



## ThinkThroughTools' EXPECTool™ Plays Positive Role in Survival at Sea

By Daniel Casciato, Director of Media Relations

**B**ased on extensive research and experience - ThinkThroughTools understands that there are five essential sequential common elements used among successful organizations that enable effectiveness in action. These five stages also form the basis of the EXPECTool™, a process used to achieve consistent clarification, communications and effectiveness, developed by ThinkThroughTools CEO Rich Obertots.

While Rich has been implementing the EXPECTool in daily operations and with clients, little did he suspect that it would play a positive role in survival at sea.

Several months ago, Chris Doutt, a senior at Youngstown State University, and the best friend of Rich's son, Ryan, embarked on a college credit course in Survival and Sailing that originated in Baja, Mexico. The program is sponsored through the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS).

"The easiest way individuals might grasp the NOLS experience is to imagine something like the TV Show "Survivor," only this is the real thing! The students are truly taught and engaged in leadership and survival circumstances that are real-time and can be life and limb threatening," said Rich.

The course is a grueling undertaking and when finished, it provides college credits and a certification in sailing and survival. On the night before Chris departed, Rich's family and his gathered to wish him the best.

"As part of this send off, I gave Chris an EXPECTool RapidReferenceCard™ and explained to him that when he was in trouble - or trying to get things done with people - especially under desert and sea survival conditions - to use the five steps of the EXPECTool to help he and his team execute," said Rich. "I thought it might help him and his team with execution, survival, conflict/risk management."

When Chris returned from his trip, he told Rich and his family that the EXPECTool "was the best thing ever and was the most important piece of gear" he had the entire time.

"We experienced some communications problems during the first couple days," explained Chris. "When you're living with a community of people 24/7 in harsh environments, that's expected. But this was leading to a lack of success. In passing, I thought of the EXPECTool card and went to retrieve it to see if I can apply the five elements to

our situation."

He said the RapidReferenceCard fit perfectly with the NOLS instructor's excellent training and methods and the EXPECTool process worked wonders for the rest of the trip as they used it as a measuring stick for everything.

"It just helped us achieve better communication, organization and conflict resolution. I never realized that I would utilize it as often as I did. When different complications would arise, it pushed our group to succeed," he said. "Everyone really embraced the EXPECTool."



Chris said that he still has the EXPECTool card and plans to use it again. "It has a practical purpose with day-to-day life and with your family too. You can use it as a general guideline in anything - with family, friends and work."

"This is just one of many examples that demonstrate that those who use the five steps of the EXPECTool can improve their operations and execution," added Rich. "We are extremely proud of Chris and his leadership success. His team set new records for NOLS. Chris clearly was the leader that drove this. Yes, our EXPECTool method helped him and his team - but the main thing is - Chris had the wisdom, courage and discipline to apply it!

"He's an inspiration that many in our industry could learn from," Rich said. "We expect astonishing things for Chris in the future and I am ever thankful for his using the EXPECTool method."

For information about NOLS, visit <http://www.nols.edu/>. To learn how the EXPECTool can help improve your program's operations and execution, call 412.670.9906 or email [info@ThinkThroughTools.com](mailto:info@ThinkThroughTools.com).

## Colorado Air Medical Programs Taking Right Action - Right Now

**T**hinkThroughTools takes great pride in enabling clients to **safely** trigger, capture and grow flight requests. In doing this, Safety / AMRM are crucial elements.

"As the foundation of all our Outreach, Marketing and Customer Service efforts with clients - we advocate an outcomes-driven commitment 365/24/7 to Safety and AMRM," said ThinkThroughTools CEO Rich Obertots. "Our firm strives to identify, provide information about and execute 'Best of Breed' Safety /AMRM initiatives as part of our systems-centric mission. The example being set in Colorado is one that ThinkThroughTools is proud to promote and learn more about as it progresses."

While Safety/AMRM practices vary with every program, for programs like those in Colorado, they require extra special attention because of the demanding environment for flight crew and patients alike. The state's combination of changing weather patterns and unique topography sometimes makes it a challenge to transport patients.

Colorado's air medical programs know that information is important to returning home safely. They also know that monopolizing that information can be fatal. Such withholding of information was recently identified by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) as a major barrier to safe air medical operations during their safety summit web cast in January.

Colorado's air medical programs, including AirLife Denver, Care Flight Durango, Care Flight Grand Junction, AirLife Greeley and Flight For Life Colorado, knew that withholding of information was a problem even before the NTSB released its findings about air medical safety concerns.

At the bimonthly meeting of the Colorado Advanced Transport Committee, which allows Colorado's air medical programs to collaborate, it was decided that something must be done to make sure that when one program in Colorado said "no" to a flight, all of the other air medical programs were in the loop.

The result was the development of the "Colorado Weather Share Alert," a new air ambulance paging system to make transporting patients in need much safer.

The alphanumeric paging system broadcasts information about flights that had been rejected due to weather, including which program or programs had said no, what type of aircraft that program was using, the type of weather that caused concern, and where that weather existed. This paging service began Feb. 1.

Each of the communications centers for the respective flight programs would receive these pages and be able to relay to their crews that not only potentially risky conditions exist, but that those conditions were risky enough to warrant at least one other program to say "no" to the flight.

"It was a little daunting," said Mike Morgan, Communications Manager at AIRLIFE Denver (HealthOne's air medical transport service), who was asked to design and implement the program. "But I knew that we were improving not just our safety, but everybody's safety, which was a great inspiration. It has been extremely rewarding to know that we have made a difference."



*The AIRLIFE crew is preparing equipment for a flight. Flight nurse Mark Riemer is closest to the helicopter as pilot Dale Garwood looks on.*

Jana Williams, AIRLIFE Denver's program director, agreed with her colleague. "I am very proud of the way we took some tragic news about programs taking flights when other programs turned them down for weather and having in some cases, fatal consequences. I believe this new system to be best practice and a reflection of how we can all work together to create solutions. I am hopeful it will positively impact our industry and spur other ideas."

Rich Obertots added, "As it relates to Safety / AMRM - ThinkThroughTools is relentless in the theme '**Right Action - Right Now!**' Many of the high-technology 'solutions' we all keep hearing about can have a positive impact *in the future*. They take significant time and investment to implement. But, this exemplary effort in Colorado by these leaders is exactly what each state/region needs to be doing. It is **RIGHT ACTION - RIGHT NOW!**"

*ThinkThroughTools wants to learn about other states'/regions' efforts and we want to continue to bring this information to light in future issues. Email [daniel.casciato@ThinkThroughTools.com](mailto:daniel.casciato@ThinkThroughTools.com) to let us know what YOU are doing so that we can share the good news and establish a "Best of Breed" data base that can increase the velocity to action for all Air Medical Transport programs.*

### ABOUT THINKTHROUGHTOOLS

ThinkThroughTools is a professional services firm that provides performance-centric services for leading Air Medical Transport providers.

Our primary focus is designing, implementing, managing and improving Outreach and Marketing Systems & Software.

Our primary aim is to enable our clients to safely trigger, capture and grow flight requests. To learn how to safely trigger more flight requests, visit [www.ThinkThroughTools.com](http://www.ThinkThroughTools.com).

## WHY SHOULD I CARE ABOUT CUSTOMER SERVICE? – A WHIRL UP CALL



By Richard M. Obertots, MBA, NREMT-P (ret)  
3T President/CEO

**T**raveling about the USA from Air Medical program to program – and interfacing a lot during Air Medical events of all kinds – I am becoming extremely concerned about the lack of knowledge, understanding and urgent concern for matters of enterprise (business) and customer service that seem to be pervasive. Far too many in our community are isolated and in deep-denial about the financial and competitive realities driving us. As a result, their whirl up call is going to be one from which they may never recover.

From the beginning, ThinkThroughTools has strived to integrate “Best of Breed” know-how and practices in Air Medical Transport that are being utilized by the world’s most successful enterprises (businesses) and organizations. We do tend to focus on the for-profit-publicly-held, as they are subject to the most intense, competitive pressures – and therefore are often the most innovative and effective. Save for having a patent or copyright (which anymore is hardly a competitive advantage given all the piracy and illegal duplication that run rampant) one factor always stands out as a mission-crucial differentiator → Customer Service!

This is where many begin to roll their eyes and think, “Why should I care about customer service?” → Then all the denial and excuses begin. Unfortunately, many in our community are mistaken and often think or state that, “Doing our work IS customer service. After all – we’re coming to the rescue of ill and injured individuals and sometimes even saving lives. Isn’t that enough? Isn’t that the ultimate in customer service?”

This is where so many are **missing the point!** Air Medical Transport is our core function. Just like manufacturing a rotorcraft or engineering a cardiac monitor or developing and implementing a medication → all the factors that are part of the core function are a given. The differentiator and competitive wedge (yes I mean WEDGE) that enables you to leverage your core-functions is CUSTOMER SERVICE! Above all – realizing that there is not ONE customer category – but **THREE!**

Most in Air Medical Transport (and this is not their fault) tend to see “The Customer” as “The Patient” (and some still say “Victim”). We still fight a daily battle, especially with medical personnel, to even use the *word* “customer.” This is a product of a highly socialistic, idealistic and altruistic mind-set of the medical training process. Now, there’s nothing wrong with being altruistic, socialistic and idealistic if vast resources exist to support this. However, in the capitalistic realm – the realm to which Air Medical Transport is becoming more a part (compared to past models of subsidized, accepted, annual losses operations) – we are operating under performance expectations that require margins to maintain the mission.

Very Simply Put → Margins = Revenue greater than costs / expenses to operate.

### WHAT IS CUSTOMER SERVICE ANYWAY?

Many individuals in Air Medical Transport seem confused about Customer Service. So what is it anyway?

**Customer Service is the mind-set and action-set of relentlessly asking, “How can I better serve the three distinct categories of individuals who are ultimately responsible for me getting my pay check?” And then taking consistent action on this – by a critical mass of those in your organization.**

Hint: Many believe it is their boss or organization that pays their check. This is deadly wrong. In some way, all **three** categories of customers do – and it’s **NOT only individuals in payroll.**

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**Standardize > Habitualize > Document > Iterate >**

ThinkThroughTools (with each founder having decades of experience in Air Medical / Critical Care Transport) has developed 365 CriticalCUSTOMERCare™ – a hybrid, on-site, training course (supported by 365/24/7 on-line, scenario-based knowledge reinforcement and verification) that enables our clients to keep the **three** distinct categories of customers centric to all acts, words and deeds.

As our industry (community) transforms and the capitalistic factors of high performance and tangible outcomes (that made America the astonishing world power that it is) become the driving and most vital master metrics – the organizations that are customer-centric and execute the techniques that are ideal for each of the **three** distinct categories of customers – will prevail, prosper and endure.

Remember, if you are not training and reinforcing **DAILY** on customer-centricity, or worse yet, if you are operating on the obsolete, Air Medical, single “customer” paradigm, you are going to experience a very painful whirl up call. For those who are leaders and innovators – 365 CriticalCUSTOMERCare™ will help you become the foremost provider in your market space.

## Help Justify Outreach & Marketing Systems

We greatly appreciate your reading - and hopefully applying - outreach and marketing information we provide free each month in ThinkThroughTIMES.

You may find this hard to believe - but individuals in air medical transport often experience difficulty with others in justifying investment in Outreach & Marketing Systems and Software. We know these are essential to consistently trigger, capture and grow flight requests. Without sufficient flight requests no program will be flying or surviving.

To help those of you who need to justify investment in Outreach & Marketing Systems and Software we have created a brief presentation that you can access at <http://www.thinkthroughtools.com/Success/default.htm>.

*Thank you for your support of Outreach & Marketing Systems and Software, ThinkThroughTIMES and ThinkThroughTools. If you require immediate help call 412.670.9906.*

## Upcoming ThinkThroughTools Presentation Sept. 25-27, 2006 AMTC, Phoenix , AZ

**“High ASPIRATION – Horrendous EXECUTION: Why so many outreach and marketing initiatives fail and what to do about it” - Presented by Rich Obertots, ThinkThroughTools President/CEO**

# #1 CAUSE OF FAILURE? POOR FLIGHT CREW CUSTOMER SERVICE!

Critical **CUSTOMER** Care™



For Critical Care Transport

## Critical **CUSTOMER** Care™ flight crew customer service training

### What defines "Flight Crew?"

Any and all individuals that participate in any way **in the process** of air medical / critical care transport! Communication Specialists, Mechanics, Administrators/Base Managers, Billing / Support Staff, Pilots, Paramedics, Respiratory Techs, Nurses and others - all have **critical** interactions with customers and all need to understand that poor and inconsistent customer service is the number one cause of failure.

### Now you can do something about it!

Critical **CUSTOMER** Care™ is a 90-Minute intensive session that focuses on the most essential elements of effective and consistent customer service. It is **customized** for each mode of critical care transport.

After experiencing Critical **CUSTOMER** Care™ – participants will be able to;

- Define "Best of Breed" practices of a customer centric culture
- Comprehend how all aspects of operating must be customer centric
- Define the three critical categories of customers in critical care delivery
- Apply the four high affinity customer service principles of The DIRT ZONE™
- Put in action the TargetingMatrix® method
- Have a more clarified understanding of how customer service impacts the financial aspects of air medical / critical care transport programs
- Be more productive and effective on the job and in the community

Critical **CUSTOMER** Care™ has been designed by highly experienced critical care transport providers for critical care transport providers. This is **NOT** generic "off the shelf" business customer service training! The principles are time and metrics proven and originate from the nation's most successful air medical / critical care transport programs.

It's very simple; Success or failure hinges on customer service. As air medical / critical care transport competition will be more intense – the programs that are effective and consistent at Critical **CUSTOMER** Care™ will survive and prosper.

For more information on content, process, scheduling, fees and terms

Call 412.670.9906 or e.mail [rich.obertots@ThinkThroughTools.com](mailto:rich.obertots@ThinkThroughTools.com)

