

## But, Don't You Know What We Do in the Call Center?

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Call centers across the country make significant contributions. Why then, does it feel like "you get no respect" from administration. We're not talking about manners. Many mature call centers face the "shrinking budget syndrome," staffing limits and inadequate marketing to manage the labor-intensive services provided. There are many reasons why this can be an issue. Start from the top of your organization to ensure the Center is understood and valued. Here are some proven advocacy techniques for you to explore.

**Do not assume your leadership understands what the call center does.** Recognize they rarely ask. Advocacy requires appropriate positioning of the Center within the health system's global strategy.

**Talk in their language.** This is the language of business decisions, ROI, managing the competition and outcomes and future opportunities. Your job is to consider how to get there. The administrator wants to know, bottom line, how dollars invested will provide organizational benefit.

**Work to understand the strategic goals of the organization.** Develop your approach to mirror this focus in your call center plan. Teach your staff how the Call Center can measure its contributions mirroring the organizational goals.

**Prepare reports that have meaning to anyone.** The old adage, "If they can't understand it, they won't buy it" is relevant. Administration is unlikely to continue giving support if they do not understand your contributions. Today's databases allow you to analyze each call and the process to enhance your management of call center operations. Talk the administration's language in the report and keep it brief. Highlight important findings. While it may need to be developed separately, it will be read. Test your current report. Take it to a lay person and ask them to identify the important findings from your report.

**Present a professional image.** Every-thing about your approach to senior management and the administrator should exude confidence. Be succinct; and if that is not your natural tendency, practice. Meetings with your supervisor may be a good place to practice. Start with the result or measurement. Then, explain why this is significant for the organization. Next, wait for a response. For many, this is a far different approach than starting with the process of how the result was obtained.

**Define what you need for success.** Recognize you may have to ask. Hospitals have never been known for their intuition or mind reading capabilities. The same rules apply

here: be succinct, use their language, position value in measurable terms and be professional.

**Ask for help.** If you are an excellent clinician and manager, but are not confident in your business skills, ask for help. If the Call Center needs to be revamped and the job is too large for one person, ask for help. If nurses seem unable to manage the call volumes desired, ask for help. Use national trends and numbers, make friends with the financial team, use the resources provided by your software vendor, network with others, use outside professionals and attend seminars to stay current.

**Be resilient.** There will be times when your leadership, “just doesn’t get it” and declines your well-defined suggestion. Do not take it personally, rather re-examine the issue and, if it is critical, take another approach. Think through potential objections before you present your issues and prepare your response in advance.

**Give super service.** Once you have positioned the Call Center, continue to offer outcomes, findings, and opportunities to use your data and to work with the internal team. Because so much of the Call Center’s focus is on the consumer, it is easy to forget the importance of the internal team. The other departments and services can serve as allies. Trust and teamwork cannot be assumed in this era of healthcare. Take the first step to begin building bridges internally. Perhaps this is a good time to evaluate your call center and how the leadership in your organization perceives it. The time to start is before there are issues, problems or concerns. Take the opportunity to advocate for your center with your leadership.



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