

## Former USAA exec teams with call-center expert to launch business

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A new San Antonio-based company is looking to shake up the call-center industry while increasing local jobs.

Former **USAA** President and Deputy CEO Gen. Wilson “Bill” Cooney and entrepreneur and call-center expert Tim Montgomery recently formed a new company called **Cooney Solutions Group** LLC (CSG).

The new company, which opened its doors in February, offers call-center management and customer-service solutions.

The company is located at 11815 IH-10 West, Suite 605, on this city’s North Side.

Over the next few months, CSG will be ramping up its operations and hiring between 25 and 35 employees at its 2,500-square-foot location, company officials say.

Montgomery, CEO of CSG, says the company is already looking for its next location because of the growing interest in its services.

“We anticipate growing out of the current location within the next few months and we’ll need the space to support some of the fortune 500 companies we have been in talks with. We have identified several locations near our current facility that will support the next 100 employees,” Montgomery says.

While declining to name names, Montgomery says CSG’s consulting division recently completed call-center projects for one of the country’s largest automotive supply chains and one of the top property and casualty insurance companies.

“Our state of the art technology implementation will be finalized by the end of this month and will allow us to begin signing contracts for the outsourced call-center division,” he says. “We’ve already had discussions with several fortune 500 companies and three have completed site visits.”

David Butler, executive director of the National Association of Call Centers, says many new third-party call centers tend to fail if they don’t line up multiple long-term contracts out of the box. He estimates that there are some 100,000 call centers in the country, which employ 2 percent or 3 percent of the working population.

### Different approach

The reason for the growing interest, Montgomery says, is the model, or concept, on which the company is based.

Most call centers, Montgomery says, charge companies based on the number of calls they take and the amount of time spent on the calls. But, he says, CSG will look to reduce the number of calls it handles for its clients as well as the time spent on each of the calls.

“About 95 percent of outsourced call-center seats are sold based on cost. ... If you pay me for every call that I take, I have no incentive to reduce the number of calls that I take. If you pay me by the time I’m on these calls, I have no incentive to reduce the amount of time on these calls,” Montgomery explains. “... We’re going after this in a very different way based on value and quality.”

The goal, he says, is to use feedback on each call to help clients see what things it can do differently to cut down on the number of in-bound calls.

Often, Montgomery says, customers call companies when there is confusion about a product or service offered. CSG will work with companies to help them eliminate phone calls related to confusion or miscommunication by helping them become smarter in how they communicate to customers.

“Ultimately, they would save money if they could eliminate phone calls by being smarter in the way they communicate,” he says.

This in turn, says CSG co-founder Cooney, will build a relationship of trust with CSG’s clients, help them increase revenue and cause them to bring more business to CSG in other areas

### Other services

CSG also offers project-focused consulting, such as technology evaluations, executive coaching and temporary leadership replacement, general assessments, start-up assistance and retained consulting.

In addition to working to help companies improve their bottom line, Cooney says the company serves both small and large companies with packages designed to fit their respective needs and budgets.

Montgomery says CSG’s virtual call-center technology allows it to set up smaller centers “where the people are,” such as near college campuses or military bases.

“Our model and our plans are to build small centers around college campuses or just across the street or nearby, where students can go to work for 4 or 5 hours and then go back to class,” he says, adding that this will cut down on their drive time and add greater flexibility to their work schedules.

Montgomery says the company will also be able to employ individuals from home who either care for children, are disabled veterans or who are retired but need extra income. “This gives us access to a labor pool that otherwise couldn’t go to work,” he says.