scott's lawn products and Weber grills in his recording, Clark is able to share his costs with his vendors.

"I get probably 25 percent of the costs covered," Clark said.

He's received positive feedback from customers who discovered new ways to use his business while on hold. Some of those customers are business owners themselves who have adopted the Profit-Tell on-hold service.

"I've probably sold four systems for (Hearld)," Clark said.



Noelle Tolczyk records a company's on-hold message as Gina Gamez and Profit-Tell President David Hearld supervise from outside the recording booth. Making good use of a caller's on-hold time is the specialty of Hinsdale-based Profit-Tell. (Doings photo by Steve Johnston)

Hearld agrees that word-of-mouth is his best advertisement. He's now busy spreading the word all over the country — a country he hopes soon will be filled with as many as 250 Profit-Tell franchises. The first franchise was sold about a year ago.

Recordings for Profit-Tell's 4,000 customers will continue to be created in the company's Hinsdale studio. Using profes-

sional writers and voice talents, Profit-Tell turns out messages designed specifically for each client. Messages typically are changed seasonally, sometimes as often as every month.

No matter where the message will be heard, Profit-Tell has a voice to appeal to a company's customers.

"A person in Georgia doesn't want to hear a New York accent," Hearld said.

He hires voices with various regional accents, including Spanish and French Canadian.

Hearld said the company's strongest asset is its ability to create messages that make the most of a caller's on-hold time. His staff conducts extensive interviews not only with a company's owner, but with employees to find out what's interesting about the business and what callers should know.