

# Parlance Perspective

Join us as we take a new look at key business challenges facing today's healthcare organizations.



## The Challenge:



## **When Your Contact Center Takes Switchboard Calls – Callers Suffer**

by **Mark Bedard**  
*Director of Marketing*  
Parlance Corporation

Put yourself in the shoes of someone calling your healthcare organization to reach Medical Records, a patient, or the ER – all routine switchboard requests. This caller may do a quick Google search for your main number but call the first number that comes up – or the most prominent number on your website. For example, they may call the Physician Referral number that pops up during a search instead of the main number. Or they may call the number on their bill, even if they don't have a billing question.

Why? Because to callers, all of your numbers are the same. You may have segmented your Contact Center functions, but your callers don't know that. Callers don't differentiate between the main switchboard number and other numbers that reach scheduling, billing, or other more specialized resources. They don't put much time or thought into what number they call – they just want to get the information they need. And they expect to get it quickly, without hand-offs or delays.

### Which number do I dial?

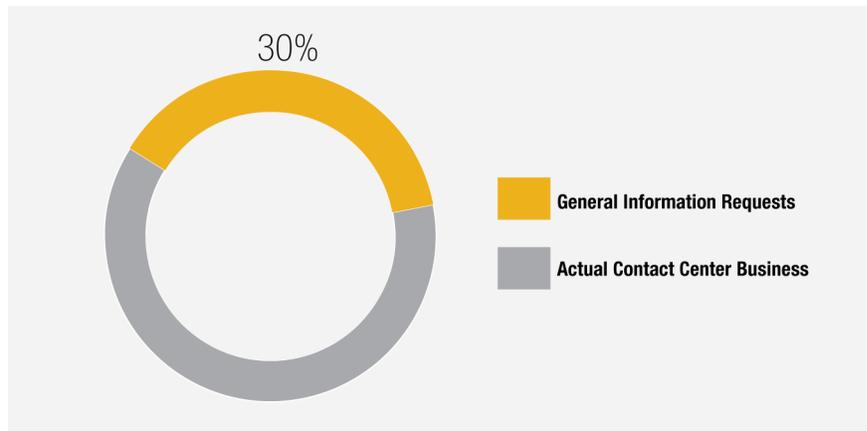
40

*Callers often see as many as 40 or more numbers when researching contact information*

## What happens when switchboard calls don't go where they should?

Data from our healthcare customers shows that routine switchboard requests add up to about 30% of the overall call volume in contact centers. This extra burden of simple requests can go unnoticed, since contact center personnel often answer the request, or hand off the call to a PBX operator – and typically there's no way of tracking them. Misdirected switchboard requests have acute, serious side-effects that merit exploration. More importantly, though this issue may appear invisible, it can be solved by making meaningful changes.

### Switchboard Requests Impact the Contact Center



*Source: Parlance Corporation customer data*

Think of that caller again – the one with a simple request. Are they able to get to the information they need quickly when the call goes to a specialized resource? Probably not, since these calls are best (and most efficiently) handled by your main switchboard and PBX operators – or an automated call handling system and self-service. So they may experience delays, multiple hand-offs, and other issues that lower satisfaction and tarnish your healthcare organization's brand. In short, these callers are not being well-served by inefficient call handling. For them, the caller experience isn't exceptional – it's frustrating. This frustration doubles the impact on your organization, since you lose internal efficiency as well as customer loyalty.

## The right resource for the right caller.

Now consider your call center personnel. They're trained, valued resources with specific knowledge that can help callers do important tasks, such as scheduling an appointment with a physician or getting test results. Using them to handle calls that they shouldn't be getting in the first place can keep them from delivering this high-value service in a timely manner. Facing a flood of switchboard calls can also create unnecessary stress (particularly during high volume periods, such as the day after a three-day holiday), reduce morale, and increase turnover.

And consider your PBX operators. They know how to answer general requests extremely efficiently because that's their primary responsibility. Ideally, they should be receiving all of these requests – including the 30% that are going to agents. But they also have other duties, including medical codes, safety alarms and other work that goes beyond handling routine calls. Imagine the calling and non-calling tasks that PBX operators could take on if routine calls were removed from their workload. A look at the many different devices and tools commonly found in a hospital switchboard operator's workspace illustrates the complexity of the position.

## A distracting, damaging, and costly problem.

Imagine if someone walked by your desk every few minutes asking what time it is, even though you're working on an important project and facing a looming deadline. Every time someone asks the time, you have to stop what you're doing, take out your phone, and check the time. Even though there's a clock on the wall in plain sight. That's what contact center personnel feel like when they're hit with general information requests that they shouldn't be getting. These calls are distracting. They're inefficient. And ultimately, they're costly.

While a flood of general information calls may be invisible, it creates tangible problems – inefficiency, personnel issues, poor service levels, and extra costs. Ask your agents how many general information requests they're fielding. Or just sit with an agent for an hour to gauge the extent of the problem. Or do more targeted research to identify the percentage of general requests they're getting. You may be surprised at what you uncover.

## A new, more effective approach to handling routine requests.

At Parlance, we work with health systems to get callers to the right resource quickly, no matter what number they call. Parlance Operator Assistant®, our advanced call handling solution, lets callers simply ask for what they need, from scheduling an appointment, reaching a patient, or discussing their bill. Operator Assistant then offloads the general information calls – allowing them to self-serve – and routes the rest to the appropriate agent skill – protecting your agents' valuable time.

For simplicity and efficiency, we deliver Operator Assistant as a managed service, taking primary responsibility for call routing and enabling your agents to focus on their customer service responsibilities. And our solution fits seamlessly into a wide range of existing environments, including PBX (we're agnostic, open to all), operator consoles, Unified Communications (we don't replace, we supplement and extend), and many more.

### Many interactions



*Patients may interact with 8 or more functions within the health network during their journey -- each with its own phone number.*

We'd be glad to explore the often-hidden issue of general information calls arriving at all of your numbers – and to help you resolve it. Just contact us today to start shedding light on this and other call handling issues that affect your business.



Parlance Corporation  
400 West Cummings Park  
Woburn, MA 01801  
888-700-6263  
info@parlancecorp.com

[www.parlancecorp.com](http://www.parlancecorp.com)