Call Center Times

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From Awareness to Action: How to Leverage Information

By Rao Kachibhotla, Inova Solutions, www.inovasolutions.com

Contact centers are flooded with data. Often, the statistics are difficult to track and even more challenging to use effectively. The real key to facilitating the use of information is to communicate the most important call center metrics to agents and executives as they need it. The workforce must be empowered with the real-time call center statistics they need to do their jobs more effectively.

Awareness

Call center solutions often operate in disparate systems that don't "talk" to each other. Gathering operational data from various systems or locations is the first step. Then, you must identify and cull down to the most important statistics so those being informed aren't overwhelmed with data. Finally, the metrics must be shared with the people who can act on them in real-time. Sound impossible? Actually, it's relatively easy. There are plenty of integration and display solutions that can quickly get your center working like a well-oiled machine.

Look for a vendor that can collect information from the systems you already have in place, such as ACDs or workforce management systems, so you can have a unified view of your historical data and what's happening in your call center in real-time. There's a wide array of visual display technologies to communicate your call center metrics - from LED displays to desktop applications and digital signage on LCD screens.

Action

By defining acceptable values for each metric, you can set performance alerts to notify you as issues begin to occur. This allows you to respond quickly to trends such as a drop in service level or spike in abandoned calls. Empower your team to address and correct issues before they become costly problems.

Results

By creating an environment of real-time situational awareness that drives the appropriate actions, unified, real-time call center reporting helps companies dramatically improve their response time to the daily ups and downs of the call center. Typical results include:

* Increased workforce productivity
* Enhanced customer service
* Reduced operating costs
* Improved operational stability

Our own call center results tracking shows dramatic improvements, such as significant increases in an ability to handle calls without additional staffing, dramatically reduced abandon rates, increased service levels and more. Specifically, here are some of our key findings:

Productivity Increases

* Increase in average calls handled of up to 12%
* Reduction in average speed of answer of up to 50%
* Reduction in average handle time of up to 11%

Cost Savings

* Staff cost reductions of up to

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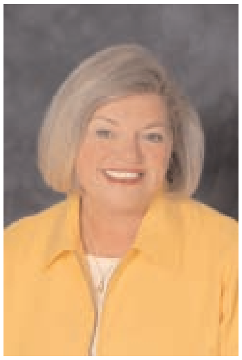


RANTS & RAVES!

Randomly Timed Musings

Energy - "The Capacity to Work"

By Kathleen M. Peterson

Chief Vision Officer, PowerHouse Consulting, Inc.

Today there is all this talk about the high price of fuel and energy consumption. The *energy* discussion pertains not only to cars, cooking, and indoor climate control. It could just as well be about *people*.

Energy, defined in physics as "the capacity to work," is something no one else can manage for us. Leaders must manage their own energy and the energy of the environment in which they work. That is not such an easy task in these times. *Overwork i*s at epidemic levels - leading to poor productivity, stress, and burnout.

When we think about Brand, and we think about the customer experience as it relates to Brand, we must think about the tactical elements we must execute to support Brand initiatives. *Execution* requires energy. *Creativity* requires energy. *Leadership* requires energy. Leaders must focus on their personal Brand Energy and the care and attention given to it. Without energy, leaders will more often than not fail at execution.

How do you manage your Brand Energy? And yes, this is a two part question. *How do you manage your "personal" Brand Energy?* and *How does that contribute to your "operational" Brand Energy?* Energy is fuel. If there is an "energy crisis," we can expect nothing but damage: personal, professional, and operational.

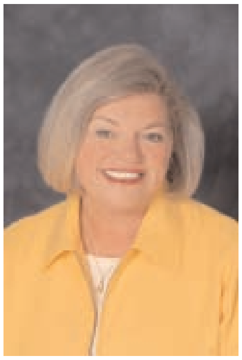
Personal damage occurs when "stress and burnout" replaces "rest and renewal" (The *Power of Full Engagement*). Stress notifies us. We often hear people complaining, "I am so stressed." But they do not stop or do anything about it. They simply announce it - many times. I suppose it is a warning to others!

Recognizing our own physical stress indicators (headache, irritability, stiff neck, etc.), actually allows us to interrupt the process. The simple act of acknowledging the condition helps to reduce the intensity. Taking action is even more effective - take a few deep breaths, take a short walk, drink some water, write out just three things you need to do instead of thirty-three, and make it harder to allow stress to rob you of energy. *No one can do this for you.* Think about this when you are feeling stressed and someone (other than maybe a paid professional) tells you to "just relax." I know that for me, that escalates my condition and potentially damages my relationship with the brave person that made the suggestion!

We all must take responsibility not to throw away valuable fuel on stress. Raise the bar on what stresses you out. For many, getting and staying stressed just seems to get easier and easier. If you need a contrast, stop at the homeless shelter, visit the cancer ward, or just read the newspaper. It is actually *easy* to feel better. One method that will do double duty is to give some positive feedback to someone - a co-worker, your reporting people, your boss. This is an energy-generating experience that is both personally, professionally, and operationally sound. When people are recognized, they are more productive and more likely to provide a great customer experience. This supports the Branded experience, helps to fulfill the mission, and contributes to energizing the environment. And when you take positive action, stress is minimized and you actually *generate energy*.

Now burnout is a different story. Stress is all about too much; burnout is about *not enough*. Not enough energy, not enough enthusiasm, not enough power left to do much of anything. Burnout is just inches away from depression. Once a leader (or anyone else for that matter) is legitimately burnt out, lethargy, apathy, cynicism, anger, and other deadly emotions virtually eliminate any capacity for optimism. This often results in the person's departure or actual break down. This can be avoided if we focus on what we must do routinely to restore our fuel and avoid an "energy crisis."

Some folks are blessed with a strong personal Brand that has always kept them in *energy balance*. However, more of us must be mindful, deliberate, and disciplined in order to develop a strong re-fueling program. When there is so much on our plate that all workdays become extended, life issues arise that cause more life balance issues. This causes more



RANTS & RAVES!

Randomly Timed Musings

guilt, more frustration, and more annoyance. This is when we must analyze our approach to the workday. There are some theories that today's passion for multi-tasking - for flipping from project work to e-mail, to phone calls - is simply counter productive. Booking meetings all day every day leaves no time to execute, no time to take care of your people, and little time to step back and analyze your own operation. This ultimately causes the need for more meetings because performance is not where it needs to be. People who are stretched become stressed and they and their environment both suffer. Taking work home every night, on weekends, on vacation, sitting in meetings with one group of people while constantly checking your blackberry to make sure you don't miss something from another group of people *is not productive*! It is in some ways more of an addictive behavior than a productive one. Yet we convince ourselves that this is the norm for today's successful professionals. I think it is time to reexamine this philosophy.

Try scheduling blocks of time for thoughtful work. Turn off that e-mail notification function that constantly "bleeps" at you, forward your phone to voice mail, and FOCUS. Humans are most effective in 90 to 120 minute time blocks. So try scheduling a couple of time blocks per week and see what happens. Perhaps spend some quality time with your staff in something other than a review or a "meeting." Take time to *catch up* - maybe go out to lunch. We all know that what and how we eat has a major impact on our energy resources. It is not what we know, but rather what we do with what we know that matters.

Summer is here and it is a great time for renewal. Take your vacation; make sure that the people around you take their vacation. Try to sever the electronic cord to the office by not bringing lap tops, business cell phones, blackberries, etc., on vacation with you. For most of us, that is extremely difficult. But if you bring these items, commit to checking messages once in the morning and maybe once in the evening. Give yourself and your family time to actually experience a true vacation with you genuinely *present*.

Some will grimace at this proposal. Others only wish that they could do it. But we can't wish; *we must do.* Energy must be deliberately renewed or the consequences will be devastating and long-term. Think about where you work or where you have worked. There is tangible energy to most environments - some good, some not so good, some down right scary. And it isn't really about how busy we are. Many of us are happy to put in the extra hours for a cause - a special project, a move, a technology implementation, etc. These can be fun and exhilarating. And in spite of the hours, the learning, the excitement, the working as a team, and the outcome make it all worthwhile. But when overwork becomes the norm, each day becomes a long day and all days seem to allot "no time" to get things done. *Energy renewal has ceased.* There is nothing coming back. All output and no input depletes energy resources personally, professionally, and operationally.

To build *Brand Energy* within your company, first evaluate the current energy practices to determine changes within your influence that will yield positive change. Then ask yourself, "What do I do to make sure I am renewing my energy?" The will to take action is not enough; only discipline works. I struggle with this myself. But since Tim Russert dropped dead at 58 last week (at work), I have a renewed commitment to take action and bring a more disciplined approach to the care and maintenance of all my energy resources.

Let me know what you do to stay energized. I would love to hear your thoughts and would be happy to collect and disseminate the feedback. So get outside, drink some water, go to bed a bit earlier, give some positive feedback to others, block out some time, take your vacation, and renew your energy resources. Good luck!

*The higher your **energy** level, the more efficient your body. The more efficient your body, the better you feel and the more you will use your talent to produce outstanding results.*
Anthony Robbins

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10%
* Operating cost reductions of up to 18%
* Reduction in absenteeism of up to 9%

Improved Customer Service

* Reduction in abandon rate of up to 154%
* Increase in service level of up to 17%

Also important are the many intangible benefits that help call center management achieve their goals. Among these are:

* Increased visibility of key metrics at all organizational levels
* Improved alignment with strategic objectives
* Enhanced decision-making

New Product: Performance Tracker 2.0

If you are tired of throwing resources at call center reporting only to end up in a money pit with little to no results, there's a new solution on the market that could be right for your call center. Inova Solutions has just introduced the first web-based dashboard for contact centers that integrates real-time and historical data. Performance Tracker 2.0 enables managers and executives to see what's happening in their call center and compare it to previous trends. This information can be accessed from any computer with an internet connection.

Consolidating multi-source data into a browser-based call center dashboard means that your relevant metrics are pulled together on a single screen - which makes life a lot easier than sifting through spreadsheets. Finally, you're empowered to proactively monitor your operations with the ability to take immediate action to impact performance:

* Consolidate multi-source data to simplify call center reporting
* Quickly identify and respond to issues through real-time alerts
* Easily discover root causes through data drill-downs
* Create, view and edit dashboards with and easy-to-use wizard

Whenever you are looking at call center solutions, consider the culture of your company. Do you need graphics, gauges, graphs and tables, or are you in a text-driven environment? These choices can affect how successfully your solutions are adopted. Plus, quick comprehension of current call center conditions and support for historical data allows you to monitor intra-day trends.

Also, make sure the solution is compatible, or easily customized, to work with your current systems and will also be able to evolve with the future. Many centers are using Microsoft SharePoint Services, so we have build Performance Tracker 2.0 on SharePoint architecture. It provides everything needed to quickly build, deploy and administer call center dashboards designed specifically for operational management.

Instant insight into current operating conditions promotes quick, informed decisions and guides decisive actions. The ultimate results - increased productivity and improved service, with a demonstrable return on investment.

Founded in 1984, Inova Solutions is a global provider of real-time visual communications for call centers, schools, manufacturers and others. The author, Rao Kachibhotla, is Director of Product Management and has an MS (MIT) from University of Virginia as well as an MS in Computer Science from Andhra University in India. He is currently enrolled in the executive MBA program at Duke University. For details about Performance Tracker, visit www.inovasolutions.com/index.htm.

Please Enter Your 16 Digit Account Number!

Wait a minute; didn't I just give you that information?

How many times has this happened to you? You enter your account information, listen to several other prompts, finally reach a live agent, and then you are asked for your account information again. This customer experience is starting badly!

After being in the call center industry for 25 years, I thought this was just a pet peeve of *mine*. However, recently I went to work for a software company (IntraNext Systems) and everyone I talk to seems to have the same poor customer experience story. No sooner would I get the words out of my mouth – *"You know when you are prompted to enter your account number and then you finally get to a live agent"* – and boom! – I am interrupted right then with *"They ask you for your Account Number again"*, followed by *"And when I ask the CSR why they do that I get one answer or another that never makes any sense. I know the technology is available for this. Good companies seem to have this information at their fingertips!"*

Not only does this transaction provide a poor customer experience, it is a double waste of time—and money—when the CSR not only has to enter the information, but also explain why they are asking for it a second time. You can solve most of this problem with a simple "Screen Pop", but you shouldn't stop there.

The Importance of Your Customer's Experience

Here are some interesting perspectives on why we should be concerned about the customer's **experience**. Recently I ran across these insights:

To create a new and lasting source of competitive advantage, businesses must manage the customer experience.
—IBM Study in 2005 quoted in CEM: The Value of 'Moments of Truth' 2006

95% of senior business leaders believe that the next competitive differentiator is customer experience.
—Revolutionalize Your Customer Experience; Colin Shaw; 2005.

***Eighty** percent of companies believe they deliver a superior customer experience. But only **eight** percent of their customers agree.*
—Bain & Company, Harvard Management Update.

The bottom line is customer experience is recognized at the highest levels as being critical to business success. And … most companies think they're delivering a quality customer experience while most of their customers do not! Where does your organization fall? When the first interaction your customer has starts with "didn't I just give you that?" followed by "and why do you need to ask me again?" … I'd say the customer experience is impacting your business. And not in a good way!

CTI and Screen Pops

I admit that a screen pop is pretty blasé these days. A lot of companies have done this basic level of Computer Telephony Integration. That's good, but there is a lot more that can be done to efficiently route calls to the most effective resource and to present timely customer specific data that can be acted upon at the point of contact. It's a form of Advanced CTI called "*Event Intelligence*®".

Event Intelligence®

Event Intelligence goes beyond a simple screen pop using data from the switch such as DNIS, ANI or other Variable Data or Caller Entered Digits (CED) from the IVR and then looks at data in your CRM/Billing System and then based on pre-defined rules "Intelligently" routes calls to the proper resource or delivers a timely and appropriate "Intelligent Script or Offer" to the desk top with the call.

Even more powerful is **"Multidimensional"** Event Intelligence – Again, going way beyond routing based on a specific DNIS (Dialed Number), ANI (Caller ID) or CED (Caller Entered Digits), to a specific group based on this one dimension of information; Event Intelligence can route based on as many criteria as you feel will significantly differentiate the call flow, the offer or the way the offer is presented.

What if … ?

What if you have a caller that is delinquent?
What if this caller is also a VIP customer? What if they are not? Do you want to treat them different or the same?

What if a caller is responding to a special offer, but you know they are not with in the area your company provides service? Would it be better to know this before you answer the phone, or do you even want to answer the phone?

What if they are in your service area, would it be helpful to know a little about them before you answer the phone?

We can dip in to information from a third party resource like TARGUSinfo and pull pack basic demographic information as well as a score related to propensity to purchase and this can help in quick enough to provide critical information to the Sales Agent in time for them to do something "Intelligent" with the information.

What if you knew what the caller was doing on your Web Site just before they called you, or maybe it was a couple of days ago, but when they call, you know they were all ready to check out and they were going to purchase XYZ, but for some reason changed their mind.

What if a caller has basic cable and you know they spend $21.95 a month on their Block Buster membership. Wouldn't it be nice to pop up a premium channel offer that is very compelling? OK, we can't do this, at least not without permission and cooperation from Block Buster, but I think you get the picture. Whatever data is available, we can help you quickly access it and make it actionable at the point of contact – that's when it will have the most benefit and the most financial impact which is very good for all of us.

Better Experience. Lower Cost.

Advanced CTI starts the moment a customer—or prospect—makes the decision to contact the company. It customizes call routing and caller treatment, provides seamless transition from self-service to assisted service, supports blended multimedia routing, and more. Advanced CTI enhances the customer experience and reduces operational costs for the Contact Center. How you ask?

The customer benefits:

Convenient self-service alternatives 24/7

Less time on hold when contacting a live Agent

Improved response time once callers get through

Instant access to database information, often on a 24/7 basis

Callback options for callers who don't want to stay on hold

Better-informed customer service representatives who are able to understand the caller's past relationship with the company

Greater opportunity for one-call resolution to their issues

Access to service reps who, when freed from routine functions, have more time to research and answer complicated questions

No need to repeat identification information and reason for calling when transferred to another agent or department

The business benefits:

Cost savings from operational efficiency

Increased revenue opportunity

More prompt and accurate response to inquiries, orders and requests

Personalized attention and efficient problem resolution

Improved customer and prospects access to information about new products and services

Increased number of services available and extended hours of operation

Higher levels of referral and repeat business

Fewer data entry keystroke errors

Shorter transaction time, increased employee productivity

Improved employee morale

Leverage your existing technology!

When was the last time you heard that?

IntraNext solutions take full advantage of the traditional PSTN environment and support IP-Network capabilities as well. They let you leverage the investment you have already made in your network.

IntraNext Systems makes what seems to be extremely complex, very simple. We will even give your organization the tools needed to make changes and new script or routing decisions on your own.

So, why completely rebuild when you can add features and flexibility using your existing infrastructure?

***You* Control the Customer Experience**

The only enduring strategy you can control is delivering the ultimate customer experience each and every time. Well-integrated CTI brings together customer and company information with minimal manual intervention and makes it possible to provide the ultimate experience—fast, accurate and personalized—for both the customer and the company. CTI enables enhanced customer experience, reduced operations cost, and greater revenue opportunities within today's businesses.

About IntraNext Systems:

IntraNext Systems is at the forefront of providing industry-wide Event Intelligence® for contact centers based on open standards CTI technology that is compatible with the major telecommunication systems.

Since 1996 IntraNext has delivered advanced CTI applications and capabilities which enable contact centers to deliver a better customer experience at lower cost. NextSys® applications include the sophisticated NextSys® Softphone, the NextCaster® multi-channel desktop reader board, and the unique new NextSys® Wireless Supervisor for un-tethered call monitoring, NextSys® Event Intelligence®, and the companion product NextSys® Event Intelligence Window®.

If you want to be in complete control of your call flow processes, increase revenue, reduce expenses or all three, give us a call it will just take a few minutes to see if we are a good match for your needs.

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Call Center Furniture – Two Recent Trends

The two most recent trends in call center furniture are a renewed focus on the individual agent and furniture that has sustainability in mind. The two trends in furniture echo trends in the industry as a whole – agent quality/retention and the environment.

The first trend of focusing on the individual agent has gained importance since call centers in the U.S. have shifted to more inbound operations than outbound. Agents for inbound centers typically require more skills and training, so the focus on agent quality/retention has gained even more importance now than in the past. In terms of furniture, this has resulted in larger, more comfortable, and better-equipped stations. The larger stations typically accommodate more storage and workspace, allow for agent personalization, and include ergonomic accessories.

Rather than a typical 4' wide straight run of stations, the trend has been to design a larger station per agent, such as a 4'x6' or 5'x5' workstation. A larger workstation typically will have several options for storage including, pedestals with box and file drawers, a paper management system that keeps papers and frequently used documents in easy reach and center drawer for smaller items.

It is also important to allow agents to have some control over their environment. Various studies have shown that when people feel that they have control over their environment, they are more productive. This can be as simple as allowing an agent to hang personal items or including a desktop lamp at each station to provide additional light at the agents' discretion.

Ergonomics plays two important roles in agent workstations. The first vital role is that this provides each agent with some control over his or her environment. Since ergonomic accessories allow each agent to adjust their workstation as needed, it can correlate to increased agent satisfaction. The second vital role is that ergonomic accessories directly affect agent comfort and thus, productivity.

Key ergonomic accessories to consider are an adjustable chair, adjustable keyboard, monitor arm, footrest, and desktop lighting. Why are these ergonomic accessories important? If you have ever sat at a computer workstation for hours at a time you know that selecting a comfortable ergonomic chair is an integral part of a workstation. An adjustable keyboard will allow the user to place the keyboard in a proper ergonomic position (a slight negative tilt), which can reduce the possibility of carpal tunnel syndrome. A monitor arm allows the user to adjust the monitor to a comfortable viewing position so that other ergonomic tools can be properly utilized. A footrest can increase movement, which can decrease circulation problems associated with remaining in a seated position for extended periods of time. Desktop lighting provides additional light that can reduce eyestrain, headaches, and fatigue.

The second trend in furniture design is sustainability or being "green". As the world increasingly makes more environmentally aware purchasing decisions, so must the consumers of call center furniture.

Sustainable or green furniture

design has several components. The first is the construction of the product itself and the lesser-known aspect of sustainability is the lifecycle of the product.

Regarding the construction of the product, a key consideration is recycled content, specifically the panel boards and the fabric. The panel boards should be FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) Certified. The FSC sets forth principals, criteria, and standards that represent guiding forest management toward sustainable outcomes. Another area to consider is the fabric on the workstation. Fabric should be produced out of 100% recycled materials.

The consideration of lifecycle is playing an ever-increasing role in the sustainability of furniture. If workstations can be replaced every 15-20 years vs. every 5-10, it saves the raw materials and energy that would have been needed to produce new furniture.

Paying attention to industry trends, including those in furniture, can help to make your call center a more desirable place to work and can assist you in making environmentally aware purchasing decisions.

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###

Call monitoring and Coaching should represent 40% to 60% of managers' duties. However, managers struggle to complete monthly call monitoring and often spend less than 20% of their time on the task.

Why?... (For the purpose of this article, we'll focus only on a few reasons).

Contributed by Guylaine Blanchette

Time:
As any manager can tell you the reasons for not having enough time are countless; caught in meetings for department procedures, HR , staff issues & problem resolution, escalated customer complaints, checking productivity performance statistics, reading emails, answering questions, and budgeting to list a few. All of these boil down to manager task saturation.

Although every call center is unique, a common occurrence is the managers' struggle with time to monitor and evaluate the quality of their agents is habitual. This is why Call Centers invest into extensive user-friendly recording and call evaluation systems to reduce the time spent monitoring calls and make the task more efficient.

At the same time, due to managers' time constraints, are those systems used to their full capacity and can managers dedicate the time to sit in front of a computer system and rate those calls? Time or lack thereof is the unwavering issue; time to listen to the call, time to evaluate the recording and time to coach. Wouldn't it be more effective if the 20% of time that managers are actually spending monitoring was completely applied to specific coaching?

Consistency / Uniformity / Unbiased Equality:
Depending on the size of the call center you may have 10 managers overseeing 200 agents. Are all managers evaluating the same way? Though managers try to give impartial ratings the fact remains that there are influences on the severity or the laxity of the decision when there is an existing relationship or regular interaction.

Also, through random monitoring of calls, you could evaluate a simple call (e.g. change of address or information request) for one agent and, for another agent, you might evaluate a difficult customer or a sales call (e.g. irate customer). The level of difficulty and the length of each call *are* different however; you are comparing their performance equally. This can lead to misdiagnosed agent performance and thus misdiagnosed agent training needs

For example, over a 6 month period you randomly evaluate calls for a specific agent and then you land on an irate customer complaint. You listen to the call and realize that the skills you thought the agent had were not really mastered. How many other customers were exposed to the low service level of that CSR before you discovered the training need?

As Call center managers, do we really know our agents? Can we really capture accurate Customer Service levels through random calling? How can we ensure that we will encounter the CSR challenges? We may monitor 10 general inquires while there is an irate call occurring that we miss. Do we really know the skill levels of our agents? Are we using the right key performance measures for our call center?

What if we could have an accurate & *equal* measure for all agents in each challenging service situation? What if a manager could focus on specific agent coaching instead of trying to find the time for monitoring? What if we could positively impact our agent's performance in a shorter amount of time? What if we could do all that and reduce our Call Center operational costs?

The Solution - Mystery Calling.

Mystery calls are staged customer calls to your agents CSR with scenarios customized by 'you'.

At ***Group Impress Plus*** we work with you to identify the types of calls that you would like to Evaluate. From an address change to the repeat caller with the same issue(s), to an irate customer that did not receive his order or received the wrong order …

We place those calls as the Customer, record the calls and evaluate them through a customized monitoring template that we design with you. We provide you with the complete unbiased Quality Performance Report identifying the training needs per agent along with the recordings. Thus allowing issues to be identified and addressed before they reach *your* customers.

This process saves valuable time for managers and increases their effectiveness; they can efficiently focus on coaching, planning, and implementing strategies that positively enhance the Customer experience with your organization (happy & returning customers). This will lead to ***IMPRESSive*** customer service.

To know more about this service contact ***Group Impress plus Inc***

1-866-619-1269

Or email us at Info@impressplus.ca

###

Cable Industry Case Study

Business Opportunity

One of the largest cable companies in North America was dissatisfied with the life cycle costs and caller retention rate of their hosted IVR. The application provided self-service for Cable, Internet, and Telephony callers. The customer wished to migrate to a premise based platform and incorporate several significant enhancements to their application. The primary goals were to reduce life-cycle costs and increase caller retention rates while maintaining a high-level of caller satisfaction.

Key Requirements and Challenges

There were several key challenges that were facing this customer when ASA was introduced to this market. First and foremost, the customer's entire IVR operation was outsourced to a hosted solutions provider which, over time, had proven to be very costly. In addition, the customer had lost touch with the inner workings of their IVR application and were in a constant "application enhancement" cycle with the vendor. Furthermore, with the hosted solution, the customer had lost the ability to bring solutions to market quickly along with the ability to remain flexible with their solution.

Application Solution

The new application suite provided a 6% increase in resolution rate, which met the goal of increasing caller retention, while creating a savings of nearly $1.8 million dollars in the first year. Caller satisfaction continues to remain high, and the ASA solution has become a benchmark standard within the Cable Company for IVR Self-Service application and has been deployed to several of their North American markets. The customer now owns the solution, has a deeper understanding of their business, and can react quickly to ongoing business needs.

Some of the key application features and functions include:

Account Balance
Outage Detection & Messaging
Appointment Confirmation
One-Time Credit Card Payment
Appointment Cancellation
One-Time EFT Payment
Converter Refresh (Box Hit)
Recurring Credit Card Payment
Pin Update
Recurring EFT Payment
Serviceability Check
Specialty Routing / VIP
Payment Center Locator
Delinquency Check
Fulfillment
Broadcast Messaging
Estimated Time of Arrival

Cable Experience

ASA Solutions has been providing custom self-service Cable applications for over 8 years. ASA was initially engaged through a leading provider of customer care and billing solutions company to perform IVR development for multiple Cable sites. Once the cable company aquired numersous sites, ASA continued as the IVR development vendor of choice for major Cable sites such as in the Mid-West.

ASA has developed a comprehensive suite of IVR applications, interfaces and performance reports on the Avaya Platform for the Cable Television industry. Functions include Outage Reporting, Account Balance, Pay-by-Phone, Appointment Scheduling, Fulfillment, Payment Center Locator, and more. ASA is an expert in custom backend host interface development, primarily with Cable and Satellite provider billing systems, including CSG and ICOMS. ASA is certified on CSG and has written extensive interfaces to both billing vendors which are available for re-use and customization.

Company Information

Since 1995, ASA Solutions has provided IVR consulting and custom application development. Headquartered in Scottsdale, Arizona, ASA Solutions specialize in IVR speech-enabled self-service solutions for contact center in the insurance, cable, utilities, financial services, healthcare, and government markets. We deliver to enterprises a superior customer service solution. ASA consults and gathers requirements, completes the design, develops and deploys the IVR system application on-site or through a hosting service, while managing the entire IVR software project for our customers. Our development expertise includes Genesys, Avaya, Intervoice, Nortel, and Envox.

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Coaching the Coaches: 48 Ways To Coach Your Reps

by Joel Linchitz, President, Phone for Success (PFS)

Summer. Baseball, soccer, playoffs, double plays, triple plays (!), home runs, sudden goals, and missed opportunities. And coaches. Coaches signaling plays at every turn, measuring performance, watching performance, always watching. To what end?

Does coaching enhance performance? Do coaches actually help players meet or exceed expectations? Some people say coaches can't help players improve, they can only help players help themselves, IF those players already want to grow. Coaching in call centers is the same story. Can call center coaches motivate reps? Can they improve rep performance? Can they boost morale?

Both sports and call center coaches watch over their teams, both signal specific moves, both measure performance, both cheer their teams on.

Or do they? In call centers, it depends on who you speak to. "Coaching? No time," many managers say. Reps rarely talk about being coached. Yet to a person, the call center managers and supervisors we speak with all agree that coaching is crucial to their reps' success. Some do it regularly, some sporadically; some talk about doing it but don't get it done, others talk about talking about it, but push it further and further down on their To-Do lists. Sometimes, managers engage consultants to do their coaching for them, which is better than not doing it at all, or doing it half-heartedly.

Much of this topic merits clarification and debate and certainly instruction. In fact, just one search engine on the internet came up with 448,000 current articles on the topic, or variations such as, "Sports Coaching Methods Can Work in Corporate Team-Building Exercises.'1 Or, "Seven Steps To Become An Inspirational Coach By Ryan Ginster."2 There are at least 447,998 more current articles to peruse.

Clearly, coaching is hot—and complex.

But in deference to summer, to summer reading, to minds already filled with images of home runs and higher revenues, raucous cheering and bigger commissions, I give you the short list:

48 Ways To Coach Your Reps.

1. Know the behaviors you want reps to perform.
2. Compliment the behavior not the person. ("Great close!!" rather than, "You're great.")
3. Say 'good job' anyway, and often.
4. Tell reps what you expect of them.
5. Smile when you tell

them.
6. Read body language.
7. Listen to voice tone.
8. Be available.
9. If you promise, deliver.
10. Look for ways to demonstrate that you're paying attention.
11. Notice what's new:
a. a shirt
b. an achieved goal
c. a photo
d. a haircut
e. an improved intro
12. Look reps in the eye.
13. Pay attention to what reps say.
14. Acknowledge good ideas.
15. Attribute good ideas in front of other people.
16. Compliment in public; correct behavior in private.
17. Say, 'thank you' even though you're paying them to work.
18. Smile right at them.
19. Fill your needs for acknowledgement somewhere else—not from reps.
20. Pretend you're coaching a sports team—cheer reps on.
21. Treat reps as individuals—some are competitive, some like a little hand-holding, some need to be left alone.
22. Figure out who you're dealing with.
23. Ask them what they want.
24. Recognize problems asap—and deal with them; don't procrastinate.
25. Ask them how they're doing—and expect detailed answers.
26. Tell them what you want from them.
27. Say thank you, again.
28. Set up a coaching system with each rep:
a. hold 1-1 meeting to identify goals
b. lay out your expectations
c. ask for reps' expectations
d. summarize the actions you both will take
e. sign commitment agreement
f. be accountable for what you promise
29. Walk around looking for things that are working—and let reps know what you find.
30. Leave sticky-notes on reps' desks: "Your intros are getting better"
"Way to go"
"Appreciate your efforts"
"Thanks for______"
31. Hold frequent rallies with the whole team so everyone's on same page.
32. Solicit their advice about incentive games, rewards.
33. Be aware that they're watching you even more closely than you watch them.
34. Lead—don't control. There are many paths to the same destination.
35. Smile.
36. Never let them see you sweat.
37. Practice being calm.
38. Breathe.
39. Read coaching articles.
40. Read motivation articles.
41. Develop your viewpoint.
42. "Be the change you wish to see in the world."—Gandhi
43. If you make a mistake, own it.
44. If reps make a

mistake, help them learn from it.
45. Walk your talk.
46. Say thank you—even though it's their job.
47. Put yourself in a rep's shoes.
48. Care about what you do, what you say. If you don't care, pretend you do.

Now go out there to the floor of your call center. Look your reps in the eye and say, "Ok, team. Let's go for the gold."

1 http://keygroupconsulting.com/sportscoaching.php
2 http://ezinearticles.com

WEBINARS/ SEMINARS

Service M.A.G.I.C.®: Three Keys to Sustaining a Competitive Edge

Live Web Seminar July 23rd at 2pm EDT!

It takes more than just talk and technology to make "Service" your competitive advantage! To really deliver consistent, service-centric excellence, you need to understand the three keys to sustaining a M.A.G.I.C. culture.

About the Event:

Join us http://gw.vtrenz.net/?XR5JIJWOYQ for this live, 60-minute webinar with Tom Larkin, 30-year Communications Specialist, Consultant and Coach.

Learn How To:

1. Provide your associates with the skills to add value in every interaction

2. Discover how to engage associates so that they are "committed" rather than "compliant"

3. Boost the performance of your call center by achieving service consistency

4. Measure what really matters for your organization, instead of what's typical

One participant will win a free hour of consulting with Tom Larkin!

Three participants will win a signed copy of Tom's co-authored book, "How to Talk to Customers."

Pricing:

$99 per person (1 person, 1 computer)

$79 per person (Min. 3 people, same company, multiple pc's)

$249 for small groups (Up to 5 people, same company, 1 pc)

$499 for large groups (6+ on 1 pc/training/conference room)

Register at http://gw.vtrenz.net/?XR5JIJWOYQ

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July 9th – Roundtable : "Scheduling Trends in Today's Call Center Balancing Job Satisfaction and Customer Satisfaction" - Moderated By: Vicki Herrell, SWPP Participating Companies include Aspect Software, IEX, InVision, OnviSource, Pipkins, and Verint® Witness Actionable Solutions™ During this roundtable we will discuss the many scheduling trends in today's call center, including performance-based scheduling, schedule bids, part-time schedules, weekend and holiday scheduling, and the schedule assignment process. http://www.crmxchange.com/dabate/wfmjuly08.asp

July 10th – VPI and DMG Consulting –"Best Practices for Achieving Call Center Workforce Optimization" - Ready to start implementing proven technologies and processes that will rapidly improve the effectiveness of your call center operations and front line employees? Learn to achieve your goals by effectively leveraging the latest powerful workforce optimization solutions. http://www.crmxchange.com/webcast/vpijuly08.asp

July 15th – Mindshare- "How to Use Real Time Customer Feedback to Enhance and Retain Your Customers" -During this session we review strategies for:— Using customer feedback to increase customer retention— Best ways for capturing & integrating feedback across all enterprise touch points— Learn how to empower front line managers with real-time intelligence You will learn to deploy a single solution that will consolidate feedback across the enterprise. http://www.crmxchange.com/webcast/mindsharejuly08.asp

July 22nd – AVAYA – "Customer Trends: How are They Driving Customer Service" - Learn how you can cost-effectively provide the level of customer service that today's consumers are demanding. Co-presenting with Avaya is Vail Resorts, one of the world's premier mountain resorts and a leader in destination-based travel. You'll gain insight into how Vail delivers the exceptional customer service that today's consumers expect. http://www.crmxchange.com/webcast/avayajuly08.asp

July 29th Bay Bridge Decision Technologies - Bridging the Contact Center Analysis Gap:

What-If, Cost Versus Service, and Variance Analysis- In this session, we discuss the insightful analysis that can be accurately and quickly developed if you have the right tools and technologies. http://www.crmxchange.com/webcast/baybridgejuly08.asp

July 31 – OnviSource – "Making Your Call Center a Top Performing Operation – Automatically!"- Attend this webcast to learn how to create a cost-efficient environment where agents are required to do less, supervisors train less and everyone can focus their attention on the customer. http://www.crmxchange.com/webcast/onvisourcejuly08.asp

###

NEWS

PreVisor's 2008 Business Outcomes Study once again shows impact of effective talent measurement

Direct link shown between assessment of job candidates and key performance indicators

Atlanta, GA – PreVisor, the global leader in employment assessments and selection solutions that connect hiring decisions to business results, released its 2nd annual report today summarizing over 33 business outcomes studies. Each study measures the impact on workforce performance following the use of pre-employment testing in the hiring process.

The 2008 Business Outcomes Staudy was completed in conjunction with U.S. and Global 500 organizations. The results span numerous industries, from financial services to retail, as well as various jobs, including sales, customer service, professional and clerical roles.

"Once again our research has demonstrated a proven link between the use of scientific assessment and performance on the job," states Caroline Paxman, PreVisor Senior Vice President of Professional Services and Chief Product Officer. "We remain committed to continuing our Business Outcomes Studies as an integral part of what PreVisor can provide to our clients, to help them measure direct business results and demonstrate ROI."

The 2008 report measures many success factors and shows that 76% of these studies had a favorable or very favorable outcome. This means that the assessment solution had a strong and measurable impact on most or all of the firms' performance metrics. None of the studies resulted in an unfavorable outcome. For each study the criteria measured are specific to the employer and the job. Some highlights from the findings:

Luxury retail chain Sale Representatives with high assessment scores sold nearly $270,000 more per year than lower scoring peers.

A healthcare organization saved approximately $1.5 million annually on recruitment and training expenses by using an assessment to predict retention – and hiring individuals more likely to stay on the job.

Collections agents for a financial services group hired after achieving a high score on a specially designed assessment were 44% more effective in getting outstanding debts paid off, resulting in improved overall productivity.

In a contact center focused on Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), agents with high test scores converted more than twice the number of calls to sales opportunities than lower scoring agents.

Companies who have participated in the studies to date include Advance Auto, EMBARQ, Sprint, and Starwood Hotels.

"Now that we know the positive impact to the bottom line from our selection program, we feel very confident that we are using evidence-based decisions in our hiring process. We can show the real ROI impact on the business instead of just shooting from the hip. It gives our managers a compelling reason to use assessment in their hiring decisions" stated Karen Hoffman, Staffing Manager at Sprint.

In addition to specific organizational findings, some overall trends were indicated:

HR executives and business owners want proof that "it works" built into the review process for an assessment program.

Organizations are looking to reduce turnover via comprehensive hiring initiatives.

Companies are showing an increased interest in web-based, unproctored assessment: Tests delivered using Computer Adaptive Testing (CAT) technology, such as that offered through PreVisor's PreView^{TM}, is one of the most secure and accurate ways of delivering unproctored tests available today.

Employers are interested in a broader, more holistic approach to measuring employee performance.

"Our goal is to help our clients get results from their selection process," states Noel Sitzmann, PreVisor CEO. "To accomplish this we need to measure what we do. Talent measurement will continue to grow in significance and PreVisor will be there providing insight on selection, performance and retention of the workforce."

For more information about PreVisor and its Business Outcome Study service, visit: http://previsor.com/products/consulting/validation

Request a copy of the 2008 Business Outcomes Study

About PreVisor

PreVisor, the leading global provider of on demand pre-employment assessment software and employee selection solutions, helps organizations by connecting hiring decisions with business results. Following the rigorous standards of industrial-organizational psychology, PreVisor's assessment content accurately predicts on-the-job performance and supports fair hiring practices. PreVisor's solutions help streamline hiring, reduce recruiting and training costs, and improve corporate performance for clients worldwide, including more than 100 of the Fortune 500. www.previsor.com

###

Promero announces *Hosted Hybrid* model for Oracle's Contact Center Anywhere software used by Medium-to-Large Call Centers

Summary

Promero announces the Hosted Hybrid hosted call center solution featuring Oracle's Contact Center Anywhere that offers to a medium-to-large call center the financial benefits of leasing the Oracle software while hosting the application at a more cost effective 3rd party provider such as Promero.

Release

Pompano, Florida - Promero, a member of the Oracle Partner Network today announced the *Hosted Hybrid* hosting solution for call centers using or contemplating using Oracle's Contact Center Anywhere www.oraclecontactceteranywhere.com . Different than the pure hosted solution [meaning a hosting provider uses its software licenses and hosts the applications use for it customers], the Hosted Hybrid offering combines the leasablity of the Oracle brand and the hosting facility of Promero.

For medium-to-large call centers [100+ agents], the financial benefits of leasing the Oracle software and then hosting the software at Promero's managed, Category 5 data center is an excellent option for growing call centers. Financing for approved purchases is available up to 36 months. Capital expenditures are virtually zero. The management of the software is administered by experienced Promero IT personnel.

“The Hosted Hybrid model, in my opinion, is the perfect ROI scenario for any call center: Low upfront costs; fixed monthly expenses; best of breed software and outsourced software management, ‘stated Gregg Troyanowski, president of Promero, Inc. “I see many operators that become hampered and frustrated with software deployments, management and support. The Hosted Hybrid Oracle Contact Center Anywhere model is the premium VOIP call center software solution.”

About Promero, Inc

~~Ab~~out Promero, Inc
Founded in 2001, Promero is a leading provider contact center solutions. Together with its partners, Promero provides innovative technology, strength, stability, comprehensive consultation, implementation and support. Promero is a Worldwide Oracle Certified Partner for Siebel CRM and Contact Center Anywhere, IEX Channel Partner and Authorized Reseller for TotalView Work Force Management, Verint Channel Partner and Authorizes Reseller for Impact 360 Work Force Optimization, Cognos Channel Partner for Business Intelligence, Voxeo Channel Partner for Voice Recognition and 1Vault Reseller for data center services. Visit our website at www.promero.com. Promero headquarters is located in Pompano, Florida. Telephone: 954-935-8800. Toll free 888-204-0822. Email: sales@promero.com

About Oracle

Oracle (NASDAQ: ORCL) is the world’s largest enterprise software company. For more information about Oracle, please visit website at www.oracle.com. Oracle Partner Network is a global business network of 16000 companies who deliver innovative software solutions based on Oracle software. Oracle partners are able to offer their customers leading-edge solutions backed by Oracle’s position as the world’s

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