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Looking Ahead

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In this edition of Looking Ahead, we examine how telephone answering services (TAS's) have played a unique and important role in our economy, from the early days of cord boards to the current era of smart phones and soft switches. A TAS combines people and technology in support of the business processes of their clients, helping small companies to grow and larger companies to continue to prosper.

As a creator of innovative products for the TAS industry, we at Amtelco/Telescan have this same relationship with you, the users of our products. We strive to create tools that are general in function and still powerful enough for you to service a wide range of clients' needs and to assist you in assimilating these tools into your operation in a timely and cost effective way.

With today's mobile work force, servicing your clients' needs means supporting them in their workflow in ways that were until recently not feasible. In the past, reception of a message meant an interruption to the workflow and consisted of several discrete steps of notification, message delivery and follow up. But now, thanks to the pervasiveness of wireless and smartphone technology, these steps are seamlessly combined and serve to enhance the workflow rather than interrupt it. This also implies that the TAS now can participate more fully in the workflow itself.

Timely, reliable and secure communications always has been a characteristic requirement of the medical community and they have been the first to benefit from your ability to use these new communication tools. But the technology used to support it also can be effectively applied in other business settings. When working with your clients, analyze their business processes and be attentive to how the new technology can be applied.

For example, when dispatching to on-call personnel, a secure message delivered using the Spectrum Secure Delivery app can keep the TAS informed automatically throughout the lifecycle of the message, from 'Viewed' to 'In Process' to 'Completed.' The on-call personnel can exchange notes with each other through the app or optionally can notify the TAS through the app to enlist backup support. Supervisory personnel can log in to the desktop or tablet version of the app as an 'Admin' to obtain access to the status of all outstanding and completed calls. As an 'Admin,' supervisors can create messages and notes, thus joining and supporting the workflow as and when appropriate.

Or consider Amtelco's MergeComm, the Intelligent Series feature that automates a myriad of dispatch scenarios. It is being augmented to provide a dashboard for the status of its programmed workflows, providing real-time monitoring. This enables response delays to be identified and

corrective action to be taken when needed. For the TAS itself, the Spectrum Charts application provides powerful analytical tools for evaluating agent performance and staffing requirements.

These are just a few examples of how you can apply new tools to make your service and your clients more productive.

TUNe (Telescan Users Network) users group member Todd Kamp of Business Centers in St. Louis recently shared with me a maxim of how a TAS can acquire and keep their clients. Citing research from an early market study done by the National Amtelco Equipment Owners (NAEO) users group, Todd said, “The goal is to provide a service to a company that you do better than they do and do it more cost effectively.” He went on to say, “If you only do one of those two, they will keep (the service) in-house.”

As you analyze your client relationships, strive to identify the critical components of their workflows that can be improved by your involvement and at the same time lead to a reduction of their overall costs. Look for ways that new technology can be applied, perhaps in ways that were not anticipated. This is the key to innovation. This is the key to seizing opportunity.

Through our partnership with you, the Amtelco/Telescan development team is kept keenly aware of our responsibility to provide the tools you need to meet your challenges. This is the spirit that guides our development process.

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