

# THE WORK OF BUSINESS

Can you hear me now? The importance of a phone connection for nurse life care planners and how to achieve it.

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*I have been a workaholic and traveler all of my life! When I got into the life care planning business, I worried about traditional offices and especially about phone service. Here's what works well for me in my travels.*

## The Phone's The Thing

The very most important thing you need when you are away from your home office is reliable phone service. Consider using a cell phone as your primary business phone. Even when I am at home in Las Vegas, my cell phone is my primary business phone. I seem to get about half of my business calls while I'm shopping for groceries or at some other errand. I hate to think of the business that I'd lose by only counting on a landline.

You should consider using use a cell phone for your business and always keeping it with you. It should have the local area code of the city where you do most of your business, so you don't mislead your clients. Law firms won't see you as someone from out of town. When you are calling locally for costs, the physician's office or hospital will be more inclined to return a local call.

## Use Call Forwarding

If you like having a landline, or if this is already your business line, get set up for call forwarding. You can have your calls forwarded to any cell phone. See if your cell provider uses the same directions as many phone systems:

- Key in \*72, then add the forward-to phone number (think: 2 = TO)
- Key in \*73 to remove call forwarding (think: 3 = FREE)

## Have Two Cell Phones

I use a smart phone for personal use and Internet access. I have a "dumb" phone for business. I may upgrade to a smart phone for business, but I like having two phones all the time. I don't think a landline is necessary, and I don't have one. When I am out of town on business or pleasure, my clients don't even realize that I am out of the office unless I tell them.

## Service Coverage

You'll benefit by studying the coverage maps for all the major providers of cell phone service. Some are very good if you are in certain cities but are not that good in smaller cities and towns. If you look at any of the cell phone carriers' maps, you'll see that

it looks like Nevada has hardly any service at all. Nevertheless, I find that there are only a few spots on the highways between Las Vegas in the south and Reno in the northwest where I might not have a signal for a few minutes. But that's all.

I've used the same service in California, Oregon, Washington, British Columbia, Alaska and Hawaii. I've used this service as I drive from Las Vegas to Denver, to Chicago and New York City. I've used it down the east coast from Pennsylvania to Georgia, on the Gulf Coast, and all the way across Texas. Recently my cell phone worked well in Key West, where I spent a marvelous week working at life care planning at the beach! There were no problems in Hawaii, but some in very rural Alaska.

Even when I can't talk on the phone due to a poor signal, I can still send and receive texts.

## Charging

When you travel, be sure to have cell phone recharging cables for home and car. I have one for each cell phone because occasionally I forget to charge and suddenly both cell phones are almost dead! The last thing you want while conducting a professional business is to not be able to immediately call out or receive phone calls! You can also get cell cases that include batteries that can increase your battery life by over 100%.

## International Service

If you plan travel to Mexico or Canada, ask if your carrier has a plan to make calls while traveling out of the US. I have a special Canada plan with Verizon. I have no roaming charges anywhere in the US or Canada. I can receive calls in Canada without roaming charges. I recently spent a week in Mexico and my phone was already "global equipped." If your cell phone is "global enabled" you will be able to receive and make calls from anywhere that has cell phone service. My provider insisted that my "basic phone" couldn't be used in Mexico, saying that only "smart phones" are "global enabled." But since I have used

it in Canada, she double checked and discovered that it was "global enabled" too. All around, my charges were \$.99 per minute and my service was very good.

## Local Phone Numbers

I found that when I moved from rural Nevada and changed my cell phone number to the Las Vegas area code, I got a lot busier as a life care planner. If you should decide to be away from your home for any length of time, you might want to get a cell phone with a "big city" area code. If you are a "snow bird" life care planner, living in the north in the summer and the south in the winter, you may want a cell phone number for each locale.

Services like Grasshopper and others can give you an 800- or 866- number for a small charge, and include other services like answering and multiple lines.

## Apps

A handy app for coverage is called, well, "Coverage." It's \$5, is updated regularly, and shows where strong cellular signals are. To obtain good coverage, some serious travelers have one cell phone from one carrier and another cell phone from another carrier. You might find this works for you but you will probably still need to have just one business phone number and that one should have good coverage. Don't forget that you may be traveling by air and ground to visit people for a home interview. You might find yourself far away from your usual carrier area and you'd be wise to be sure you can get coverage wherever you are.

## Travel

If you're traveling internationally, check out the latest in international cell phones. You can get a phone from

most carriers that is "local" where you are going. You can have all of your calls forwarded to this phone and the charges are usually not nearly as high as using your cell while roaming in China or Europe. You might also want to consider having a temporary answering service while you are out of the country.

Call all of your current clients and let them know your plans. Agree to check your email once or twice a day and maybe you can resolve all of your business concerns without having to use the phone, for the duration of your trip. Your voice mail message can give your email and tell the prospective client that you will check and respond to email twice a day.

## Cruise Ships

This is also a good strategy for travel with a cruise ship. It is very expensive to use the phone or Internet while on the cruise. But you could take care of a lot of business in a few minutes if you plan carefully and do all your emailing twice a day.

These hints will address most issues of phone service you'll encounter as a life care planner, wherever you are. Travel within North America is a little easier and cheaper than travel to Europe and Russia, but you can still manage phone service to meet your needs at home and abroad. If you research the best plans and coverage for cell phone service, you'll never have to be without effective phone service. Your responsibilities to your business, clients and prospective clients can be managed, whether you're grocery shopping near home or hiking the Rocky Mountains. The only time you should ever hear, "Can you hear me now?" is in the commercials.



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