Call Center Times

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How to Align Employee Performance with Business Strategy

by Jim McCoy, Senior Vice President, Consulting Services, Veritude

Accurate Metrics Are Key

Today more than ever, organizations must differentiate themselves through intangible assets: talent, leadership, culture, and especially corporate strategy. Each year, leadership teams spend weeks and even months fine-tuning their business strategies to secure competitive advantages. At the end of this process, executives understand where their organization is heading, what actions they must execute, and how they will measure success.

However, there is often a disconnect between corporate leaders and employees when it comes time to implement the strategy. Employees frequently don't fully understand what role they play in supporting the strategy. And, since management will use employee performance metrics to define "success," it is vital they use the right metrics.

The good news is: business leaders can use the strategic planning process to ensure that organizational strategy and measurement are translated to frontline employees.

Take the example of an organization that competes on service. If we look at the organization's call center, we can guess that management views the goal of each employee as "providing outstanding service," which clearly links back to the strategy. However, many companies use metrics like "attendance," "availability for calls," and "call length" to evaluate performance. These metrics are valuable, but by themselves they don't link back to the organization's strategy.

As a result, employee incentive programs may reward the wrong behavior and organizations may not understand which employees truly help implement the strategy.

DEVELOPING A PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT PLAN

Recognizing truly successful employees requires more than simply looking at the numbers. You must *identify* relevant metrics that match employee behavior with business strategy; *interpret* the meaning of widely different data points; continually *reevaluate* what success looks like; and *communicate* this information throughout the organization.

Identify the measurement criteria that are relevant to corporate strategy

You must ensure that the right performance metrics are used to evaluate business success and match those metrics to employee performance. By doing this, your organization can empower employees to excel in their own roles while positively affecting the organization's ability to execute its strategy.

Often, because employees are close to the customer, they can give useful feedback about what customers really value, help you identify metrics that truly evaluate performance,

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and tell you where there is disconnect between strategy and everyday reality.

By clearly matching business goals with employee behavior, you can clarify how each employee can be successful and then drive desired behavior with effective incentives.

2. Ensure that your measurement system accurately interprets employee performance

Start by finding correlations between performance metrics and the realities of your business. Using the example of a customer service call center, if you determine that customers prefer that their problems are resolved quickly, then short call time and accurate resolution might be the major criteria for success. You would want to identify metrics to evaluate employees against that criteria, and invest in resources that help employees resolve issues.

Next, assess the "weight" of different measures to actual outcomes. This is a matter of converting "apples and oranges" to "apples to apples" so you can compare widely different data points. To do this effectively, apply statistical techniques to performance measurement, much the way an actuary assesses risk. You may be able to tap in-house expertise such as an employee compensation group or retail marketing analysis team.

Continually reevaluate your performance criteria to meet changing business environments.

As your organization's business evolves, your employees must change their understanding of success. For example, if your call center needs to transform into a sales organization, your employees will need the ability to ask for the order and close the business. To help them get there, you must embed their new objectives into communications, training, and measurement programs, and ensure incentives are effective at motivating your employees to achieve these objectives.

The goal is to make your employees feel personally connected to the organization's strategy. An important additional benefit is that management will be able to quickly shift strategy based upon the market information they learn while measuring employee performance.

4. Communicate performance goals and key behaviors throughout the organization.

Once the key metrics and incentives are defined, a clear communications plan is essential so that employees know what is expected. This plan should become an ongoing element of your corporate culture, rather than something reserved for annual reviews.

Bottom line: when employees know what is expected, and have the tools and incentives to accomplish their goals, it's a winning situation for the entire organization.

SUCCESS OVER THE SHORT AND LONG TERM

When you consider the impact of aligning employee performance to corporate goals, the benefits are considerable both in the short and long term.

In the short term:
Management can better relay to employees how to succeed against specific business goals.
Employees will better understand how their roles relate to the organization's success.
Employees have a forum to communicate to management whether the current incentive and training plan is relevant to job success.

In the long run, you can bring tremendous value to your company and demonstrate the value of HR through successful employee performance measurement.

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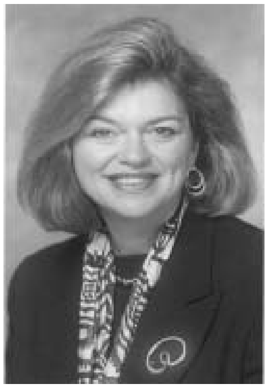

RANTS & RAVES!

Randomly Timed Musings

Information is Currency!

By Kathleen M. Peterson
Chief Vision Officer, PowerHouse Consulting, Inc.

Information is a form of currency in the digital age. Contact Centers are a pure source of it.

The Contact Center dominates, and will continue to dominate, as a remarkable enterprise resource for information and data as a source of raw currency for some time to come. Contact Centers are a singular source of customer intelligence. Contact Centers are a peculiar place where your enterprise is as close as you can get to the real and true source of customer information and intelligence, the actual dialogue with the customer.

The Contact Center is where (or when) at a specific point in time an enterprise can capture new, fresh and raw information directly about its customers - that is when you are communicating with them. Information is being minted in its largest denominations when a company communicates with its customers.

Information when properly mined and applied to the needs of the business positions the Contact Center as the fuel for the revenue engines, both in growing revenue and driving efficiency. Improving sales opportunities occur when CSR's use relevant information, properly organized and presented to make customized offers to customers based on their unique needs or profiles. While efficiency emerges by learning from mined information what is driving low value customer contacts; received wrong merchandise, short orders, poor performance, wrong invoice information etc. Efficiency improvements extend well beyond the Contact Center thereby improving efficiencies at an enterprise level not simply making a CSR perform their tasks more quickly.

Summer is a great time to take an information inventory; get reacquainted with Contact Center information beyond our standard metrics. Format and distribute as any revenue engine would - start your engines and have a good time discovering new ways to add value.

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Making Calibration Count

By Kimberly King
President, InterWeave

Calibration is the process of your organization consistently determining what meets your standards of excellence and what behaviors do not meet your expectations. The process of becoming calibrated can often be painful, time consuming and unproductive. Becoming calibrated is absolutely essential to your organization to ensure that you are all evaluating performance consistently and are always striving to create the most effective and efficient interactions with your customers. Here are tips to help your organization successfully create a consistent definition of WOW through effective calibration sessions:

<u>STEP 1: Include the Participants that Impact Center Performance</u>

Participants should include:
Human Resources
Training
Quality Assurance
Supervisors
Senior Leadership
Marketing, Product Development, Fulfillment and IT
One facilitator and a scribe to manage the session

Most of the time calibration sessions are thought to only involve Supervisors and Quality Assurance. An organization should also involve its Recruiters and Trainers to ensure that all members of the organization understand what WOW performance is.

<u>STEP 2: Follow a Process That Produces Positive Results</u>

Establish roles and responsibilities for your calibration sessions.
Select a facilitator to ensure everyone is included and that the goal of calibration is achieved – *"to ensure consistency of the monitoring, measuring, mentoring and motivating of contact center performance for the purpose of maximizing the customer experience."*

Observe the customer interaction BEFORE the calibration session to ensure that everyone monitors and measures the call individually.
This will make the session much more efficient. The call will then only be played once during calibration for the purpose of springboarding the conversation.

Gain agreement for the goal of calibration — *"to ensure consistency of the monitoring, measuring,* *mentoring and motivating of contact center performance for the purpose of maximizing the customer experience."*

Play the call while the facilitator makes notes on a flip chart and participants refer to their own notes made prior to calibration.
These notes should define the behaviors – or "distinct, identifiable actions" — as either ***strengths*** or ***opportunities***. A ***strength*** is a behavior consistently demonstrated throughout the call. An **opportunity** is a behavior that can be elevated to a higher level of performance.

After the call is over, guide the discussion to ensure that everyone consistently agrees on the *strengths* and *opportunities* identified according to your organization's *Range of Tolerance*™.

Note the opportunities on your monitoring form to ensure that everyone agrees on the categories of placement.
This also promotes consistent measurement and trending of behavioral patterns.

The facilitator guides the discussion by asking key questions such as:
"What Representative metrics (objectives) and center metrics (key performance indicators) are being impacted by these strengths and opportunities?"
"What may be causing the Representative to demonstrate these behaviors?"
"Are these behaviors a trend in this Representative's performance?"
"What needs to happen to drive performance improvement?"
"What does our organization need to do differently to impact this performance from a hiring, training, mentoring or process improvement standpoint?"
"Are any of these behaviors trends within our organization and what do we need to do to impact performance on a greater level beyond this individual Representative?"

Once the discussion focused to demonstrated behaviors has taken place, expand upon the value of calibration by also conducting a role play of the mentoring discussion that would take place with the Representative based on this customer interaction.
This exercise is valuable as participants have an opportunity to share mentoring best practices and your team is then calibrating how feedback is delivered to your Representatives for the

purpose of inspiring and driving change.

STEP 3: Hold Participants Accountable for Demonstrating Effective and Efficient Performance Management Strategies

Communicate feedback openly and assertively. Honesty is critical to ensure that you are truly calibrated and not just "going along with the group".

Focus on behaviors.
Remind your team that perceptions (i.e. "rude, "friendly", "helpful", etc.) cannot be effectively measured or mentored for improvement – behaviors (i.e. "word choice", tone", "probing questions", etc.) can. By focusing on behaviors rather than "the score", the conversation is much more purposeful and will enable everyone to feel the value and learning gained from the calibration session.

Be respectful of everyone's input.
Participants should model the same communication behaviors to which Representatives are held accountable. It is the role of senior leadership to identify those individuals who have a different ***Range of Tolerance*** than the one that is agreed upon by the remainder of the organization.

Remember – *"What you tolerate becomes your standards."*
DO NOT tolerate lack of performance or make excuses for current levels of performance. Hold everyone accountable for achieving excellence and exceeding customer expectations.

STEP 4: Follow-up to Ensure that Calibration is Contributing to Performance Change

The scribe is responsible for taking notes about the details of the calibration session.
The scribe acts as the project manager and assists in executing any action items identified as a result of the session.

All participants maximize the value that calibration brings to the organization by embracing the agreed upon changes and looking for ways to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of future calibration sessions.

Following these steps can alleviate your calibration challenges and instead create a calibration process that helps your organization drive results and experience WOW performance!

InterWeave's **Journey to WOW** *process and supplementary products and services will enable your organization to consistently achieve your WOW standards. With over 23 years of call center experience, InterWeave president, Kimberly King, models being a WOW mentor and provides you with the tools you need to drive change. Visit www.interweavecorp.com or call 877-969-3283 to find out how you can embark on the* ***Journey to WOW****!*

UPCOMING EVENTS

Webinar: Envision Analytics and Performance Management: Leveraging Customer and Business Intelligence to Enhance Enterprise Performance**.** Presented by David Pennington, director of product management, Thursday, July 12, 9:00 a.m. Pacific / 12:00 Eastern.

Conference call: Envision Exchange: Optimizing Customer Experiences Across Multiple Contact Center Channels
Join Envision and your contact center peers for a free roundtable conference call moderated by Connie Smith, chief evangelist, on August 8, 2007 at 9:00 a.m. Pacific / 12:00 Eastern.

Access archived Web events and other event updates online at http://www.envisioninc.com/events.

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PAIN FREE VACATION SCHEDULING THROUGH AUTOMATION

By Bob Webb, VP Sales, Pipkins

Staffing your center during summer and winter seasons can be a delicate balancing act. Most agents want to take at least some of their vacation days during the summer and winter holidays to accommodate their families' schedules. Typically, those are the precise times when call volumes are at their highest and the center is vulnerable to over- and under-staffing.

For centers with 50 agents or more, one solution is an automated vacation planning system that allows agents to submit requests electronically which will be fit into the available vacation slots based on a set of rules established by managers. These systems save hours of administrative overhead involved in manually receiving, evaluating, approving and denying vacation requests, while also helping to avert staffing shortfalls that can send call center service levels tumbling.

With automated systems that are able to handle sophisticated variables ranging from staffing by agent skill set to re-assignment of unused vacation slots, call center managers can easily keep operations running smoothly.

Automation Options

There are two ways to automate the vacation planning process. The first is with a standalone software application that handles vacation planning and nothing else. The second utilizes the vacation planning module. Either option will reduce clerical overhead, but a vacation planner that integrates with your workforce optimization program will be far more efficient and accurate. Staffing needs as determined by the workforce management system can be used to calculate available vacation slots. Vacation schedules stored in the larger system will be instantly accessible to the vacation module, enabling agents to view total slots and slots remaining without manual data entry or data import. Once vacation time is granted, the main system will be automatically updated, and the vacation will be included in the agent's schedule when produced. If the vacation is cancelled after it has been posted, the system will adjust accordingly.

Benefits for Agents

The vacation planning system should offer a number of key components to optimize the vacation planning process. The system should provide a variety of self-service functions to agents which allows them to:

1 – Check their personal vacation eligibility, including their earned, used and available vacation days.

2 – View available vacation slots, in order to see whether their desired time is available.

3 – Submit or bid on desired vacation dates, with either automated rules-based approval of agent requests or manual supervisor allocation based on seniority or other corporate rules.

4 – Check request status, including requests that are pending, granted and wait-listed.

These do-it-yourself capabilities lessen the burden on call center managers. They also allow agents to see how vacations are allocated and give them a degree of control over their time-off schedules.

Benefits for Managers

The functionality for call center managers must be much more extensive. A vacation planning system should be able to support highly sophisticated scheduling as well as different corporate policies that will affect vacation booking such as different work weeks or Saturday rotations. At minimum, it should enable supervisors or schedulers to:

1 – Import each agent's vacation eligibility for the year, preferably directly from the organization's HR or personnel system for maximum efficiency. Alternatively, the data can be imported from a spreadsheet or input manually.

2 – Set vacation limits for different parts of the year, including how many total weeks can be booked during a certain time period, how many of those weeks can be taken consecutively, and other parameters established by corporate policy.

3 – Set 'blackout' days where no vacation is allowed, such as major promotion periods where every available seat must be filled.

4 – Support both vacation bidding and automatic rules-based approval of vacation requests, allowing supervisors to use the method they prefer. In the case of bidding, agents should be able to bid for preferred dates to be allocated manually based on pre-established policies such as seniority, rotation or first-come-first-serve. In the case of automatic approval, the system should be able to inform the agent if all or part of the requested slot is not available.

6 – Allocate vacation slots by agent group, in order to prevent too many agents with the same skill set, in the same call center or in other group categories from taking vacation simultaneously. Separate groups can be created for billing, sales, and customer service, for example. Limits can then be set on the number of vacation slots allowed in a given week to each of those groups.

7 – Limit advance booking of vacation requests, such as permitting only full weeks to be booked more than three months in advance and allowing partial or full days to be booked no more than four weeks in advance. This helps equalize vacation opportunities.

In addition, a vacation planning system should offer a wide range of advanced functionality, such as the ability to roll over unused vacation slots between groups or set tolerances to create extra slots under certain circumstances. Some systems also can be used to schedule non-vacation-related time off such as sick time, personal time or training. A flexible and comprehensive system will produce the best results.

Additional Benefits

Automating the vacation planning process yields a variety of benefits for the call center. It allows managers to gain control over vacation requests, with the ability to implement rules in a clearly objective manner. It also reduces clerical requirements and associated costs and gives staff and supervisors instant visibility into vacation schedules.

Perhaps most importantly, automated vacation planners give call center managers the tools they need to balance agents' vacation requests with the call center's business needs. That in turn can help increase agent satisfaction, employee retention, quality of service and the bottom line.

About Pipkins Inc.
Pipkins Inc. is the leading supplier of workforce management software and services to the call center industry. Its Vantage Point product enables managers to solve complicated operational issues in today's multi-faceted call center environment. For more information, visit www.pipkins.com.
###

Train Your Customer Service Reps to Deliver Meaningful, Memorable Experiences

By Diane Berenbaum and Jean Marie Johnson

Organizations tout that they offer great service, yet, there are significant disconnects between these proclamations and actual customer experiences. At the heart of this profound discrepancy is the absence of making ongoing investments in the training and development of customer service reps.

Exceptional customer service reps, whose contributions are rooted in a sense of purpose, are priceless assets to any organization. In contrast, many reps perform based upon compliance, a limited sense of meaningful contribution and mediocre training. When effectively engaged, trained and coached, they will provide exemplary customer service and help increase sales and referrals.

Many well-intentioned managers give directions that sound like this: "Our reps don't seem to care. We need to tell them what to say on the phone so they don't sound so rude." Or, more benignly, "Teach them to be polite." These statements completely miss the bigger picture. The delivery of great service begins with a set of shared values around what it means to deliver memorable service. Once these values and behaviors are positioned front and center, development and accountability can follow.

Here is an example: the employees in a large food service company used the acronym of "RESPECT" to highlight their commitment to outstanding service: **R**igorous attention to detail, **E**ffective communication, **S**eamless deliveries, **P**rofessionalism, **E**fficiency, **C**ourtesy and **T**rustworthiness. The simplicity and clarity of this focus help drive their moment to moment behaviors that create their customer experiences.

1. Define and Train to a Standard; A Common Language for Your Organization

Once you identify the behaviors aligned with your values, you can develop a standard to be used in training that is based on these behaviors. This standard provides a common language and disciplines that create a unique cultural identify.

2. Design Customer Service Training Focused on Mind-set, Relationship and Accountability

Embrace a Service Mindset

A mind-set of contribution is a choice. You cannot demand it or command it. But, you can encourage it. Imagine introducing this concept at the very start of your program: "*Every person you communicate with is your customer—whether they are internal or external to the organization.*" Every associate in every department is indeed a customer, whether they work in Human Resources or in the adjacent cubicle. When reps broaden their thinking in this way, suddenly, every one "counts".

A corollary concept is "*Every communication makes an impression.*" If a rep has 245 interactions daily, this translates to 1,225 weekly, 4,900 monthly and 58,800 annually. That is a tremendous number of opportunities to make an impression; one that increases customer loyalty, or turns off customers and sends them racing to another supplier!

Cultivate Relationships with Customers

Training that focuses on getting the task done puts the cart before the horse. Attending to the human side of service is the first imperative of a person-to-person interaction. Reps need the skills to engage with customers in a way that builds relationships. These skills go far beyond being courteous and nice. They are about *making a connection* with the customer, as well as earning the right to *take control* of an interaction—gracefully.

Behaviors that focus on relationships include a laser-sharp focus on developing listening skills and the expression of empathy—the ability to identify and acknowledge how a customer experiences a situation.

By allowing time for associates to practice the critical first moments of an interaction— the greeting and the initial response to customers—you are helping them to replace old behaviors with new ones that express your service values. These behavioral changes take time, practice and support._

For example, imagine that a customer fumes, "You made a mistake on my statement again! What's wrong with you people?" A rep might respond from habit, saying "What's your account number? I'll see what's going on." A trained rep with a commitment to service responds, "Mr. Jones, I can understand why you'd be upset about your statement. I would be happy to help you. May I ask you a few questions first so that I can better research this matter?" The customer is likely to perceive the sincerity of this response, and feel secure that he is interacting with someone who wants to help him. He then relaxes as he and the rep work toward resolution.

Focusing on the relationship first actually shortens interactions—customers are far more likely to “let go” when they feel they are working with a caring, confident professional.

Focus on Accountability
Accountability refers to communicating professionally while choosing to do everything you can to address the customer’s need. And that happens by focusing on what you can control and what you can influence. A rep can control every response and action he takes in an interaction with a customer. Those choices, in turn, influence the customer’s responses, and his perception of the service experience. Exercising choice is no small matter.

A training focus on accountability begins with the essentials such as active listening, asking appropriate questions, being proactive with solutions or options and following up as agreed. And it also focuses on developing your reps’ ability to use *customer-focused communication* instead of *barriers-focused communication*. In other words, seeing the situation from the customer’s perspective and using language to demonstrate what can be done, rather than the reasons something cannot be done.

Accountability also means being able to step up to the plate when mistakes or oversights happen. While all customers want their service providers to be accountable to their needs, dissatisfied customers want much more. They want explanations about the causes of the situation, assurances that their concerns will be corrected and apologies, when appropriate.

3. Ensure Training is Engaging and Participatory

Typical “tell” training, with right and wrong answers, results in half-hearted compliance because it fails to engage the hearts and minds of reps. On the other hand, interpersonal skills training that is both interactive and inclusive results in a rich learning experience and greater commitment. Authentic dialogue and realistic scenarios will encourage your reps' receptivity and willingness to adopt new skills.

Sustain the Service Culture—Provide Coaching, Feedback and Support

Service training needs a commitment of time and support to sustain results. Companies who implement call quality programs after customer service training significantly improved both customer satisfaction ranging from 4% to 10% and call quality ranging from 6% to 15%, according to the 2006 Ascent Group Call Quality Practices study.

The reality is that a quality program without effective coaching may quickly become a watchdog patrol. Effective coaching models the relationship first principle, while setting and upholding performance standards. It is rooted in respect for associates and supports their contribution to the customer experience.

And it does not stop there. When you model desired behavior, reinforce skills, and address systemic barriers to exceptional service, you will pave the way to delivering sustainable, truly memorable service.

Service training programs, which are aligned with your organization's values and fully supported by coaching and modeling, clearly demonstrate your commitment to your customers and your employees. Not only will your employees look forward to their next call, they will approach each customer with a smile, knowing that they can make each contact meaningful. And, soon, your organization's service levels and customer satisfaction measures will rise and shine above the rest.

Diane Berenbaum and Jean Marie Johnson are with Communico Ltd., a customer service training and consulting company based in Westport, CT www.communicoltd.com. They are both contributors to the book, How to Talk to Customers, Create a Great Impression Every Time with MAGIC®. They can be reached at 203-226-7117 or Diane.Berenbaum@CommunicoLtd.com; Jean.Marie.Johnson@CommunicoLtd.com

###

Make Your Vocal Image a Professional One

by Katherine Hart

The fear of identity theft is by far the number one concern of consumers. Television and print media have brought this issue into every American home with frightening clarity. All consumers face the possibility of having their personal information stolen with rabid fear and apprehension. The legal, financial, and emotional consequences of such a violation are devastating and far reaching. This is the primary reason why transactions involving the sharing of private financial and health care information are wrought with reluctance and suspicion from consumers. They know that this information, if improperly used, can ruin their lives. Representatives of financial institutions and health care agencies are especially aware of these fears and are making unprecedented efforts to guard the data they collect and transmit. But, isn't there something that can be done to calm these fears at the inception of the data exchange? Isn't there a way to inspire confidence besides a lecture on software security programs and management information technology? There are ways and they are simpler than you may think.

Make your vocal image a professional one. When people call their banks, credit card companies, and health insurance companies they have the perception that they are at the mercy of the party at the other end of the line. If that party sounds casual, uncertain, or careless their fears are greatly magnified. The representative must, from the first word, seek to create a professional image that carries on throughout the call. Only when a covenant of professional trust is established can a caller feel free to give sensitive data freely, completely, and accurately.

Creating a professional image involves a full range of vocal techniques. Just as an investment banker wears a suit and tie to work, call center representatives must also put on their "suit and tie." The more sensitive the information, the more sensitive the representative must be. Consumers call their health insurance company to give intimate details of their physical and mental health, of specialist's visits, of diagnoses, and of fear and uncertainty. The recipient of their call must respond much the same way as the physician responds—with knowledge, authority, clarity, and compassion. There is no room for "yeah," "OK," "unh-huh," or "mum." These types of casual remarks do not promote a professional and trust inspiring image. They promote images of an uninformed, untrained, and thoughtless representative who is only worried about getting to the next phone call. Would you trust your most valuable and intimate information to someone who seems like they could care less? The bank vault in the lobby is an intimidating and powerful image of security and a call center agent has to be that bank vault in the lobby through their voice alone.

When I hand over my deposit to the teller at my neighborhood bank, I want to hand it to someone who looks, sounds, and behaves like a professional. I want to see my funds handled with respect and diligence. I expect the same thing when I call that same neighborhood bank and give them my account number. Where the teller has a business suit, makeup, and styled hair, the call center agent has only their voice and it has to be their most vital asset. They have no props to rely upon, only the clarity and authority of their own voice.

We see call centers focus on many standards of performance. Time spent in queue, call completion rates, and length of calls are all valid metrics and can yield valuable information. But how do we measure the confidence we inspire in our callers? How do we gauge their comfort level? Quality Assurance specialists listen for those telltale signs that a caller is apprehensive or uncomfortable and how easily an agent can ally those fears. The best representatives are those who speak in a formal and confident tone that tells their caller that they are sincerely interested in the exchange and are trained for just that purpose. They treat their callers and their data with respect and it shows through their voice. A script may tell you the words to say but it is up to the individual integrity of each agent to say those words with clarity and comprehension.

It is time for call and contact centers to devote the same commitment that they have shown to technology to agent's quality of communication. Banks and lenders compete everyday for consumer's business and one way to achieve a competitive edge is by the communication excellence of their agents. Financial services consumers who doubt the security of their financial information will go elsewhere and take their accounts with them. This can occur after one badly handled call and then it's too late to keep that customer. With a concerted effort in agent's vocal training, that badly handled call can be averted and transformed into a satisfied customer.

The wording and content of agent's scripts are researched, presented to focus groups, and examined for every nuance. But the script is only a small portion of developing an effective message. The delivery is the difference between adequate and excellent representation. Representatives can and must be trained and coached in ways to put professionalism in their delivery. Breathing techniques, enunciation, cadence, rate, and inflection are all things that can be taught and reinforced through coaching. Organizations in the financial services and health care industries where secure and sensitive data is exchanged must seek a higher degree of professionalism in order to remain competitive. That competitive edge can be attained though the image they portray via their telephone connections.

Technology has done a great deal to enhance the effectiveness of the call and contact center industry. But the human factor often gets lost in the equation. But it is that human factor that is your only link to customers. In the uncertain world we live in, where your social security number, bank account number, or password can mean a complete violation of your personal identity and assets, the trust inspired by a professional representative can make all the difference in a consumer's choice to use your services. Financial services and health care organizations are mandated by law to maintain the highest standards of data security, but first you have to obtain that data. Only by presenting the highest degree of professionalism will consumers feel confident in sharing those sensitive details of their lives. This professionalism isn't something that comes by virtue of position, it comes through training and conscientious effort. Make the effort and show your customers the respect and the entire information transaction will be elevated to a superior and professional experience. *This is when how you say it matters the most and where the most rewards are within your grasp.*

About the Author:

Katherine Hart, MFA, is Founder and President of Hartfelt Communications – dedicated to providing strategy-based communications training, coaching and consulting.

Katherine has been the inspiration and driving force in developing a custom designed training program for dozens of Fortune 100 companies – training over 23,000 professionals in the ICALL Communications Process.

Hartfelt Communications is currently celebrating 22 years in business providing vital training to professionals across the nation. We are proud to be growing, updating, and expanding our programs to address the global communications community. She can be reached at 312-786-1868 or via email at: khart@hartfeltcommunications.com.

Please visit Hartfelt Communications website at: www.hartfeltcommunications.com for further information on the ICALL Communications Process, to schedule a consultation for Vocal Empowerment Training in your Call Center, or to sign up for FROM THE HART...... a monthly e-newsletter about all aspects of Vocal Training and Empowerment.

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- *The Directory is in CD-ROM (Excel Spreadsheet)*
- *FREE Quarterly Updates* Cost: $425

______ **Resource Directory/Call Center's Buyer's Guide**: This section of our website is the most elaborate advertising program that we provide: Your company will be profiled on our website, www.callcentertimes.com, for 12 consecutive months You will be listed in the Rolling Banner for 12 consecutive months Cost: $517

______ ***Monthly Newsletter Advertisement:*** Cost: $275

______ **Corporate Logo Promotion (Website & Monthly Newsletter)**: Cost $500

Simply check the applicable column(s) and return by fax to (972) 395-9205. Please note that all transactions are final. There will be no refunds.

COMPANY NAME/ Contact/Address/Telephone/Fax/E-mail: _

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○ MasterCard ○ Visa ○ American Express

Credit Card Number Expiration Date

Name As Appears On Credit Card (Print Please) & Signature

Regards,
Nosa Eke, Publisher