

FIFTEEN BEST CALL CENTER GAMES

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Hi! I'm Jessica Cloud. Thank you visiting my blog at realdealfundraising.com.

My career started in phonathon, as a student caller my freshman year of college. Since that time, many moons ago, I have worked in nearly every area of development and currently serve as Vice President for Advancement at Starr King School for the Ministry.

I am a Certified Fundraising Executive who has worked in fundraising for nearly 17 years (12 of that full time). I worked with RuffaloCODY (now Ruffalo Noel Levitz) and the University of South Carolina for five years, and then returned to my alma mater (the University of Southern Mississippi) to administer a comprehensive annual giving program.

In one year, we increased the total dollars raised by over 300%, and in three years we increased the number of first-time donors by 285%. During my tenure, the total number of yearly donors to the USM Foundation increased from about 3,000 to over 8,000. In 2012, we launched the first faculty-staff giving campaign for USM, and employee giving rose from 10% to over 32% in three months.

I have routinely hosted conferences, given presentations, conducted training webinars and even published a book on fundraising. I have a strong background in training and was a sought-after trainer for new phonathon managers during my time at RuffaloCODY. I am the real deal!



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ELEMENTS OF CALL CENTER MOTIVATION

You'll notice that this e-book is not titled, "Call Center Motivation" because motivation goes far beyond call center games. Games are one of the most visible manifestations of external motivation in the call center but I have seen too many well-meaning managers become over-fixated on games. It is important to have other things undergirding your motivational strategy so that the games become only the icing on the cake.

Make sure your call center has:

- Thermometers and other visual representations of fundraising achievement prominently posted.
- A wall-of-fame highlighting callers' lifetime dollars raised.
- Leaderboard (updated regularly) where callers can see how they stack up against their peers. Be sure to highlight not only dollars but also consider average gift, participation, credit cards, matching gifts, and upgrades.
- Nightly goal cards that are based on scientific data analysis and projections based on the segments the caller is assigned to call.
- A clearly articulated discipline system which is activated through regular coaching and pledge verification to hold callers accountable.
- Visits from deans, administrators, and most importantly, scholarship recipients so that callers understand the importance of their job.
- Continuing education so that your callers feel like they are progressing and mastering their craft.

All of these things come before the nightly games. It is also important that games not detract from the purpose of the calling shift, which is to raise money efficiently. Games should never take time away from calling or create a situation where callers are disturbed or distracted when talking with prospects.

WHAT MAKES A GREAT GAME?

A great call center game:

- Is fun. That's the point, right?
- Pushes callers to achieve stretch goals.
- Doesn't take callers out of their seats.
- Doesn't require callers to stop dialing.
- Is easy for supervisors to manage while completing their other nightly tasks.
- Isn't too loud or so action-oriented that it causes chaos.
- Facilitates team spirit and peer coaching in some cases.
- Cultivates friendly competition and maybe even a little fun trash talk.
- Builds skills and promotes continuing education.
- Isn't expensive and doesn't require too many bulky materials.
- Has simple rules that everyone can learn quickly.
- Is adaptable for callers at different levels or calling different segments.

PRIZE SYSTEMS

Every game has a winner or winners, so those winners need prizes. You'll have to design a prize system that works for your center. Whatever you choose, as long as the callers understand the system and feel like it is worthwhile, go for it. You can also mix together elements from each of these systems. Each has positive and negatives.

- **Privilege System**

You hand out slips of paper that allow callers to have a privilege or break a rule. For instance, "Get-Out-of-a-Tardy-Free" cards or "Extra Five Minutes on Break" cards. These can be very popular amongst the students and of course, it's very budget friendly. However, make sure that your call center doesn't become a free-for-all as students accumulate many of these and begin cashing them in.

- **Call Center Cash System**

Also called Calling Bucks or Caller Points, callers accumulate points each time they win a game and they either get tracked on a spreadsheet or callers get paper "cash" to use later (or both, for accountability). Callers must save up points and then spend them on privileges or prizes. This system is good if you only have a few large prizes for the entire month or semester. You could even make the students bid on the big prizes. However, because ultimately you need prizes or privileges, this system adds a layer of tracking for your supervisors which can be onerous.

- **Swag Box/Prize Box**

You can ask local businesses to donate coupons or prizes in exchange for recognition on your website. Also ask all colleges and schools at your institution for swag. Budget to purchase several other gift cards or prizes to enrich the prize box. (Food is also a great motivator; you swag box can become a snack box.) When callers win a game, they get to pick a prize. Find ways to avoid a situation where you run out of "good" prizes too early in the semester.

Once you have the core elements of a motivational system in place and you have designed your prize system, you are ready to implement nightly games. Below are fifteen of my favorite call center games (in no particular order). For each entry, I list the materials needed, how to play the game and why I think it is a great call center game. Enjoy!

GUESS WHO?

Materials

An archive of random facts about your student supervisors and your call center manager. A whiteboard and markers.

How to Play

Collect many random facts about the manager and all of the supervisors. Write 12 -16 of them on the board in a grid pattern and when callers reach milestones (let's say they secure a credit card), they pick a square and get to guess which of the leaders it corresponds with. For instance, one of my facts was "Did pageants in high school" which was quite surprising and interesting to most of my callers. You keep guessing on a fact until someone gets it right and then that fact is retired for a few months.

Why it's a favorite

Callers love this game because they get to know the leaders better and sometimes find out embarrassing or funny information. It builds relationship between the supervisors and student callers while raising the center's statistics.

CARTWHEELS

Materials

Your willingness to do something silly if an outrageous goal is reached.

How to Play

Though not technically a game, it was one of my favorite nights in the call center. I told the students that if they achieved 70% credit cards one evening I would do cartwheels down the call floor at the end of shift. One night, the callers were full of bravado and took me up on my pledge. Supervisors were monitoring to make sure that no statistical shenanigans were going on and they truly did get 74% credit cards that night. Luckily I was not wearing a skirt that day! I did my cartwheels happily.

Why it's a favorite

It sets the sights higher for the calling crew and once they achieve a certain goal, they have demystified it and will usually perform thereafter at a higher level. Plus, you get to be the fun, silly boss on at least one occasion.

BOY(S) VERSUS GIRL(S)

Materials

Scoreboard, Two awesome donor calls and some fresh new prospects for them

How to Play

One night I had two rock-star donor callers who were dating and we were about to start donors for a lucrative school. Instead of a normal game, we had the girls cheer on my female donor caller and the guys the male donor caller.

Why it's a favorite

It was a welcome change for most of the call floor to have the pressure off of them but I remember it as one of the most engaged nights in the center. Not only did those two donor callers totally rock that night but the entire crew did better than average!

WHERE IS PHIL ANTHROPY?

Materials

A map of campus and an archive of philanthropy facts about the locations, whiteboard and markers.

How to Play

Get a map of your campus and mount it to a foam board or on your center wall. Have the supervisor write down or think of a place where “Phil Anthropy” (Get it? Philanthropy) is hiding. Students earn guesses through statistical achievements. When they guess correctly you read the description of what that location has to do with philanthropy. For instance, “The Smith Student Center was paid for by a gift of \$6.7 million from the Smith family in 2007.”

Why it's a favorite

Students learn facts about campus and about development. You can also expand the game by “hiding” your school’s mascot at other non-philanthropy campus sites when you run out of philanthropy sites.

THE ENVELOPE GAME

Materials

Envelopes, Prizes, Paper

How to Play

Three numbered envelopes are stuffed with a sheet of paper, each representing a different prize. Or – one sheet could say no prize! Students earn the envelopes by getting credit cards and once all three are in play they get to “steal” an envelope from another student when they get a credit card.

Why it's a favorite

This is a fast-paced game that builds momentum, but can get a bit out of control if students try to “steal” aggressively while others are on the phone. You’ll need a dedicated supervisor to move the envelopes around so callers don’t get out of their seats.

SURVIVOR

Materials

Whiteboard and markers.

How to Play

Draw an island on the board and put every callers name in the center of the island. For every credit card they secure, they get to “kick” another caller of their choice closer to being off the island. First knock moves a caller to the forest. Then they get kicked to the beach and then the water which is “off-the-island”. For large achievements, perhaps a \$500 or \$1,000 gift, callers can “rescue” their names or their friends. Callers still in the center of the island get a prize of some sort at the end of the night.

Why it's a favorite

This game was a perennial student favorite in my call center. This game promotes friendly competition and rivalry and callers love it!

ASSASSINS

Materials

Laminated board with numbers on it in a grid system, usually 100 squares, wet-erase markers. Construction paper cut into squares with the same numbers as the grid in a bowl or jar that callers can draw from.

How to Play

As callers check in, they draw 4-6 numbers from the jar. When they reach a milestone, they can “assassinate” a number on the board. The person who has the most numbers left at the end of the night wins.

Why it's a favorite

Nothing like some good old-fashioned call center paranoia. Callers get creative so that others won't figure out their numbers and eliminate them. It's like an anonymous Survivor. It's an easy game for supervisors to manage and callers keep very quiet.

BASEBALL

Materials

Whiteboard and markers, or a laminated baseball poster-board with wet-erase markers.

How to Play

Four milestones are laid out for the students. It could be as follows (pledge, credit card, \$100 or more pledge, and \$100 on a credit card). Callers move around the bases as they achieve these milestone but they must do them in order. No skipping. Every time the reach home, they get a point. You can divide them into two teams, which callers like a lot.

Why it's a favorite

This is easy-to-manage, team game that focuses on them meeting not just one thing (pledges) but a variety of goals (higher dollar amounts, credit cards, pledges, etc.).

JEOPARDY!

Materials

An archive of traditional Jeopardy questions and an archive of questions about your University, your call center and philanthropy at your institution. Whiteboard and markers.

How to Play

Draw a Jeopardy board and label the categories. Pick 3-4 of the 6 categories to be general trivia and 2-3 to be University and philanthropy oriented. Callers can play as individuals or as team/partners. Get a credit card, pick a question.

Why it's a favorite

This is a call center classic. The mixing of “work” categories with general trivia gives callers a welcome break. But you’ll be happy that you’re still work in some continuing education during their motivation. Don’t let callers stop dialing while they answer their questions. Hold them to time limits with a mini-hourglass or other timer.

CAPTURE RAFFLE

Materials

Raffle tickets, jar.

How to Play

On slow nights or when you are calling recent graduates or senior class students, reward callers for securing a new phone number from a parent or gatekeeper or for capturing a new email address or cell phone number. Callers earn tickets for a raffle. This could be a one-night game, or you can expand this to be a weekly or monthly promotion which runs concurrent with your other fundraising games.

Why it's a favorite

Every call center has nights where it is slow and you aren't getting many pledges. Some segments require a particular emphasis on data collection. Whatever the reason, this game allows you to shift the focus to the other important tasks that callers do during the phone call in addition to raising money, recognizing and rewarding data collection. Be sure to have quality checks in place to make sure only real data is going into your system and callers aren't gaming you.

CATEGORIES

Materials

A big list of categories, Construction paper cut into pieces with the categories written on them, a jar to draw from. A reliable 30 second timer.

How to Play

Callers earn the right to draw a category. For instance, “Ben Affleck Movies” or “States” or “Names that start with J” and then they get 30 seconds while their phone is still dialing to name as many things from that category as they can. Supervisor keeps a tally and they earn points.

Why it's a favorite

It's super-fun and fast paced. It can get loud and chaotic if the supervisor doesn't make the time limits stick and keep the noise level down though. It's a different twist than a trivia-based game or a cutthroat game like Survivor or Assassins.

HOT POTATO

Materials

A Mr. Potato Head or other Bobble-head (perhaps of your mascot), Timer that beeps, Supervisor to move the “potato” around the room.

How to Play

A stretch milestone or two is set, for instance \$500 pledge or \$100 on a credit card. The timer is set to a random number of minutes. When callers achieve one of the stretch milestones, they get the “potato”. When another one achieves it, they get to steal it. Whenever the timer goes off, whoever has the potato gets a point or a prize.

Why it's a favorite

Another call center classic. Low maintenance but can become very competitive. This game set sights higher for callers who need a stretch goal.

CUT THROAT

Materials

Whiteboard and markers

How to Play

Put the name of every caller on the board in a grid pattern. (At the beginning, you can have some empty squares.) Each time the caller achieves a milestone, they pick another caller to erase their name and put their own name on that square. Set the timer for random amounts of time to check who has the most squares or just wait until the end of the night to see who has the most squares.

Why it's a favorite

Another, easy-to-manage twist on Survivor or Assassins. Callers love to target their friends or those they feel get more attention for their call center talent. It makes everyone step up their game.

WASTEPAPER BASKETBALL

Materials

Buckets or small trash cans (maybe several if your call center is large), Balls of paper.

How to Play

Position baskets/buckets at fair intervals and angles to several callers. When they reach milestones they get to take a shot. You can give them more shots for higher dollar amounts. You can have a stretch goal and they get to take free throw (easier, straight shot) during a break or at the end of the night.

Why it's a favorite

Callers love the action-oriented games and this game lends itself to a wealth of productive trash talk between the students. This is a movement-based game that doesn't require callers to stop dialing or get out of their seats.

CALL CENTER BINGO

Materials

Specially designed call center bingo cards, markers or bingo “dotters” for the supervisors to mark the callers’ sheets.

How to Play

See sample Call Center Bingo sheet below. You can customize this for your institution. Callers find data points during calling or achieve fundraising milestones and supervisors verify the achievement and mark the space. All variations of Bingo can be played: standard, postage stamp, picture frame, four corners, or full card. (Full card will be the most frustrating for the callers, but the easiest maintenance for the supervisors.) The Sample Bingo Sheet below was made in about 5 minutes in Microsoft Excel.

Why it's a favorite

Students love this nostalgic game. By rewarding them with earned squares for data points on their screen, you get them looking at prospect information carefully, learning to scan the record in preparation for the call. This is a great game to do with new hires at the beginning of the semester because they get practice being alert while the phone is dialing and multi-tasking. By rewarding the students with squares for things that their neighbors achieve, you promote some peer pressure and possible peer coaching during shift.

SAMPLE CALL CENTER BINGO CARD

B	I	N	G	O
Prospect lives in Alaska	\$100 Pledge	Prospect was an English major	Caller sitting on my left got a credit card	Gift from a prospect who graduated in 1999
\$50 or more credit card	Prospect says no because of the economy	Got a new phone number from a gatekeeper	Collected a new email address	Prospect last name start with "Q"
The Name Jones	Pledge with split payments	FREE SPACE	Pledge with multiple designations	\$35 or more pledge
Collected a new cell phone number	Caller sitting on my right got a credit card	Prospect says no because of being retired	Prospect lives in Wyoming	Prospect lives in the New York City metro area
Prospect from my hometown	Dual Household (Both spouses are alums)	The Name Smith	\$100+ credit card	Prospect move and updated address

ADDITIONAL PHONATHON RESOURCES

How to Staff Your Phonathon Super-Fast: The 7 Secrets to Fill the Seats (\$50)

By: Jessica Cloud, CFRE

An e-book to revolutionize your call center operation by starting at the beginning. Staffing.

In this e-book I will show you how to:

- Find your staffing targets, including needed number of callers to hire and number of applications to generate so you have data to drive your staffing efforts
- Brand your phonathon as the best job on campus so that word of mouth will work for you and make it easiest to staff up semester after semester.
- Generate lots of applications fast so you can be selective and hire only the best candidates.
- Design an interview process that makes it easy to hire callers who will fit with your culture and stay employed for longer.
- Interview those applicants in one evening and get them hired fast so that you can quit staffing and start raising serious money.
- Love your job and grow your career in philanthropy.
- Dozens of samples and templates to get you staffed up quickly and easily.



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