

The Constellation

A newsletter for Answering Service Employees; donated to the industry by TeamSNUG



A Shining Star to Guide the Way...
Today's Luminary is Cathy Taylor
From A Better Answer, Inc.

Submitted By Pat Scott



“**T**hings” happen every day but “events” are memorable occasions. It was an event, when Catherine Taylor joined our staff back in 1988,” states Pat Scott, President of A Better Answer, Inc. (t/a ABA), in Bel Air, Maryland, 35 miles northeast of Baltimore. Cathy was a Constellation “LUMINARY” 12 years ago. Since then she has witnessed vast changes in our industry and marvels at the communications achievements made throughout the world.

Cathy commented that she was hired part-time to help download messages early in the morning. “STARTEL had better features than other equipment back in 1988, but many enhancements weren’t yet available. For instance, messages taken while an office was closed had to be “called out” to the office the next business day. There were no faxes, or print devices, and voicemail was a distant dream. Control “F” or Control “E” did not exist. Many clients didn’t even have computers! We had to verbalize everything! That was my primary job,” Cathy laughed. “Delivering messages.”

“Pat insists that ABA had the first fax machine in Bel Air. She pressured clients to get a fax to save us ALL time and labor in the mornings. Those were not the good ole days” said Cathy with a thoughtful expression. “Now, the speed with which messages are sent securely via HIPAA approved text and how quickly replies are returned is amazing.” “We all appreciate how vital Cathy’s years of experience and administrative knowledge have become.” Said Pat.

“Every day, changes to client information cross my desk. We promise changes that come in Monday through Friday before 3:00 PM via phone, mail, fax or e-mail, will be completed and operators notified before 5:00 PM.” Cathy said proudly.

BUT her day does not end at five. She scurries out ABA’s door to community and church activities. Cathy is a pillar of faith and leadership at her church, St. James Union American Methodist Episcopal Church; the same church where her father was minister and her mother the organist. In this same church, she gives praise to God in word, thought and deed while continuing her parents’ mission.

She is a certified Evangelist recognized by the Maryland-Delaware-Pennsylvania UAME Conference. Her nursing home ministry takes the word of our Lord to those unable to regularly attend services. She sings regularly in church and with the “Golden Echo”, a group of men and women who carry on a tradition begun by their mothers and fathers. Cathy has been a member of the group for over 50 years.

Cathy describes herself as a wife, mother, grandmother, great grandmother, good friend and faithful member of the community. Her spirit is felt every day at work where ABA staffers sit close to her and listen to her words of encouragement in an ever-changing environment.

Smiling at Cathy, Pat says, “I’d be lost without you”.



Constellation

Orion, the Hunter, is by far the most famous seasonal constellation. No other is more distinct or bright as this northern winter constellation. The famous Orion's Belt makes the hunter easy to find in the night sky.

There are several clusters and nebulae to view in this awesome constellation. The famous Orion Nebula is located in Orion's sword, which hangs from the belt. It is so bright, that even the naked eye can see the fuzzy patch. It looks spectacular even with a small telescope or binoculars. There are numerous other objects in Orion, so scan the constellation with a telescope or binoculars on a clear night!

4th Quarter 2018

An Open Letter to Our Agents - We Are So Thankful for You

While this was a letter to a specific agent, it could have gone to almost anyone who works in our industry – we are so Thankful for you.

Dear Valued Agent,

You have always been conscientious of our client's needs. You go above and beyond to sound pleasant when you answer each call, take accurate information, verifying names and numbers; as well as to make sure the message goes to the correct person! We are very happy to see the high scores you are receiving. This is something that we all should strive for, making sure the callers receive our best on each and every call



We may take a hundred phone calls every day and think that's our job. BUT, we change jobs with every phone call we take. There is always something new happening for us to experience. With a few words, you can make a person who is having difficulties feel just a little bit better about themselves. With one phone call, you can save a life! We have proven that time and again. In an industry where you can ruin a person's day, with one phone call, or end a 20-year relationship with one of our clients or their callers, YOU are never that person! Your tactfulness is assurance that you could never be the inadvertent cause of someone's unhappiness.

I've heard many of our employees say that this is just a "stop over on the way to a real job". You know this is a real job; a really important job. Ask how many of our staff have left us to go get a "real job" at a "real company", only to happily return and work for us again! It's stimulating to work at a place where we are a receptionist for a doctor, then two minutes later we are answering for a plumber, and two minutes after that, we are helping someone with a medical issue. The diversity is fun, and you excel at representing all of our clients.

A big CONGRATULATIONS! goes to YOU for taking the time to be considerate of our callers needs and giving them the feeling that the company they called will get the message, and that it will be handled correctly. One call at a time gives us a new opportunity to make someone else's day a little less hectic.

All of our staff members do a great job! As we continue to do so, we should all feel proud about the job we do, the lives we impact, and how collectively we help thousands of callers each day! Thank you for being a part of our company, we're better because YOU are here.

Healthy...

One of our biggest stressors is not finances or marriage but the lack of a regular routine, says oncologist



David B. Agus, MD, in his book *The End of Illness*. Even simply eating lunch an hour later than usual can spike levels of the stress hormone cortisol and disrupt your body's ideal state. Try to eat, sleep, and exercise at the same time every day, 365 days a year.

Wealthy...

Build Wealth Fast

Make a new budget every month.

- ◆ Cut up your credit cards
- ◆ Save \$1,000 fast.
- ◆ Contribute to your 401(k) only enough to maximize the employer match.
- ◆ Pay off your debt.
- ◆ Increase your emergency savings to 3-6 months' worth of expenses.
- ◆ Increase retirement savings up to 15% of income.



...and Wise



Smililing more is a simple way to improve the quality of your life. Smile, and life will be better, Really. Smiling is the natural way to force yourself to be happy.

Researchers think that by forcing a smile, you activate a specific set of muscles in the face. That set of muscles is closely connected to the emotions of happiness and joy. By smiling, you are signaling the emotional centers of your brain to tell them that everything is good.

ARE YOU CERTIFIED? ASK ABOUT ATSI AGENT—SUPERVISOR—SITE CERTIFICATION TODAY!

Word Search

M R A P P O R T C X F C T J H
 A F L X J Y G J H H B A A U Y
 A W J U H X X P W S O T C Z A
 R D L V F C Q E H P C H T Q E
 C E P Z C K R Y P Y V Y F A N
 B T C X W A N O O M X K U E I
 H U P I M Y R A N I M U L C T
 B A D M O T B Z H X J Y N Y U
 N G A G U V F R D T S F E C O
 Y R S N E K E G A M I Y S J R
 G X I Y E T D E I N P O S E W
 E T K M G R E L Q S U P I C M
 Y B J T L X E X C S H Q X S E
 J J K B B R U H P U O B J L A
 Q S J M R U Z L U Q W M Q O C

**Words can be forwards, backwards, up, down, or Diagonal.

Cathy
 Budget
 Grammar
 Image
 Luminary
 Opportunity
 Rapport
 Routine
 Smile
 Tactfulness
 Thankful
 Voice

What image are YOU projecting?

Very few of our clients visit our office; therefore, the senses that help to form an image of a company are not all used. Clients can't see the colors of our space; they can't smell the potpourri; they can't touch the fabrics. Nor can they identify the people they have spoken with on the phone. All those key components of the essence of our company are missing for people who only speak to us on the phone.

The things they can't touch, smell, or see, are things that would help them to have a visual of our company. Their image of our agents and their clients is formed by the things they see in their messages and hear in their conversations with us. Our agents then, help form the mental image our clients have of us. As an employee in this industry – you create the image our customer sees in their mind. How does it look and sound?

Our Visual Image is provided by your message – our product; how does it look? Are your sentences written with both upper and lower-case letters? They should be. Typing in all lower-case or all upper-case letters presents a very poor image. Not what we want for our company.

Are your sentences grammatically correct and punctuated properly? They should be. Are the words you used spelled accurately? Poor spelling and grammar are signs of sloppy work; not how we want our clients to think of us.

Our Auditory Image is formed by our voices. Your voice should be strong (not loud), clear, and warm. It's important to keep in mind that our voice loses 30% of its energy over the phone. Exaggerate your voice a bit, consciously make it more musical and more uplifting. In face-to-face conversation, body language and facial expressions, as-well-as-words, help to convey our meaning. Only 16% of the message is usually understood by our words. To compensate for the lack of the visual tools we use so automatically, and listeners rely on, we need to emphasize our voice inflections to get our points and feelings across.

Using a welcoming, energetic voice saves time, too. Listeners can understand you better. It builds confidence in the listener and inspires their trust; you sound more in control of a situation. It increases rapport when you sound upbeat and interested in our callers; they want to "know" you. Callers accept what you are saying and ask fewer questions if your voice is confident and warm. Ask to review your written messages and to listen to recordings of your conversations. You will know right away where you can improve your image; which, in turn will make your callers more satisfied at the same time.

*"Your grammar is a reflection of your image.
Good or bad, you have made an impression.
And like all impressions, you are in total control."*

-Jeffrey Gitomer