

Physician Referral & Telephone Triage **TIMES**

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Demystifying Call Center Technology— A Process

CHICAGO, IL—For many new (and sometimes experienced) call center managers, understanding the technological underpinnings of the call center may not be an easy task. It seems, at first glance, that there's a whole language of technology that is not easily accessible to the lay public.

But there is a process that call center managers can use to absorb technological concepts without going back to school for another college degree. Mitchell Lieber, President of the Chicago-based Lieber & Associates says there are several excellent resources for call center managers to use that demystify call center technology. One is books. "But the problem is that call center technology changes very quickly so the danger is that the book can become out of date quickly," he says. "So you should not get a book that was published five to six years ago but rather something in the last year or two."

Amazon.com is a good way to learn what's out there. Lieber, who works as an independent call center consultant and technology expert, says there are several good books, but one in particular that he likes is **The Call Center Handbook** by Keith Dawson. While the concepts discussed are geared toward call centers with more than 30-50 seats, he says that smaller call centers can also benefit. Another resource he likes is **Newton's Telecom Dictionary** by Harry Newton that describes in lay language what technological terms such as kilobyte and ACD mean.

One area that isn't so helpful in

demystifying technological terms is information right from the manufacturers, Lieber argues.

"Marketers for technology companies often make their descriptions seem a little mysterious so that you want to know more," he says. "Often manufacturers have different terminology for something that's the same thing as other companies have."

The technology folks within the organization can be a helpful resource for call center managers trying to learn about the subject. Lieber says that it makes perfect sense for call center managers to meet with the technology people and acknowledge that they are new to technological concepts and will be asking them some questions. "Many if not most tech people are willing to share their knowledge and expertise," he says. Another

strategy is to have a "translator" available, someone who is conversant in the technology and has the capability to translate that into everyday terms.

And, finally it's key to ask the right questions. It is very easy in the technology arena to get caught up in the "how does it work?" discussion that can get detailed and complex. Rather, Lieber suggests bringing the discussion back down to "what does this do for the call center? How does this benefit us?"

(Mitchell Lieber will discuss this and other issues much more in-depth during his pre-conference workshop "Demystifying Call Center Technology" on June 23 as part of the Sixteenth National Conference of Physician Referral and Health Information Call Centers Conference in Chicago.) ■