



CUSTOMER INTER@CTION *Solutions*[®]

September 2006 • Vol. 25/No. 4
www.cismag.com



#1 In CRM, Call Centers And Teleservices Since 1982[™]

Predictive Dialing Meets SIP

Interaction Dialer[®] 2.4

Intelligent outbound capability,
a pure VoIP environment

from
Interactive Intelligence Inc.[®]

See inside cover flap or page 30

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Don't Miss

Call Center 2.0![™]
Conference

October 11-13, 2006 • San Diego, CA

www.itexpo.com

old rule:

“IP-enabled”
is close
enough.

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NEW RULE

Buy an IP *system*, not a label

Announcing Interaction Dialer® 2.4 and the Interaction Gateway™

One fully integrated system for SIP-based outbound dialing

The truth? Predictive dialers, PBXs, gateways and other hardware boxes from proprietary vendors just aren't made for software-leaning standards like the Session Initiation Protocol.

“IP-enabled” or not.

At Interactive Intelligence, we had standards such as SIP and the Internet Protocol in mind more than a decade ago, and architected our interaction management software using an open, integrated system approach from the start.

That's why Interaction Dialer 2.4 and SIP are meant for one another.

Inherently.

Pure VoIP environment for outbound campaigns

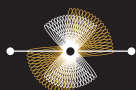
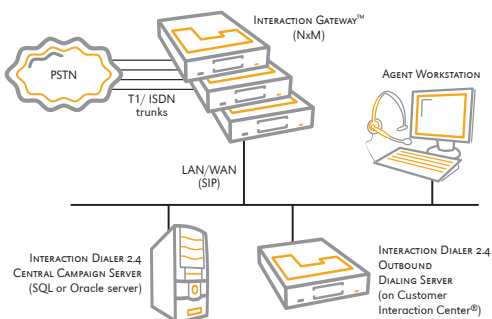
Begin with the Customer Interaction Center® (CIC) IP contact center platform from Interactive Intelligence. Integrate the server-driven Interaction Dialer 2.4 solution via your LAN or WAN. Deploy the Interaction Gateway network appliance for digital trunk-to-SIP conversion. Configure it all using CIC's central Web-based administration interface...

And get advanced call analysis for high-volume outbound dialing and call loads that no other dialer/ gateway combination can handle.

All in a single IP system that also equips your contact center with:

- A complete foundation for SIP-based outbound as well as inbound dialing for blended campaign activities—highlighted by inherent blending
- Preview, power, predictive, precise, and multi-modal “agentless” dialing modes
- A patented predictive algorithm to drive stage-based predicting for more granularity and agent utilization
- Flexible Interaction Gateway options, including an NxM architecture for greater scalability, load balancing and fault tolerance
- Multiple scripting options, from simple forms to WYSIWYG editing to COM API integration
- Regulation adherence for Telemarketing Sales Rules, safe harbor call logging, and caller ID support
- Readily-viewed campaign statistics in the *Interaction Supervisor™* plug-in

Interaction Dialer® 2.4 Architecture



INTERACTIVE INTELLIGENCE
Deliberately Innovative

We like changing the rules.

visit | www.inin.com/products/dialer
for more on the next generation of predictive dialing



CUSTOMER INTER@CTION *Solutions*

September 2006 • Vol. 25/No. 4
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#1 In CRM, Call Centers And Teleservices Since 1982™

TMC Lights The Way To:

TMC Call Center 2.0™

October 10-13, 2006 — San Diego California

www.callcenter20.com



Also In This Issue:

- Finally, A Call Center Trade Show That Addresses The Real Needs Of The Industry
- Workforce Management: The Contact Center's Easy Button?
- TMC Labs Innovation Awards Part I
- Salesforce.com's Marc Benioff Aiming For A Billion In Sales

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

CALL CENTER 2.0

<http://www.callcenter20.com>

Finally **A WORLD-CLASS EVENT**
Featuring **WORLD-CLASS SPEAKERS**
And **GLOBAL ATTENDEES**

Sponsored By
CUSTOMER INTER@CTION SOLUTIONS®

The magazine that pioneered, educated, developed and marketed the contact center industry since 1982.

*Finally, a call center trade show that addresses
THE REAL NEEDS of the industry.*

Those of you who have been in the industry for several years, I am sure, will agree that the above statement is **NOT** a sales pitch! It is a statement that addresses the industry's **TRUE** needs.

Why Do People Attend Conferences And Exhibitions?

During the last quarter century, I have learned that people come to shows for the following reasons:

1. To learn what is new;
2. To learn about cutting-edge technologies because savvy management knows that if a company

4. To learn from truly informative, **NON-COMMERICAL SEMINARS AND CONFERENCES PRESENTED BY TRUE INDUSTRY EXPERTS;**

5. To actually compare and buy new technologies in the exhibit hall;
6. To find out what the competition is up to;
7. Last but not least, to meet and network with industry leaders and decision makers to exchange views and learn from each other's experiences.

If you are serious about taking your call center, CRM and teleservices center to the next level, Call Center 2.0 is the only show you need to attend!

- does not keep up with advanced technologies, that company could face obsolescence, which of course leads to going out of business;
3. To gain greater knowledge about the industry from qualified industry leaders;

The One-Third Rule

1. Long ago, I learned that, at a trade show, one third of knowledge is gained by attending the seminars and conferences, provided they are presented by TRUE industry leaders.
2. The next third comes from visiting every relevant exhibitor and discussing your needs and problems and seeking solutions from



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exhibitors. In this manner, you can also compare different solutions from different exhibitors prior to purchasing the appropriate technology.

3. The final third of information comes from networking with leading industry experts and colleagues and conferring with them to verify the proper decisions in purchasing the appropriate technology.

Let us remember that the information obtained from each of the above three cases is totally different, but the knowledge they yield is very complementary.

Unfortunately, gaining this important information is currently NOT possible by attending the presently existing call center trade shows, particularly when it comes to learning about and acquiring cutting-edge technology in the call center and CRM industries.

Here are some specifics:

Elementary Level Of Conferences

1. It is common knowledge that a low level of conference presentation by unqualified or partially qualified speakers does not merit attendance by senior management. Consequently, in existing shows, you will find very little, if any, decision makers. In addition, at such shows, you will rarely find industry leaders or industry experts with whom to confer about your needs and requirements.

2. The coverage of advanced technology is practically non-existent in currently existing call center conferences. The reason: none of the organizers and/or producers of currently existing call center trade shows have in-depth knowledge of advanced technology or the industry; none have industry leadership in print publications; and, if they exist online, they have extremely poor Alexa rankings, which means they hardly have any Web site traffic due to inadequate content.

3. In addition to such sub-par content, presently existing conferences are not marketed properly and, therefore, hardly any attendees are found in the

exhibit hall which, by itself, is wasting the time and money of the exhibitors.

At one recent show, the attendance was so low in the exhibit hall that the exhibitors of Argentine companies were actually playing soccer and tennis in the middle of the exhibit hall, surrounded only by other exhibitors during exhibit hours. This low attendance, in my opinion, is the greatest disgrace I have ever witnessed in any conference in our industry.

4. As I tour the hall and meet the exhibitors at such shows, unfortunately, I hear a barrage of complaints from exhibitors that, "There is no traffic here, and we can't wait to find a better convention to exhibit at."

As I was walking through such a poorly organized and marketed trade show, I asked myself, "What have they done to my industry? Did the organizers really give a damn about the industry, attendees and exhibitors or are they in it just to make some money and run the show into the ground?" I was truly disappointed and came to the conclusion that this comedy of errors must stop.

Those of you who have been in the industry for more than 20 years, I am sure, recall that TMC once sponsored the industry's leading call center trade show, called TBT (Telemarketing and Business Telecommunications) Conference and Exhibition. We have decided that the time has arrived for us to come in with a truly cutting-edge, technology-focused convention for the call center/CRM industry.

Differentiation

I asked Greg Galitzine, an Editorial Director of TMC who actually designed and engineered the conference program for Call Center 2.0, to explain how he would differentiate Call Center 2.0 with existing conferences? Here are his comments:

"What sets Call Center 2.0 apart from the competition? Quite simply, there is no other venue that offers such an in-depth education on the very subjects you need to know if your job is to select the technology that makes your

contact center run effectively and PROFITABILITY.

IP technologies have taken telecommunications by storm. As such, if you are tasked with making telecom purchasing decisions for your contact center, you need to be up to speed on the latest developments and the latest tools available to help you deploy and manage agents in the most efficient, cost-effective way possible.

Call Center 2.0 is the leading event for call center management to learn about using IP communications to improve efficiency, reduce costs and increase the level of customer service. Attendees will learn about IP call centers and VoIP, ([define - news - alert](#)) deploying IP-based home agents, speech technologies, CRM, workforce optimization and all other technologies that improve call center effectiveness and efficiency.

The Call Center 2.0 conference program will also feature specialized content from the Telework Coalition, so if you're looking to learn about the latest developments surrounding Work@Home technologies, policies, procedures and processes, there's only one event to turn to: Call Center 2.0."

The Real Needs Of The Industry

Because of the above reasons, we decided we would develop Call Center 2.0, a trade show that addresses **THE REAL NEEDS OF OUR INDUSTRY** as presented by **TRUE INDUSTRY LEADERS**.

Unsurpassed Global Marketing Brings 9,000 Decision Makers From Around The World Every Time

Call Center 2.0 will be collocated with TMC's world-renowned INTERNET TELEPHONY Conference & EXPO, which traditionally brings 8,000 to 10,000 senior management attendees from around the globe.

This global audience represents conferees from **an average of 115 countries** at every show!! Obviously, this verifiable number of global attendees is unmatched

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9 seconds

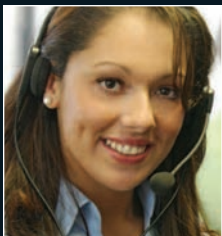
Average time to answer inbound calls.

92 percent

Percent of inbound calls answered in 20 seconds or less.

3 percent

Overall percent of inbound calls abandoned.



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by any other existing, related conference.
25 Years Of Excellence

On May 4, 2006, Mr. Steve Brubaker, Senior Vice President of InfoCision Management Corporation, a leading, high-quality teleservices outsourcing company, honored me on behalf of the contact center industry in New York City with a bronze plaque. On the plaque it reads:

"To Mr. Nadji Tehrani, for 25 years of excellence....teleservices industry founder, leader and visionary." (See the June 2006 issue for coverage of the Lifetime Achievement Award ceremony). Of course, I was extremely humbled. Given the above background, it is my humble opinion that one needs to dominate ALL three vitally important components of integrated marketing in order to qualify to sponsor a cutting-edge, well attended global contact center trade show.

TMC Dominates The Three Vital Areas Of Integrated Marketing

1. Print Media Marketing

As you know, our flagship publication, *Customer Inter@ction Solutions*, which recently celebrated its 25th year anniversary, has been the voice of the industry since 1982 and is still regarded worldwide as **"THE ONLY CREDIBLE SOURCE OF INFORMATION ON THE INDUSTRY."** Therefore, TMC continues to dominate the printed media. This helps us bring savvy, targeted attendees and speakers to Call Center 2.0.

2. Online Supremacy

As you also know, TMC continues to dominate the online traffic by bringing in over one million unique visitors per month and 18 million page views per month to our Web site, <http://www.tmcnet.com>. No other technology medium that focuses on our industry and no other business publication even comes close to TMC's Alexa rankings. For the information of our valued readers, Alexa.com is a highly respected Web site traffic auditing agency. As such, the lower the ranking number on Alexa.com, the higher the

traffic. TMCnet.com, the Web site of TMC, ranks better than three quarters of the Fortune 500 companies and **it is the world's leading communications and technology Web site**. Therefore, TMC's Web domination, which is second to none in our industry, plays a unique and powerful role in the marketing of all TMC events.

3. Events Supremacy

Based on the marketing power of TMC's highly respected, industry-leading publications such as *INTERNET TELEPHONY*® magazine, *Customer Inter@ction Solutions*® magazine, *IMSTM* and *SIPSTM* magazines, the quality and quantity of senior management attendance at *INTERNET TELEPHONY*® Conference and EXPO (which encompasses Call Center 2.0) is second to none.

TMC's unquestioned supremacy in all three of the above vitally important areas will continue to differentiate Call Center 2.0 as well as the cutting-edge technology offerings in the IP contact center, workforce optimization, CRM and speech technology areas.

For all of the above reasons, we believe that any serious executive who is interested in learning about applications, implementations and cutting-edge technologies in the contact center, CRM and call center arenas must attend Call Center 2.0 (October 10th to 13th, 2006, located at one of the best venues in the world, San Diego, California, at the San Diego Convention Center). I therefore enthusiastically welcome you to Call Center 2.0, the industry's truly global and leading advanced technology event.

In Short

If you are serious about taking your call center, CRM and teleservices center to the next level, Call Center 2.0 is the only show you need to attend! (<http://www.callcenter20.com>).

As always, I welcome your valued comments. Please e-mail me at

IMPORTANT:

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

Call Center 2.0™

October 10-13, 2006 • San Diego, California
<http://www.callcenter20.com>

Special Collocated Events & Workshops

Thursday, October 12, 2006

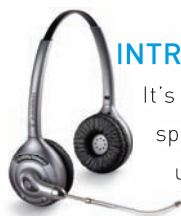
(8:30 - 9:00) Keynote Presentation by Eli Borodow, Oracle (Former CEO, Telephony@Work)
(9:15 - 10:15) *INTERNET TELEPHONY* Keynote Session Featuring AT&T and Lucent
(10:15 - 11:00) *INTERNET TELEPHONY* Keynote Presentation by Microsoft
(11:00 - 5:00) Visit the Exhibit Hall
(1:00 - 1:45) How to Calculate Your Brand Ambassador's Bottom-Line Value Presented by Hitachi Consulting
TDM-to-IP Migration Strategies Presented by Paraxip Technologies
Telework Coalition Workshop: Ask the Chiefs of Well Established Work@Home Programs
(2:00 - 2:45) Ethical Implications
Benefits of IP in the Contact Center Presented by SOS, Eicon Networks - Americas
Telework Coalition Workshop: Why Home-Based Agents: "There's No Place Like Home"
(3:00 - 3:45) Designing the Next-Generation Distributed Call Center SIP in the Contact Center Presented by Genesys
Telework Coalition Workshop: Outsourcing to Call Centers with Work@Home Agents
(4:00 - 4:45) Managing Virtual Teams: Obstacles & Opportunities Presented by Spanlink Communications
Shift Your Contact Center from Reactive to Real Time
Telework Coalition Workshop: Enabling Technologies and Telecommunications
(5:30 - 6:00) *INTERNET TELEPHONY* Keynote Presentation by Motorola
(6:00) Networking Reception

Friday, October 13, 2006

(8:45 - 9:15) Today's Advanced Workforce Optimization Solutions Presented by IEX
Advanced Contact Center Solutions For Teleservices and Call Centers Presented by Neocase
Telework Coalition Workshop: Business Continuity with Work@Home Agents
(9:30 - 10:15) Keynote address by Prem Uppaluru, Transera
(10:15 - 11:00) Keynote addresses by Dr. Jon Anton, Benchmark Portal & Dr. Donald Brown, Interactive Intelligence
(11:00 - 3:00) Visit the Exhibit Hall
(12:15 - 1:00) Trends in the Next-Generation Contact Center Presented by LiveVox, SPIRIT, SoundBite Communications
Best Practices & Processes/Metrics for Customer-Centric Operations Presented by Coastal Training Technologies
Telework Coalition Workshop: How to Make Work@Home Agents Happen
(1:15 - 2:00) Gaining the Competitive Edge Through Intelligent Communications Presented by Avaya
IP Contact Center Shootout Presented by Jacada, NEC, Five9, Inc., Witness Systems
Telework Coalition Workshop: Staffing, Training, and Supervising for Work@Home agents
(2:15 - 3:00) VoIP in the Contact Center - A Case Study Presented by FrontRange Solutions
IP Contact Center Shootout Presented by Jacada, NEC, Five9, Inc., Witness Systems
Security: Policies, Procedures, and Processes

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and LISTEN and REPLY and REACT
and RESPOND and ASSIST — **WIRELESSLY**



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Contents

DEPARTMENTS

2 Publisher's Outlook

By Nadji Tehrani, Executive Group Publisher, Technology Marketing Corp.

12 High Priority!

By Rich Tehrani, Group Editor-in-Chief, Technology Marketing Corp.

16 Recommended Vendors List

18 Customer Inter@ction News™

20 CallCenterComics.com

By Ozzie Fonesca

58 The Integrated Marketplace™

59 Identification Statement

59 Advertising Index

60 Last Call

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

INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS FROM THE EXPERTS

32 Effective Customer Service Requires Not Just Knowledge, But Insight

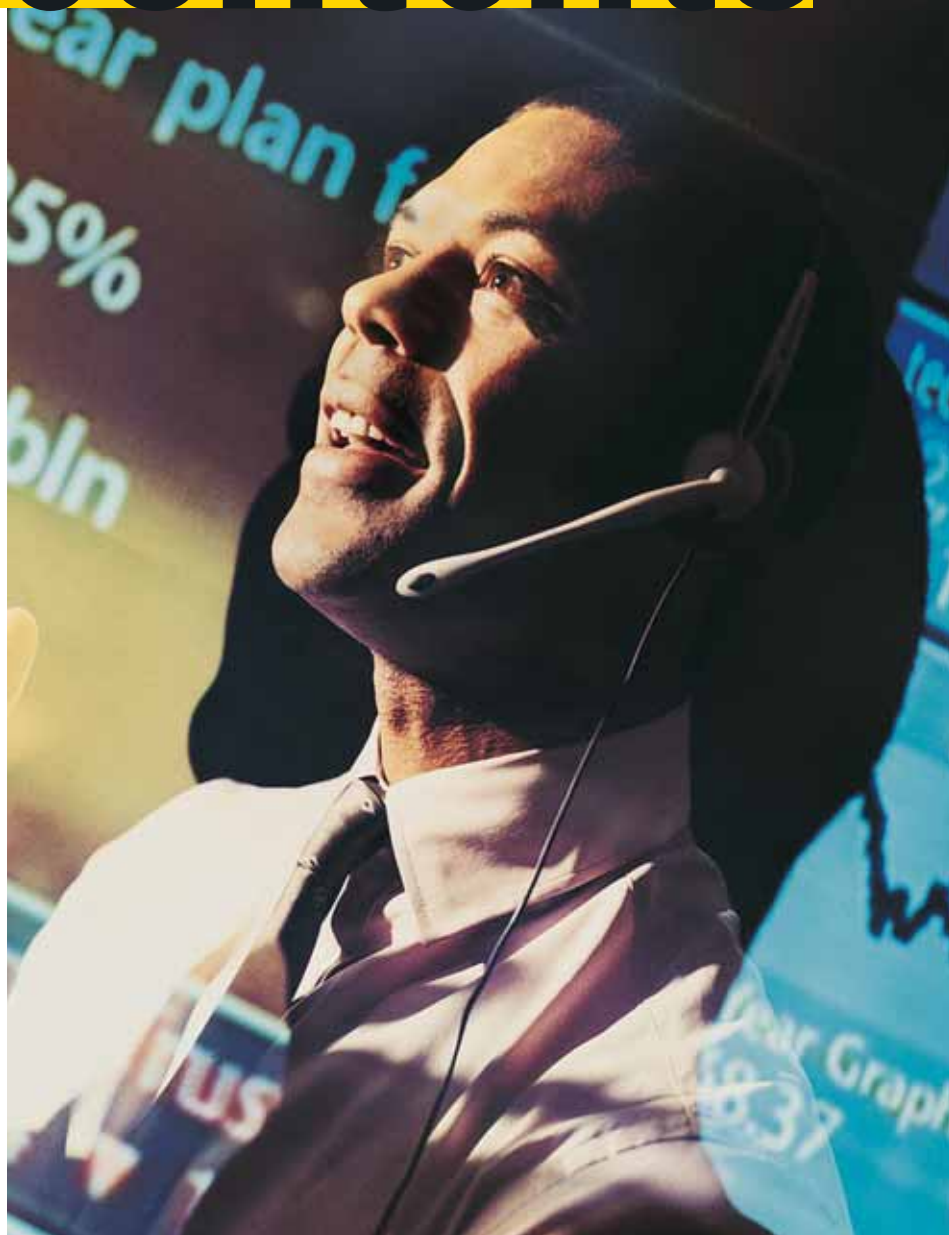
By Bruce Pollock, Director, Strategic Technology Solutions, West Corporation
A Special Editorial Series Sponsored By West Corporation

CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

34 Want To Deliver Converged, Bundled, Integrated Services? Pay Attention To CRM

By David Sims, TMCnet Contributing Editor
Communications service providers: Want to get consumers to go for your bundled offerings of fixed and wireless phone, DSL broadband and video services? Better pay attention to your CRM data-bases, among other things.

40



34

WORKFORCE OPTIMIZATION

36 Workforce Management: The Contact Center's Easy Button?

By Rick Seeley, IEX Corp.

Despite the far-reaching impact of workforce management technology, businesses often overlook the need to establish a strong foundation based on sound processes and procedures before putting a system in place. Instead, they get caught up with the bells and whistles of an automated system and buy into the misnomer that workforce management is some sort of "easy button." It's not.

40 Instantly Improve Contact Center Performance

By Doug Tanoury, Customer Interactions Consulting (CIC)

Managing contact centers is unlike managing any other type of organization; in fact, it is more similar to managing a manufacturing plant than an administrative office environment. Not many managers today understand the dynamic nature of production environments.



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Contents

MANAGEMENT SCOPE

44 Case Study: An Rx For Healthcare Communication: Outsourcing And Offshoring Medical Call Centers For Competitive Advantage

By John Chess, MediCall

There is a chronic condition plaguing the U.S. healthcare industry, with no cure in sight: a shortage of qualified nurses. For the first time ever, the U.S. Department of Labor, in its February 2004 Monthly Labor Review, cited registered nurses as the top occupation in terms of job growth through the year 2012.

TMC LABS

48 TMC Labs Innovation Awards, Part I

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



Evaluating ROI In An On-Demand Call Center Solution

By Vincent Deschamps, CEO, Echopass Corporation

If your company spends more than \$250 per agent per year on technology license maintenance (i.e., more than \$25,000 per year for a 100-agent deployment), you most likely can justify a move to an on-demand solution through maintenance fee savings alone.

Read the full article at <http://www.tmcnet.com/347.1>

Contact Center Virtualization: Requirements For Effective Team Supervision And Quality Management

By Gerry Johnsen, Spanlink Communications

Through virtualization, customer inquiries can be handled by a trained call center agent in any remote location to provide a more flexible resource for meeting service levels. In hiring conscientious, qualified agents, location is no longer a factor. This increases customer service quality, as customers dialing a local number feel like they're getting localized or specialized service and/or their call is automatically transferred and handled by the most appropriate agent.

Read the full article at <http://www.tmcnet.com/348.1>

The Church Of Return On Investment

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

If Star-Trek-style teleportation was available in 1998, no doubt the executives of even mid-sized companies would have been regularly saying to their IT engineers: "Beam me to my investment banker's office, Norbert."

Read the full article at <http://www.tmcnet.com/349.1>

Spanlink Communications Acquires Calabrio

By Anuradha Shukla, TMCnet Contributing Editor

Spanlink Communications, Inc. recently announced that it has acquired Calabrio, Inc. and its software for distributed workforce management (WFM) and scheduling. With the acquisition, Spanlink expects to become the software suite provider that transforms the business process for customer interaction in a services-oriented architecture (SOA).

Read the full article at <http://www.tmcnet.com/350.1>

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CUSTOMER INTER@CTION Solutions® magazine has been the voice of the industry since 1982. It is written by industry practitioners for industry practitioners and is regarded worldwide as the "Bible" of the industry. An annual Buyer's Guide is provided as a feature of the December issue.

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

Salesforce.com: Leading The Way To CRM 2.0

Over the years, I have had many terrific opportunities to interview Marc Benioff of Salesforce.com, ([quote](#) - [news](#) - [alert](#)) and write about both him and the company he leads. So it's funny (though not unusual in these days of 24-7 digital media) that I had never met him in person. This fact surprised not only me, but many individuals at Salesforce.com. To remedy this situation, I decided to drop in on a recent event Salesforce.com held in Manhattan. After all, it was only a one-hour train ride that stood between me and this man, the founder of Salesforce.com.

I give a lot of credit to Marc. He successfully proved to the industry (and world, for that matter) that you can launch a company selling hosted applications and make money by doing it. He even demonstrated that you can have a successful IPO in a tech-unfriendly environment.

Of course, Benioff didn't invent hosted applications, but CRM software was something that was purchased exclusively as a premise-based solution up until Salesforce.com was launched. Before Salesforce.com showed the marketplace otherwise, many people believed that it was too unwieldy a process to host these types of solutions.

When the company became successful, competitors hypothesized that the company would win only the smallest of customers. Benioff proved the industry wrong once again by attracting and keeping large accounts such as New York-based global financial institutions.

So it was fitting that the company chose New York as its venue for the conference

that kicked off at lunch and was held at the ultra-exclusive Mandarin Oriental hotel.

The conference began with Marc taking the stage and showing a slide of the world of software companies. There are thousands of software companies, he said, but only 40 have revenue at or greater than half a billion dollars. Salesforce.com has joined this elite group, and as a mark of his continued enthusiasm for the company he leads, he vowed to take the company to one billion dollars in sales.

From that point, Marc went on to say that the company has nearly 25,000 paid customers. He reminded us about the Web site <http://trust.salesforce.com>, which details API calls and pages viewed from Salesforce.com's hosted system. API, as you may know, stands for "application programming interface." An API call describes the process of another piece of software communicating with Salesforce.com's information store. Forty-five percent of the transactions are API calls, meaning that, according to Marc, the company's hosted application is becoming a more integral part of other companies' software infrastructures.

To give you an indication of how much activity Salesforce.com customers generate, on August 29, 2006, nearly 52 million transactions took place, with an average speed of a quarter second per transaction. Marc was proud to tell us that there were three billion transactions in the second quarter of this year alone.

In addition, Marc touched on Salesforce.com's customer base, which he described as split evenly between small,



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medium and large businesses. He made a point to say that the company is enjoying much success in the media industry, and highlighted a few customers in the room that were certainly household names.

Perhaps the most important point Marc made in his presentation was that the future of software, as he sees it, is in multitenancy. He took a shot at Microsoft ([quote - news - alert](#)) by saying the company thinks this model is wrong. Multitenancy means allowing users to share the same physical instance of an application; the instances of these applications occupy virtual partitions rather than physical stacks of hardware and software. In general, the hosted model relies on multitenancy to function properly.

To back up his case, Marc used examples of multitenancy we are more familiar with, such as the eBay and Yahoo! models. Yahoo! Mail, for example, demonstrates how extensible and flexible this concept is, as there are millions and millions of Yahoo! Mail users.

From there, he went on a financial tangent, explaining how software companies today rely on upgrade cycles so they can accurately determine their revenue streams. He used Microsoft's Vista as an example, as that software has been delayed, which causes trouble for analysts. Without a firm idea of when the software will be released, analysts cannot accurately predict quarterly earnings. In comparison, said Marc, Yahoo! and eBay do not have upgrade revenue cycles.

The discussion then headed into the wide world of hosted alternatives. For example, he mentioned that both Google and Yahoo! will host e-mail for your company, and even let you keep your domain name.

Another example he provided was Google's new spreadsheet, a Web 2.0 AJAX-based application that provides much of Excel's feature set for free. Benioff made a point of saying that with traditional spreadsheet software, there can be conflict and contention as multiple people share the same spreadsheet. With Google's hosted spreadsheet, these problems evaporate.

Having proven the case for multitenancy, Marc went on to talk about AppExchange, Salesforce.com's open system that allows developers to create applications that immediately take advantage of Salesforce.com's multitenant infrastructure and hardware/software. According to Marc, the growth of the AppExchange partner base is beyond what he envisioned; nine AppExchange partners recently received 100 million dollars in funding.

If this isn't enough incentive to become an AppExchange partner, consider the follow-

ing: Salesforce.com recently purchased Kieden Corporation, a company that has integrated Google AdWord technology into Salesforce.com. This allows a company to manage a campaign and be able to tell how many customers purchased products or services based on given ad campaigns. They can even drill down by keyword to see how many people purchased due to a particular ad or keyword. This service is called Salesforce for Google ([quote - news - alert](#)) AdWords, and the cost is \$300 per customer per month.

If you have heard any of my numerous keynotes around North America or read my columns on a regular basis, you'll know that I am a fan of Web 2.0 and mashups. I am waiting for more interesting applications to come along so a typical business can use Web 2.0 to do some truly innovative things. Salesforce for Google AdWords is the first application that takes advantage of Web 2.0 to allow for accurate tracking of customers from Google's AdWords. This is big news, and I think we may look back on this announcement as one of the pivotal moments of software history — when applications and data started to become more integrated.

But I can't end there, as Marc is one of the more colorful figures in our market space, and his comments are seldom what you would expect from the CEO of such a large public company.

Knowing this, I approached Marc right

after the session. Without skipping a beat, Marc looked at me and informed me that he visits TMCnet all the time, and regularly uses it as a resource. He provided me with some positive feedback: he told me he was not a fan of the way we display one of our ads, and gave me advice on how to improve what we do. It's gratifying to know that Marc is a fan of TMCnet but just as important, his comments showed me that he really speaks his mind, which is very refreshing. In fact, we are investigating ways of improving our ad displaying mechanisms. Who knows — if we do a good job, maybe Salesforce.com will buy some :-).

Further in the course of our conversation, I presented Marc with a question I hoped would ultimately provide me with a unique quote. I asked him what he would do if he was the head of one of the software companies he competes with, such as Microsoft. Without a pause, he said that the Microsoft innovation engine is broken and the company needs to rewrite Excel, Word and Outlook. He went on to say that Microsoft needs to wake up and smell the coffee. As always, interactions with Marc, whether by e-mail or in person, are rather refreshing.

The impression I took away from our conversation is that Salesforce.com seems more energized than ever, and appears to be poised for more rapid growth. Most of their competition comes from much larger companies that do not embody the entrepreneurial spirit of Salesforce.com. This is a major advantage, and I predict that the company will see good times ahead if they can keep their systems running as they scale. **CIS**

Call Center 2.0™

I'd like to take a moment to personally invite you to Call Center 2.0, the premier event for call center leaders to learn about using IP communications to improve efficiency, reduce costs and increase the level of service they provide to their customers. The conference features two full days of courses specifically designed to provide in-depth information about IP call centers and VoIP, IP-based home agents, speech technologies, CRM, workforce optimization and all other technologies that improve call center effectiveness.

Call Center 2.0 is collocated with INTERNET TELEPHONY Conference & EXPO, the world's largest IP communications event, providing more relevant, useful content to call center leaders. Whether you have already deployed IP call center solutions and want to make sure you are up to speed with the latest advancements, or you are seeking information to transition to today's newest technologies, the sessions at Call Center 2.0 will prepare you to make smart decisions.

In addition to the cutting-edge educational content, you will have access to all other activities during the week — an exhibit hall with hundreds of vendors demonstrating their newest products, exciting networking events and receptions, and the prominent keynote speakers that will headline the INTERNET TELEPHONY event. These factors, alongside the setting of San Diego's beautiful harbor, all make Call Center 2.0 a can't-miss event.

I look forward to seeing you from October 10th to 13th in San Diego, California, at the San Diego Convention Center. To register, visit <http://www.callcenter20.com>.



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

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

Spectrum Releases New Features To UltraLink

Spectrum Corporation, ([news - alert](#)) a company that specializes in real-time analytic and reporting solutions, has announced the availability of new features for Ultra-Link software. Ultra-Link now includes an XML interface and increased security. Ultra-Link software collects and distributes real-time and historical data from virtually any data source. These data are displayed to plasma screens, desktop screen pops, wallboards, e-mail and more. Ultra-Link now offers an XML interface option that will collect XML data and output XML to a Web page. Within Ultra-Link's graphic user interface, users can specify an external style sheet and transform critical data into an easy-to-read format. Users can choose from several graphic or chart formats to display real-time data or create their own. Additionally, Spectrum has increased the level of security for Ultra-Link and Data-Pop administrators. <http://www.specorp.com>



Genesys Sees "The Tipping Point" For IVR Technology

The long awaited transition from older IVR technology to open software-based platforms is gaining strength this year, and **Genesys Telecommunications Laboratories, Inc.**, ([news - alert](#)) an **Alcatel** ([news - alert](#)) company, has said that it now expects new voice portals to exceed new IVR ports for the first time in 2006.

In the first half of 2006, Genesys says it has already seen clear evidence that businesses are phasing out older IVR technology. More than 160 new enterprise customers have migrated from legacy IVR to Genesys in the past 12 months. By the end of 2006, Genesys has stated that it expects to see more new open software ports deployed than new legacy IVR ports. As the market momentum continues to build, Genesys has developed a migration model and an "ugly IVR" trade-in program to simplify the path for the next wave of companies that want to transition away from legacy IVR. Genesys identified five key reasons for the crossover: the high maintenance and upkeep costs for legacy systems are becoming harder to justify and are as much as twice the cost of maintaining open standards software; a rise in the number of end-of-life programs in which manufacturers will no longer support or improve legacy systems, driving legacy customers away; outmoded legacy technology that does not support critical technologies such as VoIP, VXML and CCXML; poor customer experience with older IVRs and frustration resulting from their rigid menu structure; and finally, the ability to easily reuse and leverage software-based applications across many departments or multiple enterprises.

<http://www.genesyslab.com>

Amcat Ships New Soft IP-PBX Functionality

Amcat, ([news - alert](#)) a provider of customer care and interaction solutions, has announced that it has begun shipping a soft IP-PBX solution that operates with and broadens the capabilities of the company's Contact Center Suite product. The solution was designed to allow companies to take advantage of more affordable VoIP communications at the same time transforming their customer contact operations by leveraging employees from across the enterprise by making them available to deliver improved customer care, regardless of their department, function or location. The IP-based soft PBX customer contact platform provides a technology environment where each customer contact is intelligent and productive, thereby increasing employee morale and customer satisfaction. The Amcat IP customer contact platform helps ensure that companies focus and align their entire organization around customer care, providing better service at lower cost. As a result, companies profit from increased customer acquisition and retention metrics and, ultimately, more revenue and profit.

<http://www.amcat.com>

IBM And dtms Solutions Forge Marketing Agreement

dtms Solutions ([news - alert](#)) and **IBM** ([quote - news - alert](#)) have announced that dtms will market IBM WebSphere Voice Server speech recognition solutions to enterprises, tying their customers' transactions to related systems through a service-oriented architecture (SOA). IBM WebSphere Voice Server speech software is integral to the creation of the new services being offered by dtms Solutions to enterprises. IBM and dtms Solutions have stated that they view hosted speech as a means to help clients leverage the advantages of IBM speech recognition technology and help their customers become more innovative and productive. The speech interface is managed remotely and transforms speech input/output into Web services.

Enterprises increasingly recognize the benefits of offering their customers on-demand access to information and self-service to conduct transactions, such as checking account status, paying bills and finding transportation schedules. With speech-enabled applications from dtms Solutions, enterprises can offer their customers pleasant, convenient, on-demand self-service using the ubiquitous channel of the telephone.

<http://www.ibm.com>, <http://www.dtms-solutions.de>

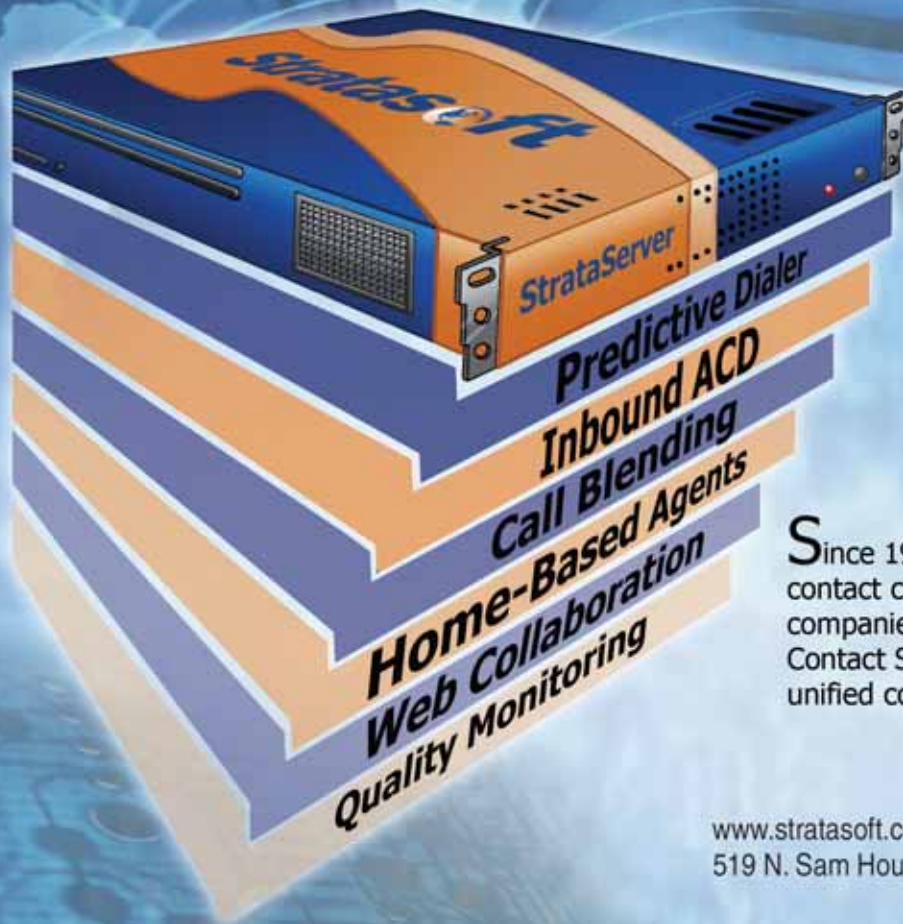
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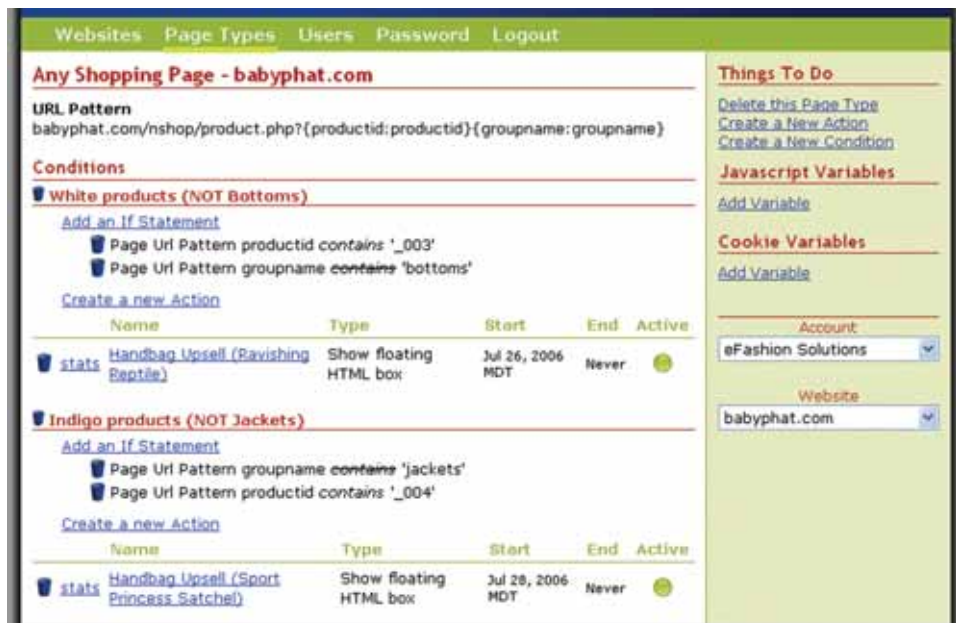
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Sento Introduces Its Customer eXperience Platform

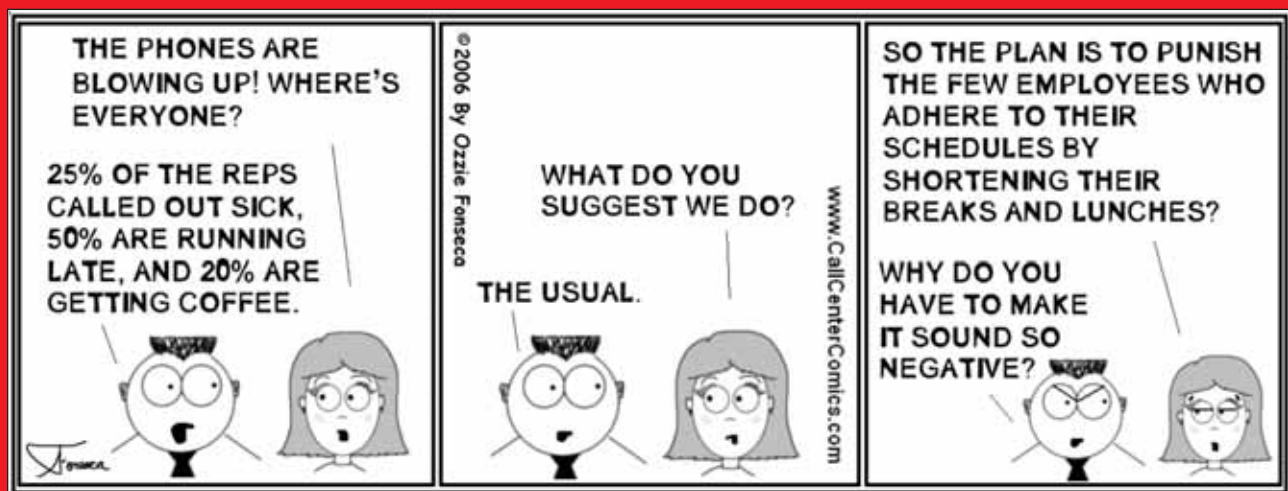
Sento Corporation ([news](#) - [alert](#)) recently announced that its patent-pending software-as-a-service SaaS solution, Customer Experience Platform (CXP), has proved successful in pilot programs. CXP is a rules-engine that aims to optimize Web sites providing rich customer experiences. Using CXP, customer behaviors are analyzed in real-time, and online Web sites are better able to respond rapidly, providing dynamic messaging and offers that motivate customers to take action. CXP's functionality allows customized marketing offers to be delivered at the moment customers are making decisions which affect their loyalty and decision to purchase. In a time when customer satisfaction and loyalty are financial necessities, CXP can help companies be more responsive and demonstrate their value to their customers. Specifically by connecting customers' interactions and behaviors with company data and e-commerce platforms, CXP delivers active personalization and one-to-one marketing. Customers receive offers based on their personal online actions, buying history, geographic location or demographics.

<http://www.sento.com>



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By Ozzie Fonseca





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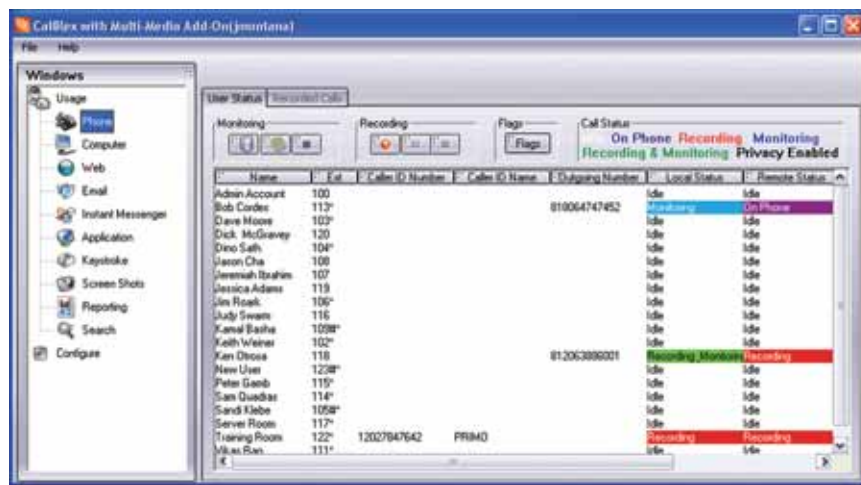


Telrex Introduces CallRex Agent Evaluation

Telrex, ([news - alert](#)) a developer of VoIP call recording and monitoring software for small and medium-sized businesses using IP-PBXs or hosted PBX services, has announced the release of CallRex Agent Evaluation, a solution designed to provide small and medium-sized call centers with an affordable and easy-to-use tool to improve agent performance.

The three-step CallRex Agent Evaluation process begins with a manager evaluating an agent's phone call against pre-defined criteria, also known as a standard. Each standard identifies the key agent activities that accomplish a call center's various objectives. As managers evaluate a call, they can attach excerpts of the recorded call to the evaluation, providing an agent with the ability to listen to specific examples of their performance. Next, the manager and agent review the evaluation together in an interactive coaching session. The coaching session is critical for the agent in understanding their strengths as well as areas requiring improvement. In the coaching session, managers use CallRex Agent Evaluation to highlight actual examples from calls that illustrate key learning points. Finally, as the three-step CallRex Agent Evaluation process is repeated regularly across all agents in the call center, improvements in agent call handling skills quickly become visible. By analyzing results over time and across multiple agents, call center managers can gain insight into performance trends and agent training needs.

http://www.telrex.com/callrex_ae.htm



Acxiom Teams With SAP

Acxiom Corporation ([news - alert](#)) has announced that company leader Charles D. Morgan, together with Bill McDermott, President and CEO of SAP Americas, has unveiled how the two companies intend to jointly market Acxiom's ability to deliver a single, accurate, real-time customer view within SAP's multichannel CRM solution, mySAP Customer Relationship Management (mySAP CRM). SAP clients and prospects can leverage Acxiom's AbiliTec customer data integration technology and InfoBase products, which provide a large collection of U.S. consumer information. By combining Acxiom's consumer content with SAP's marketing and sales functionality, customers will be better able to maximize their marketing and sales dollars while strengthening their customer relationships. During SAP's recent annual summer sales meeting, the two company leaders revealed their intention to jointly market SAP's ability to deliver enterprise-wide customer information to key customer touch points and Acxiom's experience in delivering data, analytics and customer data integration. The presentation focused on the benefits to customers, including empowering customers to engage in true customer relationship management.

<http://www.acxiom.com>

TransUnion To Acquire Qsent

TransUnion ([news - alert](#)) has announced that it has signed a deal to acquire Beaverton, Oregon-based Qsent, a provider of contact and identity management services that support customer acquisition and retention, collections and recovery and identity resolution applications. Financial terms of the deal were not disclosed. With more than 60 percent of individual contact information changing each year and more than 25 million households moving annually, the need to have up-to-date, real-time contact information is vital for businesses that deal with high volumes of customer information. Qsent receives up to one million updates and more than 250,000 material changes to contact information per day, enabling it to offer current, real-time data sources. TransUnion will leverage Qsent's information assets, technology and team of experts to enhance existing product offerings and develop new solutions in the areas of fraud and identity management, risk management, collections and marketing services.

<http://www.transunion.com>

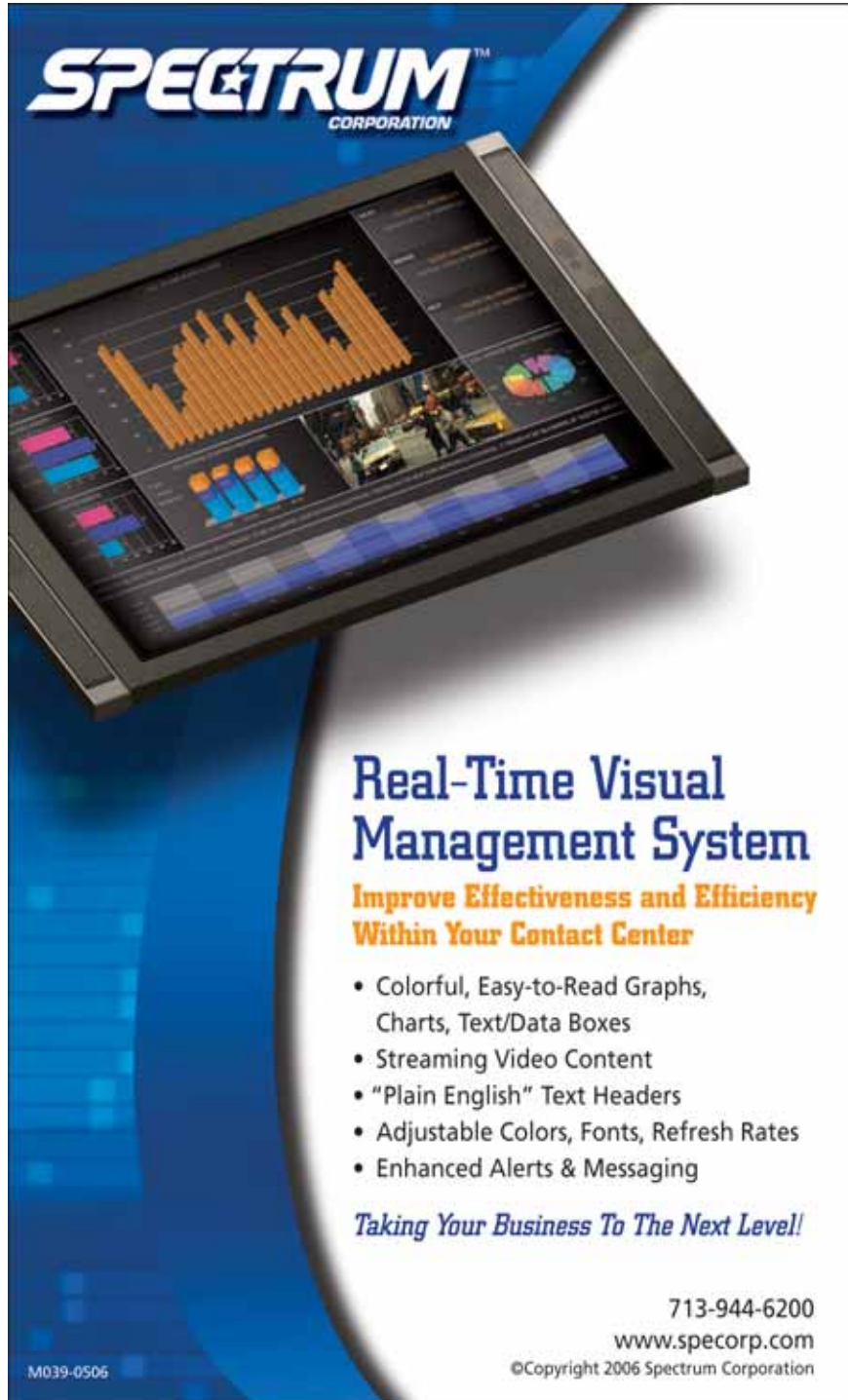
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Eloqua Releases Summer 2006 Conversion Suite

Eloqua Corporation, ([news](#) - [alert](#)) a supplier of automated demand generation software and services for b-to-b marketers, has announced the Summer 2006 release of Eloqua Conversion Suite. The Summer 2006 product release of Eloqua Conversion Suite was designed to optimize sales lead creation, conversion and management with interactive and direct marketing tactics, behavioral analytics and efficient marketing automation. The Summer 2006 release of Eloqua Conversion Suite, an on-demand software as a service (SaaS) offering, became available on July 31st to new and existing customers. The latest version of Eloqua Conversion Suite helps empower marketers to reduce the time to deployment for sophisticated, automated lead creation and management applications while leveraging best practices used by b-to-b marketers; tailor direct marketing messages to prospects based their recent marketing response or Web activity to optimize response and conversion; and more quickly and efficiently deploy and manage sequential live or Web-based events to create demand and inform customers.

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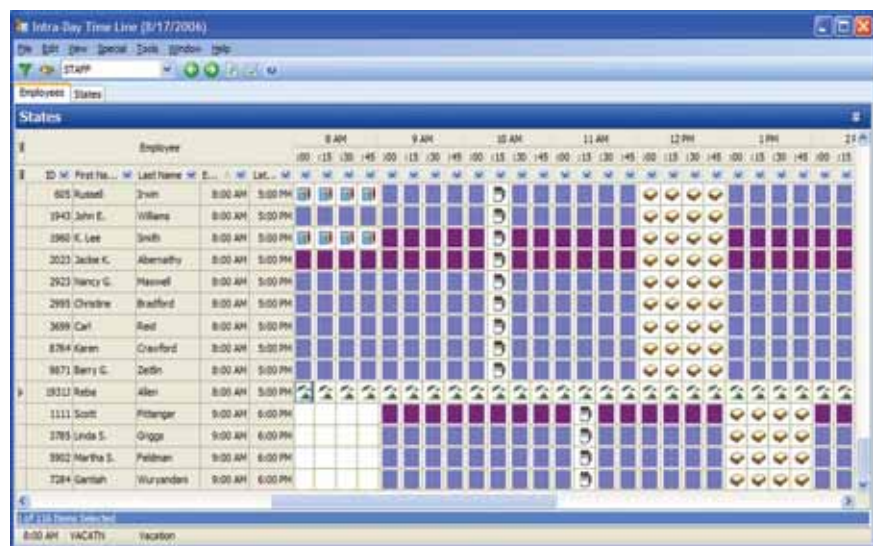
M039-0506

Aspect Enhances eWorkforce Management

Aspect Software, Inc. ([news - alert](#)) has announced that Aspect eWorkforce Management has a redesigned user interface for easier navigation; offers enhanced support for outbound and blended contact center environments in addition to its existing inbound support; and is available in four new languages: Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Korean and Japanese. The enhanced outbound support in Aspect eWorkforce Management 7.0 includes an algorithm that ensures that the right number of agents are scheduled to handle the predicted outbound and blended workload to help maximize the number of contacts made and revenue generated. It produces staffing forecasts based on contact completion information, blending rules and standard staff group parameters. Customized data regarding campaign size and passes can also be used. The software tracks schedule performance, including offered and handled contacts and contact handle time, so that real-time adjustments can be made quickly and easily.

Beta users of Aspect eWorkforce Management 7.0 have reported being able to accomplish daily workforce management tasks faster because of the software's new navigational functionality and data-manipulation capabilities that make using it so instinctive. They also anticipate additional benefits to be gained from rolling the software out across geographic boundaries to Asia-Pacific contact center operations due to the staffing solution's added support of the Chinese language.

<http://www.aspect.com>



Report Hails Dubai As A Finance And Accounting Outsourcing Hotspot

A new report by **FAO Research, Inc.**, ([news - alert](#)) which covers the finance and accounting outsourcing (FAO) market, predicts that Dubai will soon emerge as a major services geography to supply the talent, economic enhancements and quality-of-life opportunities desired by companies seeking alternate geographies for the delivery of finance and accounting-related services. Strategically located near both Europe and Asia, Dubai has transformed itself over the past two years into a tourist and commercial business oasis. Its Dubai Outsource Zone (DOZ), one of many technology-specific areas within the emirate, offers financial incentives, government assistance, state-of-the-art infrastructure and support services. Dubai intends to generate 70 percent of its GDP from the services sector by 2010. FAO Research's latest report, **"Outsourcing in an Arab Nation? Dubai as the Hidden Jewel for Finance & Accounting Outsourcing, Shared Services and Captive Centers"** is the result of a five-month independent investigation into Dubai as a non-traditional yet up-and-coming outsourcing location. The report suggests that DOZ's financial business incentives, outsourcing-friendly infrastructure, focus on the financial services sector and competitive labor pricing make it an "extremely attractive option" as an F&A service delivery location.

<http://www.faoresearch.com>

Nuance And ClickFox Partner

Nuance Communications, Inc., ([news - alert](#)) a provider of speech and imaging solutions, has introduced a Nuance consumer insight solution powered by software from **ClickFox**, ([news - alert](#)) which specializes in customer behavior intelligence. In addition to a reseller agreement, Nuance will develop an integrated solution that delivers task- and product-specific dashboards, feature views and reports pertaining to Nuance speech applications. The integrated solution has been designed specifically to optimize speech-enabled caller experiences. By pairing the integrated solution with business consulting services from Nuance, enterprises will be able to measure and analyze customer interactions within speech applications and other channels of service to identify methods to optimize the customer experience. Key benefits include: increasing the number of callers who stay with self-service, identifying optimal treatment strategies for customer by segment, and identifying opportunities for further automation.

<http://www.nuance.com>, <http://www.clickfox.com>

Envox Teams With Volt Delta Resources

Envox Worldwide, ([news](#) - [alert](#)) a vendor of voice products, has teamed with **Volt Delta Resources, LLC**, a standards-based voice application hosting services and a wholly owned subsidiary of **Volt Information Sciences, Inc.** to introduce the Envoy OnDemand hosted call center voice product. Many organizations today are ditching their customer premise equipment in favor of hosted voice products. Chief among the reasons are lower cost of entry and perceived attractive total cost of ownership, shorter time-to-market, flexibility and the fact that infrastructure and adopting new functionality is somebody else's problem. According to recent research by Gartner, organizations spent more than half a billion dollars for on-demand CRM products in 2005, and it's still likely to account for less than 10 percent of business applications by 2010. Envoy Worldwide and VoltDelta have been selling automation and alternate delivery products together for over five years in the directory assistance and enhanced services market.

<http://www.envox.com>

CallMiner Launches Speech Tools

Speech analytics software provider **CallMiner** ([news](#) - [alert](#)) has announced the launch of "SpeechTools," an application designed to make it easier to customize the CallMiner Analytics Suite by tuning to any language, terminology or acoustic environment. SpeechTools requires no specialized skills or services and enables CallMiner's Alliance Partners and customers to quickly create new language and acoustic models for CallMiner to analyze. Changes in languages, dialects, accents, colloquialisms and noise-levels can now all be altered by end users, rather than by software developers. With minimal training, virtually anyone with a modest level of computer knowledge can be qualified to operate and effectively use SpeechTools. SpeechTools also allows companies and government organizations to easily develop their own language models, allowing them to recognize unique languages such as Farsi, Pashto or other languages that are not currently available to analyze recordings. Also, companies that want to keep their audio archives private and don't want to turn them over to a third-party speech developer for tuning can now make all necessary adjustments and modifications in-house.

<http://www.callminer.com>

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NICE Unveils New Capabilities For Compliance, Analytics And VoIP

NICE Systems ([news](#) - [alert](#)) recently announced new capabilities, including state-of-the-art speech analytics, new VoIP technologies and a regulatory compliance and risk management suite. The new capabilities are part of NICE Perform.

With the NICE Perform Compliance Suite, companies can use interaction analytics to address challenges in regulatory compliance and corporate governance. The suite enables policy enforcement through proactive compliance by preventing insider trading breaches, ensuring rules are followed and detecting irregularities during blackout periods. It alerts compliance- and risk-related stakeholders to irregularities even before a transaction occurs and enables more effective and accurate instant investigations. The interaction analytics offering of NICE Perform has been expanded to include more powerful search capabilities, greater analytics throughput and increased accuracy. NICE Perform's interaction analytics component offers technologies and methodologies that address a variety of tasks and customer needs. The offering includes a variety of voice recognition methods, as well as talk analysis and emotion detection. NICE has also unveiled a VoIP Recording Gateway technology that addresses the latest trends and needs in VoIP environments. Organizations are faced with changing business needs and new regulations that require them to record customer interactions in hundreds or thousands of branches. The new VoIP Recording Gateway helps make this task more efficient and cost-effective. It provides any IP telephony environment with a scalable, centralized recording solution that replaces the need to have recording units in every branch, reducing management overhead and total cost of ownership.

<http://www.nice.com>



Onyx Acquired By M2M Holdings Inc.

A proposed merger announced between **M2M Holdings Inc.** and **Onyx Software Corporation** ([news](#) - [alert](#)) has been finalized. M2M is a holding company jointly owned by **Battery Ventures VI** and **Thoma Cressey Equity Partners**; its primary asset is **Made2Manage Systems**, an enterprise software and services company. First announced in early June, the all-cash transaction is valued at \$4.80 per share, or roughly \$92 million. With the finalization of the transaction, Onyx completed its transformation to a private company after seven years of being traded publicly on the NASDAQ stock exchange. Onyx is expected to operate organizationally as a business unit of its sister company, Made2Manage Systems, which houses several enterprise resource planning (ERP)-based product lines. **Janice P. Anderson**, former CEO of Onyx, will not continue with the business.

<http://www.onyx.com>

West Interactive Launches Natural Language Speech Solutions

West Interactive, ([news](#) - [alert](#)) a division of **West Corporation**, ([news](#) - [alert](#)) has announced the national rollout of its natural language speech solutions as part of its suite of services. West Interactive has already launched several customized large-scale client applications using natural language technology. A typical natural language application system asks open-ended questions (i.e., "How can I help you?"); callers speak the purpose of their call in a natural phrase or sentence and then proceed through relevant self-service applications or are routed to an appropriate agent. Unlike traditional speech recognition systems that dominate the market today, callers are not forced into specific options. Callers have more perceived control: They tell the system what to do in their own words. Natural language speech applications use a statistical model to understand caller's intent in the context of your business. They provide robustness unavailable in a guided system; for example, callers can hesitate, re-start and re-state their statements and still be successful.

<http://www.westinteractive.com>

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fDi Magazine, Financial Times



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



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Porticus Announces Triple-Factor Voice Authentication

Porticus Technology Inc., ([news - alert](#)) a provider of voice biometric solutions, has announced the launch of Versona, a family of voice authentication solutions for use in IVR and embedded systems that offers triple-factor authentication for maximum security. Triple-factor authentication combines three elements to verify a customer's identity: a pass code, that customer's voice and his or her communications device — landline or wireless. Phone-based caller authentication has particularly grown in demand as the need to prevent identity theft and fraud increases with wireless and electronic transactions. In the call center, or wherever an IVR system is in place, Versona speeds up the process of verifying callers by eliminating the need for agents to ask a series of qualifying questions to ensure a caller's identity. Versona's embedded option, a software-only voice biometric based on an open API for native mobile operating systems, was created to provide an ideal platform and can be pre-loaded and shipped with a handset or downloaded OTA directly to a device.
<http://www.porticusinc.com>

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Interactive Intelligence Offers Interaction Dialer 2.4

Interactive Intelligence ([news - alert](#)) recently announced that it has launched Interaction Dialer, the company's standards-based outbound dialing system that offers power, preview and predictive dialing, outbound campaign management and inbound/outbound call blending. Interaction Dialer is SIP-based, which allows it to operate in an all-software, all-VoIP environment. This version also includes a new SIP gateway called Interaction Gateway, an appliance device for protocol conversion and bandwidth management between networks designed to work with Interaction Dialer to give high-volume outbound contact centers predictive call analysis capabilities.

Unlike standalone dialers offered as part of a product portfolio requiring expensive integration, Interaction Dialer includes switching capabilities via the company's contact center automation software, Customer Interaction Center (CIC), eliminating the need to purchase a separate PBX/IP-PBX. The bundled approach also provides more cost-effective multichannel support, call recording, inbound routing, outbound campaign management, outbound IVR, blended dialing and more. All components can be deployed incrementally on an as-needed basis with simple license purchases.

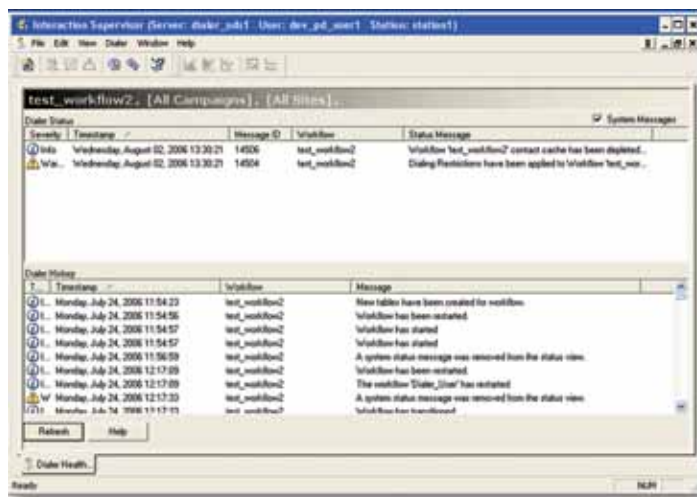
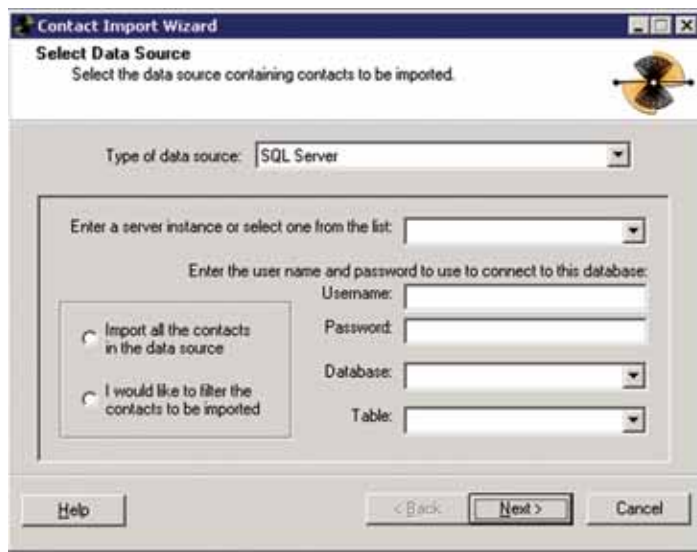
The solution is built on existing scalability improvements to CIC with support of up to 1,000 outbound agents per server; as a result, the new SIP-based Interaction Dialer, combined with the company's new Interaction Gateway, can accommodate the digital trunking needs of busy outbound contact centers, including those with distributed locations. With its "NxM" or "rack and stack" architecture that enables multiple gateways to pass calls to multiple dialer servers, flexibility, load-balancing and fault tolerance can be vastly improved compared to traditional standalone dialers, according to the company.

Call abandon rates are a concern for most companies nowadays, particularly in light of federal restrictions brought about by the Teleservices Sales Rules. A poorly paced dialer can create more problems than it solves. To counter these problems, Interaction Dialer offers a staged predictive dialing capability that identifies and projects the length of call stages such as introduction and closing to more effectively pace automated outbound calls. This not only helps improve agent effectiveness, it can help increase revenue opportunities compared to more old-fashioned outbound dialing solutions.

As real-time data is a must in today's call center, Interactive Intelligence is offering a new dialer "Health View" for supervisors. "Health View" offers call center supervisors a single interface for viewing the health of their campaigns, workflows and outbound operations. Messages displayed in this Health View provide an evaluation based on combinations of statistics gathered over time with links to the Interactive Intelligence Web site for more in-depth analysis and suggested improvements.

Another new feature includes "Contact Import Wizard," which is designed to make campaign management easier by providing a simple tool to import records into call list tables from commonly used source such as CSV files, Microsoft Access, Microsoft Excel, SQL Server and Oracle. Contacts can be added on-the-fly and scheduled to dial immediately or at a future date, and specific agents can be assigned specific contacts for preview dialing. A new "Contact Exclusion" interface enables contacts to be marked "uncallable" for one or many campaigns, whether active or not.

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Effective Customer Service Requires Not Just Knowledge, But Insight

By Bruce Pollock, Director, Strategic Technology Solutions, West Corporation

Striving For Excellence

Achieving the highest quality customer service is an exercise in vigilance. Having the best people, cutting-edge technology and time-tested protocols is certainly helpful. True excellence, however, is not simply a one-time event. It requires a continuous process.

What is the best way to secure and use customer information to improve customer service and learn more about every interaction with customers? Also, how do you guarantee that the customer feedback is accurate and not biased?

Surveys are one of the best methods to secure customer information, but many times, surveys are either biased or skewed to the negative because many customers complete surveys only if they have had a bad experience. Although these negative surveys are helpful, they do not paint a complete picture of the situation or provide accurate data to use and react to. Additionally, most surveys typically take time to compile, and by the time the company receives the data, the time frame to react has already passed, and a solution, if necessary, might not work in the long term.

When selecting a survey tool for your customer service representatives and call center agents, the most important features to consider for best-practice results are as follows:

- **Agent anonymous.** By being "agent anonymous," the tool should ensure that the agent cannot influence or bias the survey in any way through voice inflections or changes in service based on the caller's interest in taking the survey. The IVR, not the agent, should ask the caller if he or she would like to participate in the survey.





Customer satisfaction may seem easy to understand, but it is often difficult to define and even more difficult to measure. With Insight Customer Intelligence, companies can learn more about what matters most: their customers.

- **Interactive.** Interactivity makes the survey easy and therefore more likely to be completed.
- **Time-efficient.** Customer surveys are important, but the customer's time is even more important. Keeping surveys short will increase the number of participants as well as the validity of the survey results.
- **Qualitative and quantitative results.** Numbers and ratings can provide only so much information. Hearing the actual customer voice allows that individual to share his or her true feelings; the tone of voice and specific words used will ultimately allow a complete understanding of the customer's sentiments.
- **Real-time access to results.** Staying on top of the information allows managers to

react quickly and adjust methods as necessary. In an age of information, data that are a week old can be worthless since needs and direction can change very quickly.

Following best practices in surveys incorporated into your company contact center will ultimately contribute to the following:

- Better agent quality, higher agent satisfaction and less turnover;
- Reduced customer attrition and increased customer service;
- More accurate product feedback;
- Additional revenue per customer; and
- Reduced call handling costs.

West Interactive recently introduced the Insight Customer Intelligence survey system, a solution that allows contact centers to implement a network-based, real-time automated customer survey tool to measure the quality of customer interactions and improve customer retention.

Insight Customer Intelligence is completely agent anonymous. It is customizable with customer satisfaction ratings, including spoken comments, with 100 percent recording of the agent call and customer responses. Based on the customer's satisfaction score, Insight can also dynamically request if the customer would like a callback or needs to be transferred for immediate assistance. Call center managers can see the results in a real-time Internet dashboard, allowing managers and supervisors to react immediately to agent issues.

Customer satisfaction may seem easy to understand, but it is often difficult to define and even more difficult to measure. With Insight Customer Intelligence, companies can learn more about what matters most: their customers. Boosting customer satisfaction can translate into additional revenue per customer, improved customer retention, reduced call handling costs and elevated agent performance.

For more information, please visit <http://www.westinteractive.com/news-alert/> or call 800-841-9000.



Want To Deliver Converged, Bundled, Integrated Services? Pay Attention To CRM



Communications service providers: Want to get consumers to go for your bundled offerings of fixed and wireless phone, DSL broadband and video services? Better pay attention to your CRM databases, among other things.

A new report by consulting firm Diamond Management & Technology Consultants, Inc. recommends that service providers who want to develop and deliver integrated products and services need to adhere to industry standards, cooperate with large developer and vendor communities, and form strategic partnerships with experts in core technologies such as seamless mobility.

They also need to “build a convergence customer data repository, with information from multiple CRM databases and network switches, to provide a single view of customer profitability and usage across different products,” Diamond analysts found, adding that “service providers will also need a common Internet Protocol core network.”

It's quite a challenge. Cable operators like Comcast ([news - alert](#)) and the Regional Bell Operating Companies see the convergence of these various services as an important source of growth, noted Hamilton Sekino, a partner in Diamond's telecom practice.

Sekino calculates that approximately \$18 to \$23 billion in enterprise value is in play as RBOCs and cable providers bundle services to compete for increased market share in the U.S.

It won't be easy. Industry observer Maury Wright explains that the triple play “succinctly means serving consumers' voice, video and data needs over a converged network. And without question, some telecom companies and MSOs are delivering today.”

But consumer desires are changing, Wright notes: “Video has always been the most bandwidth-hungry part of the play, and that need for speed is skyrocketing. Consumers are increasingly enamored of DVRs that might record two or even more channels while yet another channel plays live. Combine DVR use

with the escalating migration to HDTV

quality, and the last mile is suddenly once again a huge obstacle just as it was for broadband data a decade ago.”

“Profitably delivering bundled services — the so-called triple and quadruple plays of various voice, data and video offerings — will require that providers build significant new capabilities,” Sekino contends. “It will take targeted marketing, customer-centric offerings, new organizational models, and technology innovation to be successful.”

“A key question these companies must answer is, ‘will customers go for it?’” Sekino said. “There isn't a monolithic market. Different consumer segments have far different attitudes about what they're willing to buy, from whom, and at what price. The answers will drive billions of dollars in investments.”

And those are exactly the sort of answers well-done CRM, which is based on the premise that one size does not fit all, can provide, as the firm notes. **CIS**

David Sims is a contributing editor for TMCnet.



By David Sims
TMCnet Contributing Editor

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Workforce Management: The Contact Center's Easy Button?

Workforce management technology has a profound impact on the day-to-day lives of the people working in the contact center. It defines agents' working hours, when they take breaks, lunches, attend training or go on vacation. The ripple of change that occurs with a workforce management implementation, however, extends beyond the agents to the management team, the IT department, the training group and human resources, among others.

Despite the far-reaching impact of workforce management technology, businesses often overlook the need to establish a strong foundation based on sound processes and procedures before putting a system in place. Instead, they get caught up with the bells and whistles of an automated system and buy into the misnomer that workforce management is some sort of "easy button." It's not.

Achieving optimal results with a workforce management deployment takes a symbiotic relationship between the people, processes and technology in the call center. When one of the elements is out of balance, efficiency and effectiveness inevitably suffer.

Whether the organization is putting a workforce management system in place for the first time, replacing an existing system or just trying to breathe new life into one that's already implemented, there are four key elements that can help ensure success:

- Build a solid planning foundation;
- Develop a workforce management team;
- Get key stakeholders to embrace the change; and

- Create a culture of continuous improvement.

Build A Solid Planning Foundation

Even before the company selects a workforce management system, operational goals should be reevaluated. Take a look at objectives such as average handle time (AHT), average speed of answer (ASA) and first call resolution. Then assess current time-off management, training and performance evaluation processes. Assessing the current situation versus desired results will help identify areas for improvement.

Being armed with a wish list of operational improvements will help the center identify and prioritize workforce management system requirements. For example, let's say a center staffed with an average of 150 agents per day has determined that one of its key goals is to reduce non-productive time. Right now, schedule adherence among the group averages 82 percent. The center,

however, would like to see a 10 percent productivity increase. Based on this information, finding a system with an effective real-time adherence module will be important because, as seen in Figure 1, increasing productivity could save the company more than \$350,000 a year.

Once new operational goals such as adherence have been defined, the call center should begin to consider the types of processes it will put in place to support those goals. In the example in Figure 1, the call center set a 92 percent adherence goal. However, it will be difficult to meet that new standard without a process in place for entering schedule exceptions into the workforce management system. When schedules are not adjusted to reflect the numerous exceptions that take place on a daily basis, adherence results will suffer.

Setting goals and establishing processes, however, will meet with limited success without a mechanism in place to define how results will be measured and shared. From an adherence perspective, if the goal is 92 percent, then shrinkage is eight percent. Using that baseline,

By Rick Seeley
IEX Corp.



adherence should be measured by agent, team and management unit to see how everyone is performing to plan. Naturally, the center will then want to share those results. Reports can be delivered to agent desktops, showing them how their performance compares to that of their peers. At the same time, management may want to see adherence results by team with the ability to drill down to the individual level.

By taking the time to identify goals, put sound processes in place and determine the best way to measure and share results, the center has established a solid planning foundation. The next step is to build a workforce management team.

Develop A Workforce Management Team

First-level training by vendors can teach employees which buttons to push

to create a forecast and run a schedule. It takes an experienced workforce planner, however, to recognize forecasting and scheduling anomalies that put service goals at risk. For example, someone with limited experience may not think to include a schedule variance to accommodate a new marketing campaign.

Yet either because the center doesn't see the need or simply due to budget limitations, many contact centers don't employ an experienced, full-time planner. Instead, workforce planning gets added to the supervisor's laundry list of responsibilities, data entry staff gets moved into the position or there's a part-timer put in place. Whatever the case, without someone dedicated to workforce planning, the system will be underutilized and the results will surely reflect a lack of focus.

Therefore, in an ideal world, the cost of hiring a workforce planner should be built into the workforce management implementation budget. If hiring an experienced planner isn't possible, look internally to identify someone who can grow into the position.

Once that person has been identified, start the education process by providing the employee with first-level workforce management system training. Once the employee is proficient in one skill, add additional training until he or she is fully capable of running the system. Also, look to resources such as the Call Center School, the Call Center Networking (CCNG), International Customer Management Institute (ICMI) and the Society of Workforce Planning Professionals (SWPP) for classes that will complement system training with industry best practices.

Get Key Stakeholders To Embrace The Change

Beyond establishing a planning foundation and building a WFM team, getting buy-in from key stakeholders is the organization's next biggest challenge. Workforce management brings a ripple of change that can be felt across the organization. Whether the team fights that change or embraces it oftentimes depends on how things are communicated.

If key constituents — agents, managers, supervisors, HR, IT, etc. — are left in the dark until a world of change is thrust upon them, they will likely fight it. Agents will have the perception that WFM is just another ploy to control their lives, management will be frustrated and neither HR nor IT will be supportive. Furthermore, it won't be long before executive management wonders if they really got their money's worth.

On the other hand, if key players are involved in the process up-front, they will be more likely to embrace the change. To help facilitate involvement from the group, form a cross-evaluation team that includes at least one representative from each key department. This will ensure decisions are carefully weighed and measured, taking each perspective into account while building consensus among the group.

Part of the cross-evaluation team's charge should be to develop a communication strategy designed to help everyone clearly understand the changes that are taking place. The communication should explain the big picture while helping each individual understand how changes will affect their daily lives.

Create A Culture Of Continuous Improvement

Now that the planning process is in place, the WFM team has been established and everyone has embraced the change, what's next? Staying on top of the contact center's objectives can be just as challenging, if not more challenging, than establishing them in the first place. So it's important to foster a culture of continuous improvement.

This means continually tracking and identifying business trends and making the appropriate adjustments to the daily plan. In conjunction with changes to the planning process, work with groups such as human resources to enhance goals, staffing and training. Also, continue working with the WFM vendor to identify training opportunities. There may be features and functionality that the call center can take better advantage of once the WFM team has mastered the basics, or knowledge that might get lost when turnover occurs.

Workforce management brings a ripple of change that can be felt across the organization. Whether the team fights that change or embraces it oftentimes depends on how things are communicated.

Additionally, it's important to keep networking. User groups, conferences and industry organizations offer a plethora of new ideas.

Constantly revisit the organization's processes and procedures to be sure the operation is functioning as efficiently and effectively as possible. If someone asks, "Why are you doing it that way?" and the response is, "Because that's the way we've always done it," a process re-evaluation is long overdue.

Workforce management is not an easy button, but it's a whole lot easier to get the desired results if the call center has laid the groundwork for success even before a system is in place. **CIS**

Rick Seeley has more than 15 years of contact center management experience. Prior to joining IEX Corporation ([news - alert](http://www.iex.com)) (<http://www.iex.com>), a subsidiary of NICE Systems Inc., he was a contact center manager at Brinks Home Security. In addition to his contact center management experience, Seeley was a founding member of the Board of Advisors for the Society of Workforce Planning Professionals (SWPP). He can be reached via e-mail at rick.seeley@iex.com.

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Figure 1. Basic Schedule Adherence Calculation.

- 150 agents = 1,125 hours phone time per day
- 1,125 hours phone time per day @ \$11 per hour = \$12,375 per day
- Adherence goal = 92 percent
- Planned Non-productive time = eight percent
- Eight percent non-productive time = \$990 per day
- \$990 per day x 365 days = \$361,350 per year
- Each percentage point of this eight percent equals just over \$45,000 of either additional savings or additional non-product time cost.

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Managing customers is a hugely complex task for large corporations. In fact, the larger the organization is, the more removed decision makers become from customers. There is a complex maze of service and product offerings that customers wish to talk about. Their communication may have begun in the shopping or pre-sales mode and moved into the sales/purchase cycle, the after-sale service and billing questions, and then perhaps the ongoing support questions. Products and services are becoming more complex. Faced with this complexity, customers and companies must look for management and operational practices that carry more impact.

The two most effective ways to improve contact center performance are as follows:

- Establish a work volume forecasting methodology; and
- Establish staff schedules that meet customer demand.

Establish A Work Volume Forecasting Methodology

Forecasting is complicated by the abundance of customer communication channels and the need to have a blended staff capable of handling customer interaction across multiple media, such as:

- Inbound telephone calls;
- Customer walk-ins;
- Inbound e-mail;
- Inbound faxes;
- Instant message requests; and
- Web callback requests.

The one thing that all the above communications channels provide is rich reports of historical data and arrival patterns in short intervals ranging from 15 to 30 minutes. These data may change based on day of week, date within the month or seasonal factors. There is only one factor that makes any type of forecasting workable, and that is repeatable



Figure 1.

patterns. Every Tuesday from 2:00 pm to 2:30 pm, the same overall percentage of daily requests will arrive. If you look at that same interval over the previous four to six Tuesdays, you will be able to predict work volumes in the interval for the next Tuesday with amazing accuracy. As Figure 1 shows, the arrival pattern is amazingly constant, and every Tuesday will look like every other Tuesday. In fact, it occurs with such uncanny regularity that it takes a natural event such as a blizzard, earthquake, hurricane or flood to alter it significantly.

In the same way that call arrivals fall into patterns by day of week, call volumes fall into regular patterns as well. Every Tuesday looks like every other Tuesday unless some special event causes a change, such as a normal billing cycle, a holiday, a system failure or a product recall. Figure 2 shows regular Tuesday call volume throughout the month.

Establish Staff Schedules Based On Customer Demand

Managing contact centers is unlike managing any other type of organization; in fact, it is more similar to managing a manufacturing plant than an administrative office environment. Not

By Doug Tanoury
Customer Interactions Consulting (CIC)



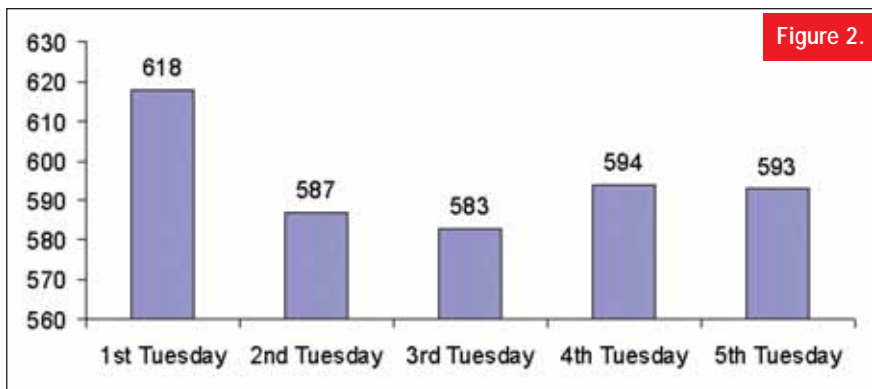
many managers today understand the dynamic nature of production environments. Production environments were the vast engines that drove the Industrial Revolution. In the early days of the twentieth century, production environments were fuelled by pools of human labor. Only in the last 25 years have these labor pools been replaced by

robots and automated machines. Customer contact centers, using telephones, interactive voice response (IVR) systems, instant messaging applications and e-mail, handle in piecework fashion the interactions of the largest corporations with individual customers.

The unique characteristics of production environments include:

- Production environments by their very nature are inflexible and rigid, especially in the demands they make on the workers;
- Processes must be consistent and uniform;
- Process variation must be managed to very low levels;
- Robust quality management programs are required to measure non-conformance or process failures; and
- Real-time tools to monitor quality and production are required.

The points above are true for describing both a manufacturing plant and a customer contact center. At the process level, production-is-production in the kitchen of a fast food franchise, at an airline ticket counter, a supermarket checkout counter, an assembly plant or a customer contact center. The dynamics of



success and failure are remarkably similar.

Production environments that render or produce services are striking similar to environments that produce products. Imagine a factory environment where workers can leave the assembly line at will to take a break, make a phone call, visit with coworkers, come in late, take an extra long lunch on occasion and perhaps leave a bit early. The pace of production is inflexible, and the individual workers must conform to a rigid schedule. Not following a strict schedule causes production and quality to suffer and costs to rise.

As we have seen, if the contact volume by half-hour interval can be predicted with a great deal of accuracy, so too can the staff required in each half-hour interval. Three key components come together:

If I know how many total calls I will get on a given Tuesday in May,

And

If I know the percentage of total calls I will get in each half-hour interval on a given Tuesday in May,

And

If I know how long on average it takes to totally process a contact on a given Tuesday in May,

Then

I can predict how many staff members are required per half-hour interval on a given Tuesday in May.

Table 3 is a staff schedule by half-hour interval that shows incoming units of work. It also shows the staff required versus the staff available by half-hour intervals.

What Results Can Be Expected

The results of establishing a work forecast and staff schedule will be immediate. All of the quality metrics that contact centers track can be improved, for example:

- Service levels will improve;
- Customer wait times will be reduced;
- Customer satisfaction will increase;
- Customer abandonment rates will fall;
- Staff productivity will improve;
- Cost per contact will be reduced; and
- Employee satisfaction will improve.

All these improvements can be obtained without any capital investment, new technology or lengthy development projects. These benefits can be obtained simply by changing current management practices and managing

Managing contact centers is unlike managing any other type of organization; in fact, it is more similar to managing a manufacturing plant than an administrative office environment.

contact centers like the true service production environments they are. **CIS**

Doug Tanoury is widely regarded as a customer management expert who has dealt with all aspects of people, process and technology across all front office business applications. Doug has held both operational management and consulting roles for EDS, MCI, eLoyalty, Siebel Systems and Customer Interactions Consulting (CIC).

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Table 3.

Table 3.

Tuesday		Seconds		Mins.
AVERAGE HANDLE TIME		301.88		5.0
Adjusted RE		210.70		3.5
Adjusted 1/2 HR RE		105.35		1.8

DAILY CALLS OFFERED	425
---------------------	-----

HALF HOUR BEGINNING	TIME	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30	12:00	12:30	13:00	13:30	14:00	14:30	15:00	15:30	16:00	16:30	17:00	TOTAL
% OF CALLS OFFERED BY 1/2 HOUR	(IPA)	3.22%	4.97%	5.99%	8.00%	7.14%	7.81%	7.23%	6.53%	4.95%	5.09%	5.47%	5.73%	5.34%	6.07%	5.41%	5.03%	5.34%	89.42%	
FORECASTED CALLS	(CIC)	13.7	21.1	25.5	34.3	30.4	33.2	30.7	27.8	21.0	21.6	23.3	24.4	22.7	25.8	23.0	21.4	22.7	422.5	
OPEN PHONES REQUIRED		3.4	5.2	6.3	8.5	7.5	8.2	7.6	6.9	5.2	5.4	5.8	6.0	5.6	6.4	5.7	5.3	5.6	104.7	
OPEN PHONES REQ'D (ROUNDED UP)		4	6	7	9	8	9	8	7	6	6	6	6	6	7	6	6	6	112.4	
TOTAL AGENTS SCHEDULED (If sum)		11	11	12	12	12	12	11	9	8	8	7	9	10	11	11	11	9	174.0	

AGENTS OVERSUNDER REQUIRED		(FTE)		7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Name	Start End Lunch	TUSBA																			
FTE 1	8:30 AM - 5:00 PM 11:00 - 12:00			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
FTE 2	8:45 AM - 5:00 PM 11:00 - 12:00			0.5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
FTE 3	8:30 AM - 5:00 PM 12:00 - 1:00			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
FTE 4	8:30 AM - 5:00 PM 12:00 - 1:00			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
FTE 5	8:30 AM - 4:45 PM 1:00 - 2:00			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0.5	
FTE 6	8:30 AM - 5:00 PM 1:00 - 2:00			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
FTE 7	8:30 AM - 5:00 PM 1:00 - 2:00			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
FTE 8	8:30 AM - 5:00 PM 1:00 - 2:00			0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
FTE 9	8:30 AM - 5:00 PM 2:00 - 3:00			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
FTE 10	8:30 AM - 4:30 AM 2:00 - 3:00			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
FTE 11	8:30 AM - 5:00 PM 2:00 - 3:00			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
FTE 12	8:30 AM - 5:00 PM 2:00 - 3:00			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
ARIS/AVC				0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	1	1	1	
LOAN IN				0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
DATE	8/21/2006	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30	12:00	12:30	13:00	13:30	14:00	14:30	15:00	15:30	16:00	16:30	17:00		
TIME	01:45 PM	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30	12:00	12:30	13:00	13:30	14:00	14:30	15:00	15:30	16:00	16:30	17:00	

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Tracey E. Schelmetic
*Editorial Director, Customer
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magazine, Dot Commentary*

Session 1: On Demand

Answering Senior Management's What-If Questions Before They Ask

It's the start of Budget Season, and your company has just engaged a high-powered consultant to address a variety of operational and financial what-if questions. That consultant can be you! The key to being viewed as a valued consultant and advisor is to provide analyses, conclusions, and recommendations to senior management before executives ask the questions.

Session 2: Sept. 13th 1:00PM EST

Long-Term Planning by Facts: Avoiding the Dangers of Educated Guesses

Welcome to Budgeting Season, everyone! During this time of year, every call center focuses on a long-term plan that addresses customer access strategies, technology applications, personnel issues, and call center processes. Developing these strategies and the tactics to make them happen successfully is critical to the success of the business, yet many organizations base many far-reaching decisions on educated guesses and inaccurate what-if analysis. This session will provide an enlightened look at some of today's most pressing issues and trends and how a defensible long-term decision can be made from factual analysis and simulation.

Session 3: Sept. 28th 1:00PM EST

Know Your Network: Essential Planning and Operational Questions for Multi-Site Operations

Organizations that handle customer contacts via multiple call centers have many critical operational decisions to make. From a workforce management perspective, it should be decided if forecasting, scheduling, and daily tracking of performance will be done from a single site or from each individual site. Likewise, there are many questions to answer about how calls will be routed in order to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of all sites.

Session 4: Oct. 12 1:00PM EST

Calling Call Center Outsourcers: Creating an Outsourcing Bid with Confidence

You've just received a Request for Proposal to provide a bid for providing outsourced services to a growing company. Most outsourcers at this point use spreadsheets to analyze and price various staffing scenarios and provide a proposal to the prospective customer. However, one wrong assumption or calculation and you may have seriously over-priced the proposal and lost the bid, or won the business with an under-bid price that will ultimately cost your business money. This session will lead you through some of the steps to evaluate a new staffing project, including what questions to ask and how to perform an accurate analysis to provide a bid that ensures profitability for your company while remaining competitive.
(Session specially designed for and marketed to outsourcers)

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Case Study: An Rx For Healthcare Communication

Outsourcing And Offshoring Medical Call Centers For Competitive Advantage

There is a chronic condition plaguing the U.S. healthcare industry, with no cure in sight: a shortage of qualified nurses. For the first time ever, the U.S. Department of Labor, in its February 2004 Monthly Labor Review, cited registered nurses as the top occupation in terms of job growth through the year 2012. Yet according to the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, the number of candidates taking the NCLEX-RN Exam actually decreased by 10 percent over the last decade, declining to 87,085 in 2004.

In 2003, to respond to this growing problem, MediCall developed a nurse-based communications center located in the Philippines. MediCall provides communications services to hospitals, health plans and physician group practices that are facing increasing challenges due to overworked nursing staffs, growing patient loads and more stringent reporting and compliance requirements.

The MediCall model enables entities such as health plans, managed care organizations, workers' compensation organizations, medical-device companies and integrated healthcare delivery systems to offload a number of staff-intensive, costly programs. MediCall helps eliminate expenses related to member and provider services, educational and training programs, clinical trials, and case and disease management support.

Using a state-of-the-art contact center, MediCall supplies skilled, experienced healthcare professionals to address routine inbound/outbound patient communications. The services run the gamut from new member welcome calls, health risk assessments and compliance calls to disease and case management support services, patient satisfaction follow-ups

and more; duties that, in the past, have often fallen on nurses to complete.

MediCall considers its business model to be both innovative and sorely needed. For it to work, however, two key elements were necessary. The first was access to a ready supply of qualified, experienced, English-speaking healthcare professionals, and the other was a top-notch communication center infrastructure.

To satisfy the first requirement, MediCall partnered with Ayala Systems Technology, Inc., a subsidiary of Ayala Corporation, one of the oldest and largest public companies in the Philippines. An abundant supply of world-class certified healthcare specialists make the Philippines a destination of choice when it comes to outsourcing. The country boasts more than 200 nursing schools with many graduates emigrating to the U.S. and eventually becoming RNs. According to an October 2004 study by the University of the Philippines National Institutes of Health, more than 50,000 Filipino

nurses have immigrated to the U.S. since 2000. Some of the largest offshore medical-related call centers are located in the Philippines, which has a large pool of well-trained, English-speaking healthcare professionals. To become a nurse in the Philippines, a four-year college education is required prior to taking the certification exam. By leveraging Ayala's extensive resources, MediCall was able to assemble a Philippines-based pool of certified and experienced nurses, physicians and pharmacists.

All of MediCall's contact center personnel have a minimum of 10 years' English education in school. In addition, they are required by the company to take courses in American English and business idioms to ensure even greater fluency with MediCall's specialized work.

For the second requirement, a world-class communications platform, the MediCall technical team drew up a stringent list of voice and online service specifications. Because communications are the lifeblood at MediCall, it was critical to find a technical infrastructure that would be available with guaranteed round-the-clock service uptime. Voice, Web chat and routed e-mail options

By John Chess
MediCall



were needed for patient contact, plus the ability to add other on-demand capabilities in the future. Finally, the ability to integrate our platform with existing customer applications, from customer relationship management (CRM) to electronic medical record (EMR) and medical practice management (MPM) systems was also imperative.

Because in 2003 MediCall was a start-up operation, it was determined that an on-demand, Web-based contact center platform made the most sense since it would eliminate the large upfront capital layout required to purchase hardware and software. Additionally, using a hosted system allowed MediCall to add capacity and features as needed.

With these criteria in mind, MediCall's executives researched various on-demand contact center alternatives. We selected Echopass and its EchoSystem contact center service integration platform because it offered an impressive full-featured and end-to-end solution.

The location of Echopass' SAS70 certified network operations center (NOC) solved a key regulatory concern, one that both MediCall and its customers would face: According to the mandates of the U.S. Government's Health Information Portability and Accountability Act, better known as HIPAA, housing medical records offshore is a problem. Echopass' NOC is located in Salt Lake City, Utah, which means that all data remain within the

continental U.S. As long as the Manila-based agents have no ability to print out or otherwise save or duplicate a record on their end, MediCall is able to assure total HIPAA compliance for its clients.

A high level of security is essential to outsourcing medical-related services. When an organization deploys call center services that are hosted in the U.S. with thin-client network computers at the offshore call center, customer service representatives are unable to download, print or copy information to a CD or floppy disk because the data reside on U.S.-based servers. Hosted services also keep start-up costs to a minimum as customer service representatives need only a PC on a LAN or a DSL connection if they work at home.

Here's how it works. An organization's toll-free numbers, Web links and e-mail addresses are pointed to the hosting vendor's communications center. All contacts are queued and routed to nurse customer service representatives in the offshore call center based on routing rules via a data network. Voice calls are delivered via VoIP. Web chat, Web callback, e-mail and faxback services broaden the range of communication options for both the consumer and the medical provider.

One program example is Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Plan support. The company currently manages a program in support of Health Plan Medicare Prescription Drug Plans (PDP). Nurse agents, staffing toll-free hotlines, use

client information systems to manage formulary lookups and benefit questions.

Another program example is medical records transcription applications. Inputting information into an electronic medical records system is a time-consuming task. Patient records must be located and written notes reviewed; at that point, pertinent information must be typed into the system and reviewed.

Using an outsourced EMR transcription service as an example, doctors and nurses dial a toll-free number when finished with a patient, input the patient's I.D. and name, and dictate the information. Patient records are updated on a near real-time basis. In an industry that places a premium on time, the payoff of outsourced EMR transcription is high — doctors and nurses decrease the amount of time spent on this task by up to 70 percent.

Yet another example is a MediCall customer that provides home diabetes supplies. Disease management is a growing trend in healthcare. Today, most health insurers outsource some or all of their disease management programs and the foundation of these disease management programs is the call center, which is often staffed by registered nurses who monitor patients' health by phone and the Internet. Using MediCall, the home diabetes supply company is able to provide callers with health and lifestyle management education, as well as ready information on nutrition and other

daily diabetic concerns. Nurses in the Philippines, who have specialized training in diabetes and can educate callers about the disease, deliver supplies, handle insurance claims and support existing nurse staff by doing the data collection, data entry, follow-up and contact. This frees the U.S.-based RN staff to

manage their patients more effectively, offering higher levels of service at lower average costs.

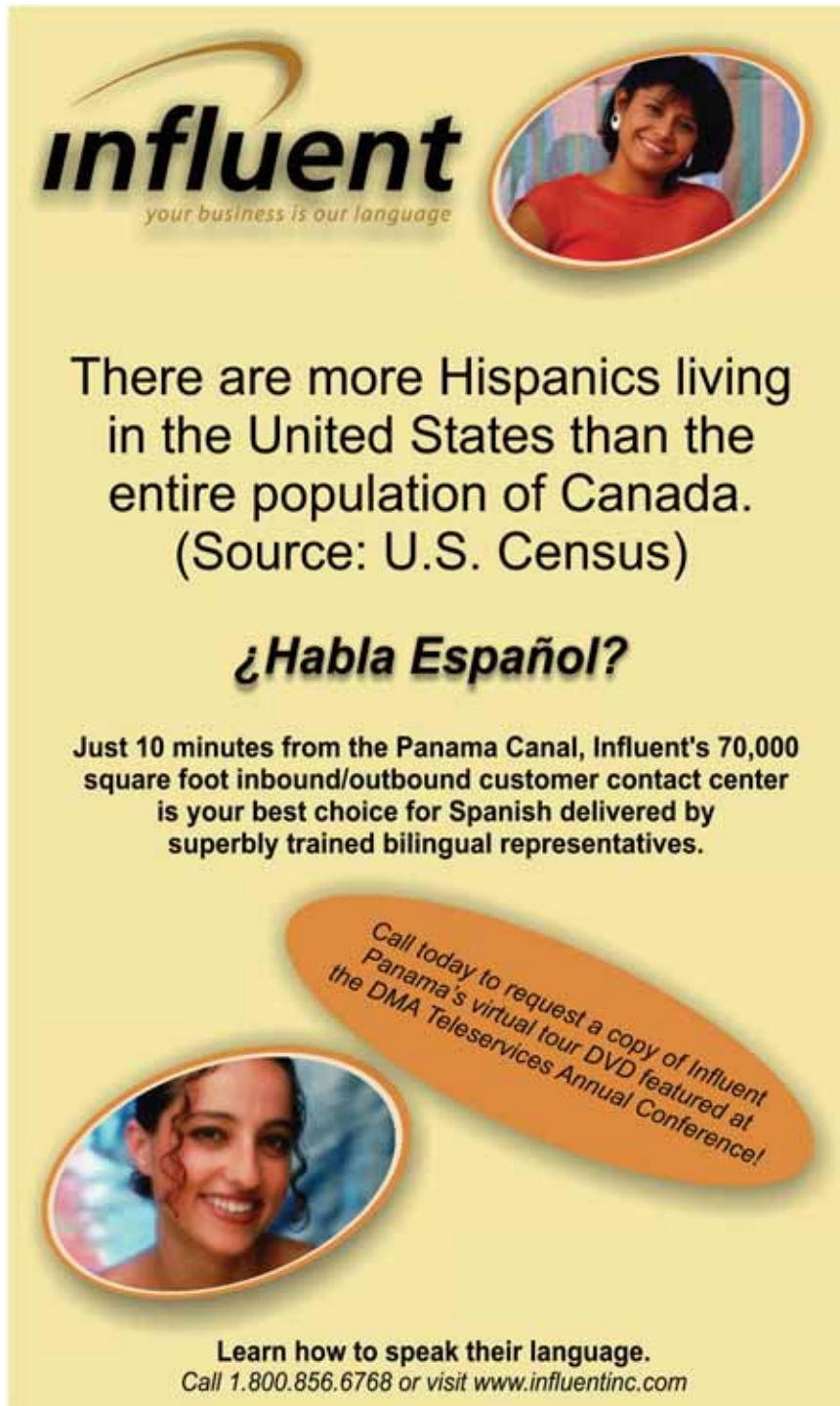
The Echopass EchoSystem service integration platform combines state-of-the-art technologies from across the telecom and call center industries in a unified, flexible and affordable call and con-

tact center solution, delivered as a service over the Internet. In addition to inbound and outbound call processing, Echopass' integrations include IVR, ACD, computer-telephony integration, database screen pops, universal queuing and routed e-mail. Additionally, because Echopass is VoIP-based, ([define](#) - [news](#) - [alert](#)) calls are placed over the Internet at correspondingly low rates.

In MediCall's new business presentations, it takes only one call to the Philippines contact center to make believers of a prospective customer's nursing staff. Nurses are understandably concerned that their patients will be well cared for. After hearing the quality of the phone call via Echopass and the professionalism of our staff, they tell us our services are superior to their own internal system. Our demonstration never fails to produce a "wow."

Outsourcing healthcare services increases effectiveness and flexibility, allows concentration on core competency and lowers costs. Other industries that deal with sensitive information, such as banking and government, have experienced success with offshore outsourcing and keeping their data secure. There is currently a growing list of health-related services being outsourced, including healthcare communications. Offshore healthcare services outsourcing should not be viewed as a replacement for U.S. call centers. Instead, it should be used to assist domestic centers through good coordination and management efforts. Today, we are seeing only the tip of the iceberg of outsourcing medical-related services. The offshore call center, as a silent partner trained in your protocols, will continue to rise in value as its benefits are better understood. [CIS](#)

John Chess, President and CEO of [MediCall](#), ([news](#) - [alert](#)) has over 20 years experience in the electronics outsourcing field. He was one of three founders of UXComm, which provided a suite of management software to the embedded processor marketplace. Prior to that, Chess was a co-founder of Cosine Communications, a company that pioneered its concept of an IP service delivery platform to the telecom industry.



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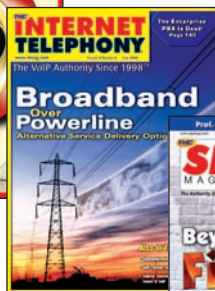
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TMC Labs Innovation Awards 2006: Part I

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 will be published in two parts in order to accommodate our in-depth write-ups for the winning solutions. Part two of the winners' list will be highlighted in the October 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 will be highlighted in Part II in the October 2006 issue of *Customer Inter@ction Solutions*.

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Amcat

Amcat Contact Center Suite

<http://www.amcat.com>

([news](#) - [alert](#)) Which is better: buying individual “best of breed” call center products in various genres, integrating them all together or buying a single solution that may not be the “best of breed” in each genre, but it doesn’t have the integration hassles, offers a single unified interface and can be orders of magnitude less in initial cost, as well as offer a lower TCO (total cost of ownership)? Well, Amcat is betting on the latter by offering its Contact Center Suite, a comprehensive call center solution that offers IVR, ACD, CTI, workforce management, predictive dialing, voice recording, multichannel contact (e-mail, fax, SMS, Web) and IP contact center functionality all rolled into one.

Focused on the small to medium-sized enterprise (SME) and call center market, Amcat provides an excellent solution for the fastest-growing and largest marketplace for customer contact solutions. Amcat Contact Center Suite offers a comprehensive path to IP customer contact, including VoIP and Web callback functionality. Amcat is unique in that it offers a choice in IP hardware supporting both the Intel IPLINK IP product line and the Aculab Prosody X product line. The Prosody X product is ideal for organizations with contact centers in different countries or continents because it is not tied to a specific communications protocol. Under a cost-free license, it includes signaling protocols for VoIP (SIP, H.323) and for TDM including DPNSS, Euro ISDN, NI-2, Q.SIG and SS7.

Amcat Communication Framework is a powerful software platform that provides next-generation communication capabilities for call centers. It was created using Intel’s Communication Services Framework (CSF). The Intel CSF provides Amcat developers with a high-level, object-oriented interface that abstracts the underlying Intel Dialogic telephony interface, allowing Amcat developers to focus purely on application development. Because of this, Amcat can easily integrate its solution with almost any element

of the Intel telephony product line as well as many third-party solutions such as Aculab’s Prosody X.

The Amcat SIP softphone eliminates the need for a telephone handset or PBX for distributed sites and remote representatives. The Amcat Agent Web-based Desktop Application is Amcat’s next-generation IP agent desktop. Since it is HTML-based, it enables customers to access various data sources, other applications, or connect to an intranet or the Internet.

With a single unified platform, Amcat provides a consistent methodology for managing both the interactions and all the associated customer and product data, saving time and delivering better customer service. Amcat’s solution is based on Microsoft’s .NET Framework, making data sharing and software integration very easy. It also leverages Microsoft clustering for fault-tolerance.

Aspect Software, Inc.

Aspect eWorkforce Management 7.0

<http://www.aspect.com>

([news](#) - [alert](#)) Contact centers need to accurately plan, manage and optimize their staffing resources to save on labor costs and improve customer service. Aspect eWorkforce Management (eWFM) 7.0 provides all types of contact centers with a set of powerful workforce optimization and strategic planning tools that automate the complex tasks of managing the workforce and enhancing productivity.

Aspect eWFM 7.0 supports outsourced, in-house, hosted, single-site, multisite, multiskill, multichannel, inbound, outbound and/or blended, covering the entire spectrum of performance optimization. Several enhancements were made in version 7.0. First, there is a new and improved user interface adding enhanced usability and increased efficiency in performing daily workforce management tasks. Aspect also added new navigational functionality and data manipulation capabilities to improve usability and reduce training costs. Additionally, the solution offers more languages, including Chinese (simplified and traditional), Korean and Japanese, bringing the total

number of supported languages to eight.

In addition to traditional inbound scheduling, eWFM also handles outbound scheduling. A sophisticated algorithm helps organizations to schedule the right number of agents to handle the predicted outbound and inbound/outbound blended workload and to maximize the number of contacts made and revenue generated. It produces accurate staffing forecasts based on contact completion information, blending rules and standard staff group parameters. Customized data regarding campaign size and passes can also be used. Additionally, the software effectively tracks schedule performance, including offered and handled contacts and contact handle time, so real-time adjustments can be made quickly and easily.

TMC Labs liked that eWFM can handle multiskill scheduling for multimedia communication channels, adds real-time schedule adherence monitoring, while also enabling Web-based agent self service. The software features accurate demand forecasting and allows users to create “what-if” scenarios to evaluate future needs or campaigns. Call centers can also track intra-day performance so managers can react quickly. The product also features adherence monitoring, historical reporting and real-time monitoring tools to help ensure agents adhere to schedules, and helps identify agents or groups who are the most or least productive. The most innovative aspect of the Aspect software (pun intended) is that it offers inbound, outbound and blended functionality, combined with forecasting, scheduling and adherence along with quality management features — all in a single comprehensive product.

Citrix Online

GoTo Webinar

<http://www.citrix.com>

Citrix ([quote](#) - [news](#) - [alert](#)) has been providing remote access solutions for many years to improve the productivity of workforce employees. Over the years, Citrix has leveraged its expertise in screen-sharing technology (compressing screen pixels, mouse movements and keystrokes) to offer application stream-

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ing, application virtualization and Web collaboration software. Citrix GoToWebinar is Citrix's managed online event service designed to enable online Webinars and targeting the small to medium-sized business market, leveraging their screen-sharing expertise.

In fact, GoToWebinar uses proprietary bandwidth-adaptive compression and screen-sharing technology used in other Citrix products to enable event organizers to meet with attendees using a variety of Internet connections. Bandwidth adaptive compression technology provides faster performance, and screen-sharing technology provides excellent 24-bit color.

GoToWebinar is similar to Citrix's GoToMeeting Corporate; however, GoToMeeting allows only 25 members, whereas GoToWebinar was designed to handle up to an astonishing 1,000 users, making it perhaps the most scalable solution in the market. GoToWebinar also features recording, live annotation and mark-up, text chat, an attendees' panel and very good scheduling and invitation functionality.

Using Dashboard, organizers can monitor overall attendee attentiveness displayed as a percentage. In other words, the host of the Webinar can see whether any attendee has temporarily switched to another application during the Webinar. This isn't meant as a tattletale feature, but rather to measure the Webinar's overall ability to hold the audience's attention. Poor attention may indicate the need for better content, shorter duration or a different speaker. In addition, users can also measure and record attendees' feedback and satisfaction with the session. Webinars can be recorded (both the screen and the audio) and can be distributed as standard Windows Media files.

GoToWebinar features advanced security and industry-standard encryption for maximum privacy and data protection. GoToWebinar allows users to start using Web events instantly with a flat-rate subscription to the service. Many Webinar packages base price on usage instead of a flat-rate. Citrix calls this licensing "all you can reach" and it includes planning, presentation and reporting functions for one flat fee with no hidden charges.

CustomerSat, Inc. **CustomerSat Enterprise** <http://www.customersat.com>

CustomerSat Enterprise ([news - alert](#)) is a hosted (ASP) survey solution designed to gather customer and market feedback by multiple channels; e.g., online, phone, speech-enabled IVR and PDA, then deliver real-time analytics on survey results — frequency distributions, cross tabs, correlations, trend lines and other statistics. These results are delivered to a portal and can be measured via interactive dashboards and "push" (e-mailed) reports. Most important, it delivers these real-time analytics on survey results without requiring MIS intervention to perform complex database queries. It also allows users to define business rules and alerts that will automatically open and assign survey cases when customer satisfaction and KPIs fall below specified thresholds.

CustomerSat Enterprise is a true innovator in the online survey market. It was the first to create an online, real-time generation of survey cross-tabs (1997), and the company claims to be the first to offer real-time trend lines of call center customer satisfaction online (1998). CustomerSat also claims to be the first to offer pop-up-on-exit surveys for Web visitors exiting a Web site (1999) and the company has a U.S. patent to boot. Their newest release includes integration of CRM-class case management and reporting features in an online survey system. For example, if a customer has the case closed and gives low scores for the case resolution (entered into the CRM system), this can automatically kick off a CustomerSat survey, which can be used to address what caused the customer's dissatisfaction.

An innovative feature to note is how well CustomerSat manages bounced survey invitations (out of office, mailbox full, etc.). CustomerSat Enterprise provides an automated bounce e-mail manager that receives, interprets, categorizes and files these bounced e-mail invitations. CustomerSat sorts bounced messages of different types into separate e-mail boxes that users can access and quickly process. This feature eliminates a com-

mon labor-intensive task and improves e-mail list quality.

The latest version enables CustomerSat users to graphically analyze, sort and prioritize cases based on such attributes as case I.D., case name, category, date created, days remaining until closure deadline, days since activity, goal in days (closure goal), number of days case has been open, case outcome and days since deadline passed. These case reporting and management features make CustomerSat Enterprise a unique hybrid between an advanced online survey system and a CRM system.

CustomerVision, Inc. **CustomerVision BizWiki** <http://www.customervision.com>

([news - alert](#)) Wikis have become a very popular collaborative and democratic exercise in allowing users to freely create and edit Web page content using any Web browser. The most popular example, of course, is Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia that relies on users to provide and edit content. Enterprises are now looking to deploy secured wikis in the corporate environment.

CustomerVision BizWiki delivers the first Web 2.0 enterprise-ready wiki that blends the power of collaboration with content creation using a user-friendly WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) editor. CustomerVision told TMC Labs, "We believed there was a gap in corporate and/or member communication between what happens in e-mail and traditional content management solutions or Web portals. CustomerVision saw the opportunity and gap to fill a communication need between the two that enables collaboration, manageability and usability."

BizWiki addresses companies' needs to create a medium for rapidly sharing knowledge, developing new ideas and capturing repeatable business process. CustomerVision BizWiki combines the power of content management, wiki collaboration, RSS (real simple syndication) and "ask the expert" workflow functionality into the BizWiki for an end user to securely and effectively capture and share a company's intellectual capital.



WEB SUMMITS

TMCnet's 2006 Web Summit Series...

TMCnet and J Arnold Associates combine forces to present the 2006 Web Summit Series. Each TMC Web Summit will focus on thought leadership from the industry's leading companies, as well as the host, Jon Arnold, one of the IP sector's most highly-regarded analysts. In addition to speakers providing their individual

perspectives, Arnold will engage participants in a roundtable discussion to explore issues in greater depth, following which, the panel fields questions from the audience. Highly interactive and informative, each event of this TMC Web Summit series should be marked on your calendar.

2006 TMCnet Multi - Sponsored Web Summit Topics

www.tmcnet.com/web-summit

VoIP Peering - July 27 *Archived

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 of 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

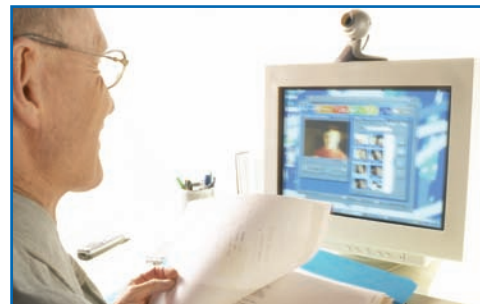
TMC's Mobility VoIP Web Summit will provide a comprehensive overview of this space, and what it takes for operators to transfer, support and bill voice traffic as it traverses various types of mobile networks. As the mobile market continues to grow and evolve beyond voice-only communications, the infrastructure 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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CustomerVision stated that their solution is deployable in minutes. In addition, with security levels necessary for an enterprise deployment, CustomerVision BizWiki blends itself as a portal or portlet off any customer Web site and enables usability back and forth with e-mail interaction and alerting to draw users to the wiki and keep them coming back.

The software features templates for powerful CMS-like functionality and easy, on-the-fly design changes, full text search with advanced query options, as well as the ability to tag pages with additional keywords for improved search and display. Other nice features include threaded discussion support, blogging support and e-mail alerts.

etalk

Qfiniti Explore

<http://www.etalk.com>

Qfiniti Explore ([news - alert](#)) is a speech analytics solution that uses a combination of voice processing technology and conceptual search capabilities to allow organizations to automatically find recorded customer calls for customer intelligence, business process automation and quality monitoring purposes, saving time and cost over manual call monitoring.

etalk leverages the Intelligent Data Operation Layer (IDOL) engine from its parent company Autonomy, a market leader in enterprise search. Most customer information that passes through the call center is in some form of unstructured data, such as recorded calls, e-mails, PDF files, etc. etalk leverages the IDOL engine to analyze and be used to search unstructured data and help the contact center more strategically analyze its customer intelligence.

Qfiniti Explore is quite innovative in that it can find calls based on the "meaning" or the context of the conversation, returning the most relevant recordings based on the concepts discussed in the conversation. It is also unique in its Trend Spotting functionality, which automatically groups together related concepts and displays in a visual map to highlight common themes being discussed in calls.

Having a contextual understanding means that Explore can distinguish between calls using the same words but with entirely different meanings, reducing false positives and wasted time.

FrontRange Solutions

GoldMine IP Voice Suite

<http://www.frontrange.com>

([news - alert](#)) In the 1990s, the integration between the phone system and CRM databases required expensive and often proprietary CTI (computer-telephony integration) software and/or hardware to interface between the PBX and the CRM software. Today, with the advent of IP-PBXs and VoIP solutions that sit on the network, as well as open standards such as SIP, the convergence between various business applications is much easier and less expensive.

GoldMine IP Voice Suite is a unique customer interaction solution that combines IP telephony and CRM into a single, comprehensive solution. The innovative offering features a VoIP telephony application that includes full integration to GoldMine Corporate Edition CRM. This integration between the phone and the CRM application helps companies elevate the quality of interactions with their customers, which in turn boosts sales, increases customer loyalty and raises the productivity of service teams. As calls come in, GoldMine IP Voice Suite triggers screen pops of customer records from the GoldMine database. For outbound calling campaigns, users can click to dial from customer records, as well as other productivity-enhancing features such as preview dialing, calling scripts and campaign status reporting.

Other advanced functionality is built-in, including the ability for employees to one-click record conversations (transaction, customer complaint, etc.) and attach the recordings to customer records for later review. In a similar manner, inbound customer voice mails are saved as audio files right in the GoldMine customer history, instead of an employees' personal phone.

Most important, GoldMine IP Voice Suite offers a single vendor solution that provides advanced CRM, VoIP, call center

and CTI functionality that perfectly addresses small to medium-sized companies' limited budgets and the technical know-how required to integrate and maintain several disparate systems.

GFI Software

GFI EndPointSecurity

<http://www.gfi.com>

([news - alert](#)) As removable storage devices become more prevalent, especially portable removable storage devices such as USB memory sticks, the need for securing these devices in the enterprise becomes paramount. GFI is a software provider that offers IT departments popular software utilities including anti-spam software, anti-virus, server monitor and fax software. The company has now added the ability to secure portable removable devices. GFI EndPointSecurity lets companies secure entry and exit of data via portable storage devices, allowing organizations to prevent users from taking confidential data or introducing viruses and Trojans to the network.

GFI EndPointSecurity allows companies to actively manage user access to media players (including iPod and Creative Zen), USB sticks, CompactFlash, memory cards, PDAs, Blackberries, mobile phones, CDs/DVDs, floppies and more. This device control solution allows administrators to actively manage user access by defining which users can use removable media centrally from Active Directory simply by making these users members of pre-defined groups.

GFI EndPointSecurity was the first product to feature a group-based approach for assigning policies to computers. This unique approach offers the customer more ease-of-use for defining device access permissions, and also provides single-click network-wide deployment of the GFI EndPointSecurity agent.

GFI EndPointSecurity's group-based approach allows the user to first set up groups, each defining the policy for a set of computers. When a policy is defined, one or more computers can be added to the policy, which marks the computers with a pending update state. At any time, pending updates can be deployed via a single click, which will trigger deploy-



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ment on all computers. Finally, administrators have the ability to monitor the use of a removable device and even block access if the activity is suspected of compromising the integrity of corporate data or the security of the network.

IEX Corporation, a NICE Systems company

IEX TotalView Workforce Management system
<http://www.iex.com>

IEX ([news - alert](#)) has been a leader in providing workforce management solutions since workforce management (WFM) solutions were invented. WFM solutions are designed to improve the scheduling and agent management processes by automating tedious tasks and performing complex calculations. IEX actually pioneered many advanced WFM features. The company was the first to create a multisite WFM solution. Some other innovative firsts claimed by IEX include: the first system to have a true client-server architecture, the first to offer Web-based agent self-service applications, and the first system to support skills-based routing in a multisite environment and with multiple call routing configurations.

IEX's TotalView Workforce Management system enables contact centers to deliver consistent service with lower operating costs while at the same time increasing employee morale.

TotalView's advanced features include skills-based and multimedia scheduling (e-mail, Web chat, fax, inbound, outbound, etc.), real-time and historical adherence, intraday and performance management, enterprise reporting and data exchange, vacation and holiday planning as well as short- and long-term resource planning. TotalView offers these features utilizing a single-server architecture that enables easy system installation and maintenance.

InQuira, Inc.

InQuira 7
<http://www.inquiria.com>

InQuira 7 customer interaction platform helps companies accelerate the time

to sales conversions and time to service resolution, through intelligence that understands customer needs and delivers an optimized response online. InQuira's core products include Intelligent Search, Knowledge Management and Analytics solutions for Web marketing, Web self-service and call centers.

InQuira helps enterprises engage their Web site visitors in an experience that is satisfying to both parties. Rather than having to list every possible keyword combination or permutation, InQuira can understand the intent or semantic meaning behind visitor's search behavior (using natural language technology) and use that insight to deliver a personalized experience specific to each person's needs. The company's technology can reduce thousands of searches into "true intent" categories, and customers can have a manageable number of interactions, around which the business can formulate an intelligent response.

InQuira is the first to develop and market intent libraries for several vertical markets. Intents refer to the meaning behind the different ways people articulate their needs, and they serve two distinct purposes: they provide a way for companies and their Web site visitors to engage in a rewarding online dialog, and through this dialog they help companies increase sales conversions, decrease service resolution times and deflect calls away from live call center agents.

InQuira helps enterprises address their business problems by reducing support costs. It does this by minimizing calls and e-mails to call centers as well as solving problems such as inadequate site search, ineffective online marketing, ineffective Web self-service and the inability to understand customer needs.

M1 Global Solutions, Inc.

Business Convergence Platform
<http://www.m1global.com>

M1 Global's ([news - alert](#)) Business Convergence Platform is a standards-based communications platform that enables companies to create and deliver communication-enabled business

processes on-demand by harnessing the power of network convergence and service-oriented architecture (SOA) in a single, hosted platform.

The M1 Business Convergence Platform consists of a hosted IP-based communications infrastructure (which includes the PBX, VoIP equipment, IVR, Web servers, e-mail servers and chat/collaboration servers, etc.) controlled by the M1 Business Convergence Suite, a unique business process management (BPM) software suite capable of modeling and executing voice, Web and data flows using a visual, drag-and-drop modeling tool.

According to M1 Global, "This unique architecture enables a business analyst or IT professional with limited coding skills to design a multichannel business process model, translate the process model into the desired application and then execute the application on our platform to orchestrate communication channels such as voice, Web, e-mail, etc., manage people-based workflow including complex skills-based routing of tasks, and integrate to Web services and other data sources." The on-demand nature of the platform enables an organization to test the benefits of SOA, BPM and even VoIP and voice self-service without large capital expenditures. M1 states, "We are the first to incorporate the functionality of business process management and its benefits of simplification, control, adaptability and integration that come with it, into the world of multichannel interaction management."

The Convergence Studio serves as a centralized modeling tool for accessing and customizing the integrated interaction management. In fact, the M1 Convergence Studio is the first business process modeling tool capable of modeling a multichannel business process involving voice, Web and data flows in a single environment. This eliminates the costs and complexities associated with integrating several disparate systems as well as the ongoing management. Finally, it's important to note that M1 uses an MPLS VPN to deliver VoIP services with guaranteed quality of service for voice. **CIS**

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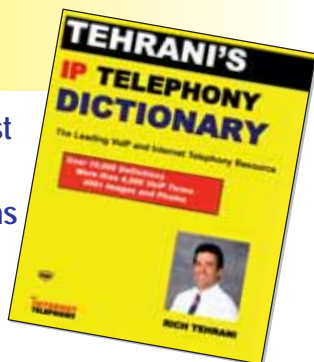
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ADVERTISING INDEX

Advertiser/ Web Address	Page Number	Advertiser/ Web Address	Page Number
1 2 1 Direct Response	51	Microsoft Speech Server	3
http://www.121directresponse.com		http://www.microsoft/speech	
Bay Bridge Webinar	43	NICE Systems.	cover 3
http://www.tmcnet.com/webinar/		http://www.nice.com	
Call Center 2.0	35	Oracle.	cover 4
http://www.callcenter20.com		http://www.oracle.com	
Dirigosoft.	9	Plantronics Inc.	7
http://www.dirigosoft.com		http://www.plantronics.com	
Echopass Webinar	31	Sennheiser Communications	21
http://www.tmcnet.com/webinar/		http://www.sennheiserus.com	
etalk	13	Spectrum Corp.	23
http://www.etalk.com		http://www.speccorp.com	
ICCM Canada	57	Stratasoft	19
http://www.iccmcanada.com		http://www.stratasoft.com	
Influent Inc.	28, 46	Strategic Contact Solutions Inc.	25
http://www.influentinc.com		http://www.strategicinc.com	
InfoCision Management Corp.	5	Symon Communications Inc.	15
http://www.infocision.com		http://www.symon.com	
Interactive Intelligence	cover wrap, 39	TMCnet Web Summits.	53
http://www.inin.com		http://www.tmcnet.com/web-summit	
INTERNET TELEPHONY Conference & Expo West.	49	Verint/Mercom Systems.	11, 29
http://www.tmcnet.com/voip/conference/		http://www.verint.com	
Invest In Guatemala	27	West Corp	cover 2, 1
http://www.investinguatemala.org		http://www.west.com	

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

Introducing Call Center 2.0

The goal of the call center in its earliest days (besides keeping the HR department in a constant frenzy due to the more than 100 percent annual turnover in early call centers) was automation. Early solutions allowed call center managers and supervisors to do things that were formerly done by hand in the “days of yore.” Auto-dialers, then later predictive dialers, took old-fashioned manual dialing (on rotary dial phones, no less...if you're under 30, look that term up on Wikipedia) out of the picture and allowed agents to make the best use of their outbound time by ensuring there was always a live call waiting for them. For the sake of example, let's call dialers a component of Call Center 1.0.

Workforce management was done on graph paper purchased from an office supply store using complex algorithms that were crunched by hand by the only person in the office capable of doing math more complex than balancing his check-book: the dreaded “Erlang distribution,” or more specifically, Erlang-C, which looked like this:

$$P_C = \frac{\frac{E^N}{N!} \frac{N}{N-E}}{\sum_{k=0}^{N-1} \frac{E^k}{k!} + \frac{E^N}{N!} \frac{N}{N-E}}$$

Does your brain hurt? You're not alone. It also no longer matters: modern workforce management solved the problems for the call center. No longer did the smart guy with the pencil need to spend all morning immersed in theoretical queuing theory...workforce management accomplished that for him. Workforce management was a component of Call Center 1.0.

Call recording, when it entered the Call Center 1.0 picture, came in as a mandatory functionality rather than a helpful one (at first). The companies that were forced to record because of regulation realized that these recordings were a great source of training material for agents; it was also a good way to keep track of agent performance for review and promotion. The problem was determining what to record when, and how to use the recordings. Call monitoring limited itself in that it required a human to sit and listen to the calls, determining which were useful and which were expendable. That took time, and lots of it.

The automatic call distributor, or ACD, which became widely used in the 1980s, was a very large part of Call Center 1.0. Before the ACD, agents on separate lines took calls from phones ringing off the hook. Customers encountered busy signals regularly, agents could not take breaks without allowing calls to go unanswered. Call centers, work groups and even single agents operated as islands of efficiency (or inefficiency, as the case may be) within the same building.

Of all the technologies of Call Center 1.0, the early IVR holds the most notorious spot. Granted, its launch was an improvement for many call centers, allowing a small amount of skills-based routing or even a smidge of customer self-service (“Press three for our mailing address”). But IVRs were difficult to set up and administer properly, and in the end, companies drove away almost as many customers with their IVR than they helped, and the rest of us got blisters on our fingers from pressing buttons.

But change, as we know, is inevitable (and not always a bad thing). The very concept of Call Center 2.0 is an exciting one. Call Center 1.0 solutions had their place and time: they made a great deal of improvement over the random, chaotic and manual systems that existed before.

So what does Call Center 2.0 mean?

To an enterprise, it means that “the call center” no longer need be a place. It can be 200 agents working from home. It can be five call centers spread over the planet. It can be 25 agents working in an office on

Main Street today, but easily relocated to an office on Elm Street tomorrow when Main Street floods from a storm. It can be two or more companies' support centers linked together into a unified support entity. It can be 10 product experts, all in their cars on roads across the country. Internet telephony, coupled with software that can be delivered as a service via a Web browser, means that any PC with a broadband connection and a headset can instantly become a node in the call center. A call center can literally spring up overnight with very little up-front capital. It can be scaled up to meet a surge in customer contact, and it can shrink back to go into “snooze mode” during downtimes. Via workforce optimization, the call center can literally determine what size it needs to be and when, and it can “fix itself” when it goes wrong. It can be administered and monitored from anywhere: a remote bar on a tropical beach, the boss' PDA from the airport, or from the space shuttle in orbit (though I imagine those astronauts already have more than enough to do). It can make the best possible use of its resources at all times, lowering its costs and raising its efficiencies.


To the customer, Call Center 2.0 is possibly even more exciting. Those hated push-button IVR systems? Gone. Call abandons from outbound sales agents? A thing of the past. The need to talk to a live agent about nearly any problem? Reduced. Nine-to-five hours for call center help? Finished.

Customers can call anytime, from anywhere, via any medium. They can use their voices to interact with the company's knowledge bases. They can pay bills, order products or get product help by speaking to an automated system that has all the answers. They can search a knowledge base at their leisure. They can share experiences and ask questions of other customers with similar needs. They can be offered resolutions to problems or issues that have not yet occurred. They can call a company and be confident that they will be known: their previous transactions, their outstanding issues, their current orders...without having to repeat their names and customer numbers. When they do need to speak with live agents, they can be confident they have been quickly routed to the best possible people in the organization to help them, regardless of where both the customer and the agent are physically located.

In 2006 and beyond, the “well-dressed” call center will look as dissimilar from the call centers of the 1980s and 1990s as chalk and cheese (which is a nauseating analogy...how about juniper berries and jet engines? Bears and bath sponges?)

Customer Inter@ction Solutions, its sister publication *INTERNET TELEPHONY* and all of TMC look forward to introducing you to the next generation of call centers. In fact, we can't wait to dazzle you. See you October 10th to 13th in San Diego. **CIS**

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



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