

Title:

How To Choose an Answering Service: Part II

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529

Summary:

Part 2 of a 3 part article from a call center industry professional's prospective exploring tips on how to keep you answering service performing well.

Keywords:

Answering Service, Call Center

Article Body:

In my last article, we covered four basics: 1. take advantage of any free trial periods, 2. watch out for long contracts, 3. get references, and 4. don't be too concerned with high prices. For this article, we will assume that you have diligently followed the 4 steps in the first article and are ready for the next evolution - how to your answering service running smoothly. We will explore a few industry tips & tricks on how to keep your service professional and reliable.

First & foremost, don't ask too much of your call center. This is not meant as don't expect your answering service to do their job, but instead, keep their responsibilities short & sweet. As with any individual, the more tasks they are required to do, the more room arises for error. The main point here is "Shortness Equals Success". What do I mean by that? First, keep your answer phrase short (i.e. how the operators pick up your line). Second, keep the information they gather from the caller at a minimum. Third, make sure your contact information is not a labyrinth of pager numbers, e-mail addresses, home phone numbers, and cell phone numbers (i.e. call Jim at home, if he is not there, e-mail him, if he does not respond page him and call his cell phone, etc.). Try to make sure your employees keep their cell phones with them at all times as this seems the best way to keep steady contact with the call center.

Second, place regular test calls to your call center. Consider your answering service your employee. As with any employee, if left un-supervised, they will start to evolve into a less than model representative of your business. Make sure every 10 or so days you place a test call to your answering service to see how they are managing your calls. Don't always call at the same time of day, instead try to stagger the times when you call as sometimes the afternoon staff

is more efficient then the evening staff or vice versa. If you experience any problems, notify your call center liaison immediately and place another test call shortly thereafter to ensure the problem was rectified.

Third, make sure you have a healthy relationship with your call center. Treat them as you would treat your own employee. Be friendly and courteous and you will be treated the same. Imagine your own business and your own clients. Are there clients that are never satisfied no matter what you do? Would you rather lose their business than spend 10% of your day managing their complaints? Rather then the "the more I yell, the more efficient they will be" premise, try to base your relationship on "the nicer I am, the nicer they will be" premise.

Fourth, perfection is not immediate. Based on the conjecture that your answering service is your employee, they are probably not going to "get it right" the first time you forward your phones. As with any employee, they need time to grow and learn about your business and their duties relative to your needs as a business owner. Have patience, be helpful, keep it simple, and they should flourish.