

Case study: Contact One Call Center

Jeff Wood is president of Contact One Call Center Inc., a Tucson-based company that provides a variety of call center services, such as phone answering, Live Chat, appointments, reservations and ecommerce orders. Located online at www.WeTakeCalls.com, Contact One has about 50 employees and generated \$2.4 million in revenue last year. Although Wood says he typically tries to “avoid business groups at all costs,” in 2013 he joined a PeerSpectives™ roundtable — and has become not only a regular member but also a strong advocate.

Wood explains that his aversion to networking groups springs primarily from a lack of time and wanting to make every minute count to grow the family business that he runs with his mother, Judy Wood, and sister, Jennifer Hoffman. Yet after a little arm-twisting from his mother, who is involved in a number of business groups, Wood agreed to attend an orientation event for a local PeerSpectives roundtable, which was sponsored by the Tucson Metro Chamber of Commerce.

“The cost of joining was relatively low,” Wood says, “and right off the bat, I was pleasantly surprised by the experience. There are no frills, no fluff. It’s all about intense business conversation. For four hours once a month, I have a reason to turn off my cell phone and completely focus on business. It’s candid conversation with other business owners — responses that I wouldn’t find in any book.”



Jeff Wood of Contact One Call Center in Tucson, Arizona.

Sharing experiences with other second-stage CEOs can point you in a completely different direction, Wood says. He refers to one roundtable session when he was looking for ways to lower the cost of sales leads. One of the other roundtable members began to ask questions: What was Wood’s typical client worth? How long did they stay? What were his cost per lead and the percentage of closure? After comparing notes, Wood discovered that he was actually spending about half the amount that other members were for lead generation. “It was really eye-opening,” he recalls. “I was caught up in trying to bring down my cost per sales. Yet the group validated what I was doing and encouraged me to do more of it rather than try to rethink it.”

At each monthly meeting, PeerSpectives members do a quick review of different challenges they’re facing and then vote on which issues to discuss in depth. Yet regardless of whether one of his issues is selected, Wood says he always derives value. “In fact, I prefer to hear from other members. It helps me reflect on the things that I am doing, and everyone’s input is always relevant.”

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Wood also appreciates the diversity of his roundtable, which is comprised of CEOs from diverse, noncompeting industries. Learning about the daily challenges of those with retail operations has given Wood additional insights into his client base, which is largely comprised of retailers.

Another component of the PeerSpectives methodology that Wood likes is sharing experiences and asking clarifying questions rather than giving advice. In fact, he has loosely adopted the format when talking with clients and employees. “It’s helped me be a better listener and dig deeper into conversations,” he says. “I’ve found myself listening more intently to what other people are saying instead of getting ready to jump in and give my answer.”

Wood credits PeerSpectives for helping him think more objectively about his business. “Sometimes you can be either overconfident or too critical of your team and your company,” he says. “The roundtable gives me balance. I’m able to better identify and appreciate the things we do well — and recognize things where we need to improve.”

Indeed, Wood has found PeerSpectives so valuable that it’s prompted him to join two other business groups. The moral: Sometimes it pays to listen to your mother.



About PeerSpectives: Developed by the Edward Lowe Foundation, PeerSpectives is a unique roundtable system designed especially for leaders of second-stage companies. Roundtables typically involve eight to 12 CEOs from noncompeting industries and are led by a facilitator who has been trained in the PeerSpectives protocol. The system revolves around confidentiality and experience-based learning rather than giving advice.