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**FIRM MANAGEMENT**

# Accounting Firms Get an "F" for Phone Skills

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Less than a quarter (24 per cent) of Americans who use a public accountant are satisfied with the way their accounting firms handle their phone calls, according to a new study.

The study of 2,234 people, conducted by audio branding specialist PH Media Group, found standards in the industry fell below the American average of 32 per cent.

Insurance companies performed the best (41 per cent), while customers of architectural firms are the least content, as only 20 per cent of their customers are happy with call handling standards.

“Poor call handling is a frustrating experience for the American consumer and can be the difference between attracting new business and putting potential clients off permanently,” said Mark Williamson, Sales and Marketing Director.

“Companies who provide a top-class call handling experience can distinguish themselves from the competition and create new positive perceptions of waiting on hold. But the research results suggest accountants still have a lot of work to do in this respect.

“There is perhaps a tendency among companies to focus their attention and budgets on visual marketing and internet presence but the telephone remains a crucial aspect of branding, marketing and sales.”

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In terms of location, people in the Northeast were found to be the happiest with their telephone experience (27 per cent), closely followed by the South (26 per cent), the Midwest (24 per cent) and the West (21 per cent).

Williamson added: “Regardless of demographic breakdowns, the statistics demonstrate a gap between current perceptions and desired standards across the board.

“Establishing a clear tone and procedure for answering the phone represents a good start but true best practice can be achieved by implementing tools such as on-hold marketing – bespoke voice and music messages that are played on hold – to improve service and deliver a congruent brand across all touchpoints with customers.”

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