

10 Tips for Choosing a Telephone Answering Service

- 1). Ask how their staff is trained?** Dealing with difficult callers, customer service, telephone skills? Do the company's employees attend national or regional educational and technical programs? A formalized training plan helps to ensure that your callers/client will receive excellent service.
- 2). How does the company ensure that enough staff is available** to avoid long rings or hold times? What backup measures do they have in place due to unforeseen increase in call volume?
- 3). Awards – Does the company participate in the ATSI Award of Excellence** program and random in house call monitoring? This program assesses a company's service level thru the evaluation of test calls, using various criteria such as hold time or lack thereof, politeness and professionalism, confirmation of telephone numbers and other vital information. This award is presented annually to companies with a score of 80% or better.
- 4). Does the company comply with local, state, and federal regulations** and carry business insurance, including Errors and Omissions coverage?
- 5). How many years has the company been in business?** How long has the ownership been in place? What is the average time an employee has been with the service?
- 6). Does the company have back-up power and redundancy** of critical system components? What occurs if the telephony provider goes down? What occurs if a hard drive or power supply goes out?
- 7). Services/Features: What hours are customer service representatives available?** Ask about what services they offer? customized scripting, call screening, voice-mail, two way text/alpha, web access to on call and messages, making appt/reservation, etc. Are these services at an extra charge?
- 8). Pricing – make sure you understand how charges are computed.** Make sure you are comparing 28 day billing correctly with monthly billing as the 28 day billing will have 13 bills per year vs. 12. Charges can be based upon time or calls. If based upon time confirm if the time is rounded up. (i.e. does 13 seconds count as 13 sec, 30 sec, 1 min on your bill?) Is hold time counted in your bill? The company should work with you to design a service package that offers your company the best value for its needs. Ask for a written proposal and confirm that there are not any additional hidden costs. Is there a deposit? Is a programming fee charged?
- 9). References –** request references and ask specifically for references of accounts that have switched to that service in the last two years.
- 10). Does the service belong to any regional or national trade associations** such as ATSI, ASTAA? Does the service belong to a user's group for their telephony or software such as PINetwork?