

The Simple Tools of Control

By Sam Carpenter



In Western culture, the word “control” has an undeserved bad rap. It conjures up the image of a type A personality gone wild with power, who, headed down the road of personal self-destruction, cuts wide swaths of anxiety among all those encountered. “Control freak” is a term that often surfaces. But if hyper-control is a bad thing, do we want the opposite, to be out of control? Like everything else, moderation is the key. In truth, most people don’t spend enough time focusing on the methodology of control. There is a science and an art to it.

In your answering service and in your personal life, if you’re ready to devote some energy and time to seizing control of your day, let’s get technical. Center your efforts around three primary tools: a digital voice recorder, Microsoft Outlook, and a cellular phone. Of course, none of these tools are new, and they stand on their own in terms of their usefulness. However, when one combines them a new and powerful sense of control is found. These tools are about the following:

- Having a goal-oriented, consistent strategy of communication with others as well as yourself.
- Having efficient systems to accomplish all necessary tasks and

- completing them promptly.
- Not suffering ineffectiveness due to actions not taken. Most of our failures stem from what falls through the cracks, not from overt mistakes.

These tools are about event control. Think of the mind as an endless filmstrip spewing out a stream of thoughts rushing downhill with no rhyme or reason. How do you trap the good ideas and slow down the incessant mind-noise? Very simple: Carry a digital voice recorder. When an idea worth remembering appears, pull out the recorder and record the thought. Then forget it and move on, leaving your mind with one less bit of clutter.

Connections Magazine Presents

For me, it doesn’t matter what I’m doing – I capture the thought, and my mind is free to move on. There is nothing more to ponder in the moment and nothing to remember later. Daily, I review the recordings of the past twenty-four hours, transcribing

them into the appropriate Microsoft Outlook task, calendar, or contact list. Once transcribed, the thought has permanence and action will be taken.

Microsoft Outlook, my second efficiency tool, has enormous timesaving

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advantages over the classic paper-based day planner that I lugged around for years. Synchronizing Outlook with my PDA once a day, all information is at my fingertips no matter where I am. As a manager, Outlook's most vital feature is the task list. (Hint: designate each manager as a "category," thus centralizing each manager's various tasks in order to better engender concise and quick "sit-downs" to review progress on various tasks.) Outlook's appointment calendar and contact information features are also vital. Keep them up to date – and use them.

One habit that remains from my former paper-based planner routine is my early morning "planning and solitude session." In the quiet of dawn, it's time to download the voice recorder information into Outlook and

...the cell phone's best feature is its on/off switch.



then review the tasks for the day. This session is the day's most significant act of personal control.

The third efficiency component is the cell phone. The key understanding here is

that a telephone number doesn't represent a place; it represents a person. After all, people aren't looking for the place where Sam is located; they're looking for Sam. However, this fact of life can lead to a day of unending disruption.

Everyone has a cell phone, but because most people use it improperly, it's often a source of anxiety and a time-waster. This means that the cell phone's best feature is its on/off switch. The primary purpose of my cell phone is to make calls – not to receive them – and so my phone spends a large part of the day turned off as I divert incoming calls to voicemail. This way I can focus on immediate tasks without interruption. I'll call people back later when I am in "callback" mode.

That's it, three communication tools to seize control of the day. If you can muster the necessary self-discipline and patience to work out the details of how the tools interface with each other to suit your own style, you will experience significantly more control and peace in your day.

Epilogue: Last year I combined these three tools into a single combination tool (i.e., the Blackberry). I immediately hated it and went back to using three separate tools. The added "benefit" of having email readily available was a distraction because there was a subtle (and sinister) prodding to check messages in every spare moment. ☹

Sam Carpenter is president of Centratel in Bend, Oregon.

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The Belle Behind the Bells

Dear Peter:

I enjoyed reading your movie review of *The Bells Are Ringing* in the August 2009 issue of *TAS Trader*.

Here is some background: In 1956, Mrs. Mary Printz, better known as “Ma Belles,” started the Belles Celebrity Secretarial Service in New York. A few years later it became The Belles Celebrity Answering Service – better known simply as “Belles.” The answering service, and Mary in particular, became the inspiration for this musical. Unfortunately, Ma Belles passed away early this year, appointing me as her legitimate successor to carry on with the Belles legacy.

Thank you for sharing the wonderful review.

From Roger Snyder, president, The Belles Celebrity Answering Service, LLC

Here are some related quotes that Roger shared with *TAS Trader*:

“The Belles may well be the most famous answering service in the United States, even though until four years ago its own number was unlisted. It was founded in 1956 by a smashing brunette named Mary Printz, whose nicknames range from “Ma Belle” to “The Witch of the East.” Mary had been in business for just a short time when

two of her clients – songwriters Adolph Green and Jule Styne – told her they were going to write a musical about an answering service and base its main character on her. The result was *The Bells Are Ringing...*” (Eisenberg, Lawrence B., “Confessions of an Answering Service,” *Cosmopolitan*, February 1977).

“Of all the switchboard operators Mrs. Printz trained, few were better than Miss Holliday herself, who reported for instruction after she was cast in *The Bells Are Ringing*. Miss Holliday became so proficient, *People* magazine reported in 1979, that Mrs. Printz offered her a job” (Fox, Margalit, “Mary Printz, an Ear for the Famous, Dies at 82,” *New York Times*, March 2, 2009).

“The walls of Printz’ office are rim-tight with autographed photos from celebrities: Candice and Louis Malle, for example, sitting in a carriage in a French field after their marriage. The photo is inscribed: “To all our Belles with love from Candice and Louis”” (Larkin, Kathy, “The Woman Who Wakes Up Robert Redford,” *Manhattan Daily News*, Wednesday, August 11, 1982). ☛

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Deb Crown, Vice President
Nate Gelfert, Systems Administrator

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Aaron Boatin Honored with Don Berry Award

TeamSNUG announced that Aaron Boatin has received the Don Berry Award of Excellence. Boatin was selected because of his exceptional dedication and involvement in the business and his demonstrated service to others through TeamSNUG; he and his company are leaders in the industry. The award was created to honor individuals who gave of themselves for the betterment of the telephone answering industry and is named in remembrance of Don Berry for his contribution to this industry. Boatin is VP of Ambs Call Center, a telephone answering and call center based in Jackson, Michigan.

Direct Line Celebrates Thirty Years

Thirty years ago, Larry and Ruth Goldenberg had a dream: to provide quality, reliable answering services to the medical and business community at a good value. So on September 10, 1979, with a 557B switchboard and ten clients, Direct Line was born. Today, their son, Ken Goldenberg, continues the legacy as he increases his leadership role in Direct Line's daily operations and develops plans for future growth and development.

CAM-X and WSTA to Hold Joint Convention

The Canadian Call Management Association (CAM-X) and the Western States Telemessaging

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Association (WSTA) announced that their respective fall 2010 annual meetings will be held as a cooperative effort in a combined meeting October 3-6, 2010. "This joint meeting held at the Hard Rock Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada, answers our members' choice to venture out of Canada every fourth year for the convention," said Linda Osip, CAM-X executive director. Dan L'Heureux, executive director of WSTA added, "We are confident the combined efforts...will yield a superior product for all participants."

OnviSource Offers Free Pilot Program for Its Explora Speech Analytics Product

OnviSource announced the launch of a pilot program for its integrated speech analytics software, Explora. Call centers wanting to "try before they buy" can use Explora to automatically analyze customer interaction calls and produce actionable knowledge for quality assurance, compliance management, training, sales and marketing opportunity detection, and business intelligence – all in a fraction of the time it would take to manually perform these tasks.

Telescan Introduces Live Video Monitoring

Telescan introduced new live video monitoring, an addition to its popular Spectrum® Messenger. This allows managers to monitor up to six locations at the same time. Either using a local LAN or used remotely, Spectrum video monitoring allows call centers to monitor any location anywhere in the world, as long as there is a Web camera and Internet access.

Professional Teledata Announces Pinnacle Enhancements

Professional Teledata announced enhancements for Pinnacle customers with eQueue switches and all Pinnacle Freedom customers. The ACD Monitor program shows complete details for all calls in the ACD queue, including DNIS, ANI, client name and ID, and the current stage of call handling; agent information shows the agent mode (such as talking or working). These enhancements are designed to be compatible with ATSI Certification.

Amtelco Introduces IS Appointment Scheduling

The Infinity Intelligent Series (IS) appointment-scheduling module offers answering services the ability to host appointment schedules for their clients. IS appointment scheduling offers answering services the ability to purchase the package and run it on their premises, run IS appointment scheduling as a Web module using any platform, and integrate it with Amtelco's scripted IS messaging or CMI Diamond contact management database.

Cosmopolitan Medical and Answer 1 Earn Gold Certification

Cosmopolitan Medical Communications and Answer 1 Communications have both requalified for the ATSI Gold 24/7 Call Center Certification Award. The certification indicates that they have met or exceeded high standards in the areas of business practices, life safety, operations, and personnel hiring, training, and ongoing evaluations through a peer review program focusing on a 99.9 percent annual run time.

Jan Lee to Speak at ASTAA

The Atlantic States Telephone Answering Association (ASTAA) announced that Jan Lee of PaceLine Communications will speak at its fall conference on October 14-16, 2009, at the Loews Philadelphia. The conference will center on services and leadership through more effective communication.

Connections Adds Webinar Listing Online

Connections Magazine recently launched a new Webinar section online at www.connectionsmagazine.com/info/webinars.html. The page will list upcoming industry Webinars, as well as links to recordings of past Webinars if they are available.

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Ad and Submission Deadlines:

December Issue: December 7, 2009

January Issue: January 4, 2010

February Issue: February 1, 2010

Subscriptions: TAStrader is an advertiser supported publication and is free to individuals in the telephone answering service industry. Subscribe at www.TAStrader.com/subscribe.

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Used Equipment For Sale: AccuCall 2.2: DataServer, Recorder, SwitchServer on one

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Help Wanted: IT Tech person needed. Knowledge of Tascom is a must. VoIP boxes, routers, forms design, and light programming would be a plus. Work in sunny South Florida, Miami that is. Call 305.442.1144; ask for Peter.

Used Equipment For Sale: Cad Com: New Data Master, plus 19 inch Line Master with spare cards. Call Tom at 209-384-5803.

Garage Sale

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Coming Events

October 14-16, 2009

ASTAA Fall Annual Conference
Loews Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA
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October 26-28, 2009

GLTSA Fall Sales and Marketing & Supervisors too!
Conrad Indianapolis
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November 6-9, 2009

STA Annual Meeting
Chattanooga Choo-Choo
Contact Dan L'Heureux at 763-473-0210,
Dan@CallConsult.net, or www.sta-assoc.org

February 2-4, 2010

OEO Partnership Annual Meeting
Gaylord Texan – Dallas TX
Contact Dan L'Heureux at 763-473-0210 or
Dan@CallConsult.net

February 28-March 3, 2010

TeamSNUG Annual Meeting
L'Auberge Hotel – Del Mar, CA
Contact Dan L'Heureux at 763-473-0210 or
Dan@CallConsult.net www.TeamSNUG.com

March 14-17, 2010

PINetwork Annual Meeting
Scottsdale Cottonwood Resort- Scottsdale, AZ
Contact Dan L'Heureux at 763-473-0210 or
Dan@CallConsult.net or www.PINetwork.net

May 12-15, 2010

ATSI Annual Convention and Expo
Westin GasLamp Quarter, San Diego
For more information: 866-896-2874 or
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October 3-6, 2010

CAM-X and WSTA Joint Convention
Hard Rock Hotel in Las Vegas, NV
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