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

Enhanced Performance In CRM And Customer Interaction Through Analytics And Workforce Management

People often ask me, "How can you write on so many diverse topics such as advanced technology, CRM, hiring and training, IP contact center, advanced speech technology, marketing, positioning and differentiation, integrated marketing and cutting-edge technology on performance enhancement, to name a few?" I say, "If you pioneered the concept of telemarketing, contact center, CRM center and promoted the hell out of the industry for the last 25 years, and if you actually and genuinely care about the industry and want to write authoritative articles about the industry, then it shouldn't be that difficult!"

Business Performance Enhancement

In focus today is the **ALL IMPORTANT** topic of performance enhancement, which comes under the umbrella of workforce management.

To be sure, the modern technology available today for contact center/CRM business performance management is extremely complex. Unless you have a solid technical and industry background, you will have difficulty understanding the complex new technology concepts. Fortunately, the vendors involved understand that the only way to market their high-tech product is via "Marketing Through Education." And frankly, there is NO other way. So please don't look for short cuts!

Going forward, workforce management and performance enhancement will be the ultimate differentiators. Sophisticated and truly unparalleled performance enhancements and other major contributions to the contact/CRM center are so enormous that no company can exist without them!!

Cutting-edge technology in call center business performance management and analytics have truly revolutionized workforce management and workforce optimization.

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contact/CRM center are so enormous that no company can exist without them!!

I recently had the pleasure of attending a presentation by John Kaiser, Vice President of Contact Center and Enterprise at NICE Systems, Inc., on contact center business performance management. Needless to say, I was extremely impressed with the depth of this advanced technology, including analytics, and the vitally important contributions that these cutting-edge technologies can provide to any enterprise.

Research Led To Confusion

In preparation for this editorial, I studied the online information from all vendors mentioned in this outlook from the standpoint of a buyer. Frankly, while I found the information useful, I was at times confused when it came to buying "the right workforce management system." That is why I asked our respected colleague, John Kaiser, Vice President of NICE Systems, to write the following sidebar called, "Demystifying Contact Center Business Performance Management."

For more information about workforce management solutions or to contact the companies listed on Table 1, please e-mail cisinfo@tmcnet.com.

Sidebar

Demystifying Contact Center Business Performance Management

By John Kaiser, Vice President of Contact Center and Enterprise, NICE Systems



Gone are the days of operating centers by the seat of your pants using a handful of ACD reports telling you how long customers waited on hold and how many calls were abandoned.

Successful contact center business management today requires a higher level of sophistication, more advanced methodologies as well as appropriate software tools. It is no longer enough to just manage the contact center or its workforce. Today's complexities call for paying attention to the entire set of business operations within the center as well as to customer issues and opportunities.

Make no mistake, the stakes are very high. As the frontline for customer communications, the contact center can and does play a critical role in the overall success of the business, and it deserves an appropriate level of managerial attention as well as investment in the proper tools. What does it take to do this?

Key Performance Indicators

First and perhaps most important is to establish a link between corporate goals and those of the contact center. If one of the company's goals is to increase revenue per customer then an appropriate upsell strategy should be put in place. If reducing customer churn is the corporate goal, then a similar strategy should be implemented.

To be effective, these strategies must be comprehensive. They must include measurable and attainable goals, appropriate training programs as well as internal processes and procedures that allow agents to do what they need to do for your customers.

Corporate goals integrated with the contact center can be reflected in key performance indicators (KPIs). KPIs help the organization define and measure their progress. Establishing the right KPIs requires analysis of the business strategy, setting the appropriate goals and getting agreement from the various stakeholders as to how those goals will be met.

Today's contact center business performance management software provides easy-to-use dashboards targeted toward specific users based on their job functions. Each dashboard, whether it is for a supervisor in the contact center or a business analyst elsewhere in the enterprise, delivers the right information, at the right time, in a format that allows that person to perform at a higher level. By consolidating information from various sources, combining the data into KPIs and presenting the information appropriately, these solutions help improve productivity, increase revenue, raise customer satisfaction,

Sidebar Continued on page 6



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Workforce Management Vendors

Speaking of vendors, fortunately, there are several major providers of workforce management products and services. Most offer a wide array of products, although some appear to have a slightly different approach to the general topic of performance enhancement and workforce management.

The following companies offer workforce management solutions to the call/CRM center marketplace.

For more information about workforce management solutions or to contact these companies, please e-mail cisinfo@tmcnet.com.

Table 1.

Workforce Management Companies

- Amcat
- Aspect Software
- BCE Elix
- Calabrio (now Spanlink Communications Inc.)
- CH Consulting
- Envision Inc.
- Fused Solutions
- Genesys Telecommunications Laboratories, Inc.
- GMT Corp.
- IEX Corp. (a NICE Systems company)
- Informiam
- Interactive Intelligence
- InVision Software AG
- Kronos
- Latigent, LLC
- Left Bank Solutions, Inc.
- NICE Systems
- Opus Group (a Verint company)
- Performix Technologies
- Solution Made Easy (a partnership between Pipkins, Voice Print, Syntora and Amae Software Inc.)
- Salesnet, Inc.
- Sendia Corp.
- Symon Communications
- Texas Digital
- Tigerpaw Software
- Verint Systems
- Witness Systems

As always, I welcome your comments. Please e-mail them to me at ntehrani@tmcnet.com. **CIS**

reduce agent and customer turnover while creating an important link between a contact center's performance and the corporate goals.

Insight From Customer Interactions

To further improve contact center and overall business performance, it is necessary to find new sources of customer insight. These insights can be used to identify areas of customer pain as well as opportunity. Using these data allows you to respond faster and more appropriately to solve customer issues and detect trends much sooner than in the past. This way you can tailor programs more closely to actual customer demands.

Recent and ongoing developments in multimedia analytics not only make this easier to do but open new avenues for improvement that never existed before. Transactional analytics have been around for years and can offer excellent ways to improve performance and begin to predict future trends. Transactions are only part of picture, however.

Interactions between agents and customers represent the "rest of the story." Through the use of tools like speech analytics and word spotting, we can learn what customers are really thinking and doing. We know when they mention competitors' names, when they are upset, when they've been transferred too many times, put on hold too long and when the agent and the customer "talk over" each other.

These important insights derived from the customer interactions are invaluable — not only to contact center management but to others across the enterprise. Finance can learn more about why customers are not paying their bills. Marketing will gain a better understanding of how customers respond to their campaigns. IT and operations can learn ways to improve processes and systems. Sales can better understand who they're competing against.

As these analytical tools have gotten more sophisticated, we can "see" what agents do on screen within the various applications they use while servicing customers. This helps us further understand what customers want and need. For example, when we see agents checking the remaining time on a contract, we know they are at risk of churn. When we see agents "stumbling around" their desktop, we know there is a need for additional training. Last but not least, we can also extract data from these applications such as customer numbers, and use the information for further analysis or to capture it for later use.

These are only a few of the many initiatives that can be taken as you strive to make the contact center a more strategic part of the organization. With contact center business performance management technology, you'll begin to improve your entire business. **CIS**

John Kaiser is the Vice President of Contact Center and Enterprise at NICE Systems Inc., (news - alert) a global provider of quality monitoring, liability recording and interaction analytics solutions. NICE recently acquired workforce management supplier IEX Corp. and performance management industry player Performix Technologies. He can be reached at john.kaiser@nice.com.

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16 Large Outsourcer Improves Customer Response Time And Reduces Costs Using IP-Based Communications Application Software Suite

By Interactive Intelligence Inc.

Alta Resources cites faster customer response time and reduced costs among the primary benefits of CIC. For instance, after deploying CIC, the company won a major client contract to create a complex IVR application.

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By Shelby Test-Peralta, StarTek, Inc.

One of the major challenges for contact center managers is retaining employees. Not only is it costly to lose an agent — replacement can cost between \$5,000 and \$17,000 — employee turnover can have a negative impact on overall contact center performance, customer satisfaction and employee morale.



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WORKFORCE OPTIMIZATION

38 Sales Force Automation Implementation Challenges

By Bill Wheeler, Avidian Technologies

Resistance to change is the biggest challenge in implementing new sales software or improvement programs. It can be extremely difficult for people to change their habits and routines. Typically, about 20 percent of sales people push back hard, they may actually quit their job if forced into change they do not want. The majority of sales people (about 60 percent) will resist the change, but slowly accept it over time. The remaining 20 percent are ready for change and are often willing participants in the process.

MANAGEMENT SCOPE

44 Key Considerations In Post-Interaction Surveying: Which Data Collection Channel Is Right For You?

By Mike Cholak, Convergys

It is a common question in marketing research: "Which data collection channel is right for my program? Telephone, Web or IVR?" If you are talking about a contact center post-interaction survey, the answer may not be a simple one-size-fits-all solution. Each data collection channel has its own pros and cons.



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But be warned...you won't want to give it back.



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By David Sims, TMCnet Contributing Editor

Naturally prisoners, virtual or actual, are not the most highly motivated, productive employees one can have. However, it's not difficult to imagine that absenteeism and turnover are not the problems among actual prisoners that they can be among the virtual variety.

TMC LABS

52 TMC Labs Innovation Awards, Part II

The TMC Labs Innovation Awards are now in their seventh year, and still TMC Labs is amazed at the continual innovation being brought to market in the contact center space to improve training, increase morale, reduce turnover, increase efficiency and reduce infrastructure software and hardware costs. The TMC Labs Innovation Award's sole purpose is to distinguish products and services that have unique features and that often help to carve out a new market niche or start a trend.

TMCNET.COM ONLINE EXCLUSIVES



Noise Monitoring A Necessity To Prevent Hearing Loss Among Agents

By Susan J. Campbell, TMCnet Contributing Editor

In the past, it was believed that hearing damage or loss was not an inherent risk for call center agents as they were not sustaining long periods of high decibel sound through their headphones. Research from specific European studies indicated otherwise and thus the Health and Safety Organization initiated a drive to enforce standards in the work environment to protect the hearing of employees.

Read the full article at <http://www.tmcnet.com/361.1>

Nuance's Jeff Foley On Call Steering

By Stefania Viscusi, TMCnet Assistant Editor

Call Steering is unique because unlike systems of the past, it is able to use the information a caller speaks and intelligently route them instead of forcing callers to choose how to categorize their problem. For example, a caller could say, "I have a, uh, billing question," or "Yeah, can you tell me, um... when I made my last payment?" and the system will accurately route the caller.

Read the full article at <http://www.tmcnet.com/362.1>

Our 100th Issue Of IP Communications Thought Leadership

By Rich Tehrani, President and Editor-in-Chief

100 issues — wow — it has been an amazing ride. If you can believe it, the magnitude of this issue didn't hit me until I sat down and started to write this column. As many of you know, in 1997 when we decided to launch a magazine titled INTERNET TELEPHONY, most people thought we were crazy.

Read the full article at <http://www.tmcnet.com/363.1>

UC Business Migration Drivers Versus IT Implementation Obstacles

By Art Rosenberg, TMCnet Contributing Editor

End users could care less about what IT worries about, as long as they get what they need or want from the technology to do their jobs more easily and efficiently. On the other hand, IT management is charged with delivering the technology that end users need and want. Because there is so much "business process" that can now be automated and improved by computer software, IT management is being admonished to "align" themselves with "business units" in order to understand what those end users need and want. My question is, exactly how are they really doing that?

Read the full article at <http://www.tmcnet.com/364.1>

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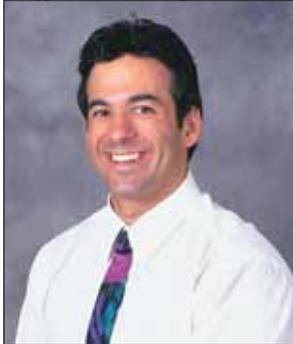
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By: Rich Tehrani,
Group Publisher, Group Editor-in-Chief,
Technology Marketing Corporation

Good Customer Service For Dummies?

Lessons From Lewis Black, Richard Branson And A No-Fog Hotel Mirror

By way of an advance explanation, let me say that this column will depart from my usual piece; I found inspiration this month not only from the contact center industry, but from another publication. I had never before read *Fast Company* Magazine and may never have started if I didn't come across an issue of the publication featuring comedian Lewis Black on the cover. If you aren't familiar with Black, he is a comedian who spends much of his time being angry and not censoring his true feelings — including profanity, which he spews out at a rapid clip. I find him funny. He makes a lot of great points and seems to be able to take ordinary material and deliver it in such a way that his audience invariably winds up in stitches.

As I perused the September 2006 issue of *Fast Company*, I noticed there were a few customer service articles. Even better, the Lewis Black article was devoted to customer service. I found the quantity of customer service articles interesting, as the issue also covered topics such as fluorescent light bulbs. Still, the content was well written, and I will likely pick up more copies of the magazine in the future.

For now, I thought I would share some highlights of the various articles

Branson, the colorful CEO of Britain's Virgin Group, which owns Virgin Atlantic Airlines and Virgin Records, went into business not to make a lot of money, but instead because his experiences as a customer were dire and he wanted to launch businesses he and his friends would enjoy patronizing.

For example, he once had the experience of wanting to speak to a pretty girl on a flight, but was stuck in his seat until the plane landed. This was the inspiration for the stand-up bars on many Virgin Atlantic flights. Not all his decisions were based on his own desires as a customer, however. It was his wife's manicurist who suggested offering nail treatments and massages on flights. Branson didn't perform any market research, he merely decided that this was a good idea, and now there are 700 therapists on the Virgin Atlantic staff. Ironically, I am writing this column on a non-Virgin flight and have nagging back pain. What I wouldn't give to have one of those therapists on this plane!

The telecom industry has also upset Black, as he once racked up a \$1,500 phone bill because his carrier didn't consider Scandinavia to be in Europe.

with you. The first was titled "The Enlightenment of Richard Branson" (<http://www.tmcnet.com/359.1>). The article's most interesting theme was that

Part of the irony in Virgin Atlantic's ascent to greatness is that when Branson wanted to equip his existing airplanes with \$8 million in built-in seat TV screens so passengers could watch whatever programming they wanted, he found that banks would not loan him the money for this endeavor. Instead, Branson got the banks to loan Virgin \$2 billion dollars for a fleet of brand new planes — with the screens included!

The moral of Branson's story is simple. As he puts it, "Don't rip people off and they'll happily stay your customer." One final word of advice from Branson: "Take a look at your business and ask yourself, 'Is this how I would want to be treated if I were a customer?'"

Another great customer service success story highlighted by *Fast Company* is that of the Mandarin Oriental Hotel and, specifically, the branch in Manhattan that I was lucky enough to visit recently when I covered a salesforce.com event.

What makes the hotel so special is the way it treats customers. "A thousand little details delivered through a combination of high tech and high pamper," according to company CEO Wolfgang Hultner.

You want examples? How about a distributed antenna system in the building so cell phone calls aren't dropped? A heated mirror that doesn't fog up when you shower? The temperature of the room is preset to your precise preference before you arrive, and the temperature in your local ZIP code is displayed on the telephone in the room.

What sets the service apart, though, is what the company does on the rare occasions when they do make a mistake — they make up for it by overcompensating. When an occasional error occurs, a message goes out over the hotel's rapid response system, apologies are quickly sent and the problem is corrected — and then some.

Employees are paid based on the quality of their service, a refreshing detail in the hotel business. There is more, of course, but if you want all the juicy details you should read the *Fast Company* article for yourself (<http://www.tmcnet.com/358.1>).

Move Over, Skills-Based Call Routing

Technologies come and go and, for the most part, skills-based routing is a technology that has changed little over the decades. The concept is simple — match the type of caller to the person with the needed skills to service that caller, such as language, product knowledge or a knack for salvaging troubled customer relationships or soothing irate callers.

It may be that the time has come for skills-based routing to share the spotlight. Over the last half decade, the concept of using analytics in call centers and CRM systems has become more popular and prevalent. Companies that deal with massive numbers of customers have so much data to mine through, it seems ridiculous not to mine that information while looking for trends that can help companies sell more effectively.

Recently, I met with Assurant Solutions (<http://www.assurantsolutions.com/targsols.html>), a company that has developed a new way of connecting customers and agents. The company, a division of Assurant, a multibillion-dollar insurance company, is well known in both the financial call center business and the payment protection market. Payment protection programs are associated with credit card accounts, installment loans, lines of credit and mortgages. Under the terms and conditions of a debt protection agreement, the monthly interest due from a customer may be waived or the monthly payments may be paid for a covered life event, such as disability, unemployment or family leave. Most often, in the case of the death of a covered account holder, the debt is extinguished.

As time went on, the company started to notice they were able to conduct more effective campaigns if they matched customers carefully with customer service agents or sales people.

Using analytics, the company is able to determine the best agent for the call — not only on basic skills, but on a host of other factors that increase the likelihood of the customer buying from the agent. I know it sounds a bit like magic, but bear with me — this could become a call center breakthrough if it can be duplicated often enough. In fact, the company's product, aptly named Targeted Solution, may end up making a far greater impact than you might think. Assurant Solutions told me that when the system is in operation, agent retention increases. Matched with the kinds of customers with whom they are more likely to experience success, agents' performance levels improve, and thus their job satisfaction.

The company has scores of mathematicians and scientists working on this project, and some of their findings are counter to general industry practices in most call centers. For example, they have found the learning curve for new agents does not increase as much depending on time as it depends on how successful the agent is. Of course, we all know confidence inspires salespeople and sales build confidence, but most centers look at time on the phone as the primary deterministic factor in agent experience.

Targeted Solution ties into customer databases and the workforce management system and continually adjusts, allowing, for example, an agent who is having a bad week to service a type of customer who may be different than that agent's normal ideal customer.

Stop and think for a moment and ask yourself what type of data would be useful in matching callers and agents. The answer I received was enlightening. Assurant Solutions develops a demographic and psychographic profile of each customer with data points like when the customer last paid and details from the customer's purchase history. The company develops a profile based on 27 "dimensions" of a customer. Targeted Solutions goes even further with agents, using 150 "dimensions" or data factors. It was at this point in the briefing that

Now for the icing on the cake — the interview with Lewis Black (<http://www.tmcnet.com/360.1>). Black, as I mentioned earlier, gets riled up so easily that many readers may dismiss his ranting as hype, failing to notice by their own experience that customer service is indeed getting worse. Thankfully, people like Black do the noticing for us. Lewis doesn't miss a

trick. He details his aggravation at not being able to get a live operator to answer the phone when he calls directory assistance. He observes that, from the time he was born, American businesses have been so focused on the bottom line that they have forgotten to think about service as service.

Black is no fan of the airline industry, either. He has experienced cancelled



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I thought about the matchmaking company eHarmony, which claims to use a sort of personality factor matrix to find compatible couples. The process, if not similar, is somewhat analogous.

In determining some data points, I surmised that a compulsive person may always pay his or her bill immediately, while a procrastinator would most likely pay at the last minute. Other factors include things such as ZIP code to determine what type of environment a customer lives in, as well as details such as the building floor a customer lives in a high rise. Where people live certainly gives clues as to their financial status — at least in general. I imagine some agents are perhaps more effective when speaking to customers of higher income; another agent may be more effective at communicating with lower-income callers. These are just a few examples.

According to the company, while “perfect matching” is important, more critical are the business factors such as revenue and persistency. They look at driving more revenue to a business in a more efficient matter. All factors are weighted and they have the ability to “turn the knobs,” so to speak, to adjust. Some reps are better at selling \$500 customers while some are better at selling \$50 customers. Their success has been more focused on retaining/selling/collecting the most revenue and achieving the most revenue out of campaigns by aligning customers to agents who are best at retaining, selling or collecting specific revenue targets.

Targeted Solutions offers three modules: Retention, Sales and Collection. The system is configurable, allowing a user to decide they are more interested in customer retention, for example, than maximizing initial revenue generation.

Assurant Solutions informed me that within a 12 month Targeted Solutions campaign, a client achieved 67 percent “lift” over baseline in rev-

flights after arriving at the airport at 7:00 am and asked for a reason for the cancellation. Instead of honesty, he encounters unapologetic lies. He wonders why the airline doesn't just tell the truth: the flight wasn't full enough to take off.

The telecom industry has also upset Black, as he once racked up a \$1,500 phone bill because his carrier didn't consider Scandinavia to be in Europe. Black sees himself as the champion of the little guy and hates it when Joe Average doesn't get what he paid for.

As you can imagine, Black is happiest with a warm reception and a little humanity. He comments that the companies catering to higher end customers generally provide better service. A few of the companies he singles out for providing good customer experiences are Continental Airlines and Nordstrom. Apparently, Black hasn't stayed at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel lately, or flown Virgin Atlantic Airlines.

Perhaps we, as a nation of consumers, could help bring about better customer

service by giving voice to our inner Lewis Black (minus the profanities, of course). And perhaps, if customer-facing

companies start to give in to their inner Richard Branson, we might just create synergy that makes bad customer service

The World's First TMC Call Center 2.0™ Conference

As you receive this issue, you are likely attending (or possibly you planned to attend but just couldn't make it) the world's first Call Center 2.0 conference. Call center technology is advancing at a rapid clip and, as the example of Assurant Solutions illustrates, there are techniques for wringing millions of dollars of savings and increased revenue from your call center and/or CRM practice.

Reading about these innovations in *Customer Inter@ction Solutions* or on TMCnet is just the beginning. To maximize your company's potential, you need to observe the "One-Third Rule" at TMC's Call Center 2.0 event, which is taking place at the San Diego Convention Center from October 10th to 13th.

The One-Third Rule stipulates that one-third of your education at a trade show is derived from attending conference sessions, another third from the exhibit hall where you can see products and services in action, and the final third from networking with colleagues.

The next Call Center 2.0 conference will take place January 23rd to 26th in sunny Fort Lauderdale Florida, and I am looking forward to personally greeting you there. Visit <http://www.callcenter20.com> for details.

enue retained, which translates to a projected \$25 million lift in revenue over a 24 month period. And the best part is that Assurant Solutions offers a variety of payment options allowing customers — assuming the situation warrants — to pay based on the success of the solution in the company's organization. Assurant Solutions refers to it as "a percentage of the lift," or the success achieved over baseline rates of customer retention or account salvages, for example. It's essentially pay-for-performance.

Here is another thought I had. If using analytics for more effective call routing is the future of the call center, then we need an all-encompassing term for the industry. I discussed some terms with company execs, but we didn't come up with anything 100 percent definitive. I'll keep you posted!

For me, it seems to make sense that analytics should be the overriding factor in connecting agents and callers. In fact, analytics can be considered an overriding term that encompasses "skills-based." In my opinion, at the present time, the best term for this market seems to be "analytics-based routing," as it renders the concept simple to understand. It should be noted that in addition to helping companies with inbound business, Assurant Solutions successfully offers their solution for collections business and other outbound campaigns.

Obviously, the larger the number of agents and the more customer data there are, the more successful the program can be. Assurant Solutions' executives provided us with a

number of examples of enormous savings from a variety of companies and campaigns. If this technique can be applied more widely, we can expect call centers to become much more efficient and able to generate more revenue, becoming even more strategic to their organizations.

This concept also has incredible ramifications for e-commerce. Imagine if Circuit City, for example, was able to send out targeted e-mail based on this technology. They could determine what I am likely to buy before I even know what I'm looking for. For example, I might be a chronic procrastinator who begins buying holiday gifts on December 20th. Based on that information, Circuit City might determine that I am therefore more likely to respond to gift cards as an incentive than a discount that must be used before the end of the holiday buying season. Using this, in combination with other data, the store could create the perfect offer for me, served up into my mailbox each time I log on.

But it gets more exciting than that. Imagine personalized Web sites from Amazon, for example. The company could have millions of customized pages — they do this now to some degree — but imagine e-commerce companies using reams of data to be better able to serve up the best offers and customer interactions possible. Customers and companies will be better off if analytics become more widely deployed in all aspects of commerce. Ultimately, these sorts of innovations benefit the entire value chain from customer to manufacturer. **CIS**

Large Outsourcer Improves Customer Response Time And Reduces Costs Using IP-Based Communications Application Software Suite

About Alta Resources

Alta Resources (<http://www.altaresources.com>) provides customized outsourcing services incorporating advanced technology, unique processes and the right people in a dedicated team environment. Customers include Fortune 500 companies such as Apria, Energizer/Schick, Nestlé Purina, Revlon, Novartis and SC Johnson. Alta is committed to helping leading brands create and leverage meaningful relationships with their customers through Relationship Sales, One-to-One Marketing, Consumer Direct-Order Marketing, Consumer Care, and Business Intelligence products. The company was founded in 1995 and is headquartered in Neenah, WI with offices in Kalamazoo, MI; Brea, CA; and Manila, Philippines.

The Challenge

Since 1995, Alta Resources had been using a Centrex system from its carrier to provide customer service via inbound analog lines. As the company grew, it required more functionality and faster response time to meet an increasingly diverse and rapidly changing set of client requirements. Alta hoped to find a new system that would help it achieve these objectives without adding undue complexity to its communications infrastructure.

“We began looking for a system that would enable us to quickly and easily create and customize applications in-house,” said David Coe, Alta Resource’s chief information officer. “We also

needed something that was highly scalable, and minimized costs associated with integration, administration and maintenance.”

The Solution

Alta Resources reviewed systems from Avaya ([quote - news - alert](#)) and Nortel ([quote - news - alert](#)), but was concerned with their multi-box approach. “The systems we reviewed offered some nice functionality,” Coe said, “but they required a lot of servers, each running a different application, which meant a longer installation period and a potential management nightmare.”

The company was then introduced to a bundled communications application

software system from [Interactive Intelligence](#). ([news - alert](#)) The system, called Customer Interaction Center (CIC), offered a single interaction engine to process all interaction types, including phone calls, faxes, e-mails, Web chats and Web callbacks. Alta Resources chose CIC because of this “single-box” architecture, and its built-in graphical application generator that allowed for virtually unlimited customization options.

“We selected CIC because it gave us far more than traditional call center applications without purchasing additional server and software components,” Coe said. “In addition, the product came with a GUI-based customization tool that would enable us to more quickly respond to client requests such as creating and modifying complex interactive voice response applications.”

Alta Resources installed CIC in 1998 at its Neenah, Wisconsin headquarters, which then supported about 400 agents, and at its Brea, California office, which supported about 100 agents. Both sites used clustered servers for fault-tolerance. In 2001, CIC was installed at the company’s Kalamazoo, Michigan office, which added another

100 agents to the system. The Kalamazoo office was centralized in 2004, with agents connected back to the Neenah office via a WAN. Today, the IP-based version of CIC, which uses the open SIP standard for VoIP, supports a total of 950 agents and business users processing on average 60,000 calls daily across the company's three U.S. offices and its Philippines site, which are all linked using tie lines. The system is used to support 50 to 60 clients and about 750 active toll-free numbers at any given time. Alta Resources uses all CIC applications, including skills-based routing, IVR, speech recognition, Web chat and reporting.

The company also deployed a CIC add-on product for outbound campaign

management, called Interaction Dialer, and integrated it with its customer relationship management (CRM) package from PeopleSoft. This gives agents a screen-pop upon call delivery that shows customer information from the PeopleSoft database.

The company purchased a second add-on product from Interactive Intelligence called Interaction Recorder to provide call recording and quality monitoring.

The Benefits

Alta Resources cites faster customer response time and reduced costs among the primary benefits of CIC. For instance, after deploying CIC, the company won a major client contract to create a complex IVR application.

"We won the contract and a consultant immediately said that there was no way we could meet the deadline, which demanded the system be up and running within two months," Coe said. "We were able to create the system in-house and under deadline. There's no way we would've been able to use a traditional telecommunications product to create such a complex IVR application so quickly and without third-party assistance."

Alta Resources also reports that, for clients requiring extensive IVR applications, CIC has reduced agent staffing by about 50 percent. Coe notes that CIC's "single-box" architecture has reduced support staff requirements too. "With a multi-box telecommunications solution we would've had to hire about double the staff that we currently use to support CIC," Coe said. "Plus, with fewer separate components, we've increased reliability."

Adding to these savings, according to Coe, has been the deployment of SIP, which has helped the company reduce charges associated with toll-bypass and the convergence of its voice and data networks.

"Overall, we estimate cost savings of about 10 percent as a result of migrating to a SIP infrastructure," Coe said.

While reductions in staff and the virtual elimination of third-party vendor intervention have led to a lower total cost of ownership, Coe says money wasn't the company's primary concern.

CIS

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

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2006 Recommended Vendor List

The TMC Seal Of Approval

The following Recommended Vendors have distinguished themselves by winning one or more of TMC's coveted awards, earning them the TMC Seal of Approval.

CRM/Contact Center Software/Hardware

Aspect Software



Co-Nexus, Inc.



etalk



FrontRange Solutions



IEX Corporation



Interactive Intelligence



Left Bank Solutions



NICE Systems



Nortel Networks



Sennheiser Electronic Corp.



SER Solutions Inc.



Siebel Systems



Stratasoft, Inc.



Strategic Contact Solutions, Inc.



Oracle



Verint Systems



Witness Systems





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

SpeechCycle And Convergys Team

SpeechCycle, ([news - alert](#)) a provider of on-demand, intelligent automated agents for technical support using speech recognition for the cable and telecommunications industries, has announced a partnership with **Convergys Corporation**. ([news - alert](#)) SpeechCycle's speech applications are hosted on Convergys' SpeechPort VoiceXML platform. The partnership will enable Convergys to deploy automated solutions that can resolve a significant percentage of calls, increase customer satisfaction and reduce costs. SpeechCycle's automated agent solutions allow callers to speak naturally to resolve an array of technical support issues for video, broadband/DSL and digital phone services. The solutions are continually updated to include changes in premise-based equipment and service provider procedures, allowing the automated agents to more effectively troubleshoot the issue specifically for each caller's environment. Convergys' speech solutions utilizing SpeechCycle applications also take advantage of billing and contact center systems to optimize and personalize the caller experience and seamlessly integrate with an agent when required through screen pop technology.

SpeechCycle's voice self-service solutions revolve around its Continuous Improvement Process to address the full lifecycle of speech applications, which means its automated agents never grow obsolete. SpeechCycle ensures high call resolution rates with its technology that "talks and thinks human," according to the company.

<http://www.speechcycle.com>

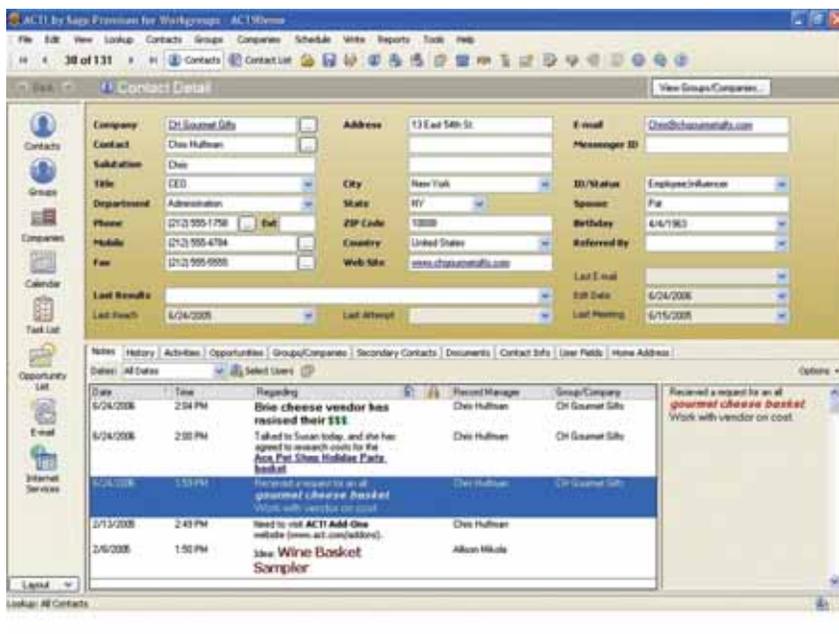
<http://www.convergys.com>

Sage Announces ACT! Add-on Solutions

Sage Software ([news - alert](#)) has announced over 40 ACT! add-on solutions compatible with the new ACT! by Sage 2007 (9.0) contact and customer management product family. Add-on products give ACT! users the freedom to choose from a selection of value-added communications, sales, marketing, mapping, help desk, synchronization, administrative and productivity applications. Each ACT! add-on solution has been reviewed by Sage Software and works with the new ACT! 2007 product family.

Sage Software also simultaneously announced four new products — ACT! by Sage Premium for Workgroups 2007 (9.0), ACT! by Sage Premium for Web 2007 (9.0) and ACT! for Palm OS 2.0 — comprising the ACT! 2007 product family.

<http://www.actsolutions.com>



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CallRex Certified To Record Encrypted Phone Calls Occurring On Cisco Unified CallManager 5.0

Telrex, ([news - alert](#)) developer of VoIP call recording and monitoring software for small and medium businesses using IP-PBXs or hosted PBX services, has announced that its solution CallRex has successfully passed interoperability testing as the first call recording solution to support the recording of encrypted calls occurring on Cisco Unified CallManager 5.0.

"Telrex is pleased to be the first call recording solution to pass interoperability testing with Cisco Unified CallManager 5.0," says Robert Kapela, president of Telrex. "CallRex's support for the recording of encrypted phone calls underscores our commitment to be an integration leader with CallManager, as well as our commitment to provide our joint Cisco-Telrex resellers with advanced, affordable call recording solutions that help them close more CallManager deals."

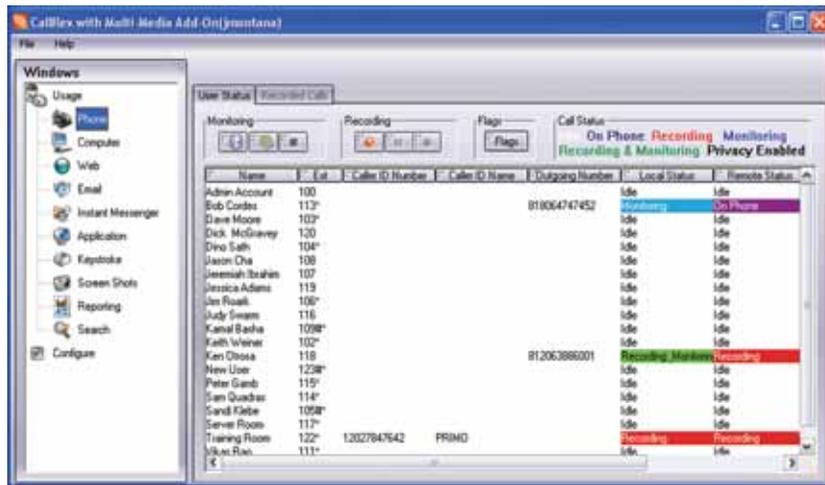
Firms with a regulatory obligation to record calls can benefit from CallRex's ability to record encrypted calls. For example, financial services firms using Cisco Unified CallManager no longer have to choose between call recording to help verify Gramm-Leach-Bliley compliance and the security provided by encrypting their phone calls.

CallRex records encrypted calls by capturing encrypted voice packets as they pass through the network and decrypting them using encryption keys shared by Cisco Unified CallManager 5.0 on a per-call basis. CallRex, Telrex's flagship product, enables small and medium-sized businesses to record VoIP calls for training purposes, dispute resolution or regulatory compliance.

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



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Aspect Releases Enterprise Contact Server 6.2

Aspect Software, Inc. ([news](#) - [alert](#)) recently announced the general availability of Aspect Enterprise Contact Server 6.2, which offers a robust application that blends automatic call distributor (ACD) functionality and computer-telephony integration (CTI) while delivering greater capacity and improvements to availability and security. The new release also incorporates the advanced routing and CTI capabilities of Aspect Uniphi Suite. This added functionality can lead to an improved customer interaction experience by routing the customer voice or Internet-based contact to the most appropriate agent, regardless of whether that agent is in a single or multisite contact center environment. Additionally, for contact centers solely needing back-end system integration for screen pop capabilities, Aspect has also released a new version of Aspect Contact Server 6.2. Aspect Enterprise Contact Server 6.2 builds on the functionality in Aspect Contact Server and expands it by integrating resources and data from across the enterprise. It creates a cohesive, real-time view of the contact center by pulling information from multiple channels, switches, reporting and administration interfaces. The latest releases of both products offer built-in real-time displays and historical reporting with standardized templates that may be customized. High availability enhancements provide automatic and quick recovery in the event of network failure and security enhancements protect against threats by adhering to IT security policies.

In other Aspect news, the company recently announced that the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office has awarded the company a new patent for a dynamic help option for Internet customers. The technology, developed by the Aspect Software R&D team, enables an organization to determine when an Internet browsing customer should be provided live agent assistance and can evaluate if an agent is available. The technology can make the determination based on how much time a customer spends on a particular Web page, errors in forms submitted by the customer, Web pages repeatedly viewed by a customer or at areas where customers may be more likely to abandon the transaction.

When the technology determines that a customer should be given automatic assistance, it reviews the probability of agent availability. If an agent is available, the customer is presented with a "help" option on the screen. If the customer does not respond to the "help" option within a certain amount of time, the option is removed. By dynamically determining the appropriate time to provide a "help" option and only providing the "help" option when an agent is available, the invention proactively provides meaningful service at the critical time. www.aspect.com



Humantech Releases New Version Of ergoTool Office Ergonomics Software

Humantech, Inc. ([news](#) - [alert](#)) has announced the release of ergoTool 5, a major new version of its Web-enabled management tool for office ergonomics. ergoTool 5 will allow companies to quickly identify and address ergonomic concerns and implement effective solutions to improve health, safety and productivity in the office workplace. ergoTool 5 is a comprehensive, two-part program. The first part is an online employee survey that examines the most critical ergonomic components of the office environment and captures quantifiable employee data. The second part, ergoTool Manager, is a management database that provides detailed reports and employee-specific solutions to your office ergonomics challenges. Data can be sorted to help you prioritize improvements, and an action plan helps ensure your solutions are cost-effective and easy to implement. New features of ergoTool 5 include improved navigation and graphics, a simplified setup process and an enhanced e-mail alert system. In addition, ergoTool administrators can add and define permissions for users, sites, departments and groups, as well as customize the ergoTool employee survey to meet their needs. <http://www.ergotool.com>

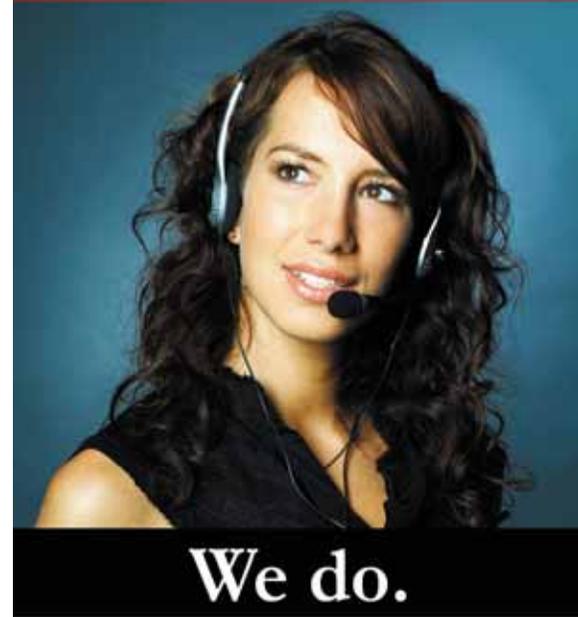


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Porticus Launches “Who I Am; Where I Am” Solution

Porticus Technology, Inc., ([news - alert](#)) a player in the field of voice biometric authentication for secure and trusted remote communication, recently unveiled Valocater, a location-aware service for mobile handsets. With Valocater, call center operators and m-commerce applications will be alerted to the geographic location and identity of a wireless caller before a phone is answered or business transacted. Combined with the Versona voice biometric from Porticus, the Valocater solution delivers “triple-factor” authentication security to automate user login and reduce fraud. Initially designed and approved for licensed race and sports wagering in Nevada using wireless phones with GPS capability, Valocater’s location verification system now insures jurisdictional compliance for gaming and government applications and uses both GPS and non-GPS capable handsets. In Nevada, Valocater confirms callers are within state borders in accordance with the law. Similar regulations apply to the lottery, which are specific to each state.

Valocater optionally incorporates the same patent-pending voice biometric authentication algorithm found within Porticus’ Versona family of solutions. Porticus’ Versona, based on a patent-pending voice algorithm developed during the course of a decade, relies on the physiological aspects (length, width and thickness) of the human vocal tract, making it less susceptible to background noise, recorded playback and intra-speaker variability (cold and flu). As speech is considered the most natural form of human communication, it has become a viable biometric option for identification security and remote authentication for wireless transactions.

<http://www.porticusinc.com>



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SYSPRO Updates Flagship Product

SYSPRO, ([news - alert](#)) an enterprise business solutions provider, has announced the worldwide release of the latest version of its flagship product. SYSPRO 6.0 Issue 010 offers added functionality across all areas of the platform: financial, distribution and manufacturing, as well as new customization capabilities and new modules. The latest release offers a number of technological enhancements including a new user interface that is flexible and adaptable and which empowers users to tailor the product to suit their needs. A major benefit to this customization capability is that it is version-independent and easily deployed across the enterprise.

In addition, SYSPRO 6.0 Issue 010 debuted SYSPRO Reporting Services, a next-generation reporting tool that also incorporates an embedded version of Crystal Reports XI. SYSPRO Reporting Services offers interactive reporting with scheduling and archiving capabilities that enhance audit capabilities.

SYSPRO 6.0 Issue 010 also introduces Electronic Signatures, which provides the option of authenticating operators as they are processing transactions. Electronic Signatures generates a log for auditing purposes, plus provides the facility to activate triggers for notification via e-mail or for integration to third-party products or custom procedures. Electronic Signatures assists in meeting compliancy requirements of a number of regulatory bodies.

<http://www.syspro.com>

Datamonitor Releases New Report: The Future Of Outsourcing

Outsourcing is increasing its reach in terms of vertical industry as well as geographic scope. While the firms investing in it are wide-ranging, their individual needs are all similar in that they need to reduce overheads as much as possible. Yet the outsourcing phenomenon is poorly understood. In its new report, "The Future of Outsourcing," market analysis firm **Datamonitor** ([news - alert](#)) examines what lessons from the past the new wave of outsourcing can learn from and what will drive its success going forward. Datamonitor's report examines outsourcing in automotive, energy, healthcare, technology and financial services markets.

Outsourcing is continuing to grow across all vertical markets, and contact centers are no exception. However, western domestic contact center outsourcing is slowing in the wake of new business realities and offshore locations providing high levels of customer service at a lower cost. Many investors in the U.S. and Western Europe have adopted to "nearshore" models as a way of moving their operations to cheaper locations. Simply put, they locate their facilities in relatively close proximity to the markets they service (e.g., from the standpoint of U.S. investors, Canada and Mexico). However, to derive maximum profits from outsourcing, many are now using the "bestshoring" strategy, which involves tailoring specific customer care needs to locations that are best suited for these functions. It allows the investor to save on the cost of domestically sourcing the work, while at the same time removing the inflexibility of using only one offshore location. For example, many European outsourcers are now locating administrative-to-mid level customer care in offshore locations including India, Argentina and the Philippines (which may account for 60 to 70 percent of total call volume), while locating the high-end/value add work in nearshore locations such as the Czech Republic or Egypt.

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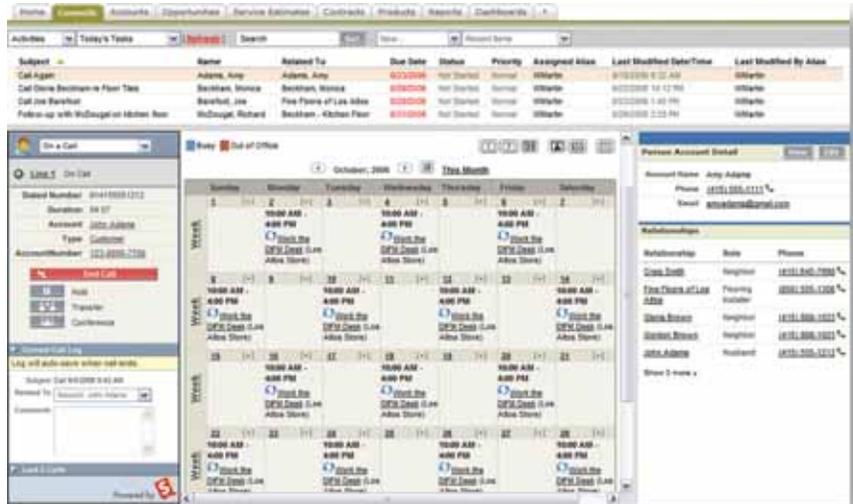
Salesforce.com Previews Winter '07

Salesforce.com (quote - news - alert) has recently previewed Salesforce Winter '07, the 21st generation of its family of on-demand business applications. Salesforce Winter '07 is scheduled for availability in the fourth quarter of 2006 and is expected to drive forward a new era of unlimited freedom, collaboration and success for customers, according to the company. (They add that customers who purchase salesforce.com applications should make their purchase decisions based upon features that are currently available.)

Leveraging Salesforce's multitenant architecture, Winter '07 was designed to deliver unprecedented customization across every level of the service from the user interface to the AppExchange development platform. Customers, developers and partners will be able to develop new processes and applications, giving them a means to manage and share all of their information on demand on the business Web.

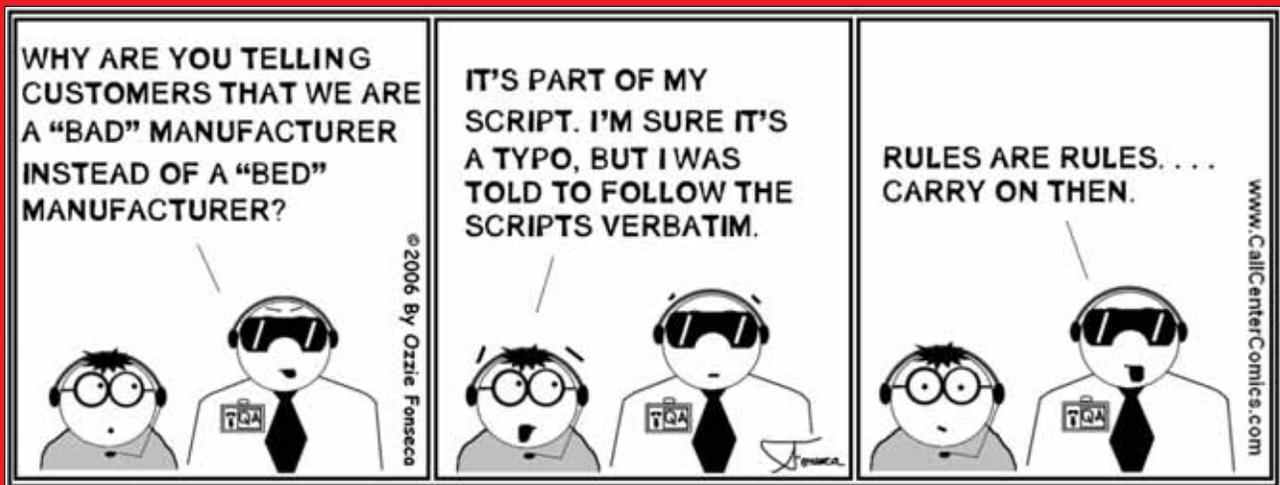
"Winter '07 will build on our innovation of multitenancy to now offer unlimited customization through the AppExchange platform," said Marc Benioff, chairman and CEO, salesforce.com. "This is a game-changing release that delivers unlimited freedom to create custom user interfaces, innovative mashups and more powerful multitenant applications."

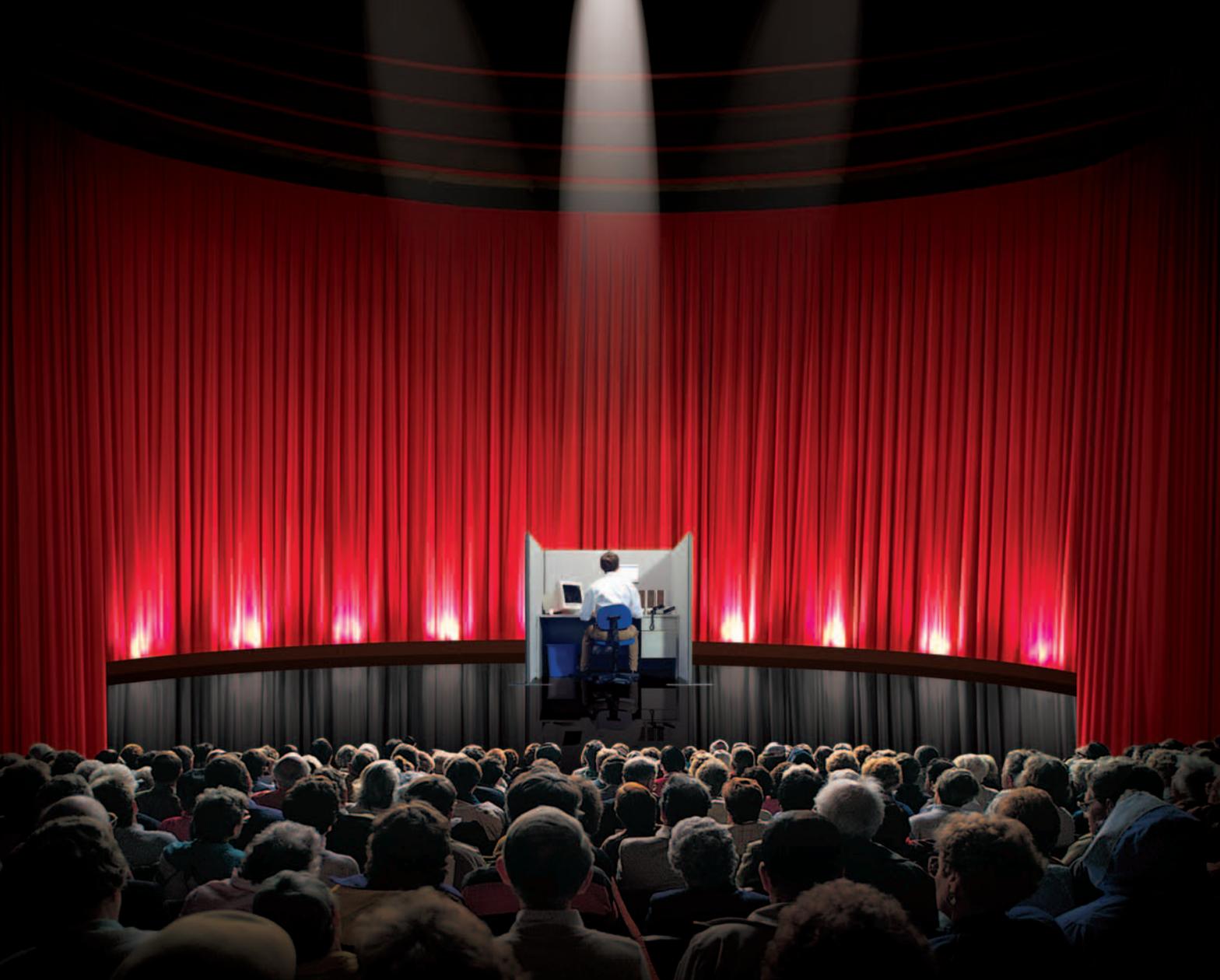
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CallCenterComics.com

By Ozzie Fonesca





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ATA: 0:23 CIQ: 17 2:13P

CALL LEADERS		SALES LEADERS	
JAMES	01	CENTRAL	18.8
PAT T.	02	EAST	17.8
JORGE	03	SOUTH	16.4
PHIL	04	MIDWEST	14.0
CHRIS	05	WEST	10.7
TIM	06	NORTH	10.4

REMINDER: Be s



ASC Releases New Version Of MARATHON EVO*lite* For Smaller Businesses

ASC, ([news - alert](#)) a provider of communications recording and quality monitoring solutions for contact centers, financial institutions and public-safety and government organizations, has announced a new version of MARATHON EVO*lite*, a recorder designed to meet the demands of small and medium-sized businesses. It now offers hybrid recording (mixed VoIP and TDM) in one rack-mountable 19-inch chassis. The world's first Linux-based communications recorder, MARATHON EVO*lite* provides power, reliability, security and open-source flexibility in a cost-effective package, according to the company. Built for organizations with up to 60 phone lines, the system is specially designed for future expansion and scalability and protects the customer's investment by growing with demand. The new version offers online storage of up to 175,000 recording hours and may be equipped with IOMEGA or DVD-RAM drives for long-term archiving. Mirrored and hot-swap hard disks provide optimal data security.

MARATHON EVO*lite* provides a tailored communications recording solution to fit the requirements of any business by combining selective, rules-based, bulk and record-on-demand solutions. The system helps organizations comply with strict regulatory requirements for the recording of phone, VoIP and radio conversations. With a scaleable channel array, MARATHON EVO*lite* captures and records all customer interactions from four up to 60 channels simultaneously and may be configured to record, live monitor and archive diverse communications from one location. It also provides the flexibility to connect multiple recording platforms, departments or locations, with data automatically transferred to the central INTER-ACTION server.

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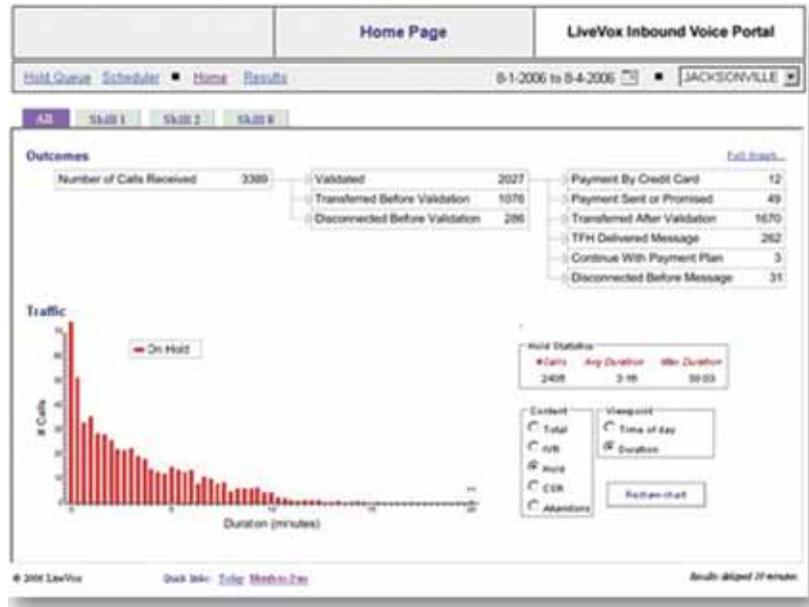


LiveVox Unveils IMS-based Voice Portal

LiveVox, Inc. ([news](#) - [alert](#)) recently announced a new offering, the LiveVox Voice Portal. LiveVox integrates the application, network and transport layers on an IMS-based architecture in order to provide a hosted, uniquely tailored contact center solution. By building IMS-based applications, LiveVox can deliver its voice solution to clients faster and with a low total cost of ownership. The LiveVox Voice Portal's IMS-based architecture also allows for vertical integration of all layers of inbound and outbound voice application solutions, including application, network and transport. Adding to LiveVox's original offering of inbound/self-service and outbound dialing, LiveVox's Voice Portal now offers automatic call distribution (ACD).

In addition to offering a tailored contact center solution for each client, LiveVox delivers all of the carrier-related transport services in one vertical solution. This enables enterprises to take advantage of SIP access to the backbone, which reduces line requirements and delivers unlimited capacity and high voice quality. Additionally, this capability eliminates the need for clients to contract directly with carriers for this service.

<http://www.livevox.com>



ePLDT Acquires BPO Provider SPI Technologies

ePLDT Ventus, a provider of offshore call center outsourcing solutions, has announced that its parent company, **ePLDT**, has acquired **SPI Technologies**, ([news](#) - [alert](#)) a global business process outsourcing company with over 6,500 employees worldwide. The acquisition allows ePLDT Ventus to further expand into the health-care, legal, publishing and transaction industries. With 26 locations throughout North America, Europe and Asia and over 150 global clients, SPI's process expertise and service delivery in such areas as medical and legal transcription, electronic data discovery and transaction processing will expand and strengthen Ventus' outsourcing solutions globally. The acquisition allows Ventus to deliver scalable and knowledge-based outsourcing solutions to its diversified markets.

Additionally, the combination of Ventus' call center facilities and SPI's facilities in the Philippines, India, the U.S. and China is expected to further strengthen Ventus' positioning in the market globally and at the forefront of the call center industry.

<http://www.spi-bpo.com>

Spanlink Acquires Calabrio, Inc.

Spanlink Communications, Inc., ([news](#) - [alert](#)) a provider of customer interaction solutions that leverage VoIP-based unified communications technologies, recently announced that it has acquired **Calabrio, Inc.** and its software for distributed workforce management (WFM) and scheduling. Based in Longueuil, Québec, Canada, Calabrio's workforce management solutions have contributed to the success of hundreds of call and contact centers in North America, Europe, Africa and South America. Spanlink's goal is to provide a software suite that focuses on transforming the business process for customer interaction in a services-oriented architecture (SOA). This approach enables businesses to improve customer interactions by making supervisors and agents more productive at all stages of customer interaction, including how they manage their time, interact with their customers and collaborate with their teams.

The Calabrio acquisition extends the Spanlink InteractiveEdge family of products, which includes Spanlink Quality Management for recording, evaluation and training, to provide a comprehensive workforce optimization (WFO) offer for IP-based contact centers. With the addition of Calabrio Workforce Management software, Spanlink now offers workforce scheduling, adherence, key performance metrics and additional reporting capabilities into the agent and supervisor desktop views.

<http://www.spanlink.com>

Call Center Agent Satisfaction Key To Customer Loyalty

Genesys Telecommunications Laboratories, Inc. ([news - alert](#)) has released the eighth study in its *Contact Centre Realities* series for Australia and New Zealand. Titled *Optimising Agent Performance*, the latest Genesys study comes at a time when contact centers are under increasing pressure to meet the often conflicting demands of service quality, revenue generation and cost efficiency. Although there are several aspects to address in order to meet these challenges, the Genesys research indicated that leading contact centers recognize that they need to focus on what is both their highest cost and their most valuable asset: agents. The Genesys research revealed that the key determinant of customer loyalty is the quality of the customer experience. Consumers rated customer service as being the number one influence on their loyalty to a company. Additionally, 71 percent of consumers would do business with a company based on a great contact center experience. While remuneration is important to agents, it is not necessarily their biggest driver of motivation, and 75 percent of agents are most motivated by factors that engender a sense of personal satisfaction and achievement in their daily work, although only 52 percent of agents report experiencing this. The biggest agent motivator is feeling or being told that they've helped a customer, and a majority of their job stress relates to customer frustration and the inability to serve customers well.

The survey also revealed that there is significant room for improvement in the engagement and retention of contact center agents. Only six percent of agents want their next role to be that of a contact centre agent. Additionally, 70 percent of managers agree that a tighter labour market has made it significantly more difficult to hire contact center agents.

<http://www.genesyslab.com>



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Intervoice Strengthens Contact Center Offerings With Nuasis Acquisition

By Susan J. Campbell, TMCnet Contributing Editor

Contact centers are consistently searching for cost-saving solutions while also improving customer service. A new purchase by Intervoice, a provider of converged voice and information solutions, is intended to do both.

While the company has announced that it expects revenues to be near or slightly above the top end of the previously predicted range of \$44 to \$49 million for its second quarter, Intervoice has also purchased the assets of Nuasis, a provider of Internet-enabled customer contact software.

Under the agreement, Intervoice now owns Nuasis' products, intellectual property, customer and channel contracts and other assets while also assuming certain obligations. In addition, Intervoice hired many of Nuasis' employees who joined the company effective September 1, 2006. Intervoice intends to continue to serve Nuasis' customers and will leverage the IP contact center suite for distribution to existing and new Intervoice customers.

The acquisition of Nuasis is expected to enable Intervoice to take a leap forward in fulfilling the goals of its strategic growth plan while also meeting the growing needs of its customers for new contact center applications.

Through the [Nuasis \(news - alert\)](#) solution, Intervoice will be able to bring new IP-based contact center applications to the agent desktop. Features will include Web-chat and e-mail response applications as well as speech-enabled IVR and voice portal solutions. Deployment options are flexible and the offering supports remote agents and hosted solutions.

According to Daniel Hong, senior voice business analyst at Datamonitor, the contact center landscape is altered by Intervoice's announcement. The acquisition couples Intervoice's strength in speech self-service with a next-generation IP contact center application that features multisite virtualization, multimedia routing, business intelligence, monitoring and reporting, CTI and outbound capabilities.

Hong also highlighted that Intervoice is now able to offer customers a total solution that is completely switch-independent. It is the optimal solution match-up to compete in the broader contact center market.

Intervoice serves over 5,000 customers worldwide, providing contact centers with deep domain expertise in IVR and speech applications. Adding the Nuasis product suite

and the NuContact Center routing software provides for the expansion of the applications expertise of the company while also opening new product opportunities within the contact center.

Positioned as offering competitive advantages over traditional CTI/ACD vendors, the seamless integration of self-service and live assistance allows customers greater flexibility to move from one service model to another as necessary.

The NuContact Center product combined with the Intervoice services methodology will complete the Intervoice technology offering for the contact center. Nuasis brings contact center expertise, along with a rapid approach to design, configuration and deployment for solutions that synthesize the call process and provide a seamless customer experience across multiple communication channels.

Intervoice President and CEO, Bob Ritchey, commented that several years ago the company began to transition Intervoice to a new direction, one based on open standards and converged voice and data networks. The objective behind this asset purchase was to accelerate Intervoice's multichannel automation and IP contact center product strategy.

Ritchey added that Intervoice is enhancing the value that the company brings to its customers by providing a solution that expands its reach into the contact center. Intervoice is also able to immediately lead the way in helping customers to reduce contact center operating costs and improve customer service.

Intervoice is taking a position that it is a direct answer to the needs displayed by contact centers across the board — lowering costs and improving customer service. By focusing integration on multichannel communication and enterprisewide applications, Intervoice will be able to present its offering as the only solution that the contact center will need.

The company will have the challenge of meeting the expectations of current Nuasis customers. To prevent defection, the transition must be seamless for all customers and service must be at a new and improved level. Intervoice can offer a powerful solution, but service will still dictate its success.

Susan J. Campbell is a contributing editor for TMCnet and has also written for <http://eastbiz.com>.

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What Role Should Technology Play As A Customer Care Differentiator?

Increasing Customer Expectations Require A Strategic Vision

Today's consumers have seen a technological explosion that is changing how they view the buying experience and beyond. What once required a trip to a bricks-and-mortar store to see available merchandise can now be accomplished by pressing a few buttons on a computer or even a cell phone, providing immediate gratification through the power to buy anything, anywhere. Customers are becoming familiar with instant satisfaction and are anticipating the same fulfillment in their customer service experience, even switching brands if the experience doesn't meet expectations. This is especially true of customers in the under-40 age groups. As globalization brings increased competition and brand loyalty takes a sharp decline, companies must improve the customer service experience if they are to survive.

Customer Care Excellence Through Technology And Corporate Vision

According to consumer research firm J. D. Power & Associates, customers' expectations are changing at such a fast pace that companies can't respond quickly enough. A company once seen as a leader in customer care may today be perceived as a poor service provider, not because the service or the customer experience has changed, but because customers' expectations have changed.

Meanwhile, businesses are not evolving processes and technology to keep up with growing consumer needs. Much of the technology deployed today has been implemented based on attitudes of the 1990s, when companies valued cost savings and the efficiency and productivity of call handling. Companies today are responding to customers' increased expectations by shifting the focus from a cost

center mentality to a profit center mentality, seeking to increase brand loyalty by providing exceptional service and sales while retaining productivity and efficiency.

Amcat believes that the answer lies in the partnership of technology and a company's unique customer service vision. Amcat is a leader in contact center solutions that help companies communicate more effectively with customers. The company believes that the right technology can improve customer care and support the customer care process while reducing handling costs.

Companies must look at the issues within their call centers and create a clear vision of superior customer service. "Every company has different needs and customer care requirements," says Mike Rohleder, Amcat CEO. "We think it's important to identify what customer service means to your organization, and then find the right technology to provide the optimal customer experience, enabling you to conduct profitable interactions. Companies like Amcat can help you with this process and then provide technologies that enable your vision."

A Vision Of Service That Extends Beyond The Contact Center

For many companies, a vision of customer care excellence means being able to answer customer questions quickly and easily, even if the resource resides outside the contact center. As companies open new offices or go global, fast access to resources, people and data becomes challenging, opening the door for customer dissatisfaction.

To meet the growing knowledge and data needs, companies must leverage the resources of the entire organization. The call center is no longer the alpha and omega of customer service. No single employee can know everything, so companies must find ways to bring down the data and people



silos and provide the resources needed to take care of customers.

The right technology plays an important role. New IP contact technologies provide extensibility and flexibility so customer care services can be leveraged wherever they reside in an organization or enterprise.

Customer Expectations Grow Beyond IVR

Take the case of UroMed, a U.S. provider of healthcare products that differentiates itself in the industry by providing highly personal customer service. To meet rising customer expectations, UroMed decided to rethink its customer interaction processes. Research from the University of Akron showed that 93 percent of people prefer to speak to a live operator and dislike the IVR experience. UroMed agreed and was looking for a way to provide customers with an exceptional experience where all calls are answered by a live person and then easily routed to the right resource regardless of location. UroMed turned to Amcat for answers.

Amcat recommended implementing its soft IP-PBX technology. This technology would

support UroMed's vision for personalized customer service enterprisewide. Its scalability would allow UroMed to provide extensive customer contact and call handling features.

Jim Weatherford, UroMed president, tells the company's story. "Amcat helped us realize that a traditional PBX or customer contact system wasn't enough. They showed us how soft IP-PBX technology could provide us with powerful customer contact functions in addition to the flexibility and value we needed." Weatherford adds, "The soft IP-PBX is now the linchpin of our customer contact operations. It extends customer service to all of our employees and leverages the resources of our extensive employee knowledge base. By empowering our employees to meet the increasing demands of our customers, we will continue to outperform in our industry."

Rohleder says companies need to respond to the phenomenon of shifting customer expectations by changing their focus, looking at the customer not necessarily as a sales target, but instead as a person who is valued and an important company asset. In today's fast-

moving consumer market, a loyal customer is an asset to be managed well. Companies need to find ways to provide the customer with the experience he or she is seeking.

Happy Customers Equal A Happier Bottom Line

There is a distinct connection between good customer service and bottom line profits, and companies are recognizing this. Many are putting efforts toward creating a better, more interactive experience with customers and prospects. This doesn't happen randomly. It's the sign of a company that knows its vision for customer care and pursues that vision with passion.

Rohleder says the center of the universe in call center excellence is to identify the processes and procedures that will provide the most profitable interactions with customers. The next step is to provide the technologies to support that vision. Amcat's vision, he says, is to help companies discover their visions and provide the right technologies to turn those visions into realities.

For more information about Amcat, ([news - alert](mailto:news-alert@amcat.com)) visit <http://www.amcat.com>.

Expanding Or Eliminating The Physical Borders Of The Call Center

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

Let's say you're an established company, and you've just decided to move your existing call center and therefore must do a lot of rehiring, or you've decided to start a call center for the first time. Perhaps you've even decided to outsource your call center services to an outside provider. Though there are many experts in your company and your customers value the experience and advice of your core employees, your call center agents are all relatively new, both to your company and your industry. They're still learning, still undergoing training programs in your call center's processes and systems and your company's solutions.

Does it make sense for these call center agents to learn from scratch, via trial and error, when in fact there is a great deal of intellectual capital elsewhere in your company that could, with the right technologies, be easily leveraged?

Of course not.

Yet many companies make this mistake of operating their call centers inside a vacuum, many times because the call center is (wrongly) treated as an afterthought...a necessary evil...and other times because the call center is technologically isolated from the rest of the organization. While a call center agent fumbles for the answer to a complicated question from an important customer, an inside salesperson who once solved that very same problem for another platinum customer sits quietly in his or her office,

unaware that the agent is attempting to reconstruct the issue from scratch. Companies with segmented, siloed, dead-end call center systems of this nature are their own worst enemies.

There are many ways that knowledge can be leveraged and shared. Part of the process is understanding how individual departments and employees can help one another, or combine their formerly isolated knowledge into one large, synergistic pool of intelligence. The other part of the process is making sure that the call center and enterprise technology is a conduit for this sort of knowledge sharing and not a road block.

IP contact center solutions have been a gold-plated gift for this sort of cross-departmental knowledge sharing.

When calls can be transferred across departments, across companies and across the globe yet remain an integral part of the call center process, it loses its borders (and this is a good thing); as a result, any combination of people, locations, departments, partners, self-service processes and distributed and virtual call centers can be joined together so the best knowledge and most appropriate service available can be offered to customers when they need it.

And in the end, allowing customers to find the resources they need, via the channel they choose, in the most efficient manner possible is what keeps them coming back to you. **CIS**

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

Stop The Revolving Door — Five Best Practices In Contact Center Agent Training

Leverage training strategies and best practices to maximize return on investment, reduce agent turnover and recruitment costs, and improve agent performance and customer satisfaction.

One of the major challenges for contact center managers is retaining employees. Not only is it costly to lose an agent — replacement can cost between \$5,000 and \$17,000 — employee turnover can have a negative impact on overall contact center performance, customer satisfaction and employee morale.

Training plays a crucial role in job satisfaction and performance for agents. Unfortunately, ongoing education often takes a back seat to other strategic efforts, such as expanding call center services. Yet savvy contact center executives are recognizing the value of embracing training as a key employee retention strategy, reconciling the costs for training with bottom-line results.

This article will provide an overview of training best practices that coordinate with an overall organizational strategy for reducing costs and improving performance.

Best Practice #1: Transform order-takers into service providers while protecting service levels.

Resolving a customer issue on the first call, efficiently and effectively, improves customer satisfaction and leverages that goodwill into opportunities for cross-selling or upselling. Achieving this often requires a higher skill level than many contact center agents currently possess. Moving from an order-taking mentality to true customer service requires skillfully combin-

ing performance management efforts with expanded training to broaden further subject matter knowledge and develop additional skills.

Best Practice #2: Recognize that training is not “one-size-fits-all.”

While traditional classroom education still has an important place in the training curriculum, dynamic training based on the particular needs of agents is the best way to speed comprehension, ensure knowledge retention and improve specific skills in the most cost-effective manner. Training experts agree that a blended solution — classroom training combined with e-learning, simulation and other online training channels — is the ideal solution for contact center environments. Delivering training opportunities on-demand, online and in chunks designed to fit into an agent's schedule delivers the flexibility needed to ensure a meaningful and measurable impact on performance,

while keeping training costs down. Some of the most progressive contact centers are using software to allow supervisors to create mini-videos that address how to handle specific issues or changes in a process, enabling supervisors to respond quickly and train agents before an issue impacts performance.

Best Practice #3: Balance the needs of virtual contact center agents.

While the debate about the pros and cons of home-based agents rages on, the fact is that many contact centers gain value from extending their capacity through cost-effective and flexible telecommuters. However, telecommuters present an additional layer of complexity in employee management. To make this work most effectively, contact center managers need to make creative use of technology such as instant messaging to facilitate ongoing communications. Dynamic training opportunities such as e-learning take on an even greater importance when a company has home-based agents to train and continually educate.

Best Practice #4: Don't forget the coaches.

Every good team needs a coach. While e-learning is a proven, effective way to train agents, one-on-one interaction with

By Shelby Test-Peralta
StarTek, Inc.



trainers, supervisors and peers is still a valuable tool to reinforce comprehension and build additional skills. Search out potential peer coaches and give them the assistance they need to help newer agents become successful. Some contact centers are investing in coaching tools that help supervisors deliver real-time insight and assistance to agents even as they interact with customers.

Best practice #5: Build confidence.

Create a way for new hires to practice their newly learned skills without being sent to the frontline immediately. One way is to pair beginners with experienced contact center agents who can provide the guidance new hires need to more quickly come up-to-speed. The mentoring approach can be an extreme-

ly effective way to ease the transition into the real situation.

A Strategic Training Plan In Action

StarTek recognized early on the benefits of training in improving retention of contact center agents. The company developed a training plan it uses for its contact centers that includes classroom training, e-learning, simulation, mentoring/coaching and personalized training and development plans based upon the skills and career interests of the agent.

The strategic approach to training has paid off. StarTek has a much lower than industry average turnover rate of nearly 50 percent, while maintaining customer satisfaction that ranks high. Other benefits include productivity gains, higher employee morale and better overall skill levels.

Agent training is an investment that pays dividends in agent satisfaction and retention, customer satisfaction and loyalty, and overall contact center performance. **CIS**

Shelby Test-Peralta is StarTek's (news - alert) Senior Vice President of Human Resources, responsible for attracting, motivating, developing and retaining StarTek employees. Shelby is a certified Senior Human Resources Professional through the Society of Human Resources Management as well as a designated Certified Compensation Professional through World At Work (formerly the American Compensation Association). StarTek, Inc. (<http://www.startek.com>) is a provider of business process optimization services for outsourced customer interactions. Headquartered in Denver, StarTek has 18 operational facilities across North America.

Sales Force Automation Implementation Challenges

Sales force automation (SFA) is a system for tracking sales leads, sales, service requests and other sales-related information. SFA helps companies encapsulate all the vital data related to sales and sales process into one easy to manage and easy to use system. With a well designed SFA system, organizations can easily access client information, review their sales history and progress, and create a history of client and prospect communication.

When discussing sales force automation, it's natural to think of SFA software. In our current environment of technology, most business processes can be optimized using some type of software program, and SFA is no exception. Just as with any other category of software, there are literally hundreds of programs that can provide your business with SFA capabilities. The key to finding one that works for your company is to identify your specific needs for this type of program. SFA software can provide capabilities such as contact management, sales management, sales activity tracking, sales pipeline management, communication history, sales projections, sales reporting and much more. It's important that companies avoid getting overwhelmed by the capabilities of the programs at the same time keeping in mind that all these capabilities can present challenges.

Before a company arrives at the point of reviewing and selecting SFA software, there are some other challenges it must consider. Finding and purchasing a good SFA solution can be a daunting task on its own; it can be even more compli-

cated a process to consider some of the challenges the company may face during the implementation process. On average, it takes three tries to successfully implement a new SFA software system. Approximately 80 percent of first-time efforts fail. The following four issues can present serious challenges during the implementation and set-up phase of an SFA program. They can also lead to ongoing complications once a company has a system in place. By knowing about and considering these issues in advance, organizations can take steps to head off potential trouble.

Failure To Analyze Existing Processes

All operating sales teams have some sort of existing, embedded sales process. This process may be very loose and managed by each salesperson, or it may be well defined with specific sales stages and milestones. Analyzing the existing sales process can be a vital first step in successful implementation of SFA soft-

ware. By examining the existing sales process (or lack thereof), company management can identify deficiencies and make corrections before they are forced by their new software to plug in an ineffective sales process into an effective SFA program.

Most SFA software provides the capability to define and track sales stages, sales milestones, activities and more. Many of them come with some well designed default processes built in. However, if a company does not understand its own process, it may be stuck using the software's built in process, which may not match what the company's sales team is doing and can create confusion and frustration.

In the SFA industry, we see the following situation arise time and again: A company with a successful sales team purchases SFA software and now has to define the stages in its sales process. Not having done this in a structured fashion before, the company now needs to take the time and resources to review their sales process and lay it out in their new program. This takes time, and ultimately delays the implementation of the SFA program and ultimately the training of their team. This creates frustration because an implementation that should

By Bill Wheeler
Avidian Technologies



have taken weeks now takes months — or longer. This can lead to resistance by the sales team against using the new SFA software, and can sour management on the effectiveness of this new tool they have purchased.

When selecting SFA software, organizations should look for one that allows them to customize the sales stages and other sales process information. If a company is taking the time, effort and resources to review and improve its sales process, it makes sense to seek SFA software that will allow the company to put in “their own” process. Although most of the programs on the market have well designed and effective sales processes built into them, a company shouldn’t be stuck using that process if it doesn’t fit their business.

Lack Of User Involvement

Resistance to change is the biggest challenge in implementing new sales software or improvement programs. It can be extremely difficult for people to change their habits and routines. Typically, about 20 percent of sales people push back hard, they may actually quit their job if forced into change they do not want. The majority of sales people (about 60 percent) will resist the

change, but slowly accept it over time. The remaining 20 percent are ready for change and are often willing participants in the process. This group can be a vital tool in improving the success of an implementation. Organizations should use their interest and enthusiasm to help build a positive environment around the project.

Encouraging the users of a SFA program to become involved is a requirement. When reviewing sales process

and selecting SFA software, successful companies must get input from every member of the sales team. It is not necessary for every team member to become involved in the process, particularly if the sales team is very large. Having sales personnel complete a questionnaire about how they sell can be enough to make them feel included. Companies can also consider asking for volunteers to do some of the research and legwork involved in the review of

SFA software. This can produce surprisingly positive results, as the sales team can add insight that management may not have thought of.

Creating awareness of the initiative and providing the necessary knowledge to see the benefit of the change is important. Changes should never be “sprung” on the sales team. One of the biggest errors that occurs at this phase is to “tell” the sales team that they are getting a new software program. It becomes just one more thing on the long task list of a busy salesperson. Organizations should ask for sales team input and assistance in selecting the software. Management should avoid asking them if they want a SFA program; the process will be more successful if the team is asked what needs they have of a SFA program. In this way, a company can give the sales team the ability to take ownership of what the new program is and does. Knowledge is power and so, in this case, is participation.

The Information Is In Their Heads

Like all of us, salespeople tend to manage their business and activities in their heads. Each salesperson knows the details of existing sales relationships and opportunities for their clients. Often the information is basic, such as the names of the primary contacts for a certain account. Alternatively, it may be more detailed information such as the specific products in which the account is currently interested. The more complex the relationships and sales opportunities become, the more difficult it is to keep everything ordered in that salesperson's head. To be effective, a SFA solution must make entering and reviewing client information almost as easy as getting it in and out of their heads.

Companies should identify ways to make it easy to get necessary information out of a salesperson's head and into a digital format. If a sales team uses a program like Microsoft Outlook for collecting contact data and e-mailing clients, a SFA program that can use an

existing Outlook contact database will go a long way toward making it easy to use. Do salespeople routinely collect business cards from prospects they visit? They should use a card scanner to quickly get the contact information into the SFA solution. If the company routinely gets e-mail inquiries from prospects, that company should select a SFA solution that allows the company to create a contact and sales opportunity from those e-mail messages with the click of a button. This eliminates the necessity of having to type in or copy the information, and allows the sales team to immediately start recording their sales activities.

Companies should create guidelines for recording vital client and sales information. The SFA program will be useful only if your sales team enters useful information into it. The old adage “garbage in, garbage out” holds true here. Most SFA programs make it easy to create notes, track e-mail, schedule appointments and record sales. When management reviews and refines the company's sales process, they should be sure to create guidelines of what the sales team is expected to do to track their sales. The team should be taught how to use the solution and where to enter the correct data. These guidelines will eventually turn into habits that will make the sales team more effective.

Running Before Walking

Sales force automation is always more complex than most people realize. For most companies, the sales process grows just like the business; it starts at a crawl, then a walk, then a run. When a company is considering SFA software, it is past the crawling stage, but by no means should try to break into a run. This can lead to a big fall, and is a major reason 80 percent of first-time SFA implementations fail. Often, it's only after this fall that people realize just how much is involved in getting a SFA program implemented properly. Taking the time and making the effort

Creating awareness of the initiative and providing the necessary knowledge to see the benefit of the change is important. Changes should never be “sprung” on the sales team.

to properly install and set up the program, as well as train the users, can make the difference between a successful implementation or being a statistic in that 80 percent failure rate.

Implementation should be well planned and time must be taken to do it properly. Companies must create a schedule that includes installation, training and a “go-live” date. Organizations should also strive to be realistic, not optimistic. Enough time must be allowed to complete each stage before transitioning into the next, using all resources available. Most SFA software manufacturers provide implementation and training services. Companies should use them. The vendors ultimately know their software better than anyone and chances are they have experience with just about every type of network configuration.

If the planned implementation is large, a company should consider running a pilot program of its chosen SFA solution. This pilot program can provide great insight into how the sales team will use the solution and the effects it will have. This gives the sales team and management a chance to “kick the tires” and take ownership. By setting up the system on a limited basis, it will also give the IT group a chance to see how the system will work in the company's network environment. This can be a good chance for a company to work out any kinks and also create interest from the rest of the company.



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IP Multimedia Subsystem solutions are taking the service provider world by storm. But how will IMS work in the real world and what is the best way to deploy, test and generate revenue from this exciting new technology? This Web Summit will discuss the ins and outs of IMS so you can quickly and intelligently deploy IP Multimedia Subsystem solutions in your network.

Deploying IPTV - August 29 *Archived

Service providers are looking to IPTV to retain their subscribers, generate new revenues, and strengthen their bundle. For IPTV to become a competitive differentiator for carriers, a number pieces need to be in place, not only to provide the service, but to seamlessly integrate it with voice and data offerings. TMC's IPTV Web Summit presents a critical look at the ecosystem that supports IPTV and how these vendors provide the tools that enable carriers to re-think what television is all about.

Mobile VoIP, The Road to FMC – September

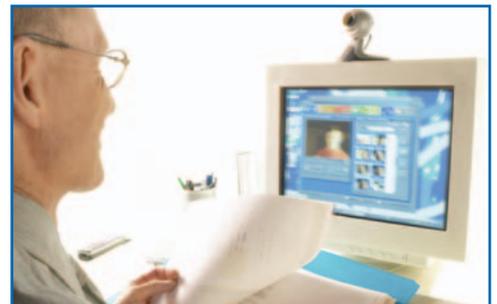
TMC's Mobility VoIP Web Summit will provide a comprehensive overview of this space, and what it takes for operators to transfer, support and bill voice traffic as it traverses various types of mobile networks. As the mobile market continues to grow and evolve beyond voice-only communications, the infrastructure must be in place to support all these scenarios. This Web Summit will be the ideal destination to learn about who is leading the way and how mobile operators will get there.

Open Source - October

The Open Source software movement has unleashed exciting innovation that is helping enterprises operate more efficiently and cost-effectively. This space is evolving rapidly, and TMC's Open Source Web Summit will be an invaluable opportunity to learn about the most successful applications as well as the emerging projects coming from this community.

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Many companies are surprised at this point that they find greater need than they had initially expected.

Embrace The Challenges

Implementing a SFA program can present a number of challenges during

both the selection process and in the final implementation. The key to success is for companies to embrace those challenges and address them head-on.

Organizations should review their existing sales processes to identify and refine their sales stages, milestones and

activities; companies should also view this stage as an opportunity to make a good sales process even better.

Companies should also create an environment of knowledge and participation among its sales team. Management may make the purchase decision, but the solution's users must have input in the review and selection process. Only by the whole team taking ownership of the program can a company hope for success.

At this point, the sales organization should design methods for easily getting sales data into the system. Everyone wants the easiest way to get something done, and if the process is made too difficult, salespeople won't do it. It's important that companies develop the easiest mechanisms possible to get their sales information into the system; once that is accomplished, the organization will have an effective means for managing and reviewing the sales team.

It is recommended that companies develop a realistic schedule for implementation and start-up, with attainable goals. The sales team must be given the time to get SFA going, even if stumbling blocks appear. By setting a schedule that can be achieved or preferably exceeded, the company will build acceptance of the system and enthusiasm among its team.

By managing and addressing these challenges, sales organizations can remove many of the difficulties in implementing a sales force automation program for their companies. This can lead to a successful implementation, acceptance by the sales team, and a system that provides substantive, useful data throughout the sales management process. **CIS**

Bill Wheeler is the Marketing Manager for Avidian Technologies ([news - alert](http://www.avidian.com)) (<http://www.avidian.com>). He is a sales and marketing professional with expertise on leveraging Outlook and Exchange to help organizations be more effective. Avidian's Prophet is a full feature sales software solution built in Microsoft Outlook.

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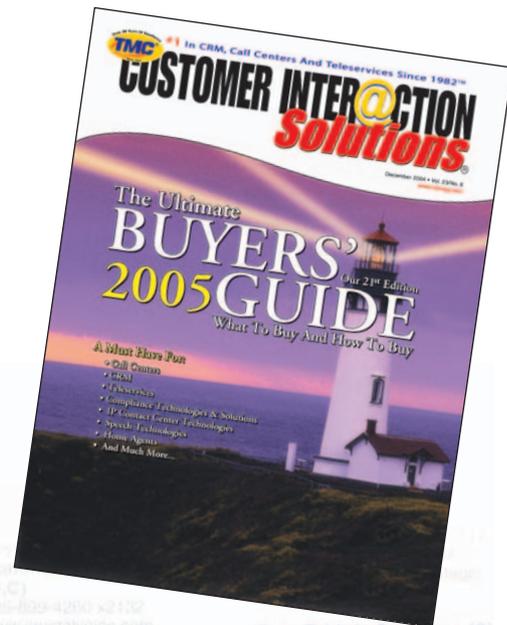
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Key Considerations In Post-Interaction Surveying: Which Data Collection Channel Is Right For You?

It is a common question in marketing research: “Which data collection channel is right for my program? Telephone, Web or IVR?” If you are talking about a contact center post-interaction survey, the answer may not be a simple one-size-fits-all solution. Each data collection channel has its own pros and cons. There are three sequential steps in the design phase of a contact center survey program:

- Developing the survey based on goals and parameters such as budget;
- Comparing each channel according to its merits and shortcomings; and
- Putting the channel you choose into operation.

Developing The Survey

Your research goals will dictate your first step in selecting a data collection methodology. These goals range from providing a valid and reliable read of customer satisfaction at the enterprise level to driving results to the agent level for one-on-one coaching. In the case of gaining an enterprise or even regional view of the company’s overall performance, telephone and Web each offer multiple benefits. Due to cost considerations, however, these channels may provide a relatively low number of completed surveys (e.g., 400). If your goal is to complement a contact center quality assurance program with agent-level “voice of the customer” feedback, [IVR \(define - news - alert\)](#) is a cost-effective option. However, whereas this type of program offers a large number of surveys (e.g., 40,000), IVR data may not be consistently representative due to low response rates and polarized customer ratings.

Some other considerations include:

Customer segment. Which customer

type is the focus of your research?

Different customer segments have different “channel preferences.” Some people prefer to be contacted over the telephone while others prefer the Internet. If you are surveying respondents in an older age segment, a telephone approach is ideal. If you are targeting technically savvy respondents, Web or IVR both work well. Because different segments of the population have different reactions to technology, be cognizant of these variations when designing your approach. One quick solution is to survey respondents using the same channel through which they contacted the company.

Budget. Many companies prefer the “high-touch” option offered by phone-based research programs but are prevented from exclusively using this channel due to budgetary constraints. IVR and Web both offer the appeal of relatively low investment compared to the phone. Beware of hidden costs in IVR implementations that may not be included in your early budget, however; the technology required for telephony and CTI integration as well as labor resources can add significant incremental expense to

your program. As an alternate low-cost option, one growing trend is to capture telephone-based survey data in a facility located offshore. This approach offers the benefits of telephone data collection at a significant savings, sometimes as much as 40 percent.

Performance incentives. Increasingly, companies are relying on customer feedback as a key indicator of contact center service quality. In an effort to drive results to the frontline agent, performance incentive programs are established whereby individuals receive positive recognition or, in some cases, monetary bonuses based in part or in whole on customer feedback. When compensation is at stake, it is especially important to choose a defensible and unbiased measurement system. The need to tie results to individual employees can make automated techniques like IVR ineffective, especially in a multicenter model, because most locations do not share identical technology infrastructures, thus creating an obstacle in “passing” agent or customer information out of the system.

Linkage analysis. Many times, customer feedback alone is insufficient for answering all of a company’s information needs. An effective technique for providing more in-depth exploration is through linkage analysis, a technique

By Mike Cholak
Convergys

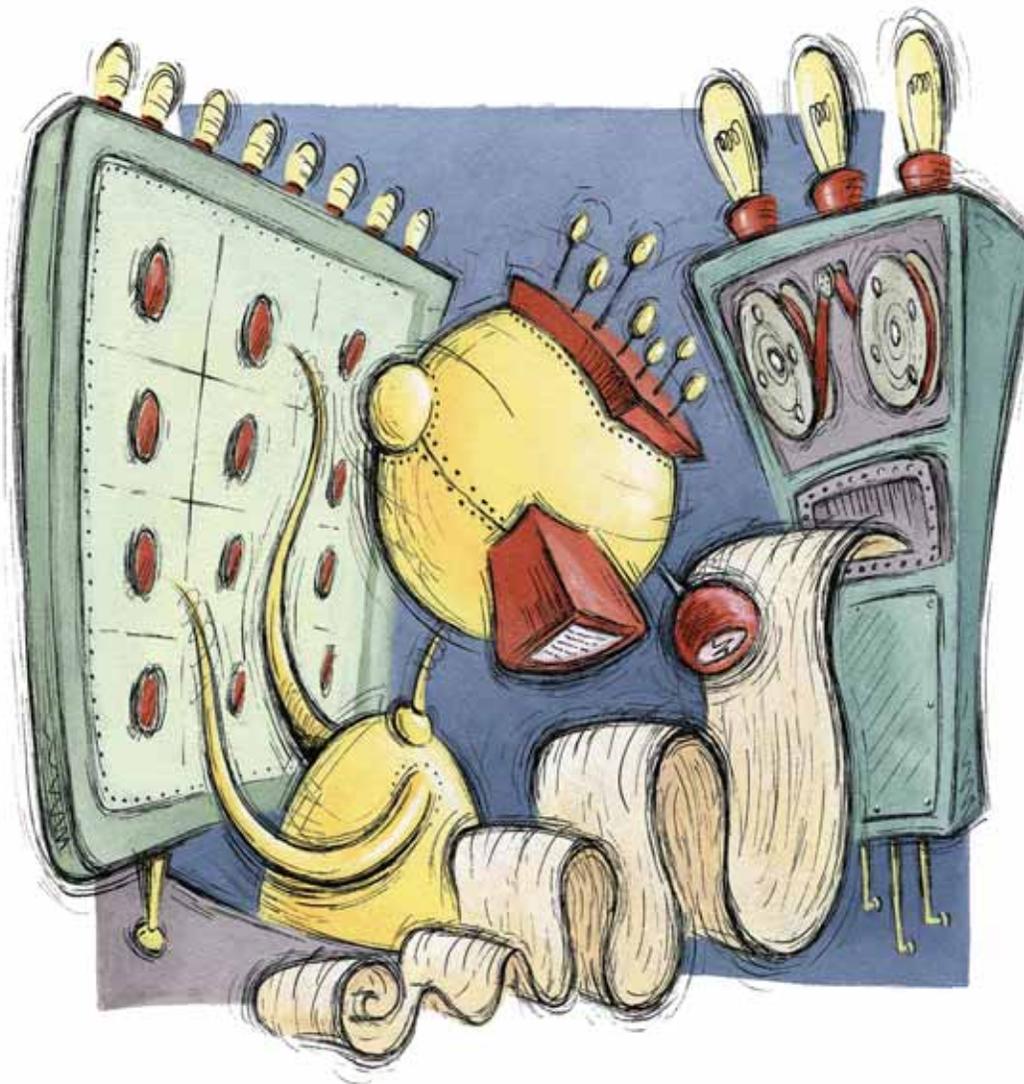
where customer scores are statistically “linked” to other operational or quality data sources. To enable a linkage approach, key identifiers like the agent who handled the call and the reason for contact must be easily “passed” out of the data systems in which they are warehoused. As noted above, the complexities inherent in an IVR solution can prevent the ease of establishing these linkages; by comparison, these obstacles are minimized for phone and Web surveys.

Survey length. Another critical consideration in designing a marketing research program is respondent fatigue, or the point in the survey at which respondents simply stop answering questions because they are bored or have become otherwise engaged. Market researchers must continually balance the need for in-depth insights against the reality that customers won’t spend a lot of time completing a survey. To that end, each of the three data collection channels discussed above offers varying success in expanding the survey length without affecting fatigue levels. Because the drop-off rate is very high with IVR technology due to lack of familiarity and low comfort levels, IVR surveys must be much shorter in length, and as a result offer “quick-hit” insights rather than more in-depth results. In contrast, Web and telephone allow for longer surveys with more attributes, deeper insights and probing of comments.

Timing of survey invitation. IVR offers the appeal of invitation immediacy. The immediacy of the survey — which is conducted as soon as the contact concludes — is commonly viewed as being critical to ensuring accurate respondent recollection. For surveys via phone or Web, the invitation may not reach the respondent until hours or even days after the contact.

Selecting The Channel

With the design in hand, now you are in a better position to make informed decisions about the channel. Table 1 is an overview of what each channel offers.



	Telephone	IVR	Web
Timing	Easily implemented. Typically 2-3 weeks to launch. Does not require additional resources for integration into IVR or agent desktop.	More difficult to implement. Typically 3-4 weeks to launch, can be longer if automated invitation used. Can require significant resources to integrate into IVR and/or agent desktop.	Easily implemented. Typically 2-3 weeks to launch. Does not require additional resources for integration into IVR or agent desktop.
Survey	Flexible design. Longer survey (8-10 mins.) provides richer insights. Readily incorporate call metrics (ASA, AHT, agent, site) into analyses. Verbatim comments rich due to probing. No transcription requirements.	Less flexible design. Short survey (2-5 mins.). Limited question types. Limited ability to incorporate call metrics (ASA, AHT, agent, site) into analyses. Verbatim comments restricted in length. Transcription is required.	Flexible design. Longer survey (10-12 mins.) provides richer insight. Readily incorporate call metrics (ASA, AHT, agent, site) into analyses. Verbatim comments rich due to probing. No transcription requirements.
Response Rate	Highest (18-25%).	Lowest (1-5%). ¹	Higher (15-20%).
Results	Representative.	Highly polarized, skewed toward positive.	Representative.
Sampling	Proven representativeness. Conveys high value to customer. First attempt made within hours of customer interaction. Can prevent respondents who recently completed a survey from participating again. Easily control all quota groups.	Limited representativeness due to low response rate. Immediately following customer interaction. Customer fatigue (with longer AHTs). Agent-initiated invite introduces bias. Cannot prevent respondents who recently completed a survey from participating again. Limited ability to control quotas, especially agent-level.	Limited representativeness due to lack of e-mail addresses. Invitation within 24 hours of customer interaction. Can prevent respondents who recently completed a survey from participating again. Limited ability to control monthly quotas by agent.
Cost	Less cost-effective, moderate with offshore option.	Moderately cost-effective.	Most cost-effective.

¹ IVR response rates are higher for agent-initiated invitations, ranging up to 20 percent or more.

Table 1.

Operationalizing The Channel You Choose

How will each data collection channel be operationalized in a contact center environment? Depending on which channel you select, your end customer will experience something different.

Interactive voice response (IVR). The key to using IVR technology in survey research is selecting the invitation approach. There are two primary invitation strategies in contact center environments that are commonly used for IVR surveying (see box). It's important to note that, regardless of invitation, all agents must disconnect the call before the customer does which requires re-training of the agent population.

Two Options For Inviting Customers To An IVR Survey

Option 1: Automated

An automated invite is played as part of the front-end IVR menu system. A subset of customers is randomly offered the chance to participate in the survey. The IVR system automatically transfers a customer who agreed to participate in the IVR survey after that customer's service transaction is complete. Agents must disconnect the call before the customer does.

Option 2: Agent-Initiated

Agents offer a pre-scripted invitation to the customer at the conclusion of the transaction. If the customer agrees to participate, the agent transfers that customer into the IVR survey system. Another option is for the customer, at the completion of the call, to ask to be transferred to the survey.

Once the customer is placed in the IVR survey, he or she proceeds through it by providing responses using the keypad and/or speaking into the mouthpiece.

If technology is inconsistent across contact centers, it can be extremely difficult to consistently "pass" agent or customer identifiers — critical for back-end analysis and one-on-one coaching —

from the front-end IVR to the IVR survey. This is the most common point in the automated invitation methodology at which the process breaks down.

With an agent-initiated invite, the actual invitation process should be closely watched by operational managers to ensure agent adherence and compliance; otherwise, there is no guarantee of an unbiased sample. This is particularly important when survey data are used in performance incentives programs.

It is always critical to remember that *anytime* the agent is directly involved in the survey invitation process, biases will enter the process.

Telephone. Telephone data collection offers a high-value, high-touch option for capturing customer feedback. It enables deep analysis into drivers of customer satisfaction. In a telephone-based survey environment, the process usually follows a common series of events: Within hours of the completion of a contact center experience, a customer receives a call from a research interviewer inviting the customer to complete a survey over the phone. If the customer agrees, the interviewer guides the customer through a survey that includes questions designed to solicit the customer's perceptions of his or her contact experience. The interviewer's role is to accurately capture the customer's answers and probe for additional insight where appropriate. (Note that in this scenario, a "research interviewer" is a professional trained in marketing research practices. It is not a good idea to use contact center agents to conduct marketing research surveys as this will invariably bias the data.)

Web. Many companies now capture e-mail information as part of broader marketing strategies, which allows an e-mail follow-up invitation to be considered in the measurement of contact center experiences. Web-based surveys are conducted by sending customers who have contacted a center an e-mail inviting them to provide feedback via an online survey about the service they received. Flexibility exists to establish

time-sensitive rules as to when the survey invitation is sent as well as contact rules that control the number of times an individual can be invited within a given time period. E-mail invitations are customizable to differentiate them from spam. Within each e-mail invitation, a URL is embedded that customers click to hyperlink into the survey. Each customer is assigned a unique pass code and login, ensuring that only the invited customer completes the survey and preventing customers from completing multiple surveys. For non-responding customers, a reminder e-mail is sent after a certain period of time from the initial mailing.

There is little question that the use of marketing research surveying to assess the quality of a contact center interaction is invaluable. Within the complex contact center environment, however, several important factors must be considered before selecting the most appropriate data collection methodology for your program. The three most common data collection channels — telephone, IVR and Web — each offer benefits and tradeoffs depending on the goals of your program and the level of insight you require. In the event that you need a valid, representative assessment of performance at the enterprise level, then telephone or Web are ideal. If you are looking to complement an existing quality assurance program with "voice of the customer" feedback and are less concerned with data representativeness, then IVR is a great option. **CIS**

Mike Cholak is a [Convergys \(news - alert\)](#) vice president in the company's Customer Care business, where he is responsible for Customer Intelligence Services. Convergys (<http://www.convergys.com/research.html>) helps clients optimize their customer management operations through a portfolio of professional services that enable companies to achieve their full business value potential.

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The Right Balance For The Call Center:

Somewhere Between Prison And An Encounter Group

The following is an excerpt from David Sims' TMCnet blog, "First Coffee," which may be viewed at <http://blog.tmcnet.com/telecom-crm>.

The British online recruitment site onrec.com recently offered a report on the two-phase effort of insurance intermediary Kwik-Fit Financial Services to "improve working life for its people."

This is commendable. Highly. Call center employees are frequently treated as so many interchangeable parts, rarely as people who want to do well at a job. And the first phase of Kwik-Fit's efforts was great. Truly. This second phase is... well, I don't know.

At many call centers, the employees feel almost like prisoners. Heck, sometimes they are prisoners — an Australian contact center newsletter (<http://www.tmcnet.com/351.1>) reported last year that prisoners "are to operate telephones for \$35 a week at a call center inside a Sydney jail."

About 30 female inmates at the medium-security Dillwynia Correctional Center, according to the report, "will handle inquiries for government agencies within the next month before pitching for private sector campaigns in the future."

The inmates reportedly "will soon begin marketing CSI products, such as recycled ink cartridges and refurbished furniture, to schools and businesses." If they do well on that, they will be

allowed to "take calls for government agencies, such as license renewal inquiries normally handled by the Roads and Traffic Authority."

Also last year, First Coffee saw a report on female prisoners in Singapore working twelve hours a day in a call center as outsource fulfillment for telecom companies in Southeastern Asia. No comments on how much they were paid — or if they were paid.

Naturally prisoners, virtual or actual, are not the most highly motivated, productive employees one can have. However, it's not difficult to imagine that absenteeism and turnover are not the problems among actual prisoners that they can be among the virtual variety.

Kwik-Fit does try harder than pretty much any contact center First Coffee has seen to keep their call center agents happy and motivated, and they have a 50 percent brilliant idea for doing so: Witness the "Making KFSS A Fantastic Place" program put in place last year.

According to News42 (www.tmcnet.com/352.1),



By David Sims
TMCnet Contributing Editor



Kwik-Fit Financial Services revamped its call center in Uddingston, eight miles east of Glasgow, after asking employees for suggestions — and receiving 6,550 of them. They spent millions of pounds putting in an IP telephone system, and added a few things not exactly commonplace in call centers.

Some are small things that don't cost anything at all: Employees have mugs instead of cups. Some of the other things do cost, but really not a whole heck of a lot, like the nursery opened on the premises. And some things, if done right, shouldn't cost at all, like the coffee franchise, Costa Coffee, opened in the call center restaurant.

Some things just show you're thinking of your employees: Kwik-Fit hired a concierge for employees, who for five pounds a month will help out with jobs such as picking up dry cleaning and going to the post office, and a "Minister of Fun" who organizes parties, football



games and such for employees. The company devised a new pension scheme as well.

Some suggestions were quietly shelved, such as the proposed rooftop helicopter pad. Of course, one wonders which employee wishes to get to work via helicopter, and just what such an individual is doing working at a call center.

News42 also reports that Kwik-Fit built a “chill out” room, “equipped with board games, vending machines, satellite TV, sofas, table football, games machines and two pool tables.” Not expensive stuff, but it lets employees know you put some thought into making their working conditions nice. You know, the old “it’s not about the money” idea.

Is it working? Over a two-year period, the company’s staff turnover dropped by 18 percent. Plug in your favorite horror numbers for how much employee

turnover costs, pick the upper-end costs for pool tables and minimum-wage nursery help and the other amenities and see for yourself if the program’s been worth it or not.

But they don’t simply provide incentive for people to show up for work. Last year, 18 employees from the approximately 1,000-employee center won all-expense paid trips to New York, and the top earner won a car. There are about 100 professional skills courses employees can take courtesy of the center. Hundred-pound shopping vouchers, choice parking spaces and other incentives are handed out frequently for “outstanding quality results,” or simply to names pulled from a hat.

Following the success of that initiative is phase two, just announced: “Fantastic You.” First Coffee is frankly dubious over both the goals and idea behind this one, mainly because I can’t identify either.

Described as “an innovative scheme designed to build relationships, increase confidence and trust and promote stronger team working within each of the departments of the business,” what the program does is sponsor retreats in a specially designed relaxation room within the Uddingston call center, and have “teams taking part in story telling workshops that encourage employees to share stories of positive experiences in their life,” according to onrec.com.

The first phase, the putting pool tables and decent coffee in call centers, awarding trips to New York, the best parking spaces to top performers, is great stuff. All for it. Sponsoring “retreats” to listen to each other talk, ummmm... the point being what, exactly?

I can see the overall idea. I can see where Kwik-Fit’s HR Director Keren Edwards is coming from when she says “We are dedicated to continuing on our journey of improvement.” I’m standing

applauding when she notes that “we are already delighted to be offering our people a competitive package, from flexi-benefits to a chill out club, the new on-site nursery to a Costa Coffee franchise — all ideas that came from phase one of our project.”

So far so good. A-plus. But the “Fantastic You” program is, well... it allows employees to “share experiences that have motivated or inspired them or shaped or changed their lives in some way,” according to Edwards, who professes herself “amazed by the trust and

enthusiasm that each of the participants have paid to the program at this early stage.”

Maybe it’s because it’s a new program that we’re not seeing any ROI associated with it the way we do with an 18 percent drop in turnover after the first phase. It has admittedly just rolled out, but the problem is that there are no real ROI metrics possible. A red flag goes up when there’s no concrete (i.e., monetary) reason for “Why are we doing this?”

Take the first part of the project, making the call center a better place for human beings than a Singaporean or Australian prison. Good idea. Put in video games, have someone run your errands while you’re working, if you work hard you win a trip to the Big Apple, you can drop your kid off at the on-site nursery, name-out-of-a-hat prizes, great stuff — tied to a specific goal, reducing employee turnover, which is tied to a specific company profit metric, saving the cost of replacing and training new employees.

This improves business quality, improves employee loyalty and morale, which aren’t just nice things, but sensible hard-headed business decisions that go straight to the bottom line. As for getting groups together to describe how much they’d like to be on *Pop Idol* or talk about their greatest date ever, why not just build a pub on site and hire a couple of psychiatrists to sit and talk with whomever wants to talk?

A good call center employee will switch to Kwik-Fit for such amenities and stay, which is the whole point. Beyond that, I can’t see where on-site girl talk groups add anything to the bottom line. What highly desirable call center employees will stay for that when they won’t stay for the free nursery care and concierge, to the point where you need to offer sessions for people to tell each other how much they’d rather be producing movies or writing novels than working at a call center?

I don’t think so. **CS**

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The final deadline is January 22, 2007.

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The final deadline is January 8, 2007.

Download the application at <http://www.tmcnet.com/369.1>

TMC Labs Innovation Awards 2006: Part II

By Tom Keating
CTO, Executive Technology Editor,
TMC Labs

The TMC Labs Innovation Awards are now in their seventh year, and still TMC Labs is amazed at the continual innovation being brought to market in the contact center space to improve training, increase morale, reduce turnover, increase efficiency and reduce infrastructure software and hardware costs. The TMC Labs Innovation Award's sole purpose is to distinguish products and services that have unique features and that often help to carve out a new market niche or start a trend. This award is also about recognizing products and services

with creative and groundbreaking features their competitors' solutions often lack.

TMC Labs researched each of the applications and eventually arrived at our winners' list. These winners have been published in two parts in order to accommodate our in-depth write-ups for the winning solutions. Part one of the winners' list was highlighted in the September 2006 issue of *Customer Inter@ction Solutions*. Congratulations to all the winners.

*Tom Keating
Chief Technology Officer, TMC;
Executive Technology Editor, TMC Labs*

Editor's note: The following TMC Labs Innovation Award winners were highlighted in Part I in the September 2006 issue of *Customer Inter@ction Solutions*.

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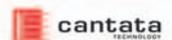
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Mitel's ([news - alert](#)) Customer Interaction Solutions portfolio is unique in its ability to target the enterprise and the small business contact centers, scaling from five to thousands of agent seats. The new offering provides organizations of any size with the flexibility to implement a contact center solution for their unique service requirements. The Mitel Customer Interaction Solutions portfolio is a two-tiered offering that encompasses the Contact Center Enterprise Edition and Contact Center Business Edition.

The new features of the Contact Center Enterprise Edition support all forms of communication including voice, e-mail, Web chat and fax. This scalable, resilient solution combines robust communications platforms, automatic call distribution (ACD) and a modular suite of feature-rich, Web-based applications for streamlining contact center management and enabling advanced multimedia customer transactions.

Developed for individual contact centers with 25 agents or less, the Contact Center Business Edition is a cost-effective, out-of-the-box solution that allows customers to choose from a number of applications in Mitel's contact center portfolio including historical reporting, real-time monitoring, dynamic agent and queue control, screen pops and intelligent messaging. The Business Edition can scale up to fit the needs of any size business.

The Customer Interaction Solutions portfolio is essentially a "contact center in a box." It offers a completely bundled solution that includes integrated multimedia routing, historical and real-time reporting, integrated forecasting, integrated workforce management, integrated call accounting and integrated intelligent announcements: expected wait time, auto-attendant, screen-pop of CRM and more. This platform avoids

"data silos" (different databases for different products) through a single, industrial-strength SQL database.

Customer Interaction Solutions was developed with .NET 2.0 and is the first to provide soft phone technology with ACD functionality and up-front advanced routing based on business intelligence which is "fed" by the CRM database.

The included soft phone features screen-pop, real-time presence and enhanced call control. The soft phone also features some time-saving functions including speed dial, pre-programmed call forward destinations, a customizable user interface and sounds for phone events. You can also select from a list of pre-configured account codes, contacts, a list of pre-configured "make busy" reason codes and quick key programming. The ACD soft phone facilitates first-contact resolution by enabling agents to avoid blind transfers by transferring calls directly to available agents they view in real time, thereby reducing instances of customers having to repeat requests in a single call.

From the real-time monitors that display calls in queue, you can simply drag a call on the screen and move that call to an alternate queue, a feature that TMC Labs found to be quite unique. In addition, you can right-click the call to transfer it to another extension (or even to yourself). Additionally, the platform can identify your most important customers and have them routed immediately to an agent.

All in all, the solution offers a great collection of features and, according to Mitel, Customer Interaction Solutions is the most affordable solution in its class.

Nexidia Inc.

Enterprise Speech Intelligence 6.0 <http://www.nexidia.com>

Nexidia ([news - alert](#)) Enterprise Speech Intelligence (ESI) 6.0 provides

a scalable speech analytics solution using a phonetic search engine that enables customers to extract actionable knowledge from recorded audio assets. It is an effective solution to mine audio content and deliver relevant knowledge and intelligence to both commercial and government organizations.

Nexidia's core Phonetic Search Engine is an open-systems vocabulary retrieval system that both reduces the time and increases the accuracy of searches against large collections of recorded speech. Unique to Nexidia is that during the ingest process, audio files are marked in phonemes, the smallest unit of human speech. The Nexidia server ingests audio files to create a .PAT file (phonetic audio track), thus marking the audio files so they can be rendered phonetically searchable. Search terms and queries are created and applied against these .PAT files. The results of these searches and queries are then compiled and generated into dashboards, charts, trending and analysis reports. Using the Nexidia Replay feature, these audio files can be played back and further searched, allowing the enterprise to drill down into the intelligence contained in the recorded audio content, generating more in-depth analysis.

ESI 6.0 ensures accurate results by providing language models trained on a wide variety of accents and dialects. Nexidia states that, compared to traditional speech-to-text models that are heavily dependent on dictionaries, ESI 6.0's phonetic approach provides a dramatically more accurate search analysis on all recorded audio. The search and query functionality available through ESI 6.0 not only finds words and phrases, but to ensure relevance, finds them in proximity to other content, thus generating more relevant results. The audio can immediately be played and the result can be listened to within the context of the original file.

Nexidia's phonetic search engine (PSE) is the only technology that enables audio-video search by using phonemes. This allows the user to search on proper names, places, industry terms and jargon without extensive training and dictionaries. This powerful phonetic search engine delivers relevant data from both poor-quality audio, such as cell phones, and high-quality sources, such as broadcast audio, and supports all audio variances, such as 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.

Nexidia's technology is very fast, indexing recorded audio at a speed 63 times faster than the spoken word, creating viable, cost-effective solutions that make large volumes of audio searchable. Nexidia can render audio searchable with significantly less hardware than other technologies.

Nexidia ESI can also be delivered as an on-demand service. Nexidia's OnDemand managed service offering provides organizations with the ability to leverage Nexidia's secure infrastructure to upload recorded audio for analysis and reporting via an on-demand portal.

Nortel

Nortel Contact Center 6.0
<http://www.nortel.com>

[Nortel \(quote - news - alert\)](#) Contact Center 6.0 (NCC 6.0) combines several products in the Nortel Symposium family, allowing businesses to tap into the power of real-time multimedia collaboration using any device. NCC 6.0 is scalable and supports industry standards such as SIP, but more important, it is modular so it has all the benefits of an all-in-one solution while allowing customers to buy just what they need.

Nortel Contact Center is simpler to set up and adapt, significantly lowering lifetime costs. Additionally, NCC 6.0 brings together contact center, self-service, unified messaging and multimedia collaboration into a native SIP-enabled modular suite called Nortel Applications Center.

Nortel claims that NCC, previously known as Symposium Call Center Server, was the first contact center product globally to offer skills-based routing instead of ACD. They also claim that Nortel Contact Center 6.0 is the first contact center to provide native SIP connectivity. Nortel Contact Center 6.0 is an open, standards-based solution that uses standards like SIP and VoiceXML where available, and also uses industry tools such as the .NET framework. For example, Nortel Communication Control Toolkit, the next-generation CTI capability which is integral to Nortel Contact Center, reduces application integration time and costs with a familiar set of tools. The Report Generation Wizard lets users quickly generate custom reports without requiring database expertise.

NCC 6 is extremely scalable. A single node center can expand to a maximum of 3,350 concurrent active agents, handle 66,000 calls per hour, support 1,000 skill sets with 100 active skill sets per agent, and can grow to a virtual contact center that includes 30 nodes for 100,000 agents total. Also, NCC 6 integrates seamlessly with Nortel Contact Recording and Nortel Quality Monitoring, two key components of any contact center. Like all Nortel solutions, these are infrastructure-neutral, working in an IP, TDM or a hybrid network. Nortel Contact Center also works seamlessly with the full range of Nortel speech and self-service solutions, applications and services. For example, a corporate-wide licensing model means customers can deploy software license capacity where it makes sense for business continuity and lower cost of ownership.

Pegasystems

Pega Customer Process Manager
<http://www.pegasystems.com>

[Pegasystems' \(news - alert\)](#)

Customer Process Manager is a CRM application that delivers best-practice processes for customer service, sales and marketing. Pega Customer Process Manager provides a powerful combination of rules and process management capabilities that enable organizations to unify their business goals with their systems and operations.

Pegasystems has stated that it provides the only CRM solution that is built on a unified business process management (BPM) and business rules platform. Because of this "smart" BPM foundation, the system can intelligently integrate application functions, essential enterprise data and human tasks into efficient, streamlined customer-centric processes, and establishes and enforces complex sets of rules that govern application behavior and drive decision-making. These capabilities make complicated CRM tasks easy to coordinate, track and analyze.

Sophisticated work management functions facilitate advanced routing, escalation and prioritization of work. With this platform, companies can achieve intelligent customer interactions that drive profitability and build loyalty as well as perform one-and-done process automation that improves productivity and reduces costs.

Among the intelligent interaction management features are predictive servicing capabilities that use real-time decisions to dynamically change business processes based on business intent and enterprise knowledge, taking the guesswork out of managing customer relationships. The solution also features role-based and context-specific screen flows and dialog scripts to guide users through every customer interaction and ensure consistency and quality. A dynamic user interface presents customer data only when and where the information is needed,

reducing training time and improving productivity. The platform also features real-time analytics to provide insight into key performance indicators. Organizations are able to quickly respond to changes in business objectives and can rapidly deploy new CRM initiatives, measure their effectiveness and refine their processes continuously for increased agility and return on investment.

Customers have achieved measurable value for their investment, including improved customer retention rates by 50 percent, improved first-call/contact resolution by 50 percent, reduced handle time by 80 percent, reduced manual steps by 60 percent, increased cross-sell/upsell close rates by 100 percent, improved time-to-market for new products and services by 50 percent and reduced user training time by 50 percent.

RightNow Technologies

<http://www.rightnow.com>

RightNow 8

RightNow 8 is the latest release of RightNow Technologies' ([news - alert](#)) flagship CRM solution. The hosted, on-demand solution optimizes the customer experience by delivering "knowledge at the point of action" (or "KAPA") across an organization's frontline marketing, sales and service touch points. By ensuring that customers and staff have the information they need when they need it, RightNow 8 can generate significant cost savings.

RightNow 8 focuses on customers by the delivery of knowledge to frontline, customer-facing staff to enable smarter, faster and more customer-driven behaviors across the enterprise. According to RightNow, "the focus on KAPA across the frontline differentiates RightNow's value proposition from conventional CRM, which has historically been limited to narrow business challenges such as sales automation or back-office market analytics."

RightNow 8 consists of three main

modules: Marketing, Sales and Service. RightNow 8 Marketing enables marketing teams to quickly design and execute multi-stage campaigns and closely track their results. New features in the latest version include support for more granular segmentation, a document repository that simplifies management of content across all campaign-related activities, and enhanced Microsoft Outlook integration. RightNow 8 Sales enables sales teams to effectively and efficiently convert leads and opportunities into sales. It provides complete sales productivity tools, pipeline management and reporting capabilities required to maximize team performance. New features in the latest version include enhanced quote/proposal generation, differentiated workflow for unqualified leads versus qualified opportunities, and improved support for mobile Blackberry users. RightNow 8 Service enables contact centers to deliver a consistently superior service experience across all communication channels and to substantially reduce operational costs. New features in the latest version include expanded search parameters, enhanced workflow design tools and greater role-specific customization capabilities.

It also has modules for surveys as well as reporting and analysis. RightNow 8 Analytics provides highly robust tools for quick and easy creation of fully personalized reports and dashboards. RightNow 8 Surveys makes it easy to design, distribute and analyze the results of sophisticated surveys and incorporate the results of those surveys into customers' records.

One of the most unique features is the solution's sophisticated drag-and-drop interface customization capabilities, which is something you typically see in customer premise software — not within an on-demand environment. The ability to mix-and-match functionality across components in a single console allows for "blended" roles such as inbound customer service representatives who can also execute upsell/cross-sell transactions.

salesforce.com, inc.

AppExchange

<http://www.salesforce.com>

[salesforce.com \(quote - news - alert\)](#) is well-known for its on-demand CRM application. The company has now built a complete on-demand infrastructure on which enterprises can run their entire business. It's called AppExchange. With AppExchange, any enterprise can manage and share information across their organization. AppExchange OS, salesforce.com's new on-demand operating system, allows companies to manage and share CRM and custom business applications in a single environment — with one data model, one sharing model and one user interface. Tools are available to build it yourself, or you can browse the AppExchange directory for community-built, install-with-a-click apps ranging from expense management to purchasing to recruiting.

AppExchange lowers the barriers for developers to build and distribute their own on-demand applications to the growing, global salesforce.com customer base. With the tools available on the AppExchange platform, even those companies without software development expertise can easily build, save and share their on-demand applications. salesforce.com leverages the latest Web development tools, such as AJAX, PHP and Ruby on Rails, providing the salesforce.com community with tools to create new innovations such as enterprise "mash-ups" with other business applications and popular consumer Internet services.

AppExchange includes superb customization and integration toolkits, enabling almost anyone to easily tailor the salesforce.com CRM application or build entirely new on-demand applications. Users also can quickly build integrations between salesforce.com and legacy applications or build more advanced new applications with AppExchange API, salesforce.com's Web service architecture. According to salesforce.com, the AppExchange API

is one of the most successful enterprise Web services APIs, handling more than 45 percent of salesforce.com's 2.6 billion transactions. Salesforce.com stated, "By providing these tools to the more than 15,000 developers in the AppExchange developer network, salesforce.com is extending the creativity that is commonplace on the consumer Web to businesses for the first time. New on-demand applications ranging from human resources, finance and legal operations can be easily built, saved and shared on the AppExchange."

Spanlink Communications
Spanlink Quality Management
<http://www.spanlink.com>

Spanlink ([news](#) - [alert](#)) Quality Management is a quality monitoring system that captures both voice and screen activity for effectively evaluating and improving agent performance. In a unique manner, Spanlink Quality Management software uses the processing power of the agent's PC to record and process the voice and screen transactions for performance evaluation or compliance. This edge-oriented application architecture minimizes hardware and bandwidth utilization in a distributed or virtual environment and adds more scalability. Once the transactions are recorded, supervisors can review and score the transactions against key performance metrics, which drives initiatives for quality improvements and training.

Spanlink Quality Management is the first compliance recording and quality management product to be "edge-architected" for distributed/virtual environments. Edge architecture has several key advantages, including more reliable system performance (reduced server bloat, smarter network utilization, expanded system capacity and reduced capital and operating expense).

Spanlink Quality Management was

designed to handle distributed or virtual contact center environments and can easily provide the features they need for voice/screen recording, evaluation and training. Spanlink Quality Management is part of a full suite of products built for VoIP, including agent productivity/desktop tools, supervisor KPI management and collaboration tools, workforce optimization, self-service and solution management tools.

Because of the architecture, Spanlink Quality Management is very effective for real-time evaluation and analytics. It integrates tightly within the supervisor desktop to provide easy access to collaboration tools for coaching, evaluation and training, which is particularly beneficial in multisite deployments where evaluators and agents may not be collocated.

The SAVO Group
Sales Asset Manager
<http://www.savogroup.com>

The goal of The SAVO Group ([news](#) - [alert](#)) is to use technology to improve sales force execution through more consistent delivery of the right messages and making the most powerful selling materials accessible in real time. With an innovative application designed for the front-line salesperson, The SAVO Group provides hosted, on-demand sales enablement solutions to clients in the financial services, business services, high tech and healthcare industries, among others.

SAVO's Sales Asset Manager (SAM) is an on-demand application that allows salespeople to quickly identify the most effective "sales assets" (presentations, documents, coaching aids, internal resources, etc.) based on a given sales situation (customer profile, solution, sales stage, methodology, competitive landscape, etc.). Through an automated survey of relevant criteria, SAM proactively recommends the most appropriate sales assets and leverages the criteria to make cross-selling recommendations early in the sales process — a critical factor in successful solution

selling. If necessary, salespeople may then rapidly customize sales assets while adhering to corporate standards for quality and consistency. SAVO's technology leverages a 100 percent Web-based, multitenant, on-demand architecture. SAM is built entirely on .NET and is completely Web services-compliant. Additionally, the latest SAM 5.2 release provides full seamless integration with salesforce.com.

According to The SAVO Group, "While information systems have always existed on the market in some form or another to store assets, these systems have turned into dumping grounds for outdated messaging and materials. This results in users wasting countless hours searching for up-to-date, relevant materials, and then cutting and pasting them to fit their needs." SAM, on the other hand, leverages a "push" model for content delivery rather than the legacy "pull" model incorporated by many competing solutions. According to The SAVO Group, "Rather than forcing salespeople to go on an "archeological dig" every time they need the latest executive presentation, case study or coaching document, SAM proactively recommends the BEST sales assets based on the selling situation. Simply stated, our philosophy is 'stop searching, start selling.'"

Marketing and product management teams leverage SAM to create, publish, maintain and analyze sales assets. By using an intuitive user interface, content owners can easily monitor sales assets, make modifications, define new rules and publish updated messaging quickly and with no intervention from IT. Through embedded analytics, marketing can immediately assess which assets get used by the sales organization and in which selling situations. This real-time visibility drives ongoing improvement of the sales assets, further maximizing sales effectiveness and marketing return on investment (ROI).

Toshiba Telecommunication Systems Division

Strata ACD Call Center Solution <http://www.toshiba.com>

Toshiba's ([news - alert](#)) Strata ACD is an IP call center solution designed for small to medium-sized enterprises or larger corporate users with multiple sites. The Strata ACD is compatible with Toshiba's Strata CIX IP family of business communication solutions. Toshiba's Media Application Server is one of the first to use Host Media Processor (HMP) technology resources as an alternative to Intel Dialogic boards in the server. HMP does not require card slots, making the server more compact and more cost-effective.

The Strata ACD is also the first and only to take advantage of Toshiba's FeatureFlex adaptability tool, which allows users to customize their own individual features to help them be more efficient with their communications solution. FeatureFlex makes the resources of the system available to create new or blended features and applications. It allows enterprises to create user-definable features companywide, by department, or for individual users. For a call center, it enables the system to be connected to valuable information resources, such as inventory, shipping, back-office information, etc. It can also connect to online information such as weather, stock tickers, etc.

There are several FeatureFlex modules available. A one-number access "find-me" feature lets callers easily find you. An interesting call screening feature allows users to set up separate lists so incoming calls are routed according to their ranking. For example, incoming calls from "friends" are always routed through, while calls from "foes" go directly into voice mail. Call monitor is a "listen in" feature that allows users to listen to voice messages as they are being recorded and pull the call out of voice mail, converting it to a live call. Call return is a nice usability feature that allows users to

listen to voice mails in queue, return calls as they listen to calls and return to the next voice message in queue, all within the same telephone call.

The Strata ACD and reporting applications reside on the Strata Media Application Server (MAS), with auto-attendant, voice mail, unified messaging, video conferencing and collaboration and many other applications, making it a very cost-effective add-on since it shares the hardware platform.

Strata ACD is compatible with all Strata CIX systems, making the CIX100 with Strata ACD affordable for small applications. It can also be networked across multiple Strata CIX systems, allowing for use in larger call centers. Toshiba's Strata ACD is an IP solution that works with Toshiba's IP telephones over Toshiba's Strata CIX IP business communication solution. It can also be converged to add Toshiba's digital telephones.

Verint Systems Inc.

IntelliQuality <http://www.verint.com>

([news - alert](#)) ULTRA IntelliQuality is an enterprise quality monitoring (QM) solution that is the first QM tool to leverage multiple sophisticated analytics technologies to create what Verint calls a "focused quality monitoring process." Focused quality monitoring involves the use of analytics to intelligently handle volumes of data in a fast and efficient manner by looking for trends in the data that can uncover previously unknown actionable intelligence. By combining speech, screen and data analytics into one QM solution, IntelliQuality identifies the calls that matter most, facilitates more efficient and in-depth evaluation and generates actionable intelligence that the contact center and the enterprise can use to improve key strategic areas. According to Verint, "By improving agent performance while simultaneously extending the benefits of quality monitoring beyond the contact center, businesses are able to achieve a higher

return on investment (ROI) from their QM initiatives."

IntelliQuality's embedded analytics automatically categorize and push the most important calls to a Smart Inbox for evaluation via a set of focused delivery rules. Leveraging Verint's IntelliFind speech recognition technology, calls are pushed to the supervisor inbox based on spoken conversation such as customer complaints or first-call resolution. Verint IntelliScreen delivers calls to the supervisor inbox based on agent desktop application activity. In addition, IntelliQuality seamlessly integrates with CTI events. For example, if the supervisor is interested in evaluating calls between two to four minutes with more than 50 seconds of hold time, they can set a rule in IntelliQuality to have a sample of interactions within these parameters delivered to their inbox automatically.

Verint is a rare company that has the technical know-how to combine speech, screen and data analytics technologies to provide a comprehensive quality monitoring solution. Verint also leveraged their understanding of how contact center managers and quality professionals operate to create an evaluator workspace that is conducive to efficiency. IntelliQuality's multimedia forms workspace allows quality supervisors to review synchronized voice and desktop activity and fill out evaluation forms in one place. These custom evaluation forms feature simple navigation and advanced tools such as a multi-language spellchecker to make filling out forms fast and easy.

Via its integration with IntelliMiner, IntelliQuality can also help automatically calibrate supervisors across the contact center. By analyzing all evaluated calls, the deviations between all calls and specific situations such as time of day or individual supervisor can be automatically identified and presented. For example, if contacts evaluated by a specific supervisor are scored higher consistently, the platform can identify this trend. **CIS**

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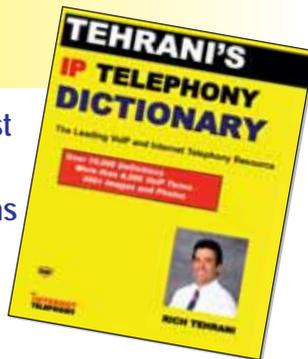
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By Tracey E. Schelmetic
 Editorial Director, Customer Inter@ction Solutions

The Church Of Return On Investment

The phrase “Return on Investment” is used so often nowadays, a casual observer would think it had become a new religion. “We praise thee, Return on Investment. Bless our customers, our suppliers, our partners, our operations and our books.”

The sins of questionable technology purchases that occurred before the late 1990s/early 2000 bubble exploded are still being atoned for today. When the tech market was up, up and away, no one could imagine there was any technology in the marketplace that wouldn't pay for itself within a few years from the astronomical profits that were being reaped, or the jaw-dropping amount of venture capital money that seemed to show up in the mailbox unsolicited, almost like junk mail. A digital, [VoIP-enabled \(define - news - alert\)](#) talking water cooler? Check. A fridge in the kitchen with a Web browser built in? Check. Giant flat screen monitors in the mail room? Check. A PDA for the 62-year-old receptionist Elsie who finds calculators frightfully complicated? Check. If Star-Trek-style teleportation was available in 1998, no doubt the executives of even mid-sized companies would be regularly uttering to their IT engineers: “Beam me to my investment banker's office, Norbert.”

Then reality, as it is wont to do, came crashing down around everyone's ears. Everyone's tech stock and personal tech stock portfolios shrank from a king's ransom to a Victorian laundress' Christmas bonus. Venture capital money no longer rained from the skies. Customers stopped spending and instead started concentrating on trying to pay down their astronomical debt. And yet...that shiny new phase one CRM installation you just completed in early 2000 still had to be paid for, and the sales department wasn't even using it, particularly since you could no longer afford the professional services to maintain the system. It had too many features and only confused users, it didn't integrate well, and it required a medium-sized army of geeks to maintain. Since you recommended the purchase, you were forced to account for the system on the carpet in the CFO's office. You looked forward the appointment about as much as you'd look forward to an extended root canal session with Laurence Olivier's Dr. Christian Szell in “Marathon Man”.

As your grandmother used to say (or someone's grandmother, anyway), necessity IS the parental influence of invention, so the enterprise communications software solutions that emerged after 2000 were stripped down, modular, streamlined and affordable. You bought only what you needed, and you had to cost-justify it down to the last nut and bolt before you got the purchase order signed. One of your only moderately necessary internal organs was removed by the board and frozen as a hostage to ensure the performance of the software you had recommended. The early disciples of the Church of the Return on Investment began creating their holy book at this time. In the days of old, a return on investment period that extended forward for years was not unheard of; by the new ROI dogma, the system had to pay for itself in months, not years.

During the post-2000 years, in the call center, we saw only a few technologies thriving; those that had the quickest and most provable return on investment. Recording and monitoring and workforce management were among the few solutions that were growing in leaps and bounds, both in sophistication and in sales. These technologies enabled call centers to make more with less: more call coverage with fewer agents, the ability to more easily weed out unproductive or counter-productive agents, the ability to make sure the key performance indicators were met with the fewest possible agents. Speech technology (a sexy but at-the-time deemed science fiction-oriented proposal) stagnated. Giant, early-phase CRM began to collapse under its own weight, like a kind of enterprise neutron star on its way to becoming a black hole. Web-based customer service solutions wandered around aimlessly. Call center solutions companies issued press releases proudly announcing that, for the first time in five quarters, they had managed to not lose any money last quarter. And we congratulated them for it wholeheartedly...it was a rare accomplishment.

Dot com start-ups with strange, cute names but no apparent products mysteriously disappeared overnight; their CEOs

showed up months later working at Starbucks counters asking if you wanted an extra shot of espresso with that tall caffamocha-caramel-mango latte. Some of these CEOs even went back and finished junior high school.

The ASP (application service provider) market had been in its infancy when the meteor of techno-recession hit, and it was powerfully interrupted by the impact. It took several years for the industry, now christened hosted, on-demand or software-as-a-service (SaaS), to elbow its way back into the business public's psyche. When the CFOs of the world finally took a close look at it, en masse, some realizations were made. "This could save us some money," they said to themselves. "No need to collect kidneys of IT administrators as insurance against loss."

At the ICCM show in August, I met with Prem Uppaluru, CEO of [Transera](#), ([news - alert](#)) a company that provides its call center application, Seratel, as a software-as-a-service. During the course of our conversation, Prem used the phrase "return without investment" to describe the software-as-a-

service industry. Others describe SaaS as mistake-proof technology buying. Companies can buy the features they need (and add more later should their needs change) in a modular fashion, scale up or down in terms of seats according to their contact center's cyclical or unexpected needs, move the entire call center to another location almost instantaneously in the case of a disaster such as a hurricane, eliminate costly professional services and internal IT administration and, most important, eliminate the need for a substantial up-front cash outlay (or any cash outlay at all, in some circumstances).

Return without investment. Many say religions are too dogmatic to embrace change, but my bet is that it won't take long for the disciples of the Church of Return on Investment to alter their rules to accommodate software-as-a-service.

And thousands of IT workers can have their spleens back. [CIS](#)

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Total Free Distribution:	3,290	2,485	248	337	3,538	2,822
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