Avrohom Gottheil Presents

Are you in flow?

A simple methodology that puts you in the driver's

seat of operational efficiency.

Are you in flow?

What is the most expensive part of a telephony job? It's not the materials. It's not the labor. The most expensive part of any telephony job is the engineering time.

by Avrohom Gottheil

What is the most expensive part of a telephony job? It's not the materials. It's not the labor. The most expensive part of any telephony job is the engineering time. The truth is, this concept can carry forward to any industry. The most expensive part of any job is the expert time. In telephony, a good engineer can cost you anywhere from $100/hour up to $250/hour. In order to minimize your costs, you want to be as efficient with your engineering time, as possible.

How do you accomplish this? By being mindful of inefficiencies in your operation. Let's take a scenario. You're installing a new phone system from scratch. Here are some of the technical tasks you would involve an engineer in:

- Programming the phone system
- Programming VoIP Switches
- Installing Voicemail
- Programming the Automated Attendant
- Testing the PRI and/or SIP lines
- Installing IP Phones
- Testing the overall programming

That sounds about right. However, let's now examine areas of potential inefficiency:

- Programming the phone system
- Loading customer user data
- Programming Button Templates
- Programming Incoming Call Routes

- Installing Voicemail
  - You're going to waste an engineer's time for this??
  - Logins and passwords aren't valid.
  - OS is not properly installed.
  - Server specs don't meet minimum requirements.

- Programming the Automated Attendant
  - Is the engineer doing the same thing for every customer? Are there any templates than can be created, and just modified?
  - Loading greetings.

- Testing the PRI and/or SIP lines
  - Basic testing doesn't require engineering time. I agree that in a hot cut you want the engineer involved from the get go, due to time limitations.

- Installing IP Phones
  - Physically installing each phone is a waste of an engineer's time.

- Testing the overall programming
  - This is pretty much a waste of an engineer's time.

In fact, performing any replicable action is a waste of an engineer's time!

You may be reading this and thinking, so, what is NOT a waste of an engineer's time? You just mentioned the entire job?

Allow me to propose a new paradigm. A paradigm of scalability. This is a paradigm that enables a company to utilize a few top notch skilled resources, and force multiply their skills onto the entire technical staff. What does THAT mean??

This means as follows. The most valuable asset an engineer has is not the work he or she performs. It is what's in his/her mind. By assigning an engineer repetitive and/or manual tasks, you're significantly underutilizing him, and you're burning him out. An engineer's mind works at a million miles an hour, and can accomplish great things for you, if you know how to leverage that asset. Well then, how DO you leverage an engineer?

You leverage an engineer by allowing his mind to flow. What is flow, and what does THAT have to do with telephony? The following definition was taken directly from Wikipedia: In positive psychology, flow, also known as the zone, is the mental state of operation in which a person performing an activity is fully immersed in a feeling of energized focus, full involvement, and enjoyment in the process of the activity. In essence, flow is characterized by complete absorption in what one does.

An engineer is in flow when he can tap into his natural essence, his creativity. He does this by planning. Allow the engineer to be in a state of flow by assigning him the following tasks:

- Programming the phone system
  - Write a detailed implementation plan that a lower level technician can follow and perform basic programming.
  - Create a template that a lower level technician can reuse for every customer, by uploading that template and just modifying the specifics.
  - The engineer performs only the most advanced or complicated tasks.

- Programming VoIP Switches
  - This can be tricky as it is advanced work.
  - Engineer can create templates for certain tasks and reuse them for each customer.

- Installing Voicemail
  - Let a lower level technician do the basic install with an instruction guide that the engineer writes.
  - Technician verifies server readiness by testing login credentials and OS/Server minimum requirements.
  - Engineer is utilized for troubleshooting issues.

- Programming the Automated Attendant
  - Engineer creates reusable template which a technician modifies for each customer.
  - Engineer provides written instructions to technician on the process of loading greetings.
  - Engineer performs only the most advanced tasks

- Testing the PRI and/or SIP lines
  - Basic testing doesn't require engineering time. I agree that in a hot cut you want the engineer involved from the get go, due to time limitations.

- Installing IP Phones
  - Utilize the engineer to provide guidance, and to troubleshoot when necessary.

- Testing the overall programming
  - The engineer should create a written test plan that can be reused and/or modified for each specific job.

Hopefully, this has given you some ideas that you can apply to your daily operation to improve operational efficiency and to maximize your profits.

Please feel free to leave me a comment and share with me your methodologies for improving operational efficiency. I'm always willing to learn to methods and to grow!
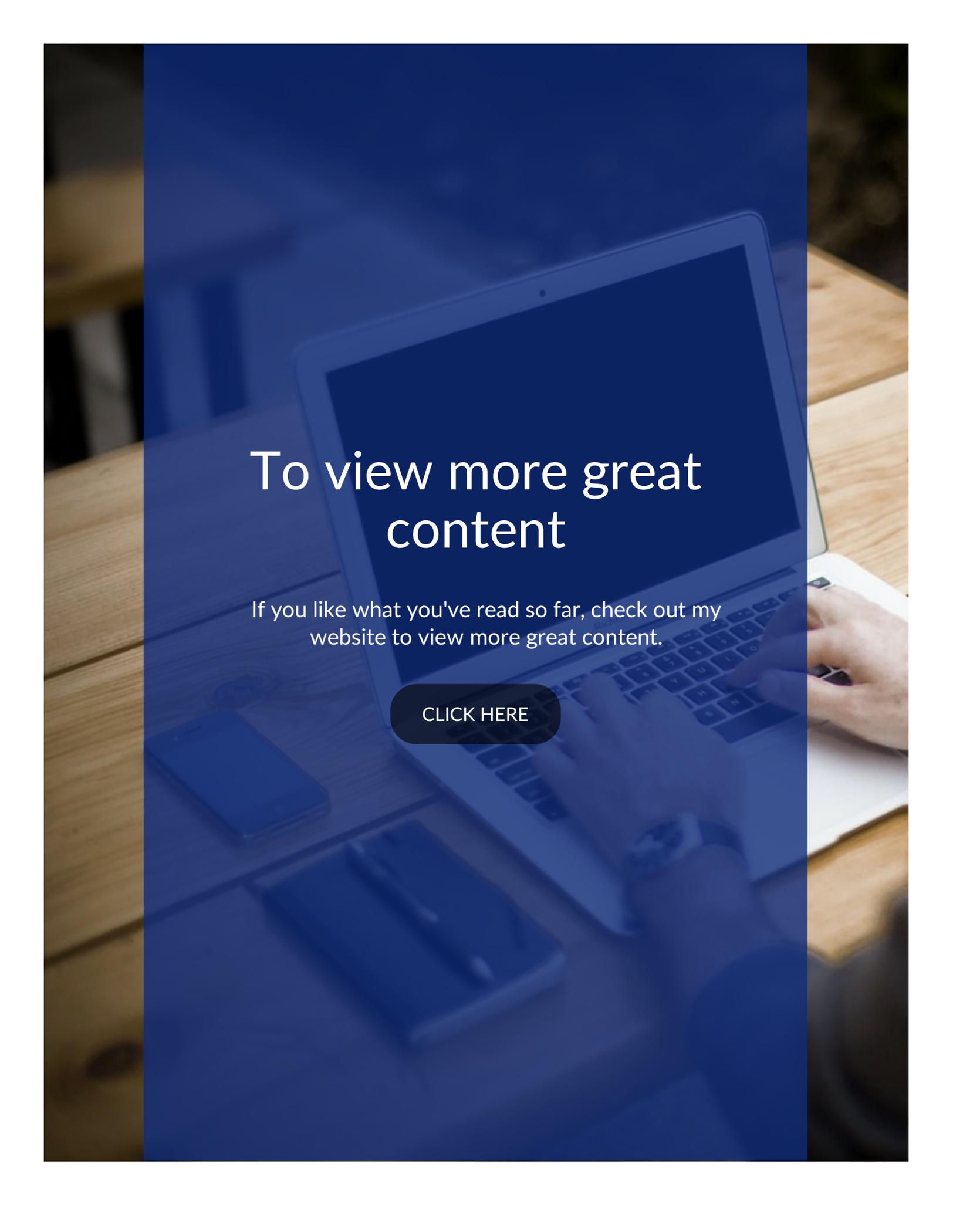
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