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

## Five Strategies To A Great Customer Experience

### Also In This Issue:

- Contact Center, CRM, VoIP Dominate Internet Search
- Top Five Advantages of Performance Management for the Contact Center
- March of the SMB Solutions
- Dialing Bogota for Business

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

# Contact Centers, CRM And VoIP Dominate Relevant Search Results On Google

**2,210,000,000 Relevant Search Results For Contact Center Services**

**Further Evidence That The Industry IS Alive And Well**

## Why Are Web sites Vitally Important?

Because if you are not on the first page of the leading search engines, you don't exist.

When people need to research anything or need to compare products and services or get complete information

about any subject matter, the first thing they do is they log on to [Google \(quote - news - alert\)](#) or [Yahoo \(quote - news - alert\)](#) or MSN and check the search results. The fact is, most people do not go beyond the first page. It should be crystal clear that if you are not on the first page of the search engines in question, you simply do not exist.

Table 1

Google Ranking Summary	Search Term	Ranking	Relevant Search Results
	Contact Center Services	#1	2,210,000,000
	Contact Center News	#3	1,920,000,000
	Top 50 Contact Center	#3	268,000,000
	Virtual Contact Center	#1	198,000,000
	Call Center Market	#1	185,000,000
	Call Center Software	#1	183,000,000
	Call Center Training	#1	151,000,000
	IP Contact Center	#9	139,000,000
	Top 50 Call Center	#1	115,000,000
	Call Monitoring	#1	105,000,000
	Top 50 Service Agencies	#1	85,200,000
	VoIP Contact Center	#1	65,900,000
	CRM Solutions	#8	63,300,000
	Customer Interaction	#1	59,500,000
	Hosted Contact Center	#1	52,800,000
	Small Business VoIP	#1	50,200,000
	Web Based Help Desk	#6	38,600,000
	VoIP Call Center	#2	34,800,000
	Speech Technologies	#2	32,600,000
	Remote Call Monitoring	#1	12,700,000
	Call Center Recording	#1	11,600,000
	Call Center Furniture	#1	10,500,000
	Remote Call Analysis	#2	9,900,000
	Customer Interaction News	#1	6,020,000
	Workforce Optimization	#1	1,810,000
	Teleservices Buyers	#1	812,000
	Teleservices Outsourcing	#1	676,000
	Teleservices Agencies Outsourcing	#2	655,000

## The Importance of Online Presence and Your Web site

More and more, companies are realizing that in order to be perceived as industry leaders, they must be on the first page of the search engines. Furthermore, it is equally important to have a professionally prepared sophisticated Web site that would explain the company's core-competency, mission statement, and management vision.

## What is the Meaning of Your Web site?

In today's new media, modern thinking, your Web site is what represents your company. One might even consider it your company's resume. Before you hire a candidate, you would, of course, like to see the resume of the candidate and then further question the information provided on the resume. By the same token, when you are looking to hire an outsourcing company or purchase a technology or service product, you also would like to read a resume of the company. In today's new media, that Web site acts as your company's resume.



### Your Web site is Your Business Card

In the traditional way of introducing yourself, your company and your Web site, you used to exchange printed business cards. Although, this practice is still in existence, the business card can only serve as a vehicle to invite interested customers to go to your Web site to get more information about your company.

**If you are not on the first page of the search engines in question, you simply do not exist.**

### Your Web site is the Raison d'Etre of your Company

In today's highly competitive global marketing environment, your customers and prospects would like to have an idea of what your company stands for and what your products, services and quality items are before they make any purchasing decision. In today's high-technology world, no company can acquire technology without thinking about follow-up services. Your Web site gives you a chance to describe such services.

### Your Web site Can Be Your Differentiator

Once again, as I have stated in many of these editorials, differentiation is the single most important factor that gives your prospects a reason to do business with you as opposed to your competition. Your Web site provides an excellent opportunity to clearly differentiate yourself from the competition by offering a clear and comprehensive "value proposition" of doing business with your company, which is something you need if you want to attract seriously prospects and customers.

### Your Web Site Can Be the Industry's Barometer of Success and Identity of Your Company

Today, hardly any business is initiated without someone first looking at your Web site. If your Web site is poorly prepared, it creates a negative perception about your company. On the other hand, if your Web site is professionally prepared and is user-friendly and offers high-quality educational content, then you are creating a positive perception that would help your prospects and your customers choose to conduct business with you. Once again, without dedicating the resources to create a professional Web site, you cannot expect seriously interested prospects.

### Your Web Site Can Be Your Positioning Statement

In numerous editorials in the past, including, "Every Company Wants to be a Peacock in the Land of Penguins, But Few of them Know How to Do It" (September 2002 Customer Interaction Solutions, <http://www.tmcnet.com/call-center/0902/0902po.htm>), I clearly explain the reason and methodology that can help any company stand above the crowd by effective differentiation and positioning of their company and products. It is vitally important to include your Web site as part of your company's overall positioning statement.

### What Your Web Site Can't Do

While your Web site can do many things for you and for your company, it can not, however, do everything. One of the more important aspects of marketing is branding. To the best of our knowledge, the most effective way to brand your company is to use print media and white papers and various other means of marketing through education in order to improve the branding of your product and services.

### Still, Integrated Marketing Remains Vitally Important

As I have indicated in a number of editorials such as "The Golden Triangle"

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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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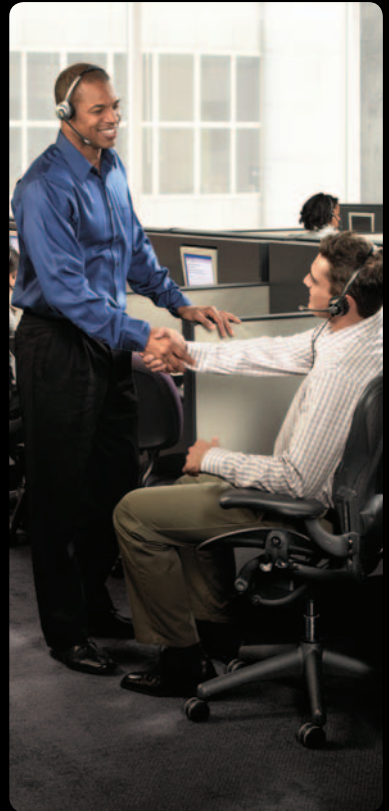
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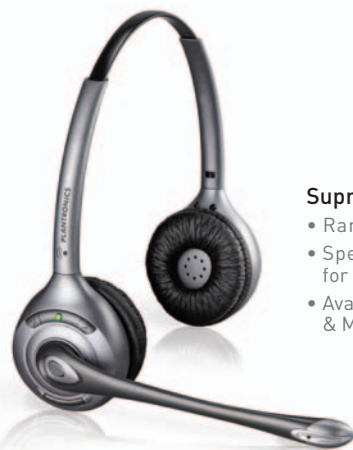


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(<http://www.tmcnet.com/articles/ccs-mag/0999/0999pubout.htm>), in order to dominate your market, you must first dominate the media. This strategy of course includes integrated marketing, where you will dominate print, online, and trade shows or events in order to complete the media cycle. There is no shortcut for an effective job of dominating your market without following every aspect of integrated marketing as I have described in several editorials during the last two to three years.

### Contact Centers, CRM and VoIP Continue to Dominate Relevant Search Results on Google for Example

As you take a look at the attached ranking summary (Table 1, on page 1, obtained from Google August 23, 2007), you will notice the absolutely phenomenal relevant search results for

our industry. You will see that few, if any, related industries can have higher relevant search results. As I stated in

**In order to dominate your market,  
you must first dominate the media.  
This strategy, of course, includes  
integrated marketing.**

my May 2007 editorial titled, "The Industry is Alive and Well," the industry is, in fact, thriving; otherwise such

phenomenal relevant search results would be impossible to obtain.

### 50% Increase in Unique Visitors in Just Four Months

As a direct result of contact center, CRM, and VoIP ([define](#) - [news](#) - [alert](#)) domination of the relevant search results, we are humbled to share with you that the Web traffic and the resulting page views of our Web site, TMCnet.com have grown immensely. We've gone from 2,000,000 to 3,000,000 unique visitors per month and from 20,000,000 page views to 30,000,000 page views per month during the last four months.

*As always, I welcome your comments. Please email them to me at [ntehrani@tmcnet.com](mailto:ntehrani@tmcnet.com).*



During my twenty years in the contact center and teleservices industry, I have learned two important lessons pertaining to client expectations. First and foremost, the client expects and deserves superior call quality and contact center performance on behalf of their customers. Secondly, the client deserves an honest, open and straightforward relationship with their vendor. In other words, a no-excuses environment.

I consider these two items to be the cornerstone of a strong client/vendor relationship. I am proud of the fact that our very experienced management staff shares and expresses this belief through their everyday client interactions. This fact is further substantiated by their ability to utilize their former client relationships as references.

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### Have No Fear: Home-based Agents Meet Highest Quality Standards

*Let's face it: the term "outsourcing" can strike terror in the hearts of those who thrive on control. Some managers are cautious about trusting the very heart of their business, customer service, to people they can't see or touch. It's a common but unfounded concern. In fact, virtual call centers guarantee quality in exactly the same way as traditional centers.* [www.tmcnet.com/1087.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/1087.1)

### Assessing IT's New Role

*It's remarkable that in today's high-tech communications environment, businesses are discovering that many contact centers continue to operate at suboptimal levels. Case in point: one financial services company has managed to turn "press zero to talk to a human" into not just a selling point, but a major advertising campaign.* [www.tmcnet.com/1088.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/1088.1)

### First Call Resolution and Offshoring Study Results

*Customer satisfaction is crucial to customer loyalty, positive word of mouth, and return on investment, as we all know. A new study released recently from CFI Group reports that (yet again) first call resolution has the most impact on customer satisfaction, and therefore, their loyalty and likelihood to recommend. In this study, across all industries measured, almost a fifth of all callers hung up with their issue unresolved. Of those customers who didn't have their issue resolved, 68 percent are at risk of defection (43 percent said they'd definitely defect; 25 percent weren't sure).* [www.tmcnet.com/1089.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/1089.1)

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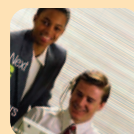
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### The Next Big Thing in Call Centers!, by Anita Rockwell & Dr. Jon Anton

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### The Next Big Thing in Call Centers!, by Anita Rockwell & Dr. Jon Anton

This informative white paper will help you improve your performance analysis and caller recovery process.

# Letter To The Editor.

## Who's Packing Your Parachute?

Dear Nadji,

Every now and then I hear a story that is so great I just have to pass it on to the people I care about. Here it is:

### Who's Packing Your Parachute?

Charles Plumb was a U.S. Navy jet pilot in Vietnam. After 75 combat missions his plane was destroyed by a surface-to-air missile. Plumb ejected and parachuted into enemy hands. He was captured and spent six years in a communist Vietnamese prison. He survived the ordeal and now lectures on lessons learned from that experience.



One day, when Plumb and his wife were sitting in a restaurant, a man at another table came up and said, "You're Plumb! You flew jet fighters in Vietnam from the aircraft carrier Kitty Hawk. You were shot down!"

"How in the world did you know that?" asked Plumb.

"I packed your parachute," the man replied.

Plumb gasped in surprise and gratitude.

The man pumped his hand and said, "I guess it worked!"

Plumb assured him, "It sure did. If your chute hadn't worked, I wouldn't be here today."

Plumb couldn't sleep that night, thinking about that man.

Plumb says, "I kept wondering what he might have looked like in a Navy uniform: a white hat, a bib in the back, and bell-bottom trousers. I wonder how many times I might have seen him and not even said, 'Good morning, how are you?' or anything because, you see, I was a fighter pilot and he was just a sailor."

Plumb thought of the many hours the sailor had spent at a long wooden table in the bowels of the ship, carefully weaving the shrouds and folding the silks of each chute, holding in his hands each time the fate of someone he didn't know.

Now, Plumb asks his audience, "Who's packing your parachute?" Everyone has someone who provides what they need to make it through the day. Plumb also points out that he needed many kinds of parachutes when his plane was shot down over enemy territory — his physical parachute, his mental parachute, his emotional parachute and his spiritual parachute. He called on all these supports before reaching safety.

Sometimes in the daily challenges that life gives us, we miss what is really important. We may fail to say hello, please or thank you, congratulate someone on something wonderful that's happened to them, give a compliment, or just do something nice for no reason.

I'm sending you this as my way of thanking you for your part in packing my parachute!!!

Sincerely,

Ray Golden  
Vice President of Sales  
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By: Rich Tehrani,  
Group Publisher, Group Editor-in-Chief,  
Technology Marketing Corporation

# NextNine: Improving The Customer Experience Through Remote Monitoring and Support Automation

The Executive Suite is a monthly feature in which leading executives in the VoIP and IP Communications industry discuss their company's latest developments with TMC President Rich Tehrani, as well as providing analysis on industry news and trends.

This month, The Executive Suite features an interview with Sherry Harmon, president of NextNine, a leading global provider of innovative support automation solutions. Ms. Harmon has extensive experience in sales and business development in the service and support industry, as well as Customer Relationship Management and communications technology. She formerly served as vice president, sales and business development for GlowPoint and vice president, sales, global alliances at WebEx Communications. She also served as vice president of sales, business development and channels with SupportSoft, Inc., where, under her leadership, the team created major sales opportunities with IBM, CSC and Comcast. Harmon brings in-depth insights for the support automation market, which is seeing rapid growth as organizations come to recognize the significant operational efficiencies and return on investment delivered by today's support automation software solutions.

**RT: What value do proactive automated support and remote monitoring offer that mainstream solutions do not?**

**SH:** Unlike mainstream, reactive methodologies, proactive, remote, support automation solutions monitor systems proactively 24X7 and perform scheduled, preventive maintenance. Downtime is averted as problems are pre-empted and resolved at symptom stage — even before customers identify initial problem symptoms. Also, as resolution is initiated at an earlier stage in

the problem cycle, mean time to repair (MTTR) is reduced significantly while system availability is maximized.

Remote monitoring provides support engineers with a consistent, timely view of any problems identified by diagnostics routines that check each and every device, application or network. The result: dramatically accelerated problem prevention and resolution, as well as maximum system uptime.

**RT: Contact Centers, as we are all well aware, represent the first line of communications and interactions with customers. In your opinion, what are some of the direct benefits of support automation that enable the contact center to serve as a more efficient, effective customer relationship management tool?**

**SH:** Often, call centers are not able to resolve or even help customers at the first instance. Many cases are referred to tier two and three engineers for lack of updated knowledge or expertise. For customers, time is not a luxury they can afford when facing a service disruption, let alone downtime. During initial meetings, vendors have pointed out that their customers complained of having to repeat basic details such as version, product in use, etc., during service interactions. This was an extremely frustrating experience for them.

Support automation has helped make first line customer support more efficient and cost effective for vendors, and satisfying for their

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customers. An effective support automation solution should encompass a data abstraction layer that models the knowledge of the service organization into a highly maintainable and flexible objects mode. With easy updates making knowledge available at their finger tips, contact centers and other first level service groups can resolve more support incidents to lower MTTR and refer minimal cases to second and third tier support staff. This translates into significant savings for the vendor's service organization, contributes to higher satisfaction levels and even increases customer loyalty.

**RT: With consumer demand for converged communications applications on the rise, and the complexity inherent in the underlying architecture, what additional considerations must telcos take into account when considering remote monitoring and automated support?**

**SH:** There are two primary issues that must be addressed: security and knowledge effectiveness. Converged communications clearly represent the future of telecommunications. As such, no matter what IP-based communications methodology you're talking about, first and foremost on everyone's mind must be security. All remote access traffic must be encrypted over the Internet, regardless of the type of access used. Several successful implementations of which I am aware use only port 443, SSL-based, outbound only communication, even for remote access sessions, file transfers and all other remote workflows, creating an ultra-secure, customer-accepted operating environment.

The complexity of converged communications solutions holds a major risk when it comes to monitoring, such as the inherent danger of flooding the monitoring organization with huge number of false alarms. Traditional approaches to monitoring are based on receiving all alarms and related data available from the system's various units at the device level, then subsequently correlating this flow into meaningful alarms.

The problem is that with the increased complexity of these systems, correlation is almost impossible, rendering much 'application level' monitoring unusable.

A different approach is to start from the problem level, using post-deployment knowledge to learn what the most critical problems are, and how they can be avoided.

By monitoring for specific system-wide problems, the number of alarms generated can be reduced to the minimum level required to maintain high availability, without creating an enormous amount of 'noise.' Also of note is that this approach requires tools that use agent-less monitoring, and enable rapid deployment of new knowledge when it is manifested in the field.

**RT: Can you point to any successful, current implementations, and highlight any resulting ROI?**

**SH:** There are several forward-thinking organizations that are using remote monitoring and proactive, automated support today. From healthcare to finance to telecom, executives agree that the customer is king and that service and support is essential to ensure the efficient and cost effective fulfillment of customer demand for technology. As such, network uptime, reliable, prompt and effective technical support have never mattered more.

**Motorola ([quote](#) - [news](#) - [alert](#))** Connected Home Solutions, in an IDC white paper entitled "NextNine Service Automation: Enabling the New Breed of Support Provider" discusses its development of a proactive support solution to provide its customers with maximum system availability and top quality service. This proactive approach to automated support via monitoring, maintenance and self-healing has allowed Motorola to better address the complex needs of its cable industry clients, increasing customer satisfaction and efficiency while reducing service and support costs. By leveraging proactive support, Motorola has increased system availability, is able to meet SLA targets accurately, respond faster to problems at deployed sites, distribute software to remote devices up to 80% faster, shorten call duration by 25% and prevent 5% of incoming calls.

Also, **Comverse, ([news](#) - [alert](#))** a unit of Comverse Technology, Inc., developed a proactive support solution to provide its customers with maximum system availabil-

ity and service. This proactive, automated approach to support has allowed Comverse to better address the complex needs of its telecom operator clients, increasing customer satisfaction and efficiency while reducing support delivery costs. For the certain systems in which Comverse leverages remote monitoring and proactive support, they have improved their service and support by 25%, quarter over quarter, as well as substantially increased uptime.

**RT: What would you consider the top three requirements of any support implementation?**

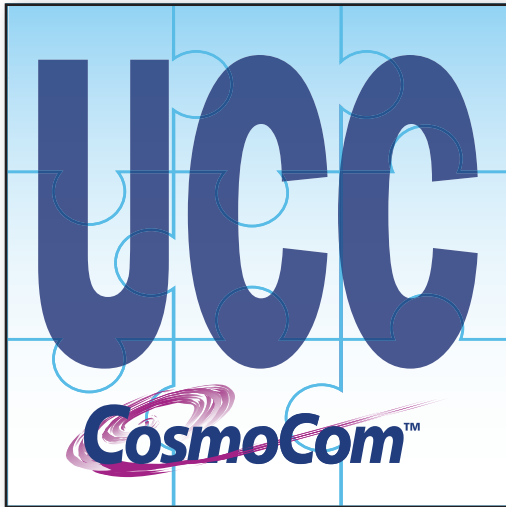
**SH:** One of the key factors is the 80/20 rule, which refers to the fact that 80% of critical network problems are generated by 20% of causes. These 20%, therefore, represent the highest priority issues that must be prevented to avoid outages — a major source of customer angst, not to mention SLA penalties. Support automation solutions must identify these critical issues and find a resolution within the first few days of implementation.

Converged communication environments are evolving rapidly, forcing vendors to 'learn as they go' how to service and maintain the systems. To achieve successful implementations, it is critical for support automation solutions to be flexible.

Fast adaptability to changes and the ability to identify and resolve specific problems is imperative, while flexibility is arguably also one of the most important considerations amongst vendors and their customers; its impact is felt throughout the life of the a customer relationship.

Finally, I would say that a strong support implementation solution should provide vendors and their customers with ease-of-use. Support automation makes many support tasks fast and error free. One-to-many software and patch distribution, trouble shooting routines, automatic report generation etc., are just some of the tasks that drive an implementation towards higher levels of customer satisfaction. Furthermore, support automation enables vendors to better understand their customers' needs and

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deliver solutions accordingly.

**RT:** In your experience, what are the most common factors that cause a support implementation to fail?

**SH:** Time and time again, we see support departments trying to stretch their limited human capital too thin; they unsuccessfully try to monitor a literal sea of data with inadequate headcount and resources, and inevitably pay the price in terms of unhappy customers and lost revenue — a problem that's eliminated with support automation.

Another impediment worth mentioning — particularly relevant when discussing remote monitoring — is the trust barrier between the support provider and their customer, the service provider. Support automation addresses the sometimes “sticky situation” of when customers demand full visibility and control of the support process. Support automation solutions are designed to track automated support processes. This means that

when needed, customers can generate reports of any processes that have previously occurred or can link into the support automation platform and view the goings on in real time.

Lastly, automating preventive maintenance is not a high enough priority for several IT vendors. In addition to the obvious benefits, automated preventive maintenance ensures higher systems performance, less issues to deal with over time, and lower TCO, thereby increasing customer satisfaction and by extension, customer retention, in addition to protecting service maintenance revenue and increasing profit margins.

**RT:** What ROI can call center professional expect within 60 days of a support automation implementation?

**SH:** One of today's best-kept secrets is that service, support and maintenance revenues are the primary drivers of economic growth. Transforming service and support into a profit center is very challenging when

facing factors such as scalability, compliance, service revenue erosion and customer satisfaction. IT organizations have realized the benefits that proactive, preventive support provides to their service offering and are now demanding more of this value added support from their support providers/vendors.

Recent research shows that a 1% increase in customer satisfaction results in a corresponding increase of 2.75% in shareholder value. For a 1 billion dollar company, this translates into \$27.5 million increase in shareholder value. Using support automation, vendors have proven to dramatically increase customer satisfaction, and therefore shareholder value, by proactively preventing problems, delivering efficient support and achieving SLA's.

In fact, [NextNine's \(news - alert\)](#) customers have experienced 30 to 50% efficiency gains, globally, by using NextNine Service Automation to automate support processes and shift to a proactive service methodology.

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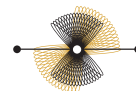
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By Patrick Barnard, Associate Editor, Customer Inter@ction Solutions

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## Left Bank Releases Three New Editions of Monet WFM

Left Bank Solutions ([news](#) - [alert](#)) has released three new versions of its workflow management solution, Monet WFM, each tailored for a specific market segment. Monet WFM Express is designed for contact centers with 15 to 50 agents, Monet WFM Professional is designed for contact centers with 50 to 150 agents, and Monet WFM Enterprise is for centers with 150 agents and up.

[www.tmcnet.com/1041.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/1041.1)

## Aspect Challenging Contact Center Industry to Adopt SIP 2.0

Aspect Software ([news](#) - [alert](#)) recently announced its "SIP Power Through Choice" program, the goal of which is to get the contact center industry to widely adopt SIP 2.0 as the de facto standard for contact center communications. Companies which adopt Aspect's "SIP Interoperability Policy" must use SIP 2.0 compliant devices with a SIP-enabled solution to establish and terminate telephone sessions.

[www.tmcnet.com/1042.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/1042.1)

## eGain Receives EMC Documentum Accreditation

CRM solutions provider eGain Communications ([news](#) - [alert](#)) has received the "Designed for EMC Documentum" logo designation for its eGain Service, a hosted contact center solution which is fully interoperable with the EMC Documentum platform. In order to receive the designation, eGain Service had to meet a comprehensive set of criteria for good design, development and implementation, as defined by its partner, EMC.

[www.tmcnet.com/1043.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/1043.1)

## NetSuite Turns Your iPhone into a 'SuitePhone'

Business execs who are planning to replace their BlackBerry with Apple's new iPhone can rejoice in the fact that the iPhone now supports NetSuite's Enterprise Resource Planning and

Customer Relationship Management software. NetSuite's ([news](#) - [alert](#)) new SuitePhone app, which was announced last month, brings all of the ERP, CRM and e-commerce functionality of NetSuite to the iPhone.

[www.tmcnet.com/1044.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/1044.1)

## Egypt Attempts to Become a Player in the Call Center Industry

Egypt ([news](#) - [alert](#)) is looking to make a dent in the international call center market, touting the advantages it holds over call center giant India. There has also been an attempt to convince India to outsource some of its already-outsourced labor to Egypt as well.

[www.tmcnet.com/1045.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/1045.1)

## Headsets: Eliminating Noise in the Call Center

In the call center, the need to communicate with customers in a clear, consistent and effective manner is a top priority. Along with the need to provide a good customer experience comes the need to reduce noise in the call center. As a solution to this, headsets by leading manufacturers such as Sennheiser are coming equipped with noise canceling microphones and digital signal processing technology for reducing noise.

[www.tmcnet.com/1046.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/1046.1)

## TouchStar Gives Back to Community

Call center solutions provider TouchStar ([news](#) - [alert](#)) is not just looking to improve customer service in the contact center, it is now focused on improving their community through a new volunteer program for their global employees. While the company's solutions may be focused on reducing oper-

ating costs and improving customer service, its TouchStar Community Spirit Program (CSP) offers company employees a list of volunteer events to partake in.

[www.tmcnet.com/1047.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/1047.1)

## CosmoCom Fuels VisitBritain's Global Virtual Call Center

Recently CosmoCom ([news](#) - [alert](#)) announced that VisitBritain, Britain's leading tourism agency has successfully built its global virtual contact center using its CosmoCall Universe offering. VisitBritain's global system has thirteen points of presence and regional operations spanning 36 countries.

[www.tmcnet.com/1048.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/1048.1)

## Verint Systems' Call Center Solutions Portfolios Receive Multiple Awards

Verint ([news](#) - [alert](#)) recently received multiple contact center industry awards for its Witness Actionable Solutions portfolio of contact center solutions. The company views these recognitions as proof of the tangible value customers continue to receive from the company's software and services.

[www.tmcnet.com/1049.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/1049.1)

## Thomas L. Cardella & Associates to Open New Iowa Contact Center

The City of Coralville, Iowa, is about to see an economic expansion as Thomas L. Cardella & Associates ([news](#) - [alert](#)) has announced that it will launch a new contact center there. This new center will bring over 244 jobs and \$6.1 million of annualized payroll.





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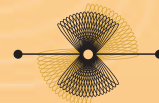
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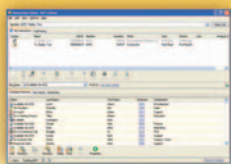
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By Patrick Barnard, Associate Editor, Customer Inter@ction Solutions

[www.tmcnet.com/1050.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/1050.1)

## Promero Releases Smart8 v2.1 to Drive Intelligent Call Routing

Promero, ([news](#) - [alert](#)) an application service provider of Internet call center, CRM and lead management software, has released the latest version of its proprietary software, Smart8 v2.1. This latest release provides intelligent call routing and dealer-franchise locator hosted software.

[www.tmcnet.com/1051.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/1051.1)

## Eagle Conferencing Debuts Services in India

On the heels of the country's 60th anniversary of Independence, Eagle Conferencing, a provider of conference call / audio web services, has announced they will now offer services in India. These services will include, phone conferencing, IVR and voice-mail capabilities.

[www.tmcnet.com/1052.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/1052.1)

## VPI Launches Activ! Performance Suite 4.0

VPI, ([news](#) - [alert](#)) a provider of integrated interactions recording and proactive workforce optimization (MFO) applications, has announced availability of Activ! Performance Suite 4.0. Comprised of tightly integrated, modular solutions for call recording, call quality monitoring, speech analytics, performance management and agent eCoaching, Activ! Performance Suite 4.0 provides organizations with the power to effectively manage contact center operations.

[www.tmcnet.com/1053.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/1053.1)

## Loquendo Announces Company Expansion

In a bid to further accelerate its growth and increase profitability, speech technology provider Loquendo ([news](#) - [alert](#)) has announced new company structure plans that will focus specifically on sales and marketing. Their plan calls for a more focused and expanded sales force as well as dedicated structures for all geographical areas and business segments.

[www.tmcnet.com/1054.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/1054.1)

## Aspect Software Partners with OpenSpan

A partnership has been announced between Aspect Software Inc. and OpenSpan, ([news](#) - [alert](#)) the enabler of the new enterprise desktop. This partnership is expected to allow Aspect to use and sell the OpenSpan Platform as part of its Aspect Quality Management recording and quality management product to assist companies in further enhancing the complete customer experience.

[www.tmcnet.com/1055.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/1055.1)

## Stream Acquires Zomax's Dublin Contact Center

Stream, ([news](#) - [alert](#)) a global outsourcing company, has acquired the Dublin-based contact center operation of Zomax, a media and supply chain solutions company. Located in Santry, the site will become Stream's third site in Dublin. The facility will provide multilingual support for clients throughout Europe. With the acquisition of this site, Stream's global reach now includes 29 sites in 16 countries.

[www.tmcnet.com/1056.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/1056.1)

## CRMxchange Launches New Web Site

MyCRMexchange.com, ([news](#) - [alert](#)) the latest innovation from CRMxchange, enables contact center professionals to share proven operational strategies and innovative management approaches with peers throughout the world. The members-only Web site allows professionals within the contact center/CRM community to network with other contact center professionals — anywhere, anytime.

[www.tmcnet.com/1057.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/1057.1)

## Vaultus Improves HEAT Mobile Help Desk Product

Boston-based Vaultus Mobile Technologies, ([news](#) - [alert](#)) an enterprise mobile software vendor, has announced an improved version of Mobile Help Desk product for HEAT. Based on the Vaultus Mobile Application Platform, Vaultus' new Mobile Help Desk product for HEAT is integrated directly with the HEAT APIs. That integration, along with other engineering improvements, delivers what company officials call "performance and scala-

bility improvements," and enables HEAT business logic and database schema changes to pass through to the mobile client.

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## Worldwide SaaS to Hit \$5.1 Billion in 2007, Gartner Says

Worldwide total software revenue for software as a service within the enterprise software markets is projected to surpass \$5.1 billion in 2007, a 21 percent increase from 2006 revenue, according to a recent study from Gartner. The market is poised for strong growth through to 2011, when worldwide revenue will reach \$11.5 billion, the tech research firm believes. And Gartner analysts say adoption of SaaS varies widely across software markets, contributing as little as 1 percent of total software revenue in some markets and over 75 percent in others.

[www.tmcnet.com/1059.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/1059.1)

## Gannett Picks Relational CRM

Relationals, ([news](#) - [alert](#)) a vendor of customer relationship management (CRM) and sales force automation (SFA) for the publishing and media industry, has announced that Gannett Co. has deployed Relationals CRM to streamline sales operations, increase opportunity potential, and improve advertiser communication across 45 of their daily newspaper properties, including The Cincinnati Enquirer, The Arizona Republic, The Indianapolis Star and Asbury Park Press.

[www.tmcnet.com/1060.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/1060.1)

## Aspect, OpenSpan Announce CRM-Related Partnership

Aspect Software, ([news](#) - [alert](#)) a vendor of contact center products, has announced a partnership with OpenSpan to allow Aspect to use and sell the OpenSpan Platform as part of its Aspect Quality Management recording and quality management product. The partnership enables Aspect Software to extend Aspect Quality Management functionality, such as screen capture and call tagging, to record all back-office interactions with applications like customer relationship management (CRM) systems, e-mail or other in-house developed systems.



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By Penny Reynolds  
Contributing Editor, Customer Inter@ction Solutions

# A Systematic Approach for Improving Schedule Adherence

In most call centers, enormous effort goes into forecasting workload, calculating staff requirements, and creating staff schedules. But all that hard work goes down the drain when the frontline staff don't stick to the schedule plan. This lack of schedule adherence is frustrating and it's expensive. So what can be done about it?

This article will outline some of the reasons that agents may not be adhering to their planned schedules and explore some potential solutions to the problem. For all you workforce planners out there, it's time to step away from erlang and workload distributions and enter the world of psychology and behavior analytics.

## Performance Management Approach

The first step is to define performance standards and communicate them to the staff. This involves defining the precise times that a person is expected to be on the phones, take breaks, go to lunch, work on other activities, and so on. This needs to be defined and then communicated clearly as the expectation.

Another part of this definition will involve the leeway that exists in meeting the exact numbers. What percent time out of adherence will be allowed at a maximum? Are there various levels of adherence that will earn them a better "grade" than others? And what are the rewards and/or consequences for meeting the goal or not meeting it? All this needs to be clearly defined for everyone in the center and communicated clearly and often.

Part of the communication about schedule adherence needs to be education about the numbers. Be sure the staff understand the relevance of adherence and why it's so important that each person be in their seat on time. Every member of the team should understand the "power of one" when it comes to call center staffing and know the impact they make on speed of service, occupancy, and bottom-line cost. (For a free book, *The Power of One*, call The Call Center School at 615-812-8400 or visit [www.thecallcenterschool.com](http://www.thecallcenterschool.com).)

The next step is to measure performance. Unlike some other qualitative measures of performance, schedule adherence lends itself to being measured quite easily. Note the login/logout times compared to schedule and note the deviations, both in terms of total minutes as well as a percentage of total hours scheduled. If the deviation meets your defined "grace period," then there's no performance gap. However, if the deviation from schedule is more than allowed, the next step is to identify the reason that person is not meeting the expectation.

## Three Reasons for Non-Performance

There are three basic reasons why an employee doesn't do what is expected. These reasons are:

1. Don't Know
2. Can't
3. Won't

Let's take a look at these from a schedule adherence perspective.

First, the agent may not know what is expected in terms of schedule adherence. Have expectations of start/stop times, breaks, and off-phone time been communicated clearly? Does the agent know how much deviation is allowed and what the consequences will be for adhering or not adhering? Make sure each person understands the schedule "contract," grades of adherence, and consequences for following the plan.

The other instance of "don't know" is when agents are fully aware of the expectation, but are not getting enough feedback about how they're adhering to the work plan. Make individual schedule adherence statistics available to them on a regular basis, preferably daily.

If the two "don't know" issues have been covered, then the next possibility for cause of the problem is in the "can't" category. Perhaps they don't have the knowledge/skill to perform, or there is a barrier or obstacle preventing proper performance. While the "can't" reason can explain some other performance issues in the call center, it is generally not an underlying cause of adherence problems. Most agents are perfectly capable of following their work schedules. Occasionally there is a "barrier" to adherence (long calls forcing them to vary from scheduled stop times or severe understaffing that make it difficult to actually break away from phones when planned). However, most schedule adherence issues do not fall into the "can't" category.

This brings us to the final possibility — the "won't" category. This is the reason for most adherence problems. Most employees with an adherence problem have willfully decided not to stick to the schedule. The reason for this behavior is most often the lack of a proper behavioral consequence.

If your call center has no real consequences associated with schedule adherence, then think about what happens to two agents seated side by side. Sarah is the picture of punctuality while her neighbor Alex is consistently late. With no formal system of consequences in place, Sarah will actually be getting negative consequences by being on time — she has to handle more calls and workload is heavier because someone is



missing. On the other hand, Alex is getting positive consequences by his behavior — he may be getting another few minutes sleep in the morning or be spending extra time in the coffee area and he doesn't have to take as many calls. Unless a regular, predictable system of consequences is in place, you may be rewarding the behaviors you want to disappear, while there's nothing to support the actions you want to see.

Applying consequences is critical to shaping behavior. While some consequences occur naturally, others will need to be consciously applied. For example, agents may demonstrate some desirable behaviors such as telephone etiquette because they get an immediate consequence for doing so — a friendly, thankful reaction from a customer. However, other behaviors like schedule adherence don't come with natural built-in positive consequences, so you will have to apply consequences to shape the behavior you want to see.

Both positive and negative consequences can be used to influence behavior. If you can catch someone demonstrating desirable behaviors, then you will want to immediately apply a positive consequence. Positive consequences work more effectively than negative consequences. People like positive reinforcement better, it produces a less stressful environment, and it also maximizes performance.

Negative reinforcement will also shape performance, but it generally produces behaviors that are just enough to get by. Discipline and punishment will generally stop a negative behavior, but in some cases only for a little while, and it will never encourage employees to give maximum effort like positive consequences can do.

Sometimes situations occur where even though positive consequences are given for desired behaviors and negative consequences are attached to the wrong behaviors, employees still do the wrong things. This is because there are other characteristics of consequences in addition to just the positive and negative aspects. In addition to the positive/negative aspects associated with a consequence there are also the aspects of how personal a consequence is, how immediate it is, and how certain it is. These other aspects of a consequence can sometimes outweigh the positive/negative aspects.

Let's look at an example where positive aspects for adherence and negative aspects for non-adherence are in place, but still don't yield the desired result. Examine both the positive and negative effects associated with this lack of schedule adherence, along with the personal, immediacy, and certainty aspects of the consequences.

Lack of Schedule Adherence Consequences	Positive/Negative	Personal/General	Immediate/Future	Certain/Uncertain
Impact on service level	N	G	I	C
Impact on peer occupancy	N	G	I	C
Bad appraisal	N	P	F	U
Loss of bonus	N	P	F	U
10-minutes extra sleep	P	P	I	C
More time to socialize	P	P	I	C
Fewer calls to take	P	P	I	C

Even though there are many negative consequences associated with a lack of schedule adherence, the employee may continue to do it. Two of

the negative consequences are of benefit to the overall call center and customers, but not felt as a personal effect. The bad appraisal and loss of bonus are also negative, but they are not immediate. Those things will likely happen sometime out in the future, and may be viewed as uncertain by the employee.

These negative consequences may be outweighed by the positive consequences. The benefits may include an extra ten minutes of "snooze" time in the morning, or an extra few minutes to socialize in the break room, not to mention fewer calls to take. All these consequences are personally felt by the employee, and they're all immediate and certain. Even though they're not as significant as the negative ones, the fact that they're personal, immediate, and certain may sway the employee to continue his errant schedule behavior.

The key when developing a plan of consequences is to apply consequences that are positive to shape desired behavior. However, it's not enough that the consequence is positive. It also has to be personal (something that means something to the employee), immediate, and certain for it to work as an influence on behavior.

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**People like positive reinforcement better, it produces a less stressful environment, and it also maximizes performance.**

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With this in mind, think about ways to make the positive and negative consequences more immediate. A supervisor that is waiting at the agent's workstation with a warning note when he comes back from break may send a stronger message than simply reporting adherence numbers at the end of the week along with a warning. Some call centers choose to project the real-time adherence screen up for all to see, so that other employees can apply some peer pressure on the spot for agents coming back late from break.

Making the schedule plan a success involves a comprehensive system of education, tracking, and consequences. Schedule adherence will be much higher when the frontline staff have been educated on the relevance and importance of sticking to the plan and provided with regular feedback on how they're doing. Couple this with a system of appropriate rewards and consequences and you'll see schedule adherence steadily and surely improve.

*Penny Reynolds is a Founding Partner of The Call Center School, a Nashville, Tennessee based consulting and education company. The company provides a wide range of educational offerings for call center professionals, including traditional classroom courses, web-based seminars, and self-paced e-learning programs at the manager, supervisor, and front-line staff level. For more information, see [www.thecallcenterschool.com](http://www.thecallcenterschool.com) or call 615-812-8400.*



By Patrick Barnard  
Associate Editor, Customer Inter@ction Solutions

# Don't Intervene on Me

I see real value in real time analytics for the contact center, particularly in terms of its ability to gather valuable customer information which can be used across the enterprise. But as a former outbound agent from the 1980s, I'm distressed about this idea of using real time speech analytics to identify calls that are going sour and automatically intervening on the call for the purpose of preventing the customer from defecting. From my recent discussions with company officials in the speech analytics field, it sounds like speech technology has not advanced to the point where you can rely on it for this purpose. Maybe that's why real time analytics continues to be referred to as the "Holy Grail of the contact center industry."

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**My problem is with intervening on the call — especially if you use speech analytics to make it happen automatically. To me this sounds like a case of over-engineering, and I can imagine it causing serious problems for agents.**

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Don't get me wrong, I'm not against automation, especially when it leads to operational efficiencies and higher customer satisfaction. I think it's fine that a contact center supervisor can monitor a potentially failing interaction and immediately send a screen pop or instant message to the agent telling them, in real time, how to calm down the customer so that they don't leave. I also think it would be fine to use real time speech analytics to automatically identify calls that are in trouble, through word or phrase-spotting or "emotion detection," and then using that to automatically trigger screen prompts telling the agent how to

respond. My problem is with intervening on the call — especially if you use speech analytics to make it happen automatically. To me this sounds like a case of over-engineering, and I can imagine it causing serious problems for agents. Furthermore, I see this idea as being in conflict with the current movement in the contact center industry to empower the agent.

First, I think it can lead to more confusion, since very often the intervening supervisor isn't aware of the full context of the call, since he probably has not listened to all of it. Second, it can be a humiliating experience for the agent, especially when the supervisor (or "automated supervisor") commandeers the interaction. Personally, I think it's better to train your agents well before they get on the floor, and then use "silent" systems, such as screen pops, scorecards, dashboards and e-learning, to deliver ongoing training and coaching in real time - or near real time. I'm not sure I like the idea of intervening via "whisper coaching" either. I can just imagine what it would be like to be on a call with a customer and have a supervisor come onto the line and whisper "cross-sell!" into the headset, as I attempt to navigate the customer through the company Web site. Although I've never experienced it, I could see this as being potentially disruptive — possibly causing the interaction to take a turn for the worse. I can also imagine a speech analytics solution misinterpreting what is being said and automatically delivering the wrong prompt, thus throwing me off, causing confusion.

Furthermore, I don't see this as impressing the customer, particularly if he or she is aware that someone, or something, has intervened on the call. Doesn't that reflect poorly on a company's training practices? I also fear that these automated systems might cause companies to skimp on initial training and rely on the automated systems for performance improvement after the agents get on the floor. That means using your customers as guinea pigs.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that such automated systems, when used to improve agent performance, can also have the effect of negatively shaping agent behavior. My question is, if you're going to bring the technology to this level of sophistication, then why not just automate the whole process using speech recognition? With fully-configurable, fully-automated, naturally-conversing self-service speech solutions now available, I wonder if it's worth it to work so hard to try to save every customer and correct every little bit of human error in real time ...

*The author can be reached at [pbarnard@tmcnet.com](mailto:pbarnard@tmcnet.com)*

The logo for 'ice' is displayed in a large, light blue, lowercase font. The letters are slightly transparent, allowing the background image to show through. The background of the top section is a blue sky with a silhouette of a mountain range.The logo for the 2007 ATA Convention & Expo. It features the year '2007' in a small orange circle, followed by 'ATA' in large blue letters, 'CONVENTION' in green, and '& EXPO' in orange. The text is surrounded by a stylized orange swoosh.

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# the customer meltdown

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**Then turn meltdowns into solid ICE.**

A nighttime photograph of a resort. In the foreground, there are palm trees and other tropical plants. In the middle ground, there is a body of water, possibly a lake or a large pool, with some lights reflecting on it. In the background, there are more trees and some buildings, all illuminated by warm lights. The overall atmosphere is serene and luxurious.

**The 24th ATA Annual Convention & Exposition  
Sunday, SEPT 30 – Wednesday, OCT 3, 2007  
Hyatt Regency Scottsdale at Gainey Ranch**





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

# eGain: Delivering Innovative Customer Interaction Hub Solutions

**T**he Boardroom Report provides the CRM, customer interaction and call center industry's view from the top, featuring the sector's first in-depth, exclusive CEO-to-CEO interviews with leading executives regarding industry news, analysis, trends and the latest developments at their companies. As the industry's leading publication since 1982, it is our responsibility to recognize leaders with the best minds in the industry and share their vision and wisdom with our valued readers. For this installment of The Boardroom Report, Technology Marketing Corp. founder/chairman/CEO Nadji Tehrani interviewed Ashutosh Roy, co-founder, chairman and CEO of eGain. ([news](#) - [alert](#))



Ashutosh Roy

**NT: Please tell us about your company and type of business.**

**AR:** eGain is a pioneer and recognized leader in multichannel customer interaction management software.

The first-ever provider of on-demand customer service software, we offer the most flexible and proven set of deployment options for the enterprise - on-premise, on-demand or managed services. Between eGain and Inference Corporation, a pioneer in knowledge management software and now an integral part of eGain, we have over two decades of experience in enabling blue-chip businesses to deliver superior customer service.

To elaborate this further, we help organizations transform their traditional call centers into what we call "customer interaction hubs" (CIH). Based on the Power of One, the concept of one unified platform for customer communications, eGain Service suite helps companies build these hubs to achieve key business-critical objectives:

- Differentiate themselves through innovative and distinctive customer service;
- Improve customer experience, contact center agent productivity and service process efficiencies;

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### We help organizations transform their traditional call centers into what we call "customer interaction hubs" (CIH).

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- Generate revenue through better online conversion as well as contextual upsell and cross-sell at the point of service;
- Reduce escalations, unwarranted product returns and field visits, while reducing overall service costs;
- Improve self-service effectiveness and adoption through multiple information access methods or what we call "multi-modal self-service."

**NT: What are the greatest customer service challenges that businesses are facing and how do you think these challenges can be addressed?**

**AR: *Disjointed customer service experience:*** One of the main sources of customer frustration and eventual defection is disjointed customer service across inter-

action channels, and between self-service and agent-assisted service. Businesses have built up these silos over the years and are trying to figure out how to integrate them, as customers continue to clamor for better experiences. Many of our clients — Costco, ABN AMRO, Eastman Kodak, and Vodafone among them, have addressed this issue by implementing eGain-powered multichannel customer interactions hubs. A concept advocated by Gartner, CIHs consolidate all interactions, business rules, knowledgebases, workflow, integrations and analytics in one platform, enabling a "joined up" customer service experience across interaction channels by ensuring consistency and context retention across channels, while curbing customer service costs and total cost of ownership. We are seeing a strong increase in CIH adoption among existing as well as new clients. ABN AMRO is taking the CIH to the next level by providing innovative Web self-service through their interaction hub, using eGain ChatBot, our virtual agent technology, which has been used by organizations to not only reduce phone calls and increase online conversion but also to provide a distinctive brand experience.

***Leveraging contact center best practices in stores/branches:*** We see a compelling business need to integrate and optimize retail stores and branches (and associated workforce) with the contact center investment through multi-channel interaction hubs. This will require

presence management and VoIP infrastructure to work closely with the CIH implementation. The business benefit of optimizing work allocation across a huge retail/branch workforce as well as empowering store/branch workforce with best-practice interactions, leveraging contact center techniques, is significant. We have already started to address this market need through our recent OEM agreement with Cisco, where Cisco incorporates eGain's award-winning eService products in their unified contact center suites.

**Interaction compliance and revenue generation:** Agent churn, outsourcing and M&As, ever-tightening government regulations and the increasing requirement to sell within the context of service are driving the need for interactive process support tools that can guide agents through compliant and value-maximizing customer conversations. Clients in sectors such as financial services, telecom and retail are already using our solutions to address this challenge. For example, a premier brokerage firm in the U.S. is using eGain Mail and the eGain CIH platform to route and process incoming customer e-mails in a way that is compliant with SEC regulations. A leading prescription services company is using event or life stage based triggers to send proactive customer service notifications that also include contextual upsell/cross-sell offers, using eGain Notify, our notification product. A leading international bank is using eGain Advisor to help small businesses open new accounts while up-selling and cross-selling related products and services.

**NT:** Tell us about new developments in your company.

**AR:** This is an exciting time for eGain. Our multi-year bet on developing a broad and deep customer service software suite based on a single CIH platform is paying off — we are seeing strong CIH adoption among existing as well as new clients, as evidenced by many more multi-application deals and

upgrades than in the past. We were rated a leader in the interaction-centric customer service management space by Forrester in 2007, with top scores in strategy as well as key areas such as customer service product capabilities, architecture and platform. Unlike our competitors, we offer the most flexible and proven set of deployment choices in the industry — on-premise, on-demand, or managed services. This is serving us well in the market, as enterprises continue to adopt non-premise deployment models more aggressively.

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**This is an exciting time for eGain. Our multi-year bet on developing a broad and deep customer service software suite based on a single CIH platform is paying off — we are seeing strong CIH adoption among existing as well as new clients, as evidenced by many more multi-application deals and upgrades than in the past.**

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Partnerships are critical to driving our business growth, moving forward. We signed a landmark OEM agreement with Cisco, where Cisco will OEM our award-winning e-mail management, chat, and Web collaboration products as part of their contact center suites for unified customer communications. We are continuing to expand the eGain EcoNet partner program, adding several new reseller and SI partners on a worldwide basis, including 4C Consulting NV, Bizmatica, Bucher & Suter AG, Centric Consulting, Calence, LLC, D+S solutions GmbH, IntelliSolutions S.A., Inter-Active Technologies (Pty) Ltd., and Spanlink Communications.

Furthermore, we plan to train over a hundred professionals in the ecosystem, many of them dual eGain-Cisco partners, in the next twelve months. This will allow us to scale our professional services capabilities.

Last but not the least, our clients continue to get recognized for their innovation and performance, which is gratifying to all of us at eGain. For instance, Barclays was selected as the European call center of the year, while ABN AMRO was rated the #1 online banking Web site for cash management in Greenwich Associates' Web site benchmarking study, and was also selected as an InfoWorld 100 deployment for creative use of technology for transformational customer service.

**NT:** I hear that you are offering something called "Best Practice Assessment Study." Can you elaborate on what it is?

**AR:** Beyond new product offerings — we launched eGain Service 7.6 suite that includes nine new applications and enhanced capabilities in scalability and serviceability as well as pre-localized UI's for multi-language support — we have launched a service called Best Practice Assessment Studies (BPAS). This study makes it easier for qualified prospective clients to understand the what, why and how of our value addition to their business before they make the purchase. The service is a no-cost, no-risk offer, and also helps buyers articulate the value of the project internally to speed up the purchase and time to value.

**NT:** What is the significance of the following in the customer interaction space?

#### **VoIP**

**AR:** VoIP will continue to enjoy rapid adoption and its value proposition to the business has triggered an across-the-board assessment of the technology stack by contact centers. Many customer service and contact center organizations are also using this opportunity to replace fragmented customer interaction systems with unified customer interaction

hubs. This trend, combined with our OEM agreement with Cisco where we are embedded in their VoIP suites, positions us well for growth. The solution allows VoIP interactions to be fully integrated with eService interactions for a 360-degree view of customer communications, which improves customer service experience, effectiveness and efficiencies, while allowing contact centers to perform 360-degree analytics for improved customer service and contextual revenue generation.

### Compliance

**AR:** The need for customer interaction compliance is driven by increasing government regulations, persistent agent churn and increased handling of front-line interactions by outsourced agents. And the need for compliance spans people (e.g., who is qualified to do something), process (e.g., what are the steps, and who does what and when), communication (e.g., secure e-channel communications) and content (e.g., what should and should not be communicated, archived, and analyzed). Without some level of automation, compliance can be a huge drain on efficiencies. As an example, a leading online brokerage firm in the U.S. is using eGain Service to route customer e-mails to agents with the right level of certification, while enforcing supervisory quality control for new agents, in order to be compliant with SEC regulations. A leading retail chain is using eGain Service to automate return of recalled products to manufacturers in a way that is compliant with FDA regulations, while also using the solution to respond customer inquiries coming in from their Web site.

### Hosted/SaaS Solutions

**AR:** Hosted customer service applications have always been popular with small and medium-sized businesses and are slowly finding their way into the enterprise. Large organizations buy hosted solutions for various reasons - operational strategy or philosophy, where a company believes in keeping only core activities in-house, non-availability of IT resources for in-house implementations,

budget constraints that preclude them from making larger upfront investments, and a new trend - let's try hosted, before we buy on-premise. This trend is favorable to eGain since we have a proven track record of delivering on-premise and on-demand solutions for years, quite unlike our competitors, who have proved themselves in only one of these areas.

### Speech Technology

**AR:** Speech-based user interfaces are becoming more powerful and usable. The adoption of speech interfaces opens up new opportunities for integrated customer experience across all channels — voice, e-mail, and Web. Improved vocabulary recognition will elevate the speech interface to the same status as keyboard/mouse based interfaces. Combine this with the convenience and potential ubiquity (think cell phones) of speech interfaces, there is a revolution waiting to happen in customer interaction management as speech technologies mature.

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## The adoption of speech interfaces opens up new opportunities for integrated customer experience across all channels — voice, e-mail, and Web.

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### Offshoring

**AR:** Rightshoring, whether it is in-shoring/back-shoring, near-shoring or off-shoring, has been around for many years and has experienced massive adoption due to the new economics enabled by networks linking large, inexpensive, trained labor markets with eager consumers in OECD countries. Regardless of where contact centers are deployed, propagation of interaction best practices and compliance becomes even more important in the age of outsourcing, increasing the need for our solutions. The world's largest outsourcers are using

our solution to handle customer service for blue-chip clients. Our multi-tenant capability allows them to serve multiple clients from the same deployment, saving money, while speeding time to benefit. In other instances, businesses have purchased our solution deploying it to in-house or outsourced agents or both.

**NT:** What is your company's greatest core competency?

**AR:** I'd say that our core competency is the ability to rapidly deliver innovative customer interaction hub solutions by anticipating or quickly responding to market needs, and leveraging global talent and domain expertise.

**NT:** What is your vision for the future of customer interactions and their value to the business?

**AR:** Globalization, relentless product proliferation and commoditization, information ubiquity and an ongoing shift of power to customers have brought customer service to the forefront of business differentiation. According to recent McKinsey research, business performance varied the most in interaction-heavy industry sectors. This kind of trend opens up a great opportunity for forward-looking companies to get ahead of competitors by maximizing the business value generated from customer interactions and make themselves "front-end effective." In fact, a large automotive company in the U.S. is even extending customer interaction capabilities to handling its interactions with its suppliers, extending the front-end effectiveness to all sides of the business. GenPact, the largest BPO in India, is using our solution to process supplier interactions in the accounts payable area for this company. Businesses can then integrate processes across the front, middle and backoffice through an interaction hub to also become "back-end efficient." You are then well on your way to extending your competitive advantage and enhancing business performance at the same time.

**NT:** Thank you very much for your time.



# New Technology For A New Generation



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# Bartender, Creative and Original CRM Please ... and Hold the Original

W

What's the one thing all editors want? Besides pictures of Paris Hilton? Easy — something creative and original.

To an editor that's one thing: "Dave, do something creativeandoriginal on how to be creativeandoriginal with CRM. 1,000 words. Before lunch."

"Right," swiveling around in my cubicle, "just finished one here, 'How Nostradamus and Aleister Crowley's Management Advice Can Help Avoid The Top Ten Mistakes Made Implementing CRM On The Balearic Islands During The Vernal Equinox Under the 1744 Codification of the Rules of Cricket Translated in Hungarian With Navajo Commentary.'"

"Aw, I saw that on Google last week. Sheesh — tell you what, cut the title to 'Top Ten Mistakes Made Implementing CRM' and run with it, I'm late for my tee time."

**Great businesses don't do original things, they achieve unoriginal goals in creative ways.**

Finding a creative or original angle for a CRM article is like finding a creative or original photo of Paris Hilton. Originality's overrated anyway, different does not mean better — tell me, has there been a worthwhile original idea in rock'n'roll since Chuck Berry? I rest my case.

So much for originality. But creative — that's different. Anybody can do that. You can be creative with CRM. You need to be creative with CRM. You cannot be original with CRM, but you must be creative.

Look, forget originality. As one CRM wit noted the basic concepts behind CRM are "centuries old" themselves — and over 2,000 years ago one of the wisest men who ever lived noticed there was nothing new under the sun. You're going to find something new?

Unless you're irredeemably clueless you already pretty much know the basic principles of CRM or can find them in about 5.2 seconds in the rushing torrent of "Ten Top," "Seven Best" and "Five Most" articles to be found online. Read a few at random, they all cover the same ground. Originality isn't the long suit of such articles.

Then do what they say creatively. "But we've tried that, and it didn't fly here. We want original thinking." There you go. That's why correctly-done CRM is as rare as scientifically credible evidence for anthropogenic global warming.

I'll underline the point to break this obsession with "originality," — let's look at an article printed by TMC eight years ago, "A Roofer's Guide To CRM," by Matthew Vartabedian. Eight years ago — a dog's life in CRM. Two dogs' lives. Nothing original about it at all, by now. But how relevant is it, and how creative do you have to be to take Vartabedian's advice and do it right?

"If you boil CRM down to its essence, you're really just talking about customer retention (making more money at less cost to your company). And once you start talking about retention, you peel back the lid of a whole new can of worms — customer satisfaction and loyalty," Vartabedian wrote. He could have written it last week.

Vartabedian cites Don Peppers and Martha Rogers' finding — over eight years ago, mind you — that "it is not enough to achieve satisfaction ratings that are merely good (satisfactory satisfaction?). Only stellar performance seems to have any measurable benefit in terms of customer loyalty at all."

Does that still hold true? Yep. Is it an original idea, that "good enough" isn't good enough? Nope, that one's held true from Noah's Ark, where Noah insisted over Japeth's protestations that they had to lay in food for, oh, a month and change, whereas Japeth argued that two weeks' worth was certainly "good enough," to yesterday, when Team New Zealand learned the hard way that a "good enough" spin-naker isn't good enough.

Completely unoriginal idea. As is Vartabedian's observation that "if the goal is to retain customers, strategies for so doing must be clearly mapped, responsibilities detailed and assigned, and quantifiable metrics put in place to ensure those lofty goals are in fact being achieved with very real results — i.e., money in the bank."

Still the operative principle behind CRM today. What? That's what you want to do with your CRM project? How... unoriginal of you.





Peppers and Rogers, before the turn of the century, back when everyone was hiring “Y2K consultants,” laid out four strategies for improving customer retention, Vartabedian said. Not a one of them would have been unknown to a shopkeeper in 16th century London:

**Customer recognition.** Treating your most valuable customers in a special way without appearing to favor a given customer over other “less valuable” ones. This involves assessments of revenue generated to date and potential lifetime value, which savvy retailer have made for hundreds of years.

**Loyalty purchasing.** Considered the weakest of those suggested — “Act now and we’ll give you four weeks free...” since it’s so easily matched by the competition. And what’s the difference between this and reducing the price to attract new customers?

**Product quality and customer satisfaction.** “Wow, they had this knowledge in 1999? (Whistle of admiration). I just bought a \$2,950 study published two months ago telling me that product quality and customer satisfaction were important.”

**Customization and collaboration.** “If you can convince a customer to spend some time or energy teaching your firm how to cater better to his or her individual tastes, then you can keep this customer loyal for a longer period, out of the customer’s own self-interest,” Peppers and Rogers wrote. Any argument there? Didn’t think so.

Let’s be crystal clear — we do not need originality when it comes to the principles behind CRM. If somebody’s trying to sell you “Original CRM Principles!” keep your wallet in your pocket.

We do, every one of us, need originality when it comes to implementing CRM principles. That sort of originality is called “creativity.”

Great businesses don’t do original things, they achieve unoriginal goals in creative ways. American Airlines wanted to get people to feel loyal to the airline and give it preference when booking flights. Completely unoriginal goal, every airline in the sky had that goal — Braniff, Eastern, Piedmont, Pan Am, all of ‘em. American got creative and came up with the idea of offering “miles” to passengers. Again, unoriginal — nothing but Green Stamps in the air. But creative, very creative.

The principles behind CRM are most unoriginal. The best things in life are ... I’ll leave the list to your imagination ... this is a family publication. They are not free, as is sometimes mistakenly believed, but you won’t be the first to discover them.

But the essence of creativity with CRM is doing what’s right in a way that works for your situation, in your time and space, with your company and your customers. And beware of anyone trying to sell you “One Size Fits All CRM Practices!” on that score as well.

People are right when they say there’s an art and a science to CRM. The problem is they usually get mixed up which is which. The principles, the dull, unoriginal, tried and true principles, that’s the science. Learn that. Then — how you do that when faced with a live customer — that’s the art. That’s where the creativity comes in.

Don’t be original with customers. Be creative.

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# Five Strategies To A Great Customer Experience

Everyone is talking about great customer experience. It's practically ubiquitous in most magazine and TV ads. It's the topic of countless articles and books. If only you could order it from a menu and serve it up at the next staff meeting.

Translating good intentions into actionable strategy requires a vision-to-action plan that you and your business can deliver.

The good news is that you can put your ideas on the fast track with a people-process-technology strategy designed from results to execution. You need start with what you want and work backwards.

**Take the time to act like a customer and interact with your company. See for yourself what works and what doesn't.**

Construct goals based on what your customers experience today. Take the time to act like a customer and interact with your company. See for yourself what works and what doesn't, and from there, you can assess what people, processes and enabling technologies you need.

## Understand Customer Communication Trends, Needs

A good strategy starts with knowing your customers. What are they buying? What are their demographics? How do they make their purchasing decisions? Are their interactions with your compa-

ny consistently good? At what point in your customer lifecycle are you at most risk of losing them? Are you listening to their complaints and ideas to continually improve your products and services? It's common sense, but keeping a pulse on this can be significant challenge.

So, put yourself in the customer's shoes. Have your staff engage in a sales and service environment across all channels, and chart the process, steps and experience. Conduct focus groups and hold online customer forums. Supplement this with 'hard' data by surveying your customers on satisfaction, product usage. Also, review quantitative research on industry trends, what your competitors offer, and how you stack up. Evaluate how technology — including business intelligence solutions — that will give you the ability to glean actionable insight from across your organization.

Together, these inputs help you analyze the customer's experience from their initial interactions through their service experience, what they expect from you, and areas where you can improve. You'll quickly see where your intentions, staff and CRM strategies fall short.

## Customer-Focused Strategy

Have you ever had a call center agent tell you that they couldn't help you because the system was down? Or experienced a bumbling and painful process with a company, and, upon complaining, learn that it's due to company poli-

cy or industry standards? Does this make you feel nameless, faceless, and worthless to the company?

Too many companies still design CRM strategies to fit the limitations of their technologies or internal processes. This is a classic mistake. It's imperative that you have the qualitative and quantitative customer insight to drive your whole organization to truly serve the customer.

Remember, CRM isn't just a technology — it's a business philosophy. Don't assume that a knowledgeable sounding IT staffer has all the answers to your CRM issues. They don't. Neither does the customer advocate with a propensity to default to manual ways to solve problems.

Your company needs someone senior who can look at all dimensions of the customer experience, and brings all of this input into clear focus. This CRM champion must be able to look holistically at all the issues, and determine strategies to address them. For example:

— Do frontline employees need to bear more responsibility for the customer experience? Then look at how you incent them to deliver service.

— Are the employees' great, but the products fundamentally flawed? Then, sit down with product management and show them the data. Help them see the problems with their product with greater clarity.



— Is customer experience lousy because there are complex processes common to your industry? Does every company do it this way? Find a better way to achieve the same goal, and your company will set itself apart from the market. Differential advantage comes from customer experience and products and services.

### **Deliver Choices and Channels**

Based on your customer research and organizational self-assessment, pick the top 10 most important customer interaction processes, and optimize them by channel.

To deliver the same experience and yet adapt to channel limitations, bring frontline users and managers together with your IT team to make sure the right content is available. Test and reduce the steps it takes to process common activities — and compare notes across channels. Leverage new technologies like real-time decisioning to guide decisions, and process-optimization tools to better manage customer data. Use CRM programs to consistently have a 360-degree view of the customer, and serve them accordingly.

Give your organization flexibility by leveraging an “on-demand solution” for sales and call routing, and link it to your ‘on-premise’ service management

systems. This allows you to quickly deploy feet on the street without compromising the critical systems that manage your business.

### **Channel Strategy, Customers and Cost-Avoidance**

A good multi-channel strategy is essential to supporting, driving and delivering great customer service. With the wide range of CRM technologies available, you have more options than ever for a complete and integrated channel strategy.

When designing or re-evaluating your channel strategy, focus first on customers and then on cost-avoidance. While everyone wants lower costs, forcing customers into a one-size fits all channel or process may drive customers away. Customers have choices, and if you make them feel devalued, you may lose far more in repeat customer sales than you save in costs.

To achieve satisfied customers and optimized resources, design a multi-tiered customer strategy. This will allow you to deliver exceptional experience to your best customers, and good service to the rest. Consider strategies such as evaluating the costs/benefits of giving your ‘gold-standard’ customers a special

number to call that reaches your best agents, or fast-track call, email, chat routing to experienced sales and service teams. For good baseline service, analyze reasons for customer interactions, and provide enhanced service in those areas—whether it’s accomplished by conducting outbound service campaigns, or by improving Web site navigation and content for a more complete self-service experience.

Cost-containment comes with delivering an optimized “one-and-done” sales, order, or service process across channels that your customers prefer. Again, start with your insight on the customer—why they contact you and channels they prefer. Then, optimize the experience so that you can serve more customers in seamless, low-cost ways.

No matter what channels you offer to customers, make sure there is an ‘exit’ option. Enable customers to reach an operator, allow online chat with a sales or service agent. While you may want to have customers visit your Web site for answers before placing phone calls, think twice before burying your phone and e-mail so that customers feel like you don’t want to engage with them.

Again, a good business intelligence solution can help you optimize your

CRM strategies by identifying channel usage and volume, sub-optimal wait times, half-completed interactions, and much more. Getting this information to managers, can support continuous improvement strategies and help lower costs. For maximum impact, this analytic data must be presented to your employees at critical junctures in customer interactions.

### Listen and Measure

Make this all a continuous process. Praises and complaints are ideal opportunities to improve products and services. Leverage "social networking" communication tools to engage customers in telling you what they think.

Online customer forums moderated by product and service leaders can help continually connect with customers.

Informational tools such as wikis can help customers help each other. By incorporating online survey tools and interactive, live sessions with customers, you can keep a better pulse on customer satisfaction. However you track customer feedback and satisfaction-online, by e-mail and after an interaction-make it repeatable. By listening and then acting on change, you'll be able to continuously improve customer experience.

*Mike Betzer is Vice President of CRM Product Strategy for Oracle Corporation. (quote - news - alert) He has overall responsibility for CRM product strategy for Siebel, Oracle E-Business Suite, PeopleSoft Enterprise and Oracle Fusion CRM product lines. Prior to this role, Betzer served as vice president of product management for CRM service products with overall responsibility for contact centers, service, field service, help desk,*

*knowledge management, mobile, wireless, handheld devices, computer telephony integration (CTI) and software as a service (SaaS) products for Siebel and the Oracle E-Business Suite product families.*

*In 1999, Betzer founded Ineto Services, a provider of hosted intelligent routing software for incoming calls, voicemail, IVR and chat. Ineto was acquired by Siebel in 2004. Prior to his roles at Ineto and Siebel, Betzer spent 14 years in telecommunications, serving in sales and operations positions including vice president of information technologies and vice president of operations with MCI. He also spent two years as vice president of sales for Pioneer Technologies.*

*Betzer holds a bachelor's degree in marketing from the University of Northern Iowa, as well as a master's of business administration in telecommunications from St. Edwards University in Austin, Texas.*

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# American Companies Dialing Bogotá for Business

**T**he number of North American outsourcers setting up call centers in Bogotá to offer near-shore services is steadily on the rise, as a number of economic and social factors are continuing to facilitate the unprecedented growth in the Colombian capital.

Over the last few years, the South American country's call center industry, which is primarily concentrated in Bogotá, has expanded rapidly. According to the Colombian Association of Call Centers, in 2006 the industry's outsourcers generated revenues of \$216 million with 30,000 work stations, up from \$44 million and 3,700 workstations in 2001. This represents a composite annual growth rate of 38 percent in revenues and 42 percent in seats over the last five years.

Leading the charge in this sudden southern migration is a balanced mix of domestic and multinational outsourcing providers. Colombia is home to some of the region's largest call center providers such as Teledatos, Multienlace and Contact Center Americas, all of which employ over 4,000 agents. The larger

over 2,000 agents. Other smaller yet higher-end operations are run by IBM, Unisys, Hewlett Packard and Citi Group.

In terms of size, industry insiders estimate that Bogotá's 30,000 agents in 2006 place it roughly on par with Argentina and behind Mexico and Brazil. The call centers in Colombia now handle 1.6 million calls per day, on average, of which about 62 percent are inbound and 38 percent outbound.

## Priming the Pump

There are a number of factors priming the Bogotá pump, including a skilled labor force, low cost of doing business, modern telecommunications infrastructure and strong economic incentives, as well as plenty of office space, according to Luis Eduardo Rosales, a sales manager with call center outsourcing giant Sitel.

"Bogotá stands out in Latin America for its remarkable growth in offshore services," Rosales said. "Establishing operations is a fast and efficient process for an investor thanks to the qualified workforce, availability of appropriate real estate and tax exemption for export of services."

In fact, many are predicting an even greater surge in Bogotá's call center space. Only a relatively short flight from some of the southern cities in the U.S. and situated in the same time zone as

New York for most of the year, Bogotá is a convenient location for American businesses to near-shore their call center and BPO operations.

## Central City

The city, with a population of seven million, is the hub of Colombian business and has a busy banking, insurance sector and stock exchange. Bogotá is also the center of the telecommunications network and has the biggest industrial facilities in the country.

In the past, adverse weather conditions, unreliable networks, security concerns and other factors have hampered other regions in South America from becoming players in the contact center outsourcing game. However, with its temperate climate, reliable fiber-based communications infrastructure and improved security, Bogotá is now poised to see rapid growth of the contact center industry. According to Virgilio Barco, executive director of Invest in Bogotá, the city is "ready for an even greater influx of business and is positioned for continued growth."

And, Barco says, the growth is spread across all industry segments, as more and more multinational players are calling on the city to host their increasing nearshore operations.

One company that recently entered the market is New York-based computing giant IBM, which is running call center

**Call centers in Colombia now handle 1.6 million calls per day, on average, of which about 62 percent are inbound and 38 percent outbound.**

multinational players include Atento, part of the Spanish conglomerate Telefonica, which employs over 5,000 agents and Sitel whose operations rely on





and BPO operation in Bogotá. Leopoldo Rother, a business development executive with IBM, said the company chose Bogotá as the headquarters for its Latin American Contact Center because of the availability of a high-quality labor force.

“We have found a talented pool of employees who are extremely service-oriented and bilingual ... which allows us to easily expand to new markets,” Rother said. “The city has an outstanding telecom infrastructure, is located in a convenient time zone with a privileged geographic location. Combined with positive economic performance and the local labor legislation, these elements make Bogotá an excellent choice for efficiently consolidating an international operation in one place.”

### The Economic Advantages

American companies like IBM have been able to lower costs while creating higher standards and improving stabi-

lization of foreign countries by outsourcing an assortment of manufacturing and service work. In turn, this has motivated governments across the globe to offer economic incentives to lure new businesses.

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**“We have found a talented pool of employees who are extremely service-oriented and bilingual ... which allows us to easily expand to new markets.”**

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Tim Searcy, CEO of the American Teleservices Association, says from an economic standpoint Colombia is a bargain. The entry level wage for an agent is the monthly minimum wage, which at the current exchange rate of \$2,000

Colombian Peso per U.S. \$1 equals U.S. \$216. According to the UBS Prices & Earnings Report for 2006, the annual income of agents and supervisors for a contact center in Bogotá is one of the lowest in Latin America.

Of course, pay range depends on an agent's experience and tenure. A bilingual agent can earn up to 40 percent more than the entry level wage. Supervisors earn a monthly salary upwards of \$500 to \$1,000. Managers' salaries range from \$3,000 to \$5,000 monthly. The difference in salary levels compared to the U.S. is significant, considering labor costs generally make up the largest portion of a call center's budget.

### Government Incentives

Because governments are well aware of the potential boon call centers can bring, politicians tend to push legislation to create various business incen-



tives. For instance, Colombia's labor legislation allows for the possibility of having two daily shifts without overtime pay, as well as greater flexibility in hiring and firing. Perhaps more importantly, there is an exemption for exports allowing for services rendered in Colombia and used exclusively outside its national borders by firms without any economic activity in the country to be exempted from value added tax.

The government has also created "Virtual Free Zones" allowing any firm situated in the city that generates at least 600 new direct jobs or invests \$32 million to benefit from the fiscal, customs and foreign exchange related benefits of a Free Zone. The business taxes in the Free Zones are about 15 percent, a huge savings compared to the current standard rate of about 34 percent.

### The Skilled Labor Force

While inexpensive labor costs are obviously a big motivating factor in choosing an offshore call center location, an educated labor force can be just as important. And, an educated workforce that speaks English can be even more important. Approximately half of Bogotá's 108 higher education institutes require their students to meet established second language competency levels in order to graduate, according to Bogotá Chamber of Commerce with data provided from the Ministerio de Educación Nacional.

Bogotá's higher education population and enrollment rates have steadily climbed in recent years. Currently there are over 400,000 students enrolled in higher education institutes including uni-



versity and technical training institutes.

Also, the national training entity (SENA - Servicio Nacional de







Aprendizaje) offers tailor-made programs for call center agents on the company's premises. Other programs are open to the general public.

Several established multinationals in Bogotá constantly highlight the strong commitment and quality of customer service of the Colombian employee as one of the city's competitive advantages.

"I have worked in many places around the world and have never had employees as educated, smart, professional, hardworking, passionate and loyal as in Colombia," said Karl Lippert, CEO of multinational beer brewing giant SABMiller.

According to research firm Datamonitor, "Outsourcing providers indicate that Latin Americans, as well as Spanish-speakers in the United States, prefer the neutral Colombian accent over all others."

In addition, the Colombian contact center industry, aware of the need to develop the skills of its workforce, has invested almost \$ 4.5 million dollars and over three million hours of training for its employees.

### Plenty of Office Space

Rental rates for top-grade office space in Bogotá are approximately \$3 per square foot. However, spaces suited for call center activities can cost as little as \$1 per square foot. With the added cost of renovation, if necessary, the cost per square foot in these areas is approximately \$1.7 per square foot.

And construction in Colombia is growing at a healthy pace. In the last year, approved construction space for offices increased 34 percent, totaling 4.5 million feet.

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**The Colombian contact center industry, aware of the need to develop the skills of its workforce, has invested almost \$ 4.5 million dollars and over three million hours of training for its employees.**

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### The Communications Infrastructure

The Colombian telecommunications market has been liberalized and unregulated considerably in recent years, which

has helped improve service and brought prices more in line.

Throughout that period the country has modernized its telecommunications infrastructure and now has a modern digital network of satellite telephony, microwaves, and lines of optical fiber.

Colombia has access to three, carrier-grade fiber optic submarine cables, with a fourth expected to be fully functional in the second half of 2007. This should guarantee the necessary redundancy for a stable and safe communications network and increase international connection capacity by at least 40 percent.

Current monthly rates in Bogotá for a clear channel connection from Bogotá to varying international cities begin at around \$1,000. Current monthly rates in Bogotá for local E-1 channels range from \$200 to \$300.

Regarding the use of VoIP, carriers are allowed to use this technology to handle their long distance traffic as long as voice communications are neither originated nor terminated on the local public network. The local telephone, data and mobile services compete in open market conditions - as will long distance as of August 2007.

### Already There

As U.S. companies continue to expand their reach throughout the world and look for new call center locations that will provide the best return on investment, Bogotá is continuing to attract firms that are moving back from India and other Asian countries to places closer to home.

"Bogotá was the natural launching point of what is currently an important Latin American presence for Digitex," said Javier Llanes, managing director of Digitex International, adding that the continued convenience and quality offered by the city will likely attract much more business.

*The author can be reached at [tgray@tmcnet.com](mailto:tgray@tmcnet.com).*

# Top 5 Advantages of Performance Management in the Contact Center

**P**erformance management is a powerful element in today's contact center, where an ultra-competitive market has organizations looking for ways to align their goals and achieve excellence.

Performance management provides information, using metrics that reveal details about the entire operation — from an organizational level down to individual agents. This ensures that goals are being met and improvements are occurring wherever needed.

"Performance Management is established processes and working models that drive business performance towards a strategic goal," said Kristina Brand, Director of Product Marketing at [Performix Solutions](#). ([news](#) - [alert](#))

Using performance management in the contact center is beneficial in a number of ways. This article looks to the top five advantages of performance management.

## 1. Simplified, More Streamlined Reporting

Metrics for measuring performance in the contact center — such as how long it took to answer a call, or recording calls to assess handling — help pinpoint areas needing improvement. With performance management in today's contact center, data from across the operation is consolidated for into what is often referred to as "one version of the truth."

Simplified and streamlined reporting reduces management complexity; it is no longer necessary to manually extract information from multiple systems, a process that can result in conflicting conclusions. Performance management occurs in real-time or near real-time.

Robert Kelly, Vice President of Performance Optimization Solutions at

Aspect, said: "Companies are beginning to understand how a synchronized suite of performance optimization solutions can enable contact center managers to consider everything and act immediately. This is resulting in an increased interest in these solutions and performance management as a whole."

"Agents are able to see their own production stats allowing for self correction. It empowers employees to manage their own performance against targets that have been clearly defined to drive effective behaviors," he added. "Supervisors are able to easily and efficiently manage, track and identify root causes for performance shortfalls and take timely corrective action as needed."

Not only is performance management helping to streamline and balance reporting by consolidating metrics but, because systems are able to work together, contact center managers can immediately act upon performance needs and thus go beyond merely measuring and pinpointing performance concerns.

Mark Seclow, Merced Systems Co-Founder and President, said: "Our experience has shown that management's commitment to using data consistently and systematically is one of the most critical components to the success of a Performance Management initiative."

## 2. Increased Agent and Supervisor Productivity

Because performance management allows for closer attention to be paid to agents, it becomes possible to also maximize their potential by giving them an

attainable and relevant set of goals that boosts their productivity and adds to the operation's success.

"Effective and timely enterprise-wide reporting and performance analysis improves strategic and fact-based decision making by providing alerts for rapid identification of problems and workflow system to automate tasks," said Aspect's Kelly.

The availability of agent performance data also reduces administrative activities and increases supervisor effectiveness. Not only is it easier to gather information for reporting, but coaching effectiveness is also increased by providing performance data more readily and frequently to agents.

"Performance Management tools help contact centers set clear expectations, gain employee consensus and deliver visibility into how departments, teams, and individuals are measured on a day-to-day basis enabling organizations to create a powerful synergy and realize quantum productivity improvements," said Kristina Brand of Performix Solutions.

## 3. Reduced Operating Costs

As performance levels improve on an individual level so too does the efficiency of the entire contact center. The reduced operational costs that result are yet another advantage of performance management.

Because consolidation is possible, and because the task of reporting is more streamlined, installation costs and the need for extra resources is reduced — further optimizing costs in the contact center.

"Contact centers can reduce operating costs by increasing efficiency, con-





solidating and analyzing integrated data from multiple sites, channels and platforms, improving goal setting by measuring agent performance and schedule adherence across an entire contact center operation, and reducing installation costs and resources required to develop and support in house cross-platform reporting and performance management application tools,” said Aspect’s Kelly.

“Because of increased competition and market pressures, companies are always looking to optimize performance without adding headcount. Performance management lends itself to a performance-based culture, allowing companies to optimize all resources and helping companies reach goals that affect bottom line revenues, by truly managing the performance of each individual agent,” Kelly said.

#### 4. Improved Customer and Employee Experiences

As individual and team alignment is created, an improved experience occurs for staff and is ultimately reflected onto customers.

**Because of increased competition and market pressures, companies are always looking to optimize performance without adding headcount.**

Improvements in the accuracy and relevancy of data and reporting in the contact center, as well as other elements of performance management, serves as a way to empower employees to become responsible for their individual performances — driving improved experiences.

“By incorporating call monitoring/speech analytics and performance management solutions, a contact center manager or supervisor will have a holistic view of the effectiveness of the agent and the quality of the customer interaction. Quality management really feeds into performance management, enabling managers to do root cause analysis, teach best practices and overall improve agent interactions with customers,” Aspect’s Kelly commented.

Performance management can also take on the role of a motivational tool,

fostering staff to not only feel more satisfied, but to go beyond the expected — further improving the contact center's performance and having a positive impact on customer experiences as well.

“Harnessing the power of your contact center agents through focused attainable objectives will deliver an empowered and appreciated workforce. Delivering consis-

tent and optimal business performance is only possible through maximizing the potential of your employees,” said Performix Solutions’ Kristin Brand.

“By empowering individuals to take control of their own performance there is a dramatic increase in employee accountability and individuals become more conscientious of their work,” Brand said.

### 5. Competitive Differentiation Through Improved Service Levels

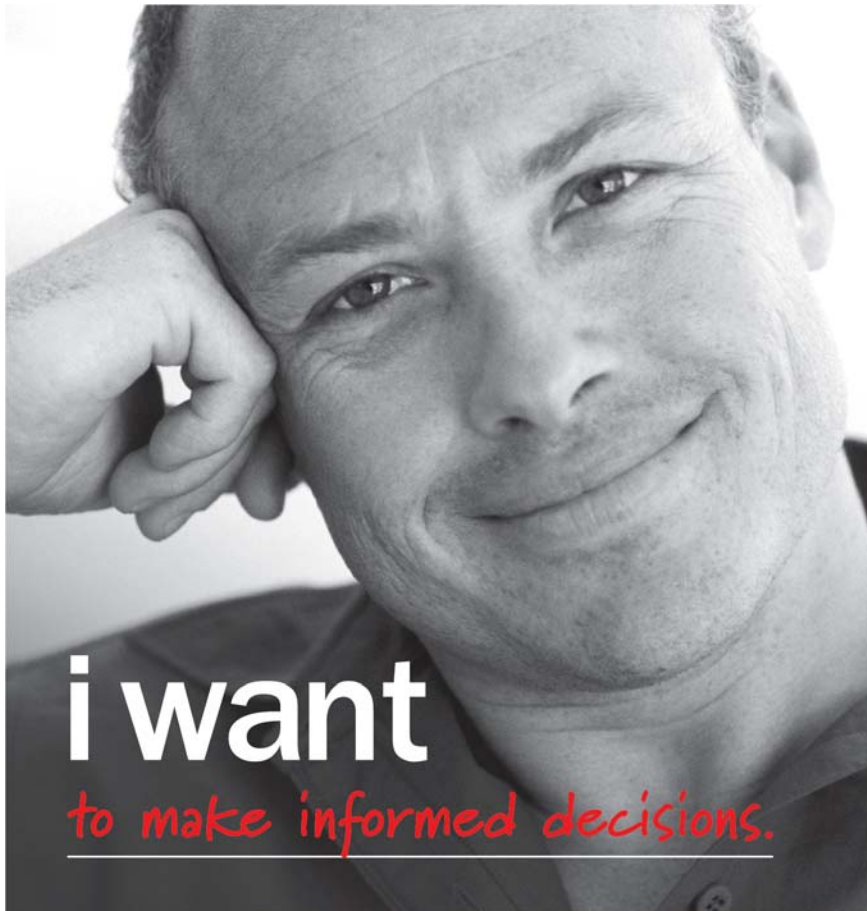
Performance management in the contact center, beyond merely seeking organizational alignment, also helps gain competitive differentiation by improving service levels. Creating competitive differentiation through improved service levels drives culture change within the entire organization and creates a performance-based environment.

“In today’s ultra competitive marketplace one of the ways contact centers strive to create differentiation is with superior service levels. Performance Management solutions allow the organization to focus not only on the specific goals for their business, it also provides a holistic view of your organization so that proactive decisions can be made to drive further improvements,” explained Brand.

“Performance Management Applications are a “must have” to any organization that is pursuing a “differentiation through service” strategy, driving significant sales in their call centers, or aggressively pursuing a culture of accountability. By providing highly personalized information at all levels in the organization, performance management applications provide the information and tools for every employee to execute with greater impact, and provide management with greater strategic control,” said Mark Seclow of Merced Systems.

Performance Management, a fast growing element in today’s contact center, extends beyond just monitoring how agents are performing and optimizing their role in the contact center. By bringing together technology, processes and people, an organization is empowered with the ability to drive change and achieve business success.

*Stefania Viscusi is an established writer and avid reader. To see more of her articles, please visit Stefania Viscusi's columnist page.*



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# March of the SMB Solutions

The small to medium sized business (SMB) market holds huge growth potential for IP contact center software vendors. The vast majority of businesses fit into this category, and in recent years the SMB market has seen faster and stronger year-over-year growth than the enterprise and small office/home office (SOHO) business markets combined. In fact, most of the IP contact center software makers who have traditionally targeted the enterprise now view the SMB market as the primary driver of their future growth.

Contact center software makers are successfully targeting this market through the development of less expensive, scaled-down versions of their enterprise solutions. They're also having great success penetrating the market by offering their software using the hosted or Software as a Service delivery model. Now that SMBs are able to access the same technology the enterprise has access to, they can gain an edge over the competition and in some cases even take their own slice of the enterprise market.

And the need for contact center software in the SMB market has never been stronger. Today, an SMB can see rapid growth practically overnight: A small company that had only 300 customers two years ago can have more than 2 million customers this year, yet its staff may have only grown from 25 to 50 employees. In order to keep up with the increasing number of customer inquiries and orders (coming mainly via phone calls), SMBs are increasingly investing in customer service centers to better handle their growing customer base and improve communications across the organization. Gone are the days when a small business had a lone receptionist answering the phone all day, trying to keep up with all the customer inquiries and ordering. Today, even a small business can afford to set up a small contact center operation consisting of five seats, with technology

that enables it to serve its customers just like a multi-national corporation. With today's hosted or SaaS solutions, all a business really needs is a server, some PCs, some headsets, and hot agents. Indeed, with their flexibility, ease of customization and infinite scalability (not to mention the simple and affordable pay-as-you-go pricing model), today's hosted solutions are enjoying rapid adoption in the SMB market.

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## **SMBs are increasingly investing in customer service centers to better handle their growing customer base and improve communications across the organization.**

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Indeed, market research shows that the SMB market is ripe for penetration. Not only are many SMBs behind the curve in terms of investing in advanced contact center technology, it is also a market, which hasn't been tapped into that much,

therefore it holds vast potential for finding new inroads to long term business relationships.

To get a better idea of why the SMB market is so hot right now, Customer Interaction Solutions asked representatives from five of the leading contact center software makers — Joe Scotto, director of SMB product marketing for Avaya, Jim Dvorkin, chief technology officer for Five9, Inc.; Walter Kenrich, vice president, product management, for Vertical Communications, Inc.; Prem Uppaluru, CEO, Transera Communications; and Tim Kraskey, VP of business development for Calabrio Software — some questions about what is driving the growth in this area. Without further ado, here are the questions and selected responses:

### **Why is the call center market paying so much attention to small to medium-sized businesses nowadays?**

**Joe Scotto:** There are a number of reasons why this market is sizzling. First, its sheer volume. Ninety-nine percent of all businesses worldwide are either small or midsized. The call center market, along with many other markets, is recognizing that these businesses are ripe to drive new growth. Second, they are easier to sell, in that it's far less complex to find the right decision maker so the sales cycle is greatly reduced. Third, they are increasingly savvy. Now that the Internet, wireless and other technologies have become part of the mainstream, the barriers to having capabilities that were previously affordable and accessible to only large enterprise no longer exist.

SMBs are facing the same challenges as large enterprises but can leverage the "nimbleness" of their size to grow quick-



ly and compete effectively. Small and Mid-market businesses are recognizing the value of customer service and its importance as a core competence they are expected to develop. As markets commoditize, customer service becomes increasingly important to survive and thrive, e.g., the smaller PC vendors have a difficult time keeping up with larger corporations like Dell and HP that have significant investments in customer service. Also, with what can be done with personalization of portals and with software as a service (SaaS), for example, service and support to SMBs can be done much more cost effectively than before — in a fulfilling, quality experience. This was a significant barrier that has been removed. Overall, the call center market knows that its technology can provide a secret weapon for SMBs. Given SMBs are now much more receptive to that, it's time to give them the focus and investment they deserve.

**Jim Dvorkin:** According to market sizing research from one of the world leading companies specializing on call center business intelligence, Datamonitor, the

majority of the growth in call centers over the next three years will happen in the market segment with less than 100 seats. That makes every call center vendor need to think through about their strategy on how to address this market segment.

Many companies of all sizes respond to competitive pressures by differentiating themselves based on customer experience. Usually, smaller companies must set their customer service goals even higher, since word of mouth and referrals can play a more significant role in their fortunes. As voice over IP and hosted software solutions lower the up-front investment costs for sophisticated call center technology, small and medium-sized companies can finally provide a world-class customer experience.

**What special needs do these companies have?**

**Walter Kenrich:** SMBs have the same requirements as large enterprises for contact center applications. However, SMBs need solutions that are low cost, easy to install, easy to manage and with a feature

set that is comparable with large enterprises (but at a fraction of the cost). They also need solutions that are pre-integrated to their existing infrastructure (PBX, network) as well have the same desktop call control interface for both contact center calls and normal business call. SMB contact center solutions also need to support remote/home based workers. Finally, they need contact center solutions that will allow them to grow both in terms of agents and applications without adding costly servers. Optimal solutions for SMBs will have the contact center solution pre-integrated on their IP-PBX, so they can enable the call center functionality without adding costly servers or adding to the infrastructure. Today's solutions enable SMBs to deploy an enterprise level contact center application via a simple license key and be up and running in a matter of hours versus weeks or months... at a very low cost point per agent.

**Prem Uppaluru:** Small and mid-sized companies want the ability to compete effectively with larger companies for the same clients and market share. They want

their customer-facing organizations to give an impression that rivals the best of their larger competitors, without making significant capital or IT staff investments. With a leaner IT staff, the SMB customer needs a complete end-to-end solution that is easy to use and manage, and one with more operating efficiencies. There's a real need to offload the ongoing system maintenance, including hardware and software configurations, equipment replacement and troubleshooting. In addition, the call center solution needs to seamlessly integrate with other on-demand software applications that the SMB already has or plans to have.

**How are the features scaled down when products are built for the SMB market? Is it only in terms of number of seats, or is it in terms of breadth of features?**

**Jim Dvorkin:** The right solution for SMB customer needs to be incredibly well packaged. Usually, this means that the software is designed with specific user tasks in mind, helping to ensure SMB call centers can operate effectively with a minimum of IT support. As a result, the user interface is clearly laid out to improve productivity, complex menus and options are avoided, the need for custom development is reduced, and all essential contact center info is easily accessible in real time and in reports.

**Walter Kenrich:** SMB's do not expect "scaled" down contact center features or scalability. In fact they might have more needs than large enterprises as to what is included in the contact center package. For example, in our Wave IP 2500 platform we have a robust contact center application that resides on the PBX platform and includes skills-based, priority and DB routing, screen pops, desktop call management, on demand or queue-based call recording with archiving and full reporting, supervisory tools, among other features. Furthermore, not all SMBs need a formal contact center operation, so the contact center product and pricing must

be flexible enough to enable two agents or more than 100 agents.

**Do you think there are "fake" SMB call center solutions out there... i.e., large solutions artificially and perhaps not optimally "shrunk" for smaller businesses?**

**Joe Scotto:** Yes, and caveat emptor. Shop around so you don't get oversold. Know what you want. Research it with peers in your industry. Ask a lot of questions regarding what it does upon implementation (and how long that will take) and understand what support looks like and what it, along with regular upgrades, will cost.

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**Since the SMB market has unique requirements, call center software for SMBs must be designed to address those requirements in the most elegant way possible.**

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TCO really is what you should look at here. An offer, covering the whole market on the one hand side brings with it the promise that a SMB will hardly ever outgrow it. On the other hand what you are usually buying with the scaled down offer is a long implementation cycle and thus high implementation cost. The amount of dollars, a SMB company can or wants to spend on the implementation, compared to the dollars spent on the soft-

ware/solution is different to what large enterprises can afford. But going with a scaled down offer in most cases requires the same spend on professional services - compared to the software cost — as for large enterprises. As an example, an enterprise solution — even if scaled down — might require \$4 in professional services per \$1 in software. A true SMB solution may require only \$1 in professional services per \$1 in software cost.

**Prem Uppaluru:** Granted, some traditional call center vendors have attempted to retrofit their platforms and pricing models to target the small and mid-sized market, they simply have not addressed the larger issues of cost and complexity. These solutions are still difficult to configure, integrate and maintain, requiring an IT staff for management and support.

**Should SMB solutions be built from the top down or the bottom up?**

**Tim Kraskey:** This is difficult to answer because even larger call centers today are being made up of a series of smaller centers. Are these small or large centers? We've built all applications to scale from one person in a home to large, multi-site centers and still be simple to integrate and support. They have all been designed for VoIP, so they are often deployed and supported in small centers, even though they are part of a larger center. The key thing is that the solution meets the requirements of the smaller center. This can probably be done either way, as long as the needs are understood and the requirements are met.

**Jim Dvorkin:** Since the SMB market has unique requirements, call center software for SMBs must be designed to address those requirements in the most elegant way possible. There are many examples in the history of the technology starting from leading enterprise CRM companies that failed miserably by trying to down-scale their existing complex enterprise-class solutions. On the other end company like Salesforce.com origi-



nally made its success by providing on-demand, easy to use, easy to implement out-of-the box solution for SMB space that now is making major traction among enterprise customers as well.

**Does an SMB solution automatically translate to “software as a service?”**

**Walter Kenrich:** No, SaaS will not be able to provide all the required features and functionality required for a SMB contact center (formal or informal). In addition, an SMB SaaS solution would need to consider the PBX, DB integration work and management of separate systems and vendors that will unnecessarily add to the operational costs of the overall solution.

**Joe Scotto:** No. While smaller firms like to outsource technology with the understanding that some entity can make it work all the time for them, others like having the control of premise-based solutions. If they have the staff and knowledge to manage and administer it, they can save money and time over the long haul.

**Do smaller companies typically want the broad array of features that larger companies have/need?**

**Joe Scotto:** Smaller companies typically don't buy for the same exact feature set of broad array of end to end features as a larger enterprise. Generally all companies irrespective of size prefer solutions. They know their business needs and will look to solve for their specific problems. If a reseller, for example, can educate them on how new features that they were unaware of can save them money or make them more productive, it can change the game. Outside of that, they will buy mostly based on price, reliability and the “it does what I need it to do” factor.

**Jim Dvorkin:** Although smaller companies need many of the same features that larger companies require, the software must be designed so that those features can be utilized with a minimum amount

of configuration and ongoing maintenance effort. Leading call center software for SMBs is designed with the needs of their users in mind, and will usually accomplish their goals by running with the default settings. Additionally, seamless integration to other popular software such as CRM products will typically be available, further reducing the administrative costs of the solution while providing application functionality that was previously only available to large call centers.

**Do large enterprises ever have a use for solutions that are ostensibly designed for the SMB market? Are they learning any lessons from this marketplace?**

**Jim Dvorkin:** Since SMBs and large enterprises share many of the same customer service goals, and since lower TCO benefits companies of any size, software that is designed primarily for SMBs may also be a good fit for large enterprises. Understandably, large enterprises may have unique requirements for custom integration, advanced analytics, data warehousing, and voice application design that are more extensively covered by products traditionally marketed to large enterprises.

**Prem Uppaluru:** Adoption of the SaaS model is rapidly increasing in the small and mid-sized call center, but larger enterprises are discovering the advantages of virtualizing their call center and unifying call center functions into a cohesive call center strategy across a highly distributed call center with captive or outsourced agents located onshore, offshore, at home or remote offices.

Large enterprises are learning through small pilot deployments that vital call center applications can be deployed on-demand, enabling the rapid deployment of a new call center, or the ability to seamlessly expand call center operations, with no infrastructure investment required. Because SaaS solutions virtualize call center operations, enterprises can more effectively manage distributed

resources located onshore, offshore or at home. Essential call center functions can be delivered where and when they are needed, no matter where your agents are located.

What can smaller companies do now with the newer SMB-targeted solutions that they couldn't do a few years ago?

**Tim Kraskey:** Small companies can now automate a lot of the processes they used to have to take on manually or on crude tools, such as spreadsheets for WFM, silent monitoring when they can now record calls, leverage CTI instead of deal with complex desktops with many required apps, etc. Again, our goal is usefulness right out of the box with no programming and without having to pick up a manual.

**Prem Uppaluru:** With the new generation of SaaS solutions, small and mid-sized companies are creating what are in effect virtualized call centers, in which agents can be working from any desk, in any office, offshore or at-home. A phone and an Internet-connected PC, and they're in business, with instant access to a full suite of call center applications. There's literally no infrastructure required, which means significant reductions in both Capex and Opex costs. With the new crop of Web and Presence technologies, call center managers and supervisors can now manage calls, observe agent activity, and monitor any call from any location — including a mobile device. This ability to oversee call flows and monitor active calls helps supervisors ensure that calls are handled promptly, agent resources are optimized, and customers are receiving the kind of consistent, high-quality service that will earn their loyalty.

*The author can be reached at [pbarnard@tmcnet.com](mailto:pbarnard@tmcnet.com).*

*To read the full version, please visit [www.tmcnet.com](http://www.tmcnet.com).*

## The IP Contact Center Roundup

**R**emember the call centers of the early 1980s? They were nothing more than rows of cubes, each with a standard phone connected to a PBX and not much else. No computers. No headsets. You just picked up the handset and dialed.

Today, thanks to the power of Internet Protocol and Web technologies, call centers have evolved into full-blown multichannel, multipurpose “contact centers,” where customers can make contact with company representatives via phone, e-mail and Web chat sessions — even two-way video communications. Today’s centers sport Automatic Call Distributors (ACDs) for receiving large volumes of inbound calls and routing them to the appropriate agents; predictive dialers for

auto-dialing slews of numbers for outbound sales and marketing campaigns; Interactive Voice Response (IVR)/speech recognition systems, which assist callers with routine inquiries and transactions and route calls quickly to the appropriate agents; performance management software, which helps maintain and improve agents performance through scorecards and dashboards, among other capabilities, while agents are at their desks; workforce management software,

which handles the scheduling of agents shifts and helps centers predict peak periods of call volume; call recording software for recording agent/customer interactions; speech analytics software, which helps companies mine their recorded call data and gain new insights into customer behavior; e-learning software that assists in the training and coaching of agents; and the list goes on. All of these pieces of software form an ecosystem that automates a contact center’s operations, leading to efficiencies which in turn lead to higher profits and increased customer satisfaction.

Today’s IP contact center software not only helps agents better serve customers by giving them the tools and information they need right at their fingertips, it also enables ongoing improvement of agent performance, streamlines complex business processes and delivers “actionable intelligence” — data which can be retrieved in real time or near-real time and used to drive key business decisions. As such, the contact center has evolved to become the “customer information center” of the enterprise. Facilitating this evolution is the fact that vendors of contact center software are increasingly bundling their solutions, thus creating tightly integrated suites of software which are designed to work in concert to deliver maximum benefits. For most centers, the heart of this software ecosystem is the IP-PBX, which delivers the core functionality needed to properly distribute calls and other contacts to the agents. Thanks to the power of IP and the “virtualization” of the contact center through hosted (i.e., Web-based) offerings, all end-points on a contact center’s network are now equal, meaning that every agent — whether they’re in the center at company head-

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quarters, a remote center overseas, or working at home — has access to the same tools and information systems and can receive or initiate contacts in the same manner.

What follows is a list of companies that provide IP Contact Center software solu-

tions. For this “roundup” we have included software makers, who offer a suite of solutions delivering the basic functionality needed to operate any IP contact center. Companies that specialize in software we consider “peripheral” to core functionality (such as “pure-play” providers of workforce management, call

recording, speech analytics, etc.) have not been included. This list is intended to serve only as a starting point for companies who may be interested in researching or purchasing this type of technology. For more information about the companies and their products, please visit their Web sites.

<b>Aastra</b> www.aastra.com	<b>Contactual</b> www.contactual.com	<b>KNOVA Software</b> www.knova.com	<b>Telrex</b> www.telrex.com
<b>Altitude Software</b> www.altitude.com	<b>CosmoCom</b> www.cosmocom.com	<b>Mitel</b> www.mitel.com	<b>Toshiba America</b> www.toshiba.com/tai
<b>Amcat</b> www.amcat.com	<b>Eagle ACD</b> www.eagleacd.com	<b>NICE Systems</b> www.nice.com	<b>Touchstar</b> www.touchstar.com
<b>Arcosoft Inc.</b> www.arcosoft.com	<b>Envox Worldwide</b> www.envox.com	<b>Nortel</b> www.nortel.com	<b>Transera Communications</b> www.transera.com
<b>Aspect Software</b> www.aspect.com	<b>Five9</b> www.five9.com	<b>Numara Software</b> www.numara.com	<b>UCN, Inc.</b> www.ucn.com
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<b>Avaya</b> www.avaya.com	<b>Genesys</b> www.genesyslab.com	<b>Shoretel</b> www.shoretel.com	<b>vThere (Sentillion)</b> www.vthere.net
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# The 2007 Customer Interaction Solutions TMC Labs Innovation Awards

Considering call centers have existed for more than 30 years you'd think innovation within the call center industry would slow to a trickle. However, call centers are always looking to squeeze just a little more efficiency and productivity out of their agents, which especially in larger call centers can equate to millions of dollars per year. With the advance of IP communications, data collaboration tools and other Internet technologies, the contact center has seen an explosion of innovative products and services over the past few years. This year marks the 8th annual TMC Labs Innovation Awards, which honor products and services that have unique features that their competition often lacks.



This year, TMC Labs considered dozens of applications and selected 19 unique and innovative products (see Chart 1). Product descriptions will be

published in two parts in order to accommodate our in-depth write-ups. The second set of product descriptions will be published in the October issue.

The first set of detailed write-ups will begin with 8x8 and end with Mitel. Next month, we start with NetSuite and end with Toshiba.

Company Name	Product	Web Address
8x8, Inc.	Packet8 Complete Contact Center	<a href="http://www.packet8.net">www.packet8.net</a>
AirMagnet	VoFi Analyzer	<a href="http://www.airmagnet.com">www.airmagnet.com</a>
Alcatel-Lucent	OmniTouch My Teamwork 4.1	<a href="http://www.alcatel.com">www.alcatel.com</a>
Citrix Online	GoTo Webinar	<a href="http://www.citrix.com">www.citrix.com</a>
Consona, Inc.	KNOVA 7.2	<a href="http://www.consona.com">www.consona.com</a>
EchoPass	EchoSystem version 2.0	<a href="http://www.echopass.com">www.echopass.com</a>
Exony	Exony Virtualized Interaction Manager (VIM) v6.1	<a href="http://www.exony.com">www.exony.com</a>
Glance Networks	Glance 2.2	<a href="http://www.glance.net">www.glance.net</a>
Mitel	Mitel Customer Interactions Solutions	<a href="http://www.mitel.com">www.mitel.com</a>
NetSuite	NetSuite	<a href="http://www.netsuite.com">www.netsuite.com</a>
Nexidia	Nexidia Enterprise Speech Intelligence 6.1	<a href="http://www.nexidia.com">www.nexidia.com</a>
Nortel	BCM50 v2.0	<a href="http://www.nortel.com">www.nortel.com</a>
NTRGlobal	NTRsupport	<a href="http://www.ntsupport.com">www.ntsupport.com</a>
Numara Software	Numara Track-IT! 8 Enterprise Edition	<a href="http://www.numarasoftware.com">www.numarasoftware.com</a>
OpenSpan	OpenSpan Platform	<a href="http://www.openspan.com">www.openspan.com</a>
Premiere Global Services	PGi Netspoke	<a href="http://www.premiereglobal.com">www.premiereglobal.com</a>
Salesforce.com	Salesforce Customer Portal	<a href="http://www.salesforce.com">www.salesforce.com</a>
TeleDirect International, Inc.	Liberation 6000 V6.6.3	<a href="http://www.tdirect.com">www.tdirect.com</a>
Toshiba Telecommunication Systems Division	Strata CIX40 IP Business Communication System	<a href="http://www.toshiba.com">www.toshiba.com</a>



## 8x8

### Packet8 Complete Contact Center [www.8x8.com](http://www.8x8.com)

The **Packet8** ([news-alert](#)) Complete Contact Center provides enterprise-class contact center functionality and hosted PBX functionality with just a PC and a broadband connection. It features multi-media queuing for voice, voicemail, chat, email and fax. It leverages Packet8's Virtual Office hosted PBX calling features and Packet8's cost efficient business VoIP calling plans. Developed in partnership with Contactual, Inc., developers of on-demand contact center technology solutions, the Packet8 Complete Contact Center lets companies quickly deploy and operate multi-channel contact centers without the time and expense of purchasing, installing and maintaining costly, specialized equipment.

According to Packet8, "Delivered entirely as a hosted service, the Packet8 Complete Contact Center requires no specialized hardware or software, no telecom equipment and no up-front capital expenditures, making it an ideal solution for blending in-house and off-site or multi-site agents. Agents require nothing more than a web browser and a directly addressable voice terminal."

The Packet8 Complete Contact Center service features skills-based routing, real-time monitoring and reporting, voice recording and logging, IVR, CRM integration and multi-media (voice, email, chat) management. Packet8's hosted call center solution, which hosts the voice network (IVR, PBX functionality, VoIP), as well as tracks and maintains customer data and interaction history, is the next evolution in hosted contact center solutions.

## AirMagnet

### VoFi Analyzer [www.airmagnet.com](http://www.airmagnet.com)

Businesses looking to deploy voice over WiFi are looking for easy-to-use tools to provide diagnosis of network issues and ensure voice quality. **AirMagnet's** ([news-alert](#)) VoFi Analyzer is a wireless LAN voice-over-IP (VoFi) analysis tool that

allows IT managers to proactively detect and determine the root cause of problems associated with voice calls on a wireless network. Unlike competing solutions it actually collects data from three sources — the air, phone and wire. This delivers a comprehensive end-to-end analysis, ensuring that VoFi calls meet the high level of call quality and reliability found with traditional phone solutions.

The product features VoFi-specific alarms and real-time statistical analysis integrated into the product, so users can identify and solve with problems as they occur. Additional quality of service features for roaming diagnosis, jitter control and call connection analysis ensure that call quality is kept at the highest levels. AirMagnet claims that VoFi Analyzer is the only product that provides MOS and R-value data for fully encrypted wireless voice traffic.

The latest version can monitor VoWLAN performance and reliability by auditing wireless networks to ensure the proper configuration of quality-of-service settings and identify and resolve traffic problems, such as dropped calls, dead spots and choppy audio. VoFi Analyzer not only samples wireless traffic as it travels through the air, it also integrates with leading phones to directly collect Syslog messages, giving crucial insight into call quality at the device itself. In addition, VoFi Analyzer integrates with leading VoIP servers to provide a "wired" perspective on the connection, letting IT managers easily see the call tear-down details.

VoFi Analyzer also provides comprehensive analysis of call roaming, a common problem-area with VoWLAN deployment. Using VoFi Analyzer, IT managers can track all roaming events and see the history of all roams in a given call to quickly determine if a call is frequently "thrashing" between APs or channels. VoFi Analyzer 3.0 also has a new feature called "Follow Phone" that allows the application to lock onto a particular client phone and track that device through any roaming event, no matter where or how often it roams, to accurately troubleshoot a problematic connection.

## Alcatel-Lucent

### OmniTouch My Teamwork 4.1 [www.alcatel.com](http://www.alcatel.com)

([quote - news-alert](#)) When Jack Bauer wants to know the exact location of terrorists within a building he simply has Chloe download a real-time satellite infrared map to his PDA, which displays red dots where the bad guys are, superimposed onto the building blueprints. Science fiction, right? Not so fast. Alcatel-Lucent has developed an in-door personnel tracking system that leverages multiple WiFi access points to triangulate the location of personnel or objects. Accurately locating objects and people within multi-floor buildings is an issue in healthcare, transportation/logistics, first-responder, as well as other enterprise verticals. Although GPS systems work well in the outdoors, satellite signals do not typically penetrate building construction materials, and therefore indoor tracking must be solved using other technologies such as WiFi and RFID.

By knowing the exact locations of the access points, an RF (radio frequency) processor can use the signal amplitude and other information, such as time-of-arrival, to accurately determine the position of each WiFi client. Typically, a collection of access points is deployed on each floor of a building to provide WiFi coverage. By knowing the locations of these access points, the RF processor can produce an accurate estimate of the X/Y location of each WiFi client, so that, for example, the position of each device can be displayed on a map. The Media Access Control (MAC) address of each WiFi client is also received, and by associating this MAC with the name of device or a person carrying an object, it is therefore possible to know the position of this object or person as a function of time.

The solution can convert the location information into a textual string such as "In Patient Room 123" and then display this information as the presence state on a buddy, or contact, list. For example, fellow doctors, nurses, supervisors and administrators can view a doctor's presence if they

have the property permissions and can immediately know the current physical location of this doctor. Depending on the presence state, you can alter the communications method. For instance, you can establish a multi-party, multimedia communications session to establish a data collaboration session. The multi-party support is enabled via VoIP using the SIP standard and a softphone client. Finally, OmniTouch My Teamwork offers SIP and XML APIs for simplified integration to legacy business systems and processes.

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**Consona, Inc.**  
**KNOVA 7.2**  
[www.consona.com](http://www.consona.com)

[KNOVA \(news-alert\)](#) provides Intelligent Customer Experience solutions that maximize the value of every interaction throughout the customer lifecycle. The company's suite of self-service, contact center and peer support applications automate the most critical part of customer service — actually resolving the case, not just tracking it. Knova's service resolution management applications optimize the resolution process across multiple service channels, including contact centers, self-service Web sites, help desk, email and chat.

KNOVA provides intelligent customer experience applications, delivered as a cohesive, integrated Service Resolution Management solution that reduces service costs, increases revenue, and improves customer satisfaction. KNOVA leverages a series of patents to build their next-generation search and knowledge management platform. It offers powerful adaptive and guided search and a Resolution Flow engine for process optimization. Importantly, it has collaborative resolution for agents and built-in forums.

**EchoPass**  
**EchoSystem version 2.0**  
[www.echopass.com](http://www.echopass.com)

[\(news-alert\)](#) What if you could combine VoIP, CTI call routing, CRM, IVR/ACD, workforce management and multi-channel voice/chat/email/fax customer interactions all in a single on-demand and highly-available solution? The hosted Echopass EchoSystem does all that and more. This customizable, fully multi-tenant and on-demand service integration platform integrates Echopass' advanced multi-channel VoIP contact center software and services with best-of-breed partner technologies and services. The EchoSystem is an end-to-end com-

prehensive hosted contact center solution with guaranteed service level agreements for the entire service across multi-site contact centers. Echopass helps ensure that incoming communications, whether via voice, email, Web-chat or fax, are routed to the best available agent. It also features recording and monitoring, as well as agent performance analytics.

EchoPass claims it is the first and only company to develop a unique multi-tenant version of Genesys' popular call routing functionality. They also claim to be the first to integrate this on-demand multi-tenant call routing capability with on-demand CRM, workforce management applications, a wide array of voice/data network technologies and other enterprise-class applications. This highly reliable solution is protected through Echopass' "always on" guarantee Service Level Agreement. This SLA offers 99.9% reliability and includes delivery/management of telco and other partner company's hosted applications which do not provide Echopass with that high a level of SLA. Echopass is SAS70 certified for its security and operations. Without upfront capital expenditures, contact centers can quickly ramp up their business with the ability to add agents and manage multiple contact center sites, all on-the-fly.

**Exony**  
**Exony Virtualized Interaction  
Manager v6.1**  
[www.exony.com](http://www.exony.com)

[\(news-alert\)](#) Contact center managers and supervisors increasingly have to manage agents in multiple locations, including branch office agents, teleworkers and third party outsourced agents. This makes it a challenge to quickly and easily measure and manage agent performance. Exony VIM solves this problem by combining virtual contact center reporting and analytics with virtual contact center resource management in a single, integrated application. The latest version, Exony VIM v6.1, includes a number of updates to the core VIM capabilities (e.g., enhanced and upgraded 'Report Builder' tool), plus two new modules: VIM Connect and VIM Service Management. The Exony Virtualized Interaction Manager leverages

key technology components from Microsoft including .Net, SQL Server, Reporting Services, Office Web Components, etc.

Targeting large enterprises, service providers, telecoms operators/carriers it features hierarchical partitioning, roles-based security, “intelligent interaction” data gathering and interpretation, and resource management/provisioning technologies that enable the effective and efficient operation of hosted, outsourced and enterprise virtual customer contact operations. Using VIM you can measure and manage the performance of any end-user in the virtualized organization. Importantly, you can easily identify and focus on priorities for customer interaction experience, efficiency and effectiveness, through self-service reporting and analytics drill-down. By offering a centralized reporting dashboard, you can monitor up-to-the-minute performance and quality of third party service providers.

Another innovation for Exony is that their comprehensive Reporting and Analytics solution works with the popular Cisco IPCC platform. In fact, Exony VIM Resource Management has been OEM'd by Cisco as per its Contact Center Management Portal, and comes bundled with Cisco's Unified Contact Center from V7.1.

**Glance Networks**  
**Glance 2.2**  
[www.glance.net](http://www.glance.net)

([news- alert](#)) Glance's hosted meeting solution has a distinct advantage over competing solutions, including WebEx and GoToMeeting, in that it runs not only on PCs but Macs as well. The Mac market has long been neglected for some time, so Glance enables Mac environments to leverage screen-sharing capabilities to enhance productivity through online interactions.

The new Mac version of Glance is the industry's first one-button screen sharing tool that lets Mac users instantly show their live computer screens to anyone online. Guests simply use their browser, from nearly any PC, Mac or Linux computer. Once connected, guests see everything the host sees, in

full color. Sign-up and installation takes under two minutes and users get to pick their own personal URLs.

Glance Networks told us, “The Mac version of Glance brings the first global cross-platform screen sharing service to Mac and PC users. Recognizing the diversification of operating system use in the business world, Glance worked diligently to create an inclusive product that appeals to all computer users and industries. Mac-oriented fields, such as creative design, marketing and education, were long neglected by the web conferencing industry. This year's release of Glance for the Mac market makes its service the only one-button and fully-cross platform screen sharing product on the market today.”

Unlike Apple's upcoming screen sharing tool, which is Mac-only, Leopard-only, inside-firewalls-only, and one-viewer only, Glance works on all Mac OS 10.3.9+ computers as well as PC (Win98/XP/2k/Vista) and Linux computers, passes transparently through most firewalls and scales to up to 100 guests at a time. With one click, users can demonstrate live Web demos, sales presentations, or creative work right from their desktops.

**Mitel**  
**Customer Interaction Solutions**  
[www.mitel.com](http://www.mitel.com)

Mitel's ([news- alert](#)) Customer Interaction Solutions portfolio scales from 10 to thousands of agent seats and consists of two-tiers. The first tier is comprised of Mitel Contact Center Enterprise Edition — for highly sophisticated large-scale contact centers — and the second is Mitel Contact Center Business Edition — for individual contact centers that have 25 or fewer agents. One innovative and important feature is that it enables seamless business continuity during a network upgrade or in the event of a network outage. Customers can maintain contact center data flow at distributed locations via the PSTN.

Using Primary Rate Interface (PRI) and the switched networking feature, Mitel has the ability to launch a PSTN call automatically to reconnect the data link-

age. According to the company, “This feature, enabled by the proprietary Digital XNet, is unique to Mitel, and along with the integration of Microsoft's clustering services provides customers with unsurpassed availability for their contact center operations. Using the PSTN to create a data channel is not new, however, having a PBX automatically do it when it senses that the data network has failed, is. In this way we can say that Mitel's Customer Interaction Solutions availability is innovative within the industry.”

Using PRI and the Mitel switched networking remote LAN feature, Mitel has the ability to launch a PSTN call automatically that will reconnect Voice over IP (VoIP) and data traffic should the WAN connection fail. As an example, if the WAN connection is being used for VoIP traffic and the WAN connection fails, the VoIP calls on the Mitel 3300 IP Communications Platform (ICP) can be routed over the PRI PSTN automatically and routed to the disaster recovery site. In conjunction with this, data traffic can be routed with a network side PRI connection. This PRI link would be connected to the 3300 ICP server allowing data traffic to be routed to the disaster recovery site over the PSTN network.

These PRI channels are 64K/s each and by simply leveraging channel bonding via the router you can provide 23 channels x 64k or 1472K/s bandwidth. This back up feature, in conjunction with the high availability server option, is unique to Mitel and provides continuous VoIP and data should the WAN be out of service.

Another important high availability feature is its support for Microsoft clustering. Mitel Customer Interaction Solutions leverages Microsoft clustering services for Mitel Contact Center Management, Mitel Interactive Contact Center and Mitel Intelligent Queue. High availability offers a disaster recovery safety net to ensure failover to a secondary server. It also allows for continuous uptime while upgrading or performing maintenance on servers without affecting customers or agent productivity.



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By Tim Passios  
Director of Product Management  
Interactive Intelligence

# Supervisory/ Quality Monitoring for the Contact Center

**Q: I've been researching some of the new quality monitoring solutions now on the market, and they're each impressive in their own way (including a couple from vendors our contact center currently works with). But I'd like your opinion. What would you look for most in choosing a monitoring application?**

A: You're right. The range of capability in the latest supervisory/quality monitoring applications is impressive—on-demand recording, screen capture, silent monitoring, agent scoring, monitoring for lines and queues, forecast views for workforce management, and operational reporting. Automated post-call customer surveys are also making the list in some cases.

But to answer your question, the deciding factor that would drive me (and most contact center managers) to choose a specific monitoring solution is centralization.

**Selecting the right solution comes down to getting everything a supervisor needs to keep interaction flows moving and make sure agents are as effective as possible.**

That is, will a solution provide all the monitoring functionality I need in a single environment? Or will it require a string of disconnected interfaces to oversee different contact management functions? Or, will it integrate to my existing system framework at all? These are unyielding questions for any vendor you talk to, including the ones who provide your current systems.

And don't let a monitoring application's color-coded charts and 3-D graphs sway you. As effective as graphic views are for supervision and quick decision-making, most every monitoring solution hitting the market these days is graphically oriented.

Bottom line, selecting the right solution comes down to getting everything a supervisor needs to keep interaction flows moving and make sure agents are as effective as possible. Supervisory processes vary from center to center, of course, but my take is that a monitoring solution should centralize these key capabilities:

- **Recording and agent scoring.** A call recording application is invaluable in a contact center, particularly when it offers scoring features to grade interactions and an agent's performance. But imagine the power of an integrated multimedia application that records e-mails and chat transcripts, too, along with an integrated workforce management module to structure agent schedules and rule-based recordings simultaneously. Disjointed monitoring systems don't offer such integrated capability.
- **Real-time statistics and threshold alerts.** Most monitoring applications track stats in real-time and issue alerts when agent performance and service levels aren't being met. The question is, just how far do those statistics and alerts reach? In addition to agents and workgroups, a monitoring application should let you keep real-time tabs on ACD and IVR functions, queue activity, lines, outbound and blended campaigns, and the health of server resources for e-mail, web and other services. And whenever a queue reaches a threshold or an agent skates close to a regulatory violation, a monitoring solution should be equipped to issue rapid automated alerts such as SMS messages, visual and audio-based alerts and supervisory e-mails.

- **Multimedia monitoring.** In contact centers that handle chats, e-mails and faxes alongside calls, supervisors need to view the activity for each media type inclusively to assess overall interaction volumes, response times, first contact resolution rates and so on. A supervisor can then better adjust flows and agent resources accordingly, incorporate skills-based and priority routing by interaction type, etc.

- **Screen monitoring.** Monitoring and recording workstation screens serves multiple purposes, from confirming product orders and verifying account record data entries, to making sure agents are actually serving customers—and not playing solitaire.

- **Coaching.** Recorded interactions will always be one of the most valuable agent training tools in the contact center. But continuous improvement requires tools such as whisper coaching and agent chat that also allow a supervisor to blindly instruct agents during a live interaction.

- **Historical reports.** Reporting should cover every aspect of your contact center, seamlessly, and produce analytics that measure service levels at each touch point so you can improve operations as a whole. Unlike segmented monitoring systems, a single monitoring application centralizes reporting and lets a manager more collectively assess interaction channels, call attributes, agents, workgroups, trends and other factors to solidify each KPI link in the performance chain.

- **Workforce management.** Workforce management is icing on the centralized monitoring cake. An integrated WFM application that brings forecasting, scheduling and adherence together with a monitoring app is every supervisor's dream, especially when the same environment lets them base forecasting on historical ACD data, monitor adherence in real-time, and get automated alerts whenever an agent or interaction process isn't performing acceptably.

Or I should say, a supervisor's dream is a quality monitoring solution that brings multimedia, screen monitoring, coaching, recording and scoring, real-time statistics, threshold alerts, WFM and end-to-end reporting together... in one application.

*Tim Passios is Director of Product Marketing for Interactive Intelligence Inc. and has more than 16 years experience in the contact center industry. Interactive Intelligence is a leading provider of IP business communications software and services for the contact center and the enterprise, with more than 2,500 installations in nearly 70 countries. For more information, contact Interactive Intelligence at [info@inin.com](mailto:info@inin.com) or (317) 872-3000.*

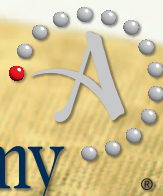




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