

Ca- CapTel

Disconnect

Produced by the CapTel Workers Union

They're Scrooging Ya'

Last year, CapTel gave all employees a \$1/hr raise during the holiday season, coupled with a \$1 per hour worked bonus.

Although the \$1/hr raise ended up being permanent, CapTel management has chosen not to carry the \$1/hr bonus over to this holiday season, with the reasoning that staffing needs have been addressed by opening new call centers and increasing staffing at existing centers.

The holidays are the busiest time of the year for CAs. Not only are there shorter (or no) breaks in between calls, leading to burned out employees and reduced caption quality, but during this season, we generate far more profit for CapTel per minute than at any other time.

We are still generating the same profit for CapTel, regardless of how many people are working. We are still working harder than we will have to work at any other time of the year, with calls routinely deep in queue in the evening for hours at a time. Why, then, is the holiday bonus not being carried over into this year?

The only answer to this question is that CapTel is prioritizing pennies per minute of profit over their employees, many of whom have been with the company for years. A \$1/hr bonus is less than \$0.02 out of the \$1.82 we generate every minute we are on calls, but this money could easily make the difference for employees struggling to pay high heating bills or buy holiday presents for their families.

We need this bonus; CapTel upper admin does not.

Who We Are

We are every color, every size, every age, every gender. We are overworked and under paid, overlooked and under pressure. We are disrespected. And yet, we are the backbone of CapTel, and we deserve to be heard.

5-Point Platform

1

A Living Wage

This means a minimum of \$15/hr for CAs. CapTel Inc currently makes \$1.82/minute of captioned calls. CAs make \$0.18/minute for captioning. That is less than 10% of the capital we create for this company coming back to us. We demand that our wages be immediately increased to at least \$15/hr. This would increase our income to \$0.25/min. \$15/hr is only the first step on the road to more equal wage distribution, but it helps ensure that workers can afford medical bills, family expenses, tuition/debt, and living expenses.

2

Ninety Percent Adherence

We demand that CapTel reduce our monthly adherence compliance threshold from 95% to 90%. From needing to use the bathroom frequently to having to step out due to triggering call content, there are many reasons for reducing the adherence limit. In addition there are times in which we are doing work necessary to our jobs at CapTel that are considered out of adherence. Our adherence time is already stretched as is. We believe that 90% per day is a fair ask that will minimize the harm of the times when CapTel requires that we be out of adherence while doing our jobs, and give us a little extra time to care for our physical and mental health.

3

Better Equipment and Maintenance

CapTel needs an immediate equipment makeover. Old and failing CRT monitors give workers headaches and often display incorrectly, many of our keyboards have important keys missing, most of our chairs are broken in some way, and breakdowns in the kitchen or at the water fountains go unattended for weeks if not months. We demand updates to our monitors and desks. In addition, we ask that CapTel hire additional maintenance personnel to insure that the equipment we already have is well cared for and swiftly repaired.

4

Transportation Compensation

CAs need to be reimbursed for transportation expenses. Since the Milwaukee location doesn't have a designated parking lot (like the Madison location, for instance), CAs are expected to pay for parking. In addition the rising cost of public transportation takes a significant bite out of our paychecks. We demand that CapTel take on some of the cost of our commute. We want at least \$10 a week to be added to our income specifically for the purposes of subsidizing our transportation. Until CapTel can provide free parking and waivers for bus transport they should be at least partially responsible for our travel expenses.

5

Union Liasons

We demand that CapTel recognize the voice of CAs on an institutional level. To do this we ask that CapTel accept the appointment of at least one (likely more) person compensated by the union with direct access to admin meetings and information as well as the ability to serve as a mediator between workers and HR/admin. Workers deserve to have more concrete information about how the company is run and deserve the chance to voice concerns or make suggestions.

Without Us

On August 21st, I went into aux mode around midday and went down to the Grand Avenue Mall, where the sunroof gave a perfect view of the solar eclipse. I probably wasn't the only worker at CapTel to do this and I certainly wasn't the only worker in the United States to do it.

It didn't feel like anything significant to look up at the sky with my hands in my pockets, but the United States economy told a different tale; employers lost close to 700 million dollars on the day of the eclipse due to a sudden drop-off in productivity.

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Sometimes in our workplace, it seems as if we have no power. The job of every captionist exists at the whim of upper management. They set the rules for how to behave in a place where most of us spend a significant part of our time five days a week.

We tend to take this authoritarian, top-down approach to running a business as not just the way things are, but the way things should be. We are so used to being managed that we just don't question it.

Although CapTel treats us as though we exist at the bottom of the pyramid, we are actually the only reason CapTel is even able to exist. CapTel makes \$1.82 for every minute we are on calls – without our labor to produce that value, they would have nothing.

If all CAs were to call in one day, the company would be absolutely fucked. Even if all the supervisors, the scheduling department, the HR department, and Chris Briskie himself grabbed headsets and started taking calls, CapTel would still not be able to sustain itself. Without us the business doesn't exist.

Having a democratic say in how our workplace is run is just as important as having a democratic say in how our country is run. And much like when government leaders ignore the will of the people, it should infuriate us when management presumes to know best how to treat us in this workplace that would not exist without us. We are all smart and capable adults and when we have a demand it needs to be taken seriously.

At the very least, CapTel management should be willing to meet with us to both discuss the issues that are important to us and to try to reach a sensible compromise. CapTel could make many small changes that would positively impact workers' lives in a very meaningful way with relatively little cost.

Administration is aware of the issues we face in many cases and either ignores the issues or drags their feet on providing solutions. This clearly demonstrates that the company respects profits more than their workers and that is a situation that we absolutely should not allow.

One change that could be immediately implemented that would make our lives far less stressful would be to lower the required adherence rate from 95% to 90%. This would allow us both the time to take care of personal needs on the job and to take care of the work-related tasks we are required to use our adherence time for.

We are the ones with the power in the employer/employee relationship and it is time for both us and them to recognize it.

Love Letter to a Hurricane

My Dearest Friend,

I knew it wouldn't last, but the nights we spent together made me realize how beautiful it could be if only I set my sights with my sighs, the calm in your eyes and warmest embrace brought a smile to my face I fear may never resurface beyond the memories we shared, of felicity, fellowship, fairness. Your generous peace, the good old days, my love.

And while others may curse your name as a homewrecker, a charlatan, a man eating menace, I would give anything to be back in your whirlwinded ways, magnanimous grace, softest lilt in your lullabies.

Perhaps, someday, they will see the light, and let us be together again.

But until then,
I love you, Irma

Disclaimer: This piece is by no means meant to undermine the tragedy in Florida, but rather to accentuate the nuance of the capitalist agenda in response to their plight, how a couple days of adequate staffing and fair wages gave the people from the call centers that were not immediately impacted peace and respite, in the hopes CapTel will recognize the difference being a responsible employer makes. Healing and restoration to our fellow workers affected by the hurricane.

Confessions of a Former CapTel Confessions Moderator

I was the last moderator for the now defunct CapTel Confessions page. I am not going to pretend to my motives were purely altruistic. I figured that moderating the page would be a healthy outlet for my frustrations both with CapTel and with my position as a CA. During one of the page's many inactive spells, I created a pseudonym and a side Facebook account and asked the current administrators if I could help out or take over. The admins did not respond until I contacted them through my own personal Facebook.

There were very few rules or guidelines about how the CC page was run, but everyone was always very careful to verify the identity of new admins or moderators to ensure CapTel HR did not get ahold of the page. If you ever reached out to CC about becoming a moderator or admin and didn't hear back, this is likely the reason. Once appointed moderator, I was the only active moderator/admin.

My hope is that more CAs will begin to direct their anger and indignation toward the source, and channel it in ways that will help improve our workplace.

CapTel Confessions and CapTel Corner exist to provide a sounding board for CAs. And unfortunately, that means CC moderators and admins take the brunt of the frustration and anger employees feel toward CapTel. We are easy targets, as we hide our face and names, and those who submit confessions can hide behind the same anonymity. CAs who feel they do not have an outlet or a voice at work, direct their hostility toward coworkers, or toward the CC mods and admins who are in fact giving them a platform to voice their concerns and frustrations.

My hope is that more CAs will begin to direct their anger and indignation toward the source, and channel it in ways that will help improve our work place.

I know that people may be wondering why it is the old CC page died. I definitely am responsible in some respects. There were times where it became difficult to set aside the time to update the page due to significant issues with my health, academics, and my second job.

And I unfortunately learned that HR at CapTel was far more understanding of my absence from work during this time than those who patronized the CapTel Confession page were regarding my period of inactivity.

And while I harbor no ill-will towards the admins of CapTel Confessions, they were a pain to get ahold of. I asked the admins if I could appoint additional moderators; they told me I was welcome too, but then ignored all subsequent messages from both my personal and “side” Facebook account.

I received the notifications that the messages had been opened, but never received any replies. They would not grant me the admin privileges necessary to appoint other admins, nor did they appoint the new moderator or admins I selected. My hands were tied.

The side account I used to moderate the page was then reported as a fake and shut down, so I completely lost access to the CapTel Confessions page. I contacted the admins to let them know. They opened my messages, but did not respond to any of them. They began to post from the page, stating once again that they were looking for new admins. I know they received inquiries, some of which were posted publicly on the page.

For whatever reason, the admins chose not to appoint additional moderators or admins. They announced the page would no longer be updated, and suggested visitors check out CapTel Corner.

CapTel Corner has begun to hold its visitors to a higher standard to discourage hate speech and other “discussion” that can be harmful to CCs. I commend them for this, and have noticed a great deal of backlash. CC is safe and accessible for CAs to use because it’s anonymous. Unfortunately, this allows for an environment where participants confuse “free speech” with “consequence free speech.”

I am not affiliated with CapTel Corner, but they have my blessing. The admins work as a cohesive team, which should allow for longevity of the page.

Atlantis Valley

The switch from the old cash-only vending system to Atlantis Valley was clearly intended to engineer a profitable partnership between CapTel and Atlantis Valley and not to provide a better service to workers. People with dairy allergies or other dietary restrictions are largely out of luck, and the switch from vending machines caused a lot of prices to skyrocket. A hamburger used to be \$2.50; now a burger of the same size is \$3-4, and when a sleeve of donuts is \$1.00 and a sandwich is \$4.49, healthy choices can be tough.

To get away with these price increases, most items no longer have prices posted, meaning the only sure way to know the cost of an item is to scan it. Are we supposed to scan every item we might be interested in, or are they hoping we just swipe our cards without thinking too much about what we’re spending? If CapTel is seeing any of that cash, it is unfair and unethical.



Contact Us

captelworker@gmail.com

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