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The
Small Business
Triple Play

Speakeasy

**Delivering the small business core
Communication and IT infrastructure**

Also In This Issue:

- Because They Couldn't Call It TELEMARKETING

- Fifteenth Annual MVP Quality Awards

- Boardroom Report: Verint

Speakeasy: Champion for Affordable Small Business Communications By: Greg Galitzine

As broadband trends evolve toward faster Internet solutions and increased mobility, small businesses will increasingly look to affordability, innovation and high levels of service and support as key components of any small business solutions they consider.

Bruce Chatterley, CEO of Seattle, WA-based Speakeasy, believes that customers who are looking for a new communications provider would do well to consider the following:

- Look for a single provider.
- Look for a partner with high customer satisfaction scores.
- Look for a financially stable partner.

Says Chatterley, "I think telecom shouldn't be complex. Try and choose a single provider, and try to consolidate your complex technology into a single interface so you can hold someone accountable for that technology or group of technology solutions.

"Second, look for someone who has a long history of great customer support. These types of technologies have become the foundation of a business, and if they're down, usually the business is down, and if you are a small business, you cannot accept that."

Chatterley continued, "As we all know, financial instability is rampant in the marketplace, and the last thing you want to do is be working with a company that has financial problems and be worrying about not only your own business but about your technology supplier and whether they're going to be here tomorrow."

As one of the fastest-growing voice and data providers in the nation, Speakeasy understands the communication needs of small and medium businesses (SMBs). Over the past decade, the provider had become the champion for small businesses nationwide.

Chatterley takes great pride in helping Speakeasy's customers achieve their varied goals.

"Our vision as a business is very simple," he says. "It's to help small businesses succeed and for us it's the vision that gets us up at 5 am every morning and causes us to run to work.

"Through all our research and experience with small business, we have found that every business has a different definition of success. For some it's to have a lifestyle business and not work for "the man" and really not to grow, but to be able to control their own destiny. On the other end of the continuum, there are small businesses that want to become Fortune 100 companies. They want to grow and succeed that way. And of course you have everything in between."

So, according to Chatterley, "Our vision is to consult with small businesses to understand their definition of success and give them the suite of tools to help them achieve their goals."

Speakeasy Business VoIP is popular with small businesses because it cuts costs and delivers competitive advantages unavailable with traditional phone systems. Advanced features like voicemail delivered as e-mail and MS Outlook integration give small businesses a revolutionary toolset for boosting productivity and maximizing business continuity. Employees can make VoIP calls from any location with Remote Office, or install softphones on their laptops and make VoIP calls from the road. With Find Me/Follow Me, incoming calls can be routed to search for employees at multiple numbers, so critical calls always get answered. Because Speakeasy Voice over IP is a hosted solution with Web-based administration, management is virtually effortless.

Speakeasy also offers a level of customer support far beyond what the typical consumer ISP or local phone company can provide. In fact Speakeasy has been leading the telecommunications industry in customer support for more than a decade.

As Chatterley says, "We offer a level of customer service that's way beyond the incumbent telephone companies and cable companies. We have a 12 year history of having some of the best customer satisfaction scores in the industry, and in fact in any industry, with most customers (85-90%) selecting the top two box scores (satisfied or very satisfied) when surveyed."

"So, we have a reputation for high levels of customer service and we're going to continue that," he pointed out.

Speakeasy offers their customers a variety of different products and services, from voice and data to managed services.

Chatterley refers to the Speakeasy offering as the business triple play.

"We're very disciplined in terms of our focus, we focus on broadband communications and IT infrastructure. You won't find us doing things like hosted financial systems and ERM systems and those types of things. We're all about being a partner in delivering the small businesses core communication and IT infrastructure."

The three elements that make up the Speakeasy business triple play are mission critical data communications, broadband-based voice communications services, and managed services.

Mission Critical Data Communications

Speakeasy offers nationwide business grade data communications services, including T1, bonded T1, dedicated DSL ADSL2, on a nationwide basis.

Broadband-Based Voice Communications Services

Speakeasy offers a variety of versions of that, including a hosted VoIP solution, which essentially has all the functionality of a Fortune 500 PBX without the requirement to buy and deploy a PBX on site.

It should be noted that Speakeasy owns its own VoIP infrastructure and network; they also have a nationwide fiber-optic network that they've worked with several different providers to build, Level 3 in particular is a major supplier. The company wanted to drive home the fact that when you communicate from a voice standpoint, you never transit the public Internet on Speakeasy service.

Managed Services

Essentially the way to think about this is any server that you would run in your small business (exchange servers, hosting servers, etc...) Speakeasy can run on behalf of their customer in their data center, which precludes the need to buy any such equipment. Speakeasy then wraps that server with managed security, performance monitoring 24x7, virus protection, basically everything you need to have an IT grade infrastructure, and delivers that over their broadband connection.

So Chatterley summarizes the Speakeasy business triple play as, "It's mission critical data communications, broadband voice communications and IT infrastructure and it's delivered and wrapped in a value proposition that we call the 4 S's:

- Single supplier: for voice, data, and managed services.
- Single bill: consolidated, easy-to-understand, and easily accessed.
- Single support person: one point of contact to resolve each issue.
- Simple, predictable pricing: flat-rate, easy-to-understand unlimited pricing bundles.

Market Opportunity

Speakeasy is well positioned to serve the small business community, and that opportunity will be huge if Gartner's take is correct. The Stamford-based analyst puts the market opportunity at 10 million small business telephone systems deployed in the U.S. with less than 100 lines, and puts the total spend of this market at approximately $63 billion worldwide for basic telecommunications.

Chatterley is excited by the company's growth. "We anticipate over 50% growth in our VoIP service in FY09" he said.

"We focus on businesses that have less than 100 employees," Chatterley says. As for the type of customers Speakeasy tends to serve, he reported that "We focus on information oriented businesses. These are businesses that use knowledge or data as the core raw materials for their business model; businesses such as legal tech companies, software development firms, publishing, real estate, stock brokerages, and so forth."

Go To Market

Chatterley shared some insight regarding the company's go to market strategy. "We have several different models," he said, "including a direct sales force, which is an inside sales force for the most part. We also have a partner channel made up of over 6,000 independent IT consultants, we now have Best Buy for Business as a channel, and then we have a Web-based asset that is really unparalleled on the Internet, which is the Speakeasy Speed Test site, which brings about 2.6 million unique visitors per month and that number is growing fast. So it is tremendous asset for us in terms of expanding our brand as well as having a Web site where we can present different solutions depending on the customer need."

Speakeasy Business VoIP is popular with small businesses because it cuts costs and delivers competitive advantages unavailable with traditional phone systems.

Widely reported at the time of the acquisition, Best Buy acquired Speakeasy last April to deepen its relationships with small business customers. Speakeasy aligns with the Best Buy For Business vision to provide small and medium-size business customers innovative solutions to help their businesses succeed.

Chatterley believes the relationship with Best Buy puts the company in a great position to grow and service the needs of the small business community. "Speakeasy, as part of Best Buy, is probably the most financially stable alternative to the ILECs and cable companies that's in existence today, and I would include in that all of the CLECs, because we're owned by a multibillion dollar company."

"The Future of VoIP is strong," believes Chatterley, citing reports that have IP phone revenues doubling over the next five years, while shipments of IP Phones are forecasted to grow 25 percent a year over the same period. He points to a Dell'Oro report that further indicates the healthy growth of IP lines from slightly less than 20 percent of total lines installed in 2007 to over 50 percent in 2012.

In the end, it all comes down to enabling the customer to succeed in their business by providing the tools to help them get there.

"Speakeasy is focused on simplifying business communications," says Chatterley. "Our streamlined, high-quality voice and data solutions improve employee productivity and enhance overall company performance." **IT**

Greg Galitzine is TMC's group editorial director.

The Speakeasy Promise

The champion for small businesses nationwide, Speakeasy is focused on simplifying business communications.

What? Why? How?

For small businesses, VoIP opens doors to a complete communications system with productivity and mobility features like nothing they've ever experienced. And with the increasing convergence of media and software applications, VoIP is rapidly becoming the essential foundation for a future-focused business. However, before small businesses can leap into the future, decision makers need to understand the basics: what VoIP is; what it offers; and how to choose the right solution for your business.

If the questions below sound familiar, you need to follow the example of thousands of small businesses before you and visit www.speakeasy.net/buyersguide/ for more answers

- **What are my phone system options?**
- **What is VoIP?**
- **Is VoIP right for my business?**
- **How can these calling features help my business?**
- **What will it cost?**

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Seattle, WA 98101
Main telephone: 1-800-556-5829
Local: (206) 728-9770
Fax: (206) 728-1500
www.speakeasy.net

Featured Case Study

Clinic IT

Clinic IT is a NY-based IT consulting firm. Clinic IT looks for partners who can work with them on a technical level, and they've been impressed by the competence of Speakeasy representatives and support technicians. They knew Speakeasy as a reliable connectivity provider with a reputation for exceptional support, and they found Speakeasy's VoIP solution to be the best name at the lowest price point. According to Karl Nelson, Principal, Clinic IT, "Speakeasy has always displayed a higher level of technical competence than other providers. The VoIP service is reliable, and we've been very happy with the level of support and response. The price point is attractive, the solution is scalable, and our clients are pleased with the feature set."

View additional case studies:
www.speakeasy.net/casestudies/

Home of the World-Famous Speakeasy Speed Test

www.speakeasy.net/speedtest/

2008

The Year Of Workforce Optimization

Also In This Issue:

- Because They Couldn't Call It TELEMARKETING

- Fifteenth Annual MVP Quality Awards

- Boardroom Report: Verint

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❯ **Publisher's Outlook**

They Invented Contact Center Because They Couldn't Call It: TELEMARKETING®!

Nadji Tehrani, *CEO, Technology Marketing Corp.*

In A World Full Of Copy Cats… Here's To Originals!
– Author Unknown

The above is one of the most memorable comments I have heard that enormously respects the pioneers and shows little respect for copy cats!

My father used to say that, "…if God wanted us to be copy cats…he would have created us as monkeys!" If you believe in Darwin's theory that man originated from monkeys, then it becomes clear why there are so many copy cats in the world!

So, one can generally conclude that without visionaries, originals, inventors and pioneers, the world would not be as great as it is now. On the other hand, you might ask, "What have the copy cats contributed to this world?"

They Invented Contact Center Because They Couldn't Call It *Telemarketing*®!

If you think that is farfetched, please read on.

I recently came across an ad from the manufacturers of Jeep® that read as follows:

> **They invented "SUV" because they can't call them Jeep®.** Jeep is a registered trademark. Good thing. No telling what kind of jacked-up station wagons they'd be trying to pass off as Jeep vehicles otherwise. Because sometime around the mid-80s, a craze took off. The era of the SUV was born. Fact is, we had them beat by a few decades."

So the copy cats invented a new name — "SUV" — and positioned it as a new concept… and with massive advertising and marketing behind it, the competitors sold millions of SUVs. Of course, in this case, to be fair, the competitors were more than merely ordinary copy cats, because after all:

- They were clever enough to invent the term SUV; and
- They positioned it as an exotic "new concept" that everyone had to have!

Interestingly, millions of people still purchase SUVs in spite of the fact that they generally have very poor gas mileage at a time when gasoline costs are going up rapidly!

A Similar Case Happened in the Call Center Industry

Back in 1982, when we launched *Telemarketing*® magazine in a pioneering act and started teaching and training the world about a new concept in electronic marketing called telemarketing, we also obtained the registered trademark for the term "Telemarketing."

Since TMC (**News - Alert**) owned the registered trademark for Telemarketing, media competitors were forced to invent other terminology: first, Call Center and later, Contact Center. And I would like to note that while the industry continues to grow, practically all of the competing print publications have folded and gone out of business.

That's another way of saying, "In a World Full of Copy Cats…Here's to Originals!"

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

Nadji Tehrani is Founder, Chairman & CEO of Technology Marketing Corporation

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

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advertisers, please visit freeinfo.tmcnet.com.*

❯ IN EVERY ISSUE

Correction

The following two companies were inadvertently omitted from the December Buyers' Guide issue of Customer Interaction Solutions. CIS regrets the error.

IEX Corp.
www.iex.com
phone: 972-301-1789
e-mail: iexinfo@iex.com
IEX Corporation, a NICE Systems Ltd. company (NASDAQ: NICE), is a leading provider of feature-rich, scalable workforce management and performance management solutions that enable contact centers to improve planning and scheduling, enhance performance and streamline tasks. Founded in 1988, Richardson, Texas-based IEX has a strong global market presence in over 50 countries with nearly a million agents in over 3,000 sites. The award-winning IEX TotalView Workforce Management system is a NICE SmartCenter(TM) solution. NICE SmartCenter combines workforce and performance management with quality management, interaction analytics, compliance, coaching and customer feedback within a structured services methodology.

Stratasoft, a TRG Company
www.stratasoft.com
phone: 800-390-1157
e-mail: info@stratasoft.com
Since 1995, Stratasoft, Inc. has been a premier global provider of essential call center software solutions with over 28,000 seats worldwide. Stratasoft offers a comprehensive product suite including a Predictive Dialer, Inbound ACD, IP Dialers, Remote/Home Agents, Automatic Dialer, Quality Monitoring, Advanced IVR, VoIP Call Center and Virtual Call Center Solutions. Stratasoft is an acknowledged technology leader in professional contact center systems and provides the best of breed "CPE" based solutions and hosted facilities in a hardened data center for some of the world's leading brands.

Do **You** Know TouchStar?

TouchStar Shares

- Philanthropy Discount
- Community Spirit Program
- 2008 is TouchStar's "Year to Share"

New 2008 Products

- Best Time to Call Application
- 2008 Enterprise Call Center System
- Unify - Affordable Unified Communications

Financial Strength

- World Class Acquisition Financing from SVB Silicon Valley Bank
- TouchStar Grows with its Customers by Investing in *Them*
- Double Digit Growth for 10 Consecutive Years

Acquisitions

- Data-Tel Info Solutions
- Sigmaworx
- Digisoft

Call Center Technology Choices

- 5 Call Center Software Options
- On Site & Hosted Deployment Options
- TDM & IP Connectivity for Agents & Lines

Recent Awards

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Rich Tehrani, *Group Publisher, Technology Marketing Corp.*

SAP: Offering CRM Relevance Over All Customer Touch Points

I am ever on the lookout for examples of solutions that take the way companies serve their customer base to the next level. There are lots of claims of improvement in the giant industry that is customer service, but as we all know, the proof is in the customers' perceptions, which are still quite low when it comes to b-to-c customer service, probably because many retailers and service organizations still don't understand what their options are when it comes to automating best practices in CRM. So I like to keep in touch with the companies striving to vastly improve how organizations do business with their customers.

Late last year, SAP **(News - Alert)** introduced the next evolution of its SAP Customer Relationship Management (SAP CRM), a component of the SAP Business Suite. I recently got a chance to talk with Mike de la Cruz, senior vice president of CRM Applications Solution Management for SAP.

RT: Can you elaborate on how using Web 2.0 interfaces increases usability? What benefits does this bring to the call center?

MdlC: Web 2.0 interfaces are more interactive, dynamic and configurable, providing more visual feedback the user and improved ease-of-use. This allows contact center agents to focus more on the customer problem they are trying to solve, and less on navigating through multiple application screens to find the right information or function. SAP CRM 2007 brings a state-of-the-art Web 2.0 interface and revolutionary ease-of-use to the call center, bringing these benefits to the contact center agent and the customer.

RT: Can you explain a little about SAP Real-Time Offer Management and what processes it is improving?

MdlC: Real Time Offer Management (RTOM) helps improve customer loyalty and satisfaction by helping agents make more relevant offers based on the customer's status, history, profile and context. The system leverages advanced optimization and arbitration analytics—taking into account all relevant customer information—to help agents cross sell and up sell or create follow up actions by making real time recommendations.

RT: What is different about next-generation solutions like SAP CRM 2007 and the earlier generations of CRM? What problems have been overcome?

MdlC: Effectively managing customer relationships is challenging as every customer situation is unique. To be effective, organizations must strive to achieve more consistent, relevant interactions across all channels and touch points. SAP CRM uniquely allows organizations to make the most of every customer interaction across the entire customer life cycle by ensuring that each interaction is consistent and relevant, with real-time information about the complete history, context value and profitability of each customer. This is only possible if the CRM solution is fully integrated with back-end systems, providing this complete view of the customer.

RT: What's the ideal size contact center to benefit from this new solution?

MdlC: Contact centers of all sizes can benefit from SAP CRM. It is important to choose a solution that can grow as your company grows, and that can deliver immediate benefits and enable you to achieve long-term strategic goals.

To read the full interview on TMCnet, please visit www.tmcnet.com/1537.1

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Oracle Announces (News - Alert) OOTB Fusion CRM Integration With PeopleSoft

Oracle has announced out-of-the-box Oracle Fusion Middleware-based integration between Oracle's PeopleSoft Enterprise Customer Relationship Management (CRM) 9 and Oracle Customer Hub. PeopleSoft Enterprise CRM customers can now use MDM capabilities for data quality management, data enrichment and customer mastering capabilities, keeping incremental changes to customer records within PeopleSoft Enterprise CRM synchronized with the Oracle Customer Hub in real-time.

www.oracle.com

SugarCRM (News - Alert) Gets SugarMaps With Google Maps, Intelestream

Intelestream has announced the release of SugarMaps, a plug-in integrating the Sugar Suite line of CRM applications with Google (News - Alert) Maps technology. It provides a module where maps and place marks are displayed according to user-determined criteria. The module will display the results with each account indicated by a place mark whose color and/or size vary according to preselected criteria. Driving directions can next be printed using each account as a waypoint.

www.sugarcrm.com

Genesys (News - Alert) Survey Examines Activities of Successful Contact Centers

A recent survey by Genesys Telecommunications Laboratories explored customer service organizations and found that while many have implemented strategies to improve customer interactions, most have yet to take action on those strategies. This survey also studied the most effective contact centers and discovered certain activities that made them more successful than others. For one, the most effective and successful contact centers sought to identify customers at the first available opportunity. A full 78 percent of call centers are currently identifying customers before connecting them to agents.

www.genesyslab.com

Customer Service Getting Worse, Accenture (News - Alert) Finds

A recently released study by Accenture found that companies "are not keeping pace with consumers' rising expectations for service, especially in emerging economies." The report,

"Customer Satisfaction in the Multi-Polar World: Accenture 2007 Global Customer Service Satisfaction Survey Report," the third in a series of annual studies designed to examine consumer attitudes toward customer service, expanded the scope of past reports to include not just the U.S. and U.K., but Australia, Brazil, Canada, China and France as well. More than 41 percent of all respondents reported that the overall quality of service they receive is "poor/terrible" to "fair."

www.accenture.com

CRM Data Security Touted by Salesboom in TFAS

Salesboom.com, a vendor of SaaS (News - Alert) CRM and ERP products, has announced it will offer two-factor authentication security to its customers. "With phishing scams on the rise," the company says, new database security standards "ensure that your CRM database security and integrity will never be breached by phishing scams." Two-factor authentication security uses a USB token, or key, containing an employee's encrypted digital ID, which is required for successful database login.

www.salesboom.com

Open Source CRM Increasing In Popularity, OSA Finds

San Francisco-based Open Solutions Alliance has released its findings of the 2007 Customer Forum Series. "Interoperability between open products" tops the list of requirements among customers and channel partners who are deploying these products, the OSA found after meeting with more than 100 customers in five cities throughout the United States and Europe. Non-technical interoperability issues, such as how to support and manage integrated products being sourced from multiple vendors, were also raised at the forum.

www.opensolutionsalliance.org

PreVisor Acquires Performance Technologies (News - Alert) International

PreVisor, a provider of pre-employment assessments and selection solutions that connect hiring decisions to business results, recently announced its acquisition of Performance Technologies International, Inc. (PTI). The acquisition is expected to bring PreVisor capabilities in computer-based training and e-learning, while increasing the company's presence in the federal government market. PreVisor's solutions help streamline hiring, reduce recruiting and training costs and improve corporate performance.

www.previsor.com

TouchStar (News - Alert) Introduces 2008 Enterprise Call Center System

Contact center technology provider TouchStar recently introduced its new 2008 Enterprise Call Center System, which provides enterprise scalability, redundancy and functionality to connect thousands of call center agents in multiple locations anywhere in the world. The introduction of this new platform marks TouchStar's entry into the Tier One enterprise market. According to the company, the new system offers functionality which is critical to modern call centers seeking to expand their use of remote labor resources and unified communications.

www.touchstar.com

Microsoft (News - Alert) Dynamics CRM 4.0 Support Announced By Ensim

Ensim (News - Alert) Corporation, which sells management software for communications, has announced its support for Microsoft Dynamics CRM 4.0, the multitenant version of Microsoft's customer relationship management application. Ensim's Unify Shared Edition is a control panel providing support for CRM, and will allow provid-

ics CRM 4.0 as part of their hosted offering and "with minimal capital expenditures," said Ensim. The Microsoft Dynamics CRM hosted product is built on the same code base as the on-premise Microsoft CRM Professional Edition, with a choice of user interface, on-line or off-line usage, and flexible products and deployment.

www.microsoft.com/dynamics and www.ensim.com

New Bluetooth Headset From Sennheiser

In a bid to further extend comfort and "unparalled sound quality" for headset users, Sennheiser Communications (**News - Alert**) has announced a new addition to its premium Bluetooth wireless headset line-up, the FLX 70. As the second addition to Sennheiser's wireless Bluetooth headsets for consumers, the FLX 70 offers big sound quality in a small form factor. The FLX 70 headset is a flexible mobile headset that offers up to five hours of talk time on one battery charge and

the ability to maintain conversation readiness without having to leave the FLX 7o headset in-ear, thanks to an included lanyard.

www.sennheiserusa.com

The Top Five CRM Software Advancements Of 2007 Highlighted

CRM software continues to play an important role in ensuring customer satisfaction and business success. As this role has increased in importance, so has the sophistication of CRM software offerings. Looking back at 2007, VendorGuru.com has issued a list highlighting a number of these CRM software advancements.

www.vendorguru.com

Contact Center Vendor OMDR Acquired by Silverline

Officials from Silverline Technologies have announced that the company has acquired

OMDR, which was formerly Omega Direct Response. The Toronto company sells customer interaction and management services, particularly in the inbound and outbound business service management space. Terms of the deal were undisclosed. Silverline designs and implements call center initiatives ranging from inbound customer care, sales and help desk to outbound services.

www.silverlinetech.com

Strong Growth In Latin American Contact Center Outsourcing In 2008

Contact center outsourcing for many companies is the optimal strategy to contain costs while meeting customer service and interaction needs. For those companies that have implemented strategies to keep those contact centers as close to shore as possible, Latin American and the Caribbean have proven to be prime locations.

www.datamonitor.com

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

Fifteenth Annual MVP Quality Award Winners

This is the fifteenth year Customer Interaction Solutions has brought you the winners of its MVP (Marketing Via Phone) Quality Awards. In the ensuing years since we introduced the awards in 1993, we have been impressed by the growing sophistication of the quality measures that have been introduced to the contact center by the leading-edge companies that apply for our MVP Quality Award. Over the years, we have seen new technologies adopted and the standards for a quality interaction refined and improved. Each of the following companies has demonstrated, through its MVP Quality Awards application, a true commitment to high ethical standards, stringent policies and challenging goals.

On a 16-point essay, entrants described a specific teleservices program and its results, and explained their overall policies and procedures, including human resources, technologies, customer services, ergonomics and public image that are used to establish, sustain and measure the program's quality. We've shared some of the most compelling items on the winners' application essays with readers. To all of the winners, congratulations.

— Tracey Schelmetic

> Gold Award Winners

APAC Customer Services, Inc.
b-to-c inbound
Deerfield, IL
www.apaccustomerservices.com

Q: Describe all efforts made to make your work environment more stress-free and ergonomically correct.
A: The center has a large employee lounge with vending areas, wireless Internet access, on-site food vendors, telephones and PCs for employees to use during breaks. Employees "bid" for shifts that allow them to structure their changing family needs etc. with our clients' peak processing. Flexible schedules, with part-time options and the ability to "trade shifts" within the employee group, allows our teams to manage their personal lives without tight constraints.

Cross Country Automotive Services
b-to-c integrated inbound/outbound
Medford, MA
www.crosscountry-auto.com

Q: What do you do to demonstrate your commitment to staff quality?
A: Our new hire "nesting program." This program is designed to help associates to achieve a smooth transition from training to their new role by extending the "training" beyond the OJT [On-the-Job Training]. In this program, new associates will leave the OJT training period and enter into a Momentum Team. Here a dedicated supervisor closely monitors them during an eight-week period. Scorecards are introduced to associates during this period and the associates are expected to meet certain scorecard performance levels before being able to proceed from this program to the floor on their own.

GC Services Limited Partnership
b-to-b and b-to-c integrated
Houston, TX
www.gcserv.com

Q: How do you measure customer satisfaction?
A: Some of our clients have entrusted us with administering customer satisfaction surveys directly, either through calls placed by our customer service representatives, quality first coaches, or through an automated IVR process. Customer comments are noted, assigned point values, and saved to a database. We then either send the raw data to our clients for analysis, or analyze the data ourselves and present our findings to the client. Through the surveys, we are able to quickly identify opportunities, make recommendations for improvement and enhance our customer service department.

InfoCision Management Corp.
b-to-c integrated inbound/outbound
Akron, OH
www.infocision.com

Q: Detail a specific program and results.
A: [The client, a non-profit organization], delivers food, medicine, clothing and other necessities to individuals, children and families who lack these essentials due to famine, war, poverty or natural disaster. [The client] places television airings in spot buys throughout the nation. Before working with InfoCision, it had a string of poor experiences in which only a fraction of calls were handled. [After program implementation], InfoCision answered 98.8 percent of calls at an average speed of fewer than five seconds per call. This allowed us to deliver a 6:1 return on [the client's] investment.

> Silver Award Winners

ePerformax Contact Centers
b-to-c inbound
Cordova, TN
www.eperformax.com

Q: How do you ensure a consistent message of quality across various contact channels?
A: The passion and quality of our people coupled with our Performance Maximization Model and Process is designed to ensure a consistent message of quality across all contact channels — from the role our reps have in delighting each of our clients' customers, to our call center account management team delighting our clients, to our entire company portraying an image that says, "It's not how many calls we handle or e-mails we respond to, bur rather how many of those customer interactions result in delighted customers who are willing to buy from our clients both now and in the future."

eTelecare (News - Alert) Global Solutions
b-to-c integrated inbound/outbound
Scottsdale, AZ
www.etelecare.com

Q: Explain how quality has evolved in your contact center, how it is sustained and how it is measured.
A: A key factor in sustaining quality is ongoing training. eGS provides extensive weekly, one-on-one coaching and regular skills refresher training to each agent. [Also]…our non-hierarchical, performance-based culture promotes an atmosphere of open communication and continuous improvement. The result for our clients is superior dedication and initiative

from our staff, while the result for our employees is that eGS is run as a professional organization where positive opinions and ideas are valued.

Hamilton Contact Center Services
b-to-c inbound
Aurora, NE
www.hamiltontel.com

Q: What do you do for customers that gives them the impression of quality and high ethical standards?
A: Throughout the vendor selection process and into daily program management, Hamilton facilitates both full shadow and blind call monitoring. Hamilton's willingness to offer both options to clients and prospective clients indicates to them the high level of confidence that we have in our agents and our proclivity for full disclosure. Invariably, this leads to Hamilton being recognized as a quality organization focused on doing right by each and every client and with each and every contact.

NCO Customer Management, Inc.
b-to-c inbound
Horsham, PA
www.ncogroup.com

Q: What elements make it easy to do business with your firm?
A: Our unique approach to operations strongly differentiates NCO from other vendors in the outsourcing sector…NCO has developed a client-centric organizational structure that better reflects the needs of our clients. Each client relationship is assigned a VP-level resource to head operations and all other aspects of client interface. This leader oversees the client services team and the call center managers who are all dedicated to a single client. NCO's client-centric organizational structure includes no shared resources, split responsibilities or conflicting priorities as are commonly found with other vendors.

NOVO 1
b-to-c outbound
Laurel, MD
www.novo1.com

Q: What are your monitoring practices?
A: Besides sales, completed surveys, dials, connects and talk time, monitoring tells us how well the call center is serving clients. Monitoring helps diagnose the effectiveness of training, supervision and quality assurance. By doing it rigorously, we can detect the need for the slightest program adjustments. Evaluations cover product knowledge, telephone etiquette and demeanor, data entry and script adherence.

Synergy Solutions
b-to-c outbound
Phoenix, AZ

www.synergysolutionsinc.com.

Q: What implementation tactics and strategies were used to accomplish the goal [detailed in your application program]?
A: Representatives selected for this program had to have a history of above average quality and data entry skills demonstrated on previous programs. The CCRs selected for this program were issued a combination of five various standardized tests including spelling, data entry, customer service scenarios, senior sensitivity training and product knowledge education prior to making these survey calls.

➤ Bronze Award Winners

The Connection
b-to-c integrated inbound/outbound
Burnsville, MD
www.the-connection.com

Q: What do you do to demonstrate your commitment to staff quality?
A: To create a world-class service organization, we have outlined and developed the skills necessary for outstanding performance. These have been grouped into "tools of the trade." The skill groups include perception management, time management, call management, workspace management and knowledge management. Agents will use these "tools" as a means to craft world-class service.

Intelenet

b-to-c inbound and outbound
Plano, TX
www.intelenetglobal.com

Q: What is special or unique about your staff that contributes to quality?
A: Performance-driven culture. For Intelenet, process efficiency is more than just a statistical measure; it is a client-centric culture, which ensures everyone in the company displays a passion for the customer, process excellence and constant productivity and quality improvements. Our culture of process efficiency spans not just operations but also people practices. Intelenet has never missed a "go-live" date on over 50 transitions; and Intelenet has outperformed contractual service level obligations and competing service providers.

Sitel

b-to-b integrated telephony/Web-enabled
Nashville, TN
www.sitel.com

Q: Specifically state your company's philosophy/motto on quality.
A: Sitel's ongoing drive to improve its transaction quality produces benefits to clients. Through ongoing process improvement initiatives, Sitel is able to provide valuable feedback that may serve to decrease the number of transactions, lower the cost per transaction, increase the revenue per transaction and provide insight to help the client manage its business drivers.

Speakeasy (News - Alert)

b-to-b inbound
Seattle, Washington
www.speakeasy.net

Q: Explain how quality has evolved in your contact center, how it is sustained and how it is measured.
A: In the last year, Speakeasy launched a new Quality Assurance (QA) program. Speakeasy has staff dedicated to QA. Once a month, the QA managers compile data on calls and customer contact and report out to the team. Employees who are performing below the "Speakeasy level of service" are coached.

TELUS (News - Alert) International Philippines

b-to-c inbound
Pasig City, Philippines
www.telus.com

Q: What do you do for your customers that gives them the impression of quality and high ethical standards?
A: TELUS International dedicated quality analysts for each program, allowing analysts to intimately know the nuances of the program and make intelligent recommendations. TELUS' FTE to quality analyst ratio is typically lower than what is seen stateside. To compute for number of quality analysts required, TELUS takes into account the type of program.

Thomas L. Cardella & Associates

b-to-c outbound
Cedar Rapids, IA
www.tlcassociates.com

Q: What do you do to demonstrate your commitment to staff quality?
A: We developed a Mentor team in each center using four criteria. The prospective mentors need great Quality, Production and Hours. The fourth required element is citizenship, meaning they must be a good patron of the call floor. The mentor team is introduced to the New Hire class on day one through buddy listening, and they continue to work with the new hires throughout the first two weeks. Through mentoring, we have seen improved performance as well as a noticeable reduction in new hire attrition because of the strong friendships being built.

"Firing" Customers Is A Bad Idea

Are you ready for another piece of traditional call center conventional wisdom to be debunked?

The University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School marketing professors Jagmohan Raju and John Zhang, and Wharton doctoral student Upender Subramanian have found that the all-too common CRM practice of firing low-value customers "may actually decrease firm profits," and that even "trying to increase the value of these customers may be counterproductive." (A review of the study appears on the Knowledge@Wharton Web site.)

The conventional wisdom is that low-value customers, the scofflaws who don't spend all that much money on your services or products but who are always on the phone with questions and complaints, are net losses which, if they can't be upgraded, should be axed.

A great deal of CRM technology goes into identifying such slugs, and to prod them with better privileges and poke them with discounts or other inducements to see if there is a high-value customer butterfly hidden in there somewhere.

Raju and Zhang give us a new buzzword, CVM, for "customer value-based management," to describe this notion. Their customer analyses, to nobody's surprise, show that usually it's a small proportion of customers who are responsible for a large percentage of profits. And of course, slugs abound.

But Zhang, Raju and Subramanian decided to analyze CVM in the context of a competitive environment. They found that if you don't have much competition in your industry, you can get away with firing bad customers. Anybody involved

in the American hazelnut industry can stop reading now.

For the rest of you, who do operate in competitive environments, "firing low-value customers can be counterproductive," the study finds, since "companies that rid

> **If you don't have much competition in your industry, you can get away with firing bad customers. Anybody involved in the American hazelnut industry can stop reading now.**

themselves of low-value customers, or take steps to turn low-value customers into high-value ones, leave themselves open to poaching by competitors."

"What our analysis tells us is companies make money, in part, by confusing their competitors about their customers," Raju said. "If you make your customer base transparent by firing your low-value customers, competitors will hit you hard because you will be left with customers of one type."

Even throwing inducements at your slugs to change their sluglike behavior, such as

teaching them to spend more or to use low-cost support channels, backfires, the Wharton researchers found: "If you make low-value customers more valuable, this can also be counterproductive because it also encourages your competitors to poach more intensely," Raju said.

So what to do? "Improve the quality of your high-end customers at the same time that you keep your low-end customers, but find other, cheaper, ways to manage the low-value customers, such as encouraging them to use automated phone-response systems or the Internet or offering minimal discounts or other benefits," said Raju.

The study provides what the researchers call the first theoretical analysis of CVM practices when CVM capabilities are potentially available to all firms in an industry. The model assumes that the firms have access to the same CVM technology, that the firms are equally efficient in offering inducements and that each firm can identify its customers.

Because hey, after all, they may be slugs, but they are *your* slugs.

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

2008: The Year Of Workforce Optimization

As anybody who manages a contact center knows, the seemingly impossible task that needs to be accomplished every day is, "Make More With Less." While budgets and headcounts get cut, expectations of better sales, better service, greater customer retention and satisfaction rise.

Most contact center technologies, when chosen well and implemented properly, can help companies make more out of less. But few of them can do it so dramatically as workforce optimization solutions: specifically, workforce management and quality monitoring.

Anyone who has watched the workforce management and quality monitoring markets grow in the last five to 10 years cannot help being impressed. These two elements of the greater workforce optimization market continued to grow even during the dismal years around 2000 after the dot-com crash seriously depressed tech markets. Recent research suggests, however, that we ain't seen nothing yet.

Contact center research company DMG Consulting LLC recently announced the publication of its 2008 Contact Center Workforce Management Market Report, a guide to the essential and evolving contact center workforce management market, products and vendors.

The report reveals some interesting and revealing stats. DMG reports that the contact center workforce management (WFM) market grew at a rapid rate of 15 percent in 2007, primarily driven by technical and functional innovations, as well as increased investments in sales and marketing initiatives that drove workforce management upgrades and replacements in complex multisite, multichannel contact centers. The market has also seen increasing amounts of activity in the traditionally under-penetrated and under-served small to mid-sized contact center segment — businesses that in the past could not afford to purchase or administer workforce management. Based on the study results, DMG Consulting has forecast that 2008 will be the best year in the history of the WFM market, with an expected 20 percent growth rate.

"Workforce management is one of the most important productivity tools in the contact center," ;said Donna Fluss, founder and president of DMG Consulting. "The requirement to provide a better customer experience while improving productivity and controlling costs is paramount in contact centers. The new generation of WFM solutions can help contact centers address these goals effectively, and we believe that vendors need to continue to invest significantly in sales and marketing to increase awareness of WFM's benefits. Ongoing and strong R&D will also help the market continue to grow, as it will speed up the pace of innovation, product enhancements and the product replacement cycle."

Another DMG report, the 2007-2008 Quality Monitoring/Liability Recording Product and Market Report, revealed similarly healthy growth for the quality monitoring sector. It is expected that once the numbers are tallied for 2007, the QM/Liability Recording Market will have grown by 10 percent, exceeding $2.3 billion in sales. This comes on the heels of a 106 percent increase in 2006. This market, according to the report, is being fueled by customer-driven vendor innovation, the continued growth of VoIP recording, acquisitions and consolidations, and organic growth. In addition, as with workforce management, the SMB market continues to see growth and new attention.

As always, we'll keep you posted on new trends.

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by Susan J. Campbell,
Contributing Editor, Customer Interaction Solutions

The Top Five Reasons Why Third-Party Remote Call Monitoring Is A Must

Call centers for years have been using some sort of monitoring in order to measure performance and customer satisfaction. While there are as many methods of call monitoring as there are call centers, not all are effective for every organization.

As customer satisfaction has become more important in the eyes of the organization, call center monitoring has taken priority. One question that every call center manager must answer, however, is whether or not it is best to conduct the monitoring within the call center, or to turn to a third-party remote call monitoring solution.

Let's examine the top five reasons why third-party remote call monitoring is a must for the call center to ensure efficiency and best practices.

1. Third-party remote call monitoring can be used to develop a strategy to reverse the trend of declining customer satisfaction.
To completely understand why customers have become dissatisfied, the call center has to be able to monitor and measure the interaction between the center and the customer. The third party providing the service is qualified to provide unbiased results of the call monitoring and how the center can translate the results to understand how to move forward with improvement.

2. Third-party remote call monitoring can be used to provide a level of precision in anticipating customer satisfaction. The information that can be captured in a third-party remote monitoring situation provides the call center with valuable information. This information that is captured within the customer conversations provides the center with clues as to what services or products the customer would like to see, what resolution they expect and even their buying preferences. This information and more can be captured in the monitoring of the calls.

> **The third party providing the service is qualified to provide unbiased results of the call monitoring and how the center can translate the results to understand how to move forward with improvement**

3. Third-party remote call monitoring is essential for training and coaching within the call center. Agents can gain significant advantage from being able to listen to their own calls. It not only provides them with the ability to identify their own strengths and weaknesses, it also enables them to more closely listen to the customer and how she or he reacted to words, inflection, etc. Call center managers can gain valuable insight into areas of improvement for the agent and customize their training and coaching specifically for that agent.

4. Third-party remote call monitoring is a valuable source for use in dispute resolution. Whether the issue is internal or there is a situation with a frustrated customer, monitoring calls is an important tool to ensure that the proper processes are being followed, that specific items are being followed up, and that information is captured correctly.

5. Third-party remote call monitoring also provides valuable information for the call center to be able to measure its internal processes. Such monitoring enables the center to measure the performance of its scripts, call forwarding, upsell opportunities and more. By evaluating the customer reaction within the calls, the call center can better assess which processes are working and what should be revamped to produce improved satisfaction.

For more information on this topic, visit the Third-Party Remote Call Monitoring Channel on TMCnet at www.tmcnet.com/channels/bpa/

Nancy Treaster
Senior VP and General Manager
Verint Witness Actionable Solutions

Verint Witness Actionable Solutions: Capturing The Voice Of The Customer

Nadji Tehrani, *CEO,*
Technology Marketing Corp.

The Boardroom Report provides the CRM, customer interaction and call center industry's view from the top, featuring in-depth 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 Verint (**News - Alert**) Witness Actionable Solutions senior vice president and general manager Nancy Treaster.

Nadji Tehrani: Please tell us about your company and type of business.

Nancy Treaster: Verint Witness Actionable Solutions was formed in 2007 following Verint's successful combination with workforce optimization provider Witness Systems (**News - Alert**). The company's unified, analytics-driven, next-generation Impact 360 suite helps companies uncover business trends, discover the root cause of employee and customer behavior, and power the right decisions to help ensure service excellence and achieve continuous performance improvement across every aspect of customer care operations. With more than 11,000 global customers, Verint Witness Actionable Solutions software and services enable organizations to capture and analyze customer interactions, improve workforce performance and optimize service processes across contact center, branch and back-office operations.

Nadji Tehrani: In your opinion, what is the greatest need in our industry?

Nancy Treaster: There are several, but one significant need centers around the "voice of the customer." Historically, capturing, communicating and analyzing the voice of the customer has proven challenging for organizations worldwide. The great divide between a company's "inside-out" perspective of its service quality and customer satisfaction is often in direct contrast to the "outside-in" sales/service experiences customers have with the business. To attain more statistically valid and timely insight, many forward-thinking companies are moving beyond the traditional metrics that track internal successes. Leveraging applications such as speech analytics and customer

feedback provides additional venues for collecting valuable information.

Speech analytics helps make sense out of the metrics being generated. We can categorize interactions based on specific challenges and objectives. We then identify the top reasons for calls within each category. The software reveals the "why" behind the "what" – providing a way for the contact center and enterprise to look closer at processes and determine the breakdown to improve operations.

Further, by collecting direct feedback following customer interactions, companies gain first-hand, actionable intelligence – more than two-thirds of all customer interactions are relevant for such feedback. While different communications channels, distributed service centers, and internal processes and systems across the enterprise capture fragments of the customer experience, they don't provide a comprehensive picture. As a result, organizations can overlook critical information that affects repeat sales, customer loyalty and the bottom line. Implementing a customer feedback survey solution that can be integrated into existing contact center and back-office systems – allows organizations to capture and take action based on the voice of the customer – through real-time perspective on issues and drivers impacting sales, service and the customer experience.

Nadji Tehrani: Tell us about new developments in your company.

Nancy Treaster: In December 2007, Verint Witness Actionable Solutions announced the industry's first end-to-end solution for analyzing customer service

effectiveness and optimizing workforce performance – the new, next-generation Impact 360 Workforce Optimization suite. Unified and analytics-driven, Impact 360 software and services break new ground for organizations striving to analyze and extract critical information from customer interactions to optimize performance, improve the overall effectiveness of customer service operations and enhance the customer experience.

Impact 360 is designed to help improve the entire customer service delivery network – from contact centers to branch stores and remote offices to back-office operations. It includes a multitude of new functionality across quality monitoring and call recording, speech and data analytics, workforce management, customer feedback, e-learning and performance management to help improve the customer experience across virtually every customer touch point across an organization.

Nadji Tehrani: What would be the impact of those developments on the bottom line?

Nancy Treaster: Organizations can deploy the next-generation Impact 360 to capture customer intelligence, optimize the customer experience, increase customer satisfaction, improve customer retention, achieve customer loyalty, seize revenue growth opportunities and reduce costs across multiple customer contact center channels and into remote office, branch and back-office operations.

The suite enables organizations to streamline processes and ensure consistency in new ways for maximum customer service effectiveness. Global businesses can deploy Impact 360 to detect unknown trends

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through enhanced, proactive, integrated speech analytics; better understand contact center growth trends through tighter links between strategic planning and tactical daily forecasting and scheduling functions, so users can combine their strategic forecasts with their tactical forecasts to increase forecast accuracy; and save time and reduce errors by automatically sending learning requests to schedulers and assigning learning automatically based on evaluation scores.

Further, global organizations or small to medium-sized businesses (SMBs) can leverage Impact 360 to help progress through the customer service continuum to extend business value. For example, our operational solutions are comprised of functionality to help reduce risk and optimize agent performance, and are designed to help organizations decrease average handle time, improve quality scores, drive down average speed to answer, manage occupancy and enhance service levels. More advanced solutions focus on further optimizing contact center performance and using analytics designed to increase first-call resolution, improve upselling and cross-selling, heighten contact center customer satisfaction, and rebalance work across all channels based on employee availability and skills. Additional analytical functionality is available for organizations that work to differentiate themselves through customer service and/or strive to create seamless customer service across the enterprise. These functions help companies perform root cause analysis, grow overall customer satisfaction and increase customer loyalty.

Nadji Tehrani: What is your vision for the future of our industry?

Nancy Treaster: There are several trends we have seen over the past year – some that are taking greater shape even as we enter 2008, and others have been on the rise over time. First and foremost, what we are seeing in terms of the contact center industry – and all industries, for that matter – is the consolidation of technologies. Businesses are interested in investing in solutions and systems that unify and integrate capabilities – operating on one platform, with single logon, common user interface and a single source that draws from a structured upgrade path and one support organization. Many are also looking to those that reach further into the enterprise to better align the internal customer service delivery network.

Industry experts are concluding that the customer service industry is maturing and that companies are demanding more integrated and robust software and services. Now, more than ever, analytics-driven workforce optimization

is a focal point of successful contact centers, as well as thriving enterprises. As a result, capturing the customer experience and analyzing its effectiveness, as well as managing forecasting and scheduling, is critical. Other drivers and trends shaping the market include speech analytics as a key technology in the contact center and enterprise, IP telephony fueling change among customer organizations, extending technologies and solutions that have proven effective in the contact center to branch and remote offices as well as back-office operations, enterprise collaboration and sharing customer intelligence, and capturing customer feedback and making it actionable.

Nadji Tehrani: What is the significance of the following in the customer interaction industry – VOIP, speech technology and home agents?

Nancy Treaster: In terms of VoIP, one of the real values of IP is that it provides the opportunity for enterprises to think differently about their business strategy. Companies are starting to leverage the flexibility of IP recording to increase workforce productivity, impact training, support dispute resolution and improve service quality. As companies continue to focus on topics such as profitability, regulatory/compliance requirements, workforce/staffing and a renewed commitment to the customer experience, IP will become an integral part of the overall enterprise strategy.

Speech analytics can help find specific calls of interest that can impact quality monitoring, training and coaching. A speech analytics solution that is fully integrated into a quality monitoring and call recording platform will help streamline existing workflow, reduce total cost of ownership and increase ROI. Also verify compatibility – make sure that the speech analytics solution being considered is fully compatible and can be supported in current and future technical environments.

As for home agents, IP recording offers organizations new functionality and supports processes that were previously unavailable in the more traditional or earlier systems. According to a research study conducted by the Yankee Group (**News - Alert**), companies are implementing IP recording to effectively and efficiently place and manage remote agents. The "agent anywhere" strategy is gaining more attention among customer service organizations as it provides contact centers with new flexibility in managing their operations.

Nadji Tehrani: What is your company's greatest core competency?

Nancy Treaster: Workforce optimization is our core competency. The new, next-generation Impact 360 Workforce Optimization suite is comprised of proven, robust software and services for enterprises and small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs), as well as the public safety sector. The solution provides a combination of analytics-driven workforce optimization solutions such as: software and services for quality monitoring and call recording, workforce management, speech and data analytics, e-learning, performance management and customer feedback surveys.

Impact 360 helps enable more efficient operations, creating more loyal customers and driving more profitable business outcomes. Our solutions help organizations enhance the customer experience by providing visibility into a company's entire customer service lifecycle – from planning and establishing goals, to scheduling and deploying the appropriate staff; from recording interactions and measuring performance, to meeting compliance requirements; from capturing structured and unstructured data, to turning information into sophisticated, actionable analytics that reveal trends, issues and their root causes; from changing business processes and goals based on this analysis, to honing employee skills to meet those goals; and then leveraging feedback surveys to capture and gauge the voice of the customer.

Nadji Tehrani: How do you differentiate your company?

Nancy Treaster: Via our solutions, as previously mentioned, our customers' success, our market leadership and ongoing investment. In terms of our customers' success, Verint Witness Actionable Solutions and the Impact 360 suite are focused on driving more profitable business outcomes based on a unified view of the customer, from the contact center to the C-suite, and from the back office to the branch office. Our solutions are designed to support the drive that customers should be at the heart of all programs. This underscores the company's approach to partnering with our customers from pre-sales though implementation, consulting and support to help ensure their initial and ongoing success, protect their investments, and evolve with them as their business needs change and grow. It's why organizations that rely on our solutions return as repeat customers, extending their investment.

Nadji Tehrani: Thank you for your time.

ContractXchange.com Shows The Way To Recruiting Your Remote Agents — Remotely

One of the great, unsung advantages of using remote agents is the opportunity to vastly expand a contact center's recruitment radius.

Bricks and mortar limits the hiring of in-house agents to the local commuting area, remote agent recruitment potentially extends the recruitment area to everywhere there is high-speed Internet.

Of course, the wonderful potential of unlimited recruitment reach can't be fulfilled unless the contact center jettisons the conventional recruitment process of requiring agent applicants come into the bricks and mortar to apply. After all, an applicant on the east coast isn't going to fly to the west coast for a contact center job interview.

So logically, it is inevitable that the recruitment of remote agents must become an entirely remote event. In other words, every step of the recruitment process from job posting to resume reviews, to personal interviews, to the final training graduation and the awarding of a job contract has to be executed entirely online.

Remote recruitment is certainly not something within the capability of Monster.com. or any of the similar job advertising boards. Instead, it requires a Web site process specially designed for the purpose. The good news is such a Web site has been developed and is already an important part of the remote programs of some major corporations. The site is called ContractXchange.com

25,000 Agent Members. And Counting.

ContractXchange.com is the first complete, end-to-end system of online recruitment. Contact centers go to ContractXchange.com when they want to recruit their own (not outsourced) remote agents. The Web site gives client contact centers access to an inventory of over 25,000 Member Agents, each of whom have to undergo the comprehensive CX Remote Certification Process before they are fully qualified to apply to one of the posted jobs in the site.

The Certification Process involves a series of online tests to determine whether job seekers have the basic computer equipment and skills to work remotely. Every ContractXchange Member is asked to undergo an online typing test and an online equipment specifications check plus an Internet connection speed test. In addition, Members are required to complete a CX Multi-Media Resume that provides clients with not only the essential background information and references, but also a personal voice recording and a video.

Only after marshaling the essential credentials of Certification are Members ready to apply for one of the remote agents jobs posted on the site. So yes, it takes a bit of time and commitment for the job applicants. However, on the recruitment side, it has never been easier for the hiring corporations.

See Them. Hear Them. Hire Them.

Each client contact center of ContractXchange.com has their own fully secure section on the site, equipped with all the data and communication tools required for the online recruitment process. A recruiting contact center simply fills a Job Posting for display on the ContractXchange Job Roster and waits for the multimedia resumes of job seekers to show in their private section's Applicant List.

Then, it's a matter working down the list, opening and reviewing the resume information plus the voice and video clips. For even deeper review, there are online interview rooms inside ContractXchange where clients can invite applicants for live, face-to-face talks and presentations. Those applicants who qualify are then sent an invitation to register for the hiring contact center's o-line training class, which is also hosted through ContractXchange.com.

Is Remote Recruitment Ready For Primetime?

Many of the present corporate users of ContractXchange.com have been very public about their approval of the site's ease of use and the quality of applicant it attracts.

Testimonials from both hiring corporations and job seekers confirm that remote recruitment is now an entirely practical (and incomparably more economical) proposition.

Is it time for your contact center to consider remote agents and their remote recruitment? The easy first step is to go to ContractXchange.com and look around.

Considering Media Channel-Specific Hiring

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

Let's face it. Some of the best IT people you've ever had were less-than-suited for face-to-face contact. But it didn't matter, did it? You weren't deploying this person on sales calls. The only thing you had to worry about was the potential for future tech support via videoconferencing.

We no longer live in as face-to-face a world as we used to. Globally distributed business, plus technologies that eliminate the need for in-person meetings, have changed the requirements. Remember when you used to know your insurance agent personally? It was before insurance agents did customer service via telephone and Web sites. In the long run, it saves you money, since insurance companies don't need to pay for homey offices for folksy insurance agents.

Customer service today is extremely channel-specific. You wouldn't hire a person with no social skills to be an in-store sales rep, and you wouldn't hire a slow typist with poor computer skills to be an e-mail and Web-chat-based agent. So why would you interview them in the wrong channels?

Your gut might say, "I want to meet these people in person," but does it really gain you anything? Imagine that you have 10 positions to fill for telephone-based jobs. Do you honestly need to see those people in person? Or in the long run, are you wasting time, since people who are less-than-impressive in a person-to-person setting might make great phone agents. And people who wow you in person might be terrible on the phone. Given the high turnover in the call center and the amount of resource drain hiring and training takes, a smart company would consider it a waste of time to choose personnel based on channels in which those people won't be working. And you might pass over great customer service workers all because you focused the wrong light on them.

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User Name   Password

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View Details
The Shopping Channel

HIRING NOW
View Details
Pizza Hut

HIRING NOW
View Details
Club Auto Roadside Services

WAITING LIST
View Details
BOARDWALK RENTAL COMMUNITIES

Welcome To ContractXchange

The Website For Work At Home Customer Service Agents. Anywhere.

See Quickview Video Of How To Become A ContractXchange Member

PLAY

INFORMATION FOR **JOB SEEKERS**

FREE MEMBERSHIP **JOIN NOW**

LIVE HELP CAREER DESK

JOIN A **LIVE** MEETING

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Introducing ContractXchange.com the world's first website that enables you to recruit your own remote agents *entirely on-line*.

So no, it's not just another job posting site like a Monster.com, it's a complete, end-to-end, remote recruitment machine. Like nothing else.

At ContractXchange.com each hiring client contact center has their own fully secure section of the site equipped with all the data and multi-media communication tools required for easy and effective on-line recruitment.

ContractXchange.com features:

● Access to over 25,000 Agent Members.

● All Applicants pre-certified for the necessary remote skills and equipment

● Multi-Media Agent Resumes with voice and video clips.

● On-line, live Interview Rooms for face-to-face talks and power points.

● On-Line Agent Training systems.

ContractXchange.com

25,000 Remote Agents. Ready To Go.

More Information For The Remotely Interested.

LiveXchange.com, for an overview of our service. **ContractXchange.com,** view our on-line remote recruitment process in action.

Call: Kevin Hayden: Vice President, Worldwide Sales. **Toll Free:** 866-987-2255 **Email:** sales@livexchange.com

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PLANTRONICS
SOUND INNOVATION

From The Headset Experts

By Joe McGrogan,
Director of Marketing, B2B
Solutions, Plantronics, Inc.

Easy Listening: When It Comes To Comfort And Safety, Plantronics Is All Ears

Eight hours is a long time to carry a conversation, especially when you're wearing a telecommunications headset on your ear. And straining to hear a caller, coping with uncomfortable or unsafe volume spikes, or feeling heat or pressure from a headset can add to the load of a contact center shift. Equipping agents with headsets designed for comfort and safety not only improves key uptime metrics but also improves customer satisfaction.

Embracing Auditory Diversity

The big hurdle to creating a comfortable headset is that all ears are not created equal. Plantronics has conducted the industry's most extensive research into variations of the human ear. The "wall of ears" at the company's Design Center represents the external ears of thousands of individuals. By analyzing these samples, Plantronics has built the world's largest statistical database of human ear shapes. It includes men and women of different ages and from different ethnicities, representative of the entire world's population.

Using this database, Plantronics engineers apply the latest computer modeling in the development of its headsets. The result is the lightest possible headset with a design that fits 97 percent of all ears comfortably — not too tightly, not too loosely, and with a good line of sound to the ear canal.

"Wall of Ears"

Pleasing To The Ear

The design of a safe and comfortable headset goes beyond calculating the right size and shape; it includes choosing the right materials and components. Plantronics uses only hypoallergenic materials in

significantly reduce allergic reactions. An advanced micro-honeycomb material in the ear cushions also reduces uncomfortable heat and sweatiness by allowing the cushions to breathe. Plantronics engineers have even worked to overcome the problems caused by the buildup of static electricity from contact with synthetic carpet and other materials in the contact center environment. A unique anti-static design significantly reduces the

likelihood of annoying tingling from low-level static discharge, making calls more comfortable and less stressful.

Safety and comfort also go hand-in-hand when it comes to sound levels. Plantronics goes beyond just incorporating technology to assure safe OSHA sound levels. Understanding today's diverse call input sources — calls coming in on a variety of mobile phones, land lines and voice over IP can have dramatically different incoming volume levels — Plantronics builds sophisticated technology into its headsets to assure comfortable listening regardless of the incoming volume level.

This includes advanced sound-limiting technology to ensure that occasional high-volume spikes are capped at a safe and comfortable level. As a result, agents can set their preferred volume level high enough so that they don't have to strain to hear callers, without having to worry about being startled by sudden spikes of volume. This reduces agent fatigue and delivers superior comfort, which translates into a "smiling voice" on the line.

So when thinking about ways to improve uptime and increase customer satisfaction, consider the design of your headsets. Superior safety and comfort are just two reasons why more contact centers around the world rely on Plantronics headsets.

For more information, visit www.plantronics. com/contactcenter

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PLANTRONICS
SOUND INNOVATION®

By Brad Schorer,
Senior Vice President,
Marketing, VoltDelta

VoltDelta Has Serviced Over Nine Billion Calls And Supports 36,000 Agents — How Can We Help Your Business?

Have you ever dialed directory assistance in North America or Europe? If so, then you likely have touched much of the infrastructure and platforms that VoltDelta builds and deploys at carrier-grade levels for our telephone company customers. VoltDelta has been providing cutting-edge solutions and system integration services for the $5+ billion/year directory assistance industry for well over 30 years. We are now offering these solutions into the contact center market through our suite of hosted solutions.

For over 100 telephone carrier customers across the globe, VoltDelta provides many call center services, including system integration, switching and intelligent call routing, network development, workstations and database management for premise- and hosted-based solutions. We have processed well over nine billion calls via directory assistance services and currently support over 36,000 agents globally across our customer base.

High Volume, High Demands

So how do you handle call volumes that are in excess of even the largest inbound call center? Through constant efforts to introduce technological innovation to control costs and maintain efficiency within the call center environment. VoltDelta introduced speech automation into its solutions and our customers rapidly adopted it because of its very tangible benefits of reducing average work time per call at the operator level. The challenge has always been creating a solution that effectively maintains customer satisfaction levels, meeting the business drivers of the customer (i.e., reduce costs), while maintaining high service levels and tight integration with live operators. VoltDelta's solutions are built to support the "five 9's" of reliability and service availability. Customers expect that when they make the call to directory assistance it is always available. Given the revenues involved, the carriers expect the same.

Expanding To All Contact Centers

VoltDelta has taken these years of expertise in supporting the demands of the directory assistance call center environment and is now offering its services through a hosted environment to all enterprise call centers. The hosted model is optimal for customers who want to deploy new technologies or extensions to existing services in a variable cost model without the capital expense burden of purchasing and managing the technology directly. Additionally, VoltDelta has been supporting clients who want to leverage their existing call center deployments but want to extend their functionality by integrating hosted solutions and switching solutions for new services involved in the call, such as mobile alerts or sending calls to "work at home" agents.

About VoltDelta Hosted Solutions

VoltDelta specializes in providing carrier-grade on-premise and hosted platform and database services to the worldwide telecommunications and enterprise contact center markets. VoltDelta develops and integrates solutions that support all aspects of customer service call centers, including speech automation, VOIP and TDM network switching and advanced call routing, agent workstation software, database services and in-call advertising. To learn more, please contact us at info@voltdelta.com or visit www.voltdelta.com/voltdelta-hosted-solutions.

Not Your Grandmother's Directory Assistance

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

Do you remember using directory assistance in "the olden days?" A live operator would answer every time, look up your query and manually connect you. It was hard not to maintain a visual image of a grandmotherly-looking woman with a tall, white hairdo sitting in front of a switchboard wearing an old-fashioned corded headset. Dialing for directory assistance was something you seldom needed to do: invariably, you were telephoning from your home or office, and both places had telephone books.

But times have changed and the demand for directory assistance has risen. With the advent of cell phones and the rapidly changing nature of businesses, directory assistance has had to become a completely different animal. Honestly…when's the last time you touched a phone book? On the flip side, you probably use directory assistance much more often now, particularly when you are in your car, in an airport or otherwise on the road.

Service providers know this, and they know that offering directory assistance is an effective value-added service. But let's face it: unless you're willing to start building directory assistance from scratch (if you start now, you may have conquered the speech recognition component of it in a few decades, then it's time to start building the databases), you're going to need to get help from outside.

Directory assistance is an ideal service for hosted delivery. You can pay for only what you need and deploy state-of-the-art technologies, and the technical challenges need not be in your hands. DA is also an ideal value-added service that today has marketing potential far beyond offering customers a convenience.

Of course, you can't use hosted directory assistance as a door-stop or a makeshift booster chair for a child like you can with a phone book, but then — no solution is perfect, is it?

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

The 2007 Customer Interaction Solutions Product Of The Year Awards, Part Two

Each year, *Customer Interaction Solutions* magazine bestows its Product of the Year awards on companies that have demonstrated excellence in technological advancement and application refinements. Listed here are products and services that we've judged to have gone the extra mile to help improve both the customer experience and the ROI for the companies that use them. It is these companies' contributions that lead the way in making the contact center technology industry the dynamic field that it is today.

Here, we present the second part of the list of winning solutions. Part One of the Product of the Year Awards was presented in the January 2008 issue.

Congratulations to the winners.

NetSuite, Inc.
NetSuite 2007.0
www.netsuite.com

Spectrum Corporation
neXorce
www.specorp.com

NextNine
NextNine Service Automation - Ecosystem Edition
www.nextnine.com

NICE Systems Ltd.
NICE SmartCenter
www.nice.com

Noble Systems Corporation
Noble Mimic Interactions
www.noblesys.com

Nuvio Corporation
nPBX (Internet Based Phone System)
www.nuvio.com

NTRglobal
NTRsupport
www.ntrsupport.com

Numara Software
Numara FootPrints 8
www.numarasoftware.com

Samsung Business Communication Systems
OfficeServ 7100
www.samsung.com/bcs

Austin Logistics
OnQ
www.austinlogistics.com

OpenSpan Inc.
OpenSpan Platform 3.1
www.openspan.com

8x8, Inc.
Packet8 Tango
Packet8 Virtual Office Complete Contact Center
www.8x8.com

Parature, Inc.
Parature Customer Support Software
www.parature.com

Aspect Software
PerformanceEdge
www.aspect.com

TeleDirect International, Inc.
Portfolio v2.2
www.tdirect.com

Vertical Solutions Inc.
PowerHelp Suite
www.vsi-powerhelp.com

Autonomy etalk
Qfiniti Enterprise
www.etalk.com

Astute Solutions
RealDialog Agent Assist
www.astutesolutions.com

Resolvity
Resolvity's Speech Application Platform
www.resolvity.com

Richardson
Richardson QuickSkills 5.0: Consultative Telephone Selling
www.richardson.com

RightNow Technologies
RightNow 8.2
www.rightnow.com

Sage Software
Sage SalesLogix v7.2
www.sagecrmsolutions.com

salesforce.com
Salesforce Call Center and Salesforce Customer Portal
www.salesforce.com

SAP
SAP Business Communications Management software
www.sap.com

TARGUSinfo
SecondApproach(SM) services
www.targusinfo.com

Transera Communications, Inc.
Seratel
www.transerainc.com

BlueNote Networks
SessionSuite WebCaller
www.bluenotenetworks.com

OPC Marketing, Inc.
SpitFire Anywhere VoIP
www.opc-marketing.com

Toshiba America Information Systems, Telecommunication Systems Division
Strata MicroMAS
www.telecom.toshiba.com

SugarCRM
Sugar Professional 5.0 On-Demand
www.sugarcrm.com

Talisma Corporation
Talisma Knowledgebase
www.talisma.com

SoundBite Communications
The SoundBite Solution
www.soundbite.com

Tigerpaw Software, Inc.
TigerpawCS v10.6
www.tigerpawsoftware.com

AMTEL
TIMS (Telecom Information Management System)
www.amtelnet.com

TouchStar
TouchStar Call Center System
www.touchstar.com

TuVox
TuVox On Demand
www.tuvox.com

Upstream Works Software
UpStart Experience Suite
www.upstreamworks.com

Pronexus Inc.
VBVoice 5.5
www.pronexus.com

VXI Global Solutions, Inc.
VisionLog, VisionCTI, VisionIVR, VisionQA
www.vxi.com

Interactive Softworks, Inc.
VoiceNet
www.interactivesoftworks.com

VoiceObjects, Inc.
VoiceObjects 7
www.voiceobjects.com

WebEx
WebEx Event Center
www.webex.com

Seawolf Technologies, Inc.
XRainbow
www.seawolftech.com

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David Yoho

Converting Ordinary People into Extraordinary Performers

There's a popular myth that successful sales reps are born, not made. While certain personality types adapt more readily to sales and service roles, your success will rise dramatically when you implement an internal marketing plan that educates, stimulates, guides and leads your reps to higher levels of performance and gratification.

Assuming you've hired the right people, your first "motivational" challenge is to learn what each of them wants. Your second challenge is to show them how to get what they want through you. It's a double-win negotiation. You help them get what they want; they help you get what you want.

There are five elemental conditions that dictate your ability to boost performance and gratification. Consider these when planning and evaluating your management and motivational strategies.

Everyone is motivated. Poor performers are motivated -- so are drug addicts, con artists and idol worshippers. The word "motivation" is derived from two other words: motive and action. Put simply, there's a purpose behind everyone's every action -- but it isn't always conscious and it isn't always healthy.

Whether positive or negative, people's motives are based on their wants, which include, but aren't limited to, attention, power, material items, leisure, challenge, fun, growth, security, spirituality, feeling needed and being understood.

If you're having difficulty getting some or all your staff to meet or exceed certain standards, you want to examine whether their motives are congruent with the environment in your center. On the other hand, you may have hired exactly what you need but the conditions in your center may not be congruent with the needs of the right people. Either way, please notice that I'm referring to what your people "need," not "want."

When you listen to your staff describe what they "need," they may really be describing wants. Those wants may not be what's in their best interests or yours. You have to be able to separate needs and wants. Example: many call center reps will complain that they're micromanaged. The truth is, most are just trying to make their jobs easier or want to look better by avoiding mistakes being discovered.

While constantly seeking "easier" as a path to "better," most call center reps thrive on challenge. But how often do they tell you that?

Your reps will act on their motives, not yours. Have you ever been frustrated because your reps didn't respond to a specific challenge, directive or contest? Quite often, that's a result of your acting from your own frame of reference. Example: most of your best reps are short-term thinkers. This is one key reason why long-term contests or incentives rarely work no matter how large the prize.

Successful managers are better long-term thinkers and are probably compensated based on longer term results. Naturally, they might think the long term incentive will keep their callers "motivated" longer.

You have to know more about them than they know about you. While certain ideas or techniques may stimulate an entire team, you will never get the most out of each member without personalization. The key issue is the discipline required to know and understand people when you're being driven for results. This idea is simple in nature yet difficult to integrate. Most people are unlikely to disclose their innermost thoughts, feelings and beliefs without deep-seeded trust.

You have to invest lots of time asking questions to simply understand them without judging or assessment. You might actually have to invest thinking time to consider what they said, determine what they meant and, of course, what you're going to do or not do with that information.

This power comes with a huge responsibility. You need to decide what's ethical and honorable to use and that by using it, you're acting in the rep's best interests. There's one additional risk: If you ever use confidential information to motivate and the rep believes you're taking advantage of them, it might take forever to recover their trust.

You can motivate your reps for short time periods only. This is good news and bad news. Here's the good news: The nature of their position creates a need to live in the present. Your reps have to react to lots of different needs and lots of different personalities in the short term in order to be successful. The bad news: Your reps have a whimsical nature. Their motives, priorities and emotions are constantly changing. So, just when you think you're beginning to understand them, they change their minds or their situations change. If you're not careful, you can confuse and frustrate them. All victories are temporary.

Therefore, your attempts to stimulate require constant consideration and attention and a substantial amount of discipline and empathy. If you want them to repeat positive behavior and eliminate negative behavior, rewards and penalties have to follow performance closely. Management would be an easy job if there weren't people involved. Of course, then, you'd be unnecessary.

Motivation can be sustained longer with an environment built for achievers. Not all of your better performers are extremely driven or ambitious; many succeed because their wants are congruent with the requirements and goals of the call center. Put simply, when you've hired representatives whose motives and values are consistent with the physical, mental and emotional environment in your center, they can thrive.

If your people aren't thriving but just surviving, if turnover is rampant or if you aren't breeding leaders, have the courage to look within instead of playing the blame game. While there are always conditions you cannot control, it's always your responsibility to create outstanding performers from ordinary people.

David Yoho has been one of America's leading sales, marketing and management consultants since 1978. He provides systems and structure for executives, managers, salespeople and business owners. He helps his clients outthink, outmaneuver, outsell and outnegotiate their competition – while boosting the bottom line. Contact David at 800-220-0440 or david@davidyoho.com

Remote Agents

Q Remote "at-home" agents are getting a lot of attention as being assets to a contact center, so a two-part question: What are the best technologies to make remote agents possible, and what are the benefits of such a workforce strategy?

A Remote agents are indeed making an impact on the contact center industry, and the "work-at-home" crowd is no longer viewed as just some phenomenon as it was early on. There are a couple of reasons why. First, our industry has realized enough experience with remote agents to be able to define best practices and quantify the benefits. And second, with the flexibility and reliability of voice over IP having taken several steps forward, the technology is now more trusted to support successful remote agent deployments.

By Tim Passios,
*Director of Product Management,
Interactive Intelligence*

Let's start by looking at how remote agents prove their worth:

Competitive differentiation. Employing remote agents is one of the most significant differentiators a contact center can leverage toward gaining a competitive advantage. For a contact center manager, you're protected against the ebb and flow of a costly labor market, you have a hedge against seasonal variations, and remote agent resources give you a viable alternative for geographic challenges.

Business continuity. The reality of most any contact center is that outages happen, and planning for them is wise management. Remote agents give a contact center the ability to get back up and running quickly.

Improved scheduling. Contact centers can dramatically increase scheduling flexibility by incorporating remote agents, mostly because many at-home agents find off-hours to be a preferable work time. Geographically, remote agent networks in various regions and time zones also better accommodate global business and customer schedules.

Cost savings. Consider the savings remote agents provide in facility costs, lower turnover rates and training expenses alone, and your center is already ahead.

As for technology, VoIP and networked application suites are driving many successful remote agent deployments. This wasn't necessarily the case a few years ago before VoIP and applications began overtaking traditional hardware systems, but now that networked IP telephony has shown increased levels of reliability, quality and security, contact centers are increasingly realizing its value. Here's the low-down for remote agent hookups, how simple they can actually be, and the key results.

No specialty hardware required. VoIP allows remote agents to use a SIP headset or remote connectivity to a home phone, mobile phone, etc. With the right communications platform, such as one of the application-based all-in-one solutions now on the market for networked IP communications, there's also no need to worry about ISDN lines or ACD routing limitations.

The ability to handle all media types. Remote doesn't have to mean limited. Remote agents can still handle calls, e-mails, chats and generic object routing with no reduction in service levels.

No loss of features or functionality. A Windows PC and any telephone device delivers much of the same functionality agents get when working inside a physical contact center operation. In other words, remote agents can handle and record interactions, access customer databases, view the presence of other agents and even receive coaching online from a supervisor.

Complete quality monitoring. Again, with the right communications solution (one of the all-in-one solutions now available), contact center supervisors retain the ability to monitor remote agents regardless of their location, including on-hook/off-hook status. All reporting capabilities still apply, as well.

According to Datamonitor, remote agents will grow to constitute 7.5 percent of the total contact center agent workforce by 2009. That sounds about right. The technology is available to do it successfully, the benefits are clearly recognizable and, if your contact center isn't at least considering a remote agent strategy, it's already behind.

*Tim Passios (**News - Alert**) is Director of Product Marketing for Interactive Intelligence Inc. and has more than 17 years experience in the contact center industry. Interactive Intelligence is a leading provider of unified business communications solutions for contact center automation and enterprise IP telephony, with more than 3,000 installations in nearly 70 countries. For more information, contact Tim and Interactive Intelligence (**News - Alert**) at asktheexpert@inin.com or 317-872-3000.*

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