

MEDICAL CALL CENTER NEWS

FROM ANSWER STAT MAGAZINE

Managing a Successful Medical Call Center Team

By Kelli Massaro

Individuals have several basic intrinsic needs that must be met in the workplace to feel satisfied, no matter what industry they are in. As the manager of a medical call center, you can positively influence staff retention if you can meet these needs for your staff. In many cases, nurturing good relationships with your employees can override negative effects of extrinsic organizational factors. Different things motivate different people, and you may need to use multiple strategies to achieve individual employee satisfaction and improve performance. In general, call center employees seek a mutually supportive relationship with their supervisor, a sense of belonging and security, a feeling of contribution, control over or input into decisions regarding their work, and authentic appreciation.

Good Relationships with Supervisors: Employees desire good, fair supervision. This is the second biggest factor in employee retention after job fit. Supervisors and managers who use a constructive "coaching" style when delivering feedback will nurture growth and learning among their employees. Conversely, supervisors that "police" for infractions and shortfalls will create fear and inhibit employees' growth potential. Feedback should be timely and include both praise for things done well and suggestions for improvement.

Belonging to a Team is more than working together with a group of people; it's an individual's personal investment in the call center's shared vision and a desire to better one's self and the department. In a collaborative culture, team members participate in call center decision-making. Trust your employees enough to delegate projects and explore their ideas. Promote the feeling of "our" call center. Stay open-minded to new ways of looking at things, and take advantage of networking with other call centers to explore alternative solutions. This will push your program, as well as your employees, to new heights.

Contribution: Employees enjoy the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to their workplace. Pooling the unique talents, gifts, and interests of team members creates an opportunity for each employee to excel and have unique ownership for a project or the work itself.

Security is an individual perception regarding "safety," whether it's financial, physical, emotional, or a combination thereof. When security is threatened due to lack of managerial support or lack of communication, employees experience anxiety, stress, and dissatisfaction. Communicate regularly, especially during times of change, to promote trust and provide a sense of confidence.

Control: Employees don't like change when they feel it is done *to* them. A leader's inability to manage change well is a frequent cause of job dissatisfaction among call center staff. Seek ways to offer your employees some input regarding decisions that affect them. Implementing change with staff suggestions in mind will achieve better staff support and results that are more positive.

Recognition and Appreciation: Recognizing a job well done and showing appreciation to employees on a regular basis goes a long way toward keeping employees satisfied.

The key to developing a strong call center team is focusing on the basics: hire right, create an engaging "team" workplace, provide opportunities for employees to stay challenged and make a contribution, involve staff in decisions, communicate effectively, and coach with timely feedback.

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Web-based Portals Improve Call Center Communications

By Chris Heim

According to a recent study by the Joint Commission, poor communication is the leading cause of death and serious injury to hospital patients. A communications system that gets the right people to the right place at the right time can mean the difference between life and death.

There are three important steps to a good communication system. Each is important, and today's leading Web-based communications systems put the solution within reach of every health care organization, from hospitals to long-term care facilities, from research clinics to first-response providers.

1) Make Sure Your Data Is Accurate: Key to a Web-based communication system is a single, centralized personnel information and scheduling database. All data resides on one robust system, saving the expense and hassle of buying, maintaining, and using multiple electronic and physical databases. Paper systems or static off-line documents can become almost instantly out-of-date. A Web-based system can integrate numerous calendars and address books, making updates quick and accurate. Without a single data source, contacting staff can cause confusion in the smallest facilities and compound delays in larger ones.

2) Make Your System Broadly Available: Web-based systems are often referred to as self-service portals because they allow authorized members to contact others without switchboard operators or other intermediaries. Self-service portals have been remarkably successful, placing the database in the hands of the people who most need to use it, allowing secure but easy access using a standard browser.

3) Make Your System Easy to Use: Tracking where physicians, nurses, or other staff are working in a fast-paced environment can be frustrating and difficult when operators have to log all their movements. New Web-based communication and scheduling systems do a simple thing – remove the operator.

Web-based self-service portals help create efficient, patient-centered, and high-quality calendar and paging systems. Medical facilities with Web-based communications experience increases in accuracy, faster response times, increased worker satisfaction, telecommunications savings, and increased patient care quality.

Chris Heim is CEO of Amcom Software in Eden Prairie, Minnesota. For more information, call 800-852-8935. Read the full article online at www.answerstat.com/articles/8/07.html.

Autodial System Keeps Members Informed

By Mario Ochoa

Are you aware of the importance of flu shots? When was the last time your child had their annual wellness examination? Have they received their latest immunizations? While these questions and their answers may not have come to mind before, health industry leaders have stressed the significance of keeping their members and patients informed about these issues, including addressing any other health care needs. To do so, they have utilized state-of-the-art technology in combination with their progressive health care solutions.

Telemessaging – sending prerecorded, auto-dialed messages – can be personalized and targeted to a specific population. It is used by many health care experts as an additional touch point for patient education as a part of their ongoing communication efforts. The system offers highly personalized, cost-effective, efficient solutions that have been identified by many professionals as ideal for resourcefully communicating messages to a wide audience. Telemessaging is one key in providing members from different areas of the health care industry with unmatched industry knowledge and support.

CareNet, a Texas-based health care call center, utilizes the system and has found success in its application. According to CareNet executive vice president Vikie Spulak, “It is flexible in that our clients can record their own messages. As an example, the medical director of a health plan may want to deliver a personalized message to their 100,000-plus members, welcoming them to their health plan.”

“The use of telemessaging often includes notifying members of pharmacy changes, such as a new generic drug that is currently on the market or reminding members to have their children’s immunizations kept up-to-date,” said CareNet president John Erwin. “Overall, it allows for more productive communication in that it conveniently and efficiently delivers messages that are important to the recipient.”

Through telemessaging, companies are able to create targeted campaigns to ER frequenters, informing them that there are other convenient resources (such as local urgent care facilities) available to help them with their health care needs. Through its functionality, members can be kept up-to-date by trusted industry professionals quickly and efficiently. They can be informed of the benefits of the flu shot or notified where to locate them. Parents can be kept current on the necessary vaccinations needed for their children.

Telemessaging has the capacity to enhance customer relationship management by keeping companies in touch with their customers on important matters. The personal, targeted messages therefore offer an additional level of support. Traditionally deployed to provide after-hours customer contact for professionals, telemessaging can be utilized as another means for staying in touch with members in order to proactively educate and engage.

“Providing compassionate and knowledgeable health care solutions should be the mission of every health care provider,” said Erwin. “Telemessaging is just another means of allowing everyone to consistently help members manage and maintain better health.”

Ambulatory Care Nursing Conference to Focus on Breakthroughs, Quality Care

The American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nursing (AAACN) is offering educational sessions at its 35th Anniversary Conference, May 4-7, 2010, in Las Vegas, Nevada. Each year the conference attracts a broad range of health care providers who work in ambulatory care settings, including military and telehealth. Attendees include RNs, LPNs, LVNs, administrators, clinicians, directors, managers, educators, nurse practitioners, and clinical nurse specialists.

Conference participants will attend educational sessions taught by the industry’s leading experts.

They will also earn continuing education nursing education (CNE) contact hours, enjoy special events, network with colleagues, and meet with vendors in the exhibit hall.

Pre- and post-conference sessions will also be offered; visit www.aaacn.org for details and registration.

Retired Nurse Proposes Solutions to Nursing Problems in America

In *American Nursing and the Failed Dream: A Critical Assessment of Nursing Education in America*, author June M. Harrington seeks to prove that the chronic problems existing in American nursing today are the result of the manner in which student nurses are educated, not the manner in which nurses are treated in the workplace.

Harrington believes that, without change, a new type of health care worker will emerge and usurp the role of the nurse. Additionally, she feels that there is a misconception regarding the cause of the issues she notes, and she disagrees with the view that nurses are victims of a hostile work environment, inadequate financial compensation, or poor working conditions. Instead, she sees them as victims of failed leadership.

Intending to inspire reform in the education of American nurses, Harrington recommends significant modifications in the leadership structure and education of nurses as a means of correcting ongoing concerns.

Free Health Care Credentialing Webinar Series Aims to Educate and Inform

Pre-Employ.com, a pre-employment screening provider, is sponsoring a complimentary Webinar entitled "Introduction to Health Care Credentialing." The Webinar is scheduled for Thursday, January 14, 2010, from 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm EST. It will consist of a fifty-minute presentation followed by ten minutes of Q&A.

To sign up, visit <http://www.pre-employ.com/Credentialing/Part1>.

For those unable to attend the webinar, it will be available shortly after the presentation date for free on demand viewing at <http://www.pre-employ.com/Webinars/Healthcare-Webinars.aspx>.

What about Those Prerecorded Messages?

Michele Shuster of MacMurray, Petersen, and Shuster LLP, reminds us that, "On September 1, 2009 the FTC's prohibition against sending prerecorded solicitation messages without the express written consent of the call recipient became effective. This new requirement, contained in the FTC's amended Telemarketing Sales Rule [TSR], does not apply to purely informational messages, *health care messages*, or calls made by entities exempt from the TSR."

Marketing via YouTube

Gretchen Godwin, RN, is excited to announce that Corridor Medical Answering Service is on YouTube. Check out it out at www.youtube.com/user/corridoranswering2.

If your call center is on YouTube, let us know.

Cold Weather and Your Health

Is cold weather good or bad for your health? It depends. Cold weather can be hard on your health in some ways, but it also be good for it, reports the January 2010 issue of the [Harvard Health Letter](#).

Most of us spend the winter trying to stay warm, but a little bit of exposure to cold may not be such a bad thing. There are two types of fat in the human body: white fat and brown fat. Brown fat is the heat-producing, calorie-burning fat that babies need to regulate their body temperatures. Most of it disappears with age, but adults retain some brown fat. Dutch researchers reported findings last year that showed that moderately cool temperatures of 61° F activated brown fat in 23 of 24 study volunteers. This is a good thing, because brown fat burns calories more efficiently than white fat and so may help control weight. When we are chilled this winter, we may take some consolation that at least we're firing up those brown fat cells.