

New Call Center Survey Points to Bright Future

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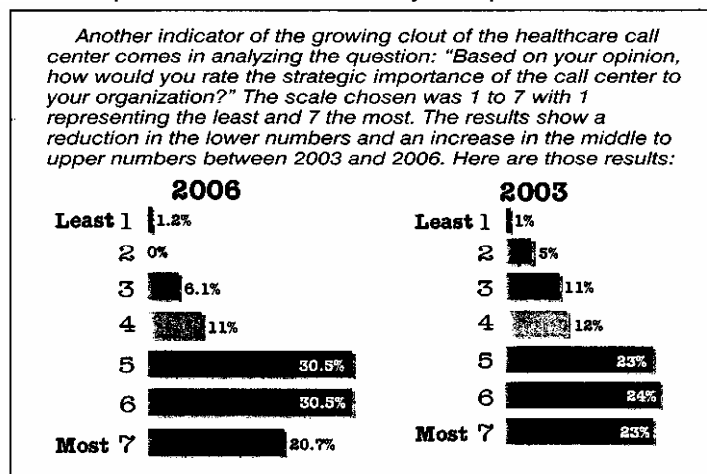
ATLANTA, GA—The future may indeed be a bright one for healthcare call centers, according to the just released 2006 Healthcare Call Center Survey.

The survey was conducted this past spring by our companion publication Physician Referral & Telephone Triage Times, Daniel+Douglas+Norcross and Corporate Health Group. One hundred and five call centers began the survey with about 80 completing all of its segments.

Eighty-one percent of respondents said that over the next two years the call center will be more important to the organization. Nineteen percent said it would remain the same and no respondent said it would be less important. This is even more positive than the results from the 2003 Healthcare Call Center Survey (which was conducted by the same three organizations). In that survey, the comparable percentages were 68.1 percent saying more important, 27.8 percent responding the same and 4.2 percent saying less important.

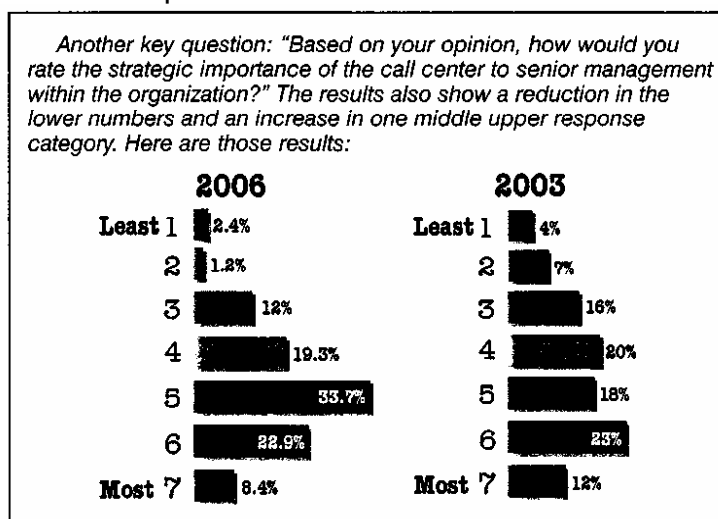
Similar patterns were found in results for the question—What do you see happening to your service offerings in the next two years? The 2006 survey says: 88.6 percent plan to add services, 10.1 percent plan to keep them the same and 1.3 percent said they will decrease services. In 2003, it was 74 percent saying they would add services, 17.8 percent saying they would keep them the same and 8.2 percent indicating they would decrease services.

Budgets and staff are also rising or staying the same. For the call center budget, over the next two years, 55.1 percent of respondents said they plan to increase their budget, 41 percent said keep it the same and only 3.8 percent indicated that they



planned to decrease the budget. This is a stronger positive response than 2003 when 39.1 percent said they would increase the budget, 46.6 said keep it the same and 13.7 percent indicated they would decrease the budget.

The same trend repeats on staffing. For 2006, 59.5 percent of respondents said they will increase staff over the next two years, 39.2 percent said they would keep it the same and only 1.3 percent planned to decrease staff. This compares with 2003 when 37.1 percent said they would increase staff over the coming two years, 52.9 percent would keep it the same and 10 percent would decrease staff.



Indeed, this increased activity also comes with challenges. For example, let's look at responses to the question: What other challenges do you face in operating and/or improving the effectiveness of your call center? A whopping 68.3 percent of respondents answered: Managing the growing number of programs and services. This was the leading response followed by 67.1 percent—Processing calls during peak times.

Additionally, 63.3 percent of respondents said that the call center is indeed included as a strategy or tactic within the organization's strategic plan and initiatives compared with 19 percent who said it isn't. 16.7 percent said they did not know.

Marketing

The number one media that call centers use to market their services is print (newspaper and magazine) with 67.1 percent of respondents saying their organizations used this. Direct mail followed at number two with 63.2 percent. Radio came in at 51.3 percent, Internet at 48.7 percent, outdoor/billboard at 34.2 percent and television at 32.9 percent. This question also had an open-ended element so respondents could indicate other methods of marketing their call centers. Among the responses here: phone book, web site, printing the call center number on discharge forms in the hospital, promotion of the number to new employees of the hospital during orientation, hospital community newsletter, health fairs and direct mail to physicians.

41.2 percent of respondents report the call center falls under or reports to the marketing department. 2.4 percent report to communications, 4.7 percent to planning, 8.2 percent to nursing and 2.4 percent to medical staff. Additionally, 5.9 percent report to physician services, 20 percent fall under administration and 15.3 percent are "other."

ROI

One of the consistencies between the 2003 and 2006 Call Center Surveys was ROI. In 2006, 72.8 percent of responding call centers measured ROI. This compares with 71.6 percent in 2003. However, there's a change in the how. In 2006, 66.1 percent of respondents who measured ROI said they do so by tracking actual revenue from patient records (revenue reconciliation) compared to 55.6 percent of the 2003 respondents. 11.3 percent estimate revenue generated based on call volume/type compared to 18.5 percent in 2003. And, track call volume and/or caller satisfaction only was 14.5 percent in 2006 and 25.9 percent in 2003. There was also another column in 2006 with 8.1 percent of respondents. Some of these responses actually fell into other categories, but one respondent said their call center measures ROI through ER diversion.

