

The Galaxy

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Look Out Baby, 'Cause Here He Comes!

"I'm still a rookie at this," admitted Moises, founder of Easybee, based in Miami, with the operations center located in El Salvador, Central America. This determined, dedicated young man may be new to the answering service industry, but as the title of this interview indicates – Get Ready! About three years ago Moises was newly graduated from Purdue University, with a degree in Industrial Engineering, and an eagerness to take on the world. He had entrepreneurship in his blood and realized he had a wealth of excellent labor in his country. Labor that he could "export" by providing Virtual Assistants for businesses in the US.



Moises Hasbun launched Easybee, with the goal of providing reasonably priced, bilingual, Virtual Assistants to upscale companies. "Locating in San Salvador, the capital city of El Salvador is one reason we can deliver English/Spanish bilingual services with an English proficiency of 90% on the SLEP test and native Spanish proficiency," he said, "I truly bootstrapped my startup, I used an Elastix contact center solution that would open a single web browser tab on incoming calls; the operators would have to scan through everything to find the information they needed. The scripts were always changing, and it was a challenge for the staff to find their stride for quality."

He quickly realized that providing

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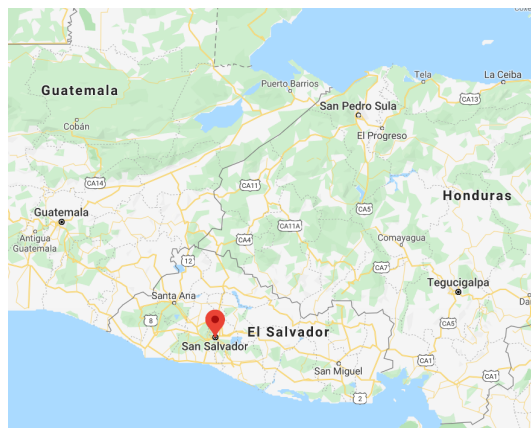


Virtual Assistant Services was a unique business that required detailed training and dependable, almost dedicated employees, which made scheduling difficult., especially when both his operator and client bases were fairly small. Service was best when the same person

could always be assigned to the same client. He also found that although his customers were buying a virtual assistant, what they mainly wanted was someone to answer their calls. "We named the company while we were still thinking the company would provide remote virtual assistants," Moises explained, "We were looking to do a play on the words Busy Bee. We were creating "Easybee, the solution for the busy bee". As our focus shifted to answering service, so did our campaigns, but the name flows easily and the bee is a creature that characterizes who we want working in our company – industrious, collaborative people. So, it stuck."

Realizing there had to be a better way to build his company than on the complexities of Virtual Assistance, Moises went to the internet, "Let's see if someone else is doing this," he thought, and he happened on Answering Service. CLICK, and there was what he needed, a listing for ATSI. "I actually stumbled on answering services and knew this was a better plan for me than virtual assistant services. I attended my first ATSI meeting in 2017, he continued, "I visited all the booths, studied all the platforms, asked tons of questions during demos, and settled on Startel as the most forward-thinking vendor."

"El Salvador has a strong call center culture employing lots of agents who are used to handling 200 calls a day. It is widely recognized as a good job, paying two to three times minimum wage. And there is a lot of competition among the



centers. Easybee is not a call center, this is a telephone answering service and we offer a different atmosphere for our operators. Rather than having one account and providing order-taking with pressure to sell, upsell and meet quotas, we offer many interesting clients to answer for. We look for more mature operators and have a calmer atmosphere. We are in business together, when business is good,

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we can share our goodwill. We value the well-being of our employees, we give them a nice work environment, and are tuned into their family needs because we have a family culture."

"I'm very proud of our company culture and of the people who choose to work here," he went on, "I have two wonderful, capable supervisors who make all the difference.



Irene has been here since the start, she is the most experienced with Startel she sets up the accounts, and also helps with the training. Mariela studied to be a doctor, but was unable to continue, she is great with people, and handles all our HR and scheduling and makes sure everyone understands each new customer's needs. Both Irene and Mariela help with quality assurance – and use the Call Source software. They both act as "wild cards" taking calls when someone calls out, or we need extra people. My goal is to not need them on the phones at all by the end of the year; they have many other responsibilities."

"I chose to have our service hosted with Shames Twardy at Excel Telemessaging. He provides all my telephony needs as well as access to the software. I didn't want the stress of being in El Salvador and needing parts, having IT problems or dealing with a phone company. Shames and I work very well together, he sees our relationship as more of a partnership than a vendor/client. We've created some very exciting projects together and we have more in the wings. I am very hands on, although I don't take calls. I do handle customer service if it is a larger issue, however that happens very rarely because our operators are really good at following instructions. I also direct the marketing (we have a marketing company that does work for our family and it made sense to build on that relationship.) and I do the billing and collections. I'm young, unattached and I'm putting most of the money back into the business; so, I'm here about 85% of the time."

While discussing what other answering service owners asked him about, Moises was quick to point out several things that set him apart. "We are 100% bilingual," he said proudly, "our operators speak English with a natural accent, and they speak native Spanish. I have also divided my company into what I call Commercial Accounts, and Staffing Accounts.



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Commercial accounts are our bread and butter and are the individual accounts that come into our company. We currently have about 150 accounts and we hope to have 200 by the end of the year, but that might be a difficult goal to achieve considering the global pandemic.”

“Staffing service is what I call those accounts that another service stateside might ask us to handle for them (fully or partially) so they can offer bilingual service to their customers, or because they need help with a high volume, low paying client,” he explained. “We also are willing to supply dedicated operators to someone who needs bilingual answering for their accounts at their place of business, while we answer from our location. This is something that is in the very early stages. There is so much to do!” he acknowledged.

Like so many of us Moises has discovered that this is an intense industry, and creative outlets are needed. “I think the key to being happy in this dynamic industry is to take small breaks often!” he laughed. “Knowing I have good people behind me, I’ll take a couple of hours and detach. “I enjoy listening to Podcasts and e-books,” he said. “And I’ve recently gotten into running. I used to hate running when I was younger; but now I plan to enter my first marathon in the fall! Running clears my mind and allows me to look at things more objectively.” Running is all about endurance, and it fits Moises at this stage of his life, he is full of energy and truly engaged in every aspect of his life.



Moises comes from an entrepreneurial family, and he is very devoted to his parents and sisters. His dad is in real estate and his mother is in the pharmacy industry. One sister, Fatima, is pursuing a degree in chemistry from Loyola University in New Orleans; and his other sister, Alia, is a business administration major at Barry

University in Miami, Florida. Both work in the family business. “I’m blessed to have my family coaching me, and if I fail, I have them to fall back on! But failure is not in my plans!” he laughed. “I spend about 85% of my time on Easybee, and the rest helping with our family business. I want to support my parents, and to thank them for all the support they have given me. Its important to me to help uphold what my parents have cultivated, yet I want to be able to excel on my own, to build something of my own. I’m very proud that this is taking shape and that I have landed in an industry where family is so valued.”

There is no doubt that Moises is going to be a huge asset to SNUG, and he is already making friends within our “family”. There is no aspect of owning an answering service that he doesn’t find interesting and even consuming at times. Whether it’s the effect of Ruby on our industry, or how some of our members are only now discovering VoIP, or how AI will impact our future, he is fascinated by everything he discovers. He is the proverbial sponge soaking up the history that each of us is willing to share, and at the same time, he has that fresh unspoiled mind that ponders the future. He wonders about how best to educate the public on the services we can offer to help run their companies better. How to get an article in Forbes about our services. And how to provide for his employees to increase their longevity with his company. Welcome Moises, you are going to make an impact on our industry’s future! Get ready! Get Ready!



Good Day, my name is Dan L'Heureux the executive director of the Startel National Users group – I'm here to present This year's recipient for the Allen Kalik Award This person very much embodies the traits listed on the award which recognizes individuals unselfish dedication and leadership . Anyone that has served on a user group board knows that it is a challenge to deal with many directions one is pulled by members, fellow directors, and our vendor. To serve as an officer while balancing that input and trying to operate your own business, you may understand that it can be much more difficult as one has to sometimes suppress personal opinions and make decisions for the good of the whole group. This years' awardee was challenged with overseeing the end of an era – never an easy task. But he did so with a positive, decisive attitude and was able to keep an even temperament, and while he takes the business at hand seriously he doesn't take himself too seriously – well, maybe sometimes he is a bit too relaxed.



When I asked him to send a head-shot for the website, this is what I first received.

He started with his mom's company as a programmer in 1992 and now, as President, is responsible for new technology applications for the company providing general oversight for programming, reporting, network and system issues. He is passionate about small business and supporting the many entrepreneurs who count on their company to provide their customer service solution.

He is passionate about our industry as well, having served on the PIN Board several times, and most recently as President of PIN – this years' Allen Kalik Award of Excellence recipient– Jeff Wood.

Sheryl Denny Memorial Scholarship

Every year TeamSNUG is proud to host the Sheryl Denny Memorial Scholarship as a way to give back and assist in furthering the dreams of our vendor employees, members, their employees, and their families. After much deliberation the 2020 Scholarship Committee has made the selection of the three recipients to receive the Sheryl Denny Memorial Scholarship valued at \$1500.00 each.

AND THE WINNERS ARE

Mason Goodwin
Son of Kelly Goodwin
Keystone TAS
Newtown, PA

Cassidy Reandeau
Daughter of Tom Reandeau
Focus Telecommunications
Eldersburg, MD

Reina Wright
Employee of Ken Goldenberg
Direct Line Tele Response
Berkeley/Stockton, CA



Congratulations Nick Giacomuzzi & John Martin!!!



By Margaret Lally

I am honored to present the 2019 Don Berry award. There will be two recipients this year!

in the name of social distancing, I will announce both and then each will be given an opportunity to speak at the end.

40 years ago, Don Berry founded Startel with an idea that Computer-Telephony Integration and automation could transform the TAS industry.

Many of you or your parents were there. Through his leadership and commitment, his dream was realized.

Don passed away in 1995, and that year the Don Berry Award of Excellence was initiated to honor and remember Don for his contribution to this industry. There is a living plaque at Startel's Irvine office with all of the recipients.

Our first is someone I am fortunate to know well.

Like many of the previous recipients he has served on the SNUG board. He is very active in the community providing answers to technical questions while pushing Startel to look toward technology that would allow continued prosperity in the changing market.

I remember speaking to him about this industry and how much he loves it. He felt fortunate to work for someone that not only appreciated his talents in his field, but that also encouraged him to join SNUG and work more with the community.

Our recipient has been the Technical Chair for SNUG since he was first elected on the board. His no nonsense attitude and direct approach to problem resolution have made him a good Ambassador for SNUG members while interacting with Startel.

In looking up how to pronounce his last name, I saw the meaning of it:

Knowledge, Leadership, Fairness.

I don't know that if that is true or that I got the right pronunciation, but I think it is very accurate in his case.

Our 1st 2019 Don Berry award goes to Nick Giacomuzzi!!!

Congratulations Nick!



2019 Don Berry Award Winners

The plaque reads:

"The Startel National User Group bestows the DON BERRY AWARD to individuals who exemplify excellence in the advancement of SNUG and its members.

We honor the enormous contributions Mr. Don Berry made to our industry."

I didn't know Don personally, but those that did carry his principles still today teaching and inspiring the rest of us to do more, listen and support each other, and care. I feel that in this industry and I think that its part of why so many extraordinary people stay in it.

John Carey made a comment a few weeks ago: There are some guys you can NOT stop. That can be said of both our 2019 recipients.

I recall the past award presentations stating the qualities of Don that made him so beloved. A few come to my mind now:

- A never-ending commitment to his customers
- Always available to help solve a problem or just offer moral support.
- And He knew no time clock

These are the qualities that I see in our next recipient.

He always has time to answer the phone to talk through a problem, even if it's not his area of expertise. He has bailed me out countless times over the years, and just last week, in fact.

For over 25 Years, this recipient has bled Startel. He is committed to our products, to the team he leads and to the customers that he is willing to assist whenever asked.

Our recipient has been one of the strongest voices in uniting our three companies and combining our resources so that we are better able to server our customers for 40 more years.

I have so many great memories with him, but over all just being happy to call him a friend.

I do remember one night trying to get a sysem to boot off a floppy disk – maybe we were trying to reformat a drive. I thought to myself when are we gonna give up and ship something. He would not do it. At every road block he had 10 ways to try to get around it.



Throughout the shelter at home order, he always has his camera on to be present for his team and his customers and of course, always looks good.

The 2nd 2019 Don Berry award goes to Startel's own John Martin!!!

Congratulations John!

Much Maligned Meetings



Meetings get a bad rap. Lots of complaining about some people droning on and others not contributing. Lots of parroting about how dull meetings are, let's take an honest look at how important meetings are – especially now.

Most of us are off premises, working from home not having a lot of interaction with coworkers and colleagues. No water cooler conversation about the game last night – there was no game. People are feeling fragile, overwhelmed with the news, and unable to focus, so many of their life balances

are out of whack. Too many things have changed all at once, causing anxiety; even for those whose lives have not been upended, the support of being together and talking about everyday things is gone.

There is normalcy in having specific tasks to do, improved organization and meetings. Yes, meetings. Two or three people on a conference call – is a meeting, all that is needed is a specific subject, and a few minutes for idle conversation at the end, and it gives structure and comfort to the participants. Scheduled video meetings force us to take a little time with our appearance, it is something to groan about – but we feel good when the call is over, we have seen our coworkers, and we feel better about our appearance. And when the meetings are purposeful and well organized, we feel a little more structure in our lives and a sense of accomplishment that will carry us through.

Make sure everyone has a time to speak (not just a chance to speak). Go around the table, or the video squares, ask everyone to contribute; what are you working on; what have you accomplished this week? What are you having trouble with; can we help? What are you especially pleased with? Give everyone a time to shine.

When we have completed a step toward a goal, a chapter in training, a solution to a problem, we feel good about it; but we feel even better when we can share our results with colleagues. Our hard work or clever thinking becomes validated when it is shared and acknowledged. We feel gratified when our efforts are recognized, and our results are congratulated. We leave that meeting feeling good, or at least better. We're reminded of what we CAN do, not what we can't.

As a leader, make sure everyone feels included and important. We feel good when we are "in the know", it helps us understand where we fit into the big picture. Give people as much information as you can about what is going on in the company. Be real; share the worrisome things as well as the positive – but accentuate the positive. The more open you are about what is going on, the more your teams will be able to make good things happen. We often do our best work when we're under pressure, especially if we are working together toward a common goal.

From the Executive Director



Dear Members,

Welcome to SNUG

Effective 6/30/2020, the PINetwork membership and Board of Directors has voted to officially merge with SNUG – so not only has SNUG membership grown and will benefit from their insights and contributions, many PIN users were former SNUG members and ‘power users’ at that, so a big WELCOME BACK is offered and your participation and push for feature development is much appreciated.

Human nature tends to seek comfort and familiarity (when you go to a multi-day meeting or church or temple, do you tend to sit in the same spot? I know I do and from observation note that many others do too) This is neither good nor bad, I’m just pointing out that often we are happy with the status quo and when things change due to outside influences, our tendency is to find the faults rather than the opportunities. I propose that not all change is automatically good, but the addition of the PINetwork members has a great chance to improve the group, the product and Startel - with a combined effort of vendor and user input the Startel product can only get better. As users, you can do more for your clients, offer more services and features to stand out in the industry and as a vendor, Startel can strengthen their base and market share. Yes, sometimes change or the need to adapt is difficult or requires time, effort and/or cash but in this industry if you are standing still, you are actually slipping behind and I still believe there is much room for optimism for our industry and to working towards a truly inclusive new group.

Other items of note from our 7/8/2020 Virtual Annual meeting; the SNUG board of directors had been functioning with Jeff Wood (Contact One, Tucson, AZ) as the PIN representative to the SNUG Board. Effective in May, 2020 the BOD had voted to retain the existing officers and directors in place until May 2021. Jeff was appointed as an regular full voting member of the SNUG board an member of the Liaison Committee and Matt Bogan was appointed as a director and member of the Tech Committee so that there would be continuity in that important committee after Nick Giacomuzzi becomes president next May. The Annual Meeting was recorded, if you would like to view the session, please send a request to Dan@CallConsult.net

Thank you to the Board members who have agreed to extend their unpaid and often underappreciated work in service to the membership.

Mark your Calendars for May 16-19 2021 - Hotel Contessa on the Riverwalk in San Antonio, TX

Wishing you the best in business,



Dan L'Heureux – Executive Director



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We Welcome Your Contributions!

Send your:

- ⇒ Articles
- ⇒ Letters
- ⇒ News Releases
- ⇒ Comments

To

Dan@CallConsult.net

SNUG will update you with the latest information and news in-between issues, so be sure to keep an eye out for messages via the e-mail list serve.

The President's Letter

DISTANT, YET CLOSER THAN EVER



reetings TeamSNUG,



We are fresh off our first, and hopefully last, virtual Annual Business Meeting and I gotta tell you... it was a little weird. Our By-Laws state that we have to have an annual business meeting with our members, and granted there really isn't any material covered in the meeting that couldn't be done in a virtual setting, but it was still a bit odd not being able to look out and see all of our friends or receive real-time feedback.

Thank you to all who attended our virtual Annual Business Meeting. These are indeed challenging times and I appreciate everyone taking time out of their busy day to join us. Hopefully it gave you the small sense of normalcy that we are all craving. A special thanks goes out to your volunteer Board Of Directors for their hard work and presentations and to our Executive Director, Dan L'Heureux for moderating.

We then set our sights towards our first ever virtual conference, which was held August 3rd-5th. I know we were all excited to see the program that Startel lined up. Your Conference Committee is also working on transitioning some of the sessions planned for Baltimore to a more virtual setting. Our goal as a Board is to make sure that our Members still receive quality content.

It is no secret that the people in our industry are not socially distant creatures. We're huggers (I'm looking at you Donna West), hand shakers, fist bumpers, high-fivers and drink toasters. But at the same time, we are also collaborators, contributors and sharers. We applaud each other's victories as if they were our own as well as empathize and help when times are challenging.

Our industry has prospered through technology advances like alpha pagers, voicemail and text messaging, weather events, terrorist attacks, recessions and now a pandemic. We've always come out stronger on the other side. We know how to adapt and pivot as well as use and exploit technology to our advantage. During these challenging times, we prove that our industry is more relevant than ever. It all comes down to the power of people... The agents on the phones providing outstanding customer service, the supervisors and managers helping to keep operations running smoothly, the IT professionals making sure our systems are operating at peak performance, our vendors for looking out for us and of course all of you.

So, while we are living in a time where we need to be distant, I feel that we are closer than ever!

Stay safe, my friends!

Love & Handstands,

Drew Ritter

Drew Ritter—TeamSNUG President