



**10 Tips
for Choosing
a Telephone
Answering
Service**

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You already know you need an answering service – there's no question there. However, how do you select the right provider to suit your needs? The short answer is that generally, you get what you pay for.

To help you find the right answering service with the services, flexibility and professionalism to meet your needs, we offer these 10 tips with questions you should ask. Most of these tips and questions have been provided by ATSI, the Association of TeleServices International.



1 Staff Development

How is their staff trained? A standardized training program helps ensure that your callers will receive consistent service. Does the company provide continuing education for existing staff to assure continual quality?

Do the company's employees attend national or regional educational and technical programs? This assures you that the company will have the latest information and training to provide you with a service plan designed to meet your needs.

2 Staffing

How does the company ensure that enough staff is available to minimize long rings or hold times?

How does the company prepare for increased call volume due to special promotions, a change in office hours, etc?

3 Certifications

Does the company participate in the ATSI 24/7 Call Center Certification program for its business, supervisors, and customer service representatives? This comprehensive program covers over 60 critical points in operations, training and emergency procedures that must be met or exceeded in order for the business site to be certified, and the supervisor and customer service representative certifications requirements include on-the-job experience and a demonstration of skills and job knowledge. The Certification program, a Peer Review Program, focuses on achieving 99.99% Annual Run-Time.



4 Awards

Does the company participate in an outside assessment program, such as the ATSI Award of Excellence service award? Such a program assesses a company's service level through the evaluation of test calls. Has the company been recognized for quality of service?

5 Compliance

Does the company comply with local, state and federal regulations and carry business insurance, including Errors and Omissions coverage?

6 Stability

How many years has the company been in business? What is the average tenure of the staff with this company? Is the company active in the local business community?

7 Reliability

Does the company have back-up power and redundancy of critical system components?

Does the company have a comprehensive Disaster Preparedness and Recovery Plan? If so, ask to see a copy of it. Is this plan reviewed on a regular basis?

8 Available Services

Are customer service representatives available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, including holidays?

Does the company offer a combination of automation and customer service agents? If appropriate for your business, the use of a personalized announcement to give office hours combined with an option to access a customer service agent is one way to reduce expenses.

Does the company offer a variety of message notification methods such as text (SMS), email, fax, alpha paging, voice mail and phone calls to meet your current and future needs?

Do the customer service agents have the ability to access the Internet? If your company relies heavily on this technology, be sure to ask about this.

Ask what other business support services they may offer. Many services now have the capability to schedule appointments and make reservations, provide help desk and dealer locator services, and take product orders and track employee attendance. They may also offer telephone and video conferencing services.



9 Pricing

Make sure you understand how charges are computed. Charges can be based upon time or calls. The company should work with you to design a service package that offers your company the best value for its needs.

10 Service Philosophy

What is your philosophy on service? How does your company track performance? Your search should include a determination of what quality of service you need. You may wish to know what the targets are for service levels. This is usually measured by average time to answer or abandon levels.

Ask for a written proposal. Request references and call them.

Keeping these tips in mind as you begin your search for the right answering service provider will help you make the best choice, have a better experience, and offer the professionalism, suite of services and quality you want – and need.



About Main Line TeleCommunications

Main Line TeleCommunications (MLT) offers individualized teleservices, including 24-hour call answering, virtual receptionist, voicemail, multiple message delivery options, and more. Committed to building strong, successful client partnerships, the company strives not only to provide each and every client with services that meet their specific needs and preferences, but also to provide their callers with award-winning customer service. MLT's advanced and regularly updated technology, combined with a top-quality team dedicated to professional development, helps ensure that clients receive the superior level of service they deserve – 24 hours/day, 7 days/week, 365 days/year.

Based in the Philadelphia, PA area, MLT caters to clients nationwide.

To learn more about Main Line TeleCommunications, call us toll-free at **877-992-9700** or email us at **info@mltcom.com**. Visit us on the Web at **www.mltcom.com**.

**Source, Association of TeleServices International*

