

# Telephone Tip Line(s)

## WORKING WITH THE COORDINATOR

The individual best suited to be the interface or point of contact for maintaining the telephone tip line(s) is the COORDINATOR. This judgment or opinion comes directly from reading the duties of the coordinator:

- On a daily basis, ensure the tips are ANONYMOUS.
- On a daily basis, monitor the STATUS of the tips to their conclusion
- On a daily basis maintain CALL statistics, as well as details related to cases solves, arrests made, and the value of property recovered.
- On a monthly basis REPORT to the Board on the details and effectiveness of the program (tip line).

## THE TELECOMPUTE HISTORY WITH CRIME STOPPERS

The Telecompute Corporation was founded in 1986 by its current CEO Warren Miller. Warren is a 1966 graduate of the Coast Guard Academy with a degree in Engineering. He served in various positions including the Commanding Officer of 4 different ships, and completed studies for a Masters in Public Administration in 1983 at The American University in Washington, DC. The first involvement with Crime Stoppers came 20 years ago when the Washington DC Board of Trade approached us to develop an area wide tip routing system for the Crime Solvers associations in 13 different jurisdictions. Bell Atlantic wanted \$25,000 for the job and we did it for \$600. Many years later, while on vacation in Florida, I spotted a Crime Stoppers billboard and decided to contact them. That eventually led to a request from the Crime Stoppers USA President to develop a nationwide tip line that would use a single number, the same number as used in Canada, which could be reached from anywhere to be directed to any local program. The national tip line and the many regional and local toll free and local tip lines we operate for many, many programs cover about 100 million Americans.

## WORKING WITH ANSWERING SERVICES

Telecompute not only works with any and all answering services, we provide the same low pricing no matter where they are located in the U.S or Canada.

## THE TELEPHONE NETWORK

What follows are explanations as to what technologies exist in the current telephone network, and how the Telecompute Corporation employs these product offerings and technologies to the best benefit of the individual Crime Stoppers program(s). Telecompute is NOT a telephone company, and therefore does not operate under the same rules and regulations as the well known telephone carriers. We DO USE the services and networks of several carriers in order to provide services, but we do so in a way that protects the identity of all callers and ensures the delivery of all calls to the intended recipient(s). One technique we use to ensure RELIABILITY is to employ a FAILOVER routing technology. If one of the carriers hosting the Crime Stoppers national tip line should go down, the calls are automatically picked up and routed by a second carrier. That capability is impossible to obtain from any telephone company. In addition to multiple carriers, we maintain backup equipment at alternate locations in order to handle an equipment failure on our part. To ensure ANONYMITY, we also employ two carriers. The inbound call is terminated (answered) with our switches and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system and then routed outbound to the ultimate destination(s). The inbound caller identification is 'scrubbed' or deleted and the outbound call is sent without any caller identification. IF the accepting caller requires a telephone number in order to accept the call, we supply a 'pseudo number' or put the same 'imaginary' number on all calls to that destination.

## GEOGRAPHIC ROUTING

The national tip line employs a technique we can describe as geographic routing. Using the first six digits of the calling telephone number, we can determine the geographic area from whence the call was made. For calls to the National Tip Line [800-222-8477](tel:800-222-8477), that means the call gets sent to the program that subscribed to the number that area. IF a call is made from an unsubscribed area, the call gets routed to the Crime Stoppers USA operator, who routes the call or faxes the information to the appropriate program. Cell phones are originated from something known as a 'rate center'. Even if the caller blocks their caller ID, a telephone number (not that of the subscriber) will be passed for the purposes of assigning costs to the various 'legs' or portions of the call (e.g. local, long distance, toll) IF the caller has subscribed to his cell phone from a local carrier, the chances are the first six digits of the phone number or the rate center will result in the call being sent to the correct recipient. IF the cell phone subscriber keeps a cell phone from New York and moves to Los Angeles, the call will not go to the Los Angeles program. If the rate center in NY falls within an area subscribed to the National Tip the call will go to that program, who we expect to forward accordingly. IF the rate center in NY falls within an **unsubscribed** area, the call goes to the National Crime Stoppers USA Operator center for routing.

## GETTING OUT OF THE POLICE DEPARTMENT NETWORK (AND OFF THE P.D.TELEPHONE BILL)

While some jurisdictions offer a legislated 'shield' against producing calls records, some do not. IF the Program offers a local number in addition to a toll free number, or IF the toll free number is handled by A carrier AND/OR terminated on any local line within the P.D., a call record is created. The same ANONYMITY we provide for toll free numbers is also available for any local number. We **port** the local number into our own non-carrier network eliminating any production of call records at the local level.

## SUPERVISION

To ensure every call has an opportunity to be ANSWERED, we supply something called telephone 'supervision'. IF a call is not answered at the primary destination/number, we can forward the call to a second destination/number, if so directed by the Crime Stopper program.

## CALL FORWARDING

Call forwarding is NEVER recommended as a way to redirect callers to an alternate site or answering service after hours or when the primary call center is vacant. Often, the resultant **call path** to the alternate destination accepts only one call at a time. IF a program expects or has a large call volume based on a Public Service Announcement, and expects the call center's many operators to pick up the load, they may be mistaken. One caller at a time could make its way to the Answering Service, while the others get a 'busy' signal, waiting for that single **call path** to open up.

## OVERALL CALL MANAGEMENT

Our mission is to provide ANONYMITY, RELIABILITY, EFFICIENCY, and EFFECTIVENESS. We have already explained how we accomplish the first two elements of our service. We produce efficiency by providing the lowest transport costs available. These are your per minute charges for connecting calls. The national Crime Stoppers tip line is at a fixed price per minute, negotiated by Crime Stoppers USA. The \$0.06/minute rate covers the transport charges ONLY for calls made within your subscribed jurisdiction. If a newly established program has no existing toll free number that is an easy way to get started. The other way we help programs cut costs is by eliminating additional monthly number charges for additional or 'legacy/published' numbers. As many as three different numbers can be routed and maintained (with all features) for just a single \$19 monthly fee. That's a local number, and existing toll free number, and the National Tip Line [800-222-8477](tel:800-222-8477) 'overlaid' onto your program's geographic area for a single \$19 monthly fee. I happen to know that single local lines can cost as much as \$50 in California, \$25 for the number and another \$25 in taxes each month. Effectiveness involves sending the call to the right place at the right time. We can do that (and save money at the same time) by employing 'menus' or instructional messages in our network before the call ever reaches the local level. We can do this using **time management** and a **status option**. The **status option** includes a menu directing callers who want to check on the status of a previous tip to 'press 1' and for callers with a new tip to remain on the line. New tips are directed to the primary destination (or alternate if they have elected for call supervision). Calls requesting the **status option** are directed to the coordinator in whatever manner selected by that coordinator. Typically, a coordinator will choose a time of day or day of the week that they will be ready to discuss the status of tips. Consequently, a caller selecting the status option will be greeted by a message advising when status calls will be accepted (e.g. "Thank you for calling. Status requests are answered on Wednesdays between 1 PM and 4 PM. Please call back then.") If the caller calls at the appropriate time, they are connected. If there is already another caller on the line, they are so advised and asked to call back in a few minutes. This procedure saves the coordinators time. It eliminates transport charges. It reduces answering service charges. And it eliminates the possibility of an improper response by a party not qualified to give the appropriate answer. Please review the following text, diagrams, and reports to gain a full understanding of how the service we offer for Crime Stoppers status and tip lines, local and toll free, has been developed with the feedback from various local programs, and how it can work for your program.

## MONITORING THE NETWORK

Each day we create a report that covers EVERY call to EVERY Crimestoppers program using our services. That covers the National number (800-222-TIPS, any legacy toll free used by a program, and any local number we manage for a program. Any call that follows an alternate or secondary path, is highlighted in YELLOW. Any call that fails to be completed is highlighted in RED. This allows us to be proactive in identifying network problems and/or a problem at the receiving end of the call. If the call could not be completed because the circuit was BUSY, that usually indicates a lack of capacity at the receiving end, (This can sometimes be caused by the use of 'call forwarding'. Multiple calls to a local number, even though call forwarded to a secondary destination, will proceed "one at a time" through that channel.)

There are two ways to correct for this problem:

- 1) Have us manage the local number (we provide unlimited channels)
- 2) Have us provide call supervision rather than call forwarding (which avoids the bottleneck altogether).

➤ [View Call Detail Report](#)

## **ASSISTING THE COORDINATOR**

It is the duty of the COORDINATOR to provide call statistics, among other things, to the Board of Directors of the Program. This information is automatically prepared by us on an ongoing basis, and even differentiates between tips and status calls.

➤ [View Monthly Summary](#)

## **SUPPORTING THE PROGRAMS**

As you read in the previous material, we use the National Telephone Numbering Plan to develop a routing matrix that determines the originating area of a call. We discussed some of the problems that can be encountered in pinpointing that originating location, and we have developed a report to do something about that. The North American Numbering Plan is altered from time to time by adding exchanges to allow for expanded telephone use. Our report (below) identifies the city or town from which each unsubscribed call originated. When we see a call from a city or town subscribed to the National Tip Line, we know that one of two things happened:

- 1) We missed an exchange and need to add it to that program's 'screen'
- 2) The North American Numbering Plan has added an exchange and we need to add it to the Program's 'screen'. The report has the added benefit of allowing the CS USA Board of Directors to see which programs may be benefitting from the National Tip line without supporting it financially. While no tip will go unforwarded, subscribed or not, ONLY subscribed programs have their tip informations sent via TipSoft format.

➤ [View Unsubscribed Report](#)

**Please feel free to call me at 800-USA-VOICE or send me an email to [warren@telecompute.com](mailto:warren@telecompute.com) if you need a general explanation of how our programs work or if you are interested in beginning service. IF you are an existing client, experiencing trouble of any kind, please call 1-800-USA-CITY**