

MEDICAL CALL CENTER NEWS

FROM ANSWER STAT MAGAZINE

How to Be Satisfied in a Dissatisfied World

By Dr. Lee Jampolsky

Do you dread going to work each day and having to face the same problems in your call center? Do the changes you make in your job often result in only short-term fixes? Changing jobs without addressing your thinking is like painting over rust. It will look great for a while, but eventually the old rust will slowly break through the new paint.

There is a solution to job dissatisfaction, stress, and lack of success – a simple solution based on research and thirty years of practical application that can be accessed anytime, anywhere, and in any call center. The solution involves attitude changes that take five seconds to apply and anyone can do.

- 1. Know that how you react to a situation is up to you.** Those who are unhappy with their call centers – or the callers – often feel dissatisfaction with a situation happening outside of their control (such as downsizing or budget cuts). But unhappiness and stress actually begin with thoughts, fears, and perceptions. In other words, situations are completely neutral – it's your thoughts about the situation that lead to dissatisfaction. As long as you believe you are a helpless victim you will not see a positive and effective response to every situation.
- 2. Know that fear, guilt, and worry holds everyone back.** Countless people, from call center agents to managers or directors, make unsuccessful job changes each year because they were overly worried and preoccupied about either their performance or the future of their jobs. Decide to stop wasting valuable time and mental energy being fearful, guilty, and worried. Instead, ask yourself, "Is my current thinking taking me where I want to go, or is it perpetuating my unhappiness?"
- 3. Being a faultfinder does not create motivation for change.** With most companies and individuals, as stress increases, so does blame. Stress and fear feed off one another in a vicious cycle of fear that is difficult to break. Break this cycle by recognizing that survival in your job and motivating others does not come from over-focus on what is wrong and who is to blame. Seek to improve relationships and productivity.
- 4. Making a change in the situation doesn't always make things**

immediately better. The typical way of thinking states, "If you're unhappy in your work, change something – change jobs, change the organizational structure, find a different career." Instead, tell yourself, "*If you are not happy with your job, learn something.*" This way there is no such thing as a "bad situation," only "learning situations."

Follow these simple suggestions, and you can shift from stressed-out and dissatisfied to clear, calm, and happy in your call center job – no matter what's going on around you.

Dr. Lee Jampolsky is a psychologist and author of Walking Through Walls, Smile For No Good Reason, and Healing the Addictive Mind. For more information, call 831-659-1478.

You Are a Person of Influence?

By Peter DeHaan



My family moved the summer before fifth grade, and I started a new school. I quickly realized three things. I was far ahead in math, hopelessly behind in grammar, and had been placed in the wrong class by the school secretary. The result was that my teacher gave me special attention and esteem, while my classmates viewed me with academic awe and respect. Although I didn't learn much academically that year, I did undergo a metamorphous of self-perception. Put succinctly, I began fifth grade as an above average student who felt average and ended the year as an above average student who was convinced he was exceptional. That single attitudinal change altered the trajectory of my educational path – and ultimately my life. Yes, Mrs. Wedel influenced me immensely.

In seventh grade, I had Mr. Snow for English. Our class read and studied Dickens' classic story, *A Christmas Carol*. Mr. Snow helped us dig into this timeless tale and mine its many truths. The conclusion was inescapable for me and equally profound. Like Dickens' Scrooge, we have a choice on how we live our life: it can be for selfish purposes, or it can be for the joy of living and the benefit of others. I chose the latter.

In high school, it was Mr. Grosser who affected me greatly. With a passion for molding young minds, he was part educator and part entertainer. There was never a dull moment in his classroom, where the unexpected became routine. He wanted us to think, profoundly and deeply. His influence was significant and helped me mature as an individual and prepare for adulthood.

The standout mentor of my college years was Professor Britten. Intellectual and insightful, he quietly communicated profundity with ease, effectiveness, and aplomb. I found myself hanging on every word. Nothing he said was wasted,

and everything had significance. He was the teacher whose class one took, not because of the subject material, but because of the instructor.

These are just a few of the teachers who influenced me. Aside from academia, I have had many notable "teachers" in the business world as well. Although not teachers per se, they nonetheless educated me, playing a critical role in guiding me to become the person that I am today.

Whatever your role in your call center, be encouraged that you are influencing others, even if you don't know it. Whether a director of operations, a manager, a shift supervisor, or a front-line call center agent, you influence those around you by what you do, the things you say, and how you treat others. Like the infamous Scrooge, you can either influence negatively by pursuing a life of self-focused hoarding, or you can influence positively by sharing, giving, and inspiring others in an encouraging and profound manner.

Peter DeHaan is publisher of AnswerStat magazine and Medical Call Center News.

Healthcare Reform Paper: *The Case for Publicly Funded Medical Call Centers*

Doctors Barton Schmitt and Andrew Hertz have recently completed a position paper regarding the role of medical call centers in health care reform. "The impetus for the paper," explained Schmitt, "was largely because I have not heard anyone in government mention telephone care as part of their solution." Medical call centers are used in many other countries and have been found to be cost-effective, yet in the U.S., only New Mexico has implemented a publicly funded call center for all of their state's uninsured.

The position paper, titled *The Case for Publicly Funded Medical Call Centers*, offers as a premise that, "every citizen should have the right to reach a telephone care nurse at any hour day or night for assistance with illnesses, injuries or other acute medical problems." Its content describes the primary functions of today's medical call centers, an overview of their outcomes, evidence of their ability to reduce healthcare costs and recommendations for making these centers a critical part of universal access to health care.

For a copy of the three-page document with references, go to Schmitt-Thompson Clinical Content website www.stcc-triage.com/research.htm or contact sue@stcc-triage.com.

Cosmopolitan Medical Communications Recognized

Cosmopolitan Medical Communications has been named a winner of the 2009 Alfred P. Sloan Award for Business Excellence in Workplace Flexibility, distinguishing the employer as a leading practitioner of workplace flexibility and effectiveness in Arizona, and across the nation. Cosmopolitan was recognized at a breakfast held by the Chandler Chamber of Commerce on June 11, 2009.

The Alfred P. Sloan Awards for Business Excellence in Workplace Flexibility are part of the *When Work Works* project, an ongoing initiative of Families and Work Institute, the Institute for a Competitive Workforce (an affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce), and the Twiga Foundation. The Alfred P. Sloan Awards for Business Excellence in Workplace Flexibility recognize organizations that are striving to find new ways to make work “work” in today’s challenging economy. The awards honor organizations of all sizes and all types across the country that are using workplace flexibility as a strategy to increase workplace effectiveness and yield positive business results, and to help employees succeed at work and at home.

Amcom Releases Enhanced Smart Console

Amcom Software, Inc., released its enhanced Smart Console call center software. Highlights in the latest version include:

- **Enhanced user interface** improves both look and feel and ease of use.
- **Enhanced operator efficiency and communication tools** allow faster phone number editing, on-call scheduling from the console, faster global search, and team chat capabilities.
- **Expanded platform capability and support** allow integration with new telephony devices and the ability to run on Microsoft Vista. Also, in the event of a network outage, communications can be maintained using a local copy of Smart Console.
- **Timesaving administration and improved configuration:** Software updates will be tested on a single PC and then automatically distributed to all PCs, ensuring that everyone has the latest software.

“Organizations that rely on our call center software every day as well as those considering this type of solution will see tremendous benefit in the ease of use and solid functionality this latest version provides,” said Chris Heim, CEO, Amcom Software. “Our development team was able to incorporate customer

feedback into their process and truly appreciate the time our customers took to provide their candid input.”

For more information, call 800-852-8935 or visit www.amcomsoftware.com.

PSA: To Test or Not to Test?

One of the most controversial issues in men's health is whether men should routinely have a blood test for prostate-specific antigen (PSA) to screen for prostate cancer. Some experts argue that PSA testing saves lives by helping detect this common form of cancer early. Others say it triggers unnecessary treatment that disrupts many more lives than it saves. The results of two studies released this spring focused the debate, but scientists are still a long way from concluding the discussion, reports the July 2009 issue of *Harvard Men's Health Watch*.

Our society has been encouraged to value early cancer diagnosis, but not all cancers are alike. Detecting prostate cancer early is not nearly as important as detecting lung cancer or colon cancer early, because many prostate cancers grow very slowly and don't threaten health. Spotting prostate cancer early usually leads to treatment, but current treatments can cause life-changing side effects such as incontinence and erectile dysfunction. The crux of the controversy is whether screening for prostate cancer using the PSA test does more harm than good. That's the question the new studies – one done in the United States, the other in Europe – were designed to answer.

Half of the volunteers in both studies were randomly assigned to have PSA tests, while the other half simply received their usual medical care. In the studies, men with high PSA levels underwent prostate biopsies to look for cancer. The American study found that after seven to ten years, PSA screening increased the diagnosis of prostate cancer, but it did not improve survival. After nine years, the European study found that men who had been screened were less likely to have died of prostate cancer, but at a substantial cost of over-diagnosis and over-treatment.

PSA testing remains a personal decision. However, the *Harvard Men's Health Watch* notes that with the latest results things have changed. Before these studies, skeptics said there was no evidence that PSA screening saves lives. These studies now support that view. Until now, if a man could not decide whether he should have his PSA checked, the default recommendation was in favor of testing. These studies suggest the opposite strategy might be better – that unless a man has a particular reason to request a test, the default should be to skip it.

Harvard Men's Health Watch *is available from Harvard Health Publications, the publishing division of Harvard Medical School; subscribe at www.health.harvard.edu or call 877-649-9457.*

Florida Hospital – Adventist Health Systems's Call Center Awarded

The “Best Practices Award” was recently given to Florida Hospital – Adventist Health Systems by Noble Systems Corporation. The award was announced at the SNUG 2009 Conference – a gathering of the Select Noble Users Group – held in Atlanta, Georgia.

The “Best Practices Award” recognizes Florida Hospital – Adventist Health Systems for its use of technology and best practices to build a unified call center environment for its organization. The hospital has combined services for its customer service, collections, and patient preregistration teams into a single call center, serving over one million patients per year.

The hospital blends inbound and outbound calls, with integrated IVR and text-to-speech tools and digital recording of calls. The hospital's preregistration programs have reduced wait times by fifteen to thirty minutes per patient and increased patient pre-payments. The collections team uses “virtual agents” to leave automated messages with personalized information, which helps reach more patients and increase collections. Automated surveys show an improvement in customer satisfaction.