

ON MY MIND ANSWER THE PHONE!



By ASHI President,
Tim Buell

To answer your phone or not to answer your phone? This has always been the million-dollar question in our industry. Here is some context to help you make the right decision for you and your business.

Did you know it's been estimated that as many as 85% of callers who can't reach a company on the first try will not call back? And 75% of those same callers will not leave a voicemail message. So, for home inspectors, it's safe to assume that, if you are out on an inspection with a client and a real estate agent, and your phone rings but you don't answer it, the person calling you will most likely hang up and that business will be lost to you. On the flip side, if you do answer the call, you run the risk of upsetting your client and the agent because you are being paid to complete the inspection, not to answer your phone.

Given this challenge, what exactly should a successful, in-demand inspector do?

CONSIDER USING A CALL CENTER

Full disclosure—I'm a big believer in using the services of a call center if it's the "right" call center. Not all call centers are created equal. Make sure that the call center provides the services you want and need in a way that meets or exceeds your expectations. And, of course, it must make fiscal sense for the inspection business.

According to Paul Zak, CEO of America's Call Center (ACC), there are many reasons for an inspector to use the services of a call center.

MORE REVENUE

After nearly two decades serving the home inspection industry, Zak stated, "As the nation's leader in integrated customer service and call-handling solutions, we provide services exclusively to home inspectors that simply put more money in their pockets. Imagine your own customer service team at a fraction of the cost—taking the calls, managing the leads, handling logistics and so on. With a strategic partner like ACC in your corner, you have more freedom to do the things you really need and want to do."

When I started my business, my wife did all the scheduling. Even if she was at a meeting with real estate agents, at the grocery store or out to dinner, she always carried her scheduling book and answered the phone whenever possible. One day, our granddaughter was with us and she casually asked my wife, "Grandma, when are you going to be my grandma without the phone?" As you might imagine, that changed everything.

Shortly after, we did an informal analysis of our booking process and discovered we were actually losing a minimum of six inspections per month because my wife was unable to answer the phone. So, we chose to engage a call center. For us, it was definitely the right decision.

BETTER BRAND IMAGE

When my wife answered the phone for our inspection business, she presented a strong and professional image for our company. However, not everyone has this ability and some inspectors really struggle with it for various reasons.

As they say in the advertising world, perception is reality. So, when your phone is answered by a professional—that is, someone who knows the industry and how to successfully navigate the end-to-end process of selling and booking inspections—the person on the other end of the line feels it. They know they are in good hands, and they come away from the conversation feeling confident and pleased with the experience.

“**IN THE END, THEY HAVE A POSITIVE PERCEPTION OF THE BRAND, AND YOU HAVE SATISFIED CLIENTS AND REAL ESTATE AGENTS WHO WILL BECOME LOYAL AND STRONG REFERRAL SOURCES.**”

AN EXTENSION OF YOUR BUSINESS

There are many call centers out there, but only a handful specialize in the inspection industry. And even fewer employ quality, well-trained specialists who can do more than simply take a message.

As Paul Zak noted, "At ACC, we've learned that to make the most positive impact for any home inspector and his business, our team members must have a deep commitment to acting as a true extension of the client's business. It's not enough for our agents to know the industry—they must know the client and the specific business so they may collaborate and customize solutions that work just for them. No cookie-cutter approaches."

For my inspection business, we use a call center that specializes in the industry and it has made all the difference.

REMEMBER, IT'S MORE THAN JUST ANSWERING A PHONE AND TAKING A MESSAGE.

It's about creating a positive brand experience with a client. That starts with having the right support team in your corner.

MORE BUSINESS, MORE FREEDOM

We all strive to achieve a better work-life balance. We all wish we had more time to do the things we want while still making more money.

Once my wife and I made up our minds to use a call center for our inspection business, the quality of our lives and our business improved dramatically. Whether we were out to dinner or traveling or visiting with friends, it was always nice to know we were not missing any inspections. And we were making more money while having more fun!

With a solid support team helping you sell and book inspections, promote your ancillary services, manage your leads and more, you'll have more time to spend growing your business and doing things you enjoy.

Using a call center is not for everyone, but using the right call center can be a powerful tool in your arsenal. It can allow you to increase your competitive advantage, differentiate your inspection business from the pack and improve your quality of life. I strongly suggest you consider it.

*"They say 'time is money.'
But I want to say 'time makes money.'
This means time is greater than money."*

—Israelmore Ayivor, Shaping the Dream

"FIND ALL DEFECTS"—POSTCARD

Mark Layton – Pillar to Post, Minneapolis, MN

Test your skills! Try to find all the defects in this photo. Submit your findings to postcards@ashi.org & join the conversation on the **ASHI Facebook** page!

