



the

Buzz



Gary's Goings-On

Gary Pudles
President & CEO

Now that I'm vaccinated, I'm trying to restart a more normal life. In a way, we have an opportunity to reinvent ourselves and I'm thinking about how that may look.

The pandemic changed everything. Over the last 13 months I haven't traveled for business, flown for vacations (two vacations for less than a week each done by car), my music hobby was put on a significant hold, I haven't spent time with my friends, but my relationship with my children and step-children has become closer and my relationship with my wife has changed since we literally spend every non-working minute together (*except when I'm playing music on Wednesday nights*).

Weekends, which used to be filled with live music, going out with friends and other social activities have been reduced to long walks with the dog, catching up on email, binge-watching TV, and takeout. At one point I went over three months without going into a store because my wife does all the shopping and anything I needed I got online.

So now it's time to get back to my life.

Step one: deciding what to keep and what to change. Some of the choices I was forced to make during the pandemic weren't so bad. I find that I've become more open about myself and willing to share more of my dreams and fears with people (especially people in the company). I like this change and will try to keep it going. Doing the Town Halls and keeping them meaningful has resulted in being brutally honest with myself – and with you.

I've also developed new relationships during the pandemic. Everyone knows that when people go through a tough time together, bonds grow stronger and transform people and friendships. Many of my relationships changed, and I've added quite a few new people to my life – relationships that I plan to make permanent.

And, most of all, I'm coming out of the pandemic with a renewed energy and a bigger sense of wonder about business, the world, and myself. I'm going to continue to work on that – as finding new things that interest me and new things to learn always helps to keep me feeling positive.

**So, stay strong and positive
and test negative!**

Follow us!



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Sales Team Update

Eric Skversky
National Sales Executive

**Our Agents:
The Real Superheroes**
Representing the best of AnswerNet



Our call center agents – **YOU** – have helped millions of people across the country with setting COVID-19 test appointments; you’ve helped people stay in their homes through rental assistance programs; and now you’re answering questions and setting vaccine appointments.

Wow – that’s impressive work, and you should be proud of it!

The biggest reason AnswerNet is able to do this work and satisfy state and county needs is because of the trust we have in **you**. We know the team will meet the challenges of any program and exceed our client’s expectations. Slowly, we’re all returning to “normalcy.” What that means or what that looks like remains to be seen. Every time you take a message, transfer a call, or call someone, you’re bringing “normal” to the person you’re talking to. What isn’t changing is the dedication and devotion you all continue to show to our clients.

As a salesperson, I can say with certainty that the team I represent is “hands-down” the most professional and talented in the industry. Our knowledge and experience brings confidence to every call or meeting which goes a long way toward building trust with potential clients. So every time you log-in for your shift, please remember the job you are doing is so important.

But whether you’ve worked on Covid-related business or not – ALL OF YOU are making a difference to everyone you communicate with. I can speak for the entire sales team when I say we truly recognize the difference you’re making because we talk about it every day!

Contact the Sales Management Team at salesmanagers@answernet.com if you hear of communities that may need our help.

“An AnswerNet Covid Story”



Karla Talbert
Sales Administrator

On January 7th, our Sales Administrator **Karla Talbert** received an urgent phone call from a doctor at a local Philadelphia hospital who had been treating a Covid-19 patient who passed away. Neither the doctor nor the hospital’s social workers could locate any of the patient’s friends or relatives.

So, Karla carefully obtained as much as much information as possible from the doctor and passed it along to AnswerNet’s Chief of Staff.

You see, the doctor found the corner of an old pay stub among this patient’s belongings and took a chance that she may have been an AnswerNet employee. Through that pay stub, we were able to confirm that she was indeed a former call center agent.

We went on to locate her brother’s name in her emergency contact information. *Then we called him.* He broke down in tears as the entire family had been frantically trying to find her.

Thanks to Karla, the family was able to make final arrangements for their loved one, and get some peace of mind for themselves.

Thank you, Karla.

If you or someone you know is struggling with the grief of losing someone to Covid-19, visit the websites below for support.



www.redcross.org/virtual-family-assistance-center



www.covidgriefnetwork.org

So many of us have learned to share our workspaces each and every day with our fuzzy, furry, and scaly friends.

Let's meet some of your Office Pet-Mates!



"MEEKA"
Stacey Bodnarchuk



"GUNNER"
Beverly Coscia



"YOGURT"
Gary Sanchez



"TILLIE"
Jess Brooks



"LILLY"
Karen Schmutz



"BRANDIE & MICKEY"
Dave Kravitz

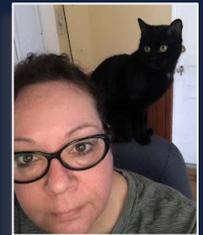
Daddy works, I sleep!



"BANE & BUDDY"
Jenna Van Dorn



"POTPIE"
Allie LaBouff



"LUCY"
Tannis Baker



"VITA"
Chris Fain



"MANGLES"
Orill Collins



"OLIVER"
Pudles Family



"CHARLOTTE"
Terri Paffile



"STEPHANÉ" & "CINNAMON"
Christina Olivas



"ROBIN"
Amanda Jennings



"CHURCH"
Chelsea Ridgeway



"OTTO & ABBY"
Leslie Brown



"REGGIE"
Don Legg



"ANDALUSIA, PERSEPHONE & LOCKSLEY"
Bev Brown



"HARLEY & PEPPER"
Ralston DiZilva



"BENTLEY"
Sarah Baptist



"SASSY"
Marcia Anderson



"MASON & SYDNEY"
Laurie Edwards



HR Corner

Jana Pudles
Education & Hiring
Coordinator

Reconceptualizing a “Return to Normalcy”

Imagine walking into a room a year ago and asking someone, “Moderna, Pfizer, or J&J?” Unless the person you were asking was Bill Gates, or Dr. Fauci, they’d look at you like you had 10 heads.

Fast forward to today, and you ask that same question, everyone will know what you mean. This is a testament to how rapidly our environment has changed. But, with these changes comes optimism that we’ll all soon be able to return to normal, and by extension, **here in the AnswerNet offices!**

When we look back on these past eight months one thing stands out – we all need personal interaction. As we move toward a more vaccinated population, the question now becomes,

“How can we prioritize our need for human connections in a way that’s physically and emotionally safe for everyone?” In my effort to answer this question, I’ve come across **3 major themes:**

1) Acknowledge that burnout happens on all levels.

If you’re a team leader, from a mental-health standpoint it’s so important to stay in tune with your employees by simply checking in with them to ask how they’re doing. Especially those employees who haven’t taken time off during the entire pandemic. *Do they need a break? Time off? Schedule changes?* Whatever the case may be, giving your team a break before we head into the Fall will be key to their success.

2) Make coming back a collaborative effort.

As to not place unrealistic expectations on any one group, lean on each other to come up with a plan that fits your team. We’ve never gone through a crisis like this before. Just look at the exhaustion we’ve seen across the globe – mask-wearing protests, closed businesses, no movie theaters – there’s a lot of understandable anger and fear. So, we must be realistic and transparent up front with our teams about how long some of our own Covid policies and procedures will last (or at least our best-guess). Keep the lines of communication open.

3) Do it in phases.

Experiment with policies, but be prepared to take some time to get them right. At the core of why **some will stay home** and **some will come back** is the reality that it will be a disruption to the daily rhythm of their “new normal.” With the safety of our employees in mind, leadership is still adapting. They know the benefits of keeping some projects going remotely vs. the ones that work better in the office. Things will take a while to get back to normal, that’s why it’s OK to do it in phases and try different things.

The answer is not having all the answers.

But this is the most important thing to consider: *Organizations that claim to have all the answers and make all “return to normalcy” decisions for their employees (and without their input) are headed for failure.*

To claim, “we’ve done the research,” or “we’ve already thought of everything,” will only create a more anxious environment if people’s legitimate concerns aren’t being heard.

Instead, try “we’re doing our best to consider all scenarios.”

We’ll never personally understand everyone’s experience, but it is on all of us to advocate for procedures that will make showing up to work safe and comfortable. Shared accountability will be key.

A lot of this will be trial and error, which is why we appreciate the collaborative and hardworking environment we have fostered here at AnswerNet.

At AnswerNet, we’ll all get there together!



NCSM Notes



Rob Marshall
Vice President of NCSM

Hello AnswerNet Family,

We in National Client Services Management (NCSM) greet you all with the joy of being a part of a fantastic, awesome company... *like AnswerNet!*

We’d also like to give a HUGE WELCOME to our newly added Canadian team members who have come on board in the past 2 months – they’ll make us so much stronger as individuals and as a company!

As we’ve all witnessed, our family has continued to not only persevere, but to grow even in the midst of a pandemic. This in large part is thanks to ownership and a senior group of individual teams that remain laser-focused on keeping people employed, creating advancement opportunities, and making people’s lives better! And for that, we are all grateful. It’s also thanks to a company filled with dedicated, hard workers.

And, while our country and the world have been witnessing so many instances of injustice, it’s also great to know we work for a company that intentionally strives to recognize and appreciate our diversity.



Embracing our diversity.

It’s an atmosphere where equity, inclusion and belonging are not only recognized, but are also topics that can be discussed professionally – *with respect for all people.*

And, knowing that our ongoing objective to seek and promote diversity across all areas, makes AnswerNet a desirable place to work. Everyone can show up to work each day as their “authentic self” – without fear of intimidation or condemnation.

As our company has recently grown, so too has our own NCSM team. We’ve taken on many new large accounts and most recently, acquired additional clients and personnel as part of the company’s Canadian acquisitions. Today, NCSM is a team of twenty-eight (28) people managing client accounts all across the world and covering multiple languages!

I’m also very proud to say that one of our primary leaders, **Jessica Brooks** was recently promoted to the position of Director, National Client Solutions Management. Jess has been a stalwart soldier in our department, and instrumental in ensuring that all team members have what they need to do their job as efficiently and effectively as possible. Please join me in congratulating Jess on a job well done, and for her true leadership and loving heart for all our people!!

THANK YOU, JESS!!

In closing, I want to say that NCSM looks forward to continuing to service our clients and each department in the AnswerNet family!

We're looking for a STAR!

[AnswerNet Cares](#), our program that makes funds available for employees to contribute to charitable organizations, is creating a video to demonstrate a first-hand experience of an AnswerNet employee going through the AnswerNet Cares Journey –*and we're looking for a VIDEO STAR!*

Specifically, we want to record the AnswerNet Cares process from start to finish – from initial video application submission, through to receiving the funding, and participating in your charity's event.

So, if you're interested in participating in our AnswerNet Cares program and would be open to sharing your experience on video, please send an email to answernetcares@answernet.com and request an application. Even if you don't wish to film your participation, we'd still love to include your charity in the AnswerNet Cares family and look forward to hearing more about all of the amazing work you all are doing in your local communities!



Still have questions?

Email: answernetcares@answernet.com

Visit: www.AnswernetCares.com

Frequently asked questions:

- ✓ **What is the mission of AnswerNet Cares?**
While the goal of the program is to encourage and support volunteerism within our local centers, AnswerNet Cares also is there to provide an outlet for AnswerNet family members to come together in person while taking part in charitable events.
- ✓ **What charities can I consider for AnswerNet Cares?**
To receive funds, the organization of your choice must be a registered 501c3. Additionally, charities may not be religion-based (*unless specifically approved by the funding administrator*), and you must be participating in the charity through volunteerism or within a specific event.
- ✓ **How much funding can I receive for my charity?**
AnswerNet sets a total of \$5,000 aside each year with each charity to receive up to \$250 (*depending on the needs of the organization*).

Robert Marshall Receives Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Certification!

AnswerNet is excited to announce that **Robert Marshall**, AnswerNet's Vice President of National Client Solutions Management (NCSM), completed the **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Workplace Certification**.

Offered at the University of South Florida's Muma School of Business, the *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) in the Workplace Certification* was a program that brought together business leaders across various industry sectors and from different geographical regions of the county.

The goal of the online virtual program was to educate business leaders on best practices to increase employee diversity and create environments conducive to equity and inclusion.

The program was held from March 24th to May 5th, 2021, and consisted of seven two-hour training modules aired on Wednesday evenings. The sessions culminated in a final exam that participants were required to pass to receive DEI certification.

Robert Marshall passed his test on May 5th, 2021, and earned his certification. As a lifelong advocate of diversity in the workplace, Mr. Marshall says that this certification encourages him to continue to do so within AnswerNet and all of his professional endeavors.



Congrats, Rob!



Patricia Avalos
General Manager, Stockton

We can do this!



My overall takeaway from this pandemic is simple – *always try to remember to live, laugh, and love and to cherish every moment of everyday life.*

Working during COVID-19 has been both a blessing and a challenge for millions of employees across the globe – *and that surely applies to us here at AnswerNet!*

As we begin to open up, “come back to the office” has its own challenges and surely triggers anxiety – simple things like leaving your comfy home, getting your kids back in the classroom, wondering *who is and who’s not vaccinated. The list goes on.*

It all can be overwhelming.

Here in Stockton, we’re making it our mission to try to be as understanding as possible with everyone’s unique situation.

We’re working hard to let our team now that we can lean on each other here for support, strength, and even laughter. Whether we initiate carefree conversation or bring each other coffee and donuts to start our day, our top priority is to make this work environment feel as safe as possible for our employees.

So, as we get ready to welcome all our agents back, we certainly can’t promise that things will be back to the way they were “pre-pandemic.”

No one can. But, maybe that’s OK?

After all, with change comes progress, and maybe new opportunities we never even thought of before. For now, we just want our team to feel welcome, safe, and not alone.



Let’s do it together!

New AnswerNet Website is live!

Get to know the new website to see what are clients are prospect are seeing!
To begin your tour, click on the images below and continue your journey from there.

Happy exploring!



GREAT NEWS!

AnswerNet’s 401K Employer Matching Program launched 7/1/21!

To see if you’re eligible or need more info, call or email HR at hr@answernet.com.

And now, a word from a happy client...

Gary,

I could not let this evening come to a close without formally letting you know that your team stepped up today in a big way.

We have a culture of recognition for "Above the Line" actions and experiences. Not that I expected anything less with our partnership, but it was a great relief to know I can lean on them to support our organization in times of urgent need.

The AnswerNet Team was able to assess the situation and put a plan in place within a matter of hours to provide us what we needed quickly and efficiently.

I will be providing an additional thanks to the center GMs as well, but wanted you to know right now, how much it is appreciated by Team Brinker.

Thank you!

Jessica & Team Brinker



Brinker
INTERNATIONAL®

BRINKERHEAD ABOVE THE LINE® RECOGNITION **CHEERS TO YOU,** Steve & Team AnswerNet

FOR...

- EVERY GUEST COUNTS
- FOOD PERFECTION
- PLAY RESTAURANT
- BE ACCOUNTABLE

In the following manner:

WOW! I can not begin to thank you for jumping through hoops for Brinker today to support our teams during a potential event. We appreciate your dedication to our account and going above and beyond, not to mention giving up Friday night, to get us extra staffing at literally a moments notice. You are great partners #5goldstars

YOU HELPED...

- BRING BACK GUESTS
- GROW SALES
- ENGAGE TEAM MEMBERS
- INCREASE PROFITS

WITH #CHILISLOVE, Jessica & Team Brinker **DATE** 03/05/2021

Shout out to the AnswerNet Brinker team –
here's to a job well done!



David Murdza
General Counsel & Director



Corporate Spotlight

David Murdza has been named AnswerNet's General Counsel by President & CEO, Gary Pudles.

That's quite an accomplishment for such a young, *but talented*, lawyer!

Congrats, Dave!

What's new at SA Hosted?



Terri Paffile
Senior Manager, SA Hosted

It's hard to believe we're already halfway through 2021 – it's already been quite a year! There have been a lot of exciting new developments here at SA Hosted, here are some highlights:

■ **SA Hosted's S.A.F.R.E. is here!**

Last month we officially launched [Secured Access for Remote Employees \(S.A.F.R.E.\)](#). It's our newest product that allows agents to work securely from their personal devices – giving our customers peace of mind that their data is safe.



■ **Please welcome Kristin Schreiber!**

Earlier this year, SA Hosted welcomed **Kristin Schreiber** as Product Coordinator. She's a familiar face at AnswerNet, as she was previously the AGM in Stockton and part of the NCSM team. *We're lucky to have her on board!*

■ **Congrats, Mike Rohrbach!**

Product Engineer, **Mike Rohrbach**, is the first one of our SA Hosted team to become xCally-Certified – *we're all so proud of him!*

■ **Ever-changing technology!**

The SA Hosted team has been busy bringing in new technology as well as updating our current solutions. *You'll be hearing much more about that soon!*



The rest of 2021 should really be something!



Hello from California!

Jennis Narayan
Corporate Operations Manager

Meet **Kimberly Williams** – a stellar employee and the perfect example of the potential for growth and opportunities that are available right here at AnswerNet.

Here's her story...

Kim began her AnswerNet career in 2015 as a CSR in Santa Rosa, CA. By 2016, she was already made "Trainer" to oversee the onboarding and testing processes for new hires.

That same year, Kim moved over to client accounts as a "Dedicated Tier 2 Agent" where she was regularly praised for her excellent customer service skills. This ultimately led to her 2017 promotion to "Team Leader" for AnswerNet's Energy Choice California (ECC). By 2018, Kim earned her "Supervisor" title to provide assistance for all agents with different CCAs.

And 2019 was quite a year for Kim – first becoming the "Assistant GM" then the "General Manager" for ECC's Santa Rosa office. But, she earned it all with her outstanding leadership skills, dedication, and talent!

As the current GM for both ECC Santa Rosa and Pittsburg, Kim has become an outstanding manager, direct report, coworker, and overall kind person who is respected by all who know her.

In her own words, "I've greatly enjoyed my time here with AnswerNet and ECC and am so grateful for all the opportunities I have been given with this company. Everyone I've worked with – from fellow agents to management and to clients – have been wonderful. I look forward to many more years with AnswerNet/ECC, and can't wait to see what the future holds!"

Meet Kimberly Williams:

A shining example of what's possible at AnswerNet!



What do Kim's co-workers and clients have to say?

- "Kim is completely trusted (which does not come easy) by the clients and has earned the respect of her agents, leads, sups, and her peers I worked with her for four years, and she's always been eager to learn and master all that she has learned, and pass on her learnings to her team." – Linda Hemer, Senior NCSM Mgr.
- "I have worked with Kim for the past 5 ½ years. Come to think of it I was trained by Kim. (Trained by the best). Kim is a great leader and takes pride in her work. She's well-respected by all our agents and Supervisors, and has built relationships with them all because of her approachable, 'open door' leadership personality. It's been a pleasure to work with Kim!! Many more years to come!" – Julie Perez, AGM ECC Santa Rosa
- "Kim's knowledge and dedication to Calpine and our clients is greatly appreciated throughout our organization. My whole team really enjoys working with her and gives me positive feedback frequently. It is a pleasure to work in collaboration with her over the years and we look forward to many more!" – Calpine (ECC Client)

The 2021 Annual Meeting was a great success!

2020 SALES AWARDS

COREY ALEXANDER: Rising Star

BRIAN POLT: Rookie of the Year

STEVE KLEIMAN: MVP

“THE PERFECT CALL”

AMY GAUTHIER: 2021 Award of Recognition

2021 OPERATIONS AWARDS

DON LEGG: 2021 Team Player/Award of Recognition

BRYCE ROBERTSON: 2021 Award of Recognition

2021 AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

Inbound

ORLANDO, FL: Year 1

TORONTO, ON: Year 1/TOP FIVE

PHOENIX, AZ (AnswerNet Education): Year 2, *Bronze*

COLUMBUS, OH: Year 3, *Silver*

SACRAMENTO, CA: Year 4, *Silver Plus*/TOP FIVE

CHATTANOOGA, TN (AnswerNet Triad): Year 8, *Ruby*

STOCKTON, CA: Year 12, *Diamond Plus*/TOP FIVE

MEMPHIS, TN: Year 14, *Diamond Plus*

SARASOTA, FL: Year 14, *Diamond Plus*/TOP FIVE

EL PASO, TX: Year 15 *Diamond Plus*/TOP SCORE

Outbound

WEBSTER CITY, IA: Year 3, *Silver*

WILLOW GROVE, PA: Year 5, *Gold*

LOWELL, MA: Year 6, *Pearl*

AKRON, OH: Year 11, *Diamond Plus*

HAYS, KS: Year 11, *Diamond Plus*

BILLERICA, MA: Year 12, *Diamond Plus*/TOP SCORE

2021 AWARDS OF DISTINCTION

ENERGY CHOICE CALIFORINA (ECC): Irwindale, CA

ENERGY CHOICE CALIFORINA (ECC): Santa Rosa, CA



This year's theme, "Beyond All Limits" was certainly appropriate as we learned as a team what we can accomplish together – as long as we remember there's nothing holding us back as a company!

We concluded the 3-day event with our annual Awards Ceremony to recognize the individuals and sites for their outstanding work and accomplishments.

Congratulations to our winners!