

General results/conclusions from the survey

Aspecific survey for the 112 call takers was undertaken in all regions of Cyprus during the months of September, October and November. The methods that were used to conduct the survey was through personal interviews, through email, and sometimes through regular post. The target group was call takers around Cyprus from the public and private sector in relevant professions, such as police officers, fire fighters, nursing staff, and some trainers of those professions. It should be noted that 112 call takers are in general those who are randomly active in duty in their unit. We have managed to reach around 205 participants for the purpose of our survey and we managed to receive 202 responses. That was a relatively high number for Cyprus, and we had to survey extensively professionals from private sector and NGOs having emergency response units in order to reach the number of 200 questionnaires. From the results of the survey we have reached somekey conclusions;which are analyzedin detail in the following paragraph.

Brief analysis of the results of the survey

1. The survey has without a doubt shown that most of the respondents, with slight exceptions experience a form or forms of stress that naturally interrelate with the difficulty at work. It is the type of work that on the one hand it is perceived as important, useful with lots of responsibility and on the other it is in itself taxing to the mind. What makes this profession more tolerable is team work and organization. Respondents of the survey generally feel that their work is quite significant.
2. Nevertheless the majority of the participants in this survey do recognize that this profession is stressful and taxing. Of great concern and carrying lots of toxic stress are cases (callers-calls) whereby cases are related to death and dying. Such cases are viewed or might be viewed traumatic. Having said that participants feel confident and competent in dealing with calls that are difficult and only rarely do they come to face critical situations that bring about great concerns and difficulties. Having said that the vast majority of the participants feel that continuous psychological training for operations is a must in this hue of business.

3. Participants view continuous training on technical aspects such as learning to better deciphering fake calls or prioritizing emergency calls as a great need in this profession. Participants have in the vast majority a keen understanding to keep up with all the latest developments in the field. They have perception on why there always exists a need for better and more efficient training. This clearly indicates that there is no “know it all attitude”. In fact there is appreciation for innovative techniques.
4. It appears as well that participants have a clearly formed understanding of what on average number of calls that they receive might be fake, wrong, critical and other. They have developed an intuitive understanding of what to expect within a week time. Traffic accidents for example might be the bulk of the calls followed by domestic violence etc.
5. Respondents clearly understand the need for supervision in their line of work. Only a minority of the participants view it as unnecessary.
6. Most participants express no actual fear of entering or dealing with people in critical situations. There is a willingness to engage with callers in difficult situations. It is easy to assume that dispatchers may perceive it as a challenge to learn how to deal effectively with callers that are complex and difficult cases.
7. It is also transparent that participants find that their job is quite important and that in turn may save lives. In fact one can easily extrapolate the understanding for the need for this job and its role in society.
8. The majority of the participants also expressed the need for their profession to become more like a distinct specialty in itself. That there is a need for the training to be or become institutionalized almost like a specialist training. There is apparently the belief that it needs to become more concrete and with great depth in all aspects that involve this specific profession. Dispatcher training must evolve into a more complex and in depth type of schooling whereby all parameters will be fully studied as the results of the survey have shown.
9. Participant’s results show clearly that whoever is dealing with this profession must have in his personality specific traits, such as empathy, understanding, calmness and extreme patience. They recognize that this job entails a need for a specific personality. In other words whoever is doing this job must possess these specific elements in his character. Not everyone out there can be trained for this job because mistakes will occur if one cannot handle the stress and complexity of work.