

# Q&A with Carol

What's Your Question?

October on-line edition



## Agents to Leaders...how do they get there?

### Question:

*We are trying to strengthen the leadership team in our Customer Service Center. To do that, we have hired some experienced Supervisors and Managers from other call centers. Employees are becoming frustrated and some have left as a result saying there are no management opportunities here!*

*I'd like to promote from within and develop current employees. Some are great with customers but just don't demonstrate management ability. How can we strengthen our leadership team with current employees?*

### Carol:

Congratulations for recognizing the value of promoting from within. Earning a reputation for career development within your organization is one of the best ways to become a great place to work. We all want to become known as the employer of choice.

Successfully developing leaders from the ranks of agents requires a program that begins long before the promotion paperwork is done. A career development program requires some planning and support from your management and other departments. First you must recognize leadership potential. Look for leaders before you hire and in your current workforce.

Examine your current method of selecting applicants to interview. You most likely look for good communication skills, typing, PC and Internet skills. Past experience in your industry and call centers in general are helpful. That's not enough when you are looking for future leaders! Here are some tips to try when making your agent hiring decisions.

1. Look for past leadership experience. It may not be with a business organization. So let the applicant tell you about leadership in school, church groups, PTA, scout organizations and sports.
2. Ask about goals for the future. Do they see themselves as a leader or perhaps advancing into a technical position?
3. Testing for personality traits and work ethic can help identify leadership candidates. If your company doesn't have such tests, look into an on-line service that will give your new hire candidates access and give you the scores.
4. Ask questions about leadership such as "Tell me about a time you considered yourself a leader in your previous job."
5. Ask questions about their impression of a good leader. Before someone becomes a good leader they should have an idea what a good leader is. Try this, "tell me about the best supervisor or manager you have worked for and why he/she was the best"

Now let's look for leadership traits in your current employees. Use this checklist to identify leadership potential in your agent workforce. You will need to observe each person and their interaction with their

co-workers as well as communication with you. Place a check next to each question you would answer with a yes pertaining to the agent.

- Is he willing to give priority to what is best for the group and sacrifice self interest?
- Does she volunteer to take on additional projects?
- Does he share ideas to reach solutions or meet goals more effectively?
- Do co-workers come to her when they need assistance or cheering up when having a bad day?
- Does he show a strong sense of community within his team.
- Does he understand the technical portion of his job and perform work accurately?
- Do others support her ideas and offer to help her?
- Does she take an interest in the success of others on her team?
- Does she demonstrate patience and willingness to help new employees?
- Do others have confidence in his ability to assist them in their daily work?

This tool will help you recognize traits, yet past experience, dependability and education should always be considered when making decisions regarding promotions.

Once the decision is made to promote an agent make sure you are prepared to provide appropriate training. Based on a survey of over 100 newly promoted agents, the top five training needs for newly promoted leaders are:

1. How to clearly define expectations
2. Coaching and counseling skills
3. Effective communication skills
4. Interpreting reports used in measuring performance
5. Teambuilding techniques

Every newly promoted agent should also have a mentor. Meeting with this mentor weekly is a great way to share challenges and get feedback and ideas. To get your leadership development program started, identify potential when recruiting and managing employees. Then look for effective leadership training and make sure each new leader has a mentor!

Good Luck!

\*\*\*\*\*

If you have a specific issue relating to customer contact centers or have a question you would like addressed, please send your question to [question@trostle.com](mailto:question@trostle.com). Sources (name and company) are not used in Q&A articles.

Trostle & Associates, LTD, is a nationally recognized customer contact-consulting firm. Carol Trostle is the Founder and CEO. They specialize in helping companies win and retain customers and becoming great places to work! To learn more about their products and services visit [www.trostle.com](http://www.trostle.com), send an email to [info@trostle.com](mailto:info@trostle.com) or call them at 210-492-1887.