

the Focal Point!



A newsletter for the customers of Focus Telecommunications, Inc.

Healthy...

We've suspected it all along...now it's confirmed. About half the excess calories consumed by Americans come from liquids. Our two-year-olds run around with juice boxes, our teens are rarely without a soda, adults add alcohol to the mix and keep loading in the liquid calories. In 1977, we drank about 80 calories a day in the form of juice and soft drinks. Today, that number has tripled, equating to about 15 pounds per year.

Wealthy...

There was a time when grandparents gave savings bonds to their grandchildren for birthdays and graduations. Maybe it's time to go back to that custom—or just buy savings bonds for ourselves. Today, you can buy a bond for as little as \$25.00. And these aren't your grandpa's savings bonds! Today, we have the "I – Bond", which is tied to the interest rate (hence the "I"). As interest rates go up, so does the rate of payment on the bond. These bonds stop earning interest after 30 years, so it's a great vehicle for long term savings.

...and Wise



Always be able to look back and say,

"At least I didn't lead no humdrum life."

—Forrest Gump

What is that Message Worth?

That is an interesting question, with a great many answers. An independent industry survey done in the late 1980s gave us some amazing answers...

- 34% estimated that the value of their messages was under \$100.00
- 26% believed their messages were between \$100.00 and \$500.00
- 26% valued their messages between \$500.00 and \$1,000.00 but...
- 40% said their messages could be valued between \$1,000.00 and \$5,000.00 and
- 14% acknowledged their messages were worth over \$5,000.00!

Wow! Adjusted for inflation and today's pricing and the numbers become staggering. Let's look at the kind of messages we take at Focus.

A message for a physician could mean a \$65.00 office visit, a \$3,000.00 office procedure, a \$12,000.00 surgery, or...a life.

A message for a towing company could be a \$350.00 tow, or a city contract worth over a million dollars a year.

We estimate we answer for about 65% of the area's residential apartment buildings, apartments that rent from between \$850.00 to over \$2,500.00 per month. The vast majority of calls we answer on these accounts are pertaining to an emergency. A ceiling that caves in due to a water leak on the floor above can cost hundreds to repair. Prompt action on a toilet stoppage could save thousands if it indicated a sewer backup. Proper handling of a "smell of gas" call could save millions of dollars and hundreds of lives. Even a call regarding a light out in a hallway could save a person from falling and being severely hurt, and the property from a lawsuit.

A computer service company may charge \$250.00 for a repair, but if their customer has lost payroll data, it could affect the lives of all their employees.

What about the message from a child who wants to say goodnight to Daddy, or from a young wife who has just gone into labor...anyone want to put a value on those messages?

Whether a message is worth pennies or millions doesn't matter here at Focus. Each week we answer over 60,000 calls on behalf of our customers. Each one is important and each one is given the care and attention it deserves.

Gotta' Giggle

If ever they receive a call from a person trapped in an elevator, our agents are trained to ask if the caller wants to stay on the line until help arrives. Katy, an especially bubbly, talkative agent, received just such a call, and, after alerting the supervisor, began chatting.

She talked about her plans for the weekend, the college courses she was taking, and what she was having for dinner that night, in typical Katy fashion, thinking she was helping to take the caller's mind off the situation. Imagine her chagrin when the caller finally grumbled, "I told you I wanted to stay on the line with you. I don't actually want to TALK to you!"

LIFE

(in 25 words or less)

"You'll never catch me bragging about my goals, but I'll talk to you all you want about my assists."

—Wayne Gretzky, holder of 61 NHL scoring records, including 1,963 assists.

January 26, 2010

Our Services Include

Answering Service
Appointment Making
Customer Service
Data Entry
Dealer Locate
Direct Mail
Fulfillment Literature
Help Desk
Hotlines
Pre-Announcements
Relief Receptionist
Reservations
R.S.V.P.
Surveys
Voice Mail

Focus Comm Centers

1912 Liberty Rd. Suite F
Eldersburg, MD 21784

2930 Carol Rd.
York, PA 17402

Remittance address:

PO Box 822640
Philadelphia, PA 19182-2640

Phone Numbers:

301-421-1111 MD/DC
410-880-8600 Baltimore
301-236-5500 VA
1-800-886-6696 Toll Free

E-mail: ask@focustele.com
website: www.focustele.com

On-Call Info can be sent to:

301-421-0347 Fax
301-421-5261 Phone
on-call@focustele.com

Customer Care Contact

301-421-5894 Office
301-421-0347 Fax
customercare@focustele.com

The President's Letter

Dear Friends,
We have a New Year and a New Look!

I am definitely not a person who changes the furniture around every few months, but after almost 23 years in business, I think Focus is ready for a new look—a new “feel”. Let’s put this past decade behind us!

We dedicated 2008 to you. It was the *Year of the Client!* We sent a survey every month, we began customer visits (which we have continued), and we held meetings to see how we could improve the features and the services that we were providing for you. We still practice the things we learned, and during the year of the client we developed habits that continue to this day.

When 2009 came, we focused on our employees. It became the *Year of the Agent.* Knowing that the way our agents were treated was the way they would treat our customers, we were concentrating on both. We caught them doing things right. Every senior staff member took a month and did something special for our agents. There were daily puzzles, inspirational sayings, stories, even lottery tickets. The whole staff received “thank you’s” whenever they did something even a little bit out of the ordinary. We made sure that everyone in our company knows they are appreciated.

Twenty-Ten is our *Year of Renewal.* The prelude to a new decade that will arrive at the end of the year (or the beginning of this year—whichever way you want to look at it). We want to review the way we do things and see if there is a better way. We want to refresh our outlook. This month we have changed our newsletter. It’s back to the future, by changing the name from *Business Calls* – back to *The Focal Point!* That was the title for many years, and we think it speaks to who we are. Any company can use *Business Calls*, as the name of its publication. *The Focal Point!* fits Focus, so we’re bringing it back.

We’ve lengthened our newsletter just a bit. Not so long that you can’t read it quickly, but long enough so that we can share some “non-business” bits and pieces with you, and maybe bring a smile to your face. We hope *The Focal Point!* will be something you look forward to reading, because we enjoy keeping you up to date on what is happening in the company that works for you.

Happy New Year!

Hugs,



Critical Information

Please Read and Respond

Do we, at Focus, have enough information to be able to help you in an emergency?

Consider this incident that happened in a Virginia Beach answering service recently.

The answering service received a call from the Highway Patrol. One of their clients had been killed in a car wreck; her office phone was forwarded to the service. She was a divorced mom with a child. The service had no idea who her babysitter was, or what her former married name had been. The supervisor at the answering service finally reprinted all of her messages, found a call from a relative and was able to notify the family.

Is there information in your account or in your billing information that would help us to help you if there was an emergency?

Ask@focustele.com

Dear Focus,
Why all the cloak and dagger stuff; can't your employees just give us their full names when we ask?

The Name is James - “007”. There are no James “Bonds” working at Focus; our agents have no last names. When you or your callers ask for a person’s name at our company, they will hear, I’m Karen, and I’m agent #135, or I’m Rob, agent #206. Why all the cloak and dagger? It’s for the personal safety of our employees.

This is not the world of old. We have identity theft, stalking, and people going postal. As employers it’s our responsibility to keep our employees as safe as possible. That is why we do not allow our agents to give out their last names to callers. We don’t want a way for people to identify them outside the work place, especially since in our case, our employees work from home on a regular basis.

Imagine dealing with an angry caller who calls back to say, “I know where you live.” Imagine having a caller say, “Your voice is so pretty, let me meet you,” then, when you say, “no”, having them show up outside your home. Scary!

No one can do an internet search on Ashleigh, #355, and we want to keep it that way.

If you have a question about why we do (or don’t do) something or a request for something you would like to see, e-mail us at Ask@Focustele.com.