Connections Magazine Presents

TAStrader

By the TAS Industry
For the TAS Industry

Buy Sell Learn Succeed

Easy Money

By Paula Ford, Answer Center

Once, when visiting another answering service, I found this shocking situation. Their check-in line was receiving 4,000 calls a month, taking about 8,000 minutes time. Even at 50 cents per call, that amounted to $2,000 per month of lost revenue just waiting to be collected from existing customers. If they were charging by the minute, the lost income would be even higher. At a rate if 75 cents per minute, this would add up to $6,000 a month!

One thing most telephone answering services discover is that their biggest "user" is not a client at all, but their own check-in line. Clients quickly realize that if they call in on their own DID number they will be charged for the call, but if they call the answering services' business number, sales line, or check-in line, the operator will merely ask for their account number and give them the messages.

Using a check-in line causes your client call count and minute count to be inaccurate, making it much lower than it should be. Fortunately, with most answering service systems this can be easily fixed. Sometimes the solution is found in how the account is programmed; in other cases, it requires training operators on a new procedure; and sometimes it is a combination of programming and training.

How do you get your operators to comply? Make your operators understand how much more you could pay *them* if customers paid *you* more. Do call logs on your check-in account daily and find the operators with the lowest number of calls on the account. Then reward those operators with cash, lunch, or a gift card. If you have an operator who just "can't remember" or won't comply, give her a week off without pay to think about it. Educating your staff to be on your side is better than threatening or firing, but if they still don't get it, remind them that they can't make more money or get promoted if your business doesn't make a greater profit. In this case, firing one bad operator will get everyone else's attention.

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***Infinity* Intelligent Series Demo Movies:**

- Messaging - Simplifies difficult client instructions and makes the message-taking process as easy as filling in a form.
- Contact-Based Architecture - Presents dispatch steps specific to each contact, increasing efficiency and reducing errors.
- Dispatching - Dispatching is what it's all about!

amtelco

EASY MONEY

(Continued from page 1)

A quick work-around fix that involves neither reprogramming nor retraining is raising prices to offset lost check-in revenue. Many clients will shift away from live operator message pickup once they realize they have to pay for it, but that creates a huge labor savings that could allow you take on more accounts without hiring new help. Plus, it will absolutely reduce your overall hold time.

You'll always have some calls on the check-in line, but watch for operators making outgoing calls on the check-in line or other business lines that will not be charged back to the client. Sometimes this is because of poor training, while other times it is because of a misguided effort to save some money for a "favorite" client.

Even worse is operators that make outgoing personal calls. Hint: doing this is *not* working for *you*. If you can't train them not to do this, then again, firing one bad employee will get everyone else's attention.

Lastly, if your operators have idle time, have them go through local phone books and make lists of potential customers for you to contact. Have one of your good operators make the calls, politely asking for permission to mail out a price list and brochure; faxing or emailing it is even better. Most people will give out that information. If you can fax or email the information instead, you'll save on both time and postage. This also eliminates any companies that have gone out of business. While this isn't the most productive way of getting new clients, it familiarizes them with your name, and that's the first step. ☎

Paula Ford's answering service is Answer Center in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Don't Transition Your Business to Your Kids

By John Warrillow

I bite my tongue every time someone suggests transitioning a business to a family member. Family businesses are fraught with problems. Here are the top seven reasons *not* to transition your business to your kids:

1. What if your son or daughter is smarter than you? The one thing your business can't give your kids, and the one thing you can't buy them as a parent, is the self-esteem that comes from knowing they are succeeding on their own.

2. What if your son or daughter is less intelligent than you? If your child lacks your smarts, intuition, acumen, etc., he or she will forever toil in your long shadow. Would you want your kids to feel inferior for the rest of their lives?

3. What if your kids are lazier than you? Most second and third-generation family members feel entitled to the fruits of the family business. Do you want to raise spoiled kids and grandkids?

4. Your kids may not want to run your business. No matter how successful and profitable your business, your kids may not want it. Would you want your kids to resent you for guilting them into the business down the road?

5. What if you pass on a jalopy? If nobody else would buy your business, why would you want to lock your kids into the same handcuffs you've worn?

6. What if you alienate your employees? As soon as you invite your newly minted MBA son or daughter to work in the business, your professional managers will dust off their résumés, realizing that Junior has won the lucky-sperm lottery and is about to leapfrog them on the company ladder.

7. What if you upset your other kids? Would you want to irrevocably change your relationship with the children who are not invited to replace you?

A better option is to sell your business to someone else. Buy lunch for an M&A professional or a business broker and ask for his or her advice. If you're desperate to give your kids a helping hand in life, sell your business and give them some of the proceeds. ☎

John Warrillow is the author of Built to Sell: Turn Your Business into One You Can Sell.

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CenturiSoft Joins Sangoma's Global Partner Program

CenturiSoft has joined Sangoma's Global Partner Program as a Certified Application Partner. Sangoma Technologies Corporation is a supplier of voice and data communication applications. CenturiSoft will integrate its Centuri Messenger with Sangoma's NetBorder Express. As a result, CenturiSoft customers will benefit from cost-effective, intelligent gateway capabilities at a very competitive price point for both TDM and VoIP networks. The functionality between Centuri Messenger and NetBorder Express will also provide customers with the flexibility to add new features and enhancements over traditional trunking gateways that would otherwise not be possible.

855 for Toll-Free Services to Be Implemented

The FCC authorized opening the 855 toll-free code on October 1, 2010. The announcement was made on June 25, 2010. The 866 and 855 NPA (Numbering Plan Areas) codes for toll-free service were assigned in 1999, supplementing the 800, 888, and 877 NPAs. The 866 NPA code went into service in July 2000, but implementation of the 855 NPA was deferred until now. The Database Service Management Inc. forecasted that the current supply of toll-free numbers was expected to reach the 90 percent threshold in the fourth quarter of 2011, serving as the impetus for this action.

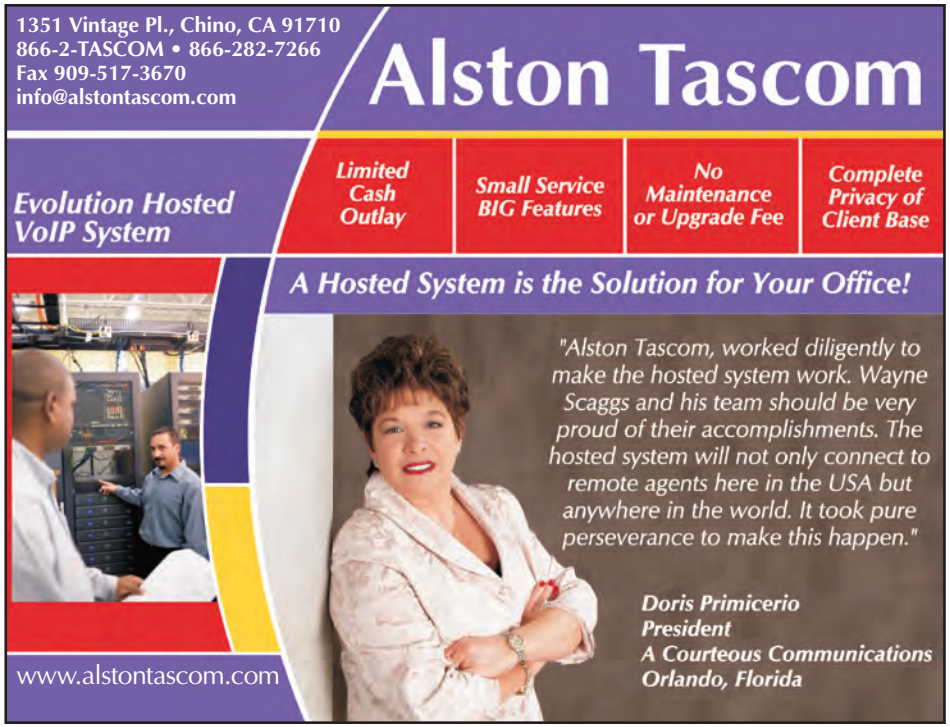
Donna West Receives ATSI President's Award – Again

Donna West, president of Focus Telephone Answering Service of Eldersburg, Maryland, and York, Pennsylvania, has been honored with the Association of TeleServices International (ATSI) President's Award for an unprecedented second time. ATSI president Larry Goldenberg sang her praises, saying, "There is nothing she takes on that she doesn't do and do well!" In addition to Answer OnLine, Donna developed HIPAA-HITECH Training for industry agents, and is currently president of the ATSI Education Foundation, a nonprofit foundation dedicated to bringing learning opportunities to the industry.

New Area Codes Announced

Earlier this year, the 544 NPA was assigned for personal communication services (PCS), and overlays were announced for Western Quebec (873 to overlay 819), Oklahoma (539 to overlay 918), New York (929 to overlay 718/347), Quebec (579 to overlay 450), and Arkansas (327 to overlay 870). An overlay means that a new area code is assigned to the same geographic region as existing code(s). With an overlay, no one needs to change area codes; however, ten-digit dialing becomes required for all calls.

The September issue of TAS Trader will be our first annual TAS Vendor Listing. Contact Valerie at 866-668-6694 or Valerie@TASTrader.com to be included.



Outsource Call Centers: Personalized Communications, providing call center outsourcing services to other answering services, contact Stan Gardner at 800-232-3321, sgardner@per-com.com, or www.per-com.com.

Seeking Acquisitions: You have dedicated a lifetime to building your company's reputation. Don't let your clients down just because you are selling the company. If it is time to sell, let us continue your tradition of excellence. Contact Nicholas at 888 422 7352 ext 1500 or Nicholas@call4health.com.

New Equipment For Sale: Voice logging recorders; easily record all conversations – just click and play. Call 574-848-5322 for Record/Play Tek, Inc., www.recordplaytek.com.

Executive Recruiting: Premier Executive Search Specialists: Search consultants to most of the top ten service agencies in the US and over 50 of the Fortune 500 companies. Small companies, too. All custom searches using a 25,000 resume file, plus extensive proactive calling. Dedicated telesales/customer service searches since 1981 – the first and the best. Contact R. L. Bencin & Associates at 440-526-6726, rlbencin@netzero.net, or www.RLBencin.com.

Established Answering Service Seeks Acquisition: Generous terms, a fair price, continue your legacy, retain your staff, and build on your reputation. Confidential. Call Michael Shooster at 800-261-3451.

Seeking Acquisitions: We pay cash for your TAS. We, ACCC, have been in business for 21 years. Confidential; call Doris 800-785-9436. References available.

Seeking Acquisitions: Reputable TAS, in business since 1967 and still owned by the founding family, seeks a small TAS acquisition in Eastern US. Ideally, you're billing under $20K per month. Smaller is better. We'll treat you right, AND your employees and customers. Let's talk. Contact Doug at 888-693-7935 or douganswerphone@gmail.com.

New Equipment For Sale: TAS equipment: in-house rental, leases or purchase; affordable for any TAS. Can be used with T1 (PRI) or small ISDN (BRI). Call Ray at 850-571-4521 or visit taseco.com

Association: CAM-X, the Canadian Call Management Association, represents telephone answering services across North America. Call Linda Osip at 905-309-0224 or visit www.camx.ca for more information.

Identifiers For Sale: I have two (2) Americom Identifiers, video adapter, and two (2) memory cards for sale. All you need to expand your TAS or start a new location is the telco lines and an inexpensive phone system. Asking $5,000 or best offer. Call 281-755-0776 or email tsutton316@hotmail.com.

Equipment for Sale: 19k buys you a brand new feature rich CenturiSoft unified communications system with 48 ports of integrated e-mail, fax, and voice mail. Will work with any TAS platform. Installation available. Call Tom Baur at 727-497-3001 or email TFBaur@aol.com.

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Garage Sale

TAS Trader is providing this "garage sale" listing section to help you find a home for old and obsolete, but still working equipment. This will also free up storage space and keep harmful electronics out of the landfill.

Tadiran PRI-23IPX boards (fits newer IPX 500/800 wall/rack mount chassis). Two available at $450.00 each. Call Charlie at 215-723-4316.

Amtelco EVE Genesis 7.5 mainframe, 2 Maxtor disk drives, 9 replacement boards for CDU and switch, 4 power supplies, 6 monitors, 5 Amtelco keyboards, Panasonic 1080i printer. Call MDXchange for prices: 915-407-7500.

Tascom Legacy with dual distributors, 12 hard drives at least 3-4 formatted and tested, extra controllers, 2 sets of spares, 2 899\'s, pc software and 2 gateways, DID Link software, plus lots of extras. $5k OBO 800-340-4350.

Infinity Voicemail, Amtelco EVE systems and parts, Startel parts, Infinity parts, and Cad Com parts. Call Rick Yocum, RLY Associates, 800-841-0841.

Glenayre equipment for sale: Paging system GL3000 & GL3960; all functional. New hard drive and 5 full workstations monitor and keyboard. Interested buyers call to discuss pricing; will sell open stock as needed. Call Alert answering service 203-387-8332.

To list your old equipment for sale there is a $50 onetime fee. If you are willing to give it away, then your ad will be free. Go to www.tastrader.com/advertise and place your ad today for our next issue.

Your Submissions Make TAS Trader Possible!

Please send you TAS news and articles for the next issue of TAS Trader. Email them to peter@TAStrader.com.

TAS Conference Calendar

September 22-24, 2010
TUNe Fall Annual Conference
AmeriStar Resort & Casino, St Charles, MO
More info: 763-473-0210,
Dan@CallConsult.net
www.TUNeGroup.net

October 3-6, 2010
CAM-X and WSTA Joint Convention
Hard Rock Hotel in Las Vegas, NV
For more information,
visit www.camx.ca and
www.wsta.biz

October 11-13, 2010
ASTAA Fall Conference
Sheraton Baltimore North - Towson MD
Contact: 763-473-0210 or
www.ASTAA.org

October 25-27, 2010
GLTSA Fall Annual Meeting
Hotel TBA – Chicago, IL
Contact Dan L'Heureux at 763-473-0210
Dan@CallConsult.net or
www.GLTSA.org

November 7-9, 2010
STA Fall Annual Meeting
Hotel Monteleone, New Orleans, LA
More info: 763-473-0210,
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