

# MEDICAL CALL CENTER NEWS

FROM ANSWER STAT MAGAZINE

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## **Make Your Medical Call Center a Strategic Weapon**

*By Jim Rembach*

For many organizations, the call center is the most important component in relationship management. Yet very few recognize and leverage this fact. For most, sales marketing gets all of the credit and attention while the call center is largely ignored. Sound familiar? We have all heard the customer relationship quote, "It costs x times more to obtain a new customer than to retain an existing one." So why does sales and marketing get the gold mine and the call center gets the shaft?

Most organizations do not calculate lost revenues from relationship failure. Beyond the difficulty in accurately determining the figures, the fact remains that no one in the organization wants to take ownership of losing revenue for the company. It is easier to spend time pointing fingers. Remember, though, a great deal of research has established that lost revenue is the revenue that would actually require the least amount of investment to retain.

So where else can customer retention efforts tap into the gold mine? No need for a hint – it's the call center. All improvement efforts in the call center should ultimately lead to providing better service and result in relationship enhancement for valuable and potentially valuable customers. The call center can be a loyalty-generation department. Call center leaders must learn how to assimilate the vision of being "the center of retention" into the mission. Unlike other mining activities, this is not an activity that rapes and pillages, but one that enhances a renewable resource.

Some may protest and say that patients and customers leave or reduce spending for numerous reasons that are beyond the control of the call center. I agree. It may be product-related or service-related. It may be cost-related or policy-related. But, these are all guesses, educated hypotheses, at best. The call center is where customer intelligence can be obtained to prove or disprove such hypotheses. The choice is simple: focus on retaining revenue and relationships, or focus on antiquated productivity measures. One leads to the gold mine, and the other leads to frustration.

Every hospital and medical call center has the potential to protect revenue, regardless of whether or not the call center is focused on "sales" activities. This

protected revenue allows your organization to better realize its market share goals. The call center is your most strategic weapon in converting lost revenue to retained revenue and getting existing patients and customers to become advocates for your hospital or medical facility.

*For more information, contact Jim Rembach of Customer Relationship Metrics at 877-550-0223 or [jim.rembach@metrics.net](mailto:jim.rembach@metrics.net).*

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## **Increase Employee Retention by Giving Them a Dose of Nurses' Medicine**

*By LeAnn Thieman*

With increased workloads, demanding staff ratios, and challenging work conditions, many employees in the health care industry are feeling burned out. Today's workers are not signing on and staying on just for the money. They are opting for employers who care about them – professionally and personally. How they are treated on the job is a primary factor in their satisfaction, their resistance to burnout, and their willingness to be long-term loyal employees. Work-life balance is often a top priority.

Considering that it costs thousands of dollars to recruit and hire a new employee, organizations are eager to retain the ones they have in addition to attracting the emerging workforce. Many have learned that in order to recruit and retain they cannot simply offer more money or bigger benefits. They need to give employees a hefty dose of what I call “nurses' medicine.”

- 1) Smile a lot. Be kind. Visit often.
- 2) Ask, "How can I help you?"
- 3) Do an assessment on a regular basis.
- 4) Be prompt in answering their “call lights.”
- 5) Explain all procedures and changes.
- 6) Communicate often and clearly.
- 7) Ease their pain.
- 8) Promote independence and self-sufficiency.
- 9) Change positions.
- 10) Provide them with nourishment.

Implementing this kind of medicine creates a "care plan" that does not coddle employees; instead, it strengthens and empowers them. This transfers to their work, promoting a positive company culture and increasing productivity. It develops creativity, inspires loyalty, and leads to a healthy bottom line.

Giving employees a dose of the same medicine nurses give their patients results in greater retention. With a little TLC, everybody wins.

*LeAnn Thieman, LPN, CSP, is an expert in health care recruitment and retention. For more information about her books, seminars, or speaking engagements, call 877-844-3626.*

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## **The Real Question About the Economic Crisis**

*By Peter DeHaan*



At the World Economic Forum, Jim Wallis suggested that wondering when the global economic crisis would be over is the wrong question to ask – even though it is the one foremost on our minds.

He posited that the real query should be, "How will this crisis change us?" After all, if we don't learn from our mistakes, we are doomed to repeat them. Drawing parallels between the years preceding the Great Depression and the past few, he offered that we have indeed repeated history. Here then is how I suggest we must change:

- Learn to be happy with less. Virtually everyone in the US is better off than half of the world's population.
- Don't spend what you don't have. Satisfying today's urges with tomorrow's income is courting disaster.
- Plan for the future. That includes having an emergency fund and a retirement plan.
- Whenever possible, avoid debt. When that is not possible, pay off debt as quickly as possible.
- Charge cards are intended to be a convenience when making purchases, not a means to buy when you have no money. The first month that the balance can't be paid in full is an indication of living beyond your means – cancel the card and don't apply for any more.
- Shun greed.

In essence, greed got us here in the first place. I hear a chorus of readers concurring, "Yes, corporate greed caused this mess to happen." Wait a minute; let's not blame corporations. Although corporations are legal entities, they cannot think and act on their own accord. Individuals control corporations, and many of them are greedy. The stockholders who own stock in the corporations seek higher returns on their investments; they are sometimes greedy. The people with 401ks, IRAs, money market accounts, CDs, and any interest bearing investment want to make as much as they can; they are partly to blame as well. On and on it goes. Virtually everyone, in one way or another, is culpable for the mess we are in – we have an insatiable desire for more.

As my first bullet point suggests, let's instead seek to be happier with a bit less. And we'll all be better off.

*Peter DeHaan publishes AnswerStat magazine and Medical Call Center News.*

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### **SDC Solutions Acquired by Amcom Software**

Amcom Software has acquired SDC Solutions, Inc., of Manchester, New Hampshire. The combined companies further strengthen Amcom's position in the market for call center and emergency management software, increasing their customer base and expanding customer solutions.

SDC Solutions' products handle critical communications for health care, hospitality, higher education, government, and corporate organizations in the United States. Said Amcom CEO Chris Heim, "SDC Solutions has earned a strong presence in the same markets we already serve and excels at providing solutions in the small to mid-sized market. We're impressed with SDC Solutions' well-regarded software and anticipate remarkable demand for these products from Amcom customers, as well as the market in general. SDC Solutions enjoys the loyalty of some of the country's finest organizations, and those customers can rest assured that we intend to continue serving their needs as our number one priority."

This acquisition comes at a time when demand is increasing for mission-critical communications solutions in the health care and hospitality markets.

*For more information, call 800-852-8935.*

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### **Telehealth Webinar to Be Presented by CosmoCom**

Health care providers looking for information about telehealth are invited to join CosmoCom, provider of unified patient-provider communications, when it hosts "New Horizons in Telehealth," a complimentary Webinar on Wednesday, June 3, 2009, from 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM EDT. The presentation will focus on exciting new applications that draw upon voice response and multichannel, multi-tenant contact center technologies to improve the quality and availability of care while reducing its cost. With the right tools, providers can now unify all facets of patient-provider communication and:

- Resolve patient requests efficiently
- Inform and activate patients
- Enhance quality and availability
- Improve patient experience and loyalty

"The telehealth of today and tomorrow encompasses much more than video conferences with doctors, store-and-forward radiology, and home monitoring

systems,” said Steve Kowarsky, EVP of CosmoCom. “In some telehealth studies where patients used only a telephone, the results were better than those in studies that relied on remote devices.”

Kowarsky will be joined by Datamonitor health care technology analyst Christine Chang and University of Kentucky chief technology officer and associate vice president of information systems Doyle Friskney.

*Health care providers can register for the free Webinar at [www.cosmocom.com/to/Telehealth0609-astat](http://www.cosmocom.com/to/Telehealth0609-astat).*

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## **Rein In Runaway Health Care Costs**

Economists agree that American health care reform will falter unless health care spending is brought under control. The editors of the *Harvard Health Letter*, in consultation with the doctors on its editorial board, propose ways you can help curb health care costs:

**Develop a good relationship with a primary care physician.** A primary care doctor knows you, your medical history, and your circumstances.

**Don't use the emergency department unless absolutely necessary.** Call your doctor and try to get some advice over the phone or in person.

**Stick with the program:** Take prescribed medications, get regular checkups, and adhere to lifestyle changes.

**Check with your primary care doctor before going to a specialist:** Let your primary care physician coordinate your care.

**Go generic:** Generic drugs cost less; check with your doctor.

**Fight inertia:** If you're taking a medication, discuss with your physician how long you've been taking it, whether it's working, and, if it isn't, not taking it anymore.

**Question the need for expensive tests:** Don't push to get new, expensive tests; if your doctor orders them, ask why they're necessary.

**Stay healthy:** Quit smoking, eat right, exercise, and get enough sleep.

*The Harvard Health Letter is available from Harvard Health Publications, the publishing division of Harvard Medical School, for \$29 per year. Subscribe at [www.health.harvard.edu/health](http://www.health.harvard.edu/health) or by calling 877-649-9457.*

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## **DIA Launches Online Career Center**

The Drug Information Association (DIA), a global, multidisciplinary association of professionals involved in the life cycle management of biopharmaceuticals, launched its new online career center, a highly targeted resource for online employment connections.

The DIA Career Center allows employers to post jobs online, search for qualified candidates based on specific job criteria, create an online resume agent to email qualified candidates daily, and receive job activity statistics.

The DIA Career Center is a free service for job seekers who have access to employers and jobs in the biopharmaceutical industry. In addition to posting their resumes, job seekers can browse and view available jobs based on their criteria, save those jobs for later review, and create a search agent to provide email notifications of jobs that match their criteria.

Job seekers and employers also have access to the National Healthcare Career Network, a group of more sixty top health care associations and professional organizations, including the American Hospital Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Association of American Medical Colleges. DIA's alliance with NHCN increases employers' reach to over 7,000 resumes and job seekers' access to over 1,500 job postings.

*For more information, visit [www.diahome.org](http://www.diahome.org) or call 215-442-6100.*

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## **New Service Launched to Pharmaceutical Industry**

Alliance Healthcare Information and Ashfield Healthcare recently launched an integrated marketing service, Physician Reach. Using a tailored approach, Physician Reach allows pharmaceutical companies to make use of a number of channels and adapt message delivery to the needs of individual physicians, practices, and health care professionals.

Physician Reach uses contract sales professionals, concierge services for physicians and their patients, field and office-based nursing services, e-detailing, and tele-detailing. It also provides database management and fulfillment services.

Alan Horgan, chief executive officer of Ashfield Healthcare LLC, says, "Both companies are part of the contract sales and marketing services division of United Drug PLC, so using shared skills and resources means that we can provide a competitive service to our customers and reduce complexity at the same time."