

## ***Finding, Hiring and Keeping Agents***

Finding, hiring and keeping agents in call centers is not an easy feat. This industry is known for a high turnover of staff. The first hurdle is to find those people who enjoy being on the telephone for six plus hours per day, don't mind being yelled at by callers, are able handle management's constant scrutiny having every conversation and work increment analyzed; and paid how much? Here are some ideas to help find, hire and keep your call center staffed.

### Finding

- Employee referrals
- Online recruiting from your company website
- Online recruiting from a third party source such as Careerbuilder.com, CallCenterCareers.com, etc.
- Employment Agencies
- Local Universities
- Career workshops

### Hiring

- Interview applicants over the telephone first
  - Determine if the candidate meets the minimum requirements of the position
  - Assess their telephone communication skills
  - Briefly explain the position
  - If acceptable, invite them in for an interview
- In Person Interview
  - Be explicit with the demands of the center
    - What a typical day involves
    - Expectations for number of calls daily
    - Performance reportings systems used and why
    - What type of training to expect
    - Career path, if any
  - Consider involving some of your agents in the interview process
    - They can help assess if the candidate will fit it
    - As they are closer to the daily grind, they are sometimes in a better position to explain the job in more detail
- Use pre-hire assessment tools to ensure they have the skills to perform the job

### Keeping

- Ensure their job responsibilities are clearly defined
- Share the goals/objects of the call center and the mission of the company
- Solicit input about everything that affects the agent
- Staff appropriately to avoid agent burn-out
- Surprise the agents with events; break up the daily routine
- Make the work environment pleasing, safe and comfortable
- Don't skimp on the equipment, especially their headsets
- Praise and coach them often
- Provide ongoing training for both the agents and the managers
- Pay them well – in most cases they deserve it. If you don't believe it, then I would suggest the management team spend time fielding calls from customers.

If you have a high turnover and are not sure the cause, be sure to conduct a thorough exit interview with everyone regardless of how long they have been with the organization. Examine and study those interviews to determine if there is a consistent theme and then take the necessary action to correct the situation. Happy motivated employees are good for business!