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January 2005 • Vol. 23/No. 7

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- TMC Labs Looks At WebPosition Gold 3 Platinum And FrontRange's GoldMine 6.7

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By: Nadji Tehrani,  
Executive Group Publisher,  
Technology Marketing  
Corporation

As the publisher of the industry's Number 1 publication since 1982, which laid the foundation of the present multibillion-dollar contact center/CRM industry, here are my visions for 2005:

their core competency to high-quality, reputable and domestic outsourcing teleservices companies.

- The future belongs, by and large, to the companies that are customer-centric and those that focus on **customer experience management**.

- To be successful in 2005 and

## LOOKING INTO THE CRYSTAL BALL...

# The Dawn Of A New Era In Fast-Growing Contact/CRM Centers!

- The future of our industry has never been better!

- I see 10 to 12 percent growth in high-end B-to-B **enterprise** sector.

- I see 6 to 8 percent growth in B-to-C, mostly in the financial services sector.

- I see 15 to 20 percent growth in domestic outsourced teleservices growth, inbound and outbound combined.

- Early adopters of **VoIP** ([define](#) - [news](#) - [alert](#)) (i.e., companies using IP contact center solutions) will not only save 80 to 90 percent on telecom costs, but they will drastically increase their technological superiority and capability over competition.

- Early adopters of speech technology will also benefit not only from 80 to 85 percent labor cost savings, but also, they will gain considerable superiority in competitive advantage and productivity.

- The other winners are the **enterprises** that outsource what is not

beyond, the companies need to be able to think outside of the box, because innovation is the key to survival.

- The successful companies of the future are the ones that place far greater importance on the quality of customer service and customer care as opposed to focusing on cheap labor.

### Justification For The Above Vision

When the do-not-call directive came from the FTC, many people had the mistaken belief that call center growth would be reduced substantially. As it worked out, nothing could have been further from the truth, because the livelihood of every corporation, regardless of size or type of business, depends on having an outstanding call center that will support every facet of business.

In short, no company can exist without the following services, and the following is not attainable with-

out having an outstanding call center:

1. The functionality of an **effective sales department** is nearly 100 percent, depending on the principles of outbound and inbound telemarketing. This is the undeniable fact of business survival regardless of what the FTC thinks about it.

2. As we indicated above, the successful companies of tomorrow are those that are customer-centric and those that focus 100 percent on customer experience management. As such, none of these goals can be achieved without having a powerful, well-trained and professional call center.

3. No **CRM** ([define](#) - [news](#) - [alert](#)) can be possible without having an effective and reliable call center.

4. The credit collection department of every company depends 100 percent on having a successful call center and no company can exist without having an effective credit collection call center.

5. In any environment, fund-raising is an extremely important part of a civilized lifestyle. And...we all know that effective fund-raising simply cannot exist without an effective outbound call center.

6. The American Red Cross has proven time and again that effective blood donation drives for our sol-





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diers in Iraq and elsewhere, as well as for the civilian population, simply cannot be organized without an effective call center. In fact, when I was invited by the American Red Cross to make a speech on telemarketing with the members of the American Red Cross, the keynote room where I made my presentation was decorated with signs that read: "Telemarketing is the link to life."

7. The main ingredient of cutting-edge marketing today is integrated marketing, and a major part of integrated marketing depends heavily on the call center.

In short, as I have outlined above, without exception or qualification, no company can exist without all of the above functions, and none of the above functions are possible without an effective call center.

This is what convinces me every day of the week and every moment of the day that our great contact center/CRM industry is here to stay, and it will continue to prosper for years to come.

The facts behind my predictions for growth as stated above are not based on an unemployed college dropout who calls himself or herself a market researcher (in my opinion, the findings of most market researchers are practically useless to those of us who really know what is going on). Rather, my conviction for the growth of the industry comes from the only reliable source that exists in our industry: day-to-day direct contact with the senior management of the call center industry, with whom I have a very close relationship, since we helped to pioneer the contact center industry with our flagship publication called *Telemarketing*® magazine back in 1982. Indeed, most manufacturers are reporting significant increases in sales, particularly in the latter half of

The successful companies of tomorrow are those that are customer-centric and those that focus 100 percent on customer experience management.

2004. The same is true for the outsourcing companies (teleservices companies) which are also reporting significant increases in business in the latter part of 2004 and that growth of approximately 15 to 20 percent seems to be a reality for 2005 and beyond (barring unforeseen developments).

### The Impact Of New Technologies

Perhaps the greatest evolution in the call center industry is that of emerging new technologies that have now become extremely functional and useful for the success, survival and rebirth of the call/contact center/CRM industry.

Technologies such as [IP contact center \(define - news - alert\)](#) solutions and speech technologies can not only reduce the cost of telecommunications and labor by a combined 175 percent, but together, they will substantially enhance the ability of contact centers to conduct their business in a far more cost-effective and technologically superior manner. Both in customer service/CRM and sales and marketing efforts, the above technologies will give the early adopters a powerful competitive advantage that cannot be matched by any conventional technologies. Consequently, the most profitable leaders and market share dominators of the future are those who embrace these technologies immediately and differentiate themselves from their competitors. Another extremely important benefit of the early adoption of the above technologies is that they provide the capability to pro-

duce outstanding call center services at even lower costs than offshore services and thus, they eliminate the necessity of going offshore and sending the lifeblood of our companies, such as our customer databases and our customer service and sales and marketing functions, to foreign countries. It is unthinkable that anyone would want to outsource such vital functions as sales, marketing, customer service and CRM, not to mention parting with the lifeblood of the company, namely, their customer database, to far-away countries with considerable exposure to geo-political problems, not to mention language problems, cultural problems, rudeness, lack of proper management, fraud and worrying about such extremely important matters as privacy and compliance with regulatory requirements (e.g., do-not-call list, etc.) And above all, without having any assurance that their customers will be treated professionally. The more I think about it, the more that valued conventional wisdom comes to mind, which says, "Don't be penny-wise and pound-foolish."

For more information on the above matters, I urge all of our valued readers to refer to my Publisher's Outlook columns for the last three years to find considerable in-depth information on all of the above.

### New Source Of Growth

As I have indicated in the last dozen or so editorials, the phenomenal business growth of several reputable teleservices companies has



been so powerful that many are actually turning down business. When asked the question, "To what do you attribute this unprecedented growth during a slow economy?", most senior management replied that many of their customers who outsourced to India, for example, were extremely dissatisfied and they have now become even more loyal customers to domestic teleservices. Some even indicated that the returnees are willing to pay even higher prices than they paid prior to outsourcing to the other countries.

#### The Growing Economy Also Helps

Obviously, the growing U.S. economy, along with higher productivity, will further boost the growth and need for call center services.

#### The Views Of Industry Leaders On the Above Predictions

As always, I prefer to consult with other industry leaders to get different opinions on this extremely important subject matter. For this editorial, we have contacted five leading companies as follows:

1. Concerto Software
2. Envision
3. Hispanic Teleservices Corp.
4. Nuasis
5. Verint Systems, Inc.

I would like to gratefully acknowledge the assistance provided by all of the above leading companies.

Before proceeding with the outlook and predictions of the above companies, I would like to begin with an abstract of comments made by Nuasis, which in my humble opinion, clearly define the need for being an early adopter in order to gain a powerful competitive advantage:

"Nuasis predicts that 2005 will be THE year of the Great Migration to IP. Companies that continue to have a wait-and-see attitude for deploying

The main ingredient of cutting-edge marketing today is integrated marketing, and a major part of integrated marketing depends heavily on the call center.

IP contact centers are at great risk of losing customers to their pro-IP competitors. IP opens the door to more cost-effective, faster deployment of CRM applications that give customer service contact centers the power to be more service-oriented, thus increasing new and current customer satisfaction levels resulting in greater customer loyalty and greater customer retention. Lastly, the ease with which IP links CRM to the contact center will encourage CRM vendors to partner with as many IP contact center vendors as quickly as possible."

#### The Bottom Line

Don't be fooled by the "cheap labor" sales pitch! Exercise powerful visionary leadership! Become an **EARLY ADOPTER** of the new technologies, dramatically reduce costs while enormously improving your customer loyalty, CRM and competitive advantage. If running a state-of-the-art call center is not your core competency, then outsource to a reputable, award-winning domestic teleservices agency so that you can sleep at night knowing that your precious customer database is protected and you are in full compliance with privacy and other regulatory requirements.

#### Plan Now To Attend Speech-World™

In order to enhance your knowledge about the above vitally important matters, I suggest the following:

1. Please read my last dozen editorials in the back issues of *Customer Interaction Solutions®*, along with many

informative feature articles.

2. I strongly urge you to attend a new, cutting-edge conference and exhibition titled *Speech-World™*, sponsored by TMC, *Customer Interaction Solutions®* and *Internet Telephony®* magazines. Speech-World™ will be co-located with our *IP Contact Center Summit™* along with the *Global Call Center Outsourcing Summit™*. Speech-World™ will take place May 24-26, 2005 at the Westin Park Central Hotel in Dallas, Texas.

I look forward to personally welcoming you to Speech-World™, where you will find the necessary information to acquire the new technology and knowledge that you need to make the right decision.

For comments by the above mentioned companies, please refer to our Web site at [www.tmcnet.com](http://www.tmcnet.com).

As always, I welcome your comments. Please e-mail me at [ntehrani@tmcnet.com](mailto:ntehrani@tmcnet.com).

Sincerely yours,



Nadji Tehrani  
Executive Group Publisher  
Editor-in-Chief

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Please remember where you **first** read this pioneering effort before the copycats copy us (as usual) and pass it off as their own.

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### Service Providers: Follow The VoIP Dollars

By Rich Tehrani, Group Editor-in-Chief, Technology Marketing Corporation

So where will service providers make money if prices in the US are eroding so quickly? The answer is elsewhere, which is why companies like Vonage are launching VoIP service in the UK. While the media (myself included) obsess endlessly about who will win the VoIP service wars, it is obvious we

are experiencing global myopia when we don't consider the ramifications of the arbitrage opportunity where telephony rates orders of magnitudes higher than in the states.

Read the full article at <http://www.tmcnet.com/77.1>

### Monitoring Isn't Enough To Answer The Quality Question By Dr. Jodie Monger

We are continuously asked how well the contact center is serving the corporate asset — how well is service delivered to customers who call to resolve a problem or to ask a question? In many centers, we must rely on a summary of operational metrics with the assumption that certain metric levels answers this critical question. We also rely on quality monitoring scores to answer the question.

Read the full article at <http://www.tmcnet.com/78.1>

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## CUSTOMER INTER@CTION Solutions®

### Executive Group Publisher

Nadji Tehrani (ntehrani@tmcnet.com)

### Group Publisher

Richard Tehrani (rtehrani@tmcnet.com)

### Editorial

203-852-6800 (cispress@tmcnet.com)

Editorial Director, Tracey E. Schelmetic

Assistant Editor, David R. Butcher

### TMC™ Labs

203-852-6800 (tmcclabs@tmcnet.com)

Executive Technology Editor/CTO/VP, Tom Keating

### Art

203-852-6800 (cisart@tmcnet.com)

Senior Art Director, Lisa D. Morris

Art Director, Alan Urkawich

### Executive Officers:

Nadji Tehrani, Chairman and CEO

Richard Tehrani, President

To Subscribe, Call: 203-852-6800

Or write to the circulation director at [srusso@tmcnet.com](mailto:srusso@tmcnet.com). Subscription rates (published monthly): Free for qualified subscribers in the U.S.A. only. For non-qualified U.S.A. subscribers, \$49. All Canadian subscribers, \$49. All Foreign (air mail), \$85. All orders are payable in advance in U.S. dollars drawn against a U.S. bank. Connecticut residents add applicable sales tax.

Circulation Director, Shirley Russo ([srusso@tmcnet.com](mailto:srusso@tmcnet.com))

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## Advertising Sales: 203-852-6800

Kevin J. Noonan, ext. 124 ([knoonan@tmcnet.com](mailto:knoonan@tmcnet.com))

Executive Director, Business Development

Allan Brown, ext. 278 ([abrown@tmcnet.com](mailto:abrown@tmcnet.com))

Midwestern, Texas Regional Manager

Glenn Maiorano, ext. 279 ([gmaiorano@tmcnet.com](mailto:gmaiorano@tmcnet.com))

Eastern, Midatlantic, Canadian Regional Manager

John Coleman, ext. 280 ([jcoleman@tmcnet.com](mailto:jcoleman@tmcnet.com))

Western, International Regional Manager

## Exhibit Sales: 203-852-6800

Dave Rodriguez, ext. 146 ([drodriguez@tmcnet.com](mailto:drodriguez@tmcnet.com))

Vice President of Conferences and Online Media

## Online Advertising & Newsletter Sponsorship

Dave Rodriguez, ext. 146 ([drodriguez@tmcnet.com](mailto:drodriguez@tmcnet.com))

Vice President of Conferences and Online Media

Kevin J. Noonan, ext. 124 ([knoonan@tmcnet.com](mailto:knoonan@tmcnet.com))

Executive Director, Business Development

Karl A. Sundstrom, ext. 119 ([ksundstrom@tmcnet.com](mailto:ksundstrom@tmcnet.com))

Northeastern, Canadian Regional Manager

### Editorial Offices are located at

One Technology Plaza, Norwalk, CT 06854 U.S.A.

**Customer Service:** for all customer service matters, call 203-852-6800.

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*By: Rich Tehrani,  
Group Editor-in-Chief,  
Technology Marketing  
Corporation*

**F**or those companies looking for first-rate customer interaction solutions but don't want to spend a fortune on equipment, hosting is making a major comeback. In 2004, there were relatively few IPOs, but one of the most successful was that of hosted customer interaction solutions provider, Salesforce.com. The company is currently worth close to \$2 billion. Only a few years ago, many "industry visionaries" said that hosted providers were all doomed. (Is there any industry in which

White Pajama. Somehow we are all comfortable e-mailing or searching the Web with a company named Yahoo or Google, but we just don't want to have our contact center running on software from a company with such a name. Actually, this is not quite true, as White Pajama has been successful with its unusual name, having weathered the bust and now thriving in the boom. The company is getting ready to take it up a notch, and by changing the company name to Contactual (<http://www.contactual.com>), they believe they are ready to do so.

# 2005: The Year Of The Hosted Solutions

writers, editors and analysts have to eat their words more often than the technology industry?)

I, for one, was a bit concerned by these dire predications, as I have been a champion of the hosted model for years. Hosting makes great sense for many organizations. At our [Internet Telephony](#) events, we have frequently had general sessions that focus on helping attendees decide if hosting makes sense for them. We call this session the "IP-PBX Shoot-out." The most recent event, held last October in Los Angeles, had a standing room-only crowd and an audience truly thirsty for knowledge about this important technology.

Because I see hosted customer interactions as positioned for a tremendous amount of growth in 2005, I decided to write about a few of the companies worth watching in the hosted space.

The first is White Pajama, a company created in the height of the dotcom area when a name like White Pajama made a bit more sense. You know, Yahoo, Google,

I spent a good deal of time testing the Contactual system and found it to be quite robust and useful. The menus are simple to navigate, and the GUI is easy on the eyes. Where Salesforce.com is more of a system designed for CRM/sales-type applications, Contactual is more contact center-oriented and, in fact, the two systems can work together.

With today's Web services, the ability to connect various hosted products to achieve an integrated hosted solution makes applications extremely powerful. In many cases, the openness of Web technology allows software based on the Internet to be more flexible and, subsequently, more powerful.

So is hosted technology right for you? The answer: It depends on what your needs are. If you feel you must have ultimate control over everything, then hosting probably isn't for you. If you feel like you would prefer to focus on your core competency and leave the details of contact center development to someone else, then it's worth looking at. Still, as much of a hosting advocate as

I am, the downside is very real and I have witnessed dozens of these vendors disappearing almost overnight during the bursting of the dotcom bubble. I don't see a scenario in which this will be repeated, but as a responsible journalist, it is essential that I put the risks out on the table and let you decide. One thing is for sure: If a hosted vendor is four years old or more, it probably won't see worse times than it has already experienced, and is therefore about as stable as it can be.

## Hosting In Credit And Collections

Fairfield County, Connecticut is home to TMC, the parent of *Customer Interaction Solutions*® magazine. If there is one thing this area produces a lot of (aside from a very high cost of living), it is trade show and publishing companies. I'm not sure why. Perhaps the weather is so cold here that many of us launch trade shows so we can get away to a warmer destination in the winter. Perhaps this is the reason that [Internet Telephony Conference & Expo](#) will be in Miami this February.

When we see a company that is in our field, our county and, more amazing, in our own hometown of Norwalk (population 78,331), we want to get to know them. Don't get me wrong. Close proximity is great, but this company does have a unique technology worth your time to learn about.

Before I go further, there is an important point worth making. Technology is decimating contact center jobs at a rapid clip, and soon we may worry less about offshoring and more about technology taking away contact center seats. Of course, technology is a double-edged sword: for every





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advancement that is made to displace jobs, the same advancement makes it less expensive for smaller companies to come and compete in the market. Desktop publishing leveled the playing field in publishing back in 1982. As a result of technology, thousands of new magazine titles, newsletters and brochures were self-launched. In the process, however, some of the people involved in typesetting print publications lost their jobs.

Having set the story up, I would like to introduce Adepra to you. The company is a pioneer in helping credit card companies combat fraud. Using its technology, you can do so much more than battle fraud, but the company decided to pick this niche and dominate it. They are a major presence in the credit card space. In a typical credit card

business, for every 100 calls to customers that may have incurred fraudulent charges, only a few of them are actual fraud.

Using a hosted model and speech technology, when a credit card company detects fraud, the information goes to Adepra, who then place a call to the customer and, using text-to-speech technology, it communicates with the cardholder to decide whether the suspect transactions are in fact valid. Just as a fraud analyst does, the system can read up to five transactions to a cardholder to ensure they are all valid.

Adepra is venturing into new markets, such as collections, and the company has proven that its technology achieves better results than live collection agents. Furthermore, the technology has allowed some companies to call customers with

smaller balances. These customers were not contacted in the past, as their balances were too low to warrant the call.

In one scenario, a company was going to take its collections functions offshore. After evaluation, the company realized it would be less expensive to use Adepra technology and keep 10 percent of the staff to take payment information when necessary. So here is a scenario in which technology saved American jobs.

Whatever your thoughts on Adepra and what they do, one thing is for sure: This type of technology will change the way all contact centers work. It has not only the ability to save corporations massive amounts of money, it can be used to upsell customers or to get them thinking about shopping and buying. I would welcome a call from [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) ([quote](#) - [news](#) - [alert](#)) reminding me in November to start my holiday shopping. What about a system that can call all of our *Customer Interaction Solutions*® readers, offering them an incentive to come to the next TMC-sponsored conference? Then there are the obvious applications: a customer satisfaction survey, or the ability for an airline to call and tell you about a delayed flight and offer to have the automated system rebook you on the next flight during the same call. Again, the solutions are infinite, and you can likely come up with a better example of how to use it in your business than I can.

Hosting seems destined to change the way contact centers operate. We can thank Salesforce.com, Contactual and Adepra for standing as solid examples of how companies can make a good living from providing hosted solutions. Better yet, these companies are stable examples of why you should consider using hosted solutions in your business.

Sincerely,

*Rich Tehrani*

Rich Tehrani  
Group Publisher, Group Editor-in-Chief  
[rtehrani@tmcnet.com](mailto:rtehrani@tmcnet.com)

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## Contact Centers Embrace VoIP

Although I can't believe it, [Internet Telephony Conference & Expo](#) is now on its eleventh event, and while the technology was in its infancy for the first few years, it is now being embraced by virtually all contact centers. In fact, home agents, off-shoring and virtual call centers are a few of the entirely new things that companies can do with their contact centers because of VoIP and, more amazingly, most of these advances have really been made in the last few years. VoIP and IP contact centers are growing rapidly, and if you aren't coming to ITEXPO to learn how you can benefit from them, you may be missing out on some key information you will need to compete more effectively.

An entire educational track is devoted to IP contact centers at the show, and we have the leading speakers in the industry participating in the event...speakers you can't find anywhere else.

Here are some of the conference sessions you will benefit from at the show:

- The Evolving Contact Center
- Open Architecture IP Networks for the Contact Center
- Choose Wisely: Migrate Your Contact Center to IP
- Leveraging IP for the Contact Center
- IP Contact Center Shootout (panel)
- Turbocharge Your Call Center with Integrated CRM
- Balancing the

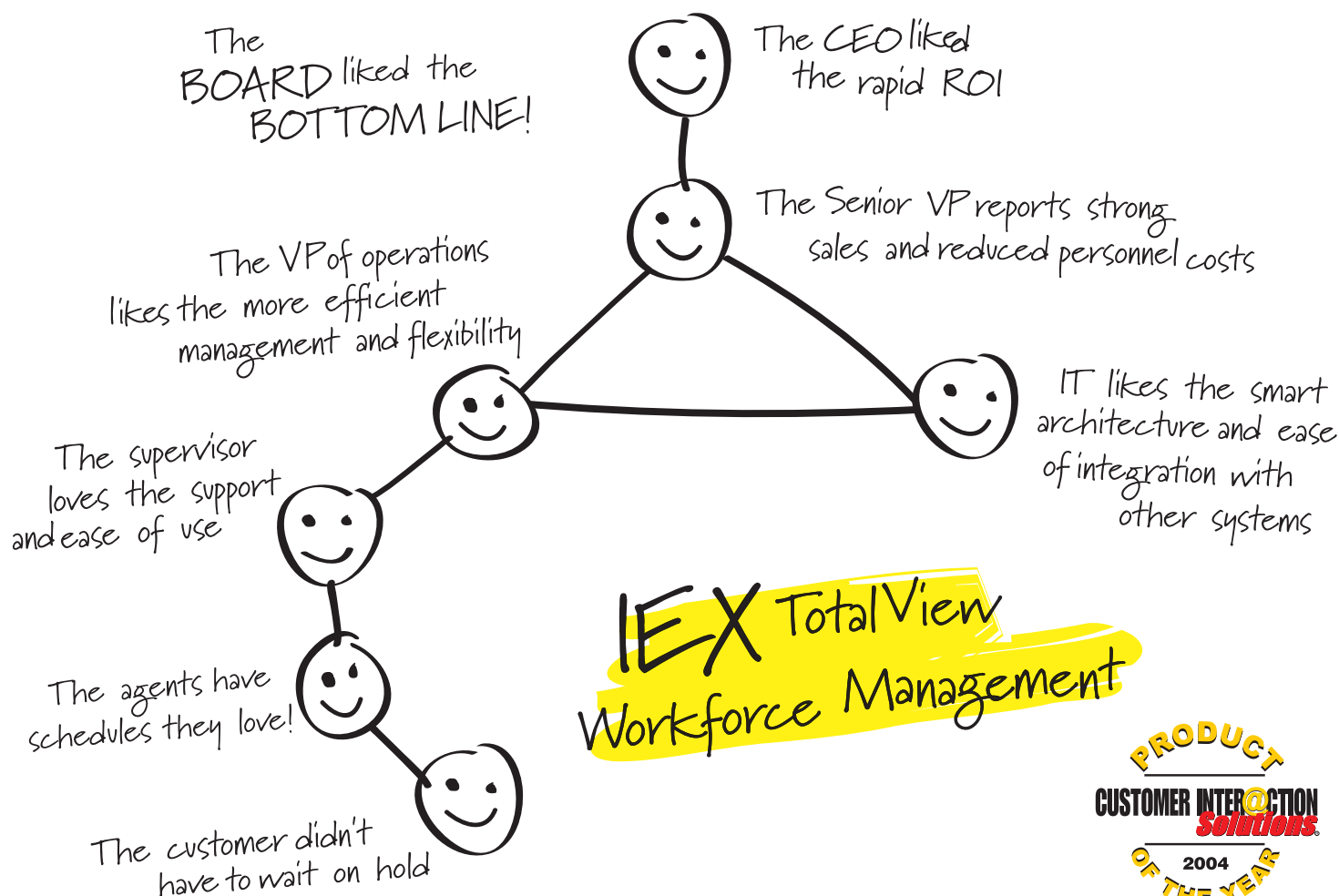
Customer Experience with Speech Technology

- The Role of Technology in Complying with FTC Mandates
- IP and Offshoring: Options & Opportunities

The show takes place in Miami, Florida, February 22-25 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. We recently moved to the convention center, and the exhibit hall is scheduled to sell out. Please book right away, as the hotel is close to selling out (we sold out the show hotel for the last two events) as I write this, and airfares are going up quickly. I hope to see you there, so please visit [www.itexpo.com](http://www.itexpo.com) to register!



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# THE CEO SPOTLIGHT

This month, the CEO Spotlight focuses on Scott Shute, President and CEO of etalk Corp., a global provider of enterprise-class contact center performance solutions.

**TS:** In the last few years, call recording seems to have become even more important than it was before. Are you finding that new industries are turning to you for recording solutions? What are the factors involved in this increased interest in recording and monitoring solutions?

**SS:** The slowdown in the economy and the explosion of buying choices, driven in part by the Internet, have combined to create a fiercely competitive marketplace. As a result, businesses are relearning an old lesson: Every customer counts. So we're hearing companies talk more and more about customer retention and word-of-mouth, because these are the most cost-effective ways to maintain and build market share. Every customer interaction, then, needs to be positive, and the only way to ensure this is to monitor calls, assess the quality of service provided, and use that information to train agents who aren't delivering the best possible service.

We're seeing this especially in the travel and tourism sector where there are two types of customers: those who are brand loyal, like platinum travel club members who demand a high level of service, and price-sensitive customers, who go where the deals are. Almost every airline, for example, is playing the price game to some degree, but the customers everyone wants are the ones who keep coming back, regardless of price, and the best way to attract and keep them is to deliver outstanding service across the board. So travel companies are investing in call monitoring in an effort to know their



**Scott Shute**  
President and CEO, etalk Corp.

customers better and to provide much more personalized service.

In general, our customers are clamoring for customer information, and a growing trend is the practice of recording and analyzing every call, as well as capturing as much agent screen activity as possible. Using speech analytics, companies are now able to run reports that tell them how the contact center team, as a whole, is providing service. For example, companies can now capture the number of times agents didn't tell a customer about a price promotion or didn't get a manager involved when one was requested. So we're building onto our Qfiniti platform the ability to handle much more data and to sort and analyze the information more easily — because all those data are worthless if they don't drive business results.

Service quality, though, is only part of the story. The need to capture every customer interaction is growing, too, because of increased regulatory scrutiny in the financial industry. Here, recording is becoming almost mandatory, as companies now feel the need to have a precise record of what each client requested and what the agent delivered. Companies want to make sure that simultaneously they're in complete compliance and that agents are following company service policies.

**TS:** What kinds of improvements can call centers expect to see after they properly implement evaluation and measurement efforts?

**SS:** Companies that monitor correctly and put their data to work always see improvements in agent productivity and customer satisfaction. The reason is simple: Quality monitoring platforms like Qfiniti enable companies to see customer interactions through the agents' eyes — and hear them through the agents' ears. And they get a better understanding of how their agents are doing their jobs. All this information, then, provides an opportunity for discussion. The call center managers can share call recordings with their agents and be specific in their feedback and coaching. Moreover, the data help managers see exactly where processes work and where they break down, and they help managers do a better job of gathering feedback from agents as to why the contact center isn't working as well as it could.

Another powerful advantage of evaluation and measurement is that they help to ensure consistency. A company with multiple contact center sites wants consistency. Every agent in every location, anywhere in the world, should be saying the same thing to every customer and delivering the same standard of service.

Our general "data message" is that quality monitoring isn't a punitive activity. It's not about "catching agents in the act." It's about giving employees the opportunity to listen to their calls and talk about how they deliver service, how they sound on the phone, and what they can do to improve.

**TS:** In the past year, I've noticed that some of the hype surrounding e-learning has died down. Is this because rather than being a novelty, it's now a necessity to most call/contact centers? What kinds of things are companies able to do with e-learning that they were never able to do before?

**SS:** The hype has died down, but not the necessity nor the enthusiasm for e-learning



in the call center. Companies have become savvier about technology investments in general, and they're reluctant to throw e-learning at a problem unless they're confident they'll see value. As a result, e-learning now has to be easily integrated into business processes and directly linked to specific sales and service objectives.

In the call center, e-learning is used most often to reinforce previous training around specific skills. E-learning systems are now so sophisticated they can be set to start automatically at an assigned time. For example, if I'm an agent working at my computer, a screen may pop up and say, "Scott, it's 9:00 am and time for your training to begin." And for the next half hour, that's all my system will allow me to do. This ensures that both the agent and the manager follow through on their training commitment.

Another great development is the electronic version of a "seat drop." If a contact center manager had an update for the whole team — a price change or a product on backorder — he or she would put a note on everyone's chair first thing in the morning. Now, in response to a market change, like the recently announced Sprint merger, a manager can quickly create a course on how agents are to handle related customer questions and distribute that training module through the IT system. Moreover, that training stays in the system, creating a "learning library" that is available to agents whenever they need it.

**TS:** Can you name the most important steps a company can take in keeping call center turnover down?

**SS:** The No. 1 reason service agents give for leaving the call center is that they don't feel valued by their employers. They see few rewards for a job well done, no career development possibilities, and a lack of recognition for their contributions. As the people interacting with customers, service agents carry a huge responsibility, and good ones are expensive to replace, so it's critical to make them feel appreciated. To do this, companies should recognize service agent improvements as well as successes, link com-

pensation to performance goals, provide agents and their managers with reports showing their real impact on the company — in dollars and cents — and provide professional growth through training opportunities.

Another frustration for agents is not being kept up-to-date. I'll go back to the Sprint example. An agent at a telecommunications company who doesn't receive information on the merger and doesn't know how to respond to customer questions would feel ill-equipped to do his or her job. Agents are the face of the company, and they should never be left in the dark.

Everyone wants to do the best job they can, but they have to have the right tools. To feel good about their role in the company and to do their jobs well, service agents must be informed, aware of how they are perceived by customers, and provided with opportunities to learn and grow. For the most part, they'll take all the training they can get. They understand, often better than anyone else, that customer satisfaction depends on them, and they truly want to improve. They want to do a good job.

**TS:** What has been the experience of companies that offer surveys to customers immediately after contact with an agent? What's the most valuable data that can be obtained from such surveys, and what's the most effective way to use this information?

**SS:** Surveys are interesting, because most people don't like to take them, and they'll avoid the process if they can. But for a company working to improve service, surveys are critical because they are one of the best ways to understand customer needs, train agents accordingly and fix service processes.

To help companies gather this critical customer information, we design survey products that ask customers to evaluate the service they received immediately after the call, so we don't lose them, and we can get their immediate reactions. We can also set up the survey system so that agents can gather customer feedback, or we can ask a customer who is still in the call queue if he or she

would be willing to take a service quality survey. If the customer says "yes," the survey begins immediately after he or she finishes speaking with the service agent.

Our philosophy with surveys is "Do it now." We don't mail or call customers later; as a result, the response rate with our survey systems is about three times that of most companies.

**TS:** What developments do you see happening in both the near and far future of quality monitoring?

**SS:** Everybody's talking about customer information. Companies want it, and they want as much as they can get. This trend is going to continue — and it's starting to influence technology development in the contact center. Because what better time is there to find out about a customer than when you're interacting with him or her? At etalk, we're going beyond, "Did the agent say, 'Thank you?'" to "Does the customer want to know the agent's name?" In other words, through voice analytics, we can gather and sort customer preferences and find out, for example, if he likes getting new product information when he makes a service call — and we can really get to know the customer. And here's what's really exciting: We're going to see contact center value increase as it becomes a key information source for the marketing organization.

The challenge with information, of course, is determining what you're going to do with it. Our customers are looking to us to help them match data collection and analysis with their business goals. We're working to enable contact centers to gather and sort information about customers easily and more quickly than ever before. This is critical in such a competitive marketplace because our customers want to fix service problems on the spot and make immediate changes in how they respond to customers, with regard to everything from pricing to product availability. We're committed to providing systems to help them do that.

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# 2005 Recommended Vendor List

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#### West Corporation



#### InfoCision Management Corporation



### CRM/Contact Center Software/Hardware

#### Amae



#### Sennheiser Electronic Corporation



#### GN Netcom



#### Spectrum Corporation



#### IEX Corporation



#### Stratasoft, Inc.



#### Jacada



#### Telephony@Work




#### Mercom



For information about how to get on the Recommended Vendor list, see <http://www.tmcnet.com/mediakit/cis04/soa.htm>





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In Chris Cooper's Oscar-winning performance in the film "Adaptation," his character breaks down simply and ingeniously why he is so drawn to plants: "Because they're so mutable. Adaptation is a profound process — means you figure out how to thrive in the world."

# Toshiba Eases Evolution With Flexibility

By David R. Butcher,  
Assistant Editor, Customer Inter@ction Solutions® Magazine

2005  
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Solutions  
EDITORS' CHOICE

That mutability of which Cooper's character, John Laroche, spoke so passionately of plants can be justly said, too, of the technology with which we deal in our industry. Are his words too dramatic for describing the driving force of our industry? I don't think so.

Adaptation. Or adjustment. Or flexibility. Or malleability. A sort of unreliable but controlled fickleness. However this innate flexibility is described, at the base is the ability to thrive, to do more and to do it more easily.

And so what preeminently, though not exclusively, made [Toshiba America Information Systems, Inc. \(quote - news - alert\)](#), Digital Solutions Division (TAIS DSD)'s Strata CIX (a native IP business communications system) our choice for this month's Tech Highlight focus was its offered option of the FeatureFlex adaptability tool, which allows users to customize their own individual features.

Because knowing what will be the next most important "killer application" is so difficult to determine and because it can be different to each person, Strata CIX offers this "killer enabler" to endow enterprises with the ability to create their own personalized killer app.

FeatureFlex allows enterprises to create user-definable features companywide, by department or for individual users. FeatureFlex makes the resources of the system available to create new or blended fea-

tures and applications.

Using Strata CIX with FeatureFlex, users can customize their systems — modifying or programming new features — in fewer than 10 minutes, rather than having to wait months or even years for their equipment manufacturer to add the features they want.

This tool may be used to create features on-the-fly, combining call handling with messaging or other functions, because it is architected and abstracted to provide blended solutions.

Examples of application creation offered by Toshiba, using the system's built-in scripting language, are as follows:

- To connect with back-office systems to allow important information (such as inventory management) to scroll across the phone or screen;
- To connect with online sources for information (such as weather tem - pera -

tures, stock prices, currency evaluations, etc); and

- To set up call management features that provide special handling for important calls (such as follow-me routing to forward calls to another number). It can also be set up to route calls from unknown callers (or any designated callers) directly into voice mail.

FeatureFlex also opens the door to third-party application development: software developers, telecom dealers and systems integrators are able to create customized solutions for individual vertical markets and others.

Again, FeatureFlex is an option, not a requisite in using Strata CIX.

In its entirety, Toshiba's Strata CIX, the native IP business communications system upon which FeatureFlex is built, is designed for small to medium-sized enterprises or larger corporate users with multiple sites. (It supports up to 672 ports.)

Strata CIX was designed to deliver virtually every feature to every user, regardless of the type of device being used, whether the user is mobile or stationary. So you can take your PDA ([news - alert](#)) anywhere in the building and continue your work. The IP telephony system supports IP phones, IP wireless handsets, both analog and digital





telephones, and [IP softphones \(news - alert\)](#) on laptops, PDAs and tablet PCs. Strata CIX will also work with standards-based SIP phones, as it is built on open standards. (Toshiba has also made available a new family of IPT telephones: desktop IP phones, wireless IP phones, PDAs, laptop and tablet PCs, and security cameras.)

The new system offers "never-before-seen IP-based adaptability capabilities, making it the most efficient, easy-to-use, and customizable system available today," according to Michael E. Durance, vice president and general manager of TAIS DSD.

Strata CIX takes advantage of Toshiba's migration path and empowers Strata CTX and older Strata DK digital business communications systems users protection of investment, as the upgrade is affordable, Durance continued. Along with its new mix of IP features, CIX delivers all previous features and functionality of Toshiba's traditional digital business telephone systems.

Additional features of the new IP telephony system (200-plus features): My Phone Manager, a personal administration tool that allows individual users to program the telephone program speed dial numbers and feature buttons via their PC's Web browser without administration support; robust voice processing; eManager, a system administration tool that unifies programming of CIX and the Strategy ES Voice Processing System; networking capabilities; TDM enablement; one number access; call monitor and retrieve; and voice mail return.

Toshiba's Strata CIX with FeatureFlex will ship by the end of this month, and both CIX and its optional FeatureFlex feature will allow users to easily adjust their current system and to flexibly adapt to the consistently kinetic technological world. His passionate belief being delineated, Laroche would be proud.

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## New Products...

### Customer Experience Management

#### Symon Announces SES 8.1 For Business Intelligence

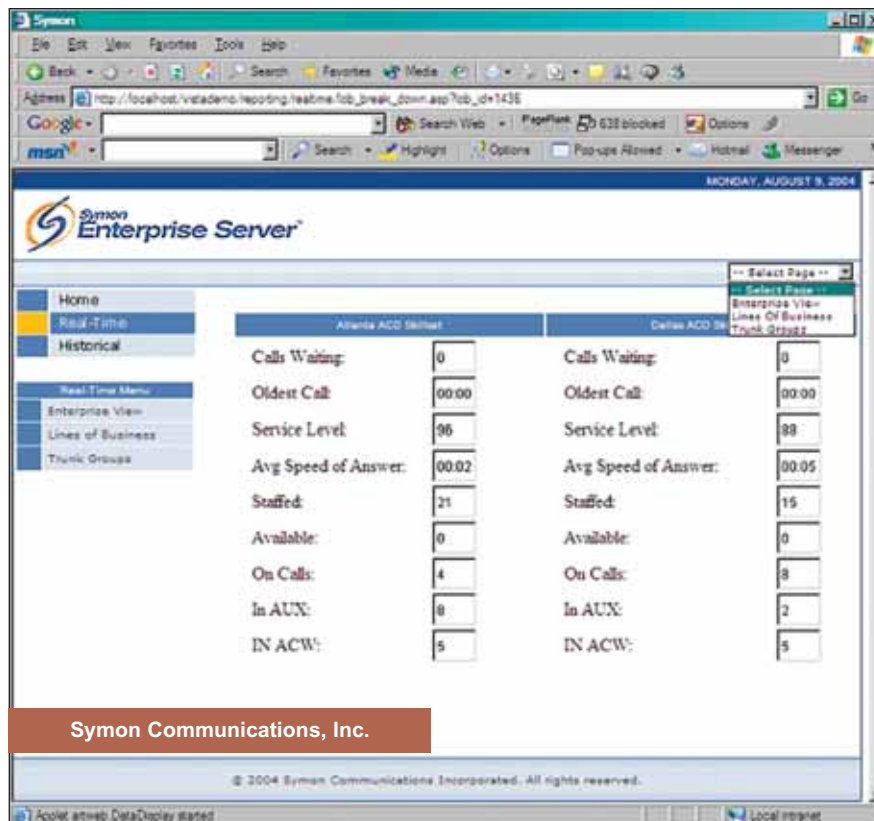
Symon Communications, Inc., a provider of enterprise information for productivity and performance management solutions, has announced the release of Symon Enterprise Server (SES) 8.1. Symon has added more collectors and capabilities to SES 8.1 to further improve collection, transformation and distribution of both real-time and historical enterprise-wide key performance indicators and other business intelligence throughout the organization.

Included in SES 8.1 is Series IV and its various reporting options and product modules to enable large, advanced applications to more quickly set up without the wait of customization. SES 8.1 with the new Series IV options is intended to address enterprisewide data consolidation and reporting issues across single or multi-site and multi-vendor implementations, and to increase productivity and performance while eliminating data silos and reducing expenses. Data can be easily consolidated, aggregated, transformed and ready for use in a variety of presentation layers, including Web-based reporting with drill-down capability, agent scorecards, LED panels, plasmas and TVs, and Symon's alerting and messaging solutions. <http://www.symon.com>

#### Centergistic Announces AgentView PowerUser Dashboard Version 4.0

Centergistic Solutions, a provider of enterprise performance management software, has announced the release of AgentView Enterprise PowerUser version 4.0, sold as a module for Centergistic's AgentView Enterprise Performance Management system.

Version 4.0 of the interactive desktop dashboard provides contact center managers and other senior level managers the ability to create a dashboard of information windows, on the desktop, that show evolving views of real-time group statistics, individual agent "states" and historical summary information, all in one place. As additional capabilities are added, new customized



windows can be turned on to show that information. The information contained in these windows can be collected from other ACD ports and other data sources.

Version 4.0 has improved the flexibility

of the information windows, enabling dynamic re-sizing and font selection. Additional graphics views are now available, as is a special "stealth" color-coded alarm that can be set to display in the



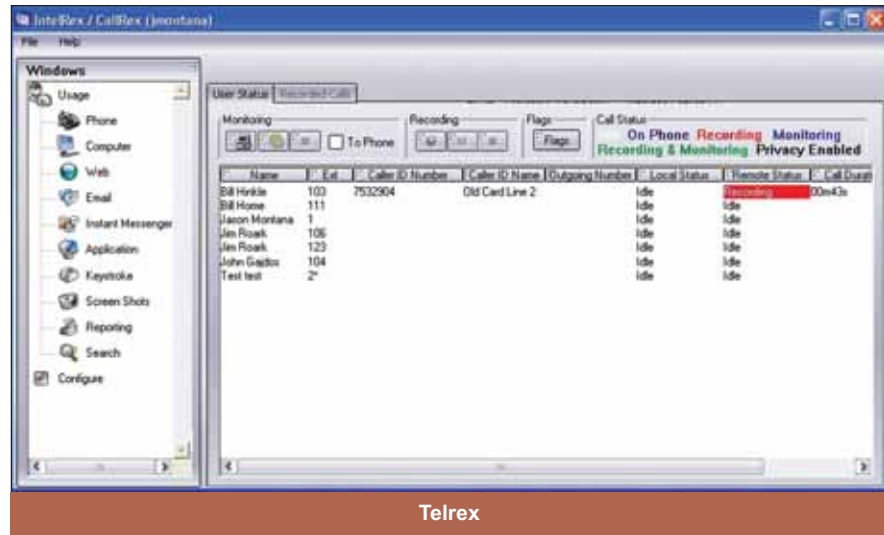
background. Individual user authentication security controls have also been added.  
<http://www.centergistic.com>

## Telrex Announces CallRex v3.0 As Enhanced Multisite VoIP Call Recording

Telrex, a developer of VoIP call recording and monitoring software for small and medium-sized businesses with IP or IP-enabled telephone systems, has announced the release of CallRex Version 3.0.

"CallRex is entirely software-based, thus it is 50-60 percent less expensive than legacy-based solutions that require expensive proprietary telephony cards and are complex to install," Robert Kapela, Telrex product manager, said.

New features of this updated software: look-back call recording; support for Citrix terminal services; the ability to export multiple calls; improved trigger filtering; automatic deletion of recorded calls according



to pre-defined criteria; remote polling of recorded phone calls; improved recording quality; restart capability for remote data collectors; improved call compression; improved record-on-demand capabilities;

the ability to automatically receive software updates online; among other enhancements.

CallRex currently supports 3Com, Mitel, Avaya, Cisco, Shortel, Nortel,

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Siemens, NEC, Zultys, Artisoft, and many softswitches and gateways. The VoIP call recording and monitoring software is sold through a network of resellers.

<http://www.telrex.com/callrex.htm>

## ASC Provides Free VoIP Recording Solution

ASC, a provider of integrated communications recording and performance improvement solutions, has announced a trial version of its new VoIP recording solution will be available for free to any company that requests it. The full, working solution, EVOip, offered for use through December 2005 with no stipulations, allows companies to determine its value as a business tool.

Completely software-based with no proprietary hardware required, EVOip may be installed on a PC running Windows 2000 or Windows XP to record, store, search and replay VoIP call data. Calls are categorized by selected parameters, such as date, start/end time, call duration, channel or IP address, and then stored on the company's server. A browser-based graphic interface allows users to easily play back, archive or e-mail recordings. Features allow the company to perform search-and-replay through any browser.

The product requires that the IP telephony solution currently being used sup-

port standard IP protocols as well as data switch spanning.

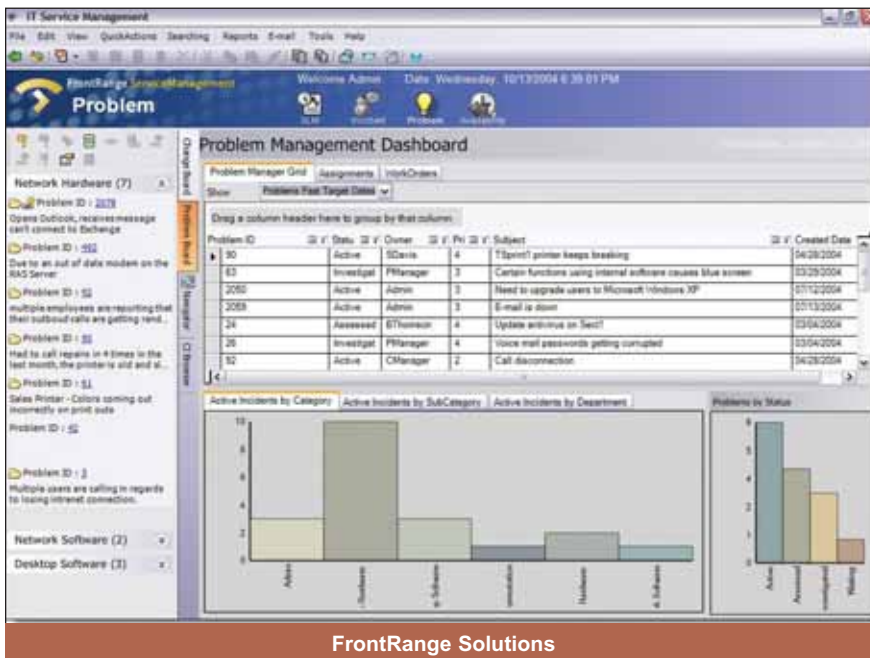
<http://www.asctelecom.com>

## Contact Center Software

### FrontRange Launches New IT Service Management Solution

FrontRange Solutions, a provider of IT Service Management and CRM solutions for small to mid-sized enterprises (SME) and distributed enterprises, is announcing availability of its new modular IT Service Management (ITSM) solution. Built on the Microsoft .NET platform, it offers advanced technology capabilities and was designed to "become the most integrated ITIL compatible solution in the marketplace."

"The most significant vendor events in the service desk arena in 2005 may not be from the enterprise level players, but from the mid-market," John Ragsdale, senior research director for Forrester Research, said. "This release could change what 'enterprise service desk' means. This new suite, on a .NET platform, includes surprisingly complex functionality across incident, problem and change management, all for an attractive single price."



FrontRange Solutions

## Quick Hits...

### Oracle Buys PeopleSoft

Oracle Corporation has announced its signing of a definitive merger agreement to acquire PeopleSoft, Inc. after 18 months' of hostility. Oracle intends to enhance PeopleSoft 8, to develop a PeopleSoft 9, to enhance a JD Edwards 5, and to develop a JD Edwards 6. It also intends to immediately extend and improve support for JD Edwards and PeopleSoft customers worldwide. Oracle revealed that it will be paying \$10.3 billion (in cash) for the acquisition of PeopleSoft. This translates to \$26.50 a share. Oracle had insisted its previous offer of \$24 per share, or \$9.2 billion, was its best and final offer. PeopleSoft stockholders have tendered approximately 75 percent of PeopleSoft outstanding stock, as of December 28, giving Oracle control of the company. The combined organization is now positioned to become the second-largest producer of business application software, after only SAP.

<http://www.oracle.com>

<http://www.peoplesoft.com>

### IBM And Fujitsu Partner To Promote Open Standards For Autonomic Computing

Fujitsu Limited, a provider of customer-focused IT and communications solutions, and IBM, the information technology company, have announced an agreement to collaborate on autonomic computing standards. Initial areas of collaboration are expected to include existing or new standardization efforts related to the Web Services Distributed Management (WSDM) Event Format, standardization of a set of actions to manage IT resources, and standards related to software installation and deployment. Through their collaborative efforts with standardization bodies, Fujitsu and IBM will promote the industrywide adoption of autonomic computing standards.

[www.ibm.com](http://www.ibm.com)

[www.fujitsu.com](http://www.fujitsu.com)

### CPT's Voice Harbor Integrates With VoiceGenie's NeXusPoint

CPT International, a provider of standards-based voice application hosting services, has announced that VoiceGenie Technologies' NeXusPoint software is now supported by CPT's Voice Harbor. VoiceGenie is a provider of VoiceXML-certified platforms and solutions for speech ser-



FrontRange emphasizes IT Service Management solution's "rare ability" to provide such an overview, with each of its seven modules launched from a single common architecture. This allows all applications to work from a single database and easily exchange information, intended to simplify reporting across all levels of the business. The seven service management modules that comprise the new ITSM product are as follows:

- Incident Management;
- Problem Management;
- Change Management;
- Release Management;
- Availability Management;
- Configuration Management; and
- Service Level Management.

"ITSM represents a significant milestone for FrontRange," FrontRange CEO Michael McCloskey said. "With our new solutions, we will deliver the most advanced technology platform available in the marketplace for managing IT infrastructures. Within our advanced framework, we have codified our experience and best practices for delivering IT solutions to more than 8,000 companies worldwide."

The suite will be available by the end of January 2004.

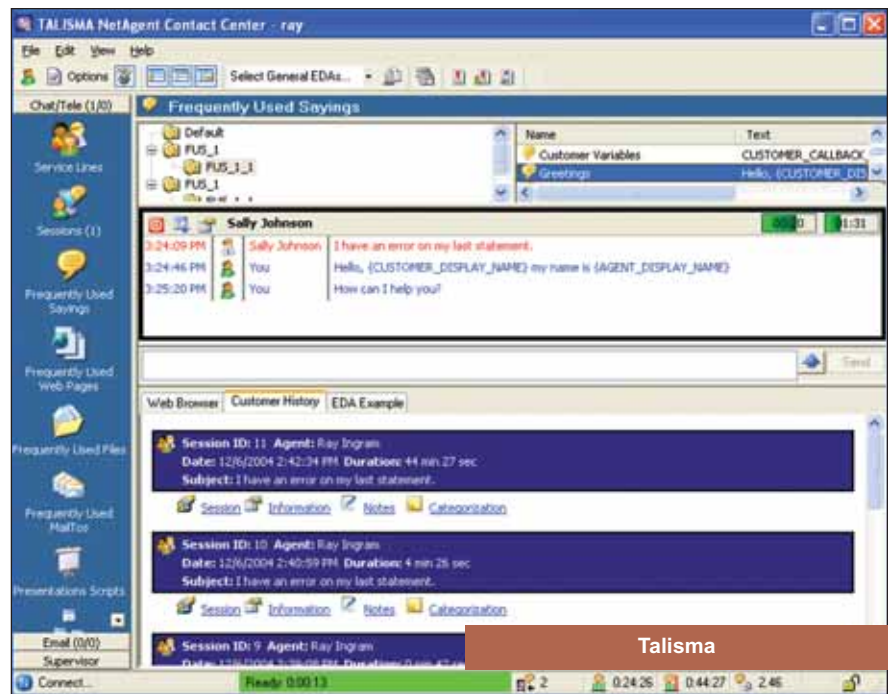
<http://www.frontrange.com>

### **Talisma's NetAgent 6.6 Intended To Increase Customer Satisfaction/Agent Productivity**

Talisma, a provider of multichannel CRM solutions, has announced the launch of NetAgent 6.6, a comprehensive multichannel interaction management solution for contact centers that is intended to make it easier for contact center and customer service agents to provide exceptional customer service.

Key enhancements include an updated version of NetAgent Chat that allows agents to proactively engage Web site visitors, based on unique criteria, using real-time text messaging. It also enables agents to assist customers with form completion and provides the ability to "push" Web pages to potential customers while co-browsing.

Developed specifically for contact centers, this latest release is comprised of NetAgent E-mail, NetAgent Chat and NetAgent CTI. Talisma NetAgent 6.6 can intelligently dispatch and route incoming



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requests to agents across multiple channels, to ensure customers receive the optimum level of service necessary to resolve their issues.

Additionally, NetAgent 6.6 ships with many new telephony enhancements, including multi-line voice conferencing and screen-popup countdown.

<http://www.talisma.com>

## SoundBite Launches SoundBite 5.0 For Telecommunications

SoundBite Communications, a provider of on-demand customer communications solutions, has announced the availability of SoundBite 5.0 for Telecommunications, a Web-hosted solution built on SoundBite's patented interactive voice messaging (IVM) technology platform and designed specifically for telecommunications companies. Leveraging SoundBite's experience working with various types of companies, SoundBite 5.0 for Telecommunications allows these organizations to rapidly reach their customers with timely, personalized

communications and empowers those customers to respond immediately. In addition, companies benefit from "pay as you go" use; no hardware or software installation; automated, real-time access and management of campaigns; rapid campaign implementations; and high response rates.

SoundBite 5.0 for Telecommunications' new features enhance the real-time execution and administration capabilities for all interactive campaigns within an organization. Those enhancements include the following:

- OnDemand Blended Suppression — wherein a phone number or a group of phone numbers can be blocked from being called during a campaign;
- OnDemand Enterprise Support — with which organizations have the ability to create, manage and report on their SoundBite campaigns on a companywide basis; and
- OnDemand Campaign Management and Reporting — enabling companies to manage calling campaigns over the Web, in real time, as well as to obtain real-time results.

vices. The partnership offers to developers and enterprise customers using the NeXusPoint platform an outsource alternative to CPE deployment. CPT and VoiceGenie previously partnered on industry-specific voice application projects within the insurance, telecom services and government sectors.

<http://www.voicegenie.com>

<http://www.cptii.com>

## Genesys Announces Reseller Agreement With PeopleSoft, Forms Strategic Relationship With Unveil

Genesys Telecommunication Laboratories, Inc., a contact center software provider and Alcatel company, and PeopleSoft, Inc. have announced a new global reseller agreement. Under the agreement, both companies will collaborate on product roadmaps and continue their development of solutions that combine Genesys contact center software and PeopleSoft enterprise CRM applications. The first offering under the new agreement is an out-of-the-box computer-telephony integration (CTI) solution that pre-integrates Genesys 7 software with PeopleSoft Enterprise Service applications and CRM analytics (versions 8.8 and 8.9). Also, PeopleSoft will sell and support the Genesys Framework and the new, server-side Gplus Adapter for PeopleSoft. In other company news, Genesys, with Unveil Technologies, a provider of conversational voice self-service applications for call centers, has announced that Unveil has joined the Genesys InterActs Partner Program as a strategic member. As part of the agreement, Unveil can resell both the Genesys 7 contact center software and the Genesys Voice Platform in conjunction with its Conversation Manager solutions.

<http://www.genesyslab.com>

<http://www.unveil.com>

## ServiceWare And Kanisa To Merge

ServiceWare Technologies, Inc., a provider of knowledge management solutions for service and support, and Kanisa Inc., a provider of service resolution management (SRM) software applications, have announced the signing of a definitive agreement to merge in an all-stock transaction.

The new name of the combined company, to be headquartered in Cupertino, California, has not yet been determined. The combined company (with 170+ joint customers) will offer a suite of SRM applications for agents,



KANA (see pg 25)



The platform also includes answering machine detection, which can eliminate hang-ups on a live person and clipped messages on answering machines. The Direct Connect feature gives call recipients the option to connect directly to a live agent, and the Load Balancing feature allows outbound calls to be automatically adjusted to control the influx of inbound calls to the call center.

SoundBite 5.0 for Telecommunications also enhances companies' call center effectiveness by automatically capturing information to complete transactions, and enabling screen-pop and whisper functionality to improve agent efficiency. The platform can seamlessly integrate with existing call center infrastructure, such as automatic call distributors (ACDs) and customer relationship management (CRM), to create an end-to-end customer interaction management solution.

<http://www.soundbite.com>

## Web-Based Customer Service

### KANA To Optimize Service Resolution Management

KANA, a provider of service resolution management (SRM) solutions, has announced the availability of KANA Resolution, a process-driven customer service solution exclusively focused on optimizing the resolution process. KANA Resolution can reduce service costs, improve customer satisfaction and increase revenue opportunities by enabling contact center agents to solve customer inquiries faster, more accurately and consistently across service channels.

KANA Resolution is intended to improve the delivery of service by leveraging intelligence to automatically provide agents with the information and process required to resolve customer requests, thus reducing first-call resolution rates and decreasing call handling times. Built on KANA's architecture, the solution provides deep enterprise application integration (EAI) support. This EAI support brings real-time enterprise information, such as customer history, shipping or billing information, into a single integrated view.

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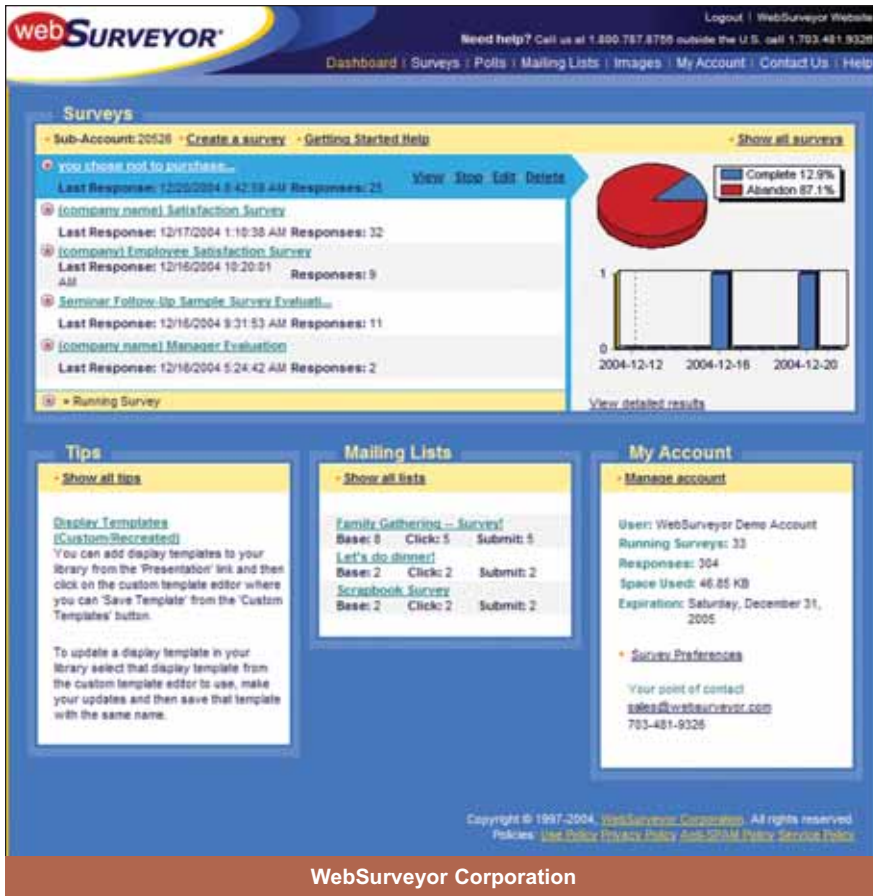
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The agent is guided through the resolution process, creating a consistent and repeatable resolution environment. KANA Resolution can capture and automate contact center processes, to decrease agent-training time, call handling time and customer churn, while also increasing cross-sell and upsell opportunities.

KANA Resolution's included features:

- A Resolution desktop that augments existing service environments with an intuitive process-driven interface;

- Resolution management that guides agents through a step-by-step process to solve customer problems;

- KANA IQ integration, which provides full access to the customer knowledge database; and

- Treatments and offers to suggest appropriate customer communication, including cross-sell and upsell offers.

<http://www.kana.com>

## WebSurveyor Releases WebSurveyor 5.0 For DIY Online Surveys

WebSurveyor Corporation, a provider of do-it-yourself online surveys, has announced the release of WebSurveyor 5.0, the latest version of its online survey tool. This latest version of the Web-based tool offers greater control through a comprehensive survey dashboard, along with a dynamic new user interface. The survey dashboard provides centralized control over the survey process, displaying an integrated view of survey activity, and presenting the top five most recent surveys,

self-service and peer support, delivered on an integrated knowledge management and search platform.

The merger is expected to close in the first quarter of 2005.

<http://www.serviceware.com>

<http://www.kanisa.com>

## Recruitmax Launches DIG And Raises Contribution For First Coast Brain Injury Support Group

Recruitmax, a provider of workforce management technology solutions, has announced the launch of its Data Intelligence Group (DIG). Recruitmax DIG is composed of several in-house technology experts and certified professionals who will focus on business intelligence and the execution of data management best practices, including methodologies for data migration and integrations across business applications.

Recruitmax also announced that its first Work-a-Thon raised \$3,410 for the First Coast Brain Injury Support Group (FC-BISG), the local chapter of the Brain Injury Association of Florida — the largest donation to date for the support group. The Recruitmax Work-a-Thon, staffed by its engineering and support teams, was held during the weekends of October 16 and 23 (October is recognized as Brain Injury Awareness Month). Recruitmax donated \$10 for each order filled between the hours of 6 p.m. on Friday through 8 a.m. on Monday for both weekends.

<http://www.recruitmax.com>

## VCom And Navigata Partner For WiMAX Delivery Of Wireless High Speed Internet In Kamloops

VCom Inc. (formerly WaveCom Electronics Inc.), a designer and manufacturer of wireless telecom products, has partnered with Navigata Communications Inc., a member of the SaskTel group of companies, to provide the primary equipment required for Kamloops to be the first location in Canada to receive the benefits of new WiMAX technology. VCom will be the exclusive developer and supplier of the wireless technology used in the pilot to undertake broadband WiMAX wireless network development in Kamloops and its immediate surrounding areas.

<http://www.vcom.com>

<http://www.navigata.ca>

<http://www.sasktel.com>

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response rates, number of responses and more.

New features/functions: list management; a gateway page; library management; survey detail report; online polls; quota controls; date controls; enhanced analysis; scoring; improved graphics; cluster reports; and improved branching.

<http://www.websurveyor.com>

## Speech Technologies

### Loquendo Releases Tool For Speech Applications Prompts, Offers Saskia To Accompany Willem

Loquendo, an Italy-based speech technology company, has released its latest software technology, Loquendo TTS 6.4, to include TTS Director. Loquendo TTS Director is a multiplatform Java development tool that supports users in designing effective prompts for their applications.

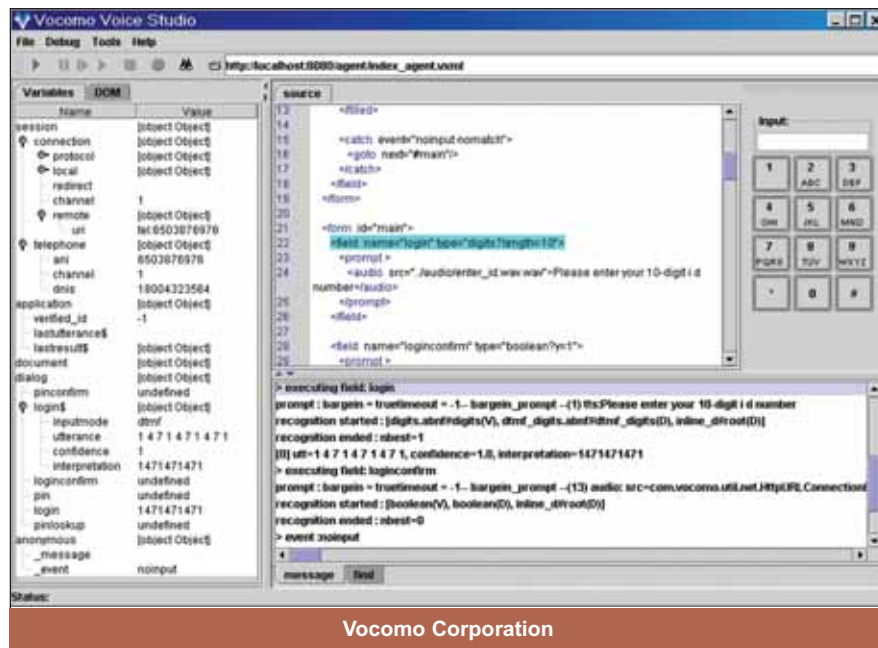
Text is written and interactively refined through a "listen & edit" procedure, allowing fine-tuning for better TTS performance. Prompt designers can select the TTS voice, which may be changed through control tags in the text itself; they can choose among Multi-line, Paragraph or SSML Modes; they can set acoustic and prosodic parameters; and they can save their edited prompts both in text and audio formats.

The Control Tags menu provides access to Loquendo's TTS Control Tags, which are grouped according to a set of categories, enabling the right choice to be made more easily.

The Effects menu guides users through the software's advanced features, which include expressive cues and plug-in lexicons to obtain the required effect. They are grouped according to intuitive linguistic categories.

The repertoire of Expressive Cues consists of a set of prerecorded formulas that include conventional figures of speech, such as greetings and exclamations, interjections and paralinguistic events, to suggest expressive intention, therefore making vocal messages sound more lifelike and expressive.

Many customers from numerous sectors — such as telecommunications, banking,



voice portals and content providers — are currently using Loquendo TTS. Also suited for e-mail, personal assistants, talking heads, unified messaging, mobile and CRM applications, Loquendo TTS is available in 16 different languages, in both male and female voices, and runs on all relevant operating systems.

In other company news, Loquendo has announced Saskia, the new bubbly Dutch female voice to accompany Willem, the Dutch male persona. Saskia is the latest addition to Loquendo's multilingual portfolio of lifelike synthetic speech. (See New Products in Nov. 2004 issue of *Customer Interaction Solutions*® for more about Willem.)

"The two new expressive voices, Saskia and Willem, are the most human-sounding voices available and provide our customers with a greater variety of TTS options to meet their business needs," Rosanna Duce, Loquendo VP Marketing & Sales, said.

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"Our customers can leverage high quality voices to deliver best voice applications: this is not only a major milestone for Loquendo, but the industry at large."

To listen to the synthetic voices of Saskia and Willem and their expressivities, visit

<http://www.loquendo.com>

### Vocomo Announces Immediate Availability Of IVR Desktop Tool

Vocomo Corporation, a provider of next-generation interactive voice response (IVR) systems, has announced immediate availability of its new release of VocomoVoice Studio, a desktop tool for developing, testing and debugging VoiceXML IVR applications.

VocomoVoice Studio 2.1 is "an ideal desktop IVR programming environment for the serious IVR application developer." Vocomo's IVR software products can move IVR solutions from the domain of custom software and specially designed telephony boards to an open software model for standard high-volume computing platforms, accelerated by the following features for IVR developers: full VoiceXML 1.0/VoiceXML 2.0 interpreter; built-in text-to-speech (TTS) synthesizer; VoiceXML browser support of the SSML "say-as" tag; playback of prerecorded audio files; virtual phone keypad for DTMF

input; complete VoiceXML debugger with single step and variable inspection; full breakpoint capability for easy debugging; ECMA script debugging; execution history to allow developers to investigate a given execution path; on-screen script inspection for ease of VoiceXML IVR programming; support of remote application server access via HTTP; compatibility with all Web application server environments; extended VoiceXML Grammar Support; VoiceXML tutorial; and full compatibility with VocomoVoice Response 2.1.

A free download of VocomoVoice Studio 2.1 tryout software, at the company's Web site, allows developers to sample the product for 30 days before purchasing the full version.

<http://www.vocomosoft.com>

## **Workforce & Employee Management**

### **Kenexa Introduces Interview Builder, Web-Based Solution Streamlines Hiring Process**

Kenexa, a provider of human resource solutions, has announced the introduction of Kenexa Interview Builder, the company's comprehensive solution for providing HR and hiring managers with competency-

based structured interviews. Previously available via CD software and housed on individual computers, the new Kenexa Interview Builder provides multiple users with anywhere/anytime access to interview questions and resources via the Web.

Using Kenexa Interview Builder, organizations complete a Web-based job analysis to determine critical competencies for specific job functions and those that are indicative of top performers. Key questions are then identified to successfully measure those competencies and are posted to the company's Web site for hiring managers to access prior to an interview. During the interview, hiring managers can rate the candidates' responses to the questions and electronically submit the scores into the Kenexa Interview Builder system for further analysis or retrieval.

"When a company creates an interview script, they think they know what they want to hear, but [they] rarely have the data to support the questions they ask," Troy Kanter, president, human capital management for Kenexa, said. "Now, instead of making hiring decisions based on gut feelings and personal likes and dislikes, hiring managers and HR can select candidates based on objective data, which also prevents potential legal ramifications and mitigates risk in the hiring process."

Kenexa Interview Builder can be supplemented with a series of ongoing training programs to support the roll out of the solution within the organization and to assist hiring managers in determining characteristics of a good interview. It also provides multiple levels of access to various levels within the organization. Its reporting functionality has been updated for easier use when comparing candidates. Kenexa Interview Builder is currently available.

<http://www.kenexa.com>

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### **Workscope Opens International Data Centers**

Workscope, Inc., a provider of human resource solutions, has announced its expansion of operations with the opening of two new international data centers. Workscope's European data center is located in Germany, and its Asia Pacific data center is located in Hong Kong. Workscope's expansion into these international locations enables it to provide outsourced HR solutions for benefits and workforce management to multiple-country companies with offices in Europe, Middle East, Africa, Asia and Australia.

<http://www.workscope.com>

### **UniPress And Contactual Partner To Deliver Integrated Customer Service And Telephony Solutions**

UniPress Software, Inc., a provider of Web-based service desk automation solutions targeting the mid-market, and Contactual (formerly White PJ, Inc.), a provider of on-demand contact center solutions, have announced a partnership to offer on-demand, Web-based customer service technology solutions. The partnership links UniPress Software's FootPrints Web-based service desk with Contactual's OnDemand Contact Center, providing organizations with an integrated service desk and telephony solution.

<http://www.contactual.com>  
<http://www.unipress.com>

### **Voiceglo Products And Services Now Available Through eCOST.com Online Retail Site And Catalog**

Voiceglo, a communications and networking company, has announced that online retailer eCOST.com will distribute Voiceglo's Internet phone products, including its proprietary GloPhone service, through eCOST.com's Web-based store and catalog. As part of the distribution agreement, eCOST.com will add Voiceglo's USB phone product and GloPhone VoIP service to its online inventory, allowing consumers and small businesses to conveniently sign up for Voiceglo's services and buy the corresponding hardware at the same time.

<http://www.voiceglo.com>  
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A large background image of a woman with dark hair, wearing a Sennheiser headset, smiling and looking down at her work. She is wearing an orange sweater over a light blue shirt. The background is a bright, modern office environment with large windows.

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Contact centers may be the biggest beneficiaries of a switch to IP telephony. In addition the well-documented cost savings VoIP offers over traditional telecom service, IP telephony is the perfect application for home agents because it enables seamless connectivity to remote networks.

The editors of Customer Interaction Solutions, the leading magazine in the contact center market, have contributed a two-day workshop to INTERNET TELEPHONY Conference & EXPO filled with answers to your most pressing questions as you select VoIP.

The conference sessions at "IP Contact Center Summit" address key issues for contact centers as they transition to IP, including: International VoIP Deployment, Distributed IP Contact Centers, Transitioning from TDM to IP, and Upgrading the Network to Support IP Contact Center Applications.

### IP Contact Center Summit Program

#### February 22-23, 2005

##### **The Evolving Contact Center**

Tuesday - 02/22/05, 12:00-12:45pm

Presented By: Hollie Moran, Product Marketing Manager, Aspect Communications

##### **Open Architecture IP Networks for the Contact Center**

Tuesday - 02/22/05, 1:00-1:45pm

Presented By: Rob Winder, Vice President of Business Development, Genesys

##### **Choose Wisely: Migrate Your Contact Center to IP**

Tuesday - 02/22/05, 2:00-2:45pm

Presented By: Kevin McPartlan, Vice President of Business Development, Nuasis Corporation

##### **Leveraging IP for the Contact Center**

Tuesday - 02/22/05, 3:00-3:45pm

Presented By: Wendell Black, Vice President of Sales, Telephony@Work

##### **IP Contact Center Shootout**

Tuesday - 02/22/05, 4:00-5:45pm

Presented By: Oscar Alban, Principal Global Market Consultant, Witness Systems Ross Daniels, Product Manager, Cisco Systems

##### **Turbocharge Your Call Center with Integrated CRM**

Wednesday - 02/23/05, 10:15-11:00am

Presented By: Jim Puchbauer, Director of Marketing, AltiGen Communications, Inc.

##### **Balancing The Customer Experience With Speech Technology**

Wednesday - 02/23/05, 11:15-12:00pm

Presented By: Joel Riciputi, Senior Product Marketing Manager, Nuance Communications

##### **The Role of Technology In Complying with FTC Mandates**

Wednesday - 02/23/05, 1:00-1:45pm

Presented By: Brian Chamberlain, CRM Consultant, Teleformix LLC

##### **IP and Offshoring: Options & Opportunities**

Wednesday - 02/23/05, 2:00-4:00pm

Presented By: Kevin McPartlan, Vice President of Business Development, Nuasis Corporation Ron Haigh, Senior Director of Engineering, Virtela Communications, Inc., Ross Daniels, Product Manager, Cisco Systems



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## Outsourcing: Assembling Your Best Options

**L**ately, the business headlines scream daily about their best advice for conducting business and outsourcing. Outsource everything to India! Stay put! Partner with a firm in the Caribbean! Co-source to the Philippines! Move to a cheaper domestic location! Send all your agents to work from home!

Who's right?

Maybe all of them. "Moderation in all things," said Terence, an ancient Roman comic dramatist (who lived back in the time when "outsourcing" referred to hiring mercenaries to sack Carthage). Is it shocking to suggest that the best solution to conducting business nowadays is to take a little from Column A, a little from Column B and a little from Column C, and combine them in a balance that's right for your company?

Technology changes the landscape for outsourcing almost weekly. The array of networking and data technologies available today allows the most seemingly haphazard arrangement of buildings, countries, call centers, managers and personnel — a help desk in the Philippines, a work group of agents in Des Moines, their manager on a working vacation in Florida, a sales guy lost on Interstate 80 somewhere in Pennsylvania, some Spanish-speaking agents in Texas, Albert the Warehouse Guy on his lunch break over a pastrami on rye in Moe's Diner, and the billing people at corporate headquarters — can easily be "glued together" by technology to the point that the customer has no idea they're not all in the same room with one another.

Sound expensive? It's not...compared to the costs of "traditional" (read: "old fashioned and quaint") systems of the not-so-distant past. Costs splashed out

on newer technologies are recouped on the savings in long-distance bills, expensively located call centers, agent turnover, inefficiencies and customer churn.

Am I saying your company CFO isn't going to bounce off all four walls when you propose these types of new technology and overhead investments to him? Of course not — that's what CFOs do. But after you leave his office and let him look over your proposal, more likely than not, he'll agree with Terence of Rome: mixed solutions, interoperable and in moderation, lead to better things.

*Tracey E. Schelmetic*  
Editorial Director  
Customer Interaction Solutions®

## The Benefits Of A Blended Customer Contact Solution

In recent years, companies have been forced to choose between either high quality or low cost when implementing a customer service solution. Domestic contact centers generally provided the highest quality service, but competitive pressures have forced many companies to go offshore to reduce costs.

Today, many of America's largest companies are discovering that the best way to maintain quality while reducing customer service costs is through a mix of locations and solutions. As a leading provider of customer contact solutions, West Corporation provides its clients with an ideal balance of quality and cost savings through blended solutions utilizing domestic, near-shore and offshore contact centers along with home agents and the latest in interactive speech technology.

In addition to higher quality and reduced costs, there are numerous advantages to blended solutions, including:

**Expandability:** One of the inherent features of a West blended solution is that it combines multiple contact center options and home agents with some of the largest speech-enabled port capacity in the industry. This combination makes it easier for companies to absorb unforeseen spikes in call volume and offload transaction-based volume or FAQs.

**Built-in Backup Systems:** In addition to standard backup systems, a blended solution gives you additional security. Should any one location be unavailable

due to unforeseen service interruptions, West's Virtual ACD automatically routes calls to other available sites or remote agents. West's infrastructure is fully redundant and monitored by a state-of-the-art network operations center staffed 24/7/365.

**Ability to Prioritize Callers:** Your best customers deserve extra-special attention. With a blended solution, callers can be intelligently routed to the agent who best suits their needs. This specialized routing can be based on a number of factors, including the quality of service they require, cost or location. In most cases, this prioritization can be implemented with no additional contact costs.

West's blended solutions are customized to meet the changing needs of their dynamic corporate clients. Using robust technological capabilities developed and refined over the past 18 years, West can provide its clients with up-to-the minute reports that are tied to benchmarks selected by the client.

West Corporation's blended solutions are changing the future of customer contact centers and are becoming the most efficient and cost-effective way for today's companies to make sure customers and prospects receive the type of outstanding service they expect.

*For more information, please contact West Corporation at 800-841-9000, or visit <http://www.west.com>.*



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BY Brian Kelly, KANA

# BOLSTERING CUSTOMER SERVICE THROUGH SERVICE RESOLUTION MANAGEMENT

As companies look to grow their customer base, they are continually seeking ways to provide greater levels of customer service in order to attract and retain patrons. Although most organizations realize that providing great customer service is an essential part of their everyday operation, many are saddled with corporate mandates to remain responsive but cut costs. In order

to meet corporate goals and still provide customers with the answers they need quick-

ly, accurately and efficiently, organizations are turning to service resolution management.

There are three steps of customer service transactions — routing, case tracking and service resolution. The SSPA 2003 Support Industry Benchmark Study reported that routing calls is only five percent of the cost of providing customer service, 15 percent is the case management portion, and service resolution accounts for 80 percent of the time and cost of providing customer service. This is due to a number of factors, including disparate information, agent turnover and a lack of repeatable guiding processes. The numbers are eye-opening and are causing organizations to take a closer look at the process around the overall customer service experience. By optimizing the resolution process, a company can dramatically reduce the overall cost of providing service and create happy and loyal customers as a result.

The mature segments of the customer service market are routing and case management. Routing is a well automated process,

as most companies already having a routing system in place to properly and efficiently route service calls to the right department or agent within an organization. Obviously, this is a key component to customer support. It is, however, only the first step.

The next step is case management, which manages customer contacts or correspondence. Case management tools allow companies to build a record of those contacts and customer histories so the enterprise can maintain relevance and begin to build a relationship with the customer. A successful framework of service resolution management is built with a knowledge base of customer data and information. Organizations must build a knowledge base for customer service agents with a holistic view into the customer lifecycle. Information in the knowledge base should consist of how many times a particular customer has called, what type of calls he or she has made in the past and which products and services the customer has purchased. However, while these tools are an essential part of the customer service process and are absolutely necessary to automate and manage a call center, they are only the beginning of the process that makes up the customer experience. The goal of customer service is to provide answers to the customer. Call routing automation and case management are not the tools that actually accomplish that task.

**Service resolution accounts for 80 percent of the time and cost of providing customer service.**

The third and most vital step in a customer service transaction is service resolution. Service resolution focuses on resolving inquiries during the customer support process. SRM applications reduce service costs, improve customer satisfaction and increase revenue opportunities by enabling agents to resolve

customer inquiries faster and more consistently across service channels. The ability to provide an enhanced level of customer satisfaction through SRM is due to the open architecture associated with effective service resolution solutions. By enabling the service resolution application to connect to estab-



# Customer Relationship Management

## CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

lished legacy knowledge bases, call center agents can automatically be presented with customer data that allow them to present the most appropriate solution to the customer.

Once agents are armed with the correct answers, they then need to deliver the solutions to customers. This could involve providing the best solution and offering alternative solutions while also ensuring that opportunities to cross-sell or upsell are not missed. A service resolution application interfaces with existing case management and/or call center applications and optimizes the existing process. An effective service resolution application can solve customer issues by understanding the customer's request and providing the agent with the right tools, information and guidance.

A complete service resolution process involves several touch points with the customer: phone, e-mail, chat and self-service. The service agent's job is easier when these communication tools are integrated with tools such as search, collaboration, authoring, response and knowledge bases. Workflow on top of each solution further streamlines the process and reduces time spent on resolving the actual inquiry.

### Guessing Is Not A Best Practice

The workflows associated with the service resolution process take the guess work out of finding and delivering the right answers, even to the most complex inquiries. Many best practices are often lost within call centers due to agent turnover or simply because they are not documented. A complete service resolution process is one that captures best practices and ensures they are available to all contact center agents so when common inquiries are asked, both new and established agents can guide customers to the proper answers through a resolution workflow that encompasses best practices and also prompts agents when there is an opportunity for cross-selling and upselling.

The ability to cross-sell and upsell customers is a critical component to any service resolution application. Cross-selling and upselling provides companies with

opportunities to bolster revenue and increase customer loyalty. However, the most successful companies realize that it is much easier to sell to a happy customer rather than one who is having difficulty getting his or her inquiry addressed. This is where SRM can help. By increasing a contact center's first-call resolution rate, phone conversation times are decreased,

which results in happier customers and individuals who are open to upselling. By automatically being presented with cross-sell and upsell opportunities during the SRM process, agents can work to bring other products or services into the fold, capturing additional revenue.

Imagine that customer Thomas Smith calls his cell phone service provider. He is



immediately connected with a call center agent who retrieves his account information. Thomas explains that he believes there is a billing irregularity on his latest statement and he would like to talk with a contact center agent to discuss the charge.

As the agent engages with Thomas, his account information is verified and the agent has been presented with a complete picture of Thomas' information in a single integrated view pulled from all CRM systems that hold knowledge of Thomas and the products and services that apply to him. This gives the agent a comprehensive picture of Thomas and saves the agent's time by eliminating the necessity of sifting through multiple systems and screens.

Now that the agent has all of Thomas' account information, he or she can work on providing Thomas with an answer regarding his inquiry — fast and efficiently. Because Thomas asked a question that often garners customer inquiries, the contact center agent can work through an established resolution workflow. By taking Thomas through an established workflow, the agent is sure he or she is providing Thomas with the best possible information and answers.

While moving through the workflow that will resolve Thomas' billing inquiry, the contact center agent is alerted, through the serv-

ice resolution application, to a possible upsell opportunity. Because Thomas currently subscribes to a certain cell phone package, he is eligible to take advantage of unlimited picture messaging for an additional \$5.00 per month. By alerting the contact center agent that Thomas is eligible for this program, both the company and Thomas benefit because Thomas was interested in increasing his ability to send picture messages and the company realized a revenue opportunity.

By providing call center agents with the means to both resolve customer inquiries quickly and easily as well as cross-sell and upsell, organizations create longer lasting customer relationships and also increase their ability to capture additional revenue for the company.

### Overall Service Resolution Management Benefits

The benefits of implementing a service resolution strategy include increasing first call resolution rates, as agents have quick access to the right information, reduced agent training costs and significantly reduced agent turnover. As much as service resolution impacts cost reduction, it has the biggest influence on customer satisfaction and customer retention. Through proper service resolution

management, organizations improve the quality of customer service with quick, consistent and accurate answers enabling inquiries to get resolved faster and allowing companies to establish a greater level of customer loyalty.

*Brian Kelly is KANA's executive vice president of marketing and product strategy. He has 15 years' of experience in CRM at KANA with both current KANA analytics and enterprise CRM tools and in his former role as executive vice president of products at Broadbase Software, prior to its merger with KANA. At Broadbase, Brian was instrumental in product strategy and actively participated in its successful IPO in 1999, and secondary stock offering in 2000. Brian has used his vast experience in marketing, product development and strategy to ensure KANA remains a visionary leader in the eCRM market. He is responsible for KANA's product vision, marketing and strategy as the company continues to develop its eCRM applications optimized for key vertical markets.*

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# INNOVATIVE IDEAS FROM THE IP CONTACT CENTER EXPERTS

## IP Contact Centers And The Agile Company

**T**he contact center has long been looked upon as a cost center in an organization. This stigma is what has kept many organizations from investing more heavily in this area of their business. The introduction of technologies like VoIP are changing the landscape, allowing a corporation to use technology to differentiate itself from its competition and do business in entirely new ways.

### Mobility

Perhaps the least overlooked benefit of adding IP to the contact center is the power that is unleashed upon the knowledge workers in an organization. Today's mobile workforce is an under-used asset in most contact centers, as most call center technology requires agents in a queue to be sitting at a desk with a fixed telephone and a computer.

Voice over IP technology changes the above paradigm, allowing knowledge workers to travel around the world yet still be considered part of the virtual contact center. IP-based solutions allow these workers to roam where their jobs take them, yet still remain a vital, central part of the contact center.

### Field Sales/Service

Another area of enhanced integration when contact centers embrace IP is the field sales force that typically is considered a separate business unit in many organizations. Seamless connectivity including conferencing and collaboration with customers, partners, agents and field teams means increased service levels and higher sales.

### Virtual Contact Centers

IP allows contact centers to function in ways never before possible, such as

allowing agents to work from home and contact centers to be linked together in a loose network that appears a cohesive whole from a management perspective and to your customers.

### Multimodality

Once IP enters the call center, it transforms into a living, thriving contact center and allows organizations to meet the needs of their customers in the manner to which they are becoming accustomed. Customer preference, whether it's e-mail, chat or even video, can now be met on a case-by-case basis. Better yet, the proper resources to handle each mode can be located anywhere there is an Internet connection.

### Monitoring

One of the often overlooked benefits of VoIP in contact centers is the ability to use it to monitor agents in ways that are far superior to traditional telephony. In fact, IP by its very nature is an excellent technology that allows information to be recorded and shared from anywhere.

### New Ways Of Doing Business

What we are seeing in business today is the advent of differentiation via chan-

nel expansion. A company like Apple leveraged a product, the iPod, to help it build a retail channel to in turn sell its legacy computer products. This channel is being used as a differentiator by more and more companies. Consider the example of satellite radio operators opening kiosks in malls.

What would happen if IP contact centers were used to change the way rental car companies did business? What if the rental company could have video screens at airport counters instead of agents behind a counter, linking the customer to a remote agent? Is it really necessary to have a physical agent present? What if certain ATM machines in a grocery store could have a virtual banker available to ask questions and buy additional services? What about a healthy food manufacturer putting a video kiosk in a supermarket, or a consumer electronics company setting up a kiosk in Office Depot?

VoIP in the contact center is about saving money, increasing flexibility and even differentiating your company from your competitors. The incredible power the Internet affords an individual is dwarfed by the opportunity and flexibility afforded to an entire contact center full of agents and, most important, the organization for which the agents work. IP allows for new, unimagined ways of doing business and, most important, it allows your company to do business in the manner your customers need most.

*Rich Tehrani*  
*Group Editor-in-Chief*  
*Customer Interaction Solutions®*



# Build Customer Loyalty While Reducing Operational Costs

**A**s contact centers play an increasingly critical role in customer transactions, many businesses are seeking tools and applications to generate new revenue during interactions with established customers, essentially making sales and service extensions of one another. Companies today have two objectives: service the needs of their customers and turn their contact centers into profit centers.

Businesses that want to get closer to their customers are pursuing goals that seem to be at odds: improving customer service while also reducing contact center volumes and costs. To accomplish both, many businesses are transforming their conventional call centers into multichannel contact centers that support telephone, e-mail and the Web. This change provides customers with more service options while it reduces the number of calls that agents handle by phone.

It's clear for the small to medium-sized and distributed enterprises that being able to afford and generate new revenue in a contact center is critical to their survival. Their ability to deliver integrated services — whether they are revenue generating or service-oriented — can make the difference between attracting and retaining long-term customers, or just struggling to get by on

their way to extinction.

Small and midsize companies historically haven't been able to consider traditional call center solutions because these solutions traditionally were large, time-consuming implementations given the technologies that have been available. Copper-based analog networks are extremely limited as a contact center tool. Only telephones, PBXs ([define - news - alert](#)) and ACDs ([define - news - alert](#)) can connect to a copper-based network; copper wire won't accommodate PCs, laptops, IP phones, softphones and other data-driven telephony devices. Trunk capacity limits the number and type of interactions a system can handle.

Solutions today should include the convergence of voice and data onto the IP network. This will greatly simplify infrastructure management and reduce operational costs while increasing customer loyalty, upselling and cross-selling new products and services, still attracting new customers in this Internet-driven, global economy.

With a converged network and the adoption of [voice over-IP \(VoIP\) \(define - news - alert\)](#), a technology that carries voice as data, this new generation of contact centers provides significant advantages. In addition to connecting regular

telephones, VoIP enables companies to easily connect desktop computers, laptops, IP phones and softphones. Expansion is a snap because data networks are designed to scale with your company's needs. You can easily add and reduce staff based on seasonal sales cycles; and by implementing virtual private networks (VPNs), you can add remote agents as easily as you can add them in your corporate headquarters, without the need for special hardware or proprietary solutions.

To run a successful multichannel contact center, you need a single-platform technology solution that can provide four vital elements. First, it should provide self-service applications, allowing customers to do business with you when they want. Customers can complete transactions, initiate requests, check account balances and get status information without human assistance. Second, it should provide an extension of your network to include multiple sites and/or remote agents, so your customer relations follow the sun. Third, it should allow your customers more options to interact with your enterprise by communicating over e-mail and the Web by queuing/routing/handling all interactions, providing faster response times and enhancing the customers' personal experience. Finally, it should seamlessly integrate your contact center solution with other customer information applications (e.g., front- and back-end applications such as CRM, service management and ERP).

Each year, millions of customers switch to competitors for one simple reason — poor customer service. Because contact centers are the natural choice for interacting with customers, contact center managers are under more pressure to do more with less. While reducing operational costs, contact centers must also increase productivity and efficiency, customer loyalty and must generate new revenue through cross-selling and upselling activities.

A study by Bain and Company in 2003 found that a 5 percent increase in customer retention improves profitability by 25 percent to 100 percent, especially where customers have ongoing purchasing relationships.

In a recent Dataquest survey, 25 percent of the respondents reported integration costs as their highest concern when thinking about adding a contact center.

## Potential Operational Gains

- Call volume reduced by 20 percent or more
- Queue times reduced as much as 30 seconds
- Abandoned calls reduced by more than 35 percent
- 24-hour-a-day access across all time zones
- Customer satisfaction increased 20 percent or more

By Mike Heberling,  
Director of Business Development,  
FrontRange Solutions Inc.

For more information, please visit  
<http://www.thecontactfront.com>.

would select this profession was bewildering to them. Despite a lack of support, I pulled Sean aside to pass along some lessons about our business. I'll share them with you.

1. Pay attention during training! Companies spend millions of dollars cumulatively to create effective training. This training is designed to help the call center represen-

he does not want to be embarrassed. Good outbound telemarketing involves a more energetic use of voice, facial expressions and often body language. Sean did not think that this kind of emotive behavior would look very cool. My point is that if the person on the other end of the phone does not know you and cannot see you. . . then who cares?

5. It IS personal! Making phone calls is difficult. Sean is going to face a lot of rejection. The nonsensical beliefs that we can convince ourselves that this is a game, and that representatives should not take some of this personally, is naive. If a representative does not take his or her job personally on the negative side, it will be difficult to create a sense of enthusiasm for the positive side of the job. Managing the stress is important, but ignoring the stress is foolish.

6. Be unusual . . . listen to your manager! Much like my advice about stupid mistakes, this doesn't take a genius to figure out. However, listening to good coaching will make Sean more popular, make him more money, and make him better at what he does.

7. Get into management training! No other industry does as good a job promoting from within than teleservices. The road from the calling room to the board room is fairly straight. It's not easy, but making teleservices a career puts destiny in Sean's hands. "Promotion through performance" is not always a perfect approach, but I have rarely seen failure as the cause for promotion. (Cynics need not heed number 7.)

Sean is seventeen years old; soon to graduate; a skateboarding junkie; and an otherwise normal kid. So, as expected, he rolled his eyes at me and pretended to pay attention. But over a few minutes, it started to make sense to him and I could feel that a kernel of what I might call wisdom was transferred. One down . . . millions to go.

Until next time, I am on the line.

*Tim Searcy*  
CEO,  
The American Teleservices Association

# EDUCATING THE NEXT GENERATION

**BY**

*Tim Searcy,  
American  
Teleservices  
Association*



tative to be an effective conduit of information. If Sean pays attention during training, his success is not assured, but the probability of high performance improves. Good training exists in most firms and encompasses lifelong skills on communication, overcoming objections, vocal expression, etc.

2. Avoid the stupid mistakes! Be a great employee. "Show up on time, do what you're told, be cheerful and make a difference," I told Sean. I know this isn't brilliant advice, but in reality, we have a problem in our country. In many walks of life, employers have found the next generation lacks responsibility, a positive attitude and an interest in making a difference. If Sean commits to what he does each and every time, he will be perceived as an asset even if it is only by comparison.

3. Follow the script! One of the worst things a call center rep can do is shortcut what he or she has been taught. These misguided attempts to save time and effort remind me of the proverbial Road to Hell: the shortcut path is also paved with good intentions. Often, problems arise on the calling room floor as reps under pressure to perform start to become script authors. In an effort to boost performance, representatives start to share "best practices" with one another. These practices usually become increased material changes to the script. As I told Sean, not only is this against his new company's policy, but it will be easily detected and stopped through the loss of his job.

4. They can't see you! Sean is no different than almost anyone else, which means that

Like many of you, I spent time over the Thanksgiving holiday "at home." Home for me is Lincoln, Nebraska. While I was in town, my nephew Sean informed me that he was going to be joining the ranks of teleservices professionals. He had recently been hired by one of our member companies (without my assistance), and he was going to begin selling credit cards by phone. I was thrilled!

Sean is a member of my family through my wife's side. For years I have been a source of incredible confusion for my relatives. My in-laws could not understand how anyone could choose to be in this business. The fact that a second member of *la famiglia*

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BY Meenakshi Sharma, eGain

# HOSTED CRM FOR THE CONTACT CENTER

This is a good time to explore and acquire hosted CRM ([define](#) - [news](#) - [alert](#)) solutions for your contact center ([define](#) - [news](#) - [alert](#)). Often called “on-demand” solutions, hosted software applications for customer service, marketing automation, sales force automation and other aspects of CRM have evolved and matured over time. Nowadays,

it's not hard to find a solution that meets most, if not all, your needs.

Many companies are offering solutions that are proven in both hosted and in-house deployments, and users can attain the best of both worlds.

Contact centers are using this approach to practice and perfect their CRM strategies. Hosted applications become “training wheels” for these contact centers, allowing them to incrementally implement and fine-tune CRM initiatives and maximize the odds of CRM success. Contrary to popular belief, hosted solutions are not just hastily deployed, purely tactical quick fixes. Mature on-demand solutions offer exceptional functionality and, in fact, encourage innovation. Solutions that are proven in hosted as well as in-house modes offer unmatched flexibility, allowing contact centers to get up and running quickly, prove ROI (return on investment) and fine-tune requirements before seamlessly switching to an in-house deployment, if they choose.

## The Need For Speed

In a time of overlapping markets and a dizzying array of products, competitive advantages have moved from asset-based to adaptive capabilities; i.e., how fast can you learn, change and respond? This is as true for the contact center as for the rest of the enterprise. In fact, contact centers, more than most other parts of the organization, are being asked to reinvent themselves at short

notice and with limited resources. Businesses want their contact centers to do a lot more with a lot less. They want contact centers to provide high-quality, integrated customer interactions through multiple channels, cross-sell and upsell at every available opportunity, and provide critical information and insight about customers to the rest of the organization — and cut costs at the same time.

Is your contact center being asked to do “new” things — use new Web-based interaction channels, know everything about your customers' preferences and interaction history at the moment you interact with the customers, or analyze customer interactions for insight about preferences and product issues? Do you have the tools to achieve your new goals? Do you have unlimited time and budget to get there? Probably not.

Can you afford to ignore the promise of speed that hosted CRM applications offer? For instance, if you were part of a retail organization and swamped by customer e-mail, wouldn't an easy-to-deploy, easy-to-use e-mail management system be a real blessing during a holiday season? An experienced vendor can set up new tools in as little as a week. It is therefore not surprising that even large organizations are now opting for on-demand solutions to fix time-critical problems.

## Don't Dismiss The “Low TCO, Quick ROI” Claim

Besides the speed of deployment, another benefit of hosted CRM solutions that is widely acknowledged but not given enough consideration is that on-demand software offers low TCO (total cost of ownership) and quick ROI. Even detractors of hosted soft-

ware admit that it is a “low-risk, high and rapid returns” option. This characteristic makes hosted software a good fit for innovative, customer-focused organizations whose main goal is to adapt and respond to changing customer needs.

In an unpredictable environment where

Contrary to popular belief, hosted solutions are not just hastily deployed, purely tactical quick fixes.

change is the only constant, it's hard to dismiss the value of solutions that need low upfront investment and offer quick results. What makes the proposition even more attractive is that vendors with proven expertise in both in-house and on-demand deployments now offer a hybrid approach that allows for seamless migration from hosted to in-house implementations, a path that is becoming increasingly popular with contact centers of all sizes.

### Flexibility On Demand

What attracts contact centers to on-demand solutions is the freedom to start small and expand on demand. They don't have to pre-plan each small detail and the final state of a large deployment. They can determine the general roadmap, add pieces one at a time, monitor closely, and refine the system based on feedback from existing users and changing market demands. With hosted CRM software, companies can add users, interaction channels, capabilities and customization and integration, all on demand.

### Attractive Features Of On-Demand Delivery

***It's ideal for distributed contact centers and agents.*** One hosted CRM benefit that doesn't get enough ink in evaluations is that most mature on-demand products are Web-based, which makes them perfect for virtual contact centers. A user can log in from anywhere as long as he or she has access to a Web browser.

***The product is easy to use.*** A bonus benefit that organizations typically discover later is that products designed for on-demand deployment are often easier to use than those meant for only in-house installations. With in-house deployments, organizations often run into huge hidden training costs. The very nature of on-demand applications makes vendors ensure they are easy to support. Web-based products tend to have particularly user-friendly interfaces.

***Upgrades and routine maintenance are easy.*** Most satisfied hosted CRM users rave about how little it takes to maintain the system. Businesses with limited IT resources are some of the biggest advocates of hosted CRM. Upgrades are not a nightmare and

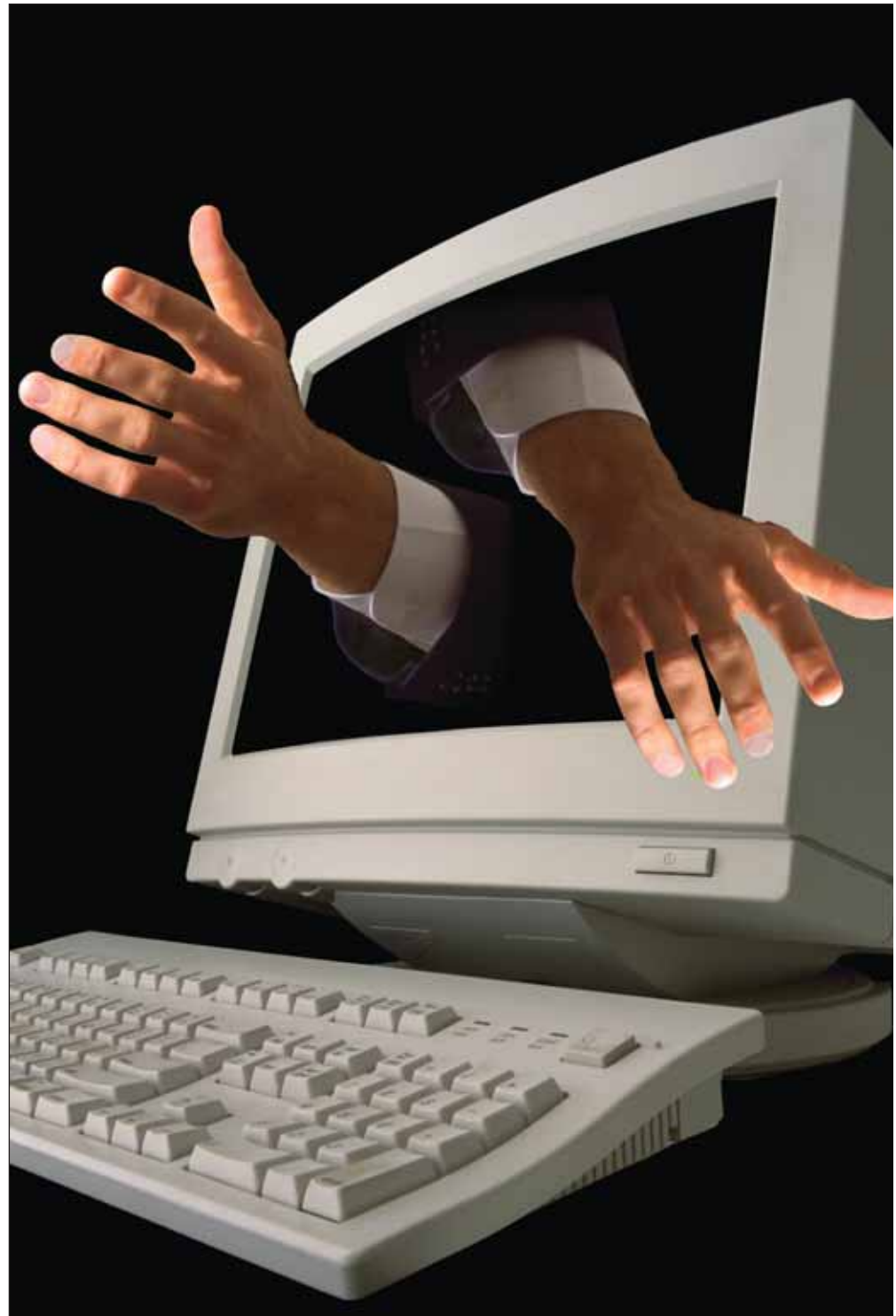
routine maintenance can be almost invisible. The "Pros" Are Numerous, Most Of The "Cons" Have Disappeared

Here's some more good news: mature solutions don't have the three common limitations of early hosted CRM applications.

***Limited customization options.*** No longer must companies accept on-demand solutions "as is." Mature solutions can now be

customized as easily as in-house options. They also provide extensive configuration capabilities that reduce the need for custom coding.

***Lack of integration capabilities.*** Here too, mature solutions are designed to fit into companies' existing environments. Integrations with transaction and fulfillment systems are readily available in these





solutions.

**Inadequate security.** Some hosted CRM solutions offer even more data security than what companies were planning to attain for an in-house deployment. Of course, different industries may have some different requirements (as is the case with some financial services organizations), which may rule out the hosted option.

### Choosing A Solution

Important guidelines that should be considered when considering a hosted solution include the following:

**Check customer references.** Speak to the company's customers that use the product on a hosted basis.

**Consider various deployment options.** Many companies allow users to "try it before you

propose" for hosted solution providers.

**Ask if the application scales easily.** You should be able to expand usage of the system easily and without any disruptions in service. Also ask about common customizations that the vendor performs for similar deployments.

**Check to ensure if the system will integrate with your existing systems.** A hosted CRM solution provider can provide integration with your in-house systems to allow you to leverage current investments. Many users look for out-of-the-box integrations that can help minimize the cost of ownership.

**Does the vendor use a collocation facility?** Your hosted solution provider should house your applications and data in data centers to ensure data security. You may wish to ask about redundant heating, ven-

ance.

**Determine policies about routine maintenance and upgrades.** You may wish to ask about the vendor's policies regarding security updates and patches, spam filtering and application upgrades and patches.

**Ask how often backups are performed.** Check for complete daily and weekly backup, incremental transaction log backup, and onsite and offsite storage

**Determine the vendor's disaster recovery policy.** It should include co-location sites, redundant network access and backup servers and hardware.

Hosted solutions address the Achilles' heel of traditional in-house CRM implementations, which have classically failed because of their enormous scope, the complexity and requirements of organizational and behavioral changes, the challenges of process definition and improvement, metric development, and ever-changing business priorities that risk even the best run initiatives. However, hosted solutions should not be seen as the antithesis to in-house deployments. The implementation cycle should include the same phases: try, prove, optimize, scale and integrate.

With some of today's solutions in in-house as well as hosted deployments, companies are finding they can find the best of both worlds — they can seamlessly bring the hosted solution in-house if and when they need to. If this sounds too good to be true, it's time for you to take a closer look at today's hosted solutions.

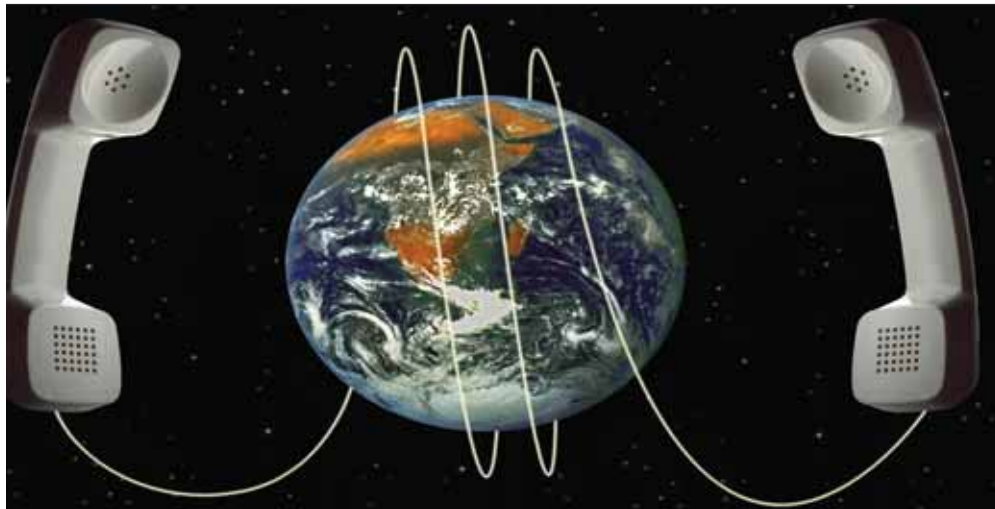
*Meenakshi Sharma is marketing communications manager at eGain (<http://www.egain.com>), a provider of customer service and contact center software and services. eGain Service, the company's software suite, installed on-demand as well as in-house, includes integrated applications for customer e-mail management, live Web collaboration, service fulfillment, knowledge management and Web self-service.*

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**Match the product suite support to your contact center roadmap.** Companies may wish to include components such as knowledge management, interaction management, process management, reasoning capabilities and analytic capabilities. Check to see if it supports expansion to other interaction types such as proactive contacts, self-service, interactive service and escalated contacts, if these features are important to you.

**Consider the time it will take to deploy the product.** Rapid time-to-benefit is a key value

proposition for hosted solution providers. tilation and air conditioning; uninterruptible power supply (UPS) with automatic power transfer bridge system; and premises security.

**Ask about security measures.** The hosting network architecture should include multi-level security that eliminates single points of failure and security risks within the network, systems and physical locations.

**Determine if you are guaranteed availability and performance.** Many service providers can guarantee very high levels of availability. Look for built-in redundancies, failover, disaster recovery and wrap-around security for round-the-clock availability. Additionally, look for the provider's ability to perform proactive monitoring and maintenance for all critical services to ensure peak perform-



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## CUSTOMER INTER@CTION SOLUTIONS' 2004 PRODUCT OF THE YEAR AWARDS

While the technology market may be coming back to life, it's still vital that capital investment in technology and services be invested as wisely as possible in order to speed return on investment and improve

the business processes and bottom line of the companies that purchase these technologies.

To this end, the editors of *Customer Inter@ction Solutions*® have compiled a list of the best of the best for our readers. These products span a range of product categories, but all represent the pinnacle in their chosen arenas. As always, we encourage you to do research to help you select those technologies and companies that best suit your company's business needs and, ultimately, your most important company asset of all: your customers.



### **ACCPAC,** a Best Software company <http://www.accpac.com> **ACCPACcrm.com 5.6**

ACCPACcrm.com version 5.6, the hosted version of ACCPAC CRM 5.6, offers users comprehensive, single-click integration with Microsoft Outlook; a faster and easier-to-use interface; and additional reports and enhanced reporting flexibility over previous versions. The ACCPACcrm.com hosted CRM service allows businesses the freedom to move to on-premises deployment of ACCPAC CRM, at any time, and with all data and customizations fully intact.

### **Axiom Corp.** <http://www.axiom.com>

**Chomonix**  
Axiom's Chomonix is a lifestyle consumer segmentation system that characterizes and differentiates demographic and associated consumer behaviors for each home in Japan. Similar to block groups in the USA, and based on Japan's 2000 census data, homes are grouped into 32 consumer lifestyle clusters using factor analysis and other proprietary statistical techniques. The Chomonix model is maximized by incorporating consumer expenditure and buying behavior data. Chomonix codes can be applied to any customer or marketing database using the address and its associated Chome geocode, providing a common framework to view customers across channels in the organization.

### **Ai-Logix, Inc.** <http://www.ai-logix.com> **WordALERT**

WordALERT is a hardware-based solution that enables real-time word-spotting for automated operator supervision and continuous monitoring. WordALERT recognizes keywords while a conversation is in progress and offers predictable performance with dedicated speech and media processing hardware that leaves system memory and CPU available for applications. WordALERT allows easy grammar/language changes to match a caller's language. There is

a choice of three WordALERT bundles: Developer's Kit; Station Logging Kit; or Trunk Logging Kit.

### **AIT Limited** <http://www.aitgroup.com> **Portrait**

Portrait is customer interaction management software that helps organizations dramatically improve the quality of their interactions while increasing efficiency and generating significant new business. Interaction Intelligence lets users: deliver a comprehensive, single, real-time view of each customer to the point of interaction, across Web sites, branch offices, contact centers or distribution partners; and recommend relevant offers of genuine interest; meet goals efficiently; and respond quickly to change.

### **AltiGen Communications, Inc.** <http://www.altigen.com>

**Alt>Contact Manager 5.0**  
Alt>Contact Manager (ACM) 5.0, Altigen's most advanced call center solution, supports individual inbound, outbound or blended contact centers, up to 144 agents. ACM also supports multisystem networking for additional growth and is designed to be managed and maintained in-house. Significant enhancements address the following evolving needs: modular licensing; advanced IVR/centralized call recording applications; distributed call centers; system redundancy; and reporting. The ExtensionAnywhere feature allows cellular and PCS telephones to log into workgroups as remote agent extensions.

### **Amcat** <http://www.amcat.com> **Amcat Contact Center Suite 2005**

Amcat Contact Center Suite 2005 incorporates new life-cycle management for interactions and adds new management and VoIP capabilities: establishment of follow-up actions with data; sending of data or messages via e-mail, fax or Web service, allowing follow-up information to be sent in real time to Web sites,

databases or individuals; tracking/managing of agent, team and campaign performance, used on PC monitors, large display screens or handheld computers; softphone capability to support distributed call centers and remote agents without the need to add hardware; and enhancement of international compatibility.

### **Aplicor Inc.** <http://www.aplicor.com> **Aplicor CRM**

The 2004 Aplicor CRM release is a hosted solution functionally equivalent to the decades-old, on-premise applications, while providing the delivery, cost and operational benefits of the hosted model. Benefits include a focus on business processes, not transactions, and an emphasis on customer relationships, not customer data. It has a process-oriented workflow engine embedded throughout the application and has replaced the one-size-fits-all hosting model so that each client has the same individualized processing capabilities as if the software were installed locally for each client's exclusive benefit.

### **ASC telecom AG** <http://www.asctelecom.com> **EVOip**

ASC's EVOip is a software-based solution for recording VoIP calls, ensuring complete coverage. The solution's recording interfaces connect with almost all traditional and IP telephone switches, and its architecture is designed for maximum flexibility, scalability, easy installation and rapid integration with pre-existing systems. The product categorizes calls by selected parameters and then stores them on the company's own server. A browser-based graphic interface allows users to easily playback, archive or e-mail recordings, as well as to perform search-and-replay through any browser. Its two key components: EVOip is a vendor-independent passive system; and "EVOip active" provides selective recording.

### **Aspect Communications** <http://www.aspect.com>

### **Uniphi Suite**

Aspect Uniphi is designed to unify the contact center and the enterprise by integrating the applications that drive customer communications, contact center and customer information, and workforce productivity for better insight to business and customer activity—to simplify contact center development and management. Based on open standards, it provides organizations with a single point of control and one view of contact center operations, bringing the separate databases, the separate reporting engines and the application flows together effectively in one suite.

### **ATG (formerly Primus Knowledge Solutions)** <http://www.atg.com> **KnowledgeCenter 6**

KnowledgeCenter 6 is a next-generation software platform designed to help companies enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty by leveraging knowledge and delivering precise answers to customers' questions via self- and assisted service communication channels. KnowledgeCenter is a modular set of integrated products designed to meet specific needs of organizations. Included platform features: enterprise scalability; true, seven-level natural language processing (NLP); detailed analysis and reporting capabilities of customer experience; multiple language support; and seamless integration with CRM systems.

### **Austin Logistics** <http://www.austinlogistics.com> **Valeo**

Austin Logistics' Valeo is a predictive analytic application that can enhance customer value by adding real-time predictive intelligence and value-driven queuing to existing pre-agent routing systems. Valeo resides at the client site with access to the telephony infrastructure, where it adds predictive intelligence to routing decisions at the point of inbound call entry, before callers have selected IVR (self-service) or agent service. With Valeo, callers can be prioritized. Valeo easily inte-



# Management Scope

## MANAGEMENT SCOPE

grates data on each caller from legacy host systems, disparate departmental systems, customer databases and third-party providers.

### Autonomy, Inc.

<http://www.autonomy.com>

#### Authenticate Intelligent IVR

The Authenticate Intelligent IVR system is intended to allow enterprises to effectively automate customer service operations in call centers by forming an accurate understanding of caller queries in real time and automatically providing an intelligent response. The system permits callers to explain a particular problem in their words, understands the conceptual meaning of this query, and automatically returns useful results. If a relevant answer is not found within the system, it instantly routes the call to a qualified agent for advice. Built on IDOL, Intelligent IVR has a wide-vocabulary speech recognition capability and is completely speaker- and language-independent.

### Avaya

<http://www.avaya.com>

#### Avaya Contact Center Express

Avaya Contact Center Express provides cost-effective, easy-to-implement multichannel (voice, e-mail and Web chat) contact center solutions designed and priced for mid-sized businesses. It leverages Avaya intelligent routing and integrated IP technologies; works in IP, traditional and mixed environments;

and can grow and evolve with businesses for complete investment protection. It integrates robust reporting and includes outbound dialing pre-view contact capabilities, simple wizards and development tools for complete customization. IP-enabled, it can be extended to remote agents. With it, businesses can be up and running in hours.

### Avolent, Inc.

<http://www.avolent.com>

#### BizCast

BizCast is designed to help companies streamline financial interactions between employees, partners and business customers. BizCast, an enterprise software solution for financial relationship management, is intended to deliver cost reduction, improved cash management and forecasting, and improved customer care. It extends the foundation of electronic invoice presentation and payment (EIPP) to encompass five key areas of financial relationship management: online billing and payment; online account management; process management; enterprise access; and decision support. BizCast is designed to easily integrate with existing accounting, customer care, e-commerce and electronic payment systems.



### Best Software

<http://www.act.com>

#### ACT! 2005

Best Software offers two new versions of its ACT! sales effectiveness tool: ACT! 2005, for individuals and small teams of up to 10 users; and ACT! 2005 Premium for Workgroups, supporting powerful database collaboration for workgroups of up to 50 users. Included key benefits: low cost and ease-of-use, combined with advanced selling tools typically found in expensive CRM systems; little-to-no need for expensive IT resources; and scalable relational data architecture.

### Blue Pumpkin

<http://www.bluepumpkin.com>

#### Blue Pumpkin Workforce Optimization Suite 4.5

The latest release of Blue Pumpkin Workforce Optimization (WFO) Suite ties together more of the contact center processes needed for managing and optimizing workforce—now including e-learning, a more flexible platform and other advanced enhancements. Each component is a best-of-breed solution that delivers results to turn the contact center into a strategic differentiator and competitive edge. The sum of the suite components, however, is more powerful than the individual parts. The suite forms a logical roadmap to help contact centers evolve at their own pace.

### Call Compliance, Inc.

<http://www.callcompliance.com>

#### Wireless Number Blocking

In response to the advent of wireless number portability (WLNP), and potential for an \$11,000 fine per non-compliance incident, Call Compliance offers an enhancement to its TeleBlock system, called Wireless Number Blocking (WNB). The TeleBlock system contains daily updated WLNP data and automatically screens and blocks calls to wireless ported numbers originating from predictive dialer subscribers that have enabled WNB screening by calling campaign on their proprietary TeleBlock Web interface. This allows TeleBlock end-users using predictive dialers to screen and block their calls in real time against changing WLNP data, in addition to screening against the available federal, state, third-party and in-house DNC lists.

### Centergistic Solutions

<http://www.centergistic.com>

#### AgentView Enterprise PowerUser 4.0

AgentView Enterprise PowerUser 4.0 is a real-time desktop dashboard intended to make contact center managers more effective. Each layout screen is tailored to the viewer, containing critical performance metrics depicted as colorful graphs and gauges. The new PowerUser provides a performance picture that the user can immediately grasp. Version 4.0 includes: met-

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ric and layout templates based on a variety of ACD types; additional gauges with font selection and automatic sizing; "stealth" background color alert; drill-down, from highest level to individual agent; save/store of favorite layouts; and secure user authentication.

### Cincom Systems

<http://www.cincom.com>  
**Synchrony**

Synchrony is a customer experience management solution that enables small and mid-size organizations and enterprise departments to deliver consistent and highly responsive customer service. Its architecture bridges multichannel contact center functionality with a CRM universal view to provide a consolidated, relevant portal of the resources and information necessary to optimize each customer interaction. Its core features, functionality, architecture and delivery model have been enhanced through two significant software releases in 2004.

### Cintech LLC

<http://www.cintechllc.com>  
**cTouch**

Cintech's cTouch suite of Web interaction tools enables organizations of all sizes to cost-effectively increase the speed and responsiveness of their customer care organizations while efficiently handling customer requests across a range of channels. cTouch is a thin-client/server-based solution that includes two product options: cChat, a live online messenger/manager; and cMail, an e-mail management and response application. Product additions include licensing by contact type and duration, to give call centers a cost-effective way to meet seasonal needs.

### Citrix Online

<http://www.gotoassist.com>

**Citrix GoToAssist 6.0**  
Citrix GoToAssist 6.0 is a managed service that enables companies to cost-effectively provide remote-technical support. The service enables support desks to meet the needs of complex and mission-critical support environments with quality service and best practices-driven support tools. GoToAssist requires no client-application installation step for Windows 2000, XP and NT devices. Included functions: patented session brokering technologies; automatic session recordings and chat-log archives; end-to-end 128-bit Advanced Encryption Standard (AES); and GoToAssist Management Center.

**ClickFox**  
<http://www.clickfox.com>  
**Customer Behavior Intelligence**  
ClickFox's Customer Behavior Intelligence solution can help organizations align their business objectives and their customers' goals for their self-service channels. ClickFox provides visibility of customer behavior across self-service channels, as well as in-depth analysis of individual applications. Self-service optimization can occur with ClickFox's three steps: users build a visual model of the existing self-service channel; actual customer behavior is mapped to the visual model of the system, and potential areas of

improvement are analyzed and pinpointed; and finally, specific recommendations for improvement are made.

### Concerto Software

<http://www.concerto.com>  
**FirstPoint Enterprise leveraging Cisco CallManager**

This newest version of FirstPoint Enterprise is the first enterprise-sized contact center solution that incorporates full-featured functionality of a time division multiplexing (TDM)-based contact center solution in an IP infrastructure, including queuing, routing and extensive reporting capabilities.

### Co-nexus

<http://www.4cxm.com>  
**CXM REPORT - SURVEY**

Co-nexus' recently introduced CXM REPORT - SURVEY module adds customer satisfaction data to the CXM voice/screen recordings and agent performance evaluations. The SURVEY module is used for caller polls and customer feedback by playing prerecorded survey questions. With imbedded speech recognition technology, the CXM SURVEY module accepts verbal commands. The survey results are scored and catalogued for later retrieval. Callers can leave a personal message recorded and attached to the survey results. Survey results are also linked to the recording of the callers preceding call and the agents' evaluation score.

### Contact Center Compliance

<http://www.dnc.com>  
**DNCscrub Enterprise Edition**

Contact Center Compliance's DNCscrub is a compliance program that contains the entire matrix of federal and state laws, including all industry exemptions and existing business relationship exemptions. The Contact Center Compliance system prevents calls to DNC and wireless numbers in real time; is business-enabling, informing clients of existing business relationships that are nearing their expiration; makes keeping track of conflicting rules easy and cost-effective; and allows users to clean their records upon receipt. The product's goal is to maximize callable records while keeping you in compliance cost-effectively.

### CosmoCom

<http://www.cosmocom.com>  
**CosmoCall Universe 4.4**

CosmoCall Universe 4.4 is the latest version of CosmoCom's all-IP, unified contact center suite, which includes multichannel ACD, IVR, CTI, predictive dialing, multimedia recording and administrative tools. Version 4.4 highlights: easy integration with thin-client applications; robust N-way conferencing, including recording; streamlined tenant management; enhanced skill weighing; and enhancements to both CosmoDesigner and CosmoDialer. RTP redirect has also been introduced into this version, and more languages have been added.

### Dictaphone Corporation

<http://www.dictaphone.com/contactpoint>

### ContactPoint Recruiter

ContactPoint Recruiter is a competency-based hiring management software application that helps contact centers hire the most qualified agents, streamline the recruiting process and reduce costly turnover. The competency model lets contact centers define the skills, knowledge and abilities that agents need; once this model is captured within ContactPoint, contact centers can use Recruiter to create and administer interview questionnaires based on these standards. It analyzes responses to identify the best candidates for each position. The application also maintains baseline profiles for every new hire.

### Digisoft Computers, Inc.

<http://www.digisoft.com>  
**eTelescript**

A Web-based call center software solution, eTelescript can maintain central call center management control and provide the capability to maximize the potential of home agents or remote call centers. The application has an interactive agent interface and a comprehensive campaign management application to drive revenue and improve customer experiences. It's designed to run using Microsoft's .NET platform. Integrated telephony features synchronize with the agent module to provide telephony to local and remote agents. Some available modules to choose from: Appointment Scheduling; Super-Dialing; CTI; Predictive Dialing; Monitoring; and Advanced Reports.

### Edify Corporation

<http://www.edify.com>  
**Edify Voice Interaction Platform (EVIP) 9.0**

The Edify Voice Interaction Platform (EVIP) 9.0 provides customers with application flexibility, scalability and data connectivity to improve customer service and loyalty, as well as operational costs. EVIP 9.0 offers 480 ports of speech on a single server. The platform is a comprehensive voice system that enables companies to build, execute and manage voice applications across the enterprise. EVIP 9.0 integrates powerful automation software with an open architecture that supports enterprise requirements to integrate emerging standards and technologies.

### eGain

<http://www.egain.com>  
**eGain Service 7**

eGain Service 7 is a comprehensive customer service application suite, available in-house or on-demand, that helps businesses transform contact centers into customer interaction hubs for unified multichannel service, reduced costs, improved agent productivity and enhanced customer retention. Included in the suite: adaptive applications for self-service; a common knowledge and service management platform; and adapters for easy integration with CTI, content and business systems.

### Empirix Inc.

<http://www.empirix.com>

### OneSight for Contact Centers

Empirix's OneSight for Contact Centers is an end-to-end voice application management solution. OneSight can proactively pinpoint and address customer-impacting issues hidden within an organization's technology infrastructure issues that are obscured in black boxes that underlie automated services provided by contact centers. OneSight provides a means for organizations to gain insight into the health of those automated systems.

### Envision

<http://www.envisioninc.com>  
**The Envision Performance Suite 8.3**

The Envision Performance Suite 8.3 with Envision Business Intelligence allows anyone throughout the enterprise to access recorded interactions on a subscription basis. The integration with the suite allows subscribers to identify breakdowns and to create coaching clips for the contact center, and thus improve efficiencies, reduce errors, lower costs and improve the bottom line. Because it resides on a single server, the suite can save hardware costs and integration expenses. Envision uses a universal, browser-based interface to deliver information to agent desktops.

### Epicor Software Corporation

<http://www.epicor.com>  
**Epicor Clientele CRM 8.2**

Epicor Clientele CRM is a scalable and flexible solution designed to manage the complete customer life-cycle. It provides integrated sales and customer support functionality that helps organizations acquire, retain and grow profitable, long-term customer relationships. Clientele CRM is the first CRM application built entirely on the Microsoft .NET Platform, which provides new levels of accessibility, extensibility and integration.

### etalk

<http://www.etalk.com>  
**Qfiniti 1.7**

Qfiniti can help customers to improve their call center service and productivity through quality monitoring, performance optimization and process analysis capabilities. etalk expands Qfiniti's enterprise capabilities with version 1.7, providing functionality for both single-site and large, multisite installations. Included enhancements: virtually unlimited scalability of screen recording; improved centralized management for monitoring recording sites; advanced alarming capabilities; instant status updates regarding channels, users, servers and overall system health; and extensive and flexible client-side API for recording, data attachment and verification.

### Five9, Inc.

<http://www.five9.com>  
**Five9 Virtual Contact Center**

Five9 Virtual Contact Center is a hosted contact center ASP with all of its customers running VoIP completely independent of a traditional telecom company, and without any ties to a PSTN-based infrastructure. Virtual Contact Center is built from the ground up to eliminate third-party license fees and to ensure costs are kept low. Along with its VoIP functionality, the Virtual





Contact Center offers the following: ACD; predictive dialer; CRM; IVR; CTI; remote agent capabilities; skills-based routing; recording; silent monitoring; real-time reporting; chat; and centralized management for multisite and offshore contact centers.

### **FrontRange Solutions** <http://www.frontrange.com> **GoldMine 6.7**

GoldMine 6.7 is a Windows-based application that provides SMB and distributed enterprises with sales-force automation and CRM best practices, in an easy-to-use software package. It scales from one user up to large organizations, has low TCO, rapid ROI, is flexible, and can be implemented fast, even for large organizations. Included new additions: mobile real-time access for Palm and WAP phones; addition of iGoldMine, for Web access; capabilities for campaign management; improved opportunity management; improved analytics for reporting; quick-sync for mobile users; enhanced APIs and integration for linking to other applications; VoIP support for softphones; and integration with MS Outlook and Exchange.

### **Fused Solutions, Inc.** <http://www.fusedsolutions.com> **KnowPlex**

A Web-native, database-driven technology, KnowPlex facilitates seamless integration of customer care resources — in-house or distributed agents, and self-service applications — and the efficient flow of ticket/knowledge base information. Integration with existing CRM and service-related applications completes the information flow to deliver high-quality customer care/technical support. Included ticket-management features employed by KnowPlex: automated ticket escalation; full ticket history, analysis and reporting; and a rules wizard functionality.

### **GL Communications Inc.** <http://www.gl.com> **PacketSeries – PacketGen and PacketScan**

GL Communications' Packet Series products, PacketGen and PacketScan, provide SIP call generation and SIP/H323/RTP/RTCP analysis. The PacketGen and PacketScan products are ideally suited for simulation and analysis of VoIP networks, gateways, routers, proxies and switches. The Packet Series products are software-based and can reside on any Windows PC. They build on, and extend, GL's analysis and simulation from the TDM world to the VoIP world. PacketGen provides call simulation over VoIP systems and can generate thousands of calls, providing vigorous stress tests for VoIP networks. It controls all systems simultaneously and provides statistics, call records and quality of service (QOS) measurements. PacketScan provides real-time audio monitoring, analysis and statistics on both SIP and RTP/RTCP messages.

### **GN Netcom Inc.** <http://www.gnnnetcom.com> **GN 8210**

The GN 8210 digital amplifier makes enhancements to improve contact center communications and deliver

real benefits that analog devices cannot. The amplifier is intended to reduce background noise on incoming signals, to automatically adjust incoming volume, and to offer unsurpassed acoustic protection and the ability for end users to tailor the sound to their preferences. GN Netcom intends for there to be less repetition needed, for calls to be shorter and for the interaction between contact center agents and callers to be smoother and easier, thus reducing contact center costs and raising customer service levels.

### **IEX Corp, a Tekelec company** <http://www.iex.com>

**TotalView Workforce Management 3.8**  
The TotalView Workforce Management system version 3.8 enables contact centers to deliver consistent service with lower operating costs and higher employee morale. It improves the scheduling and agent management processes in both single and multisite environments. The system's advanced features include skills-based and multimedia scheduling, real-time and historical adherence, intraday and performance management, enterprise reporting and data exchange, vacation and holiday planning, and short- and long-term resource planning.

### **Inova Solutions** <http://www.inovasolutions.com>

**Inova Performance Optimization Suite 5.0**  
The Inova Performance Optimization Suite version 5.0 helps the technologies and human resources that are already in place to perform at optimal levels by integrating operational and performance data from existing systems to provide unified views of metrics and measurements that directly impact performance. The views can be presented in a variety of formats suited to the unique information needs of business users ranging from agents to executives. Version 5.0 enhancements: openness and scalability of real-time middleware Inova LightLink; browser-based dashboards; interactive 3-D visualizations; dynamic multimedia presentation; enhanced XML output; and data marts with report-ready data for use with third-party tools.

### **Intervoice, Inc.** <http://www.intervoice.com>

**Omnia Voice Express**  
Intervoice's flexible Omnia Voice Express packaged speech applications enable small to large enterprises and carriers to connect people with information while reducing upfront development costs, deployment timeframes and the complexity associated with application development. The process-based applications suite supports both Speech Application Language Tags (SALT) and Voice Extensible Markup Language (VoiceXML). Depending on the need, Omnia Voice Express applications can be used as application templates, turn-key solutions, applications as a service (ASP), configurable applications or developer applications. Powered by Microsoft SQL Server, these applications also

feature a modular construction that allows developers to add or remove functionality without reworking the entire system.

### **iPhrase Technologies, Inc.** <http://www.iphrase.com> **OneStep WebResolve**

The new WebResolve product is an e-support solution that enables customers and partners to quickly solve their own product and service problems without engaging a customer service agent. WebResolve offers fast answers via search, navigation and personalization over the full breadth of support resources. It can seamlessly escalate to e-mail, chat or phone agents while telling the agents what resources the customer has already tried. The OneStep WebResolve server runs on Windows and several versions of Unix, including Solaris, AIX and Linux.

### **Jacada, Inc.** <http://www.jacada.com> **Jacada Fusion**

Jacada Fusion can reduce application complexity that negatively impacts many critical areas of call center operations. By fusing applications to deliver a simplified user interaction, Jacada Fusion can eliminate costly problems that arise from the complexity and multiplicity of applications that users must navigate in order to accomplish even simple business processes. Jacada Fusion "fuses" all types of applications — Windows, Web- and host-based — to deliver a simplified user interface. It integrates all three application types using a non-invasive approach at the presentation layer of the applications.

### **KANA** <http://www.kana.com>

**KANA Resolution**  
KANA Resolution is a process-driven customer service solution exclusively focused on optimizing the resolution process. This solution is a new enterprise software application for service resolution management (SRM) to improve delivery of service by leveraging intelligence, thus providing agents with necessary information to resolve customer requests and facilitating the process an agent should follow. Built on KANA's open architecture, the solution provides deep enterprise application integration (EAI) support; this EAI support brings real-time enterprise information into a single, integrated view that provides the information the agent needs to resolve the customer's request without having to access multiple systems or screens to get the data.

### **Kanisa Inc.** <http://www.kanisa.com> **Kanisa6**

Kanisa6 is a complete suite of customer service applications that automate the problem resolution process across all channels. Included in Kanisa6: Support Center; Support Site; Site Search; and Expert Forums. Kanisa6 delivers a complete self-service application, as well as an integrated platform that

combines knowledge management, natural language search and business process support. Additional enhancements: resolution wizards for process-driven self-service; Pagelet architecture for rapid deployment and easy customization; detailed Web session tracking for multichannel support; machine learning and a reputation model; and intuitive authoring with auto-tagging.

### **Knowagent** <http://www.knowagent.com> **r7 Solution**

Knowagent r7, designed for the customer service center, is a comprehensive solution that can help contact center managers and supervisors manage the lifecycle of contact center agents to ensure that agents both perform at their best every day and can meet the changing needs of a competitive environment and of a demanding customer base. Knowagent r7 functions: drives direction and delivers priority to agents or reps; provides for consistency in communicating with agents; enables accountability of delivered information; and ensures the information is understood and applied by the agents.

### **KnowledgeBase Solutions** <http://www.kb.net> **KnowledgeBase.net 4.0**

KnowledgeBase.net, an application that combines the most relevant aspects of document and knowledge management with search technology and customizable portals, can help organizations unlock the power of their knowledge by offering a means to centrally store and easily access information. KnowledgeBase.net 4.0 offers numerous features, including self-learning; searching; remote Web site-searching; new reports; and new portal options, among others.

### **KnowNow, Inc** <http://www.knownow.com>

**KnowNow 3 Enterprise Edition**  
KnowNow 3 Enterprise Edition's core is the KnowNow LiveServer event-management engine. With this edition, events can be quickly and efficiently delivered directly to an application, to a browser or to both simultaneously. It provides a simple means of integrating any system or business process together over the Internet, and it fits into existing architectures. The use of native Internet protocols enables it to send and receive data through firewalls and connect end points that may not be under the users' domain or control. The intelligent routing system handles events as they are in motion, including filtering, transformation and security.

### **Left Bank Solutions** <http://www.leftbanksolutions.com> **Monet AnyWhere**

Monet AnyWhere is a Web-based workforce management agent and supervisor portal. It provides agents and supervisors with anytime-anywhere access to scheduling, tracking, exception planning and management functions. With Monet AnyWhere, agents and supervisors can log in from anywhere they are handling calls. Changes, requests



and explanations are displayed to the supervisor; the supervisor can then take the proper action. Once the approvals/denials are granted, Monet AnyWhere automatically updates and changes current and future schedules, then updating individual agents with alert messages. Individual agents and supervisors have numerous optional functions to effectively communicate, approve, decline and document daily changes and exceptions in the call center.

### Linktivity, a division of Inter-Tel <http://www.linktivity.com> WebDemo 4.0

WebDemo 4.0, the latest version of Linktivity's Web-based, real-time conferencing and collaboration software tool, is a premise solution that offers the following: SL support; dynamic CAST 128-bit encryption; Web meeting desktop icon launchers; Windows/LDAP/Active Directory/Radius Authentication; popup blockers compatibility; fast and easy installation; multilingual support; and full integration and customization capability. Linktivity's on-premise Web conferencing and remote access and support solutions are installable server software.

**LivePerson**  
<http://www.liveperson.com>  
**Timpani Contact Center**  
Timpani Contact Center streamlines

and integrates customer interactions across all online channels. By supplying a unified customer history that provides a 360-degree view of the customer — coupled with intelligent routing and escalation capabilities — this multichannel communication solution facilitates hand-offs between service channels, enabling organizations to deliver seamless customer service and first-contact resolution. The hosted modular application also offers a user-friendly operator console and integrates with existing infrastructure. The application is comprised of technology that supports and manages e-mail, live chat and self-service.

**Maximizer Software**  
<http://www.maximizer.com>  
**Maximizer Enterprise 8**  
Maximizer Enterprise 8 is a CRM solution that helps small to medium-sized enterprises improve sales, streamline marketing and enhance customer service and support, while delivering the fast deployment and affordability expected by small to medium-sized enterprises. Highlights of the solution include workflow automation; accounting integration; advanced reporting and analytics capabilities; anti-spam and do-not-call legislation compliance; and advanced Microsoft Outlook integration.



### NEC Unified Solutions <http://www.necunifiedsolutions.com> Communications Portal

NEC Unified Solutions' Communications Portal integrates all channels into a unified, Web-accessible portal that puts the individual back in control of his or her own communications. All contacts are simply and easily managed from a single Web-based application, reducing the complexity of handling multiple communication forms. Designed to work seamlessly with Microsoft Exchange, Communications Portal provides customers with a simpler toolset. It combines scheduling, collaboration, telephony, e-mail and multimedia activities within a single application to improve user efficiency and productivity while enhancing customer satisfaction through greater communications control.

**NICE Systems**  
<http://www.nice.com>  
**NICE Perform**  
NICE Perform helps organizations transform countless daily interactions into business intelligence to benefit every function in the enterprise. Some ways it delivers these capabilities: by capturing multimedia interactions; analyzing the captured content based on various specifications; presenting the analyzed

results efficiently and effectively; and by using coaching and monitoring tools.

### Noble Systems Corp. <http://www.noblesys.com>

**Noble IVR Concierge**  
Noble IVR Concierge allows contact centers to improve the customer experience for callers in the hold queue through an integrated combination of custom messaging, IVR menus and ANI detection: companies can announce the average wait time for a caller on hold; the system then offers the caller the opportunity to hang up but to remain in the call queue. The system keeps the call in the exact place "in line" that the caller would be if he or she remained on hold. When the next agent is available, the system automatically calls the customer. Also, callers can enter a different phone number for callback and can request a specific date/time.

### Nortel Networks <http://www.nortel.com> **Symposium Call Center Server 5.0**

Nortel Symposium Call Center Server 5.0 can help create a more effective virtual contact center that best supports a company's customers. Two new included capabilities: Longest Idle Agent, by which "Find the longest idle agent" can be defined three different ways so it can be tailored, as defining the longest idle agent is the agent who has



## NEW! TMC Award for 2005 For Cutting-Edge IP Contact Center Products and Services!

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**Application Deadline: February 7, 2005**

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been most idle since initial log-in that day (used to assure a balanced workload across the virtual environment); and average speed of answer, by which to find the site with the shortest average speed of answer so as to assure calls are answered most quickly.

### **Nuance Communications** <http://www.nuance.com> **Nuance 8.5**

Nuance 8.5 is the latest release of Nuance's speech recognition software. Optimized for key industries and applications, Nuance 8.5 enables accurate, scalable and easy-to-deploy voice automation solutions. The updated software offers numerous advanced features and capabilities that enable engaging and easy-to-use applications. For example, callers can speak more freely and naturally when interacting with voice automation solutions, and voice systems can automatically detect and adapt to the unique speech characteristics of a broad customer base as well as of individual callers. AccuBurst optimizes the system resources for improved performance.

### **Nuasis Corporation** <http://www.nuasis.com>

**Nuasis NuContact Center 2.0**  
Nuasis' standards-based approach attempts to lower the cost structure of cross-platform integrations. Also, Nuasis' Pure IP system can reduce the total cost both of ownership and acquisition. The NuContact Center 2.0 release includes the following new capabilities and integrations: SIP integration with third-party IVR; SIP-to-SIP transfer between NuContact Center and a SIP-based IVR without occupying additional voice trunks; integration with third-party fax applications; integration with third-party monitoring and alert applications; agent capacity increases (500 agents per system across multiple locations); and CRM integration.

### **Oncontact Software** <http://www.oncontact.com> **Client Management Software 8.0**

Client Management Software (CMS) 8.0, a CRM solution that automates sales, marketing and service areas of an organization, can be run in a Windows and/or Web environment. ClientNet and PartnerNet are Oncontact Software's audience-specific Web portals that enable companies to share information with all business channels. CMS 8.0 builds on the continued functionality of CMS, a completely customizable CRM system that lets users manage strategies from a single software suite.

### **Pegasystems** <http://www.pegacom> **PegaRULES Process Commander 4.2**

PegaRULES Process Commander (PRPC) is a Java- and XML-based enterprise platform that harnesses IT systems' intelligence and processing power into applications that streamline key business processes. PRPC is built for scale, performance and change, and includes the following features: built-in versioning; simple rules creation forms oriented to business users; and a built-in, browser-

based development environment. Included updates with Version 2: at-a-glance views; simplified navigation for designers and developers; application accelerators; drag-and-drop design aids; and push-button project documentation.

**PeopleSoft**  
<http://www.peoplesoft.com>  
**PeopleSoft Enterprise CRM 8.9**  
PeopleSoft Enterprise CRM 8.9 is the most significant CRM release in the company's history. The newest release includes 15 new products, including a comprehensive PeopleSoft Partner Relationship Management (PRM) suite; three new industry solutions – Revenue Management, Student Lifecycle Management and Wealth Management; and more than 700 new features and enhancements across PeopleSoft's Service, Sales and Marketing suites. PeopleSoft Prescriptive Analytics, an embedded decision engine, also comes with this release. Included enhancements with Version 8.9: 38 percent usability improvement; 46 percent reduction in business task performance clicks; and 30 percent faster performance.

**Plantronics, Inc.**  
<http://www.plantronics.com>  
**Plantronics CS50-USB**  
The Plantronics CS50-USB wireless headset system brings mobility and hands-free conversations to contact center coaches and supervisors. The wireless USB headset system provides remote ring detection and call/answer end capability, with eight hours' of talk time. The CS50-USB provides wireless mobility anywhere in the contact center, up to 300 feet, without missing calls. Conversations are secure with digital 900MHz, and a noise-canceling microphone provides clear communications. The CS50-USB is compatible with most PC softphones.

### **Pro Tech Communications, Inc.** <http://www.protechcommunications.com>

**Apollo Multimedia Amplifier**  
The Apollo Multimedia Amplifier for contact centers utilizes noise suppression and connective circuitry, delivering the latest in circuit board technology. The desktop amplifier was designed with call center training environments in mind. New features: conference mode to conference over both the telephone and Internet call simultaneously; battery-off mode for non-battery operation; easily accessible receive/transmit volume controls; a separate headset port for supervisor monitoring; a separate mute control; a VOX background filter control; and a PC on/off switch for multimedia functions.

### **Prosodie Interactive** <http://www.prosodieinteractive.com>

**Prosodie Interactive's Virtual ACD 2.0**  
Prosodie Interactive's Virtual ACD 2.0 service includes skills-based routing, multitenant functionality and live supervision displays. It comes integrated with IVR for greeting callers, for handling touch-tone and speech recognition pre-qualification

and self-service programs, and for delivering customized messages to queuing calls. Advanced features include extensive reporting and silent monitoring and call recording standard at install.

**RightNow Technologies**  
<http://www.rightnow.com>  
**RightNow CRM 7.0**  
RightNow CRM is comprised of three applications that have been built on a common base: RightNow Service, a multichannel customer service and support application; RightNow Sales, a powerful sales force automation application; and RightNow Marketing, a multichannel marketing automation application.

**salesforce.com**  
<http://www.salesforce.com>  
**Supportforce.com**  
Supportforce.com is an on-demand customer service solution that enables companies to deploy global contact centers and help desks without software, thereby easily managing and sharing customer information. Supportforce.com can be integrated with a company's existing contact center infrastructure with the sforce Telephony API (STAPI) toolkit. Supportforce.com includes complete customer support and help desk functionality; knowledge management capabilities; Web self-service; and performance metrics. Easily customized without programmers, the application can also be used anywhere, with only a Web browser. It includes language and currency capabilities that enable multinational companies to use the application across their entire organization.

**Salesnet, Inc.**  
<http://www.salesnet.com>  
**Salesnet Advertising/Media Sales Edition**  
The Salesnet Advertising/Media Sales Edition, designed to effectively manage low-margin business and high staff turnover, is a solution fully adaptable to meet the industry's unique selling environment. This on-demand CRM solution designed specifically for Advertising/Media Sales industry offers pre-built sales processes to guide selling best practices, enabling sales to begin immediately. Instant insight into a business from pre-configured dashboards and charts show deal performance and provide visibility into forecast, pipeline and business.

**SAS**  
<http://www.sas.com>  
**SAS Marketing Automation 4**  
SAS Marketing Automation 4 allows users to rapidly create, modify and manage sophisticated, multichannel marketing campaigns. Users can define target segments; prioritize selection rules; schedule and execute campaigns; and perform advanced analyses to predict the success of customer communications. Built on the SAS Intelligence Platform, SAS Marketing Automation includes robust, integrated analytics, data management and business intelligence in an easy-to-use inter-

face. It is a multithreaded, open standards-based, J2EE-compliant solution that supports an array of operating systems and database products, and allows for easy migration from other campaign management tools.

**SER Solutions, Inc.**  
<http://www.ser.com>  
**CPS Enterprise Edition**  
SER's CPS Enterprise Edition (CPS E2) is an enterprise solution that enables contact centers to manage their business strategies rather than their technology. Designed for large contact centers with complex list management or collections requirements, CPS E2 offers real-time portfolio management to provide holistic, real-time management of call records, campaign strategies, agent profiles, work sessions and agent workflow. Included CPS E2 features: dynamic record management; campaign recycling and dynamic agent reassignment; flexible contact strategies; robust scripting and reporting; collections management capabilities; soft dial capabilities; and VoIP functionality.

**Siemens Communications, Inc.**  
<http://communications.usa.siemens.com>  
**HiPath ProCenter Agile**  
HiPath ProCenter Agile is a feature-rich contact center solution aimed at small and medium-sized businesses, or large enterprises with high-volume call-handling departments. As a comprehensive solution, Agile delivers the following with ease: intelligent call routing; graphical reporting; innovative productivity tools; and presence-enhanced features for both agents and managers. Siemens has incorporated Team Lists, Team Bars and a "one-click collaboration" feature to consult, conference and transfer to offer better presence management and collaboration features.

**SoundBite Communications, Inc.**  
<http://www.soundbite.com>  
**SoundBite 5.0**  
SoundBite 5.0 is an on-demand customer communications platform that allows companies to instantly deliver voice, e-mail and text messaging to customers via an ASP model, and empowers those customers to respond immediately. As a Web-hosted solution, SoundBite 5.0 provides unlimited personalized calling and e-mail capability; automated, real-time access and management of campaigns; high response rates; load balancing; answering machine detection; the ability to directly connect with an agent; and short campaign durations. Included new features for real-time execution and administration: OnDemand Blended Suppression; OnDemand Enterprise Support; and OnDemand Campaign Management.

**SPIRIT**  
<http://www.spiritdsp.com/voip>  
**TeamSpirit**  
TeamSpirit is a multipoint VoIP platform for large-scale applications serving many users with different network connections all over the world, and for enterprise collaboration systems integrating VoIP with corporate databases, business appli-





cations and groupware solutions. It provides high-quality peer-to-peer and multipoint IP conferencing, and allows many people to talk simultaneously without speech drops or breaks. TeamSpirit combines SPIRIT's proprietary speech technologies for echo- and noise-free full duplex conversation (RealDuplex) with the smart speech flow management, based on prosodic speech characteristics analysis (Multi-PASS).

### Stratasoft

<http://www.stratasoft.com>

#### StrataSIP Web Agent

StrataSIP Web Agent is a VoIP-enabled softphone that uses SIP for use on the StrataDial call center software suite. StrataDial includes full support of remote call center agents for processing both inbound and outbound (blended) calls. Utilizing the latest advancements in VoIP and SIP, remote agents can be launched from anywhere in the world. These remote call center agents appear as seamless members of the entire call center agent pool and can be monitored, adjusted and activated exactly like agents working in the call center — using only a Windows-based PC, a high-speed Internet connection and a USB headset.

### Symon Communications, Inc.

<http://www.symon.com>

#### Symon Enterprise Server

Symon Enterprise Server (SES) is designed to improve collection, transformation and distribution of both real-time and historical enterprise-wide key performance indicators (KPIs) and other business intelligence. Data silos are eliminated, and information is easily consolidated, aggregated, transformed and ready for use in a variety of presentation layers, including Web-based reporting with drill-down capability, agent scorecards, LED panels, plasmas and TVs, workforce management tools and Symon's alerting and messaging solutions. Project management and implementation services assure that SES installations are completed to customers' specifications on time and within budget.

### Syntellect

<http://www.syntellect.com>

#### Continuum

Previously released as Vista 5.0, a next-generation open-standards speech and IVR enabled self-service platform and simultaneously integrated with the advanced contact center solution Interchange, Syntellect's combined offerings were re-launched as Continuum, offering speech-enabled and IVR touch-tone points on the self-service side. Continuum also offers intelligently routed voice, e-mail and Web inquiries with CTI/screen pop on the live-service side, as well as flexible deployment options. Also offered is the ability to immediately pass captured self-service data via CTI/screen pop to an agent, should a self-service inquiry escalate to live assistance.

### Talisma

<http://www.talisma.com>

#### Talisma NetAgent 6.6

Talisma NetAgent 6.6, an integrated

multichannel interaction management solution, enables contact center and customer service agents to more easily ensure that customers receive the optimum level of service necessary to resolve issues.

Talisma NetAgent 6.6 is comprised of three applications: Talisma NetAgent Email; Talisma NetAgent Chat; and Talisma NetAgent Phone. There are more than 260 enhancements, including enabling agents to proactively engage Web site visitors using real-time text messaging. An improved agent and supervisor interface includes more powerful search capabilities, new real-time outbox functionality and enhanced reporting.

### Telephony@Work

<http://www.telephonyatwork.com>

#### CallCenter@nywhere 7.1

CallCenter@nywhere is a multimedia IP contact center solution that adapts to changing business needs on-demand, empowering companies to provide world-class service on the phone, fax and Internet, with the ability to adapt any contact center technology or business practice in real-time while sharing technology across locations on a multitenant basis. Version 7.1 offers carrier-grade Web-services interfaces to Telephony@Work's scalable service provider offering, to enable these service providers to easily and cost-effectively create a unique look and feel for their services and to embed new technologies into legacy offerings and new devices. Version 7.1 also introduced the Flash client for multimedia agents, which runs on any computer regardless of operating system.

### Telerx

<http://www.telerx.com>

#### Customer Connections

Telerx's Customer Connections helps merchants with locations nationwide to deal with inconsistent in-store service levels using a centralized toll-free number. It records calls and then red flags those that require additional attention because of their severity.

Owners/operators/store managers receive notification of escalated contacts via e-mail, outbound calls, wireless devices or store faxes. Store personnel access the customer record via the Internet or an IVR application using text-to-speech technology to contact the customer in an attempt to resolve the severe issue. A central repository for all customer contact information, Customer Connections generates data for analysis, trending, reporting and product/process improvement.

### TuVox

<http://www.tuvox.com>

#### TuVox Perfect Router

TuVox's Perfect Router is a natural language speech-enabled call routing application that lets callers say what they want and then routes them to the right place — automated or live. Perfect Router replicates the live agent experience, as callers interact by simply saying what they want. Dynamic routing logic is then used to determine the best way to handle each call based on a number of factors. The application, imple-

mented in 60 to 90 days, increases the number of reachable applications from tens to hundreds; reduces misdirected calls; shortens calls; and improves customer satisfaction.

### Ulysses Learning

<http://www.ulysseslearning.com>

#### CallMentor Learning and Performance System - 2004

The 2004 version of Ulysses Learning's CallMentor Learning and Performance System features an expanded learning and performance improvement system. This includes Master Coach and Facilitator Certification, as well as an enhanced Performance Diagnostic, which has four unique assessments to fully align CallMentor to organizational goals, priorities, practices and culture. The CallMentor system is an intelligent blend of performance improvement methods that respond to contact center executives' most challenging business needs, forming the foundation of frontline service, sales and coaching development, or builds upon previous training to bring about a higher level of sales and service performance and customer loyalty.

### UniPress Software

<http://www.unipress.com>

#### FootPrints 6.5

FootPrints 6.5 is a Web-based service desk tool for help desk and customer support automation. FootPrints supports Microsoft Windows 2003/2000/NT, Unix and Linux Web servers and numerous databases. FootPrints 6.5 is fully integrated with a variety of tools for asset management, live e-support, network security, telephony, sales automation and more. Included new features: FootPrints Customer eService portal; FootPrints Dynamic SQL Database Link; a full-service level management module; an automated, customizable dashboard; stronger performance to manage large ticket volumes; and individual work schedules and agent availability matrix.

### Unveil Technologies

<http://www.unveil.com>

#### Unveil Conversation Manager

Unveil Conversation Manager is a voice application management environment that enables enterprise call centers and outsourcers to rapidly build, deploy and maintain high performance speech applications. Its value lies in the relative ease with which customers can author sophisticated speech systems to increase automation rates, to improve caller satisfaction and to reduce cost of ownership. Conversation Manager does not require specialized linguistic skills to develop speech grammars, and applications authored using Conversation Manager can automate most kinds of customer transaction. Version 2 includes enhancements that further reduce speech development and tuning, add robust reporting capabilities and extend support for third-party VoiceXML platforms.

### Verint Systems

<http://www.verint.com>

#### ULTRA IntelliCoach

ULTRA IntelliCoach provides actionable intelligence needed to maximize agent performance and to build a world-class contact center team. With ULTRA IntelliCoach, supervisors can manage the entire agent evaluation, feedback, coaching and development process. From a single application, supervisors can do the following: monitor interactions to evaluate agent performance; identify individual agent needs; leverage existing content to deliver targeted training based on unique requirements; create a library of Best Practice Clips based on recorded interactions; and track training assignments and activities to ensure proper follow-up. It also provides a Supervisor Dashboard that enables supervisors to perform many functions.

### Vertical Solutions, Inc. (VSI)

<http://www.vertsol.com>

#### PowerHelp Enterprise

PowerHelp Enterprise is a completely Web-based solution specifically designed to address both internal and external CRM needs of large and small organizations. VSI offers a solution that enables users to penetrate, retain and manage a multitude of growing business customers with value-added services. With PowerHelp Enterprise, users can manage any internal or external request for customer service, service desk, field service or sales and marketing group.

### Vocomo Corp.

<http://www.vocomosoft.com>

#### VocomoVoice Response for VoIP

VocomoVoice Response for VoIP is an open-standards VoIP IVR platform that allows businesses to efficiently deploy their customer service applications in a single IP-centric network. Intended for customer self-service and mid-sized call centers, Vocomo has launched a new generation of IVR products that enable a significantly lower total cost of ownership. This advanced VoIP IVR software, with support for VoiceXML, SIP, H.323 and RTP, enables developers to build flexible, scalable and cost-effective IVR applications. With it, organizations can reduce costs, enhance productivity, improve customer service and simplify management as they move toward an IP-centric communications model.

### VoiceGenie Technologies, Inc.

<http://www.voicegenie.com>

#### NeXusPoint 6.4

NeXusPoint is a high-performance VoiceXML platform that delivers a flexible infrastructure for developing and deploying DTMF (touch-tone) or speech-enabled applications. With a feature-rich and robust architecture, it facilitates speech application deployment for any type or size of business. Version 6.4 includes the following new features: broader operating support; enhanced reporting and monitoring features; improved standards support; extended ASR/TTS support; and an entirely open architecture. Platform performance offerings: low latency; high scalability; and high density.

### VoiceLogger, Inc.

<http://www.voicelogger.com>

#### DigiVoiceXE 3.0

DigiVoiceXE 3.0 is the next generation of VoiceLogger's recording solution for contact centers, public safety, financial services and general business. Included in the release is patent-pending screen logging, which will offer companies the ability to log the screen activity of hundreds of workstations simultaneously. An additional enhancement includes Flex Recording, designed to meet the performance-driven quality assurance monitoring needs of any contact center. DigiVoiceXE 3.0 also includes enhancements to its split-screen agent evaluation functionality, expanded system and administrative features, and additions to DigiVoiceXE's user interface.

### WebEx Communications, Inc.

<http://www.webex.com>

#### WebEx SMARTtech

WebEx SMARTtech enables IT help desks and technical support organizations to remotely support and manage multiple computers or POS hardware — without a costly hardware or software infrastructure. Access is granted/easily deployed from or over a Web browser, anywhere in the world, regardless of most firewall restrictions: a technical support representative can work on the system as if physically next to the computer. Support organizations can benefit with reduced support costs and with increased customer satisfaction. WebEx SMARTtech is designed for security from the ground up. It is built upon the

WebEx MediaTone Network.

### West Corporation

<http://www.west.com>

#### West at Home/Virtual ACD

West at Home is a remote agent solution that removes the barriers and limitations of traditional call center and home agent solutions. By utilizing a Virtual ACD (VACD) platform, West can deliver calls and data to agents in remote facilities located anywhere in the world, enabling companies to take advantage of a higher quality alternative to offshore and to provide customers with better service at a lower cost. The VRU-based technology eliminates geographical limitations on agent location. The technology can be implemented on a managed or hosted basis. Benefits include increased call capacity at minimal costs; greater scalability, flexibility and reduced implementation times; and faster call resolution.

### Witness Systems

<http://www.witness.com>

#### eQuality Vision

eQuality Vision helps contact center management search through customer interactions, spotting trends, patterns and anomalies that can provide sales/service directors with insight into their operational effectiveness. The solution retains all



call characteristics, offers data visualization capabilities and has an easy-to-use interface, enabling users to pinpoint and view interesting or unusual contacts to perform detailed analysis and trending. The solution offers the following: a rapid visual overview of large volumes of contact recordings; the ability to identify areas of focus or concern visually based on user-defined business drivers; integration with eQuality Balance/ContactStore/ContactStore IP; color-coded interactions; and parameter adjustment.

### Xten Networks

<http://www.xten.com>

#### LiveEye – XCAP Server

Based on open standards, LiveEye delivers server-side storage of IM buddy lists and provides an Events Engine for centralized presence rules. It also provides a basic Presence Agent server module as part of the eyeBeam 1.1 SDK. Eyebeam introduces the following SIP-based technologies: instant messaging; contact-list management; privacy management; peer-to-peer presence; server-based presence; server-managed contact lists; server-side contact list/privacy list storage using WebDAV or XCAP; server-side privacy management using XCAP; and automatic updates to contact lists, privacy lists and

server-managed contact lists. This is the first publicly available XCAP server, and eyeBeam is the first endpoint to support XCAP.

### Zeacom, Inc

<http://www.zeacom.com>

#### NEC Q-Master

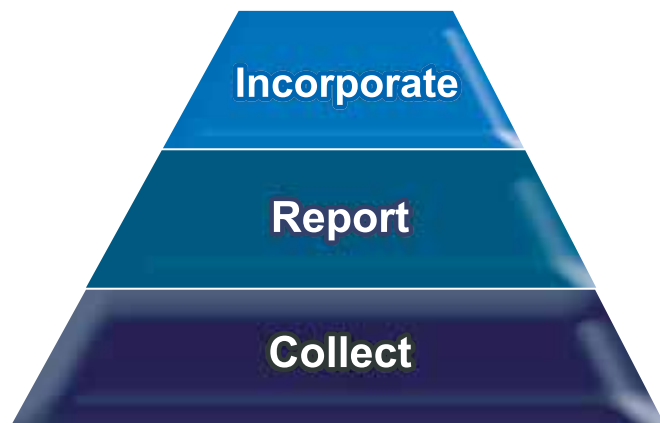
NEC Q-Master is a multichannel contact center routing and reporting solution developed for NEC Unified Solutions in the Northern and Latin Americas. NEC Q-Master is an integrated contact center solution that provides a broad range of functionality and scalability at a competitive price. NEC Q-Master organizes incoming calls and media, on a single and centralized environment, according to routing preferences predefined by the individual contact center. Also, the solution's sophisticated intelligent routing features direct callers to the right agent every time. NEC Q-Master is completely modular.

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BY Harold Hernandez

# KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT DOESN'T COME IN A BOX

In day-to-day life, there are many examples of how components can be interconnected to create a desired solution. Although [Apple Computer \(quote - news alert\)](#) has now hidden the computer inside the monitor, there is still a host of external components that will likely come together before a basic desktop configuration is complete.

Along the same lines, a home entertainment center that includes a TV, multimedia receiver, VCR, CD/DVD player and speakers is impractical and generally not available as one all-inclusive unit because the

cost would be relatively high and odds are that one or more of the component parts would not be exactly what you were looking for. The key is that with these consumer electronics components, interoperability is virtually guaranteed. This allows you to choose from a wide range of component parts and feel confident that everything will work well together.

With enterprise-class solutions, the challenge of interoperability is so great at almost every level, most organizations are willing to make substantial concessions in terms of requirements, business processes, ease of use and every other buying criterion in exchange for the assurance that all the component parts will work together. Organizations understand that CRM, ERP and other enterprise-class implementations will require compromise, and these companies are now reasonably prepared to accept that and move forward with those types of solutions. Unfortunately there is a knowledge gap when it comes to knowledge management processes and solutions, and that has resulted in a string of implementations that, at best, have failed to deliver on expectations.

The core challenges are that knowledge management is relatively new and remains a broadly defined concept. The variables that should be taken into account when considering a KM implementation require a level of understanding, vision and coordination that goes back to the early days of ERP

implementations. Those projects consisted of tying together independent components that did not have the interoperability advantages of today's consumer electronics, or the still-debated benefits of today's all-in-one packages. Getting it right from a KM perspective remains a huge challenge. Even getting to the point where you can articulate exactly what KM opportunity you are tackling can be daunting. But even rocket science can be explained, so let's take a look at a basic checklist of considerations that go into a KM decision.

At the highest level, you have organizational considerations and KM components to think about. On the organizational side, you may have to consider one or more of the following:

- **Strategic plan.** What are you doing, and for whom? Are you improving search functionality for a specific type of user or are you tying together all enterprise KM initiatives into a holistic vision?

- **Executive commitment.** Does the organization understand the risks, rewards, requirements and timeline and agree that KM must become part of the organizational fabric? Is there an executive sponsor driving this initiative?

- **Stakeholder commitment.** Are the users, contributors and support staff well informed and supportive of the respective requirements and proposed changes? Does anyone feel his or her job is threatened or that he or she will be burdened with additional undesired work as a result of your KM project?

- **Type of knowledge required.** Will your users be dealing with reasonably predictable and routine questions that have known answers, or are the users typically working in a more unique research mode? Are they engineers or end users?

- **Knowledge delivery approaches.** What are the intended delivery channels (bots, search, push, collaborative browsing, library, portal, machine-to-machine, etc.), and what is the process to properly format the knowledge for the channel and user?

- **Required versus available enterprise resources.** Identify your required resources early in the process. Compare required time, budget, subject matter experts, various IT staff,



knowledge base engineers, etc. to the available resources, and identify your gaps. Please note that content management and authoring requirements are routinely underestimated, and this results in substantial content, data and/or knowledge-related challenges.

- **Business process redesign plan.** In the event that you are able to implement a KM solution using all of your current processes, you can skip this step. It is more likely that the full benefit of your proposed solution will only be realized through some changes to the existing processes. New processes should be defined to your best ability early in the design phase and revisited at regular intervals.

- **Organizational change management plan.** How do you implement your proposed KM vision while sustaining current requirements and operations?

For an understanding of the KM components needed, you'll have to look at your organizational considerations relative to the following:

- Type of knowledge users you will be supporting: creative, routine questions, internal, external, etc.

- Data/content sources: single or multiple sources? Nature of content? Content submission rate? Batch, stream, pull or other content acquisition process?

- Content source formats: What formats will the process be required to accept and process?

- Text mining: Will the source content be manually processed? To what extent? Will text mining be leveraged in order to substantially automate the content management requirements?

- Knowledge/rules authoring: Can any content be directly published from the automated content management process? Who will the knowledge authors and reviewers be? What is the project authoring workload? Will those be full-time assignments or collateral duties? From where do these resources come?

- Knowledge utility/management: What is the content review process? Is it manual or automated? How will knowledge value be measured?

- Workflow management: Is workflow management a module of the proposed KM suite or will it be externally imposed? Who



owns workflow design and oversight?

- Reporting: What tools will be used to report on KM processes and overall performance? What metrics will be applied? Who will require reports, which reports and at what frequency? What actions/reactions can be anticipated or required as a result of the report date?

- Metadata: Is there already a metadata schema in place? Can the proposed KM solution conform to the existing standard? Could or should anyone outside the scope of the current KM initiative leverage the proposed metadata?

- Application administration: What are the required resources for ongoing application administration? Will they reside within IT or operations?

- Hardware requirements/admin: Does additional hardware need to be purchased in support of your KM initiative? Who will own and maintain the hardware? Do the required skills already exist within the organization?

- Knowledge base development and maintenance: Is this required for your particular KM design? Will it be a one-time or ongoing need? Should the resources be internal or contract? What is the rate of change in the key variables within your target knowledge universe?

- Knowledge delivery channels: How will knowledge reach the intended users? Will

bots drive the knowledge to the users? Will the knowledge be leveraged in a self-help environment, for live agent support, by machine-to-machine interaction or via some other configuration?

Now that you've answered all these questions, you are ready to go. Depending on your final objectives, you may be able to leverage one of the available KM packages that are out there. If you require some combination of packages or point solutions, rest assured that both the technology and skills are available to ensure a successful implementation from proof of concept to final delivery. Try to avoid shopping for a solution until your requirements are well defined, or you will likely end up stuffing your organization into a box.

*Harold Hernandez is an independent consultant with 14 years' experience in the design, implementation and optimization of customer contact operations. His technical and operational experience supports the delivery of cost-effective results across all areas of a modern call center. He can be contacted at [harold@ccarchitects.net](mailto:harold@ccarchitects.net).*

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**BY** David Weiss, Dataprobe

# REDUNDANCY KEY TO HIGH AVAILABILITY VOICE SERVICES

It's no secret that organizations today rely on a constant stream of voice and data communications to maintain contact with customers, staff and business partners. It's also clear that system architects must provide for the highest degree of fault tolerance in maintaining critical communications and interaction. While many companies have

embraced redundancy in the data center, few have recognized the need to incorporate redundant systems into their voice technologies.

When determining the necessary degree of resilience in a voice system, communication

planners need to consider the importance of maintaining

these vital links to customers. Ultimately, customer service becomes the issue as every interaction is measured by the customer. If your goal is 100 percent customer satisfaction, then you must deliver optimum results that exceed expectations.

Current server-based PBXs ([define](#) - [news](#) - [alert](#)) VoIP ([define](#) - [news](#) - [alert](#)) solutions, conference bridges and call center systems provide new capabilities at a fraction of their previous costs. In deploying these technologies, organizations have come to recognize that these capabilities are mission-critical for operations. Planning for the inevitable failure of complex systems is the only way to prevent these events from becoming real disasters. Redundancy solutions offer fail-safe options on every level, encompassing failover servers, diverse phone lines, media storage and hot sites. With redundancy becoming the new watchword, downtime is no longer an acceptable risk.

Historically, the resiliency of the voice

network meant that communication managers could focus their disaster planning budgets in other areas of concern. However, as the migration of voice communications moves toward server-based facilities and IP networks, planners are beginning to take extra steps to ensure that the expected level of uptime is maintained. In addition, as PBXs, call centers, conference bridges and VoIP technologies are built more frequently from a combination of hardware and software vendors, the likelihood of unscheduled downtime increases.

Failures can occur at any level of the system. While handsets have typically been the most reliable part of the phone system, new technologies have added additional levels of complexity. IP phones, computer-telephony integration and Bluetooth are all standards in this new paradigm. Server-based PBXs rely on complex software, often from multiple vendors, and disc arrays and other hardware technologies are subject to failures. Network connectivity opens the system to malicious attacks both internally and externally. Phone lines are subject to occasional outages due to cable

breaks and component failures at the local and long-distance carrier levels.

Now that the phone system is on the network, it is susceptible to all of the maladies of the network world, including hacker attacks, viruses and Trojan horses.

## Redundancy Solutions For The Line Side

Architecting a highly available solution means looking for ways to eliminate single points of failure in all aspects of the system design. Network planners should look at both link redundancy and hardware redundancy to minimize failure options.

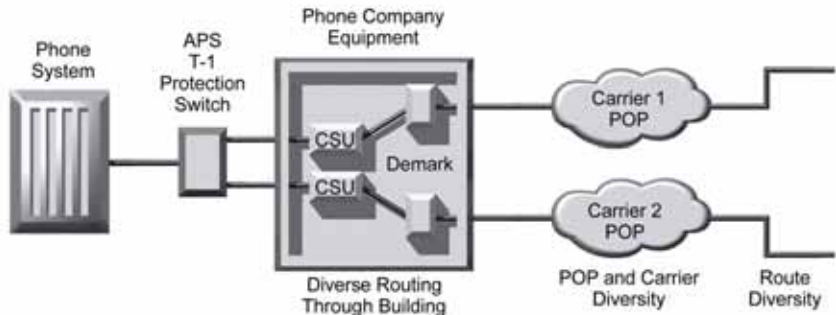
Carriers can also provide diversity and avoidance to help minimize risks. Diversity refers to redundant services, and avoidance ensures that redundant services do not share common facilities. This can be done at both the local and long-distance levels. Additionally, loop diversity provides two redundant circuits from the local point-of-presence (POP) to

your facility. POP diversity, having local links originate from multiple wire centers, or POPs, is an ideal solution. Interoffice diversity provides the same level of service between wire centers. Check with your carriers for available services. Using multiple carriers and providing multiple building entry points and different in-house routing are essential.

These diversity services may or may not include the customer premise equipment necessary to switch between the redundant links. Protection switching for redundant T-1 or DS-3 circuits is either provided by the carrier or purchased and installed by the customer. This provides automatic detection of degraded or interrupted service and switchover to a spare circuit. Protection switching can either be 1:1, with a standby circuit for each primary, or 1:N, with one spare circuit that can be substituted for one of several circuits.

Even in VoIP solutions, any gateway to the public switched network involves local loops and carrier services. It's essential that companies do not overlook this critical link

**Figure 1: Line Side Redundancy**



to customers. Diversity and avoidance services, along with protection switching, can provide solutions to help you maintain your voice communication systems.

### Redundancy Solutions For The Equipment Side

The advantages of migrating to an open architecture, server-based platform for telephony services has prompted the wide acceptability of un-PBXs and IP-PBXs. Flexible architecture, standardized compo-

nents, multiple sources and lower costs are only a few of the reasons that servers are now common for phone systems, voice mail, call recorders and other voice technologies.

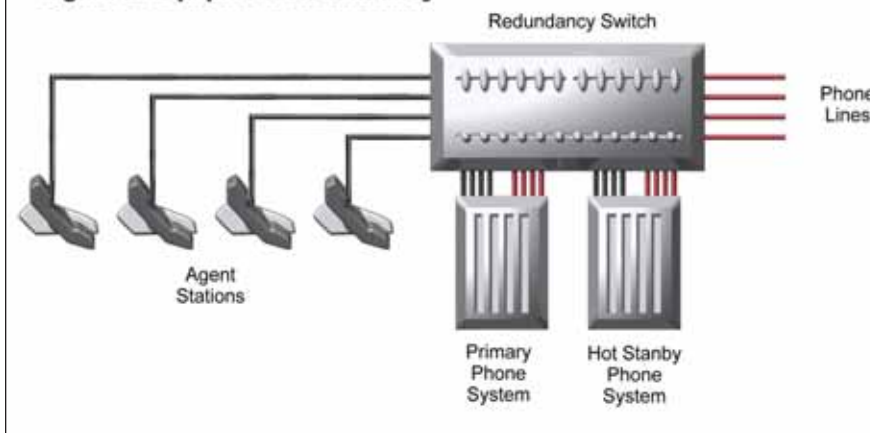
There are, however, trade-offs for all this new power and flexibility. Voice systems have become more complex. Not so long ago, there was one provider to handle everything, including line and equipment servicing. Then came the age of the PBX, in which one provider solved all equipment needs and problems. Now systems are crafted together from "best of breed" providers for processors, memory, storage, power supplies, telephony boards, operating systems and application software. Deploying all of these technologies to work together is a testament to the collaborative nature of modern computers. It also increases responsibility for the end user or consultant to make sure that all the pieces work together seamlessly. Now that the phone system is on the network, it is susceptible to all of the maladies of the network world, including hacker attacks, viruses and Trojan horses. Unfortunately, it is therefore inevitable that elements of the system will either break down or be compromised.

While many manufacturers boast of the high reliability of their systems, the end user should be concerned with a different metric — availability. System availability is the readiness of the system to perform its stated function at any time of the year, month, day, hour or minute. Availability is calculated by using two standard measurements: mean time between failures





**Figure 2: Equipment Redundancy**



(MTBF), which is the likelihood that the component will experience a failure; and mean time to repair (MTTR), which is the average length of time it takes to identify, diagnose, remove and repair or replace a failed component. If a component takes several hours to service and begin functioning again, the availability is severely compromised. The standard formula for calculating availability is as follows:

$$\text{Availability} = \text{MTBF} / (\text{MTBF} + \text{MTTR})$$

This calculation is referred to as “inherent availability,” which does not take into account scheduled maintenance downtime. When lost time for maintenance is added, you can arrive at the true operational availability.

System engineers must look at maximizing reliability and minimizing both scheduled and unscheduled downtime to achieve the best availability possible: the operational availability. Redundancy is the key to providing both the maximum reliability and the minimum repair time. At the component level, redundancy is commonplace for the components that are most likely to fail. Mechanical items like disk drives and power supplies are often the first components that come to mind. Additionally, most systems for telephony services come standard with redundant arrays of inexpensive discs (RAID) and redundant power supplies.

More demanding applications require that redundancy at the system level be con-

sidered. In this scenario, two complete, identical systems are installed. One system provides hot standby with automatic failover for the other system. The standby server, SNMP manager or other management facility is continuously monitoring the health of the system in use. Upon detection of a failure of the primary system, the hot standby is switched into service. Physical layer switching is used to move the phone lines or operator stations from the failed primary server to the newly activated standby.

Hot standby systems allow for scheduled maintenance to be performed with the absolute minimum of interruption, as one server is upgraded while the other is in service. This solution also allows for an immediate, graceful fallback in the event that a planned upgrade goes awry or that a new software installation has unintentional and unplanned consequences.

Redundancy switches operate on the physical layer, moving the actual wires from the phone lines and operator instruments to the telephony boards in the system. In IP phone systems, switching is only required for the phone line side. In essence, redundancy switches perform the same function as a patch panel, but do so automatically and simultaneously for all circuits. As the central component of a fault tolerant solution, the redundancy switch itself cannot represent a single point of failure. These switches use mechanical latching relays to provide a continuous mechanical connection in all

circumstances.

Although redundancy servers are optimal solutions, when considering their deployment, several issues still need to be addressed. As either server may be needed at any time, it is important their databases be synchronized so all configurations, securities and call logs are the same on both systems. Licensing is also a factor. If redundant systems share the same licenses, they need to have dongles switched or need an add-on module to support automatic redundancy switchover.

By considering your needs for availability and redundancy solutions, each system can achieve the level of fault tolerance required to meet organizational objectives. Voice technology remains a critical component to customer service and corporate communications. Thus, deploying line solutions, from diversity and avoidance services to protection switching, should be extremely important for network planners. Furthermore, phone systems have increased in complexity and networkability, leading to possible component failures and malware (malicious software) attacks. Standby systems and redundancy switches keep inevitable problems from becoming true disasters.

*David Weiss has over 19 years' experience in product management, business development, sales and marketing, and he is an expert in the remote site management technology industry. He serves as the president of Dataprobe, where he is directly responsible for developing new market business strategies and for establishing key partnership opportunities and strategic alliances. Dataprobe is a manufacturer of technology solutions for today's demanding remote site management and networking needs. Since 1969, Dataprobe has been providing communication managers, OEM developers and direct consumers with remote technology products.*

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# Miracle Worker?

Contact Center Managers  
today need to....

- ✓ Earn customer loyalty
- ✓ Upsell/cross-sell successfully
- ✓ Increase revenue and yields from an often finite customer base (while lowering costs)
- ✓ Manage risk and meet compliance standards
- ✓ Reduce staff turnover and ignite brand evangelism!

Capturing and evaluating interactions with customers has become essential. And yet the business case for investing in today's quality management technology goes far beyond the old concept of catching the rogue call center rep misleading customers or behaving unprofessionally. Today's technology allows for an impact that is far more reaching than the one-dimensional "QA Checklists" of the past.

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### Apptera Rolls Out New Packaged Speech Applications For Financial Services

Apptera, a provider of configurable packaged speech applications, has announced the availability of new packaged speech applications for the company's Financial Services Suite. Apptera Account Enrollment, Account Payment and Mortgage Quote automate a range of customer service requests, including establishing new customer accounts, making credit card or loan payments and receiving quotes for refinancing and new mortgages.

Apptera's Financial Services Suite, introduced in 2004, enables banks and credit unions to more efficiently and affordably offer personalized service to customers and help them generate revenue around the clock. The new applications were offered to extend Apptera's presence in configurable speech applications, enabling enterprises to deploy higher quality, robust voice solutions more cost-effectively and quicker than custom-developed systems. Apptera Account Enrollment leads callers through the process of applying for a loan or enrolling in a new account — asking the same questions as live agents, but completing the enrollment process in half the time. Apptera Account Payment helps customers make a credit card or loan payment, at their convenience, from any phone. The speech application is designed to eliminate hold times and to lower agent costs by voice-automating the entire account payment process. Finally, Apptera Mortgage Quote helps banks and credit unions deliver differentiated service to customers and provide automated rate quotes around the clock without the need for mortgage specialists.

<http://www.apptera.com>

### Definition Du Jour

#### Multimodal Speech Synthesis

Multimodal speech synthesis is artificial speech accompanied by the image of a human face that replicates emotions: smiles, frowns, winking, head shaking, etc. The progress of artificial speech has been rapid, but in many cases, synthesized speech still cannot communicate the nuances of human speech, which relies on tones, emotions and gestures to communicate such nuance.

### Nuance Voice Platform Honored By Forrester Research

Nuance recently announced that its Nuance Voice Platform, the company's open, standards-based platform optimized for speech, was named a "Top Market Leader" by analyst firm **Forrester Research** in its December 8, 2004 Forrester Wave report, "Evaluating Speech Self-Service Platforms". The Nuance Voice Platform received top honors, according to Forrester, because of its strength and scalability, Nuance's strategy, proven track record and market presence, and the company's standards compliance and financial momentum. Elizabeth Herrell, vice president of Forrester Research, stated "Nuance's experience in developing and deploying speech technology results in a robust platform that allows it to deliver advanced capabilities as soon as they become available, while maintaining high system performance...Nuance Voice Platform is a quality choice for companies demanding all-around excellence in speech platforms and applications."

<http://www.nuance.com>

“ Our speech has its weaknesses and its defects, like all the rest. Most of the occasions for the troubles of the world are grammatical. ”

— Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592), French essayist

### Edify Achieves VoiceXML 2.0 Certification

Edify Corporation, a supplier of voice and speech solutions, recently announced that the Edify Voice Interaction Platform (EVIP) 9.0 has achieved VoiceXML 2.0 certification through the VoiceXML Forum's Platform Certification Program. VoiceXML 2.0 certification verifies that an application can be deployed in a way that is compatible with the VoiceXML standard, eliminating the need for proprietary markups. Edify customers also have the benefit of operating both VoiceXML compliant solutions and native Edify voice solutions on the same platform. EVIP 9.0 is a comprehensive voice system that enables enterprises to build, execute and manage voice applications across the enterprise. EVIP 9.0 integrates automation software with a new distributed architecture that supports emerging standards and technologies such as VoiceXML 2.0. The Edify Voice Browser, a primary component of EVIP 9.0, allows the Edify platform to execute VoiceXML 2.0-compliant code as stand-alone VoiceXML applications or in conjunction with any Edify application builder code. By allowing application developers to use VoiceXML whenever they see fit, Edify also offers the ability to leverage Edify's data access and multichannel capabilities where more powerful tools are required all on a single, integrated platform. The VoiceXML Forum's rigorous Platform Certification Program certifies that implementation platforms execute VoiceXML 2.0 capabilities embodied by the Forum's VoiceXML Conformance Test Suite. The test suite is based on the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) VoiceXML 2.0 recommendation and the W3C VoiceXML 2.0 implementation report test suite. The certification process consists of a test suite, a test harness and an independent testing program. The certification program is managed and developed by VoiceXML Forum members and provides impartiality through the use of independent third-party test laboratories.

<http://www.edify.com>





# What Can Actionable Intelligence Do For *YOUR* Workforce?

Contact center agents can make or break customer satisfaction. But, many lack the skills to quickly address problems and target new sales opportunities.

Actionable Intelligence can arm your agents for success!



Verint's ULTRA™ Intelligent Recording solution delivers actionable intelligence for building a smarter, more motivated workforce. ULTRA provides real-time monitoring and evaluation to help you identify skill gaps, and intelligent coaching and development that can improve performance by giving targeted training and assistance, to each agent, when they need it.

ULTRA enhances staff productivity and effectiveness, and helps empower you to build a world-class contact center team. You'll be better positioned to improve service and increase customer satisfaction, while minimizing agent turnover and costs.

Find out how Verint can help. Request our FREE white paper, "Actionable Intelligence for a Smarter Workforce".

Visit our website at [www.verint.com/smarterworkforce](http://www.verint.com/smarterworkforce) or contact us at **1-800-4-VERINT.**

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**GoldMine 6.5/6.7****FrontRange  
Solutions Inc.**6701 Koll Center Parkway  
Ste. 250

Pleasanton, CA 94566

Ph: 800-776-7889

Web: <http://www.fronrange.com>

Price: \$495 per concurrent user

**2005  
CUSTOMER INTER@CTION  
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GoldMine 6.7 is the latest version of one of the most popular contact managers on the market specifically targeting the small to

# TMC™ Labs Review

medium-sized business, though with its Microsoft SQL Server support it can scale to larger installations as well. GoldMine is a full-featured, enterprisewide contact manager that allows the sharing of data between multiple GoldMine users. Featuring an integrated e-mail client, shared calendars, group scheduling, mass fax/mail merging, PDA links, data synchronization, Internet e-mail, sales forecasting and customizable fields, GoldMine is an extremely versatile CRM software program. GoldMine

is well known for its almost "plug and play" installation.

In fact, unlike many CRM software solutions, you can find it on retail store shelves. We should mention, however, that GoldMine also has a strong partner channel comprised of individuals who will come in and help install and customize GoldMine to suit your needs. At TMC Labs, we actually got our hands on GoldMine 6.5 (not GoldMine 6.7), but the versions are nearly identical except for a few new features that we will list later.

One of the key features of any good CRM solution is record typing; the ability to display different details and views for different users (customer service, sales, accounting). Based on the record type, users can specify what information to capture and what rules are applied. GoldMine 6.7 does an excellent job of this. The ability to customize views in GoldMine is complemented by its ability to customize and integrate with any third-party database using GoldMine's GM+View tab (see Figure 1). The GoldMine GM+View tab is essentially a Web browser so users can integrate to any third-party database. GM+View is very powerful: companies can use any of the GoldMine fields to query a third-party database or even a Web site. For instance, you can pull up a record and then go to GM+View to view the MapQuest directions from your office to the address of the current record displayed. GoldMine comes with a screen designer for easy integration into other databases or for displaying customized data on a Web page.

Installing GoldMine was a breeze. Pop the CD in, go through your typical install wizard and, in a couple of minutes, you have a full-featured CRM system that can rival any of the high-end CRM packages (e.g., Siebel) that require professional services to install. We should point out, however, that GoldMine has a vast VAR channel and professional installers who will install and customize GoldMine to suit your needs. The default sample database was in the dbase file format, and we wanted to see how easy it was to migrate to SQL Server. GoldMine has a wizard to migrate your existing GoldMine database from dbase to SQL Server; the wizard automatically creates the SQL tables.

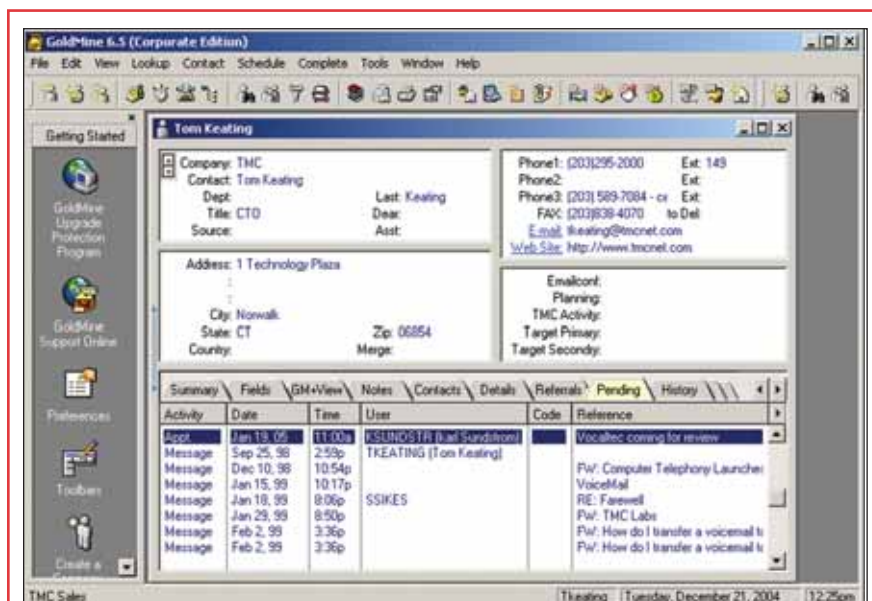


Figure 1. GM+View tab for integrating with Web sites and databases

Overall, the procedure was relatively painless.

## Sales Forecasting And Reporting

Important to any good CRM solution are metrics such as sales forecasting and reports. GoldMine includes specific metrics that allow sales and marketing professionals to view forecasted sales against marketing programs, as well as closed sales as a result. The software also enables users to track and analyze customer responses to identify effective campaigns. The canned reports in GoldMine (see Figure 2) are quite extensive, and you can design your own reports as well.

One optional add-on feature we liked, and which has been available since version 6.0 came out, is the GoldMine Outlook Link. This add-on feature lets you use the popular Outlook e-mail client instead of the GoldMine e-mail client, while still retaining the integration with the GoldMine database. In other words, you can send and receive e-mail within Outlook and the e-mail will still be stored in the History tab in GoldMine for future reference, attached to that specific contact. In addition, from within Outlook you can add special GoldMine columns with GoldMine data fields, such as company name, and a "linked" checkbox field tells you whether the e-mail is linked in the GoldMine History tab. Speaking of add-ons, GoldMine claims that an impressive 235 third-party products are certified to work with GoldMine.

## GoldMine And VoIP

Another very interesting add-on (actually, it's a separate product) is FrontRange's IP Contact Center, which VoIP-enables both FrontRange's GoldMine and HEAT products. The product delivers real-time and historical reporting, queuing, automated call distribution (ACD), integrated voice response (IVR) and screen-pop capabilities and is based on SIP. "We designed IP Contact Center to enable companies to deliver superior customer service and drive revenue by streamlining customer communications," said Kevin J. Smith, FrontRange vice president of products. "The key to productivity gain is the ability to integrate the voice and data platform, enabling calls to

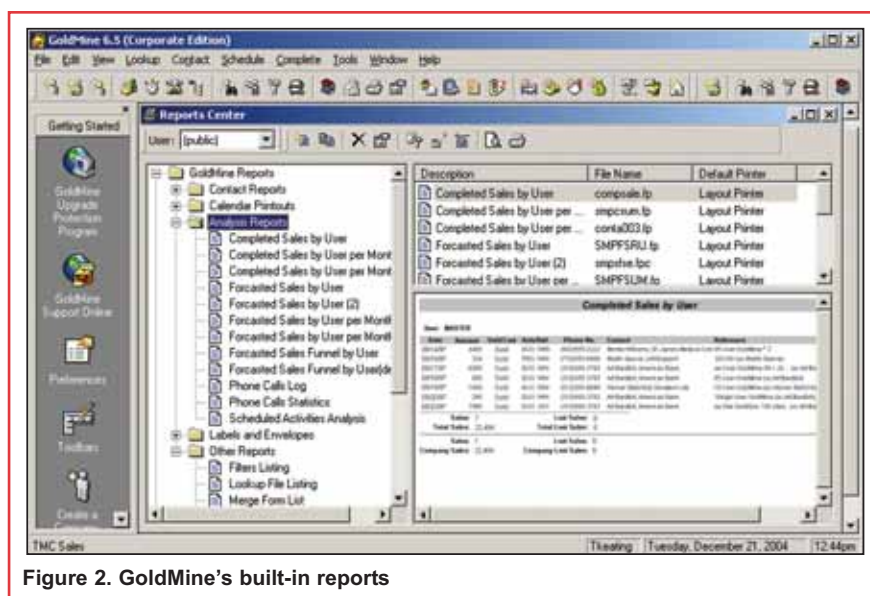


Figure 2. GoldMine's built-in reports

be routed according to pre-defined criteria, such as agent skills or the customer's last interaction with the organization."

We like GoldMine's "Group" feature, which lets users create groups defined by filters (wizard-driven criteria, such as State="CT" and City not equal to "Hartford"), by SQL queries or simply by manually tagging records. Once you have a group defined, you can perform a mail-merge to this group and then print a letter to these recipients. You can also perform fax-merging and e-mail blasting to recipients.

Finally, the new features of GoldMine 6.7 that differ from GoldMine 6.5 include advanced Palm PDA integration, record typing enhancements, Query By Example tools, enhanced API/integration tools, SMS/text messaging and softphone support.

## Search Within A Static Group

We would like to be able to create specific groups for each sales rep (by territory) so the sales reps can activate their group and work solely within their group, not bothered by other records they don't care about.

While you can create sales groups within the entire database, the problem is that when group members bring up the search window to look for a company, the Search window searches within the entire database and not within the activated group. For example, if users search on Wal-Mart, they'll see Wal-Mart stores from all over the country, not just their own territory. As a

result, we feel that there should be a checkbox in the Search window called "search only within activated group" that is on by default (or remembers the last setting).

## Search Using A Dynamic Filter

We should mention that you can activate a "dynamic" filter within GoldMine instead of using a group. For example, you can create a filter to display only records with State="NY", allowing a sales person to work his or her way through the NY records one at a time, by simply clicking the "next record" button. We should mention that each time you scroll to a new record, it has to re-query the database using that filter. Because the state field is indexed, the performance was very good. However, if you use a more complex filter as opposed to a simple filter, merely scrolling to the next record could take several minutes. This is why GoldMine's "static" group feature is so important: it doesn't have this performance limitation, as the records are queried once and then saved into a group.

## Conclusion

GoldMine informed us that a "query by example" feature should be available in the 6.7 release, which is perfect for non-techies who are not SQL query experts. GoldMine has quite a loyal following, plus a strong developer base that often does some nifty integration or designs some creative add-ons. This is handy, because if GoldMine doesn't come with a particular feature you



may be seeking, you can often find a third-party product that will enable that feature.

Overall, GoldMine does a superb job of blending contact management, document management, sales automation/forecasting/reporting, day and time planning, group calendaring and e-mail messaging to track and manage all of your information.

GoldMine's near plug-and-play installation and extensive customization capabilities (often a contradictory combination in other products) are unique in the CRM software space. GoldMine is one of the finest CRM software solutions on the market today, and we would not hesitate to recommend it.

**RATINGS (0-5)**  
**Installation: 4.5**  
**Documentation: 4.5**  
**Features: 4.75**  
**GUI: 4.75**  
**Overall: A**



For information and subscriptions, visit <http://www.TMCnet.com> or call 203-852-6800.

## WebPosition Gold 3 Platinum

**2005**  
**WebPosition**  
**(owned by NetIQ)**  
 851 SW 6th Ave., Ste. 700  
 Portland, OR 97204  
 Ph: 800-962-4855  
 Web: <http://www.webposition.com>  
 Price: WebPosition Gold 3 Standard, \$149;  
 WebPosition Gold 3 Professional, \$349;  
 Platinum Upgrade, \$99 extra; Page Critic  
 (subscription service), \$99 for 12 months.

Marketing and sales are inexorably linked. Without the proper marketing — and even with the greatest sales team — sales revenue is still doomed to failure. In the past, marketing mainly consisted of print advertising, radio & TV ads, tradeshows and marketing mailings; but this arsenal at marketing managers' disposal is incomplete without proper Web-based marketing. Unfortunately, marketing managers are not HTML experts, and they are even less experienced at performing search engine optimization (SEO) on the company's Web site to ensure a high ranking on the popular search engines. This inexperience has often resulted in Webmasters and Web developers being responsible for performing SEO duties. This introduces problems in of itself, as Webmasters are not marketing experts. They don't know which marketing campaigns are most important at any particular moment and, as a result, they can't target specific keywords for the best search engine optimization. Further, research confirms that over 80 percent of Web visitors use search engines to find the information they're seeking. When a potential customer conducts a search for keywords related to your site's products or serv-

ices, if your page does not appear in the top listings, you are losing revenue.

Enter WebPosition Gold 3 Platinum, a Windows-based application and one of the premier SEO utilities on the market today. Using WebPosition Gold 3 Platinum, even the most novice HTML coder and even the greenest "search engine optimizer" will become an SEO expert in no time.

Basically, WebPosition Gold 3 Platinum breaks down SEO into five simple steps:

1. Research your target keywords with the integration of Wordtracker, a popular keyword research tool.
2. Design and submit HTML pages with Page Builder, Upload Manager and Submitter.

3. Monitor your rankings with Reporter.
4. Optimize your pages, using the built-in expertise available in Page Critic.

5. Analyze your results through to conversion, using WebTrends Analytics (a separate product).

Let's examine each of these steps in detail.

## Research Your Target Keywords

Every company knows at least a few keywords that, when searched upon via a search engine, they want in order to draw those searchers to their Web site. What they don't know is that there are many related keywords they may not have considered. With Wordtracker integrated into WebPosition Gold 3 Platinum, you will not only know

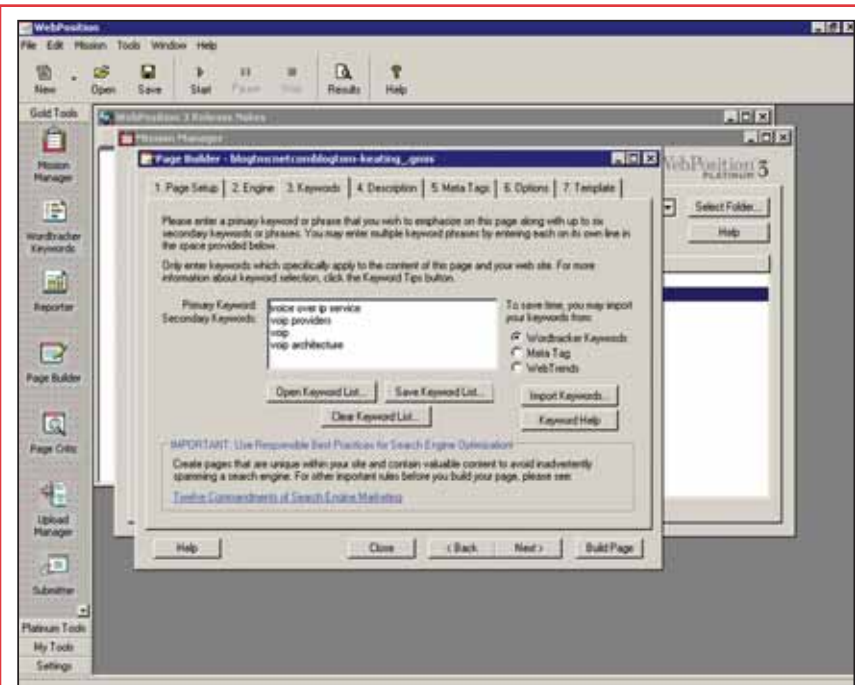


Figure 1. Add keywords to track — can import from Wordtracker

the related keywords, you will also know how many times per month that keyword is searched. Knowing the popularity of a particular keyword is key to drawing Web traffic to your Web site. Webtracker is very popular among SEO experts, and when we tested Wordtracker integrated into WebPosition Gold 3 Platinum we could not have been more pleased.

## Design And Submit HTML Pages

WebPosition Gold 3 Platinum will help you design the necessary HTML tags and keyword placement to ensure optimal SEO via the PageBuilder wizard. Using this utility was very straightforward. For instance, you can simply import keywords created via Wordtracker (See Figure 1), type keywords manually, or import keywords from Meta tags from an existing Web page. You can choose which SE (search engine) to optimize and then enter the main body text, choose your template, and then click Build Page. It will auto-create the important Meta tags (title, Meta keywords, Meta description, etc.) and perform other SEO tricks targeting your keywords.

## Monitor Your Rankings

Tracking your rankings on the major search engines could be a full-time job if doing so manually. How do you know if a particular change to a Web page resulted in a “bump” in the search engine rankings? Fortunately, WebPosition makes tracking your SE rankings simple. Using WebPosition Reporter, you can enter in the domain you want to check for specific keyword rankings, as well as enter your competitors’ domains to see how you compare. Check out Figure 2, which shows the Competitive Analysis tab within Reporter comparing two TMC Web sites for several keywords using a few search engines.

## Optimize Your Pages

The Page Critic is one of the most powerful features of WebPosition. Using the built-in expertise of this feature, you can examine an individual Web page and determine if it has been search engine optimized. Page Critic will “crawl” the search engines you specified, searching for the keywords you specified and then returning statistics

and analysis in an HTML report (See Figure 3). Because WebPosition uses a built-in browser (Internet Explorer), it makes extensive use of clickable hyperlinks for getting definitions and explanations of key terms — terms such as “keyword prominence” or “keyword frequency” — which is useful for SEO novices or is a refresher to those who already know. Web site links are all clickable: for instance, suppose a competing site ranks highly; you can quickly go to that Web page and look at the source code. Back and Forward buttons are both available, with the Back button especially useful for toggling between a view of a WebPosition report and a Web site. We should point out that all of WebPosition’s reports let you choose whether or not to include “sponsored listings” (paid ads) in the reports. This allows you to view your crawler-based rankings, sponsored rankings, even your combined rankings, on a single, easy-to-read report.

After optimizing your pages, the next step is, of course, getting the search engines to list your Web pages. WebPosition’s Submitter automates submission of specific URLs to the top search engines; and it has a built-in feature to throttle how many times you submit URLs to the search engines so as to not spam them and to follow each search engine’s submission guidelines. We should point out that the search engines are notoriously fickle about index-

ing all the pages of a Web site and keeping them indexed, which is why manual submission is important. In addition to the array of submission options already included in past versions of WebPosition, version 3 can automatically submit any page still not found in the search engine after a reasonable indexing time has elapsed. You simply schedule Reporter’s URL Verification feature to track your most important pages. Any URLs not found, those that you previously had to manually paste into the submitter for resubmission, can now be automatically submitted.

The Platinum Upgrade provides additional features beyond those that WebPosition Gold Standard and WebPosition Professional Edition offer. These features include Meta Manager, to manage your HTML Meta and title tags; Link Defender, to check for any broken links within your site; Code Defender, to remove white space from your HTML code, thus improving performance, making it harder for the competition to copy your pages; and, finally, an additional 25 search engines.

## Features Overview

- Optimal keyword research from Wordtracker, the industry leader, and with up to 25 keywords free
- Fully customizable report templates
- Support for over 200 global and region-

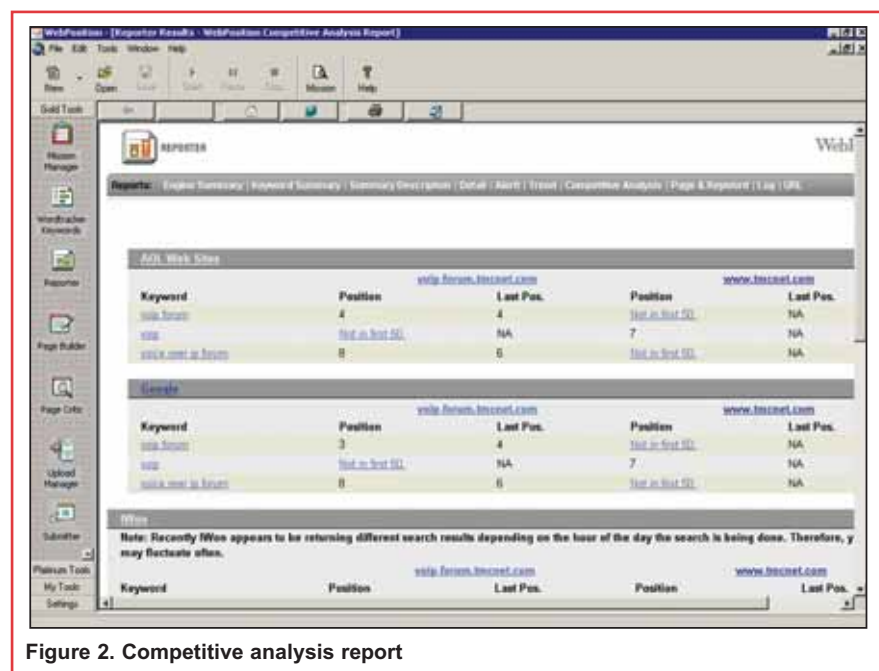


Figure 2. Competitive analysis report

al search engines, including the new shopping engine, Froogle

- Enhanced reporting on both your organic and pay-per-click search listings
- Export of data for use in Microsoft Excel and other applications
- Expanded expert advice from Page Critic for improved competitive comparisons
- Platinum package, including Meta Manager, Link Defender and Code Defender modules
- Integration with WebTrends, an industry leader in Web analytics, for tracking your results through to conversion
- Reporter checking your site rankings in the top search engines
- Page Critic supplying expert, custom-tailored advice for how to optimize each of your new or existing Web pages
- Page Generator creating optimized Web pages based on keywords and details you enter about your business
- Upload Manager remembering all optimized Web pages you create, change or add

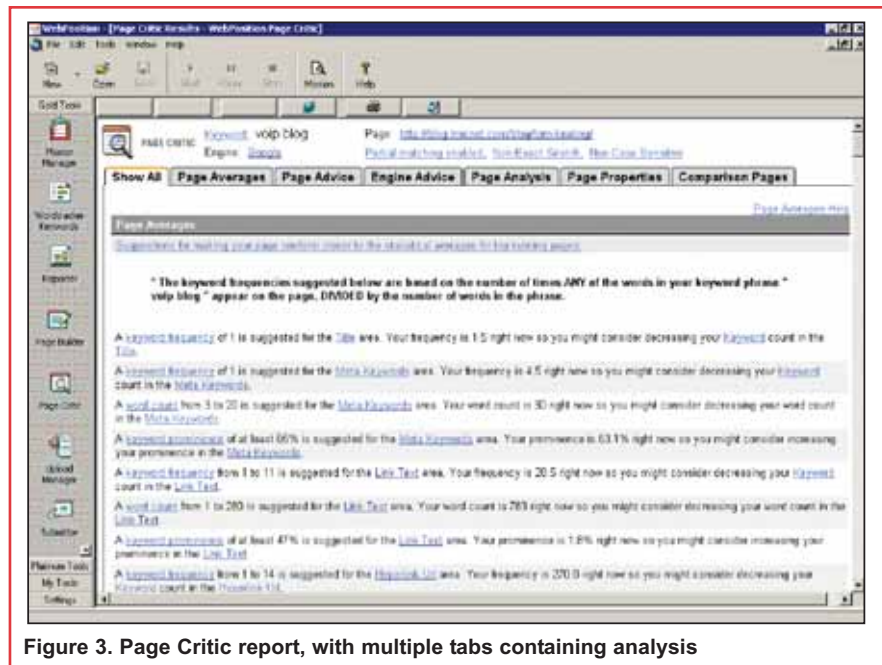


Figure 3. Page Critic report, with multiple tabs containing analysis

- Scheduler activating the Reporter daily, weekly or monthly to automatically check your Web site's rankings

## Room For Improvement

Our only suggestion is in regard to the tracking of the previous rankings in Reporter. Currently, it only tracks the previous ranking for a particular keyword to compare with the current ranking. We'd like it to keep the history of rankings for the past 10 times we ran the Reporter mission. Even better, we'd like to see it keep an infinite number of iterations, and then we'd like to see WebPosition provide a graph with a timeline (day, week or month) on the X axis and the SE ranking on the Y axis. Seeing a graph of a keyword's rankings across a timeline (similar to what Alexa does) would be a valuable tool.

## Conclusion

TMC Labs was very pleased with the features of WebPosition Platinum, as well as its ease of use, which surely and fortunately will not intimidate marketing managers new to the SEO game. WebPosition Gold 3 Platinum is, without a doubt, the premiere search engine optimization software utility on the planet, and we enthusiastically give it two thumbs up!

RATINGS (0-5)  
 Installation: 4  
 Documentation: 4.5  
 Features: 4.75  
 GUI: 5  
 Overall: A

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# Reducing Staff May Cost You Money



By Penny Reynolds,  
The Call Center School

Many businesses have felt the effect of a slowed economy over the past few years. All departments, including the call center, have been asked to tighten their belts and make the most of resources.

Because about 75 percent of call center's operating costs are related to staffing, that is generally the first place the call center manager might look to reduce costs. It is all too common to think of layoffs and reduction in staff as a way to respond to the call from senior management to tighten belts. But before you write up the pink slips, make sure you understand the implications of staff reductions.

Let's assume that you're a fairly small call center with fewer than 50 agent seats. (If you're a larger center, you can view these numbers as representative of a specialized agent group within the bigger call center structure.) Most days, you're meeting your service goal of 30 seconds. The snapshot below indicates the staffing picture with varying numbers of staff during an hour in which you're getting 350 calls.

Number of Staff	Avg Delay (ASA)	Staff Occupancy
30	298 sec.	97%
31	107 sec.	94%
32	54 sec.	91%
33	30 sec.	88%
34	18 sec.	86%
35	11 sec.	83%

Staffing with 33 "bodies in chairs" would enable you to meet the service goal fairly consistently. A strategy of decreasing staff numbers to reduce costs would impact service directly. The loss of one person would worsen delays from 30 seconds to 54 seconds. Eliminating another person would double the wait 107 seconds, and reducing staffing levels by three agents would result in an average delay of 298 seconds. Those callers accustomed to waiting for only half a minute in queue would now be waiting nearly five minutes!

Unfortunately, service isn't the only thing that suffers. With 33 staff members in place to handle the call workload, agent occupancy (the measure of how busy staff are during the period of time they're logged in and available) is in an acceptable range at 88 percent. Taking one body away raises occupancy levels to 91 percent; taking two away results in 94 percent occupancy; and taking three staff members away means staff would be busy 97 percent of the time during the hour. In other words, there would be a total of only 3 percent of the hour (108 seconds) of "breathing room" between calls. Such a high level of occupancy can't be maintained for long. The likely result will be longer handle times, longer periods spent in after-call work to "catch their breath," burnout and, inevitably, turnover.

There's another downside to consider from a cost perspective. The idea was to save money by eliminating staff. Assuming a wage rate of \$20 per hour, then eliminating three staff members, would result in a savings of \$60 for that hour.

However, if your center is paying the phone bill by providing a toll-free service for callers, the reduction in staff might be outweighed by the increased telephone costs associated with the longer delay times. In this example, with 33 staff members in place, the average delay is 30 seconds per call. Multiply that by 350 calls per hour and that's 10,500 seconds (or 175 minutes) of delay. If we apply a fully loaded telephone cost per minute to that usage of \$.06 per minute, that's \$10.50 for the queue time.

If we reduce the numbers to 30 staff, remember our average delay increases to 298 seconds of delay per call. Multiply that by 350 calls and that's 1,738 minutes of delay, priced at \$.06 for a total of \$104.30 for the queue time that hour. In other words, by eliminating three staff members to save money, we've just

increased our telephone bill by \$93.80 for that hour! And this doesn't even take into account the likelihood that calls under these circumstances will more often fail to reach expected service levels.

The cost implications are even more dangerous in a revenue-producing center. If the value of a contact is \$50, and agent salaries are \$20 per hour, it is easy to see that putting another agent on the phone will pay for itself even if the agent answers only one call per hour that would otherwise have abandoned from the queue. Even if the value of the call is only \$5, there is clearly a trade-off in determining the staffing level that will produce the highest net bottom line. The return on appropriate staffing must be argued against budget constraints.

So, from three different perspectives: that of the customer (service delays), the agent (higher occupancy), and senior management (higher telephone costs and abandoned calls), it's easy to see that a simple staff reduction may not save you any money. In fact, it may cost you much more in terms of poor service, productivity, morale and just the opposite direction on your bottom line than what you intended.

*Penny Reynolds is a Founding Partner of The Call Center School, a Nashville, Tennessee-based consulting and education company. She is the author of several call center management books, including Call Center Staffing—The Complete, Practical Guide to Workforce Management. Contact her at penny.reynolds@thecallcenterschool.com or call 615-812-8410.*

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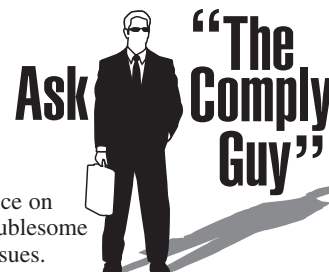


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By  
Tracey E.  
Schelmetic,  
Editorial Director,  
Customer  
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# Welcome to a new era of customer contact.

I bet you've heard that before, huh? Probably from many editors and analysts, including me. It's become the contact center's version of "Have A Nice Day." It's often uttered, but we seldom notice it anymore, and we're not even completely sure what it means.

We've entered an era in which we can buy the sexiest technologies known to telecommunications for our call centers. We can Web-enable, speech-enable and IP-enable our contact centers. We can make IVRs so smart they sound like people. We can up our processing power, lower our agent turnover, expand our self-service and contract our average handle time. We can serve up data shaken not stirred, turn employee gossip and chat into company capital, monitor the voice stress in our agents, automatically pre-screen our employees, and automate our scheduling, recording and training. We can translate our Web chat into Brazilian Portuguese, offer video conferencing to our best customers and monitor our shoppers' behavior online. After all that, we can order up reports so sleek they should be on a Milan catwalk wearing Manolo Blahnik shoes.

So the eternal question remains: Why do so many companies still have such rotten customer service?

Ask yourself this question: Nowadays, we have Atkins diets, South Beach diets, Zone diets, low-fat diets, cross-trainers, e-dieting, personal trainers, Pilates, yoga, yogurt, exercise DVDs, tai chi, power walking, spinning, soy, green tea, sugar substitutes and more vegetables in the supermarket than I ever realized actually grew on the planet. (I'm still not convinced that some of them actually do.)

Do we all have bodies like the people in Bowflex ads? Not a chance.

Despite the preponderance of diet aids, we're a chubbier nation than ever before. Why? Probably because all the things that make it "easier" for us to lose weight have just made it easier to forget that the only way to lose weight is to eat properly and to get more exercise. The rest simply gets in the way. I'm not advocating you chuck your beloved Atkins diet book or toss out your tofu; we really only need to remember these things are merely minor aids in accomplishing the task.

In the same way, customer-facing organizations need to remember that the technologies don't make the experience. They don't improve anything if they're not used properly. All they do is alienate customers in a more high-tech way than before. Proper use involves understanding what your customer is looking for from you, and applying common sense to your business practices.

An example: I've recently purchased a house, and have been busy getting all my utility companies, old and new, in a row. I called the company that maintained the oil burner for the previous owners. I was suddenly dropped into a very involved, very expensive IVR system. Problem was, my question didn't fall into any of the menus on their menu tree. I pressed zero. "We're sorry, that's not a valid option." I waited through the menu once again, and chose a button at random, then explaining to the woman who answered that I had purchased a home formerly serviced by their company and needed some background information on the account. "I'm sorry, that's not my department," I was informed. I was transferred. I waited. I huffed. I was ultimately told they couldn't find the address, and did I know the name of the previous owners? How do

you spell that? I said "Thank You" politely, and hung up, resolved to call another company.

Now, maybe I'm expecting too much, but when I informed the first person who answered my call that I was, essentially, both a potential new customer and an individual who has the power to take away one of their existing service accounts, shouldn't that have thrown up a red flag that my call should be prioritized, or that I should, at the very least, be properly directed to someone who could help me?

Secondly, the tone of the experience bothered me. When I shop for books or DVDs, I want my experience to be slick, high-tech, automated and fast. When I shop for an oil company, I'd like to feel that "small town mom-and-pop" attitude that means if my oil burner cashes out on a dark and stormy Sunday night, I'll find someone who actually cares (other than me, of course) and that I'm not dealing with a franchise of a branch of a branch of a company located a thousand miles away. The last thing I want to be faced with is a Kevlar IVR with its "zero out" option dismantled. That tells me that this is a company that wants to hide from me.

Here's the most shocking part of all these long-lingering inefficiencies: they can't be automated away. They can't be Web-enabled, or speech-enabled. They can't be networked, software developed or open source-coded. They require human brain power and common sense. Remember that? It's been rapidly disappearing from the human race for some time. At the risk of sounding like Grandpa in one of his more crotchety moods, what happened to critical thinking? Do the top executives of companies with large customer service entities actually call their own contact centers sometimes? Do they try and navigate their own IVRs? Do they try and engage their agents in a chat session? Do they know their outsourcers? Do they talk to their own agents and call center managers? Do they know how much they pay their agents and what the relationship between pay scale and the quality of the employee is? Do they try and look at their companies through their customers' eyes?

Do they even know who their customers are?

For now, I'll say welcome to another chapter in the never-ending saga of the quest for perfect customer service. I look forward to navigating 2005 with you.



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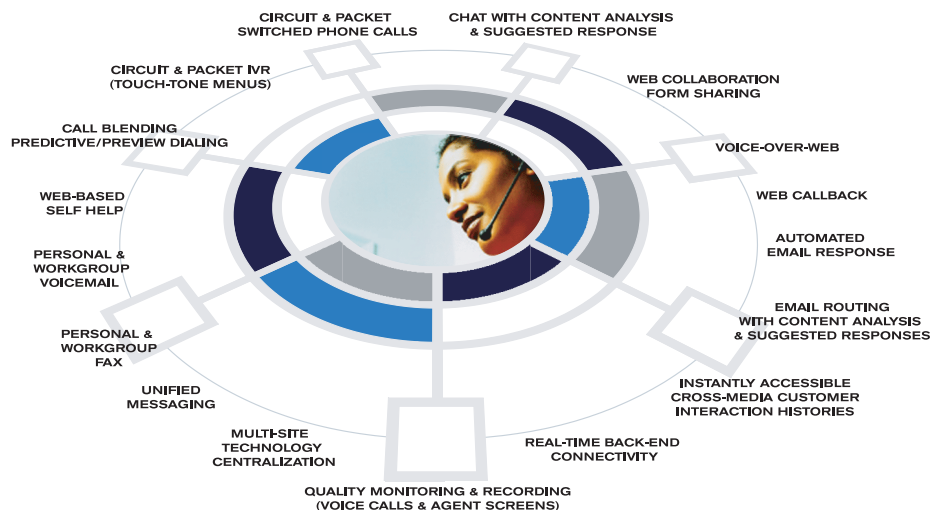
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