



How Answering Services Have Evolved

The Dangers of Working
with an Outdated Answering Service

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On March 7, 1876, Alexander Graham Bell received a patent for the first telephone - and since that moment, the world has never been the same. Although at least two other inventors would dispute his claim as “the father of the telephone”, nobody has disputed the tremendous importance that phones have had on our society. From the very first switchboards, the telephones have fulfilled their role in connecting the world and making communication easier for all. As technology advanced, it wasn’t long before there was a telephone in everyone’s home, and now in everyone’s pocket. With such a monumental shift in communication, it was only a matter of time before it became impractical for businesses to field all of their incoming calls, and thus, the answering service was born.

From the primitive beginnings of switchboard operators to the modern web-based answering services, changes in technology are helping to connect businesses and customers like never before. If your business is considering working with an answering service, it’s crucial to know how technology has changed over time in order to avoid the pitfalls of a non-evolved service.

Setting the Scene: Answering Service History

Although answering services are commonly used today, this hasn’t always been the case. In fact, before the telephone was even invented, communications companies offered a service that would send Morse code messages over telegraph wire. Teenage boys were hired to transmit these messages and this became the most primitive iteration of a communications answering service.

Even though the boys were a perfect fit for telegraph communications, they didn’t translate well to telephone manner. In an effort to provide a more pleasant experience, communication companies began to hire women operators, a bold move for the day. A female phone operator at this point in time was a rarity because most women worked to raise children and to care for the home. The first woman phone operator in history was Emma Nutt, and thanks to her tremendous success, she helped to break boundaries and pave the way for working women everywhere, especially in the communications industry.

Fast forward 3 quarters of a century from the first telephone patent to communication companies and popularized switchboards which allowed operators to field multiple calls at once. Later, the invention of the 800-number made it even easier for customers to call in to a business, because the company was now paying the tab. These inventions became the earliest precursor to the modern answering service and although technology changed through the years, the one feature that has remained constant has been the professionalism, skill, and patience needed from call agents.

Where Are We Now? Present Day Answering Services

In the last decade, there has been a rise in popularity of business answering services that are able to field a wide variety of calls, including intercompany employee issues, questions and comments from current customers, and sales operations. Today, answering services can serve a wide variety of industries due to the ability to customize each client's preferences in order to better suit their customers.

For example, a 24/7 answering service can make a big impact in the medical field. By fielding calls for a doctor's office, call agents can act appropriately for each situation they encounter; they can reach the doctor on-call for after-hours emergencies or simply take a message for an appointment cancellation. Thanks to modern advances, answering services can now act as a liaison, a secretary, an emergency contact and so much more.

Today, MAP Communications is an industry leader with the technical capabilities that combines software and hardware to produce highly customized scripts for clients, use web portals to check messages and call logs, and fully integrate billing and call log information. Additionally, MAP records all calls and gives the client the ability to hear a recording – simply request a certain call and MAP can follow up by sending an audio file. However, for our medical clients, we are HIPAA compliant and will convey the messages in a secure way as to not expose protected health information of your patients. MAP is able to process payments, make and cancel appointments, answer technical questions, and seamlessly handle all customers needs, both now and into the future!

The Future of Answering Services for Businesses

Answering services will play an important role in the future of businesses, not only for the technology that they provide to the business, but more importantly for the role they play interacting with your customers. Customers have more choices at their fingertips – so it's crucial now more than ever to provide high-quality customer service to your potential and current customers. Customers are looking for businesses that are readily available and instantly responsive to their needs.

Whether your business or service is available 24/7 or not, your customers have needs around the clock. It's becoming more necessary for companies to meet customers' demands in real time or you run the risk of losing customers to a competitor who is available 24/7/365. As this trend continues to evolve, the role of an answering service will be less of a service offering but rather viewed as hiring an extension to your business, an 'employee' that will be always available to support your customers. In the future, answering services will continue to develop and be seamlessly integrated into the core offering of a company.

Why Do I Need a Modern Answering Service Anyway?

Even in the age of the Internet, phone calls represent a majority of business inquiries and for this reason; a modern answering service is crucial. Missing potential clients can sink your business quickly, but with an up-to-date call partner, your future clients will have their questions answered promptly and efficiently, even at busy times. For the growing small business there are a number of distinct advantages, such as record keeping and recording for call details, which could help you remember that important piece of information that leads to a new sale, or it could help you to resolve a customer dispute.

One of the most frustrating experiences for a customer is calling into a business only to find that the telephone operator doesn't have the knowledge or experience to handle the inquiry. At MAP Communications, we have created specific and detailed metrics that help ensure that each call agent is equipped with the know-how to delight your customers when they call in. In fact, we are even able to observe our progress in this area with real-time activity monitoring, which, in conjunction with analytics reporting, allows you to see exactly how and why customers are calling in. Just one of the many ways that MAP is blazing a trail for answering services in a digital world.

Dangers of Working with a Non-Evolved Answering Service

Losing out on a potential client can be detrimental to your business including the loss of repeat and referral business. By partnering with a non-evolved answering service, you can miss out on new business opportunities. An outdated answering service will not have the team or staff experience to provide a higher-quality of customer service and knowledge that customers come to expect of your business. In addition, a non-evolved answering service may not have the software or security to track your client's information properly. More modern answering service partners will have the secure technology and the capability to track your calls, record information and convey all critical customer information to your business. Overall, the entire experience your customer has on the phone will affect how they perceive your business and their investment with your company. Keep that in mind when selecting your answering service partner.

Are You Looking to Partner With an Outstanding Modern Answering Service?

MAP employs the industry's finest live agents to deliver the highest levels of answering service imaginable. We are a 100% employee-owned company which means every one of our staff is much more than just another employee – he or she also has a vested financial interest in ensuring the success of each and every customer we service.

We have always invested heavily into our systems and processes to ensure that we remain the answering service industry leader. MAP utilizes an internally developed operational call-handling platform called ECHO Software. ECHO was designed and written by our own programmers to ensure that our customers do not have to rely on software vendors for account-driven enhancements. Our software platform is a robust call-handling application that guides our live agents logically through the call for a professional, comprehensive customer support solution. For a free trial or more information on how MAP can make a difference for your company, visit us at mapcommunications.com.

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