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Web Site	Alexa Site Rank	Web Site	Alexa Site Rank	Web Site	Alexa Site Rank
TMCnet.com	1,540	TMCnet.com	1,540	TMCnet.com	1,540
eWeek.com	1,942	Smart Money	2,992	GE	3,209
Computerworld	2,940	Fast Company	3,748	Ford	3,329
InfoWorld	3,980	Red Herring	4,370	General Motors	3,797
Network World	6,195	Inc. Magazine	6,008	Coca-Cola	5,718
Light Reading	12,471	Barron's Online	6,551	State Farm Insurance	6,513
Wireless Week	42,137	Technology Review	7,382	DuPont	17,070
Pulver.com	43,326	Weekly Standard	8,342	Kroger	22,656
Telephony Online	52,860	CIO Magazine	12,663	AIG	29,404
Destination CRM	56,033	Fortune Magazine	13,063	Chevron Texaco	34,412
VoIP News	68,122	BtoB Online	25,004	Exxon Mobil	34,607
Telecomweb	191,198	Worth Magazine Online	217,538	Fannie Mae	39,772
Telephony World	229,201				
Call Center Magazine	234,504				
CommWeb	243,661				
America's Network	251,349				
Wireless Review	604,039				
Communications News	673,705				

TMCnet Traffic Analysis

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- Lessons Learned In The Past 25 Years
- TMC Labs Reviews Nuasis NuContact Center 3.0 –
- What's Next For CRM?
- The Speech Technology Excellence Awards



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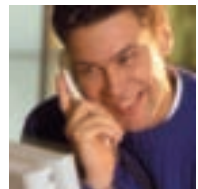


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By: Nadji Tehrani,
Founder, Chairman & CEO, Editor-in-Chief,
Technology Marketing Corporation

The Lessons Learned In The Last 25 Years

The First Lesson: Ignorance Is An Entrepreneur's Best Friend!

Introduction

The June 2006 issue of *Customer Inter@tion Solutions*® magazine will represent the culmination of 25 years of publishing and informing the world's contact/CRM centers and customer interaction centers. During that period of time, as is normal in every endeavor, we made plenty of mistakes and learned from them as we went along.

In addition, we also observed a tremendous number of companies in the contact center field that continued to make mistakes and, in some cases, they never learned from them. Most of those companies with that attitude are no longer around. Please note that the following are all true stories.

Obviously, the tremendous amount of information we have gathered since 1982 when *Telemarketing*® magazine (the former name for the current *Customer Inter@tion Solutions*®) laid

that could help us become better managers by avoiding errors.

Lesson #2 — Why Do Some Companies With Poor Products Succeed And Others With Very Good Products Fail?

Believe it or not, this was precisely the case for a pair of companies, one with a great product and the other with a mediocre product. Ironically, the former (the company with a great product) nearly went bankrupt, while the company with the mediocre product maintained better than 80 percent market share! If you asked me to explain why this was so in one word, I would say, "marketing." If you allowed me three words, I would say "lack of marketing" and if I could use two more words, I would say "lousy marketing." Believe it or not, this is a true story, and I admired the company with the highest market share simply because the CEO of that company was a master marketer, while the CEO of the failing company considered marketing to be a necessary evil, and he gave it only lip service.

The ironic thing, in this case, is that the above scenario occurred with not

The reason for unusually high rates of failure within the technology companies — they typically spend 95 percent of their budgets on research and development of new products and next to nothing on marketing.

the foundation for the world's contact centers/CRM and customer interaction centers would fill several volumes of books. However, I will try to share with you just a few of the highlighted lessons



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only many high-technology companies, but also with several teleservices companies.

Lesson #3 — The Case For The Teleservices Companies

Company A and Company B ranked #48 and #49 in the Top 50 Teleservices Agencies ranking as selected by the editors of *Customer Inter@ction Solutions*® magazine. The CEO of Company A was a master marketer and frequently consulted with TMC. He followed practically every suggestion that we gave him. He was also an excellent manager and had very talented and hard-working employees. As a result, the company rose from #48 to #2 in the Top 50 rankings (over a five-year period), and thanks to the

president of marketing, but no budget for promotion or advertising.

Lesson #5 — Rush To Market

Back in 1990, a leading company in our industry came up with a product that was supposed to be all things to all people. For political and personal reasons, this product was marketed long before it was ready. The powerful marketing and previously existing respect for this company in the industry led many innocent call center executives to adopt that technology, only to find out that it was completely non-functional and, in fact, it was nothing more than a major headache. As a result, the company lost major market share and still has not recovered from that disaster.

Today...no company prospers without the implementation of well strategized integrated marketing.

tremendous business savvy of the CEO of Company A, the company went public in the mid 1990s at about \$15 a share. Subsequently, the price rose to \$80 per share. Later on, there was a two-for-one split, and the split stocks also rose to \$80 per share. The bottom line is that the CEO and founder of Company A cashed in an estimated \$600 million worth of stock, and through exceptional investing, he has now become a billionaire. Company B did nothing: no marketing, no promotions, no advertising and, therefore, the company went nowhere. Again, this is a true story.

Lesson #4 — Having A Marketing VP With No Budget

Believe it or not, some companies are short-sighted enough to have a marketing vice president, but no budget. They try to rely completely on word-of-mouth marketing. Even if these companies have not gone out of business over the last 25 years, they have not made much progress, either. To me, it is incomprehensible for any company to have a director or vice

Lesson #6 — Suing Your Influential Customers

Another idiotic and totally incomprehensible action that a few CEOs have taken in the recent past was actually threatening to bring a lawsuit against their leading customers. The reason? The customer refused to renew its contract with Company A because of Company A's obsolete product and unreliable technical service. The short-sighted CEO of Company A was blinded by his ego and did not realize that the contact center industry, like many other industries, is an extremely well-connected group. In other words, when somebody screws up a great company by offering lousy service, yet does not allow customers to go elsewhere by virtue of threatening lawsuits, that CEO has no reason to exist, in my opinion. Fortunately, one such CEO was let go just before the company went under.

This was not the first time I had witnessed such an illogical and idiotic action of bringing a lawsuit against a prestigious customer. Back in my chem-

istry days, the CEO of a chemical adhesives company where I was employed submitted a completely defective product to the company's leading customer. When the customer refused to pay, the ill-advised CEO brought a lawsuit against the customer. That ill-advised action took the chemical company, which had heretofore been the #1 supplier to the industry, to last place. Eventually, the company was sold for practically a song to a leading competitor.

One wonders how the board of directors of any responsible company could put up with this kind of stupidity — instead of providing maximum care for their leading customers, they actually brought a lawsuit against them. Yes...it sounds utterly stupid, but it has happened and I have witnessed it.

Lesson #7 — The Demise Of Horizontal Trade Shows

Once upon a time, the grand-daddy of all technology shows, COMDEX, featured exhibitors who offered soup-to-nuts in terms of products. Suddenly, there was a shift in the marketplace from exhibiting at horizontal shows in favor of exhibiting at small but highly focused and targeted trade shows. As a result, COMDEX no longer exists. What made matters worse in COMDEX's case were ill-advised managers who treated every exhibitor like dirt and dictated to those exhibitors that if they wanted a particular space the next year, exhibitors must increase their booth size by 20 to 50 percent. The rule was, "Take it or leave it." Eventually, exhibitors who were not getting much business out of COMDEX anyway declined to continue exhibiting, and COMDEX is now history.

Lesson #8 — The CEOs Blinded By Ego

As I have indicated in many of my previous editorials, a CEO can be a double-edged sword. On the positive side, a CEO with the right frame of mind and the proper attitude can enhance the revenues of his or her company tremendously. The right CEO will

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actually build and reinforce relationships with all customers, or as many of his customers as possible and, in fact, will play the role of ambassador for the company. Alternatively, many CEOs would prefer to deal only with other CEOs. In such cases, the wrong CEO (who is rude and has a huge ego problem) would spell disaster.

I know one CEO who inherited a company with about 80 percent market share. That market share was largely the result of an outstanding CEO who had run the company previously. The new CEO, a person with horrible interpersonal skills, came in and started to break most, if not all, of the company's relationships one by one! As a matter of fact, I became so disgusted with that particular company that I wrote an editorial about how lousy some companies are in treating both their customers and the leading media in their industry. One analysis that I used was that the company acted as if the world owes them everything and they owe nothing in return. Needless to say, that particular CEO was let go, and the rest of the company was extremely happy for that.

Lesson # 9 — Build Great Products And Keep Them A Secret!

Another great lesson that we continuously learned from mistakes made by small to medium-sized companies is as follows:

The tendency of technology companies has often been to build a better mousetrap only to find that the mouse died 15 years ago! Believe it or not, as funny as this may seem, this is still the case in 80 percent of technology companies.

As I have indicated in previous editorials, I once visited the CEO of a speech technology company who had an outstanding speech product. I was very taken by the natural speech that was incorporated into their solution. I said to the CEO, "You have a great product here. How are you going to market it?" He replied, "I have invested 35 years of my life and every penny I had in devel-

oping this product, and right now I have no money for marketing." Can you believe this idiotic comment? We have stated in these editorials many times that "If you don't market, you don't exist." In fact, in previous editorials, I updated that comment by saying, "If you're not on the first page of Google and/or Yahoo search results for your industry, you don't exist." Nevertheless, high-tech companies continue to ignore the rules of marketing and they give only lip service to it. Ironically, the few companies that do market seem to have one or more of the following problems:

- The marketing pieces and advertisements are not benefits-driven;
- There is no differentiation statement;
- There is no positioning statement;
- There is a wrong message to the wrong audience; and
- There is no call to action!

With that many problems, it is no wonder that many who do a lousy job of marketing don't blame their lack of knowledge about effective marketing; they say marketing doesn't work or advertising doesn't work, whereas in reality, their poor marketing message has all of the above problems and, in most cases, their messages have no call to action.

That should explain the reason for unusually high rates of failure within the technology companies — they typically spend 95 percent of their budgets on research and development of new products and next to nothing on marketing.

Today...no company prospers without the implementation of well strategized integrated marketing.

Lesson #10 — Don't Hang Your Hat On PR Alone

Many times, I have witnessed CEOs and vice presidents of many technology companies go on media tours with the public relations (PR) staff. The companies visit both the leading publications as well as the industry analysts. Often times, they feel that their visit will lead to press via public relations, and thereby they feel that their marketing job is

done. Many CEOs, while visiting the leading media providers, rarely ask "How do you think I should market my product?" And that is the source of the problem, because a leading publisher who really understands the industry can offer practical solutions and suggestions for effective marketing strategies at no charge. Yet, many companies are not receptive to it, and they feel that PR alone is going to do the job. In my humble opinion, that will never happen, and it is only wishful thinking.

Lesson #11 — M&A Blunders

In the mid 1990s, when the contact center industry was flourishing and growing at literally 50 to 100 percent a year, Wall Street became extremely interested in the contact center industry, specifically in teleservices. Investment bankers started calling me and asking me what I thought about this company or that company. It looked as if there was a feeding frenzy or, more specifically, an acquisition frenzy going on. Every week or every month, I would hear of a new acquisition. I was concerned about this activity: not because I did not feel that consolidation would be good, but because many of the acquirers were financial buyers, which means they were strictly interested in making a profit and they were clueless about the many, many details that need to be considered in order to effectively run and manage a call center. I recall talking to such a financial buyer who used to be a waiter in a restaurant; he then purchased the restaurant and subsequently went into the real estate business and made a ton of money. At that time, he discovered the rapid growth of call centers. As a result, he borrowed millions and acquired half a dozen incompatible and sub par companies. Before too long, as expected, he ran into major problems. I recall receiving a call from that person asking me what he had done wrong. Unfortunately, it was too late. If he had called me prior to the acquisitions, I would have told him that his

Congratulations To Top 50 Teleservices Agencies

As the industry's leading publication since 1982, it is my distinct honor to congratulate all the companies in the 21st Annual Top 50 Teleservices Agencies Ranking (inbound). By becoming a Top 50 Teleservices Agency, you have distinguished your company as one of the very best in the outsourced teleservices, customer care/CRM industry. Be sure to inform your customers and prospects of this great news, for awards without marketing and differentiation are wasted! Please read my Publisher's Outlook titled "Award Marketing" at <http://www.tmcnet.com/cis/0203/0203po.htm>.

Customer Inter@ction Solutions and TMC are pleased to announce that this year's Top 50 Teleservices Agencies/MVP Quality Awards Dinner will be held in conjunction with the 25th Anniversary Celebration for *Customer Inter@ction Solutions* magazine in New York City on Thursday, May 4th, 2006.

We have selected the elegant Marriott East Side Hotel on Lexington Avenue as the venue for this special party. Many past winners of Top 50 and MVP Quality Awards — true industry luminaries — have been invited to join us in honoring you on this great evening.

The event promises to be the most exciting teleservices-focused event of the year.

For more information, contact Frank Coppola at fcoppola@tmcnet.com or 203-852-6800, ext. 131.



particular combination of incompatible companies would never have become a unified profit center. As a result, millions of dollars were wasted.

Lesson #12 — The Unlikely And Unfortunate Story

A few years ago, a poorly funded company (Company X) claimed to have developed a new technology that raised the eyebrows of all technology-savvy people. The company made every claim known to mankind, and they made many, many promises. While no one was taking them seriously, they decided to manipulate an analyst to state that upon evaluation of all products in this category, the analyst found Company X's product to rank at #1. Obviously, some monetary rewards must have changed hands, otherwise such nonsense never would have been presented. The industry was up in arms. All manufacturers were against this action and they spent a considerable amount of time informing the rest of the industry to beware of Company X's questionable practices. To make a very long story

short, eventually Company X went out of business.

An Analysis Of The Above Wasteful Cases

I have always wondered what is in the minds of the people who continue to make mistake after mistake and misleading statement after misleading statement, getting involved in all of the problems that I have outlined above. I once explained some of these problems to a highly respected CEO of our industry who, in my judgment, was one of the most, if not the most, knowledgeable CEOs in our industry. I shared with him some of the errors that were being committed. I asked him what he thought about the issue. His answer was, "If this industry wasn't so good, many of those CEOs would be pumping gas!" The more I thought about it, the more I realized he was right.

Obviously, the purpose of this editorial is not to embarrass anyone or bad-mouth any individual or any company; rather, the main objective of this editorial is to learn from some of the mistakes

made in the last 25 years. If I can prevent anyone from making any of the above mistakes, I think I have accomplished what I set out to do!

As For Ignorance Being The Entrepreneur's Best Friend

I am a firm believer that ignorance is truly the entrepreneur's best friend. I once read a study made by a reliable research organization that stated that 90 percent of entrepreneurs are between the ages of 30 and 38, because that is a period in life when people don't know an excessive amount about business, but they do know some things for real. Consequently, entrepreneurs in that age bracket are more likely to take a plunge, and once they are in the water, they know that they have to sink or swim. That element alone leads the entrepreneurs to become successful.

The Case In Point

Indeed, such was the case with *Telemarketing*® magazine back in 1982. After the second issue of the publication, we literally ran out of things to write! My editor came to me and asked "Are you sure this is an industry?" I replied, "No, I am not sure, but we are going to make it an industry," because I believed that *Telemarketing*® magazine (which I defined as "The magazine of **electronic marketing**" back then) had a tremendous future in the business community. The moral of this story is that had I known too much and had I known that after the second issue there would be nothing to write about, I probably would not have started the magazine, and the rest would have been history. Consequently, I continue to believe that ignorance is the entrepreneur's best friend! **CIS**

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

IMPORTANT:

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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INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS FROM THE WORKFORCE OPTIMIZATION EXPERTS:

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By Patrick Botz, Voice Print International, Inc. *Up until a few years ago, the contact center was an overlooked and relatively untapped source of business intelligence. The full extent of its value to the enterprise as a whole has only come to light in recent years — mainly due to the emergence of technologies that enable organizations to capture and meaningfully evaluate multimedia interactions.*

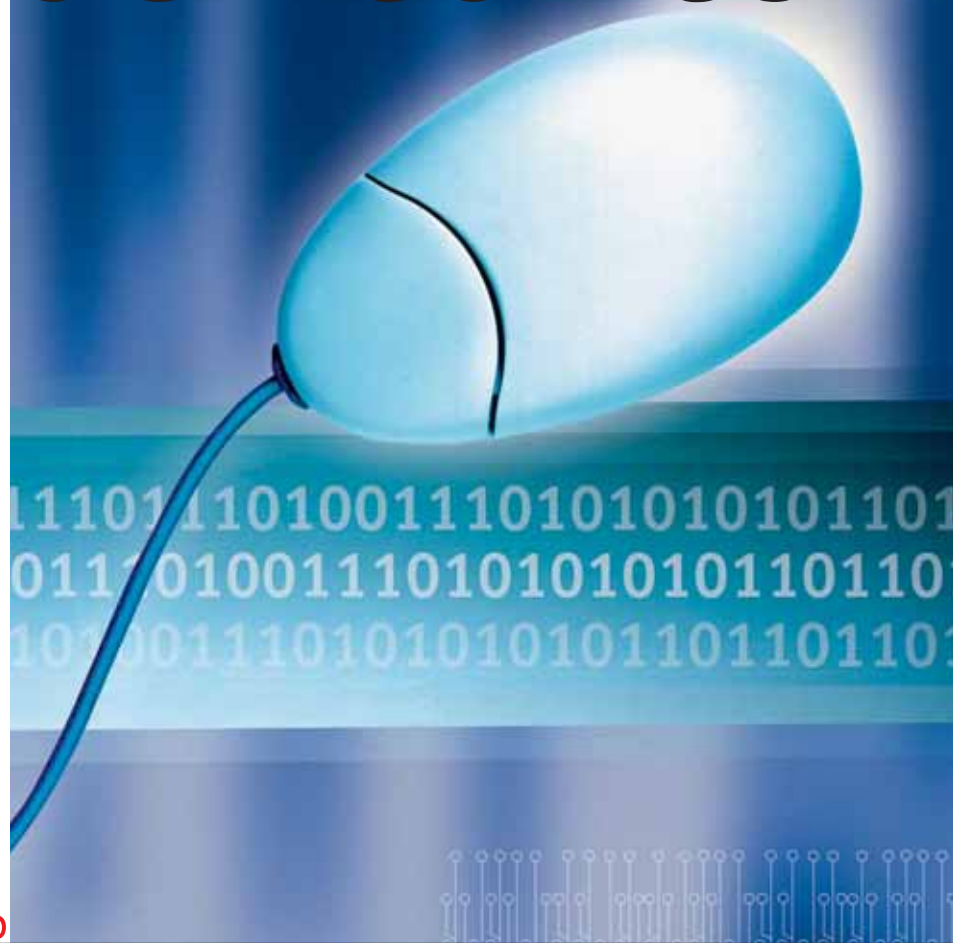
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By Tracey E. Schelmetic, Editorial Director, Customer Inter@ction Solutions

SPECIAL FOCUS

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For 25 years, Customer Inter@ction Solutions magazine has been the voice of the call/contact center, CRM and teleservices industries. We've been often imitated, but never equaled. We have watched the industry germinate, grow, mature and prosper, and we've been extremely instrumental in helping it do so.



CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

36 What's Next For CRM?

By Larry Barnes and John Yaggie, Avande

In the past six months, Microsoft has introduced new technology for everything from customer relationship management to business intelligence. What does it mean for your company? We've had the opportunity to work with the Microsoft products in clients' IT environments, and in the process, we've uncovered several important considerations for any company, including those with CRM and business intelligence solutions — or custom applications — already in place.

OUTSOURCING

40 Customer Inter@ction Solutions Magazine's Twenty-First Annual Top 50 Inbound Teleservices Agencies Ranking

This is the twenty-first year Customer Inter@ction Solutions magazine brings you its "Top 50" Teleservices Agencies Ranking. In this issue, we're presenting the "Top 50" inbound portion of the ranking. (The outbound portion of the ranking was highlighted in the March 2006 issue.) Since its inception in 1986, our "Top 50" ranking has been used as the benchmark for choosing large-capacity/sized teleservices agencies.

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By Debbie May, IEX; and Mark Selcow, Merced Systems Inc.

Performance management systems help contact centers overcome challenges by combining data from their most critical systems to create an overall view of current business trends and operating conditions. Armed with this information, companies can form solid, actionable conclusions based on the operational results of the organization.



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SPEECH-WORLD

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With new products and whole new categories of products in the contact center space, it is tough for our readers to keep up with the latest and greatest products and services. That is why Customer Inter@ction Solutions launched the Speech Technology Excellence Award: so we can judge the "best of the best" in speech technology and pass our findings on to our readers.

TMC LABS

60 TMC LABS

This month, TMC Labs reviews Nuasis NuContact Center 3.0.

TMCNET.COM ONLINE EXCLUSIVES



Outsourcing: Minimizing The Data Security Risks With Secure Collaboration

By Cathy Planchard, TMCnet Columnist

In most outsourcing situations, organizations need to share sensitive data — much of it valuable intellectual property — with others. Keeping data secure can be extremely difficult when the information is in someone else's hands, even if those hands belong to a seemingly trusted partner.

Read the full article at <http://www.tmcnet.com/276.1>

Cell Phone Privacy, Or Lack Thereof

By Tracey E. Schelmetic, Editorial Director, Customer Inter@ction Solutions

It appears that many wireless users are concerned that their mobile phone conversations and physical locations are not private. Of course they're not. When you stand on a train platform screaming into your mobile phone that your boyfriend or girlfriend doesn't appreciate your efforts at housekeeping, everyone can hear you. I know this is shocking, but it's true.

Read the full article at <http://www.tmcnet.com/277.1>

Forrester: How To Get A Good CRM Consultant

By David Sims, TMCnet Columnist

Forrester finds that enterprises continue to invest heavily in CRM-related capabilities, expecting enterprises "to spend about \$3 billion worldwide on new CRM software licenses in 2006." Total spending with CRM application vendors, including vendor services and maintenance, "will exceed \$8 billion."

Read the full article at <http://www.tmcnet.com/278.1>

Unica, Oracle, Siebel Top Latest Forrester Survey

By David Sims, TMCnet Columnist

A recent Forrester Research report recognizes Unica's overall excellence and cites Oracle's Siebel Enterprise Marketing Suite as having the strongest product offering in the latest Forrester Wave Evaluation: Enterprise Marketing Platforms, Q1 2006.

Read the article at <http://www.tmcnet.com/279.1>

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

The Dawn Of Call Center 2.0

The modern call center industry is about 25 years old, yet it remains on the forefront of customer interactions. Paradoxically, for many years, call centers have not been on the leading edge of technology or foremost in the minds of corporate management. As markets become more competitive, it is essential that call centers embrace the latest technologies to ensure they not only keep their current customers, but are well positioned to attract new ones.

This is not to say that call centers have shunned technology. On the contrary, during the past quarter century, the call center has transformed itself from an industry that managed customer relationships on index cards to an industry that utilizes the latest CRM software on state-of-the-art servers.

Over the years, call centers have embraced technology when automating their inbound and outbound calling functions using ACDs, skills-based routing and auto, predictive and preview dialers.

Beginning about 15 years ago, call centers began using technologies such as CTI (computer-telephony integration) to enable better sharing of voice and data between phone systems and computer systems. Screen pop is just a

In the late 1990s, VoIP (voice over IP) was born. It was heralded as a technology that would transform service providers and enterprises as well as call centers. Massive investment in VoIP ([define](#) - [news](#) - [alert](#)) took place by all of these sectors. Most of these investments ceased after the financial markets took a hit in 2001.

It was at this point that the call center market stepped up and took a leadership role in VoIP deployment. The entire call center offshoring phenomenon has occurred because call centers were able to embrace VoIP for inexpensive calling. (Routing standard long-distance calls to India or the Philippines would have been far too cost-prohibitive.) VoIP allowed organizations to locate agents wherever it made the most sense, regardless of geography.

In the last few years, state-of-the-art technology has transformed the Web to Web 2.0, VoIP to VoIP 2.0 and now, naturally, the call center is able to leverage advances in its own core technologies to achieve what is coming to be known as Call Center 2.0.

For the past two decades, many innovations have helped call centers become more productive and, subsequently, generate more savings and profit for companies. In many cases, the judicious use of advanced contact center technologies

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single example of how call centers embraced the merging computer and telephony realms to enable agents to know who was calling before the agent said "Hello."

has effected dramatic increases in sales volumes and customer satisfaction and retention levels in today's customer-facing organizations.

We are now poised to begin the next evolutionary phase of the call center: from where it stands today to where it will be over the next decade.

This leap will be deemed "Call Center 2.0," and it will be the biggest change the industry has ever seen.

Call Center 2.0 is not about technology only, it's about state-of-the-art customer relations and determining the best way to put the customer first. It amounts to mass customization of customer contact — the ability to make every customer feel special — to project that your company is focused exclusively on every customer's needs on a personalized basis.

In addition, this new way of thinking about the call center will help it evolve into the next-generation entity called the contact center, and will help us realize that our customers are really groups of communities that can benefit from interacting with one another.

In addition, Call Center 2.0 heralds full integration into the corporate supply chain and drives forward the desire to integrate analytics into customer contact. Furthermore, it allows us to mine, archive and utilize the enormous amount of data available to our contact centers so we may respond to customer needs more effectively and create true customer delight.

Furthermore, Call Center 2.0 will focus on integrating various departments in organizations using SOA or service-oriented architectures. SOA-based applications will allow unprecedented amounts of information to flow between departments in order to answer customer questions and solve problems in near real-time. It will also allow agents to make use of critical, up-to-the-minute data that can make a scenario in which a customer calls to buy an extended warranty and leaves the interaction having decided to buy a

new car realistic.

Video will play a huge part of Call Center 2.0. Call centers will implement and use video solutions to increase the customer service levels of phone calls. In some cases, conversations will be two-way video-enabled. In other instances, the benefits of using video calls will be so obvious that all call centers will scramble to show their agents' faces to customers.

Video kiosks will be an integral part of Call Center 2.0, allowing companies to put a virtual video call center anywhere they like. Sony can put such a kiosk in the stores of an electronics retailer, and Weight Watchers can put them in supermarkets. Some ATMs will become video-enabled, allowing bank tellers in call centers to answer questions for customers around-the-clock.

Call centers will embrace client-based VoIP, striking deals with companies such as Skype, Vonage and others. Call centers will go upmarket with VoIP, allowing their customers to speak with agents in higher fidelity, with stereo and surround sound. VoIP will become a service differentiator.

Call Center 2.0 will be speech-enabled, allowing customers to do their business via automation if they choose. They can seamlessly transfer to a live agent in the middle of the transaction, if needed, and then revert back to automation once again.

Call Center 2.0 will use SIP (Session Initiation Protocol) endpoints, allowing more flexibility and interoperability. In addition, there will be enhanced presence use to determine when the best agents are available in an organization. Essentially, SIP will allow all workers in a company to become call center agents.

Call Center 2.0 will allow organizations to build vast, virtual and geographically distributed contact centers around the globe using the best workers for the task at hand. Also, it will allow callers to schedule callbacks online with ease, and will enable callers to view wait times online before they place a call.

Some of the technologies that make

up Call Center 2.0 exist today, and every company needs to explore and discover the combination of concepts and technologies that will help them continue to both exceed customer expectations and attract new customers. Technologies such as AJAX, mashups and just-in-time communications will soon be embraced by many organizations in their customer-facing applications. The companies that deploy Call Center 2.0 technology early will be well positioned to travel light years ahead of their competition.

Call Center 2.0 Live

At TMC, we are proud to have been on the forefront of the call center industry for the last two and a half decades. When we launched this magazine to cover call centers and CRM back in 1982, it was the first magazine of its kind in the world. We then launched the first magazine in VoIP, INTERNET TELEPHONY, back in 1998. We are excited to be guiding you, our loyal readers, through the next quarter century of telecom innovation and we think Call Center 2.0 will be as exciting, challenging and rewarding as any time in the past. We look forward to serving your needs in an objective and high-quality fashion for the foreseeable future.

And since there's no time like the present, we're planning to begin educating the marketplace about Call Center 2.0 immediately. To showcase the best and brightest in the Call Center 2.0 market, we have launched the world's only Call Center 2.0 conference, which will be held from October 10-13, 2006 in San Diego, California. Please mark your calendar now, and visit callcenter20.com for details. **CIS**

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THE BOARDROOM REPORT™



WITH NADJI TEHRANI



VoIP Is Ready For Prime Time In Contact/CRM Centers

The Boardroom Report provides the CRM, customer interaction and call center industry's view from the top, featuring the sector's first in-depth, exclusive CEO-to-CEO interviews with leading executives regarding industry news, analysis, trends and the latest developments at their companies. As the industry's leading publication since 1982, it is our responsibility to recognize leaders with the best minds in the industry and share their vision and wisdom with our valued readers. For this installment of The Boardroom Report, Technology Marketing Corp. founder/chairman/CEO Nadji Tehrani spoke with Michael Mitchell, president and co-founder of Strategic Contact Solutions (SCS). ([news](#) - [alert](#))

Strategic Contact Solutions' CEO Michael Mitchell is clearly very excited about VoIP.

"Up until very recently, VoIP ([define](#) - [news](#) - [alert](#)) was something talked about, but not ready for prime time," he said. "VoIP has now become ready for prime time. We have taken HMP (host media processing) and VoIP, and brought it to the next level. We're confident that this is a solution that is very viable and is ready for prime time today. We have it installed in many locations. It allows for us to very easily get into the hosted environment. Because of HMP and because of VoIP, you can adjust the number of licenses for the call center. There's no more hardware that needs to be added or replaced. It's just a matter of calling in,

connecting to their system and adding or removing licenses as they see fit."

ASD Softswitch Combines Multiple Functions

SCS, based in Hoffman Estates, IL, helps businesses with inbound, outbound and blended call centers connect customers with information faster, more effectively and more efficiently. The company's primary product, ASD Softswitch, is a fully integrated software suite designed to enhance telephone hardware and provide digital recording, IVR, ACD, call monitoring, VoIP, and other advanced features that complement existing enterprise solutions or replace them. It is a telephony hardware alternative merging artificial intelligence, digital recording, IVR and call

monitoring with inbound/outbound/blended telecommunications.

About the company, Mitchell said, "We offer a blended solution, providing agents with the opportunity to be productive regardless of whether there are incoming calls." Regarding concerns regarding voice over IP's reliability and quality, he said, "We make sure that our customers are aware of the fact that you have to manage bandwidth, but as long as you manage bandwidth, you can use VoIP very reliably. And it provides for a much more economical way for you to get into hosted solutions and at-home agents. It opens up all kinds of opportunities."

Innovative Tools To Manage Home Agents

When asked about what the company expects to announce in the near future, Mitchell said SCS is "coming out right now with some innovative tools" designed to help companies solve the problem of managing home agents. It is SCS's stated goal to aim for this as a target market during the next 12 months.

"We have some customers that are using at-home agents and they're very happy with it," said Mitchell. "We're providing tools so management can monitor what the agent is doing, not

only from a listening and quality control standpoint, but we're providing matrixes, so that we can, in real time, be notified when an agent isn't making the appropriate contacts per hour, or the appropriate sales per hour or that they're not making the appropriate penetration."

Alternatives To Offshore Outsourcing

Mitchell had some opinions regarding offshore outsourcing. "The reason that people went offshore, to India and the Dominican Republic and other places, was for cost savings," he said. "There are other ways to achieve cost savings without having to do that and still provide quality of service that's far superior compared to what companies are receiving offshore."

With regards to companies employing home agents rather than offshore outsourcing, he stated, "They can benefit from a lot of the cost savings. It won't be equal to it [offshore outsourcing], but it will be significant enough to justify it. And where it is not equal, they're making up for it in quality of service."

He also described as "very successful" the nearshore option, including Canada and Mexico. "It's not providing the same cost savings, but it is providing some cost savings." He described the two solutions, nearshore and at-home agents, as being "much more palatable to our customers and their customers. You can stay here in the U.S. and pretty much get your cost savings by just doing business differently."

Customer Loyalty And Growth

Mitchell has a statistic to offer that would make any chief executive envious. "We have about 40 customers right now and we have never lost a customer yet. Nine years ago, we got exclusively into the telemarketing arena and developed three products. Only in the last three-and-a-half to four years have we started to aggressively market our product."

When asked about the firm's growth curve, Mitchell said it has improved sig-

nificantly in recent years. It had only about 10 clients four years ago. "It's a result of starting to market," he said.

Mitchell also said his company experienced about 50 percent growth between 2004 and 2005, with a stated goal of 100 percent growth in revenue between 2005 and 2006. When asked about the company's growth strategy, he listed marketing, branding, telemarketing and direct mail as being part of the effort.

An upfront approach regarding cost was another advantage he discussed. "We have always been very upfront about what the cost of our product is and what you get for that cost. We sell our product as a suite, one price for all. We do not say to customers, 'If you want to add this or you want to add

that, you have to pay additional fees.' If you were to go to an industry convention, you would find that we would be the only ones on the sales floor that could tell you, 'Your price is going to be X.' I think everybody else would say, 'Well, we need to go back and re-engineer it and talk to our people before we can give you a price.' We're not trying to sell used cars!" **CIS**

For more information about Strategic Contact Solutions, visit <http://www.strategicinc.com>. (news - alert)

If you are interested in purchasing reprints of this article (in either print or PDF format), please visit Reprint Management Services online at <http://www.reprintbuyer.com> or contact a representative via e-mail at tmcnet@reprintbuyer.com or by phone at 800-290-5460.



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The TMC Seal Of Approval

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CRM/Contact Center Software/Hardware

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Aspect Software



Co-Nexus, Inc.



etalk



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Interactive Intelligence



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Left Bank Solutions



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SER Solutions Inc.



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VoiceLog LLC



Witness Systems



Interactive Intelligence





Teleservices Outsourcing

West Corporation



InfoCision Management Corporation



Advanced Data-Comm, Inc.



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

By Tracey E. Schelmetic, Editorial Director, Customer Inter@ction Solutions

Nuasis Launches NuContact Center 3.0

Nuasis Corp. ([news - alert](#)) recently announced the availability of its NuContact Center 3.0 software. The new release supports agents located anywhere, higher system scalability and advanced conditional routing based on customer intelligence and business analytics. NuContact Center 3.0 features continue to highlight the extensibility of the software-only product architecture. With this release, the product extends functionality to customer service agents beyond the formal call center and uses customer intelligence from multiple enterprise software applications to improve routing decisions. NuContact Center 3.0 supports the use of any hard phone device for remote or home-based agents. This capability allows customers to more quickly address call center staffing challenges that include limited recruiting pools, commuting issues and business continuity. Customers can deploy agents at low cost within hours without the need for the proprietary phone sets required by other vendor solutions. Agents simply download the NuContact Center desktop software over the Internet and sign on to the system from any available phone set.

NuContact Center 3.0 provides remote agents with the same feature set that is available to agents at major call center operations. Call center supervisors also have the full set of management features available for monitoring remote agents, viewing real-time statistics and reporting on remote agent status and performance. This new capability extends the product's Enterprise Routing Architecture beyond the physical confines of formal call center locations. Customer contacts are routed to a single virtual pool of agents who can be distributed physically across the system regardless of geographic location. This same capability can also be used to extend call center functionality to customer service personnel stationed in the field who are not normally part of the formal call center staff.

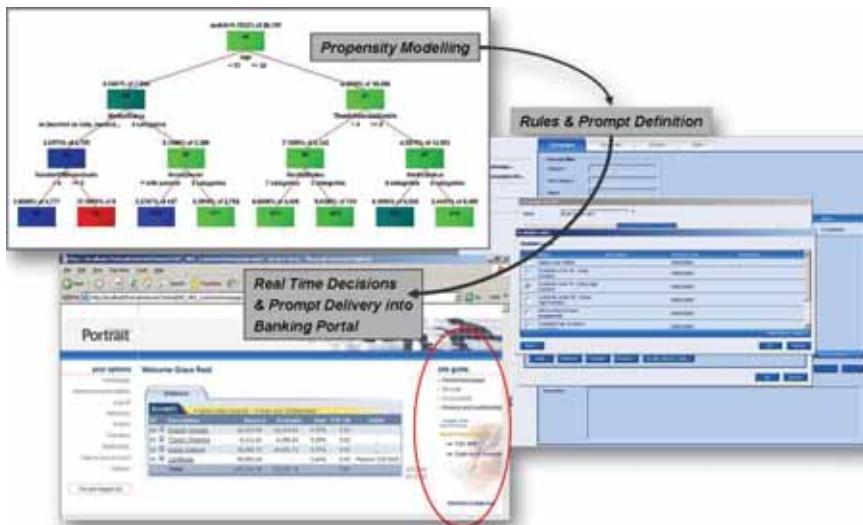
<http://www.nuasis.com>

Portrait Software Enhances CIM Suite

Portrait Software, ([news - alert](#)) a provider of customer interaction management and predictive customer analytics software, has announced the latest addition to its Customer Interaction Management Suite. The new offering, called Interaction Optimizer, integrates with any existing CRM infrastructure to bring real-time analytics to the point of customer interaction. It allows b-to-c companies with large customer bases to leverage everything they know about each customer, including information learned during the interaction itself, to help them take the most profitable action and provide the best customer experience. Interaction Optimizer is the first new offering emerging from Portrait Software's acquisition of Quadstone, a customer analytics player, in December 2005. Interaction Optimizer was designed to bring a new capability to any existing CRM environment: real-time scoring.

With real-time scoring, automated customer behavior models — for churn risk or propensity to buy — are used to recommend the best next action to take in each interaction, including cross-selling, special offers or service initiatives. Portrait Interaction Optimizer uses customer propensity models and leverages business rules that determine how, when and where each offer is delivered. Unlike batch-mode scoring that updates customer scores weekly or monthly, real-time scoring updates scores on demand, allowing comprehensive, up-to-the-second insight to be delivered to the front line, whether it is an assisted or unassisted channel. This can translate into more relevant offers, more sensitive service delivery and increased profitability and loyalty.

<http://www.portraitsoftware.com>



Switchvox Launches SMB IP-PBX

Switchvox ([news](#) - [alert](#)) recently announced the launch of its IP-PBX for small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs). According to the company, Switchvox SMB is the only IP-PBX to offer a call event notification application programming interface (API) for companies to integrate their IP phone system with other business applications or databases such as contact directories or order tracking software. The product also includes Switchboard 2.0, a real-time call control panel that leverages the benefits of unified voice and data while providing greater visibility into the phone system. For example, users can easily direct calls to other extensions in real time, view if other employees are currently on a call, and even be shown relevant information from other applications as calls are received. Switchvox is built from open source software and uses open standards. It works with all Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) compatible hardware and software phones as well as standard analog handsets, rather than typical PBXs that rely on proprietary telephones. Voice over IP providers can be used to send calls over the Internet worldwide and directly to remote corporate offices by peering Switchvox systems using the SIP or Inter-Asterisk eXchange (IAX) protocols.
<http://www.switchvox.com>

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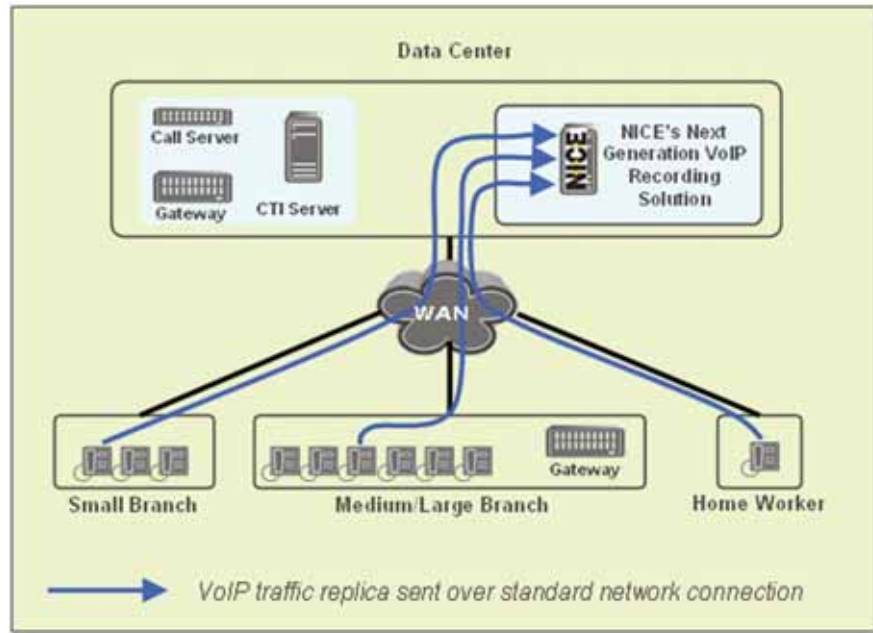


CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE MANAGEMENT

NICE Offers Next-Gen VoIP Recording Solution

NICE Systems, ([news - alert](#)) a provider of solutions that enable organizations to extract insight from interactions to drive performance, has announced the availability of its next-generation VoIP active recording solutions. New developments include technologies designed to revolutionize the way recording is done in a VoIP environment, and which are fully integrated with the industry's popular VoIP switch vendors. The new offering includes solutions for active recording in Nortel's newly developed Duplicate Media Stream over IP (DMS-IP) architecture, active recording for Cisco's CallManager, new redundancy options for Avaya's Communication Manager API, and IP-phone applications. NICE's next generation, active VoIP recording solutions can help "flatten" the organization, according to the company, helping enable efficient management and administration of branches and agents from home, and enhance centralized recording capabilities for distributed environments, with a low total cost of ownership. By eliminating the need for setup, administration and management at branches or remote sites, active recording can reduce the overhead and complexity associated with previous-generation VoIP recording.

<http://www.nice.com>



eTelecare Global Solutions Names President And CEO

eTelecare Global Solutions (eGS), ([news - alert](#)) a provider of outsourced customer care solutions, announced that it has appointed **John R. Harris** as President and CEO. Harris will join eGS's Board of Directors and will be based at eGS's headquarters in Scottsdale. "We are delighted to have recruited John, who has a long track record of building successful outsourced business services and information technology organizations. He also has extensive CEO, M&A and public company board experience," said Fred Ayala, eGS Chairman. Harris was one of the top executives at Electronic Data Systems (EDS). During his 25 years with EDS, one of the pioneers of the IT outsourcing industry, it grew from approximately \$100 million in revenue to over \$19 billion.

Harris brings to eGS extensive operations, sales, marketing and international experience. While at EDS, he was President of the Communications Industry Group (CIG), which he led from under \$100 million in revenue to approximately \$900 million. CIG delivered customer care, system integration and business process management services to telecom and media clients with a staff of 5,000 in 22 countries, and included a significant customer care operation with 2,000 staff and over \$100 million in revenue. He also led sales teams that targeted the Fortune 500 market and were responsible for EDS's first \$1 billion dollar commercial contract, and spent 10 years living and working in Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

<http://www.etelecare.com>



VoiceSage Secures First-Round Funding

VoiceSage, ([news - alert](#)) a Cork, Ireland-based provider of interactive notification solutions to the enterprise sector, has announced that it has secured over €1.5m first-round funding. The company has raised the total funding to date to €2.5m. VoiceSage provides its solution on an ASP (application service provider) basis, requiring from a customer only access to a computer and an Internet connection. VoiceSage calls its solutions "really easy to use, but behind the scenes some pretty sophisticated technology is keeping that simple for the customer." Paul Sweeney, European Marketing Director at VoiceSage, has stated that, "Over the coming months, we will be adding world-class natural voice interaction technology to the service, and this will enable our clients to achieve even more business value by increasing the impact on key communications metrics, while also impacting on other issues such as policy renewal rates, late payment days, and lowering the overall cost of customer contact." VoiceSage Notice can be integrated into existing communications processes in a way that allows customers to harness the power of voice communications at reduced costs. VoiceSage Notice can be triggered from within any database to deliver automated real-time alerting. For example, a bank may wish to notify a client that his or her overdraft is coming to its limit and encourage the bank patron to contact customer service so that a direct debit doesn't fail; a credit card company may wish to notify a client that there has been some unusual activity on his or her account and ask the credit card customer to validate or cancel that transaction.

<http://www.voicesage.com>

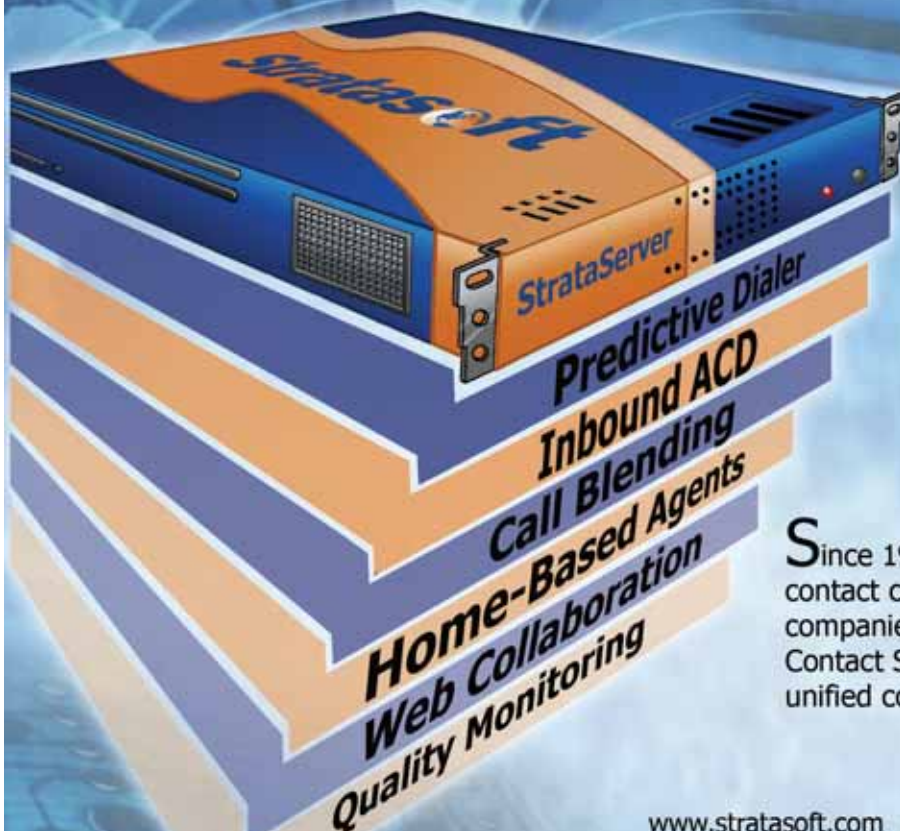
Voice Print, Syntora And Pipkins

Partner For Solution

Three contact center software solution providers — Voice Print ([news - alert](#)), Syntora ([news - alert](#)) and Pipkins — ([news - alert](#)) recently made a joint announcement regarding the launch of "Solution Made Easy," an integrated, modular suite of contact center solutions developed by the three companies. Solution Made Easy is comprised of the six key components essential for workforce optimization: call recording, quality monitoring, workforce management, performance management, speech analytics and agent coaching. Called a "mix 'n' match, one-stop-shop" by the companies, it helps enable organizations to design their ideal workforce optimization solution for their specific environment at their own pace. Solution Made Easy offers a selection of applications from which to choose. The approach was designed to give organizations of all sizes the opportunity to adopt capabilities that were previously only cost-effective for very large enterprises; companies are not forced to purchase an expensive suite package they may not need, nor do they have to perform costly integrations or incur professional services fees in order to implement the solutions they need.

<http://www.solutionmadeeasy.com>

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Plantronics Offers Three New Products In Wireless Family

Plantronics, Inc. ([news](#) - [alert](#)) recently announced it has augmented its family of wireless office headset systems with three new products designed to address the communication needs and challenges for all levels of office employees: the CS70 Wireless Office Headset System for executives, the SupraPlus Wireless Headset System for phone-intensive users, and the Plantronics Voyager 510SL Bluetooth Headset System with WindSmart for mobile professionals. Together with the CS50 and CS55 products, Plantronics' family of wireless office products now addresses the wearing and functional preferences of every office professional, according to the company. Results from a new international study by Plantronics reinforce the need for wireless headsets in the office. The study, which polled 1,200 office workers across the globe, found that approximately 80 percent believe the modern work environment requires more multitasking, while 47 percent spend more time on the phone at work than they did five years ago. Fifty-nine percent of employees believes that workplaces will be completely wireless within the next five years. The CS70 enables executives to be fully engrossed in conversation while simultaneously accomplishing supporting tasks up to 300 feet away from their desk. The CS70 features a very discreet form factor and is extremely lightweight (0.75 oz) to provide all-day wearing comfort. The headset is built on digitally encrypted, voice-dedicated DECT 6.0 technology to provide exceptional audio quality and lower interference with other wireless devices. <http://www.plantronics.com>



Premiere Global Services Introduces Voice Messaging Solution

Premiere Global Services, Inc., ([news](#) - [alert](#)) a global outsource provider of business process solutions, has announced Interactive Notifications, an enhanced voice messaging solution that enables enterprises to deliver automated, personalized alerts and notifications to their customers in a timely and efficient manner, with speech recognition capabilities for capturing responses and feedback. The automated Interactive Notifications solution allows companies to confirm appointments, survey customers and gather important feedback by asking questions and receiving a spoken response. Recipient responses are captured and delivered to Interactive Notifications clients to update records and follow up with recipients as needed. Interactive Notifications can be triggered based on specific business rules, allowing businesses to immediately reach out to customers with important information such as flight cancellations or fraud alerts. With professional voice talent available for recording, Premiere Global's solution can create for customers consistent, compelling messages that can help generate a higher response rate than other modes of communication, while reinforcing their brand and building stronger customer relationships. Premiere Global clients can access real-time status reports to track the progress of their notifications programs as they run, and detailed reports are available for analysis and fine-tuning of future campaigns. <http://www.premiereglobal.com>

Spanlink Introduces New Call Recording Solution

Spanlink Communications, ([news](#) - [alert](#)) a provider of customer interaction solutions that leverage VoIP technology, has announced Spanlink Quality Management, a new call recording and evaluation software product designed to optimize team performance in virtual customer interaction networks. The new product is part of the Spanlink InteractiveEdge family of products, which are built from the ground up to help transform centralized contact center environments into virtual customer interaction networks. Spanlink also recently announced new speech-based and agent-based products in its Spanlink AnswerCenter family, which automates multichannel question answering through natural language understanding. Spanlink also recently announced a significant new release of Spanlink CentralControl software for virtual IP communications systems management. <http://www.spanlink.com>

The screenshot shows a software interface titled 'Spanlink Quality Management' with a user name of 'johnson' and role of 'Supervisor'. It displays a 'Team Summary for RockCoast_Orders' with the following data:

	Current Month	Past Month	Current - Past	Past 3 Months	Current - Past 3	Past 12 Months	Current - Past 12
Team Average	89%	88%	0	89%	0	89%	0
Group Average	88%	88%	0	88%	0	88%	0
Total Evaluations	24	20	N/A	90	N/A	102	N/A
Total Exceed	2	4	N/A	8	N/A	8	N/A
Total Meet	14	17	N/A	33	N/A	33	N/A
Total Below	6	4	N/A	35	N/A	21	N/A
Total Contacts	54	63	N/A	133	N/A	152	N/A
Total Recordings	90	69	N/A	133	N/A	152	N/A

Below the team summary is a 'Team Detail by Agent' section for the 'Current Month' with the following data:

Agent	Total Evaluations	Agent Average	Score Std Dev	Total Exceed	Total Meet	Total Below
Gerry Johnson	8	89%	2	0	8	2
Tammy Jones	8	82%	2	0	4	4
Joan Levi	8	94%	5	4	4	0

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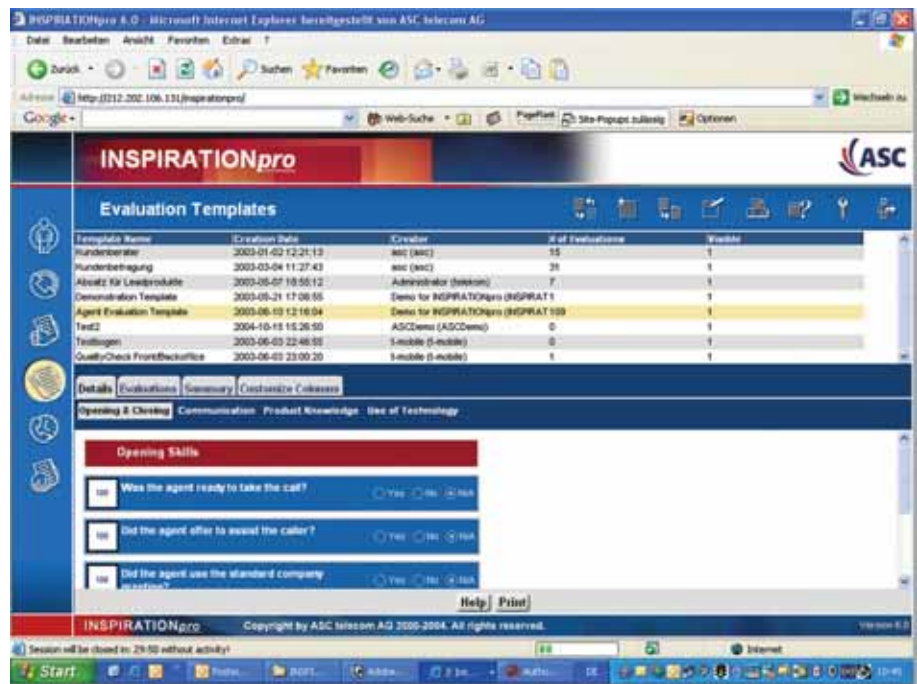
ASC Adds E-mail Response Management

ASC, ([news - alert](#)) a provider of communication recording and quality monitoring solutions for contact centers, financial institutions and public safety and government organizations, has announced the addition of e-mail response management (ERM) to INSPIRATION_{pro}, its quality monitoring solution. ERM systems automate e-mail acknowledgements and responses to standard customer inquiries. They minimize workload in a multichannel environment and help ensure a high-quality, well-written and credible response to customers. When integrated into ASC's quality monitoring software, INSPIRATION_{pro}, they allow systematic and standardized monitoring with identical evaluation templates for all media types, including voice, e-mail, fax and computer screen.

INSPIRATION_{pro} now works with a range of ERM systems, including the popular "Mailminder" from Xtramind. When the products are integrated, supervisors may monitor agents "cross channel," by reviewing calls, e-mails, faxes or mailed correspondence. This broad examination helps supervisors generate more accurate reports and pinpoint agents who may be better in one media type than another.

INSPIRATION_{pro} offers flexible templates used for evaluation and scoring, and agents may train by listening to their own calls. Remote playback lets supervisors directly access calls through a WAN connection and a browser-based interface. The product uses the industry-standard Crystal Reports as its reporting engine, and an evaluation wizard customizes and reflects the supervisor's requirements in an easy and intuitive manner.

<http://www.asctelecom.com>



Empirix Awarded New Patent

Empirix Inc., ([news - alert](#)) which helps organizations adopt complex communications solutions with confidence, announced that it has been issued U.S. patent # 6,957,420 for testing non-deterministic behavior of voice and speech applications, a key element of its Hammer testing products.

The technology enables Empirix to intelligently test next-generation contact center technologies such as voice and speech applications that interact with callers dynamically rather than through a rigid path. One example would be a speech recognition application that prompts callers with, "What would you like to do today?" or presents options based on a caller's unique history, rather than "Press 1 for account balance, Press 2 to open an account" and so forth. In the past, the only way to test these dynamic applications was manually, relying on human testers to determine every possible path and then test each individually.

<http://www.empirix.com>

Kansas To Open Call Center To Recover Delinquent Child Support

The **State of Kansas** recently announced its plans to open a call center to assist in its child support enforcement endeavors. Kansas' Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services has put in a request for \$2 million to fund the call center over the next year. The bill has the support of Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius. The contact center would be assigned to maintain and follow up on the address change information required in the recovery of back-due child support. The state government feels that the establishment of such a call center would assist the state's caseworkers and allow them to devote more time to searching for delinquent parents and establishing more support orders for Kansas families and children.

<http://www.srskansas.org>

Aspect Software Forges Distribution Partnership For Middle East And Africa

Aspect Software, Inc. ([news - alert](#)) recently announced that according to a recently signed agreement, United Arab Emirates-based **CTSoft** of the **Al Yousuf Group** will distribute Aspect products in the Middle East and Africa. With expertise in services like systems integration, business and technology consulting and post-sales support in the contact center space, CTSoft maintains a strong channel network comprised of established players in the enterprise IT and telecom solutions industry. It has a widespread customer base in core verticals like banking and telecom and in sunrise verticals, including utilities, retail and transportation. CTSoft will distribute the following Aspect solutions: Aspect EnsemblePro, Aspect Spectrum ACD, Aspect Unison Predictive Dialer, Aspect Conversations Predictive Dialer, and Aspect RightForce Workforce Management

<http://www.aspect.com>

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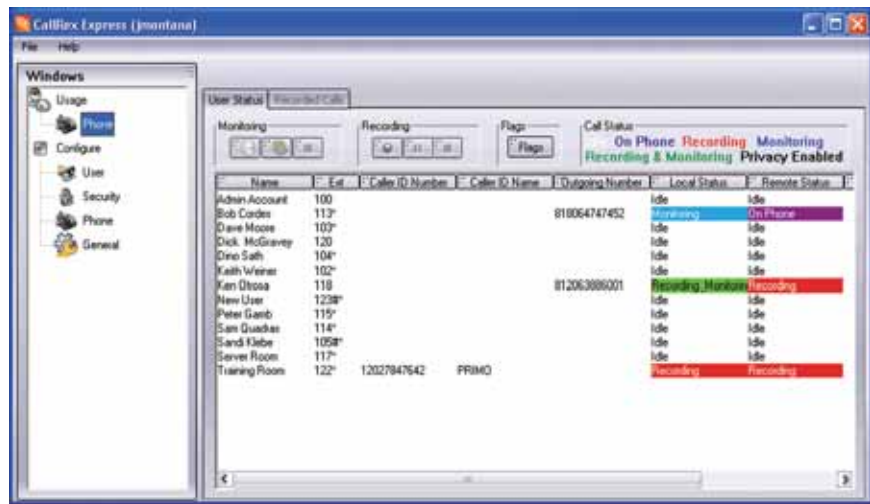
Telrex Introduces New VoIP Call Recording Product For Small Businesses

Telrex, ([news - alert](#)) developer of VoIP call recording and monitoring software for small and medium-sized businesses using IP-PBXs or hosted PBX services, recently announced the release of CallRex Express, a new recording solution designed specifically for small businesses that must record or monitor up to 15 phones.

CallRex Express is a single-server, single-site solution for businesses that need call recording but have been priced out of the market due to the historically high cost of recording solutions. CallRex Express is priced aggressively for small businesses and smaller remote call centers, starting at only \$89 per phone.

With CallRex Express, businesses have a reliable way to train new employees, resolve disputes with clients, ensure improved levels of customer service and address security concerns. When a business grows beyond 15 phones, CallRex Express can be easily upgraded to CallRex Professional with an upgrade key code. CallRex Express offers two kinds of licenses: unlimited licenses for automatic, triggered call recordings; and on-demand licenses for recording calls on an ad hoc basis. An on-demand license requires manual initiation of a recording and allows managers to spot-monitor any phone call. A manager can start a recording at any time in the conversation and still capture the entire conversation.

<http://www.telrex.com>



Left Bank Solutions Engages Stevens Communications As Partner

Left Bank Solutions Inc. ([news - alert](#)) recently announced a strategic partnership and reseller agreement with Stevens Communications Inc., ([news - alert](#)) a provider of workforce management solutions to the call center industry. The partnership allows Stevens to deliver Left Bank Solutions' Monet WFM OnDemand workforce management suite to users throughout the U.S. Further, it provides Left Bank Solutions with access to financial, call center and enterprise customers within the extensive Stevens customer base.

Stevens has been a player in the call center solutions space for over 20 years. It has completed hundreds of successful workforce management implementations for companies such as Fidelity, Dean Health Care, Federal Reserve, Kohler, Pfizer and Aon Insurance. Stevens has said it believes that Monet WFM OnDemand fills "a gaping hole in the marketplace."

<http://www.stevenscom.com>
<http://www.leftbanksolutions.com>

Sphere Communications Announces Spherical IP-PBX Release 5

Sphere Communications Inc. ([news - alert](#)) has announced the general availability of Release 5 of Spherical, the company's next-generation software IP-PBX. Featuring communications Web Services for business application software integration, SIP trunking and expanded SIP device support, software-based call recording and Assured Services for optimizing emergency communications, the new Spherical release was designed to enable a new era of all-software business communications that are cost-effective, scalable, secure and built on a proven platform. Sphere Communications delivers enterprise IP-PBX communications as an open, enterprise soft switch application that runs on industry-standard servers across existing data networks and interoperates with a comprehensive array of standards-based third-party communications devices. Spherical IP-PBX is a fully distributed software solution that scales seamlessly up to 30,000 ports across multiple locations.

<http://www.spherecom.com>

Talisma Announces Version 7.0 Of CIM Solution

Talisma Corporation, ([news](#) - [alert](#)) a provider of enterprise customer interaction management (CIM) solutions, has announced the release of Talisma CIM 7.0, a comprehensive interaction management suite designed to fully integrate multiple communication channels, including e-mail, chat, Web self-service and phone with an intelligent knowledgebase, robust business process functionality and third-party data. Additionally, Talisma CIM 7.0 offers measurement and cross-channel reporting capabilities. Deployed onsite or on-demand and built on a secure, extensible platform that can scale to handle millions of interactions per month, Talisma CIM 7.0 helps meet the needs of today's global businesses delivering quality customer service and creating competitive advantage, according to the company. The Talisma CIM 7.0 product suite includes Talisma Email, Talisma Chat and Talisma Phone, and leverages the Talisma Knowledgebase across all agent and self-assisted customer contact channels. The knowledgebase integration allows a seamless escalation from Web self-service to alternate service channels and provides agents with a view of prior self-service searches and returned results. As a result of this visibility and seamless cross-channel integration, service agents can have immediate access to reliable and consistent information, enabling more helpful and rapid responses.

<http://www.talisma.com>

Compiere Appoints New CEO

Compiere, Inc., ([news](#) - [alert](#)) a provider of open source ERP and CRM applications, has announced the appointment of **LaVonne Reimer** as Chief Executive Officer. Reimer plans to accelerate the growth of the company and improve speed-to-market through the expansion of the global partner community. With this community, comprised of ERP implementation experts and sales professionals, Reimer will strategically position Compiere to capture a larger share of the ERP and CRM markets and become a leading choice for small to medium-sized enterprises (SME) worldwide, according to the company. Reimer, a lawyer-turned-entrepreneur, has more than 15 years of entrepreneurial and software development experience and has successfully developed strategic partner networks for a variety of other companies. As founder and CEO of an education software start-up, she raised millions of dollars in venture capital funding. Most recently, Reimer created and launched the Open Technology Business Center in Beaverton, Oregon, which is described as an "incubator" for seed-stage open source ventures.

<http://www.compiere.com>

ICT Group Expands Maine Call Center

ICT Group, ([news](#) - [alert](#)) a global company that provides support services to corporations, is planning to expand its thriving call center in the Nichols-Bass Business & Technology Center in Wilton, Maine, and add between 50 and 60 jobs. Gil Reed, president of The Nichols Group, which owns the Nichols-Bass property on Weld Road, has said he has a verbal agreement that the company will lease 50,000 square feet of office space. It is currently occupying 20,000 square feet in what was once the corporate offices of G.H. Bass & Co. in the shoe shop's heyday. The news follows an announcement that MBNA, now owned by Bank of America, was closing its call center in Farmington and three other Maine sites on March 10, putting 354 people out of work. The Farmington center reportedly employed 37 full-time and 56 part-time workers. Area towns hope that the 93 jobs being lost at MBNA might be picked up by ICT's hiring.

<http://www.ictgroup.com>

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Saratoga Systems Files For Patent

CRM solutions provider **Saratoga Systems** ([news - alert](#)) has announced that the company has filed for a patent on a new technology that provides synchronization of complex heterogeneous databases in a fraction of the time of other solutions. This synchronizing technology works with any complex relational databases and can handle databases with millions of records and thousands of users. The patent-pending data synchronization technology was designed to make it easier to support remote and mobile database users, making Saratoga's CRM technology an attractive alternative to some "less nimble" CRM software competitors, and to software-as-service alternatives that are subject to outages or Web connectivity issues. According to the company, the real benefit of this patent-pending synchronization technology is faster synchronization speed. The latest release of Saratoga CRM has been tested handling SQL data synchronization at least seven times faster than previous versions. This will prove a boon to users with large database systems who need to keep their data current, but previously had to schedule synchronization over weekends or long periods, when users could not access the system.

<http://www.saratogasytems.com>

Enkata 6 Brought To Market

Enkata, ([news - alert](#)) a provider of operational performance management (OPM) solutions, has announced the launch of Enkata 6, a new solution introduced to further the company's pursuit of the OPM solutions market. Enkata's OPM solutions integrate and analyze front- and back-office customer lifecycle data to reduce operational costs while simultaneously increasing customer satisfaction. Enkata 6 features greater vertical-industry depth, including a complete suite of applications specifically tailored for financial services, and a new module that helps health insurers overcome the operational challenges presented by Consumer Directed Health Care (CDHC) plans. The latest release is also positioned to improve on Enkata's usability throughout the organization, including increased scalability and security enhancements, advanced collaboration and initiatives management functionality and improved role-based reports, dashboards and analytics. Enkata 6 also marks the

first release of Enkata's entire Financial Services application suite designed to address the needs of dynamic and complex retail banking organizations. The new suite, which integrates and analyzes data sources specific to financial services organizations, helps retail banking institutions identify costly operational failures that can lead to dissatisfaction, customer churn and unwanted calls. Features of the new financial services solution include providing a complete view of the customer lifecycle by analyzing data across multiple systems; monitoring customer satisfaction and operational costs via pre-built reports and metrics such as fee adjustments per agent and calls per issued statement; and identifying specific drivers of failures in front- and back-office operations, such as agents with low FCR, customer events with highest call rates and fee adjustments, and customers with the highest propensity to churn.

<http://www.enkata.com>





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QuestionPro Introduces Feature To Calculate Customer Loyalty

QuestionPro, ([news - alert](#)) a provider of online survey services, recently announced a new feature designed to enable businesses to quickly calculate customer loyalty, a key determinant in a company's overall health. The feature is based on a methodology discussed in a newly released book called "The Ultimate Question" by loyalty expert Fred Reichheld, which postulates that knowing the answer to a single question can help companies determine whether they are heading in the right direction. QuestionPro has introduced a feature that automatically creates this type of methodology and incorporates answers into an easy-to-read report, showing users exactly what percentages of customers are "promoters" and "detractors" and then calculating the score. Used in conjunction with the insights in the book, business owners, marketers and researchers are better positioned to find an easy and more cost-effective way to determine the health of their business in near real-time.

<http://www.questionpro.com/the-ultimate-question/>

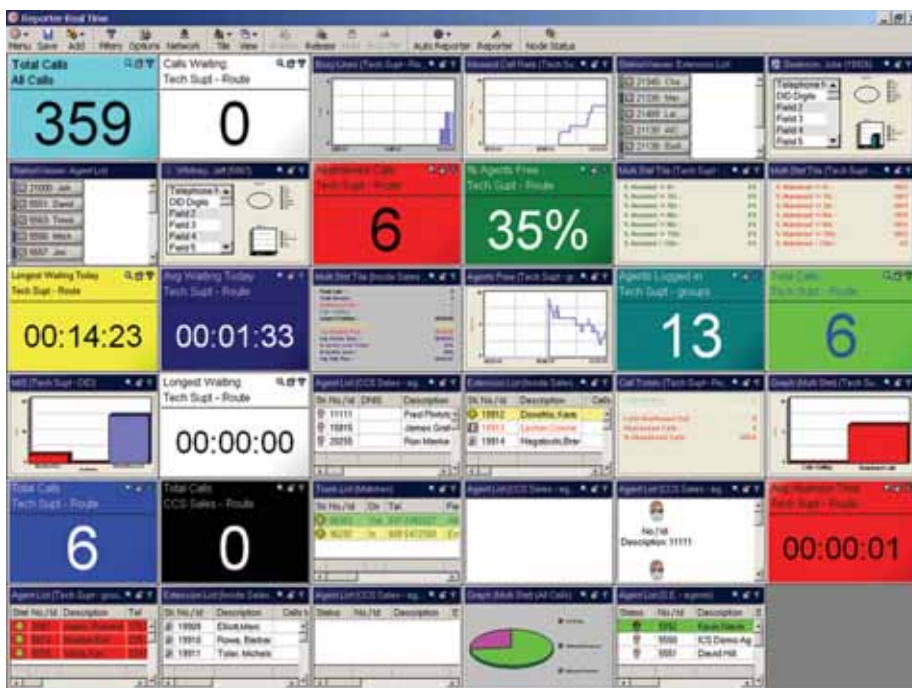


Inter-Tel Introduces Contact Center Suite Version 4.0

Inter-Tel, Incorporated, ([news - alert](#)) a provider of voice and data communications solutions for businesses, has announced the general availability of Contact Center Suite Version 4.0. A robust software application, Contact Center Suite v. 4.0 offers several new and enhanced features, including media blending, improved call routing, advanced reporting tools and simplified administration designed to enable small- and medium-sized businesses to more effectively manage customer communications through multiple media such as voice, e-mail, voice mail or fax.

Among the enhancements to Contact Center Suite v. 4.0 are Internal Call Modeling, which provides new activity reporting and intelligent routing capabilities for internal calls; an Enhanced CallViewer, which increases user functionality and customization and includes changeable screens, DSS buttons, integrated call logger and personal call router; Historical Call Routing to provide new, intelligent routing capabilities; Media Blending, including real-time and historical reporting; Live and Remote Server Configuration; and Agent Help Support, which allows managers to monitor and react to the support needs of their staff in real-time when faced with a difficult call that requires the assistance of a manager.

<http://www.inter-tel.com>





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How “Real Time” Is Revolutionizing The Contact Center: The Essential Role Of Real-Time Analytics, Reporting, Scheduling And Training

By: Patrick Botz, Voice Print International, Inc.

Up until a few years ago, the contact center was an overlooked and relatively untapped source of business intelligence. The full extent of its value to the enterprise as a whole has only come to light in recent years, mainly due to the emergence of technologies that enable organizations to capture and meaningfully evaluate multimedia interactions. These days, various workforce optimization applications are routinely used in contact centers worldwide. However, most of these technologies fail to leverage one of the contact center's most unique characteristics — it operates in real time, therefore it offers incredible potential to provide valuable, up-to-the-minute intelligence that can impact and influence the performance of every sector of the enterprise.

With the advent of real-time performance management solutions such as business analytics and automated agent coaching, the contact center is finally being recognized as a mission-critical business intelligence center that delivers a strategic advantage to the enterprise as a whole. Indeed, real-time intelligence garnered from customer interactions can be leveraged to improve managerial decisions and investments made by strategic departments such as sales, marketing, human resources, research and development, finance, operations, etc.

Avoid Disasters. Optimize Opportunities.

The contact center is fed a constant diet of real-time customer intelligence. It is uniquely positioned to channel this real-time information to the rest of the organization. By reacting promptly and appropriately to real-time intelligence, an organization can optimize an opportunity or avoid a potential disaster. For example, if a decision or action made at the corporate level — such as a poorly executed marketing campaign, procedural fiasco or unpopular policy implementation — is resulting in an inordinate number of customer complaints, a real-time performance management solution will immediately identify this development as it is actually unfolding and send an alert to the appropriate department. The situation can then be addressed and agents can be promptly advised about how to best handle those specific customer complaints. Without real-time solutions in place, can you imagine the massive losses that would come to light in the days, weeks or even months before the problem has even been properly identified?

In addition to averting disaster, real-time performance management solutions can help organizations take advantage of rare and fleeting opportunities. Early recognition of customer trends can provide a major competitive advantage. For example, as a direct result of a competitor having implemented a price increase or a change in the scope of service, your agents might suddenly find themselves handling an unusually high volume of new orders from the competitor's disgruntled customers. A real-time performance management solution can alert you to this trend, sending a report in which you can actually drill down to individual agent/customer calls that have resulted in a sale, listen to the conversations and discover what the customer is responding to and why: the actual root cause of the customer behavior. This information can be used immediately to strength-

en and focus your current campaigns, thus increasing profit margins and customer satisfaction. Simultaneously, automated business rules will trigger the delivery of targeted training materials directly to the desktops of the agents in specific skills groups, helping them to close future sales.

Real-Time Performance Management — The Driving Force Behind Successful Workforce Optimization

Advanced, real-time performance management applications can collect data and present real-time and historical performance information to agents, managers and executives within the contact center environment. Key performance indicators (KPIs), quality scores, scheduling information and service-level indicators can be distributed to contact center personnel using desktop dashboards, Web-based consolidated reporting and television monitor display systems. Superior solutions can monitor both telephony and business metrics in real time — providing the tools to leverage that information into business intelligence that can dramatically enhance contact center and business performance.

In addition to enabling contact center managers to deliver real-time multimedia training to agent desktops on a schedule- or rules-driven basis, track agent improvements over time, quickly identify training weaknesses and flaws and implement prompt remedial measures, real-time performance management applications enable management to gauge the effectiveness of sales and service tools such as scripting, training, calling lists, etc. By integrating a workforce management application with a real-time performance management solution, contact centers can take advantage of real-time agent productivity tracking, multimedia agent training and agent performance reporting tools.

Automated Agent Coaching — A Powerful Alternative To Traditional Training

A study by the Olsten Corporation, a provider of staffing services to multinational companies, found that contact centers that implement a specific training regimen for at least one month have an annual turnover rate of 20 percent versus 55 percent for those companies with less training. In a sales environment, an investment in ongoing sales training will directly increase your close rates. Providing agents with new product information increases first-call resolution and decreases the costs associated with callbacks. Better trained agents provide better customer service, which customers view as a



significant differentiator in a competitive market. Proactive computer-based coaching is the most efficient training method for training agents in a contact center — far more effective than traditional classroom training. Successful agent coaching is embedded in the processes, projects and experiences of a business and can be customized and distributed quickly and easily. Considering the logistical challenges of scheduling hundreds of agents with multiple shifts into a classroom, it becomes evident that automated coaching provides companies with a powerful alternative or complement to traditional learning.

Workforce Management — A Fundamental Essential

By integrating a workforce management solution with real-time contact center analytics and agent coaching solutions, organizations can take advantage of real-time agent productivity tracking, multimedia agent training and agent performance reporting tools. In addition to optimizing agent scheduling, they can also improve agent productivity and accountability. For example, when the agents who are not adhering to schedules have been identified, managers can automatically deliver schedule-adherence training to these agents through the

integrated agent coaching module.

Contact centers can enable agents to see key personal performance metrics such as average talk time, average wrap time and calls handled in real time by displaying schedule-related data and messages on agents' dashboards. If the workforce management scheduling system is linked at the back end, the dashboard can be used to broadcast scheduling changes, solicit overtime volunteers and issue scheduling reminders on an agent-by-agent basis without any interruptions to call handling.

Delivering The Right Information To The Right People At The Right Time

Real-time workforce optimization solutions were designed to adhere to a very simple philosophy: to deliver the right information to the right people at the right time, thus stimulating dramatic improvements in quality and production. Although the actual systems and software are remarkably sophisticated and highly advanced, analytics and agent coaching and training solutions are quite simple to implement and use.

The ability to efficiently access, analyze, share and leverage valuable business intelli-

gence in real time can make a substantial impact on your bottom-line — increasing customer confidence, maximizing productivity and dramatically improving workforce performance — all of which will inevitably culminate in increased revenue and greater profitability. Dramatic improvements in agent quality, performance and efficiency lead to reduced agent attrition rates, which in turn result in a contact center comprised of experienced, highly trained agents.

Patrick Botz serves as global director of marketing for Voice Print International, (news - alert) a global provider of interactions recording and workforce optimization solutions for contact centers. Voice Print has partnered with Pipkins (news - alert) and Syntora (news - alert) to develop Solution Made Easy — a tightly integrated, modular suite of award-winning contact center solutions for call recording, quality monitoring, workforce management, performance management, speech analytics and agent coaching. Visit <http://www.SolutionMadeEasy.com> (news - alert) or call 866-596-EASY for more information on Solution Made Easy — Your One Stop Workforce Optimization Shop.

Leaving Behind The Days Of “Data Rich, Information Poor”

By Tracey E. Schelmetic, Editorial Director, Customer Interaction Solutions

Call centers have always been bursting with data. These data included information acquired during inbound or outbound telephone calls, e-mail, written communication from postal mail or faxes, order and invoice information, details about returned merchandise or cancelled service. It's always been there, it's just that generally, all the puzzle pieces of the customer relationship resided in different databases, and never were those databases to meet. In fact, if a customer had two separate relationships with a company (a checking account and a mortgage with a bank, for example), you could probably double the amount and the disparity of piecemeal information. It was akin to being a millionaire, but with one dollar resting in a million separate accounts with a million different banks. Sure, you're a millionaire...but it would be prohibitively expensive to actually get the money out. A customer would spend more trying to attain the money than he possessed in the first place.

Modern contact center technologies have gone a long way toward putting an end to the old "data rich, information poor" scenario. Newer technologies have aggregated all customer information so it's easily usable for both maintaining and building the customer relationship properly and training and keeping agents. The availability of real-time data and the ability to mine those data, coupled with high-quality analytics and a common-sense (and customizable) method to deliver meaningful information to managers, supervisors and agents have made all the difference in the world to both customers and agents.

Too often, companies perceive improving the customer experience and increasing agent performance and retention as two separate activities — possibly even mutually exclusive to one another. This is most certainly not the case. What's good for customers is also good for agents (and vice-versa, of course). Nothing will burn out quality agents faster than a lack of information and tools to serve the customer properly. This lack of meaningful, real-time data will lead to customer exasperation and rudeness to the agent, which will in turn increase agent stress levels and negatively affect call center staff performance. When agents feel ill-prepared and poorly equipped, it will show in their performance, and it will ultimately lead to the kind of nightmare agent turnover that was common in the "boiler room" call centers of the 1980s — turnover in excess of 200 percent per year or more. We often hear the adage that it costs much more to keep an existing customer than to prospect a new one. What many people in the call center industry forget is that this is also the case with agents, but the costs of attaining a new agent are far higher than those of attaining a new customer.

Providing agents with the right information and the right tools, when they need them, will by definition improve customer relationships and loyalty...a true case of "one thing leads to another." Your agents are your emissaries...the face of your business. Not supporting them with all the tools in the modern call center's toolkit to do their jobs properly is as good as hanging up on your customers.

The author may be reached at tschelmetic@tmcnet.com.

Customer Inter@ction Solutions Celebrates 25 Years Of Excellence



For 25 years, *Customer Inter@ction Solutions* magazine has been the voice of the call/contact center, CRM and teleservices industries. We've been often imitated, but never equaled. We have watched the industry germinate, grow, mature and prosper, and we've been extremely instrumental in helping it do so.

To celebrate *Customer Inter@ction Solutions'* magazine's 25th Anniversary, we're bringing readers a special, three-month feature, culminating in our June 2006 Anniversary Issue. Each month, we'll have a special editorial section as a tribute to the

industry and our coverage of it. We'll highlight the history of the industry in timeline format, and bring readers a series of "Top 25" lists, including the Top 25 innovators, products, industry events and more. We'll offer news of industry players both past and

present, and predictions for the future of the industry. We'll also include retrospectives from Nadji Tehrani, who has been so instrumental in forging and nurturing the multibillion-dollar call/contact, CRM and teleservices industries. Stay tuned!



Top 25 Technologies That Changed The Call Center

1. The ACD
2. Auto, predictive and preview dialers
3. CTI (computer-telephony integration) and screen pop
4. CRM (customer relationship management)
5. IVR (interactive voice response)
6. Workforce management
7. Skills-based routing
8. Hosted solution delivery
9. Customizable call recording solutions
10. Knowledge management and data mining
11. Voice over IP (VoIP)
12. The IP-PBX
13. The IP-ACD
14. Speech recognition, speech synthesis and text-to-speech
15. Salesforce automation
16. Customer analytics
17. Performance analytics
18. E-mail management
19. E-learning
20. Customer self-service via company Web portals
21. Wireless and noise canceling headsets
22. Advanced display technologies, notifications and dashboards
23. Ergonomic call center equipment
24. Web collaboration and co-browsing, Web chat
25. Compliance technologies and solutions

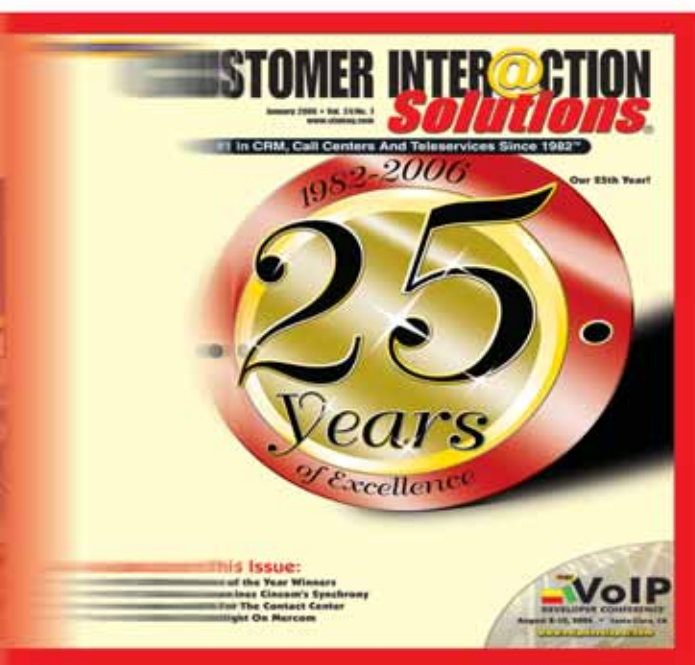
Celebrating 25 Years Of Excellence And Honoring The Top 50 And MVP Companies In New York City

Customer Inter@ction Solutions and TMC are pleased to announce that this year's Top 50 Teleservices Agencies/MVP Quality Awards Dinner will be held in conjunction with our 25th Anniversary Celebration for *Customer Inter@ction Solutions* magazine in New York City on Thursday, May 4th, 2006.

Top 50 and MVP companies will be feted at the elegant Marriott East Side Hotel on Lexington Avenue in New York City. Many past winners of Top 50 and MVP Quality Awards — true industry luminaries — will join us in honoring you on this great evening. In addition, the event will feature the presentation of Lifetime Achievement Awards to the most influential and well-known innovators in the call center industry, both past and present.

This event, the call center industry's only "Red Carpet Affair," promises to be the most exciting teleservices- and call center-focused event of the year.

Space is limited, so please contact Frank Coppola at fcoppola@tmcnet.com or 203-852-6800, ext. 131.



What's Next For CRM?

In the past six months, Microsoft has introduced new technology for everything from customer relationship management to business intelligence. What does it mean for your company?

We've had the opportunity to work with the Microsoft products in clients' IT environments, and in the process, we've uncovered several important considerations for any company, including those with CRM and business intelligence solutions — or custom applications — already in place.

You Expect More

To start, we have to acknowledge a significant but unspoken consideration that already exists among companies like the ones for which we consult. Namely, many a customer is caught in the market shift from first-generation, monolithic CRM suites to hosted CRM applications. However, recent hosted CRM reliability issues have companies rethinking this approach.

The shift away from monolithic solutions from the once-dominant vendors took place as companies recognized these solutions were not relevant for every situation. As hosted solutions came to the fore, problems with performance, security, integration and service reliability proved that this alternative wasn't right for everyone, either. As a result of their experiences with CRM, many executives are now asking, "Do large deployments really have to be that expensive and complex? Do hosted solutions have to compromise reliability and security?"

At the same time, companies expect to measure even greater benefit from

CRM. Vendors are promising "one-stop" shopping for all points of customer contact, resulting in a single view of a customer across sales, service, call center and marketing disciplines. Embracing single-vendor solutions requires significant investment, so it's no wonder adoption is hardly widespread. But even if companies were to migrate to a single CRM platform for all their customer interactions, the end result is yet another silo — one that holds more comprehensive customer information, to be sure, but nevertheless one that doesn't do much to integrate these data into the rest of operations.

This is in marked contrast to the value that people are starting to understand they need out of CRM today: visibility across operations. Instead of function-specific views of each customer, IT and business decision-makers want visibility into the full opportunity lifecycle, from sales lead to product delivery, including related call center activity after the sale. How did a new business opportunity conclude — and how quickly? Why did it resolve in the particular way that it did?

This insight is more than traditional CRM systems have provided, and after years of promise, expectations are high.

By Larry Barnes and John Yaggie
Avande

Consider The Great And Mundane

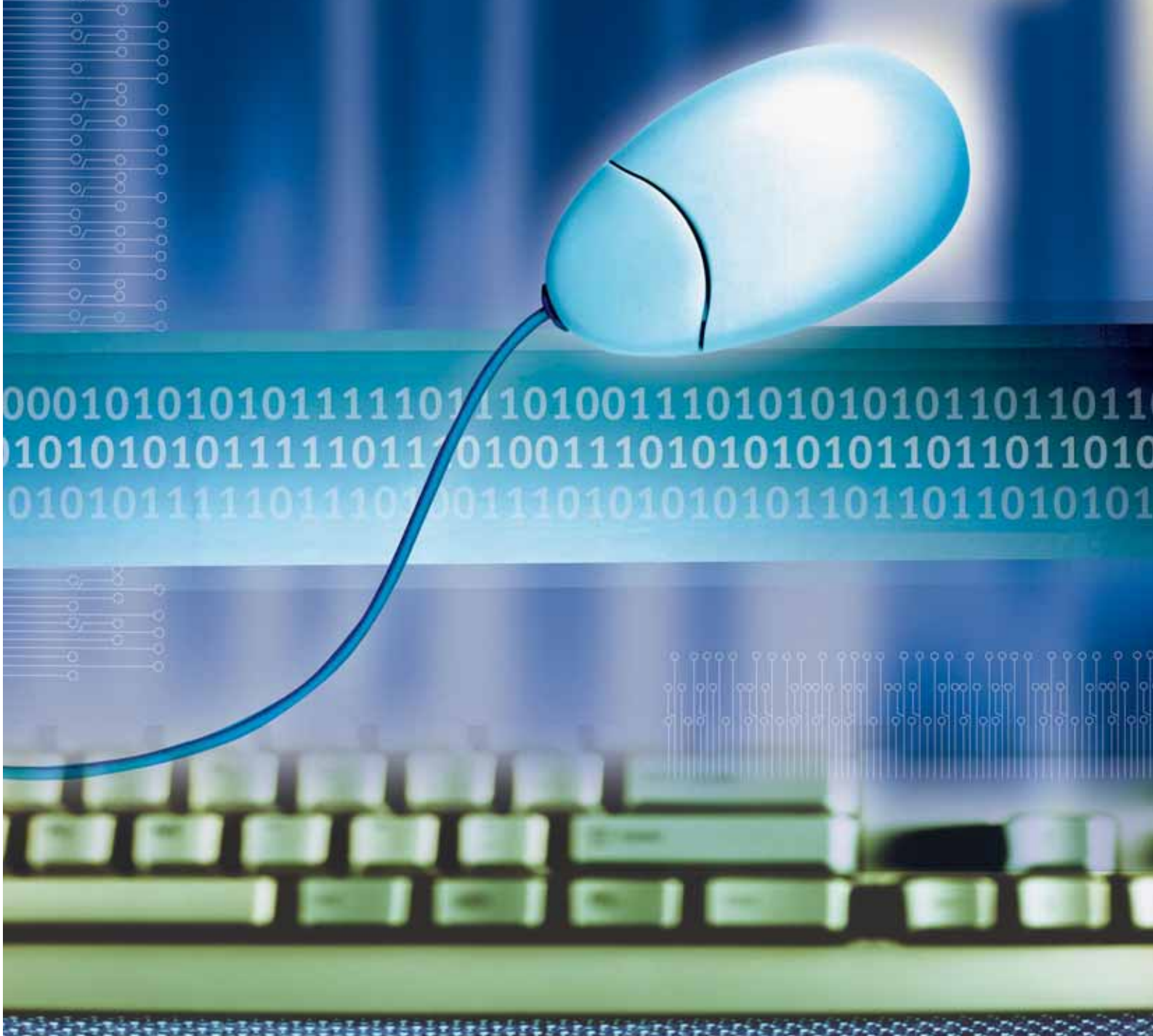
Given that companies understand and want more from CRM systems, what's the number one consideration on our list?

It all starts with data.

Data come first, for the simple reason that in the absence of a single system that traverses multiple functional areas, you can be sure that data are being entered at multiple points and muddying your picture of your customer relationship. These data have to be merged, duplication has to be eliminated and data entry points must be limited to improve the quality of data moving forward.

Let's face it — most organizations don't take full advantage of their existing data. Your call center software generates valuable information about hold times, call volume and so forth. But it won't tell you whether faster call resolution was due to great service or because the customer exchanged e-mail with another department prior to making the call. It may not tell you that callers hung up in satisfaction or in frustration — *those* data are captured in your CRM system or even in your ERP system, which reflects account closures. Insight into the full customer lifecycle still eludes most organizations today.

Which brings us to the second consideration: CRM and add-on CRM business intelligence modules provide an incomplete picture, as do add-on ERP business intelligence modules.



Say a client's order size drops from historic levels. That information in the ERP system, coupled with relationship details from the CRM system, would become insight for better understanding. A spike in certain types of service calls would be more revealing in the context of ERP data that could indicate a part is now sourced from a new supplier. Even better, this trend insight could lead to a repair/replacement offer to other customers before they report part failure.

The true value lies in the integration of CRM and ERP information to provide a complete picture of a customer relationship.

Seek — And You'll Find — More Advanced Technology

From our experience, even where custom integration has been undertaken to unite data silos, advances in new technology should give companies pause to consider more powerful functionalities companies can look for — without expecting a giant price tag — to prepare for more sophisticated customer insight:

- Sixty-four-bit processing, which makes scalable, high-performance CRM business intelligence possible — at an affordable price, as 64-bit capacity is becoming a commodity;

- Built-in replication capabilities for near real-time change from operational databases;

- Integration capabilities that can provide extract-transform-load (ETL) support automatically and cost-effectively;

- Sophisticated and scalable analysis functions for slicing and dicing very complex data sets; and

- Presentation of a unified data model for advanced analysis as well as operational reporting.

Historically, most firms have used point solutions for business intelligence. These point solutions work fine within their areas, but in aggregate, they result in a higher cost of ownership due to

ongoing maintenance fees and the higher price tag on the specialized expertise they require. Dependence on point solutions also seems riskier, given the pace of vendor consolidation in both the enterprise software and business intelligence technology categories.

Coupled with evidence that enterprise reporting architectures are becoming increasingly prevalent, the list of system criteria for next-generation customer insight also should include:

- Broader BI capabilities, integrated reporting and business scorecard management capabilities that support development of active rather than static reports; and
- Technology that does not require specialized programming or other expertise.

We've found that the latest Microsoft database and CRM technology addresses these "must have" capabilities with the benefits of a common technology stack that takes advantage of 64-bit processing for crucial scalability. For example, we just completed a proof-of-concept in which Microsoft SQL Server 2005 running on a four-way Intel multi-core server outperformed a customer's legacy installation.

In addition, Microsoft SQL Server 2005 and Microsoft Dynamics CRM are both built on the .NET application development platform, so IT staff can apply their .NET skills to both types of technology instead of just one or the other. (For that matter, because the .NET development environment can be capitalized for optimization of IT staff, software development and infrastructure.)

New Microsoft technology also tackles a few things that you might not otherwise consider. How will your users use intelligence and reporting tools in their day-to-day work? By our unscientific estimate, about 95 percent of all analytics data wind up in a spreadsheet.

Things like easy integration with productivity applications can make a big difference in how much use employees get out of CRM and BI technology — and how much insight you collect. Microsoft SQL Server 2005 includes

Analysis Services so that you can perform customer segmentation and identify customer trends, and then publish them using the database software's Reporting Services function as well as supporting native access from Microsoft Office system software.

SQL Reporting Services data are "live" in the spreadsheet, so that any changes made to the data update related documents. Microsoft CRM takes advantage of SQL Reporting Services and provides a link between CRM data and reports that are "living" documents created in Microsoft Office applications. That's especially relevant for executives who need up-to-date, accurate customer information but don't need to use the full capabilities of the CRM software.

Don't Make Choices You Don't Have To Make

Insight raises the question of data ownership, since CRM systems aren't the sole repository for information relevant to customer insight. Customer data integration (CDI) and master data management (MDM) are two sides of the same coin that has been spent on this issue. As integration becomes a priority, software vendors may present the issue as a decision companies must make to buy or build their own data management solutions. This "choice" is an important consideration, but not for the reasons you might think.

From our perspective, this "choice" bears the same hallmark as the decision to buy or build portals during the Internet boom in the late 1990s. Ultimately, a portal is an exercise in integration. By its very nature, integration originates from within a company — it's not a construct you can impose from the outside. That's important to keep in mind when considering how to approach MDM. Note that over time, the portal functionality that was sold on its own has been subsumed by platform vendors and application vendors such as Microsoft, IBM and SAP.

Another "choice," the one between on-premise and hosted enterprise appli-

Things like easy integration with productivity applications can make a big difference in how much use employees get out of CRM and BI technology — and how much insight you collect.

cations, is becoming less absolute. Sure, on-premise deployment gives you control over the CRM system as well as data integration, data ownership and security. On the other hand, hosted CRM spares you the expense of deployment and maintenance. In some cases, divisions of large organizations have chosen this option — bypassing IT and ceding control to the solutions provider — because they were desperate to start tracking customer relationships immediately.

But there's another option: managed services, which combine the best of control and cost-effectiveness. Some of our clients have determined that CRM is strategic to the organization but that staff skill sets won't keep pace with the system. A managed service can address the cost-efficiency issue as well as provide the strategic capabilities. Some firms recognize the benefits immediately: staff who serve as an extension of their IT department, who don't have a learning curve, and who even may be available to offer round-the-clock service that in-house staff would be otherwise unable to provide.

The managed service option also keeps open the possibility of transitioning to an on-premise — i.e., owner-operated — system. That skilled staff is already on-hand to help make the shift, something a hosted service provider cannot offer.

Look Beyond Customer Insight

The last consideration is empowering employees to make good decisions. We've seen reports on the "danger" of



putting too much information into the hands of users. But we're more likely to talk with clients about embedding intelligence into their business processes and operations. For example, an increase in helpdesk reports of a particular type of incident might trigger an automated alert embedded with relevant data, advising sales representatives that updated user manuals are available. Sales below a certain threshold or trends in a customer's portfolio of holdings might prompt a change in workflow or other actions.

Call it next-generation customer insight, or smart business intelligence, or whatever you like; with systems to capture data and the capabilities to do more with that information, what's next for CRM will depend on defining what "doing more" means. Reports could become living documents that are never outdated; changes in data might prompt automated processes — even technology — to adapt accordingly. Could there be something more than customer insight, as well?

Given what we've seen in our work with new Microsoft CRM and database technology, and given companies' great expectations for customer relationship management, we recommend companies consider a vision that's more ambitious in its goals and broader in scope.

Today's advanced understanding of the complexity of customer relationships, coupled with the latest technology, make it possible to strive for and achieve something more. We call it *customer intimacy*, a state of insight and technology-driven anticipation and responsiveness that makes it possible to forge bonds of partnership. "What's next" for CRM may be the most important consideration of all. **CIS**

Larry Barnes is director of Business Intelligence for Avanade. He helped lead Microsoft's business intelligence initiative and co-authored Data Warehousing with Microsoft SQL Server 7.0 by Osborne Press. Larry is a founding member of the Open Database Connectivity (ODBC) specification committee.

John Yaggie is the U.S. CRM practice director for Avanade. As a practice director, John has responsibility for sales, business development and delivery of Microsoft CRM solutions for Avanade's enterprise customers. John has spent the last 10 years working with customers to help them design and build highly integrated CRM

systems, including complex call center solutions, contact center analysis, optimization and custom CRM applications.

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CUSTOMER INTER@CTION Solutions® Magazine's

Twenty-First Annual Top 50 Inbound Teleservices Agencies Ranking

This is the twenty-first year *Customer Inter@ction Solutions* magazine brings you its "Top 50" Teleservices Agency Ranking. In this issue, we're presenting the "Top 50" inbound portion of the ranking. (The outbound portion of the ranking was highlighted in the March 2006 issue.) Since its inception in 1986, our "Top 50" ranking has been used as the benchmark for choosing large-capacity/sized teleservices agencies.

Ranking Basis

Since the basis of our ranking is company size, *Customer Inter@ction Solutions* uses a measurable, *third-party-verifiable* aspect of teleservices to arrive at our list of the "Top 50" agencies: *the number of minutes each agency was billed* by each of its phone companies for telephone service for 12 months, encompassing November 2004 through October 2005. We have found this to be an accurate and reliable reflection of the amount of teleservices each agency does, and therefore, provides a true reflection of its size.

Qualification Criteria

To qualify for inclusion in this year's "Top 50," the agencies had to answer a questionnaire detailing the nature of their business and listing their number of billable minutes between November 2004 and October 2005. The questionnaire had to be verified with the signature of each agency's president/CEO. In addition, each agency had to submit a letter of verification from each of its telephone service providers certifying the number of minutes for which it billed the agency during the designated period. (Our sincere gratitude is extended to all the carriers for their thorough and expeditious provision of these data.)

Exceptions

Agencies that did not supply this third-party verification were disqualified, with the exception of three circumstances: 1) a client of the service agency was billed directly for its telephone service and would not provide a letter of verification for anonymity reasons; 2) part of the billable minutes were with a foreign telecommunications carrier that could not provide the data by the deadline; 3) legitimate business situations prevented an agency from obtaining verification from certain of its carriers or a certain carrier. For each of these circumstances, we required a letter of explanation and signed verification of billable minutes pertaining to the explanation from the president/CEO of the agency. **You will find an asterisk next to the name of all "Top 50" agencies that supplied a portion of their verification from their president/CEO due to one of the three circumstances identified above.**

In all cases, from the questionnaires to the letters of verification, the agencies

were warned that should falsification be detected, they would be disqualified from this and all future "Top 50" rankings. And indeed, *Customer Inter@ction Solutions* magazine's editorial staff carefully verified calculations, discrepancies and other aspects of the supplied information to ensure that this ranking is of true value to you.

Understanding The Listings

As you read through the following list of "Top 50" agencies, you will notice that we have provided a numerical ranking of 1 through 36 (1 being the largest), but have not revealed the number of billable minutes used to arrive at this ordering. This was done out of respect for the confidential nature of this information to the many agencies included here that are privately held corporations. This year, only 36 companies met our minimum number of billable minutes to be ranked in the inbound "Top 50." You will notice that the "Top 50"



The Top Five Global Teleservices Performers

1. SR. Teleperformance
2. ACS, Inc.
3. SITES Corp.
4. ClientLogic
5. ICT Group, Inc.

inbound has been divided into three categories: A, B, C and D. Category A is composed of U.S. service agencies whose primary business function is provision of telemarketing services for outside firms. If you are considering an international teleservices campaign, Category B consists of international teleservices agencies. Again this year we have separated out all international teleservices done by U.S. agencies and ranked those companies' international minutes in the International category, Category B. Domestic companies that are also ranked in the International category are marked with a dagger (†) in their domestic ranking.

Category C is the list of Top 50 Global Performers, which ranks companies according to their aggregate outbound and inbound, and domestic and international minutes.

Finally, Category D, which was introduced in 1998, is comprised of companies that provide purely interactive inbound services (no live operators). We added this category to reflect the growing demand for such interactive inbound services. Companies that are in the Domestic and International categories that are also ranked in the Interactive category are marked with a double dagger (‡) in their Domestic and International rankings.

We hope you will use this "Top 50" feature, both inbound and outbound portions, for your outsourcing needs throughout the year, and be sure to tell the companies you found them in *Customer Inter@ction Solutions*.

Companies with enhanced listing are regular advertisers in *Customer Inter@ction Solutions*. **CIS**

CATEGORY A

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ACS, Inc. * †
http://www.acs-inc.com 2. SITES Corp. † ‡
http://www.sitel.com 3. Teleperformance USA (part of the SR. Teleperformance Group) † ‡
http://www.teleperformanceusa.com 4. ClientLogic * † ‡
http://www.clientlogic.com 5. GC Services Limited Partnership * † ‡
http://www.gcserv.com 6. APAC Customer Services, Inc. * † ‡
http://www.apaccustomerservices.com 7. ICT Group, Inc. * † ‡
http://www.ictgroup.com 8. NCO Group * † ‡
http://www.ncogroup.com 9. eTelecare Global Solutions * †
http://www.etelecare.com 10. Center Partners * ‡
http://www.centerpartners.com 11. Telvista * † ‡
http://www.telvista.com 12. AFFINA, LLC * ‡
http://www.affina.com 13. The Connection *
http://www.the-connection.com 14. Cross Country Automotive Services ‡
http://www.crosscountry-auto.com 15. Telerx ‡
http://www.telerx.com 16. AmeriCall Group Inc. (part of the SR. Teleperformance Group) * †
http://www.americallgroup.com | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 17. DialAmerica Marketing Inc. ‡
http://www.dialamerica.com 18. TCIM Services, Inc. *
http://www.tcim.com 19. InPulse Response Group
http://www.inpulseresponse.com 20. Microdyne Outsourcing, Inc. *
http://www.microdyne.com 21. Alta Resources * ‡
http://www.altaresources.com 22. XO Interactive * ‡
http://www.xo.com 23. InfoCision Management Corp.
Ph: 330-668-1400;
Fx: 330-668-1401
http://www.infocision.com
Year began providing teleservices: 1982
Size of projects accepted:
Minimum 500 hours
Type of calling:
B-to-B: 14%; B-to-C: 86%
Outbound: 84%; Inbound: 15%;
Interactive Inbound: 1%
Specialization: political, non-profit and religious fundraising, product/service sales and customer care, volunteer recruitment 24. Influent, Inc.
http://www.influentinc.com 25. Alert Communications *
http://www.alertcom.com 26. Charlton
http://www.tcgcorp.net 27. InService America
http://www.inserviceamerica.com 28. NOVO 1, Inc.
http://www.novo1.com 29. Hamilton Contact Center Services
http://www.hamiltontm.com |
|---|---|

30. Global Response *
<http://www.globalresponse.com>

31. AnswerNet Network
<http://www.answernetnetwork.com>

32. O'Curran Teleservices
<http://www.ocurrance.com>

33. Connexions ‡
<http://www.connexions.com>

34. Archway Marketing Services †
<http://www.archway.com>

35. Advanced Data-Comm, Inc.
 Ph: 800-582-9501;
 Fx: 800-829-9780
<http://www.advanced-data.com>
 Year began providing teleservices:
 1988
 Size of projects accepted:
 Minimum 200 hours
 Type of calling:
 B-to-B: 54%; B-to-C: 46%
 Outbound: 69.1; Inbound: 30.9%
 Specialization: customer service, sales,
 market research

36. Synergy Solutions, Inc. *
<http://www.synergysolutionsinc.com>

**CATEGORY B —
 INTERNATIONAL**

1. SR. Teleperformance ‡
 Ph: +33 155764080;
 Fx: +33 155764081
<http://www.srteleperformance.com>
 Year began providing teleservices:
 1978
 Size of projects accepted:
 Minimum varies
 Type of calling:
 B-to-B: 20%; B-to-C: 80%
 Outbound: 31%; Inbound: 64%;
 Interactive Inbound: 5%
 Specialization: outsourced CRM serv-
 ices, debt collection, technical support

2. ClientLogic * ‡
<http://www.clientlogic.com>

3. NCO Group * ‡
<http://www.ncogroup.com>

4. Teleperformance USA (part of the
 SR. Teleperformance Group) ‡
<http://www.teleperformanceusa.com>

5. eTelecare Global Solutions *
<http://www.etelecare.com>

6. SITEL Corp. ‡
<http://www.sitel.com>

7. ICT Group, Inc. * ‡
<http://www.ictgroup.com>

8. Telvista * ‡
<http://www.telvista.com>

9. Vision-X Inc. * ‡
<http://www.vxusa.com>

10. Hispanic Teleservices Corp. *
<http://www.htc.to>

11. PCCW Contact Center Business * ‡
<http://www.pccw.com/contactcenter>

12. MCCI (part of the SR.
 Teleperformance Group)
<http://www.mcci.ca>

13. Archway Marketing Services
<http://www.archway.com>

14. GC Services Limited Partnership * ‡
<http://www.gcserv.com>

15. APAC Customer Services, Inc. * ‡
<http://www.apaccustomerservices.com>

16. ACS, Inc. *
<http://www.acs-inc.com>

17. AFFINA, LLC * ‡
<http://www.affina.com>

18. Ambergri Solutions *
<http://www.ambergriolutions.com>

19. Americall Group Inc. (part of the
 SR. Teleperformance Group)
<http://www.americallgroup.com>

20. Voxdata *
<http://www.voxdata.com>

**CATEGORY C —
 GLOBAL TOP 50 RANKING,
 AGGREGATE INBOUND & OUTBOUND,
 DOMESTIC & INTERNATIONAL**

1. SR. Teleperformance
 Ph: +33 155764080;
 Fx: +33 155764081
<http://www.srteleperformance.com>
 Year began providing teleservices: 1978
 Size of projects accepted:
 Minimum varies
 Type of calling:
 B-to-B: 20%; B-to-C: 80%
 Outbound: 31%; Inbound: 64%;
 Interactive Inbound: 5%
 Specialization: outsourced CRM serv-
 ices, debt collection, technical support

2. ACS, Inc. *
<http://www.acs-inc.com>

3. SITEL Corp.
<http://www.sitel.com>

4. ClientLogic *
<http://www.clientlogic.com>

5. ICT Group, Inc. *
<http://www.ictgroup.com>

6. NCO Group *
<http://www.ncogroup.com>

7. Teleperformance USA (part of the
 SR. Teleperformance Group)
<http://www.teleperformanceusa.com>

8. eTelecare Global Solutions *
<http://www.etelecare.com>

9. APAC Customer Services, Inc. *
<http://www.apaccustomerservices.com>

10. GC Services Limited Partnership *
<http://www.gcserv.com>

11. Telvista
<http://www.telvista.com>

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connected to

the gods for

centuries...

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you now to

today's business

world

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LABORFORCE

MODERN & RELIABLE TELECOM
INFRASTRUCTURE

CULTURAL AFFINITIES

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INVESTMENT INCENTIVES

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2005 / 2006

fDi Magazine, Financial Times



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Michael J. Riek, President, HDN
(Help Desk Now)



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12. DialAmerica Marketing Inc.
<http://www.dialamerica.com>

13. InfoCision Management Corp.
 Ph: 330-668-1400; Fx: 330-668-1401
<http://www.infocision.com>
 Year began providing teleservices: 1982
 Size of projects accepted:
 Minimum 500 hours
 Type of calling:
 B-to-B: 14%; B-to-C: 86%
 Outbound: 84%; Inbound: 15%;
 Interactive Inbound: 1%
 Specialization: political, non-profit and religious fundraising, product/service sales and customer care, volunteer recruitment

14. Millenium Teleservices
<http://www.mmtel.com>

15. Americall Group Inc. (part of the SR. Teleperformance Group)
<http://www.americallgroup.com>

16. Center Partners *
<http://www.centerpartners.com>

17. TCIM Services, Inc. *
<http://www.tcim.com>

18. Vision-X Inc. *
<http://www.vxusa.com>

19. PCCW Contact Center Business *
<http://www.pccw.com/contactcenter>

20. Hispanic Teleservices Corp. *
<http://www.htc.to>

21. Cross Country Automotive Services
<http://www.crosscountry-auto.com>

22. AFFINA, LLC *
<http://www.affina.com>

23. Influent, Inc.
<http://www.influentinc.com>

24. Epixtar
<http://www.epixtar.com>

25. MCCI (part of the SR. Teleperformance Group)
<http://www.mcci.ca>

26. The Connection *
<http://www.the-connection.com>

27. Archway Marketing Services
<http://www.archway.com>

28. NOVO 1
<http://www.novo1.com>

29. Teleservices Direct
<http://www.teleservicesdirect.com>

30. Charlton
<http://www.tcgcorp.net>

31. Telerx
<http://www.telerx.com>

32. Microdyne Outsourcing Inc. *
<http://www.microdyne.com>

33. Synergy Solutions, Inc. *
<http://www.synergysolutionsinc.com>

34. The Heritage Company, Inc.
<http://www.theheritagecompany.com>

35. InPulse Response Group
<http://www.inpulseresponse.com>

36. Hamilton Contact Center Services
<http://www.hamiltontm.com>

37. Alta Resources *
<http://www.altaresources.com>

38. 121 Direct Response (Tele-Response Center, Inc.) *
<http://www.121directresponse.com>

39. AnswerNet Network
<http://www.answer.net/network.com>

40. Alert Communications *
<http://www.alertcom.com>

41. XO Interactive *
<http://www.xo.com>

42. Ambergris Solutions *
<http://www.ambergrissolutions.com>

43. Advanced Data-Comm, Inc.
 Ph: 800-582-9501;
 Fx: 800-829-9780
<http://www.advanced-data.com>
 Year began providing teleservices: 1988
 Size of projects accepted:
 Minimum 200 hours
 Type of calling:
 B-to-B: 54%; B-to-C: 46%
 Outbound: 69.1; Inbound: 30.9%
 Specialization: customer service, sales, market research

44. InService America
<http://www.inserviceamerica.com>

45. Voxdata *
<http://www.voxdata.com>

46. Connexions
<http://www.connexions.com>

47. Global Response *
<http://www.globalresponse.com>

48. O'Curran Teleservices
<http://www.ocurran.com>

49. Greene & Associates, Inc.
<http://www.greeneassoc.com>

50. 24-7 InTouch Inc.
<http://www.24-7intouch.com>

CATEGORY D — INTERACTIVE INBOUND

1. XO Interactive *
<http://www.xo.com>

2. PCCW Contact Center Business *
<http://www.pccw.com/contactcenter>

3. SITEL Corp.
<http://www.sitel.com>

4. ClientLogic *
<http://www.clientlogic.com>



5. ICT Group, Inc. *
<http://www.ictgroup.com>

6. Teleperformance USA (part of the SR. Teleperformance Group)
<http://www.teleperformanceusa.com>

7. SR. Teleperformance
 Ph: +33 155764080;
 Fx: +33 155764081
<http://www.srteleperformance.com>
 Year began providing teleservices:
 1978
 Size of projects accepted:
 Minimum varies
 Type of calling:
 B-to-B: 20%; B-to-C: 80%
 Outbound: 31%; Inbound: 64%;
 Interactive Inbound: 5%
 Specialization: outsourced CRM
 services, debt collection,
 technical support

8. DialAmerica Marketing Inc.
<http://www.dialamerica.com>

9. APAC Customer Services, Inc. *
<http://www.apaccustomerservices.com>

10. GC Services Limited Partnership *
<http://www.gcserv.com>

11. Vision-X Inc. *
<http://www.vxiusa.com>

12. Cross Country Automotive Services
<http://www.crosscountry-auto.com>

13. Alert Communications *
<http://www.alertcom.com>

14. AFFINA, LLC *
<http://www.affina.com>

15. Alta Resources *
<http://www.altaresources.com>

16. Telerx
<http://www.telerx.com>

17. Connexions
<http://www.connexions.com>

18. Telvista *
<http://www.telvista.com>

19. NCO Group *
<http://www.ncogroup.com>

20. Center Partners *
<http://www.centerpartners.com>

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Creating A Culture Of High Performance In The Contact Center

Running an efficient and effective contact center requires a dedication to excellence. In most contact centers, there are more hidden inefficiencies and performance issues than can be uncovered and corrected. However, the ability to get to the root of the problem is often hindered by the difficult nature of combining performance information from disparate customer- and employee-facing systems: ACDs, workforce management systems, quality monitoring solutions, etc. As a result, many centers find themselves grappling with inconsistent measurements, inefficient processes, inaccurate data, dissatisfied employees and suboptimal management decision making.

Performance management systems help contact centers overcome these challenges by combining data from their most critical systems to create an overall view of current business trends and operating conditions. Armed with this information, companies can form solid, actionable conclusions based on the operational results of the organization. That information can then be used to drive the day-to-day practices of the center toward a higher level of performance and profitability.

These systems enable organizations to successfully develop a culture of high performance and accountability because they do what reports and dashboards alone cannot. Performance management systems provide the tools and enable the practices necessary to provoke and enforce change. They don't just supply information that may or may not be acted upon at the whim of a manager or team member. Performance management technology offers analytical results that are tied directly to operational goals. That way, leaders can better understand exactly what moves their organizations, supervisors know whom to coach and what to coach them on

and agents are empowered with access to accurate and timely performance data.

This article describes 10 ways contact centers seeking to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their operation can benefit from performance management technology.

1. Manage By Metrics That Matter

Many companies employ a form of performance management today. But they are often at a loss to explain how their performance metrics influence employee activity and overall results. Performance management supplies the insight decision makers need to make strategic business decisions based on timely analysis of key performance indicators (KPIs) and then closes the loop with operational results. As a result, the center can identify the key metrics that drive the business and tie every employee's individual objectives to those measurements. By aligning everyone's goals and providing visibility into their indi-

vidual performance, organizations can successfully change behavior to improve productivity.

2. Develop A Culture Of High Performance And Accountability

Performance management establishes clear goals and performance targets for each employee. Since all goals and metrics are directly tied to performance, there are no surprises. Every employee can see that the standards they are being evaluated against are consistent across the organization and are grounded in business goals. This helps eliminate the sense of unfairness among agents who might feel they are being judged solely on the preferences or desires of a single line manager. Instead they are assured of fair treatment because they know what is expected of them, can see how they are performing and, most important, what they are responsible for accomplishing.

3. Reward Employees Promptly And Accurately

From the agent's point of view, this step provides the payoff for buying into the culture of high performance and

By Debbie May, IEX, and
Mark Selcow, Merced Systems Inc.

accountability. Performance management systems track and report employee behavior without distortion or prejudice. Results can be measured against key metrics and fed directly into recognition and reward programs. With dashboards at their disposal, employees never need wonder how they are being measured or how they stack up against their peers. By tying performance directly to incentives, the operation can effectively reinforce desired behaviors.

4. Use Information To Improve Customer Satisfaction

So much of the customer experience hinges on their interaction with an individual agent. Creating an environment in which agents are given responsibility for their own performance as well as the visibility and tools necessary to make meaningful improvements empowers the agents. That sense of empowerment naturally leads to a happier workforce with lower turnover, and one better prepared to competently and pleasantly handle customer inquiries and concerns.

In addition to creating more motivated agents, performance management applications provide the tools necessary to drive targeted behaviors, including customer satisfaction. By integrating a performance management application with customer satisfaction tools such as IVR-based post-call surveys, operations can easily incorporate customer feedback into agents' balanced scorecards.

5. Replace Time-Consuming Tasks With High-Yield Activities

In a nutshell, performance management automates the delivery of information to employees and guides their activities, freeing-up management to focus on helping everyone improve results. Specifically, performance management



allows agents to track their own performance. This allows supervisors to spend coaching sessions reinforcing key messages instead of just providing feedback. As a result, these sessions are transformed into true development discussions because the conversation has been shifted from delivering statistics to skill coaching.

6. Measure Processes To Improve Results

Performance management provides a common frame of reference to measure

the impact of key metrics while supplying visibility into processes that have traditionally been paper-based, such as coaching and training. By automating management activities through integrated workflow, organizations create consistent processes and standardize activities across all levels of the operation. This allows organizations to establish and track best practices by providing guidance and setting targets for the amount of time managers should spend in activities like hiring, coaching and training.

7. Optimize Existing Technology Investments

Performance management solutions produce advanced insight with data collected from multiple sources in the organization, including customer databases, ACD logs, IVR input and CRM applications. While many organizations may already have these systems in place, they often lack the ability to draw deep insight about their operations from each source. As a result, they end up relying on point reporting and surface-skimming metrics that keep much of the power and potential of the data locked up. Performance management systems, however, are designed from the ground up to incorporate data from multiple sources. They offer a comprehensive view of the operation, helping the center gain a better understanding of the entire customer lifecycle while maximizing existing technology investments.

8. Leverage Predefined Solutions

Modern performance management solutions come pre-built and ready to integrate with the systems that already power the contact center. By selecting a performance management solution designed to interface with the center's workforce management system and other operational tools, implementation time and integration expenses can be greatly reduced. Furthermore, some performance management systems are bundled with predefined metrics and KPIs – allowing everyone from executives to agents to quickly see the information that matters most to their daily activities – without a large upfront investment in professional services.

9. Choose A System That Will Grow With Your Business

In the past, some performance management solutions have required heavy customization and were quite invasive. The latest performance management solutions are focused on meeting the long-term needs of organizations. This gives companies the chance to find a performance management solution that

is right for their business, incorporating the right mix of performance measurement and process improvement tools. The best third-generation performance management solutions also allow companies to expand their applications and easily incorporate new functionality as the organization's performance management needs grow.

10. Think Big, Start Small

Performance management creates a clear and measurable return on investment without a long ramp-up time. These tools can reduce average talk and hold time, increase agent online time, improve schedule adherence, reduce attrition, boost first-call resolution rates and enhance customer quality ratings.

Performance management can help rapidly narrow the productivity gap between standout and sub-par performers, which can be as great as 4:1 in some environments. Giving agents the tools they need to self-evaluate and take corrective action, as well as to understand and follow endorsed best practices, can lead to both increased call productivity and revenue generation. Supervisors and managers are able to view much more performance data with minimal effort, giving them the maximum opportunity to make meaningful changes through policy adjustments and one-to-one interaction. Business analysts are freed from designing and deploying routine daily reports, allowing them to put their expertise to work on long-term business analysis and highly targeted investigation. Ultimately, the mindset of the performance-focused organization will have a ripple effect that makes top performance the expectation rather than a luxury.

Performance management provides a logical evolutionary step for companies that take the day-to-day operations of their contact center environments seriously. By leveraging existing investments in workforce management and other customer interaction tools, performance management delivers a complete view of the effectiveness and efficiency of cus-

Modern performance management solutions come pre-built and ready to integrate with the systems that already power the contact center.

tom contact, both at the individual level and in aggregate. This makes it easy for front-line agents and managers alike to understand their role in the performance chain and how improvements may need to be made. The ROI on performance management solutions can be seen within just 6 to 9 months in most organizations. Performance management represents a clear competitive advantage for companies looking for continuous improvement and consistent excellence in their customer organizations. **CIS**

Debbie May co-founded IEX Corporation (<http://www.iex.com>) (news - alert) in 1988. As president, she is responsible for setting the vision and direction of the company while overseeing its daily operations. Under her leadership, IEX has attained recognition as a global leader of workforce management and optimization technology for contact centers. She can be contacted at debbie.may@iex.com.

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Training At The Desktop: Seven Strategies For Success

The advent of e-learning as a strategy for training call center agents has yielded an efficient and cost-effective new toolset for sharpening agents' knowledge and skills, but it has also raised a series of challenges. What kinds of instruction are best suited for delivery at the desktop? How does online coursework fit into the center's overall workflow? How can it assist agents who are underperforming?

The answers to questions like these are becoming increasingly important as e-learning gains ground in the contact center world. Managers are turning to e-learning systems as an alternative to certain kinds of classroom training in order to cope with a wide array of financial, staffing and logistical pressures.

Online training is seen as a way to balance rising agent responsibilities and corporate demands to increase revenue and decrease costs against obstacles such as strained training budgets and the difficulty of scheduling classroom instruction for hundreds of agents across multiple shifts. Benefits such as easier training delivery, significantly lower delivery costs and the ability to individualize training to help resolve the agent's specific shortcomings are adding to the appeal.

With adoption increasing, it's time to concentrate on how to get the most out of your e-learning system. It is important to first accomplish the following:

1. Match the message to the medium.

E-learning is not a replacement for classroom instruction. Activities such as training new hires, introducing a new CRM system or conducting simulation exercises are still best suited to face-to-face sessions with a live instructor. Training at the desktop should be

reserved for coursework such as product line or policy changes, cross-training, skill refreshers and individual skill remediation. Sample topics would be a new line of widgets, a new cell phone service plan, collecting on older debts, a new policy on family member inquiries, reducing excessive talk times, handling disgruntled customers, etc.

2. Use bold and varied visuals.

Every e-learning system comes with authoring tools for creating courses. Initially, vendors recommended designing each module or training "burst" with a common look and feel from screen to screen, but managers have discovered that agents need some visual excitement to stay motivated and thereby maximize information retention. The trick is to dress up the text with bold and even startling graphics, including animations, and vary the visuals from slide to slide. This will help keep agents engaged.

3. Integrate, integrate, integrate.

To achieve the best results, the e-learning system must seamlessly exchange information with the call cen-

ter's performance analytics, quality monitoring and workforce management systems. These integrations will make it possible to tie online course delivery to agents' performance metrics and quality scores (see #4); simplify efforts to analyze the impact of training on agent productivity (see #7); allow voice and screen captures to be easily repurposed for use in training courses; permit e-learning sessions to be easily incorporated into the agent's schedule; and make it easier to push e-learning content at appropriate times and to enforce time limits on training.

4. Use performance metrics as a trigger.

While e-learning is useful for delivering content that must be learned by all agents, it can also be used as a fix for specific performance deficiencies exhibited by individual agents or groups. Training materials can be dispensed automatically to the underperforming agent as soon as a problem is identified by the performance analytics or quality monitoring system. Training can be activated by a rules engine whenever certain thresholds are reached, such as when an agent exceeds pre-defined idle or talk times, fails to meet sales targets or scores below a given level on quality monitoring.

By Henry Lach
Syntora



This ability to tie training so closely and immediately to performance enables rapid problem intervention without pulling the agent into a training room. It provides a mechanism for agent self-improvement, it helps remedy poor work habits before excessive damage is done, and it stretches resources for call centers with insufficient coaching staff.

5. Let your dashboard drive.

If your contact center uses on-screen agent dashboards for displaying key performance indicators, the same dashboard can typically be used to deliver e-learning modules. The agent simply clicks on the module name to launch the course during scheduled training breaks or slow periods; prerequisites can be enforced to ensure that courses are completed in a logical order. The advantage is that the dashboard is always docked on the agent's screen, ensuring that the training alert won't get buried in e-mail, and also eliminating the need for the agent to log in to a special Web page. This can help expedite completion of the training activity. The dashboard can also be used to provide nearly instant individual and

group test results to agents after they have finished a course.

6. Test regularly and quickly.

One of the beauties of e-learning systems is that tests can be embedded at the end of each course to assess the agent's understanding of the material. To help maximize learning and ensure that agents have a solid grasp of one group of concepts before proceeding to the next, it is advisable to divide each course into smaller sections and then administer a test after each section. Tests usually should be no longer than 10 questions, both to minimize the time commitment and to keep the agent's attention.

7. Crunch the numbers.

Test results provide a wealth of information that can improve call center operations. If an agent does poorly, additional e-learning can be provided, or team leads or supervisors can intervene for personal coaching. If a particular question generates too many wrong answers, training managers need to determine whether there is a problem

with the course material or the question itself. If performance on the floor does not show improvement after e-learning (a correlation that is easy to make if you have an integrated system that can consolidate performance and e-learning reports into one view), an evaluation is in order to determine how to achieve better results.

These guidelines can help e-learning implementations run smoothly and enable contact centers to take full advantage of their e-learning systems. The result is easier training delivery — without a disruption in call handling — a savings in training costs — and better trained and informed agents who can translate their newfound skills into increased sales, collections and/or customer service. **CIS**

Henry Lach is president of Syntora Inc. (<http://www.syntora.com>), (news - alert) provider of agent productivity software for contact centers.

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CUSTOMER INTERACTION Solutions® April 2005 51

LumenVox And Digium Partner

Speech solutions provider **LumenVox** ([news - alert](#)) has announced that **Digium Inc.**, ([news - alert](#)) the creator of open source PBX technologies and Asterisk, a cost-effective approach to voice and data transport over IP, TDM, switched and Ethernet architectures, is currently integrating LumenVox's Speech Engine into their Open Source and Business Edition PBXs.

"Speech recognition enhances customer interactivity with an Asterisk PBX," said Mark Spencer, president of Digium and creator of Asterisk. "Additionally, the integration with the LumenVox Speech Engine enables the Asterisk development community to cost-effectively build and deploy speech solutions with performance characteristics to support even the most demanding speech requirements."

The Speech Engine performs recognition on audio data from any audio source, and allows for dynamic language, grammar, audio format and logging capabilities.

<http://www.lumenvox.com> and <http://www.digium.com>

Envision Telephony Offers SpeechMiner

Envision Telephony, Inc., ([news - alert](#)) a provider of software for the contact center and the enterprise, has announced the availability of Envision SpeechMiner, a solution powered by **Utopy** ([news - alert](#)) which identifies, categorizes, analyzes and reports customer intelligence stored within each recorded interaction. Envision SpeechMiner works in combination with Envision Business Intelligence, allowing call centers to understand, analyze, predict and change how their organization affects the customer experience. Envision SpeechMiner allows decision-makers to easily identify, categorize and analyze information according to their unique business needs. It moves beyond simple word spotting to capture meaningful intelligence from the context and emotion of the conversation. Once companies understand why people are calling, they can begin to catalog and evaluate this information for competitive intelligence, marketing campaign effectiveness and operational inefficiencies.

Key Envision SpeechMiner features include analytics that capture intent and perception stored in phrases, not just word spotting; emotion detection, which identifies speaker emotions based on the tone and manner of speech; multi-language capabilities to support 30 languages; and customized reports that incorporate Microsoft SQL Server 2005 Reporting Services, allowing users to more quickly and easily add reports and deliver alerts.

<http://www.envisioninc.com> and <http://www.utopy.com>

“

“The true use of speech is not so much to express our wants as to conceal them.”

— *Oliver Goldsmith (1730?–1774), Irish writer and physician*

”

Definition Du Jour

Forensic speech science (FSS)

The study and measurement of the data transmitted in the human voice for a variety of legal purposes, including voice print identification and authentication, accent identification and lie detection.

Nexidia Advances Speech Intelligence

Nexidia, ([news - alert](#)) a provider of audio search and speech analytics solutions for government intelligence, contact center management and Internet media, has announced the availability of Nexidia Enterprise Speech Intelligence (ESI) 6.0. From a single CPU, Nexidia ESI now indexes recorded audio 63 times faster than the spoken word, increasing its ability to make large volumes of audio searchable in the most computationally efficient way. Additionally, audio search speed is now 120,000 times faster than the spoken word.

Nexidia ESI 6.0 premieres Forensic Search, a feature that allows both power users and casual users to quickly and easily conduct ad-hoc searches on large sets of audio data. Forensic Search enables the system to “learn” search patterns within the organization and intelligently tune and adapt the application, resulting in more optimized searches and results. The solution uses the company's Phonetic Search Engine (PSE) technology, which enables audio search by using phonemes — the smallest unit of human speech. The Nexidia technology supports all audio qualities and audio variances such as a speaker's age, gender, accent, language and dialect. Searches using phoneme pattern matching are executed on all words and phrases including blended words, proper names, slang, code words, nonstandard grammar patterns and ad-hoc use of different languages. As a result, the untapped assets of audio content can be revealed, delivering business intelligence from the voice of the customer.

<http://www.nexidia.com>



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The Speech Technology Excellence Awards

Finding cost efficiencies in the call center seems to be following Moore's law: That is, as more and more call centers implement various call center technologies, it becomes more and more difficult to "squeeze" cost savings on each phone call.

Fortunately, there is one nascent technology which is in the process of being adopted in the call center — speech technology. Speech technology performance and accuracy is drastically better now than it once was, as integration is much easier and developer tools are much easier to use. The ROI on speech technology deployment is often very quick because repetitive or automatic inquiries and tasks can be offloaded from an agent to a speech recognition system.

Customer Inter@ction Solutions magazine knows that speech technology will be a key differentiator or cost savings method for call centers. We have been covering call center technology for two and a half

decades and have therefore seen the progression from primitive predictive dialers and recording systems, to full CTI integration, to IP-PBXs with remote VoIP call center agents. One would be hard pressed to not find all aforementioned technologies in the best-quality call centers. And so, soon it will also be the norm, rather than the exception, that these high-quality customer interaction centers have speech technology implemented.

With new products and whole new categories of products in the contact center space, it is tough for our readers to keep up with the latest and greatest products and services. That is why *Customer*

Inter@ction Solutions launched the Speech Technology Excellence Award: so we can judge the "best of the best" in speech technology and pass our findings on to our readers.

Congratulations to the winners.

SPEECH TECHNOLOGY



EXCELLENCE AWARD™

Aspect Software

<http://www.aspect.com>

Product: Aspect Customer Self-Service IVR

Aspect ([news](#) - [alert](#)) Customer Self-Service (CSS) IVR is a full-featured interactive voice response platform that enables businesses to realize all the traditional benefits of voice self-service in their contact centers – such as automating transactions normally performed by costly live agents and extending business hours – and at the same time delivers advancements in speech technology, including speech recognition, text-to-speech, voiceprint identification and more.

Aspect CSS uses PSTN and VoIP connectivity to help companies automate customer service transactions ranging from simple information requests to more complex processes such as order placement and address capture. The solution is scalable and interoperates with leading databases and legacy corporate data sources so businesses can deliver a range of simple to complex self-service capabilities to callers quickly and easily. Leveraging Aspect CSS, companies can reduce costs by automating complex customer transactions, deliver a positive self-service experience by providing customers with an easy and convenient way to make requests and complete transactions, use Voice XML development language to rapidly deploy self-service applications, as well as integrate with other call center and enterprise data sources to build holistic, comprehensive customer histories that support more personalized and targeted service.

Aspect differentiates itself from competitive products by offering a intuitive development environment, which enables users to create sophisticated self-service workflows without writing complex code; support for speech auto-attendant applications; advanced speech technology, including automatic speech recognition, text-to-speech capabilities and voiceprint identification capabilities for security; and unified applications to aggregate contact center resources by integrating self-service applications with call center and enterprise data sources for personalized service and a holistic view of customer histories.

Avaya

<http://www.avaya.com>

Product: Avaya Voice Portal

Voice Portal is Avaya's ([news](#) - [alert](#)) latest IP- and SOA-enabled self-service software platform and a critical first step towards voice-enablement of thousands of enterprise services and applications. Until now, dedicated deployments, development and management teams have focused on providing call center cost reduction through traditional IVR architecture. In the next years, voice portal functionality will be embedded directly into the communications architecture, eliminating the indecision around what IVR needs to be configured with the call center.

Avaya's Voice Portal addresses the needs of IT purchasers, managers and implementers by offering the manageability, reliability and scalability of a software-based media processing appliance coupled with the ease of integration and programmability in Web and Service-Oriented Architectures. By offering robust speech and touch-tone capabilities in a package that is easy to install, maintain and modify, CIOs can integrate "call center only" capabilities into the IT fabric of their enterprise.

Avaya Voice Portal is unique in that it provides medium-sized and large enterprises with a powerful software-based solution for delivery of voice self-service applications, integrated with their contact center applications as well as within their existing Web and SOA infrastructure. Avaya Voice Portal maps to traditional Internet architectures but with critical enhancements that couple the power of IP telephony with leverage points into Web applications that move traditional telephony implementations into a re-envisioned and more accessible architecture

Cantata Technology (formerly Brooktrout Technology)

<http://www.cantata.com>

Product: The TR1000 For Microsoft Speech Server

([news](#) - [alert](#)) The TR1000 for Microsoft Speech Server is targeted at the enterprise market. Due to the lower cost of ownership provided with this platform, small, medium-sized and large companies can afford to develop and deploy speech applications to improve their business processes and enhance their call centers.

Cantata provides the only telephony platform developed and branded specifically for Microsoft Speech Server. The product was created around a single CD that installs the Windows-certified drivers, scalable telephony board and Telephony Interface Manager (TIM). The Cantata drivers and TIM have a universal design requiring no software changes to upgrade from a four-port analog prototype to a multi-span digital production system.

Cantata's Brooktrout TIM is tightly integrated with Microsoft Speech Server and the Microsoft Speech Application SDK (SASDK). The TIM controls communication between the TR1000 and telephone network, streams media for recognition and speech output, performs DTMF detection and processes all the call control. The TIM allows startup, shutdown, port allocation, system cycling, statistics and other common tasks to be automated through the Windows Management Instrumentation (WMI) interface

Available in configurations from 4 to 96 ports per server, the WHQL-certified TR1000 is ideal for deployments in speech self-service and contact center applications. The TR1000 provides on-board speech features including echo cancellation, voice activity detection and intelligent pre-filtering of noise and silence. TR1000's ability to perform these functions on-board reduces CPU utilization and PCI bus traffic. The performance of the TR1000 allows systems to scale in size and features to meet the current and evolving needs of Microsoft Speech Server applications.

Cisco Systems, Inc.

<http://www.cisco.com>

Product: The Cisco Customer Voice Portal

As a flexible and cost-effective replacement for traditional interactive voice response (IVR) systems, the Cisco ([quote](#) - [news](#) - [alert](#)) Customer Voice Portal is ideal for both large enterprises and small and medium-sized businesses. The Portal can be hosted in a service provider environment as well as on premise, so businesses can choose the deployment model that best matches their organizational, technical and operations capabilities.

The Cisco Customer Voice Portal allows organizations to centrally manage a virtual, network-wide IVR across multi-

ple locations using a single application instance. Cisco's unique, flexible architecture saves deployment and administration costs and simplifies ongoing management and operation. The Cisco Customer Voice Portal can be deployed in both traditional TDM-based and IP-based contact centers, as well as in a hybrid environment for companies migrating their telephony network to a common converged environment for data, voice and video communications. This flexibility allows companies to gain the benefits of next-generation self-service technology without having to rip and replace existing telephony equipment.

The Customer Voice Portal supports both speech-enabled and touch-tone applications, which can be quickly integrated with back-end data and business rules available on the Web. By using the Java 2 Platform, Enterprise Edition (J2EE) and Voice eXtensible Markup Language (VXML) standards along with the graphical development tools provided with the Customer Voice Portal, complex voice applications can be developed faster and at a lower cost than traditional IVRs or other voice portal technology.

Empirix, Inc.

<http://www.empirix.com>

Product: Hammer On-Call for Voice Quality

(news - alert) Unlike manual testing, which is difficult to organize and frequently misses hidden problems, automated Hammer testing generates thousands of real test calls that duplicate real-world operating conditions to find the capacity bottlenecks and configuration errors that other tests miss. The company's load testing service provides users with a fast, easy-to-use solution that helps them guarantee that their voice applications will scale to meet different mixes of call traffic and growing user loads. From the switch through the IVR to back-end databases and CTI screen pops, Hammer On-Call gives voice applications and infrastructure a thorough workout by generating thousands of calls. Empirix's consultants create sophisticated, realistic tests that help call centers isolate and eliminate system bottlenecks and errors during development and production, and verify the scalability of their voice applications — including speech recognition. The product's Web interface provides users with immediate access to performance data. Companies may even access performance and test data

remotely while the load is actually being applied. Each engagement includes a summary report that documents that the system has been "Hammer Tested." Test scripts and results from every test run — including log files — are permanently stored, simplifying the creation of future test scripts, standards and protocols.

etalk

<http://www.etalk.com>

Product: Qfiniti Explore

(news - alert) Qfiniti Explore delivers a conceptual understanding of customer calls that automatically spots relevant trends within the contact center and across business using intelligent speech analytics. Through its SmartView searching capabilities and call clustering, Explore uncovers the information tucked away in customer interaction recordings. The solution offers real-time notification for immediate customer intervention and coaching; the automation of trend spotting to help enhance product and service offerings, sales and marketing programs and the evaluation of corporate policies and processes; visibility to call recordings for customer intelligence, business process automation and quality monitoring; and the ability to save significant time and cost over manual call monitoring.

Explore lets users extend speech analytics beyond the contact center environment to benefit the entire organization. By delivering rapid access to precise and accurate customer information, Explore allows companies enterprisewide insight into contact center interactions such as customer satisfaction, script adherence, agent training, call handling and resolution, sales effectiveness, marketing campaigns, competitive research, win/loss analysis, regulatory compliance and risk and liability.

Explore takes advantage of the Intelligent Data Operation Layer (IDOL) engine from Autonomy, a company that provides solutions to manage unstructured data, to form an understanding of the content in a call similar to the way a human understands information. This means Explore can distinguish between calls using the same words but with entirely different meanings. Using unique pattern matching techniques, Explore can find calls that would otherwise have been missed because specific words or phrases were not mentioned in a conversation. The efficiency of the IDOL engine

ensures that Explore can deliver value across large volumes of customer calls within an enterprise, helping to understand the customer across multiple globally distributed contact centers.

Intervoice, Inc.

<http://www.intervoice.com>

Product: Media Exchange

(news - alert) Media Exchange for Enterprises is a rich and flexible deployment platform that supports numerous ready-to-run applications, such as automated name and address capture, field force automation, locator automation, password reset, survey automation and voice authentication. The platform also provides an application framework for large-scale custom applications and uses a robust underlying platform that supports voice recognition, Web browser and multimodal user interface technologies. Media Exchange provides all of the infrastructure management, integration and content metering capabilities to enable enterprises to reduce cost and time-to-market with enhanced voice and speech self-service applications.

Media Exchange's platform subsystems include Media Exchange Studio, designed to make the development of speech applications easier, with a high degree of collaboration and reuse; the Voice Application Server, a runtime environment that executes voice applications via VoiceXML; the Media Gateway to control and manage all call control, routing, steering, switching, transfers and computer-telephony integration; Media Server, a subsystem of Media Exchange for Enterprises that enables customers and employees to perform transactions and access information over the telephone 24 hours a day; Media Exchange's Control Center, a centralized management tool that makes it easier to monitor, administer and provision a voice automation solution in a local or distributed network environment; and Application View, a graphical real-time business monitoring and reporting tool that provides accurate, up-to-date information about a company's IVR system.

LumenVox

<http://www.lumenvox.com>

Product: Speech Engine v. 6.0

Speech Engine v. 6.0 upgrade includes

server-side grammars, n-Best results, MRCP and Linux kernel 2.6 support. **LumenVox** ([news - alert](#)) completely embraces the W3C standards, such as SRGS grammars, and supports many versions of Linux to meet market demand.

LumenVox's Speech Recognition Engine is a flexible API that performs speech recognition on audio data from any audio source. The Speech Engine is speaker- and hardware-independent: it supports SRGS and SISR on the Windows and Linux platforms. The Speech Engine provides speech application developers with an efficient development and runtime platform, allowing for dynamic language, grammar, audio format and logging capabilities to customize every step of their application. Grammars are entered as a simple list of words or pronunciations, or in the industry standard Speech Recognition Grammar Specification (SRGS), as defined by the W3C.

Other features and functionality include streaming audio; support for English, Latin American Spanish and Canadian French; a flexible API that integrates into current OA&M, billing, provisioning and debugging systems; client/server architecture to distribute speech-processing load; runtime-defined grammars entered as simple text, BNF, raw phonetic spelling or SRGS; advanced dynamic barge-in to adapt to each call in real-time; an SDK that includes documentation and a demonstration C/C++ application; and flexible error recovery through the use of confidence scores and n-best results.

NICE Systems

<http://www.nice.com>

Product: NICE Perform

NICE ([news - alert](#)) Perform captures multimedia interactions, analyzes their content to gain insight and presents this insight in a manner which facilitates decision making. The product is comprised of several components. NICE Perform's recording capability means that all calls can be captured and stored as required. It is based on a proprietary NICE technology that stores digitalized voice recording in a highly efficient manner, making rapid identification and retrieval simple and inexpensive. NICE Perform is fully integrated with Microsoft .NET client-server technology, which uses NICE Perform's smart client installed on the desktop and

communicating with the central server for rapid system integration. This technology reduces overhead, improves response time and eases the installation of updates and new versions. The solution's audio analysis capabilities are among the most advanced and accurate available, allowing users the capabilities for word-spotting, emotion detection and talk analysis. Finally, the aggregation of the various tools and technologies included in NICE Perform allows users to find and make use of the insight hidden in the enterprise's unstructured data.

Nortel

<http://www.nortel.com>

Product: Nortel Application Center

The new **Nortel** ([quote - news - alert](#)) Application Center was created to bring together contact center, advanced speech, unified messaging and multimedia collaboration into a cohesive application environment. The solution was designed to deliver an easy-to-use customer experience and increased profitability for the businesses that it serves. The Nortel Application Center platform will ultimately integrate what have previously been stand-alone applications with a seamless integration across multiple applications, common tools and standard reporting modules, making the Application Center a more efficient and effective solution for managing customer interaction.

The open standards-based framework allows users to adopt a complete solution to interact with their customers at one time. Open standards allow the solution to be integrated into a multivendor environment. Customers can deploy additional Nortel applications over time by simply turning them on. Also, by employing the Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) standard, customers can customize these solutions to reflect their specific business needs and deliver faster innovation and competitive differentiation.

Parus Interactive

<http://www.parusinteractive.com>

Service: Parus Interactive's hosted speech recognition solutions

Parus Interactive ([news - alert](#)) helps clients enhance their customer care processes with voice-activated self-service solutions. This allows Parus' clients to reduce the expense of providing a positive customer experience. Parus' clients appreciate the quick and easy implementations

of Parus' hosted solutions, while avoiding capital expenditures and hardware maintenance costs.

By way of an example, Parus' automated service, exclusively provided by Parus for National Retail Federation's 95th Convention & Expo BIG Show 2006, allowed attendees of the conference to retrieve valuable show information using speech recognition technology. By dialing a toll-free number or visiting a specially designed kiosk located in different locations on the show floor, attendees were able to use the following speech-enabled services: show times and registration information ("Simply say 'Show Times' to access BIG Show 2006 show times and registration information by date"); special event information and reminders; show host hotel information; and a private meeting scheduler.

Premiere Global Services

<http://www.premierglobal.com>

Service: Premiere's Interactive Notifications

(news - alert) Target markets for Premiere's Interactive Notifications include Fortune 500 service providers such as financial services and retail industries. Retail industry customers include large chains that have frequent buyer programs, store charge cards and other loyalty and retention programs. Retailers can use Interactive Notifications for order status or to keep customers updated on the order status from point of purchase to package arrival; inventory alerts to advise customers of out-of-stock issues or back-order changes, enabling them to modify orders, confirm deliveries or transfer to the call center; and warranty programs to market warranty renewals and other upsell offers.

Financial industry customers such as banks, brokerage services, credit card providers and insurance companies use the service in a multitude of ways. Banks can deliver interactive notifications for low balances, statement summaries, deposits, cleared checks, bill presentments, insufficient funds, mortgage and other loan activity and maturing investments. Brokerage services can improve attendance at seminars with interactive voice notifications that ask clients to confirm or reschedule, and can automatically deliver account maintenance calls providing the opportunity to connect to a live agent.

Credit card companies can automate fraud alerts to customers and immediately collect responses from any device; notify customers by voice or text when transactions post to their accounts and credit limits are about to be reached; alert customers when stored values reach low thresholds and drive them to a Web site or call center to replenish accounts; allow customers to activate their card quickly and efficiently; and follow up or replace direct mail with interactive communication and drive response rates of marketing campaigns. Finally, insurance companies can use the service to notify customers when insurance policy renewal payments are due and allow payment right on the call with credit card processing or a transfer to the call center; schedule claim and life insurance medical appointments with customers and provide automated reminders; keep customers updated at key milestones in the claims process; and collect missing information during the policy application process and provide status alerts

Pronexus

<http://www.pronexus.com>

Product: veoMobile

([news](#) - [alert](#)) veoMobile is a complete software/hardware platform for deploying speech applications. It is not a standalone application; rather, veoMobile provides a natural voice user interface (VUI) to virtually any existing enterprise software application. The platform encapsulates best practices for VUI design, critical for speech application success. With advanced automated speech recognition features including barge in, tunable grammars and DTMF fallback, veoMobile delivers 95 percent or more speech recognition accuracy.

veoMobile targets small to large organizations that can benefit from business process automation. It connects mobile workers or customers directly to enterprise business applications such as CRM, work order management or customer billing simply by placing a call from any phone. The VUI design framework comes with pre-packaged speech components and a powerful call flow development tool that enables Pronexus to quickly customize call flows to specific applications. Furthermore, a Microsoft .NET-centric architecture and modular functionality

ensures scalability and seamless integration to a customer's IT and business infrastructure. veoMobile supports both enterprise deployments as well as SaaS or hosted deployments, depending on the size and requirements of the organization.

RightNow Technologies, Inc.

<http://www.rightnow.com>

Product: RightNow Voice

Since RightNow's ([news](#) - [alert](#)) acquisition of voice automation innovator Convergent Voice in July of 2005, RightNow has been offering RightNow Voice, a natural-language search capability to integrate with common CRM platforms. The on-demand delivery aims to remove barriers to voice/speech adoption, with the choice of a packaged or hosted solution, rapid deployment, usage-based license terms and a managed services model. RightNow's voice-enabled CRM solutions integrate the full spectrum of voice-based automation functions into core customer service, sales and marketing processes, enabling organizations to streamline communications with customers, partners and internal processes — complementing the Web, e-mail and chat channels RightNow's solutions already support. It will also ensure a consistent message and overall customer experience regardless of the channel used.

The solution is comprised of eight modules, including voice access to the knowledge base, voice incident management system, location finder, order status, repair tracking, refund status password reset and customer surveys. Certain RightNow clients are already in full production with these modules and are currently realizing significant cost savings and customer satisfaction improvements.

Syntellect

<http://www.syntellect.com>

Product: Continuum Solution Modules

([news](#) - [alert](#)) Continuum Self-Service has empowered clients to serve a broader customer base by providing timely, accurate information to customers and maintaining efficient contact center operations. By supporting the latest advances in speech recognition and text-to-speech technology and providing the recognition accuracy, scalability and robustness required to deploy successful natural lan-

guage and large vocabulary speech applications, Continuum has helped to manage customer relations at the most critical contact points.

Continuum is offered in a "plug and play" modular format so users can purchase and use what they need today, while ensuring the ability to add new communication channels in the future, both for self-service and live-assistance. The core offering exhibits significant out-of-the-box advantages such as the ability to automatically capture and pass both customer-specific navigation and transactional data during a self-service inquiry to the agent desktop should a customer need to talk with an agent. Continuum delivers a future-proof, state-of-the-art solutions suite on an open platform supporting standards like VoiceXML and VoIP, and is positioned for emerging standards like CCXML and MRCP.

Utopy

<http://www.utopy.com>

Product: Utopy SpeechMiner

([news](#) - [alert](#)) SpeechMiner identifies, evaluates and catalogs events within recorded person-to-person conversations, providing reports that categorize the content of customer conversations for contact center managers, quality monitoring groups, sales, marketing and business unit managers. Version 3.5 introduces Deliberate Listening technology that captures true business intelligence from every customer conversation with a high level of precision. With a new understanding of why a customer is calling, companies can now capture, catalog and evaluate such information for competitive intelligence, marketing campaign effectiveness, complaints, operational inefficiencies and more. One Utopy customer was able to course-correct and increase upsell efforts by 400 percent within three weeks, leading to a 91 percent increase in sales volume.

The new version includes some enhanced features. The company has improved the solution's ability to accurately capture the meaning of conversations and correctly categorize calls; upgraded SpeechMiner's "Enterprise Ready" features so that it easily supports complex, multi-divisional solutions across wide-area enterprises; enhanced SMART, the solution's topic and management software, in terms of ease-of-use and features, allowing non-engineers to successfully implement pow-

erful speech analytics solutions; and finally made pre-packaged reports available in Microsoft Reporting Services, allowing customers full access to the SQL database to create custom reports and link to their business intelligence solutions.

Verint Systems

<http://www.verint.com>

Product: ULTRA Analytics Suite

([news](#) - [alert](#)) The ULTRA Analytics Suite is a unified platform for contact center recording and performance analytics. ULTRA Analytics is used by contact center executives at Fortune 1000 companies who oversee multisite call centers with a minimum of 150 agents. ULTRA Analytics is a sophisticated performance management tool designed to provide greater operational visibility to contact center managers and high-level customer relations executives. In addition, sales and marketing managers leverage the data collected by ULTRA to identify industry/customer trends and make critical business decisions.

Unlike most other solutions in the market today, ULTRA Analytics' powerful root cause analysis is designed to help enterprises understand why customers are calling and take effective action to better address their needs. This actionable intelligence supports clients' efforts to maximize customer loyalty and improve the profitability of their customer-focused operations. Verint's ULTRA Analytics suite drives total quality by enabling organizations of all sizes to cost-effectively capture all customer interactions and extract actionable intelligence from telephone, voice-over-IP, e-mail or chat. In addition, ULTRA provides easy access to all customer data via its Web-based desktop portal. ULTRA goes beyond traditional performance management and workforce optimization tools, enabling business to not only understand what is happening in their operations, but also identify the underlying causes.

VoiceGenie

<http://www.voicegenie.com>

Product: VoiceGenie IVR software platforms

([news](#) - [alert](#)) VoiceGenie software powers some of the largest IVR deployments in the world. The company's customers include organizations such as Scotiabank, Sony, AIG, AT&T, Air Canada, Bank of New York, Bell Canada, Citibank,

Eastman Chemical, France Telecom, Hertz Germany, India Times, Merck, Motorola, Netflix, New York Daily News, SCANA, Suncoast Media, Ticketmaster, TV Guide, Tyco, Verizon and others.

VoiceGenie IVR software platforms provide a flexible open standards infrastructure for supporting next-generation speech-enabled contact centers. The platform is renowned for excellence in VoiceXML and was the first to support the VoiceXML 2.0 and 2.1 standards. Furthermore, the platform is the only VoiceXML platform to provide Media Resource Control Protocol (MRCP) and Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) proxies, supporting the deployment of thousands of ports in highly-available, distributed architectures.

Said one customer, "VoiceGenie's robust and efficient architecture, low cost and ease of implementation have been a cornerstone to the success of our speech recognition services, which deliver new efficiencies for our customers." Another said, "We selected VoiceGenie after a thorough evaluation of all certified VoiceXML platform vendors. VoiceGenie's adherence to open standards-based technologies enables us to launch new and compelling services to our subscribers while leveraging our existing investments."

Voxeo

<http://www.voxeo.com>

Product: Prophecy

Voxeo's ([news](#) - [alert](#)) Prophecy was designed to eliminate traditional barriers to enterprise speech deployment by bundling a full-featured telephony platform with speech recognition and synthesis at less than one-fifth the cost of previous offerings. Prophecy is a premium speech platform, a versatile voice-over-IP (VoIP) platform and an interactive voice response (IVR) platform, all rolled into a single software download. With an abundance of telephony features, Prophecy also aims to deliver greater functionality than other products by breaking through traditional industry barriers and providing high-quality speech recognition and speech synthesis capabilities at no additional cost, enabling developers to more easily and cost-effectively add speech functionality to telephony applications.

The company's goal was to develop a solution that is simple enough to run on a laptop, yet scalable enough to run thou-

sands of ports in a carrier-class network. In addition, Prophecy avoids the vendor lock-in forced by other proprietary platforms by employing the industry's first and only Voice Extensible Markup Language (VoiceXML) browser interface that can pass 100 percent of the standard's mandatory and optional compliance tests. Prophecy leverages the Call Control Extensible Markup Language (CCXML) standard to provide the call management, routing and conferencing capabilities that VoiceXML alone lacks.

Other features include call conferencing, call recording, comprehensive SIP-based VoIP telephony support, a built-in soft phone, the SQLite database engine, and a Web server supporting PHP 5.1 and Java/JSP, all in a single 80 megabyte download with zero configuration requirements.

Witness Systems

<http://www.witness.com>

Product: Impact 360 Speech Analytics

([news](#) - [alert](#)) Impact 360 Speech Analytics plays a strategic role in the customer interaction centers of Global 2000, small and medium-sized businesses worldwide, as well as in IP telephony, back-office environments and throughout the extended enterprise, including branch offices. Impact 360 Speech Analytics is part of the overall Impact 360 workforce optimization solution from Witness Systems. Impact 360 represents a complete synergistic solution for workforce management, quality monitoring/full-time recording, e-learning and performance management.

Unique features include data mining to enable call centers to graphically display patterns and trends from selected conversation transcripts; extensive search capabilities including simple comparison, Boolean comparison, word prefix comparison and inflectional and proximity comparisons that can be used individually or in combination; the ability to gain greater insight into the patterns and types of interactions being handled, enabling centers to determine their root cause and take action; and improved market analysis to produce rich data for sales, marketing and operations, helping customers make strategic business decisions. [CIS](#)

Nuasis NuContact Center 3.0

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 Mountain View, CA 94041
 Ph: 650-318-2200

*By Tom Keating, CTO and
 Executive Technology Editor, TMC*

Not very long ago, call center routing was generally performed with PBXs and ACDs, plus kludgy CTI integration and equally complex integration with other applications. Now that **VoIP (define - news - alert)** offers customer interaction centers the ability to move voice over a data network, **Nuasis Corp. (news - alert)** has introduced a software model that changes the very nature of routing technology. Instead of routing voice over a switch, the Nuasis software sits on standard servers independent of the PBX. The company's newly launched NuContact Center 3.0 solution consolidates legacy ACD, e-mail and Web systems, leveraging SOAP, ODBC/JDBC, SIP, XML, VoiceXML and CTI. NuContact Center 3.0 utilizes standard servers using the Linux operating system and an Oracle back-end database. Because it is software based on open standards with easy interconnectivity between the "application pieces," no CTI hardware or middleware is required. This approach is desirable because it reduces both the complexity and cost of deployment.

With the availability of NuContact Center 3.0 software, agents can be located anywhere in the world, and with higher system scalability. NuContact Center 3.0 supports the use of any phone device (analog, IP phone, PC phone) for remote or home-based agent operations. This capability enables customers to quickly address rapidly changing call center staffing requirements. Customers can deploy agents quickly and simply by downloading the NuContact Center desktop software

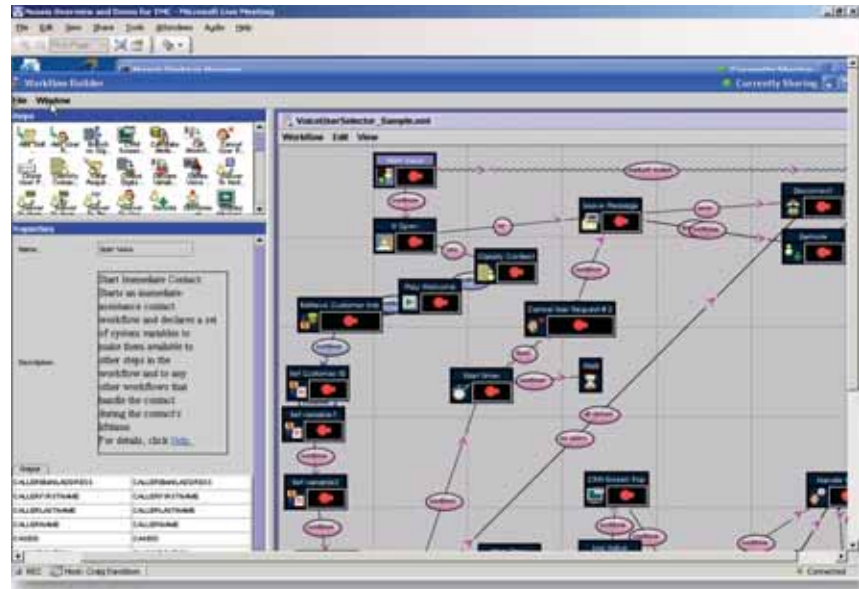


Figure 1. Workflow graphical editor. The NuContact Center workflow design tool is an object-oriented, drag-and-drop interface that allows users to easily build routing plans. The same tool is used to build routing plans for phone calls, e-mail or Web chat sessions.

over the Internet and signing onto the system from any available phone set.

The latest version of the solution supports 5,000 named agents. Up to 1,000 concurrent agents can be logged in to the system, doubling the capacity over the previous release of the solution. NuContact Center 3.0 features a workflow engine (see Figure 1) with a graphical, icon-driven development interface that supports the creation of sophisticated routing algorithms that can factor in business values, call center metrics and customer data to determine best routing decisions.

Nuasis uses Audiocodes hardware for the voice gateway, loaded onto Dell servers. This can be a set of voice gateway servers at a centralized location or distributed in a hub-and-node fashion for more redundancy, depending on a contact center's needs. Nuasis chose Audiocodes hardware because it enabled them to program some admirable scalability and reliability tricks by loading special software onto the Audiocodes card to provide system reliability as well as call connection and failover functionality. In fact, unlike a

standard Cisco or Audiocodes gateway, Nuasis monitors the voice connection and, if an interruption is detected, they are able to hold that call, play a courtesy message and seamlessly re-route the call, along with the already-collected screen-pop customer information, to the next available best-skilled agent.

According to Nuasis, "The NuContact Center has been designed with multiple levels of capabilities to assure system availability in the event of either of these disaster recovery scenarios. Unlike other systems, the NuContact Center includes a patent-pending capability that automatically redirects contacts to other sites in the event of a localized network outage. By design, the NuContact Center has been engineered to deliver 100 percent of calls to live agents in the event of a system or network outage without dropping the contact." (Nuasis and TMC recently teamed to present a Webinar entitled, "A New Look At Disaster Recovery For The Call Center," which may be accessed in the archives at <http://www.tmcnet.com/274.1>).

NuContact Center has an impressive set of built-in features, including vari-

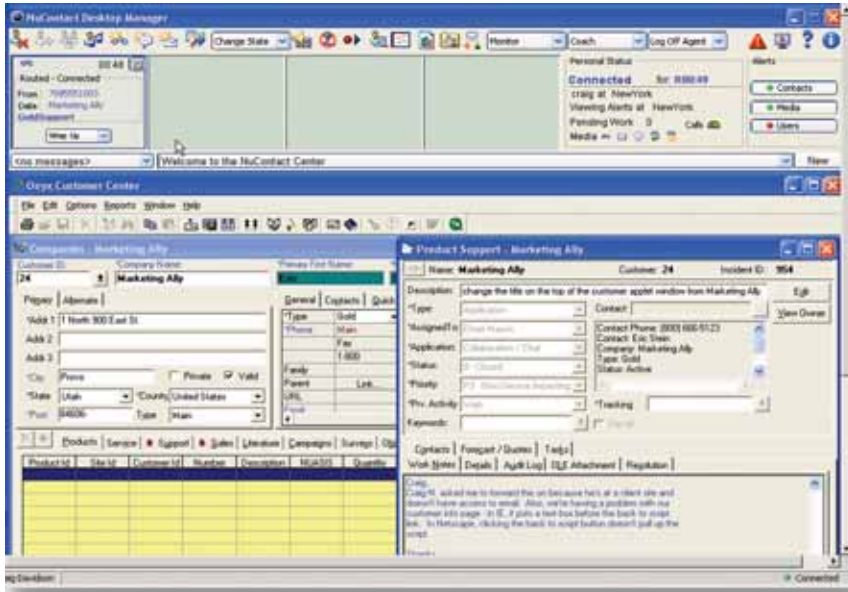


Figure 2. NuContact Desktop Manager main agent screen. The NuContact Center uses a single multimedia agent desktop for responding to phone calls, e-mail and Web chat sessions. As part of the desktop, the system includes Shutters — a windows management feature that automatically opens and closes desktop applications required during a call.

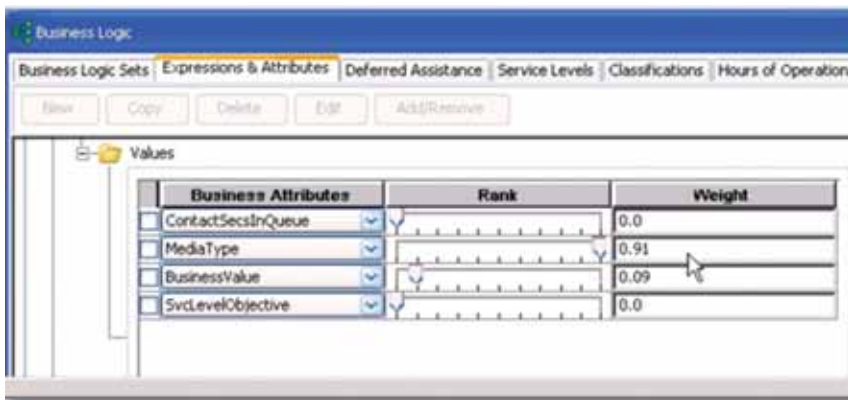


Figure 3. Defining business rules for handling media types. The NuContact Center allows customers to define business rules used to determine routing decisions and queue priorities. Weighted averages are assigned to these business rules and can be adjusted dynamically, on-the-fly, to address real-time changes in call/contact volumes.

ous call recording methods — on-demand recording, emergency recording, workflow-based Nth call recording, 100 percent recording of all calls, and more. It also features an auto-attendant and IVR prompting with digit collection, playback and database access. Users have the ability to monitor voice and Web collaboration sessions, and can coach agents during those sessions. The ability to “barge in” to an existing voice or Web collaboration session is also available. Call center

supervisors are provided with a full set of management features available for monitoring remote agents, viewing real-time statistics and reporting on remote agent status and performance.

Nuasis provides tight integration with all the major CRM players, and offers users the ability to screen pop their CRM application window directly beneath the NuContact Desktop Manager, which is NuContact Center’s main call center agent interface for taking calls, e-mail and collaboration ses-

sions; viewing statistics, and more (see Figure 2). When the call ends, the CRM application will automatically minimize. Nuasis calls this their “Shutters” windowing feature, and it will also automatically open and minimize any desktop application required for the call. For instance, if an agent is working in e-mail and an incoming call arrives, the application will automatically minimize the e-mail window and bring the call to the forefront along with the CRM application, sized perfectly to the same window configuration as the NuContact Desktop Manager.

One really powerful feature included with NuContact Center 3.0 is the solution’s ability to define business rules that affect a center’s call handling. For instance, as shown in Figure 3, NuContact Center allows users to apply weighted values to various business parameters such as media type (e-mail, fax, chat, phone), time the caller is in queue, service-level objective, and the business value or importance of the customer. As a result, users can adjust the weighting of the business values on-the-fly so that higher-tier customers effectively “jump” ahead in the queue. These quick adjustments can be done without changing routing workflows.

The platform features extensive system logs for tracking customer and agent activities, outstanding callbacks, etc. In a similar manner, it features “cradle-to-grave” Web-based report publishing which leverages Crystal Web Author for the publication of customized reports. The Nuasis NuContact Center 3.0 has an impressive array of features that marries the best of the call center world (ACD, IVR, CTI, skills-based routing) with the best of the VoIP world (IP phones, soft phones, remote IP agent capabilities, multimedia, multi-site networking and conditional routing based on real-time analytics). This combination, along with support for industry standards, is the true power behind Nuasis NuContact Center, and it will enable this platform to evolve and add more powerful functionality with tight integration to both business processes and agent productivity. **CIS**

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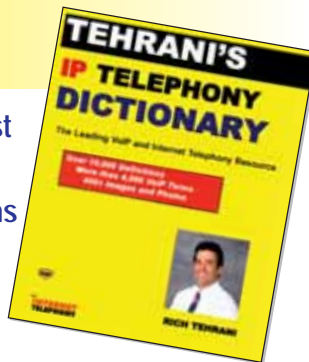
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By Tracey E. Schelmetic
Editorial Director, Customer Inter@ction Solutions

A Dashboard! My Call Center Kingdom For A Dashboard!

I love dashboards. Not the kind you have in your car, although I like those, too. I mean the kind that come with certain contact center software solutions, so you can see graphically where you are: calls in queue, how long the next customer in queue has been waiting, queue imbalances, agents online, agent call times, number of sales made. The first thing I ask many call center solutions providers, with child-like eagerness is, “Do you have dashboards?” (I promise, even if you don’t, I still pay attention at your briefings.)

I also like real-time alerts that are based on up-to-the-minute contact center intelligence. The kind of notifications that tell a supervisor that the threshold of the acceptable number of callers in queue has been breached, so therefore it’s time to open the window and yell to agents taking a smoke break on the sidewalk downstairs that they’d better get inside and in queue, pronto.

Modern contact center technologies that leverage real-time intelligence can produce dashboards and alerts that allow agents and supervisors to make decisions and effect changes on-the-fly, improving the customer experience immediately. Not very long ago, this information was generated at the end of the day, or worse, at the end of the week or month, so supervisors were limited to determining where the problems were...not where they are at the moment. Beyond that, it generally wasn’t the supervisor herself who discovered the problem, it was usually a QA worker who found the problem, informed his boss, who informed her boss...and the supervisor found out about the problem only after being called onto the carpet. Problems undetected are problems that go unchecked and that, in turn, create bigger problems, as anyone who has ever missed a few oil changes knows.

The first companies to begin using dashboards and real-time alerts in their products realized how inefficient it was for problem detection to reside at the top of the pyramid, at which time it had to trickle downwards throughout the organization, becoming diluted and confused along the way. By the time the call center was able to put fixes in place, there were new problems heading upstream, passing the resolutions to previous problems on their way down. By giving managers, supervisors and even agents the ability to quickly spot changes and inefficiencies, newer contact center solutions enable front-line workers to find and diagnose issues and implement changes before problems grow beyond the bud stage. When contact center employees can “take ownership” of small crises before they become big and scary, they have a vested interest in curing what ails the contact center before the malady

becomes fatal. In essence, everybody in the call center becomes a QA officer.

I find myself wishing I had dashboards and instant notifications. Though they really don’t apply to my job, it would be nice to have them, anyway. To suddenly get a screen pop that says, “Tracey, you are so behind on writing copy for the September issue, it is suggested that you not even stop to eat until dinnertime next Tuesday in order to make the deadline” would be massively helpful. As would a dashboard that showed me, at a glance, not only how many unread proposals were sitting in my inbox, but the anxiety level of those whose proposals I haven’t yet evaluated, and the estimated number of follow-up e-mails those delays were likely to generate.

Even beyond work, imagine how useful personal dashboards and notifications could be. Think how they could lead to relationship harmony: you might get a notification that indicates, “Alert! Spouse has cooked the last 11 dinners in a row,” plus a dashboard that indicates that spouse’s annoyance level was at 72 percent and rising; only three points away from entering the critical “Spousal Irritation Red Zone.”

Or perhaps an alert to inform me, “Have not phoned mother in 17 days. Repeat: No maternal contact since March 12th.” The dashboard might inform me that the Maternal Indignation Meter had just surpassed the “Cold Shoulder” mark and was rapidly moving through the “I Gave Birth To You In Pain And Suffering” zone, soon to pass the dreaded “Insincere Threats of Disinheritance” red line. [Editor’s note: This is just a “what if” scenario, let concerned readers be assured I spoke with my mother yesterday. Or the day before. I forget.]

But until some enterprising inventor can think of a realistic way to work dashboards and notifications into our personal lives, we’ll spend our time admiring the ones that can help turn contact centers from anecdotal “what was” entities into “right now” resources. **CIS**

The author may be contacted at tschelmetic@tmcnet.com, unless you are her mother, in which case, she’ll call you next week.



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