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

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## ➤ Publisher's Outlook



**Nadji Tehrani**, CEO,  
Technology Marketing Corp.

# 32 PRINCIPLES OF MODERN MARKETING PART 3

**A**s indicated in previous editorials, it is our paramount responsibility as the industry's preeminent and pioneering publication, since 1982, to address the greatest needs of our industry.

My close contact with — and observation of — the industry has always convinced me that the greatest needs of our industry as well as many other industries is having an outstanding marketing department. As I have stated before:

**If you don't market, you don't exist. And, today, if you are not on the first page of the leading search engines, you don't exist.**

To the extent that our editorial resources for this publication have expanded significantly, I truly believe that our outstanding and renowned editors are covering every possible, crucial aspect of the industry in the best possible way. Therefore, to prevent being redundant, I have decided to continue to focus on marketing, which I believe is not only the greatest need of contact/CRM centers, but also most particularly, the need of technology providing companies. Unfortunately, technology-driven companies are always focusing on building a better mousetrap only to find out that the mouse died 15 years ago!! Hopefully, someday, they will all realize that before they develop any product, they have to verify that the marketplace actually needs that product and they also have to market it because no product no matter how great, will sell itself.

Now we again turn our attention to our continuing coverage of the Top 36 New Principles of Modern Marketing. In our last installment we left off with number 11, so this month we present numbers 12 through 16.

### Rule 12 – Focus on Awareness

As indicated above, one of the greatest weaknesses of high-technology companies is the notion that "our product is good enough and people will find out about it," by osmosis I suppose!

**There is no such thing as developing a great product and expecting it to sell itself.**

It will never happen. Just to prove my point, I wanted to share a portion of an advertisement that was developed by McGraw-Hill 50 years ago titled, "The Man in the Chair." The man in the chair is positioned as a buyer who is providing several reasons why he cannot buy your products. Some of those reasons are as follows:

- "I don't know who you are."
- "I don't know your company."
- "I don't know your company's products."
- "I don't know your company's customers."
- "I don't know your company's record."
- "I don't know your company's reputation."
- "I don't know what your company stands for. Now — what was it that you wanted to sell me?"

Consequently, it should be crystal clear that no one will buy anything from you unless all of the above concerns are answered and the only way to do that is via integrated marketing, which we shall discuss later on in this editorial.

**Nadji Tehrani**, CEO, Technology Marketing Corp.

### **Rule 13 – Positioning and Differentiation**

In order to better appreciate how great the role of positioning and differentiation is may I suggest that you read my editorial titled, “Every Company Wants to be a Peacock in the Land of Penguins, but Few of them Know How to Do it Right” ([www.tmcnet.com/2370.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/2370.1)).

Having stated the above, we need to understand that today in this super competitive marketplace, if you do not give a reason to your potential buyers why they should buy your products, they simply will not choose your products over your competitor's product. In other words, you must find what makes your product unique and translate that in terms of benefits to your potential buyer and then communicate the benefits and the differentiation factor to the marketplace around the clock 24/7. In other words, positioning and differentiation are not part-time jobs. You need to do it every day, every minute, every month, every year, 24/7 to be successful.

### **Rule 14 – Focus on Relationship Marketing**

Even if you apply all of the 36 marketing principles that will be described in these editorials, if you do not have a well natured relationship with your customers and your customer base, you may face great difficulty selling your products and services. The reason is that 75% of buying decisions are made “based on emotion.” In other words, even if you have the best product in the marketplace and your competitor has a better relationship with your prospect, 75% of the time, your prospect will buy your competitor's product. Therefore, you need to do everything humanly possible and affordable to build a solid relationship and a continuous relationship with your prospects and customers. Otherwise, all bets are off.

### **Rule 15 – Avoid AF, Build a Functional Advertising and Marketing Campaign**

I suppose you are wondering what does AF stand for. AF basically stands for “artsy fartsy” in advertising. One of the greatest mistakes made in advertising is that complete control is given to the creative people to design an advertisement that looks extremely pretty and perhaps beautiful, but it

doesn't say anything and it is not functionally effective. Seasoned marketing people will tell you that there is much more to developing an effective advertisement than making it look artsy fartsy. An AF ad may win advertising awards just based on looks, but when it comes to productivity, they are practically useless unless good copy and graphic communication skills are blended with uniqueness and convincing creativity in the copy. If you would like to take your advertisement to the next level, you need to be so creative that it would become a memorable advertisement for years to come. A good example of such an ad is the above mentioned comments from the McGraw-Hill advertisement. This ad was so effective. It was true 50 years ago, and it is true today. Therefore, anyone who has anything to do with marketing and advertising must refer to this ad as the “raison d'être” of marketing (the reason for existence in marketing).

### **Rule 16 – Try to Outsmart, Outthink and Outsell your Competition**

Obviously, this is much easier said than done. However, if you truly are interested in dominating your marketplace, there is no shortcut to this rule.

Not only do you need to outsmart, outthink and outsell your competition, but also, you need to dominate online, print and trade show marketing. This is the most effective solution to market domination that exists today in my opinion.

With so many global competitors around today, being a copycat will not get you anywhere. So you need to outsmart your competition and be original. To truly outthink and out-market your competition, you must dominate the three areas mentioned above such as online, in print and in person at trade shows. Then, if you do all of that, you should be on your way to success provided that you have an effective sales department that can effectively bring in the orders. In other words, even if you do everything requested above and your sales department is extremely weak, nothing will sell and all marketing dollars are wasted. So there is a cause and effect relationship here. Without effective marketing, there will be no qualified sales lead generation and without qualified sales lead generation, the sales people will have nothing to sell with. **CIS**

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

*Dear CIS Readers,*  
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You now have an expert source for Unified Communications!

*Dear Andrea,*  
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- Direct the call to a different queue (e.g. Collections)
- Direct the call to a specific agent (e.g. VIPs)
- Display additional information when the call is delivered to an agent

The advantage here is that you create time savings by automatically letting the right agent deal with the right customers. And, it is always a good thing to prioritize the 20% of your customers who bring in 80% of the revenue!

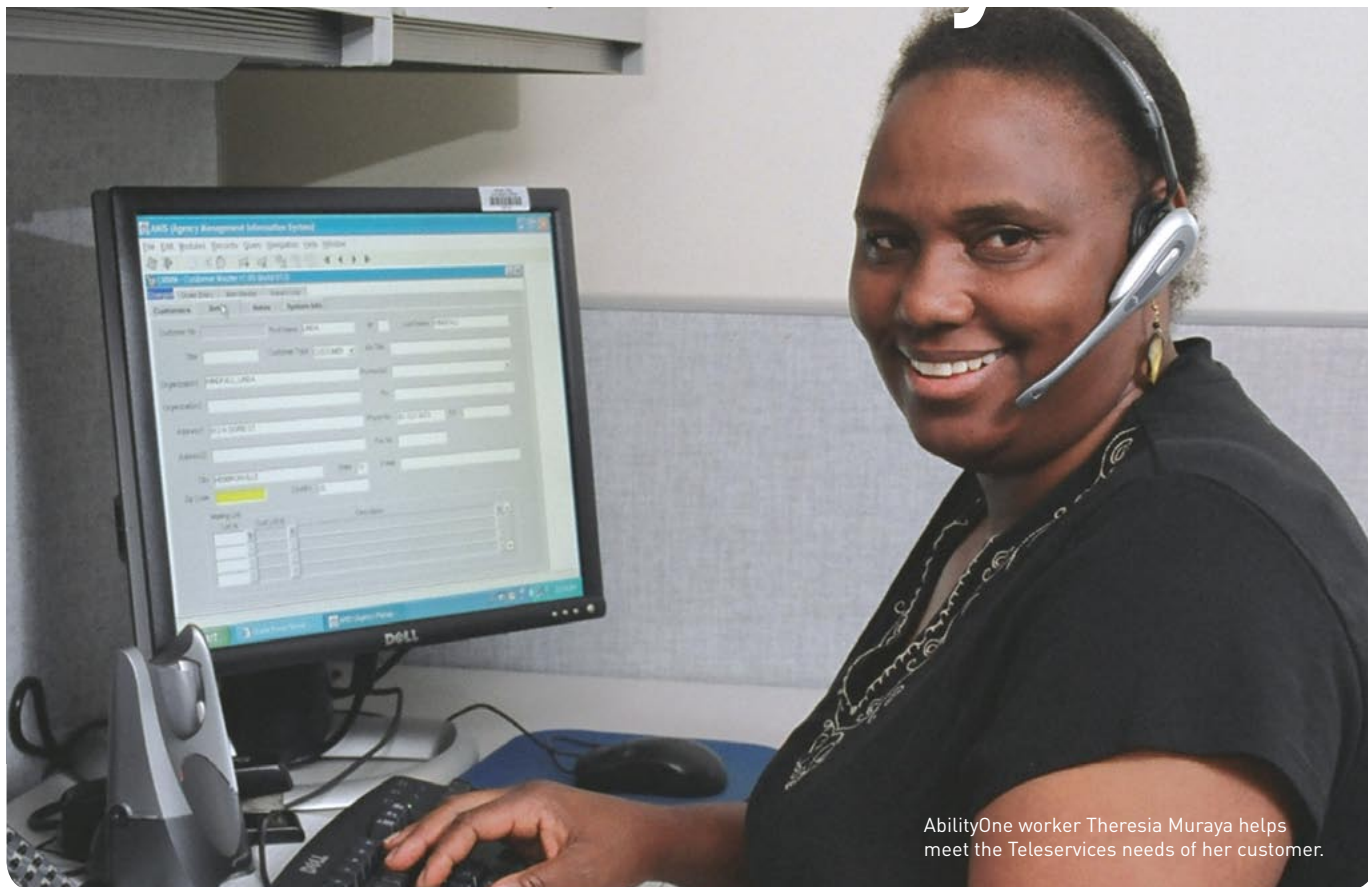
Do you have a question for Andrea?  
[Email marcom@zeacom.com](mailto:marcom@zeacom.com)



*Andrea Kerr is a Solutions Engineer at Zeacom. For 8 years, she has visited customers across the country and deployed a wide variety of unified contact center applications.*

  
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# accountability



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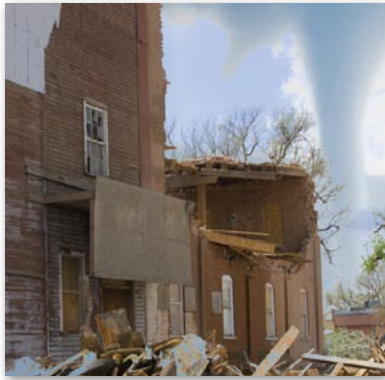
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By Brendan Read, Senior Contributing Editor,  
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**HONDURAS**  
in perfect position

Rich Tehrani, Group Publisher, Technology Marketing Corp.



## While You Were Out This Summer...

**L**ike many of you, I recently returned from some R&R this past summer and as I head into the fall, I think it would be instructive to take a look at the important news from the past few weeks so we can accurately gauge where things are headed for the rest of the year. After all, it is very possible that while you were vacationing on that cruise ship, news of a killer contact center solution has emerged, which could make your job easier and in doing so save and/or make money for your corporation.

### Hosted Applications

One trend which hasn't let up these past years is applications going hosted. Although in the past month, there have been a number of high-profile on-demand outages ([www.tmcnet.com/2376.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/2376.1)), thankfully, few if any of these occurred from hosted on-demand providers in the call center or CRM spaces.

So rather than focus on damage control, SaaS providers who enable better customer interactions have been able to focus on making better products. Case in point is Oracle ([News - Alert](#)) who has now enabled better integration between the company's on-demand and hosted applications. This comes courtesy of lots of elbow grease and Oracle Fusion Middleware.

### Smart Phone Frenzy

Another trend we have seen this past summer is that of increased focus on mobility and smartphones such as the 3G iPhone, which I went through quite an ordeal ([www.tmcnet.com/2377.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/2377.1)) to get myself. But Apple ([News - Alert](#)) is not alone in producing devices that make us drool — the much-anticipated BlackBerry Bold is also being rolled out across various wireless networks worldwide.

In such an environment it makes sense for a company like SugarCRM ([News - Alert](#)) to come out with version 5.1 of their popular customer relationship management solution, which supports the iPhone ([News - Alert](#)) and BlackBerry via an HTML interface. As mobile browsers get better — and certainly Safari is one of the better ones, it makes sense to have applications which are at least aware of the fact they are running on mobile networks so they can adjust accordingly. Sure, you can browse any site with an iPhone but still, custom designed sites or even a custom application designed for Apple's newest phone make the experience that much better.

One company who is no stranger to the contact center is Aspect ([News - Alert](#)) and in a recent interview ([www.tmcnet.com.2379.1](http://www.tmcnet.com.2379.1)) with Henry Danser, a vice president of the company, I got a solid glimpse into what the world's leading contact center company thinks about the future of contact centers as well as the integration of the call center and UC. In addition the interview provides insight on the two other critical areas you need to focus on in your contact center — performance optimization and unified solutions.

This summer has also seen CRM systems get smarter. As a result of Salesforce.com's open APIs and technology from DataSea, users of the popular hosted CRM solution can now use natural language queries to extract specific data from massive stores of information. Think of this as having a search engine available for all corporate information available to contact center agents allowing them to better serve your customers. In theory this should result in more accurate information being disseminated by front line workers and the speed to get at this information should be vastly improved as well. This could mean in some applications there could be tremendous cost savings as in a contact center (as in many other areas of life), time is money.

So while many of us have vacationed these past months it is good to know that the companies making call center products and solutions have been quite busy — producing products and services, which should make your life easier this fall and beyond.

Oh and on another note, I find it curious to see that over a decade after some predicted the Internet would kill the call center market, the world's leading e-tailer, Amazon.com ([News - Alert](#)) recently announced ([www.tmcnet.com/2380.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/2380.1)) it would hire 250 full and part time customer service positions. When will the Internet finally do away with the call center you ask? I suppose it will happen shortly after the paperless office that was predicted 20 years ago becomes a reality.



## ➤ ONLINE EXCLUSIVES

### Smoothstone Intros Intelligent Call Control Apps for iPhone

By Rajani Baburajan, TMCnet Contributor

Smoothstone IP Communications, a company that provides managed communications services for mid-size enterprises, has developed what it claims is the first mobile interface for Apple iPhone 3G on AT&T's nationwide network. Smoothstone technology on iPhone 3G and iPod touch enables call center managers and executives to control their corporate call centers from anywhere in the world. The interface allows clients with Smoothstone's Intelligent Call Control (ICC) suite to use the mobile version to manage call queues across multiple locations in real time, reroute any calls to any other agent or call center location on the fly, and transfer held calls through a drag-and-drop interface.

*Read the full article at [www.tmcnet.com/2381.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/2381.1)*

### CRM From Maximizer Signs Up Turkish Partner

By David Sims, Contributing Editor, Customer Interaction Solutions

Maximizer Software, a vendor of CRM products, announced the appointment of a new certified business partner in Turkey: E&M Computer and Engineering. The first customer of the partnership is Alarko Real Estate Development Company, a subsidiary of Alarko Holding Group, which has more than 6,000 employees. Built on a Web-based architecture, Maximizer CRM offers sales, marketing, and customer service users and managers access to customer information via desktop, Web, or mobile device.

*Read the full article at [www.tmcnet.com/2382.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/2382.1)*

### Focus on Customers Helping Retailers Survive in Uncertain Economy

By Stefania Viscusi, Assignment Desk Editor

While customers have always played a key role in the success of a business, the need to better meet customer demands is increasing as concerns of economic uncertainty grow. Retailers are especially looking more closely at customer data and leveraging key findings to deliver a differentiated customer experience. Recent research findings from RSR Research point to an increased amount of retailers seeking customer experience organizations as a way of getting better insight out of their customer data.

*Read the full article at [www.tmcnet.com/2383.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/2383.1)*

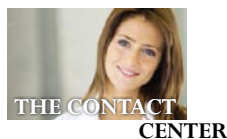


# REMOTE agents or Remote Headaches

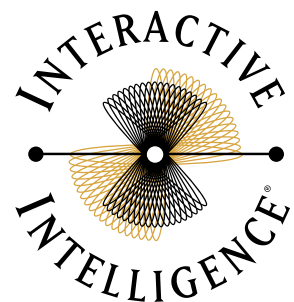
Agents who work outside the contact center violate Rule #1 of the long-standing Supervisor Code. "I have to be able to see them to know what they are doing." Not anymore. We give supervisors a full-time, real-time view of remote agents in one interface... presence, availability, interaction times, alerts, coaching, everything. We call it "remote control."

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Deliberately Innovative

By Tim Searcy



## The Key Elements of Self Regulation

**A**s many of you know, the American Teleservices Association is creating the first self regulatory organization for our industry that will incorporate audits and certification. The ATA represents the call centers, trainers, consultants, and equipment suppliers that initiate, facilitate, and generate telephone, Internet, and email sales, service, and support. Call centers offer traditional and interactive services that support the e-commerce revolution, provide specialized customer service for Fortune 500 companies, and generate annual sales of more than \$500 billion.

From our original work on the concept of an SRO (Self-Regulatory Organization), we have been focused on creating a long term partnership with the bodies that regulate our industry. In particular, we want to become part of the overall solution for remediation in appropriate cases for the FTC, FCC ([News - Alert](#)), and ultimately the States. For this reason, we involved the FTC ([News - Alert](#)) and the FCC very early in the SRO design process to make certain we were in line with their thinking as well as that of our members.

are not clear, and we have had to scour the public record and the best interpretations of sometimes conflicting signals to publish one standard for companies to follow. We accomplished this goal earlier this year, and standards are now a matter of public record on our website at [www.ataconnect.org](http://www.ataconnect.org).

- It should be recognized as legitimate and relevant by the call-center industry and by its regulators – the FTC, the Federal

- Set standards for call centers, based on existing laws;
- Audit call center compliance with standards, and provide accreditation;
- Enforce ongoing compliance of call centers through periodic review, audits, and, where appropriate, removal of accreditation.

We are very fortunate to have partnered with the Taylor Institute at the University of Akron. The Institute will be the “home” of the ATA-SRO, and classes for auditors are already filling up for our September and October programs. ATA’s chief counsel, Mitch Roth of Williams Mullen has created the curriculum, and with the help of the University created a test battery for the new auditors. This is an exciting time, and we are hopeful to have the first audits completed and be able to award the ATA-SRO accreditation seal at our Annual Convention in San Antonio, in October.

The SRO is well on its way, but its ultimate success will be measured by the peace of mind it gives regulators about our ability to keep our own house in order. If the teleservices industry can become effective at regulating itself, the governing bodies will be less obligated to increase the regulations on us. To make this happen, we need industry leaders to insist on accreditation as a means of determining suitability for new vendor partners. Additionally, vendor partners engaged in outsourcing in the short run will be able to establish a competitive advantage by being accredited. **CIS**

– Tim Searcy serves as the CEO of the American Teleservices Association (ATA).

**The SRO is well on its way, but its ultimate success will be measured by the peace of mind it gives regulators about our ability to keep our own house in order.**

After meeting with these agencies three years ago, it became clear that the ATA-SRO will only be credible and effective if it meets the following goals:

- It must be independent, both in perception and reality, from the entities it purports to regulate. For this reason, we have gathered feedback from our members as well as created a steering committee for the design of the tools and standards. Separately, we have begun the process to train and certify third party auditors to do the actual audit work.
- It should enforce standards that are meaningful and accepted. The ATA has primarily focused on federal and state law as the source for the standards. This may seem straightforward. Unfortunately, many of the regulations

Communications Commission (“FCC”), state attorneys general, and state public utility commissions. The ATA has now entered into one of the most difficult stages of a new concept, which is adoption. The ATA and its board of directors are actively working with Fortune 500 companies and outsourcer partners to move quickly to gain widespread acceptance. Feedback from the regulators at three recent ATA events cannot be better. The FTC and FCC are clearly anxious to see this system work and then are willing to consider how we can be part of their overall enforcement.

So what is the SRO doing? The SRO in addition to creating the standards and all the necessary training and tests, has a very clear mandate from the board of the ATA:

# Clarify the conversation.



Enhance call quality and reduce unwanted noise with the Vista M22, featuring our advanced Clearline™ audio technology. Your agents will enjoy the superior work experience. Your company will benefit from increased productivity, improved data accuracy, and more satisfied customers.

Hear the difference for yourself. For a free trial, visit [www.plantronics.com/m22trial](http://www.plantronics.com/m22trial).



**Keith Dawson,** SENIOR ANALYST, FROST & SULLIVAN



## Seven Steps to a Coherent CRM Strategy

**C**RM has become something of a dirty word in today's contact centers. Many companies have deployed large and expensive systems only to find that they are not reaping the promised benefits from their technology. So what happened? Why hasn't CRM created the smooth connection between customer information and decision-makers that so many of us expected?

The answer, I suspect, lies less in the technology (which is really very good) and more in the fact that contact centers haven't successfully worked through the strategic and process issues that would enable their CRM tools to really enhance the customer experience.

I think that most CRM existing deployments can be salvaged, and new ones ramped up to "success" more quickly, if the contact center managers guiding the process focus on understanding and documenting several core issues.

1. The customer access strategy. Few contact centers have this, but it's among the most useful documents that can be created. It is a map, or blueprint that describes in detail what the available customer touchpoints are, and how your company processes them inside and outside the contact center. It's the first stab many companies make at delineating responsibility for different kinds of calls and understanding where the gaps are. It is a critical snapshot of what your real situation is, and how your behind-the-scenes processes are running right now, giving you a sense of where your CRM system is falling down or not helping the appropriate people get the information they need.

One reason that most companies do not have a coherent CAS document is because fully mapping out the customer interaction process often involves turning over a lot of unpleasant rocks and having ugly problems start to crawl out.

2. How siloed is your customer data? It's a pretty safe assumption that your contact center is sitting on a mountain of information, most of it used pretty thinly. The kinds of data that flow through a center include typical call-related data from the switch; customer information from CRM and other backend systems; quality data from the recording system and QM tool; and agent performance data from workforce management and PM tools.

Each of these originates in a different piece of technology, and is often managed by a separate professional with divergent competencies and interests. And most often that management never takes the data outside the contact center itself and analyzes it in the context of other nuggets

that the rest of the organization finds valuable (profits, revenues, customer churn, and so forth).

So from a CRM strategy point of view, you should be asking yourself: Can the constituencies outside the contact center that have responsibility for revenue generation account for how they use customer data? Are all the parties that could be using customer information actually doing so, and if not why not? The barriers are most likely not technological, they are likely cultural and managerial.

3. Are your metrics effective? In other words, do you have a working and standardized definition of what makes for a successful customer interaction? And is that definition shared by non-contact center parties? Is there agreement on the definition of success? If not, where is the friction and how is it affecting revenue generation and cost control? Also important, how often is the "success" criteria being met, and what is the process control enabling that?

Just as critical, is the metric that you're using to define success one that is going to reflect the value of the contact center in the eyes of senior decision makers? If you define success in terms of how many calls handled or how fast you answer them, then the CFO probably isn't going to be impressed. But if you define it in terms of costs reduced, or even better, customers saved or upsell opportunities converted, then you're on your way to executive happiness.

4. What is the exception handling strategy for negative customer interactions? Was it developed by the contact center as a way to mitigate negative call handling statistics, or was it developed by a corporate strategist to improve the overall customer experience? Your CRM strategy has to be built to understand why negative interactions happen, and to provide you with a fast way to intercede when things go wrong. That process for stepping in and fixing bad practices quickly is much more important than simply documenting what has occurred.

5. What is the process for measuring customer satisfaction, and has it been proven to generate statistically valid results? Most customer satisfaction survey systems are not accurate, and can

easily be gamed by agents, supervisors and contact center managers to create the impression that customers are happier than they actually are. The CRM strategy may be built on a series of false assumptions about customer intentions. And you'll have better ROI from your CRM if you build it to find the problems, not just to validate your impressions about how well your reps are doing. This may be painful at first, but it always pays off in the long run.

6. What are the analytic capabilities of the quality monitoring system you are using? Have you leveraged the available tools to discern patterns in their customer base, with speech analytics or business intelligence tools, for example? Most contact centers that use analytics these days are paying attention to just one side of the customer call — the agent side. They ask the system if the agent is adhering to scripts, for example, or did the agent sound empathetic and polite. This is not nearly as important as understanding what the customer is thinking, saying, and what the customer's intended next action might be.

7. What is your strategy for building processes to handle multi-modal customers that interact with you via multiple channels (e-mails, texts, mobile)? To what degree are these interactions segregated or intertwined and handled based on customer criteria (not channel criteria)? This goes back to the idea in point #1 that you should have a map that spells out what you hope to do with the different kinds of interactions that come in, and helps you understand where your gaps are (in staffing, or in customer satisfaction) for lower-priority modes of interaction. You may discover, through effective use of CRM that alternative modes of contact tend to cluster around higher value customers. That kind of data is more than just information, it's insight that if you can leverage it through smart processes and resource allocations, gives you a leg up on the competition.

Clearly, most of these ideas have less to do with technology or deploying tools with a particular feature set than with having a clear-eyed view of where your contact center stands in the eyes of the rest of the company. **CIS**

— Keith Dawson is principal analyst at Frost & Sullivan.



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[www.tmcnet.com/2333.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/2333.1)

### Convergys to Buy Intervoice

Convergys has purchased Intervoice ([News - Alert](#)), a software and professional services firm with voice portal, IP contact center, hosted and mobile messaging, and self-service applications for \$335 million. Convergys says that by integrating Intervoice's complementary speech automation, Web self-care and mobile applications, it will be able to offer a comprehensive array of automated and live agent services. Intervoice's extensive global channel and technology partnerships and sales presence also provide Convergys ([News - Alert](#)) with cross-selling opportunities. That will enable the company to penetrate deeper into current markets and access new markets and geographies.

[www.convergys.com](http://www.convergys.com)

[www.tmcnet.com/2334.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/2334.1)

### Nuance's New SmartListener Enhances Speech Rec Apps

Nuance ([News - Alert](#)) has launched its new SmartListener software technology that will enhance automated speech applications at contact centers. Using SmartListener a speech rec system can better focus on the concept behind caller's words and decipher caller's actual request. SmartListener does this by recognizing out-of-grammar inputs, enabling the system to identify the caller requests correctly the first time more frequently. The system then adapts to a larger variety of more natural responses from callers. SmartListener uses Nuance's Adaptive Grammar Engine to transform the grammar versions of an existing speech solution into adaptive grammars.

[www.nuance.com](http://www.nuance.com)

[www.tmcnet.com/2335.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/2335.1)

### Downturn Slowing U.S. Contact Center Expansion

The U.S. economic downturn has led to a slowdown in contact center job creation, reports the Site Selection Group. There has been a year-to-date decrease of 27,189 new jobs to July 2008 as compared to July 2007 with 1,990 jobs in July displaced at 11 facilities closing or downsizing. At the same time there continues to be stable growth in key offshore markets as well as at strategic domestic locations. The global net effect has been a monthly increase of 3,015 jobs displaced as compared to June 2008, 9,725 new jobs created at 16 facilities opening or expanding, and an increase of 134 new jobs as compared to June 2008. There has been a year-to-date increase of 9,122 jobs displaced as compared to 2007.

[www.siteselectiongroup.com](http://www.siteselectiongroup.com)

[www.tmcnet.com/2336.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/2336.1)

### Philippines Contact Centers Look Beyond U.S. For Clients

The Contact Center Association of the Philippines (CCAP) has reported that local contact centers are tapping other English-speaking markets, such as Australia, Canada, and the UK as the economic slowdown is impacting growth from contact center operations for U.S.-based companies. The U.S. market accounts for about 90 percent of the total Philippine industry clientele. Jojo Uligan, CCAP executive director, noted that while there may be reduced demand in certain U.S. industries, the need to reduce costs may actually lead to more outsourced work to countries such as The Philippines.

[www.ccaph.ph](http://www.ccaph.ph)

[www.tmcnet.com/2337.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/2337.1)

### Do Not Call Works Fine: FTC

The federal Do Not Call (DNC) registry may be a mixed bag for some telemarketers and teleservices firms but from the consumers' and regulatory standpoints the DNC has worked well. The Federal Trade Commission told Congress July 10 that more than 145 million phone numbers have been registered by the end of FY 2007, which occurred September 30, 2007, up from 132 million numbers at the end of FY 2006. Consumers are getting fewer unwanted calls while complaints have been low and compliance high.

The FTC received complaints totaling approximately 0.3 percent of the total number of registered telephone numbers at the end of FY 2007. The DNC registry has now been made permanent, with consumers no longer having to renew their registrations.

[www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov)

[www.tmcnet.com/2338.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/2338.1)

### Soffront CRM Supports Multiple Currencies

Soffront Software now provides multi-currency support in version 8.7 of its CRM software. This feature increases efficiency of sales teams in conducting business globally using worldwide currencies. Multi-currency support is available in all Soffront modules, including sales, forecasting, quotes and invoices, and reporting. Customers can select a currency as their corporate currency to run monthly, quarterly, and annual reports for the enterprise. Yet sales teams in different countries can still manage all of their quotes and opportunities in their local currency. A European sales team can create quotes and opportunities in the euro, a Canadian team can use Canadian dollars, and a United States team can use U.S. dollars while a U.S. VP of Sales can analyze their forecasts in U.S. dollars. Soffront uses this feature for its own operations; the firm is headquartered in Thailand.

[www.soffront.com](http://www.soffront.com)

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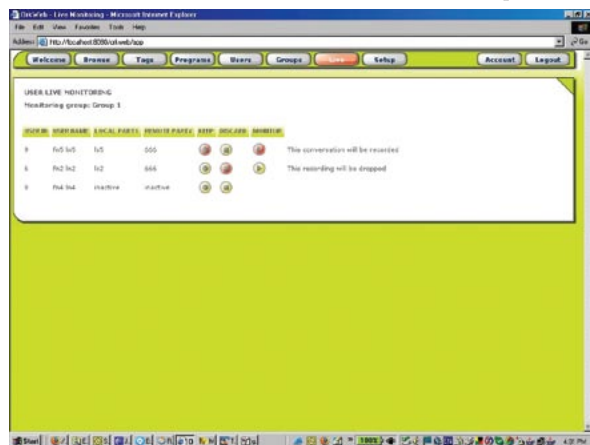
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[www.tmcnet.com/2351.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/2351.1)**OrecX Launches Open Source IP Recording**

OrecX LLC, a purveyor of open source voice

software that uses a unique five-step system to facilitate compliance with the Red Flags Rule. The CompliancePal software enables companies to comply more quickly, and with less effort.

[www.compliancepal.com](http://www.compliancepal.com)

recording solutions, formally announced its Oreka Total Recording (TR) software solution. The solution takes advantage of open source to enable more efficient contact center deployments. The Oreka solution offers several levels of recording capability including the ability to record all calls, or initiate on-demand or selective recording. Contact center managers have the option of listening in to live calls for the purposes of monitoring employees for training and the like. The solution passively listens to network packets as it records VoIP SIP sessions. Both sides of the call are then mixed together, and each resulting audio file is logged separately.

[www.orecx.com](http://www.orecx.com)

solution closed off agent training, compliance, and dispute resolution gaps, as calls are now recorded and archived through an Inter-Tel (News - Alert) 5000 IP telephone system using CallRex Professional software. Evergreen Professional Recoveries president Ken Ross said that call recording has headed off at least two frivolous lawsuits in the past three months, which would have cost it at least \$10,000 in fees. Prior to CallRex his firm had no recourse when lawyers were calling with claims. It became a 'he said, she said' situation where there was no hard evidence to base a decision or dispute on.

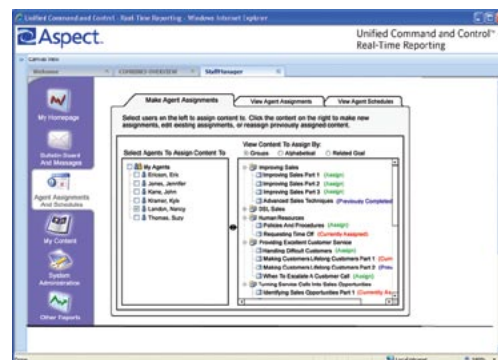
[www.telrex.com](http://www.telrex.com)[www.tmcnet.com/2340.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/2340.1)**CallRex Saves ARM Firm Thousands Of Dollars**

Telrex's (News - Alert) CallRex suite of IP call recording and call center optimization products has saved accounts receivable management (ARM) firm Evergreen Professional Recoveries tens of thousands of dollars. The

service in Asia, leading to the demand for more sophisticated applications such as quality monitoring, voice portals and analytics solutions.

[www.frost.com](http://www.frost.com)[www.tmcnet.com/2342.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/2342.1)**Metro One Introduces Internal Do Not Call List Hygiene Product**

Companies and non-profit organizations engaged in telemarketing efforts now have a convenient way to cleanse their internal do-not-call lists. Metro One Telecommunications' (News - Alert) new Internal Do-Not-Call (IDNC) Cleanse product helps telemarketers by identifying numbers in their internal do-not-call files that have been surrendered, and returning those numbers to the pool of active prospects. The firm says that until now there has been no systematic way to update internal do-not-call lists, leaving telemarketers with a growing file of restricted numbers even though many of those numbers have been reassigned. The IDNC Cleanse leverages Metro One's Historical Directory Assistance Listings database and its ability to handle rapid, large-scale data processing.

[www.metroone.com](http://www.metroone.com)[www.tmcnet.com/2345.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/2345.1)**Get The 'Performance Edge' In eLearning, Hiring**

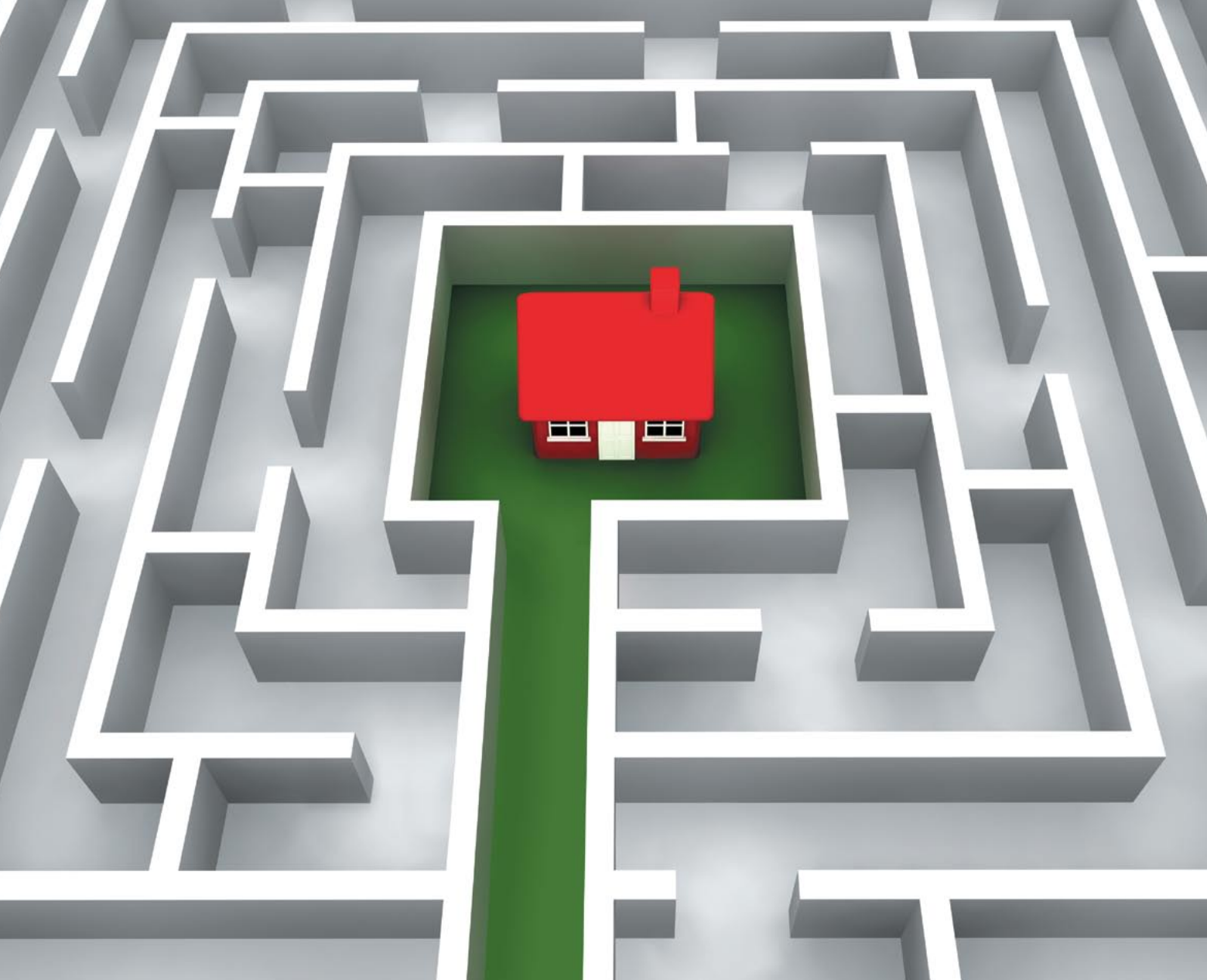
PerformanceEdge (News - Alert), from Aspect Software now offers PerformanceEdge eLearning and PerformanceEdge Job Match. These two solutions will enable contact centers to get an edge in agent recruitment, retention, and training and in contact center productivity. Designed to improve training and coaching, PerformanceEdge eLearning delivers the right content at the right time to agents and supervisors, while PerformanceEdge Job Match is a Web-based job screening application designed for contact centers. These capabilities will

[www.tmcnet.com/2339.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/2339.1)**Compliance Coach Partners with Identity Theft Resource Center**

Compliance Coach has partnered with the Identity Theft Resource Center, Inc. to jointly promote each other's services to combat identity theft. They will also raise awareness among the business community for the need to comply with the FACT Act Identity Theft Red Flags Rule by November 1, 2008. The Federal regulation imposes new responsibilities on businesses to prevent consumer identity theft. Each affected entity must perform a risk assessment, identify covered accounts and applicable red flags, then map the red flags to detection and response procedures and implement a written identity theft prevention program. They must also train staff and update the program periodically and report on its effectiveness. Earlier this year Compliance Coach launched CompliancePal, a Web-based

[www.tmcnet.com/2341.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/2341.1)**Asia-Pacific Contact Center Industry To Keep Growing: Frost**

The current economic slump in the United States has not had a major impact on the market for contact center solutions in Asia-Pacific according to Frost & Sullivan. Its new report on this topic: Asia Pacific Contact Center Applications Market, finds that the revenues in the contact center applications market covering 14 Asia-Pacific countries rose 12.2 percent year-on-year in 2007 to \$665.4 million and is expected to show 14.2 percent growth this year. In 2007, contact centers from all Asia-Pacific countries except Philippines increased their investment on infrastructure and business applications to improve their services. Japan topped the market with 24.9 percent (\$165.5 million), followed by India at 17.8 percent (\$118.6 million) and Australia at 15.3 percent (\$101.7 million). The research firm cited high priority for customer



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help customers overcome the difficult task of lowering hiring costs and improving agent retention and skills, ultimately enabling their contact centers to deliver improved customer service, collections and sales. Both tools will be available a Software as a Service, which won praise from Paul Stockford, president and chief analyst at SaddleTree Research. He said Aspect is making eLearning capabilities easily accessible to its customers and speeding the adoption process of this essential performance optimization application.

[www.performanceedgesuite.com/performanceedge/performancehome](http://www.performanceedgesuite.com/performanceedge/performancehome)

[www.tmcnet.com/2343.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/2343.1)

#### Hotels, Retail, Onshore Outscore Cable/Satellite, PC Firms, Offshore: Satisfaction Study

A study of eight vertical marketers conducted by CFI Group found that hotels and retailers ranked at the top of the list and cable/satellite and PC suppliers were at the bottom when it comes to customer satisfaction and performance. It also found that contact center agents are more likely to get a higher proportion of "harder" questions when customers cannot find answers on a Web site or elsewhere. Customers who tried other methods before calling the contact center ranked their satisfaction scores 15 percent lower than customers who called the contact center directly. Offshore contact centers' are doing a better job this year solving issues, but their satisfaction scores still lag behind onshore contact centers by a wide margin. The study finds that issues are 25 percent less likely to be resolved when agents are difficult to understand.

[www.cfigroup.com](http://www.cfigroup.com)

[www.tmcnet.com/2344.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/2344.1)

#### Diamond Resorts International Selects Noble

Diamond Resorts International has selected Noble Systems Corporation's Noble Solution for blended inbound and outbound contact management in its new 177-seat membership sales and service center. Noble's unified system is expected to give it a single platform to increase the productivity and efficiency of their contact center. The Noble Enterprise solution provides tools to manage telemarketing, customer service and reservations, and collections in one integrated package. Noble combines features including predictive dialing, blended inbound routing, appointment setting, automated messaging, IVR, and account ownership, with an integrated database and a complete suite of quality monitoring, management, and

reporting tools in a scalable, open environment.

[www.noblesys.com](http://www.noblesys.com)

[www.tmcnet.com/2350.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/2350.1)

#### Toshiba Debuts Largest-Ever Strata CIX IP Switch



Toshiba ([News - Alert](#)) has unveiled the newest and biggest member of its family of Strata CIX IP-enabled switches, the Strata CIX1200. Its main features include 1,152 ports, networking with up to 128 sites, and 200 to 1,000 users network capacity. Prior to the CIX1200 the largest such unit was the CIX670. The Strata CIX1200 offers quality and reliability in an affordable IP system that supports medium-to-large companies. It allows networking up to a total of 128 sites and can accommodate larger capacity or distributed configurations. That makes the CIX1200 an ideal solution for a headquarters' site that is networked to small or remote contact centers, or to offices or retail/restaurant locations as informal centers. When used along with Toshiba's FeatureFlex adaptability and customization tool, the CIX1200 offers smooth migration path from smaller Toshiba systems.

[www.toshiba.com](http://www.toshiba.com)

[www.tmcnet.com/2346.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/2346.1)

#### South African Contact Center Industry: Will Growth Match Goals?

South Africa's outsourced contact center industry is experiencing the growth, but it may not reach the government's targets. A study by Frost & Sullivan predicts the total number of outsourced seats will reach about 60,000 in the next five to seven years, yet the government has a goal of 100,000 by 2009. The current number of outsourced seats in South Africa is estimated to be between 24,000 and 25,000. According to the research organization the government needs to re-evaluate its value propositions to maintain strong growth rates. While the government is supportive of the sector some industry organizations feel it is slow and bureaucratic. Labor costs are also shooting up. In response Frost

says the country must invest in skills training to contain a high attrition rate and must address a belief in the market that South African telecoms costs are amongst the highest in the world.

[www.frost.com](http://www.frost.com)

[www.tmcnet.com/2349.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/2349.1)

#### Comm, Financial Services Better At Customer Service: Study

A study commissioned by Genesys ([News - Alert](#)) Communications Laboratories revealed that communication and financial services companies are doing a better job at using customer service as a strategic differentiator than other companies. One common characteristic is the strong likelihood that companies not currently using an IP-based contact center will likely implement one in the next two to three years. The study found that 66 percent of financial services companies, 45 percent of communications companies, 58 percent of utilities and 83 percent of healthcare companies not using the technology are moving toward IP installations.

[www.genesyslab.com](http://www.genesyslab.com)

[www.tmcnet.com/2348.1](http://www.tmcnet.com/2348.1)

#### SoundBite Intros New Collections Platform

SoundBite Communications ([News - Alert](#)) has released a new product, Intelligent Communications Platform for Collections. It incorporates field-proven technology to help organizations maximize profits, accelerate debt recovery and mitigate risk. Its SoundBite Hold Queue and FastConnect features improves agent utilization through increased direct connect success rates and reduced hold times. They eliminate ring time and hold times associated with dialing an agent, which reduces abandoned calls. The platform also has new features enhance agent productivity and enable virtual contact center operations. Using SoundBite's Agent Skill Group capabilities, organizations can more easily leverage dispersed agents across their entire enterprise and place their best agents on their best accounts.

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## Contact Center and Service Provider Similarities

In his VoIP blog, Rich Tehrani ([News](#) - [Alert](#)) writes:

I have been seeing an interesting trend in the communications space. In the last 2-3 years, more and more companies who used to focus on service providers have expanded their focus into the call center space. Acme Packet and NextPoint ([News](#) - [Alert](#)) are a few examples of such companies. This is not so surprising mind you when you realize how remote agents resemble service provider customers and the thing they have in common is the need for an SBC.

In addition there has been growth in the hosted contact center market and as more service providers have become interested in providing such services worldwide they need to work with call center vendors who can supply them with the solutions they need. Virtual ACDs and hosted IVR solutions are just a few of these products.

There is more of course. In some cases, call center solutions need to be so big they actually require more switching power than is needed by a small city. This is why West Corporation -- a company in the outsourcing and other spaces is a Sonus customer.

One of the reasons there is a collocated Call Center 2.0 event at ITEXPO ([News](#) - [Alert](#)) September 16-18 2008 in Los Angeles is so global decision makers -- whether they are enterprise, service provider, contact center or reseller can come together in one place and see the entire world of communications products and services.

Visit Rich's blog at <http://blog.tmcnet.com/blog/rich-tehrani/>

## The IP-PBX Energy Wars...

In his VoIP and Gadgets Blog, TMC ([News](#) - [Alert](#)) CTO Tom Keating writes:

So today I get a new report from the Tolly Group stating that the ShoreTel ([News](#) - [Alert](#)) Unified Communications system is significantly more energy efficient than the Cisco Unified Communications Manager. ShoreTel apparently topped Cisco in using less energy to drive VoIP communications in specific large, medium and small enterprise-class scenarios.

Is that what it's come down to? Instead of feature-to-feature comparisons we're going to have to start comparing energy consumption? I'm not against the idea, I just find it kind of humorous that everyone is jumping on the enviro-green bandwagon.

I have to wonder if an IT manager, CTO, etc. might purchase a more efficient IP-PBX ([News](#) - [Alert](#)) over a less efficient one that has many more features? Well, certainly in San Francisco and other uber-green areas that might be the case. Green trumps everything when you're a greenie - not that there's anything wrong with that.

I should point out that the IT Manager or CTO often not held accountable to what the electricity costs are. Many businesses see their electricity bills just as one of the costs of running their businesses. Other than instructing their users to turn off their radios, monitors, and computers at night, most businesses don't delve into purchasing energy efficient computer or phone equipment. That is changing due to high energy costs - albeit slowly.

Visit Tom's blog at <http://blog.tmcnet.com/blog/tom-keating/>

## End of Line for Toll-Free Numbers?

In his Readerboard blog, Customer Interaction Solutions' Brendan B. Read writes:

July 31 was the 'last run' for the toll-free number connecting New Jersey Transit, the third largest transit agency in the US, with its customers. Could this be the beginning of the end for toll-free numbers in North America?

NJ Transit has since June been switching callers from 800-772-2222 to 973-275-5555. It abandoned toll-free to cut costs. The technology environment is finally right for ending toll-free service. NJ Transit, like many public agencies along with private companies, has been diverting calls away from live agents through the Internet, including a mobile-enabled site, and with proactive means such as automated outbound text alerts.

New Jersey residents, like many others across North America, have been switching from TDM to IP, which makes long distance charges irrelevant. My son, who lives in the central part of the state, bought IP with a package from his cable company. Also, North Americans are becoming used to paying per contact, as their counterparts in other parts of the world have long done, through their text messaging rates.

Who will be the next to follow in NJT's path? Do I hear any roar from the airlines?

Visit Brendan's blog at <http://blog.tmcnet.com/call-center-crm/>

## PCI Compliance

In his "On Rad's Radar?" blog, Peter Radizeski of RAD-INFO ([News](#) - [Alert](#)), Inc. writes:

PCI DSS is like HIPAA in a lot of ways: buzz but no one has a handle on it. There's more myth than fact, but who is going to sift through the hundreds of pages of law?

In most of these laws (HIPAA, PCI, SOX) it is a matter of securing data. Not encrypting it, but securing it - even in the physical form like file folders and paper. For example, if someone walks away with my yellow file folder filled with patient info is that any different that someone walking away with a PC (or server or laptop) with patient records or a DVD back-up copy? Not really. And we have had some doozy events lately including TJ Maxx, Sweetbay Supermarkets, and AT&T laptops.

PCI DSS - Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard - is a compromise by VISA, MC, AmEx, DiscoverCard, and JCB Int'l to standardize the disparate security requirements. It is "intended to provide a baseline for best practices in card security". That's the best way to describe it really. MasterCard has the SDA - "Site Data Protection" Program and VISA has its CISP - "Cardholder Information Security Program".

Firewall, software patching, and password security are three main ways to stay on top of this. CIO.com has a series of articles to help you get up to speed, since the PCI Compliance deadline just passed. VISA has 12 Steps to Compliance on its site.

Visit Peter's blog at <http://blog.tmcnet.com/on-rads-radar/>





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# The SaaS Market: As Bad As Larry Ellison Says?

In a recent earnings call, Oracle founder Larry Ellison “dissed” the SaaS industry, calling it a laggard that isn’t really living up to the hype. “If you look at the leader, Salesforce.com ([News - Alert](#)), they don’t make very much money and they’ve been at it for almost 10 years,” he said in widely-reported remarks, adding that “it’s hard to point to any software-as-a-service provider that’s doing a good job of improving its profitability.”

The irony, besides the fact that Larry has sunk a lot of his own gelt into Salesforce, is that Oracle finally made money from its own on-demand applications this past quarter.

He admitted as much: “We continue to get better at it and grow the business,” he said. “[But] it’s not really growing any faster than our overall business,” and it certainly isn’t growing as fast as some had predicted, he noted sourly.

Well, what does go exactly as predicted, other than presidential elections in some communist countries? Is the SaaS ([News - Alert](#)) business model, which is of great interest to CRM vendors, really destined for mediocrity?

“I bet if you dig around you will find a quote from Ken Olsen on microcomputers and personal computers that will look pretty similar,” said Denis Pombriant, noted CRM analyst with Beagle Research when asked for his take on Sir Lawrence’s judgments. “The point is that it’s a paradigm shift, and early birds in these shifts don’t always get wealthy, at least not right away.”

Chris Selland, VP of Marketing and Business Development for more traditional software vendor EasyLobby and a long-time keen observer of the CRM scene, noted that currently, at least, “he’s not wrong. SaaS is ultimately an economies-of-scale business — the first client is very expensive to bring up, but each additional client on a SaaS platform should have a much smaller marginal cost.”

Profit margins should increase faster than revenue as the company scales, said Selland, “as opposed to traditional software where the relationship is more linear.”

Marc Benioff ([News - Alert](#)), the former Oracle exec who runs the very Salesforce that Larry called out, shot back with both barrels. “I recommend you look at the continued organic growth annualized rates of our revenue, profitability, and free cash flow over the last decade versus traditional enterprise software companies who are not acquiring, versus software companies achieving annualized growth through acquisition — backing out acquired revenue — versus annualized growth of acquired companies with the acquirer.”

Greg Gianforte, CEO and Founder of RightNow Technologies ([News - Alert](#)), one of the more prominent SaaS firms in the CRM space, conceded Ellison’s point — for now. “Ultimately, the SaaS business model will be similarly or more profitable than the traditional model due to the annuity nature of the SaaS business,” he said.



Currently “SaaS firms are investing for growth and grabbing land,” he explained. “If Larry could find a way to grow his business north of 30 percent I’m sure he would invest too. The fact is that his applications businesses and database business can’t grow that fast due to their market maturity.”

Most of those consulted agreed that we’re at the beginning of something that’s going to be a lot bigger in coming years, so ride out the low profits now. “The [SaaS] shift is compelling to the customer and the vendors are forced to streamline and sell greater volume,” Pombriant noted. “That’s the way of markets. If you wait around until a new paradigm is profitable I guarantee you will miss the market.”

CRM guru Bob Thompson drew a historical parallel, saying “Amazon.com took the better part of a decade to turn the corner, as I recall. He’s right that SaaS vendors aren’t making much, if any, profit so far, but that’s not unusual for fast growing companies. Even conventional software companies struggle in the early years. Internet businesses need time to scale.”

SaaS is still at a relatively early stage of market development and acceptance, Selland pointed out: “As SaaS becomes more widely accepted, industry profitability should increase as well. I’m sure Marc Benioff would say the same thing.”

Part of it is just structural, the nature of the beast. “Given the way revenue is recognized by SaaS firms versus traditional perpetual license firms, over the life of the contract versus all up front, SaaS firms will not generate lots of profit until these fast growth opportunities slow,” Gianforte pointed out. “This is due to the way the revenue flywheel spins up in a SaaS firm... I believe you will see margins continue to expand across the entire SaaS industry in well-run firms.”

And as Thompson noted, it’s one thing to listen to Larry, always an interesting interview, but “consider how Ellison invests his money. A different picture emerges. He’s the major investor behind NetSuite ([News - Alert](#)), which recently went public and earned him a tidy increase on his investment. If not a true believer in SaaS, at least he’s hedging his bets!”

And who says SaaS is the end of the road anyway? “Clearly the market sees potential for long-term profit growth in SaaS, which is part of the Next Big Thing — Cloud Computing,” Thompson added.

Larry himself isn’t a complete doomster either, truth be known. He sees hope. “We think that [SaaS profitability] is going to change over time,” he conceded. “But the entire on-demand industry has to get better at making money in selling on-demand software.” **CIS**

— David Sims is contributing editor, Customer Interaction Solutions magazine.

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# Adding Value to Business Process Outsourcing

**T**hese are, to cite the old Chinese curse ‘interesting times’ for organizations seeking to outsource their contact center services and for business process outsourcers (BPOs) alike. That is because serving end-customers has never been more challenging. Today’s buyers are savvy, proactive, quality conscious but price-sharp, unimpressed with brands unless they consistently deliver, and whose loyalty is as good as their last interaction.

These individuals also utilize a growing and bewildering array of channels. And as shown by the popularity of the Do Not Call list in US, which will shortly go live also in Canada, customers prefer to reach out rather than the other way around, unless they want you to.

Yet as firms, including nonprofits and institutions move their strategies towards meeting these customers’ needs, by investing in tools such as in CRM, call recording (see related article), speech analytics, and performance and workforce management systems at their contact centers, they have been moving away from BPOs for such high-value interactions.

The BPO firms are now in what Bob Lyons, a former senior executive with Convergys and TeleSpectrum (now TRG Group) who is general manager and vice president of Avaya’s ([News - Alert](#)) Contact Center division calls “a paradox”.

BPOs cannot afford to invest in the latest tools without strong assurance that clients will want and pay for them, yet clients will not do business with these BPOs unless they have those tools. Consequently organizations are now bringing in-house those calls that drive customer satisfaction and outsourcing those that are mainly transactional.

BPO firms are then left with little more than labor arbitrage and flexibility to offer poten-



tial clients. They are hindered by strong price pressure: industry reports indicate the average rate in North America is \$25 per agent/hour while historically typical rates were in the mid 30s. At the same time Indian programs demand about \$11 per agent/hour while those in The Philippines command about \$11.50 per agent/hour. Together that leaves many BPO with very little resources to buy those solutions that clients want.

“Companies are beginning to realize that customer retention is also important in addition to pricing and offerings as value and marketplace differentiators,” says Lyons. “Those that do a lot of outsourcing are now demanding that value proposition.

## Canada's Domestic BPO Market

Canada’s currency relative to the US dollar has risen to the point where on some occasions it is more valuable, which has made it less viable for nearshored programs.

The flip side to the strong Canadian ‘Loonie’ is that Canada has still, relative to the US, a strong domestic market thanks to its energy and more stable housing sectors.

Outsourcing is one of the best means of reaching out to Canada’s 33 million consumers, and to its business and government sectors. BPO firms who know Canada can navigate your program through the country’s two official languages, cultural issues, the metric system, and regulations, such as the new Do Not Call list that comes into effect Sept. 30 (see related article).

US-based BPO firms with operations there are aggressively pursuing Canadian business. ICT Group is netting results from this strategy. Canadian revenues help drive a 33 percent increase from international sources in the second quarter 2008 from the same period in 2007.

Earlier this year Convergys appointed Igor Sarenac as Vice President, Business Development, for Canada, placing special emphasis on attracting and expanding business among companies headquartered there.

There are also many Canadian BPO firms that offer an increased range of services. As one example, 24-7 INtouch has launched a value-added partnership program that provides clients with complete end to end solutions through a one vendor relationship. Pre-screened quality outsourcing solutions through a single vendor make it beneficial for clients to easily outsource and manage all of their unique business needs.

“We recognize our strengths, and don’t attempt to offer everything ourselves,” says Greg Fettes, President and CEO of 24-7 INtouch. “Instead, collaborating with strategic and complimentary vendors allow us to offer a total solution our customers can depend on.”



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## Boutique BPOing

Boutique BPO firms are smaller companies whose value propositions stress top level high-customizable quality customer care and satisfaction and personalized attention to clients' needs. They are noted for loyal, well-trained and experienced agents and supervisors backed by quality assurance systems. They can provide the ideal adjuncts and partners to best-in-class in-house contact centers. While their rates are not the lowest, they deliver value for money.

"Boutique contact centers are better suited to enable customer care and satisfaction because they are more focused, hiring and keeping people off the beaten path, and they don't need to hire thousands of people," says Bob Lyons, general manager and vice president of Avaya's contact center division.

InfoCision is one such boutique BPO. It specializes in customer acquisition, care and retention, nonprofit fundraising, and product and pledge fulfillment. All of its contact center agents relate to American end customers; its services are delivered via 32 small facilities located only the USA. It has won Customer Interaction Solutions' magazine's Marketing Via Phone (MVP) Quality Award every year since its inception.

Outsourcers say 'we can do this in different regions at lower cost'. So what is happening is that companies are saying 'I'm not getting the innovation with you so I can do it myself and leave you with handling just the transactions with my technology.'

### The drive to value-add

BPO firms, realizing these trends, have been stepping up their quality and services. They have been expanding into areas such as applications hosting, back office management, billing, conferencing, consulting, data analytics, HR management, and market research.

Convergys offers one of the largest menus of value-added services of any BPO firm: from billing to HR and to speech-recognition-enabled voice applications: the latter significantly bolstered by its acquisition of Intertivoice, a leading automated voice platform supplier, and to training.

Convergys has been experiencing growing demand for its behavioral intelligence (BI) services, reports Ryan Pellet, VP Global Consulting Services.

BI captures data from interactions occurring in more than 30 different channels, from contact centers to social media, viral marketing, and to games and maps as to how customers are interacting with those channels. That helps enterprises optimize their marketing, customer acquisition and customer service strategies and decide how much resources to spend and where.

Convergys has also been applying its value-add services, such as HR management, to its

contact centers. They have bolstered their quality to the point where the BPO firm has won price increases from its clients that helped offset higher costs.

In turn, the high quality contact center care has led to increased interest and demand for value-added services, thereby creating a virtuous circle.

"We drink our own Merlot," explains Pellet. "We apply the same tools that we offer and provide to our clients on ourselves. If we continue to perform at or above the market standards then we are invited to do the value-added pieces."

LiveOps ([News - Alert](#)) continues to do likewise. The pure-play home agent BPO firm has added silent monitoring of agents, which enables managers to identify service issues plus agent readiness assessment testing that helps ensure that agents are ready to go live with end-customers. These tools are also on the Summer 08 release of LiveOps' hosted On-Demand Platform that it markets to other contact centers.

APAC Customer Services is seeing increased demand for handling back office processes such as claims, receivables, medical bills, e-mail, and USPS ([News - Alert](#)) for clients.

"We're providing a one-stop shop for our clients with these BPO services, taking on routine tasks that cost them money to handle, in addition to our contact center services for them, which offers them greater convenience," explains vice president of operations Rebecca Lucera.

Avaya's Lyons is skeptical about BPO firms' ability to successfully branch out into these

other areas as potential buyers may question their competency to deliver because they have not been present in these fields.

"These firms still face the same paradox as with value-added contact center functionality," says Lyons. "To add value beyond labor arbitrage they need to integrate these services and provide business consulting so that they can provide a premium offer that allows them to capture a price premium. Yet the cost to build or buy such expertise far exceeds the expected return so again you are left with a business model focused on labor arbitrage."

In the case of Working Solutions, a pure-play home agent-based BPO firm it is the company's clients more than marketplace expansion desires that drove it to start offer hosted technology solutions.

The firm provides call and contact routing (TDM or IP), IVR, and speech analytics including real-time alerts to supervisors for customers who may require escalations or specialized handling.

"We've been providing these services to clients who utilize our agents for quite some time," says CEO Tim Houlne. "But we've seen a growing number of companies ask us to provide software and technology for their internal call center operations."

### Mergers

The low margins, plus ease of entry, and many players along the retiring and cashing out of companies' founders have made mergers and acquisitions the norm in the BPO industry. Yet while they have led to bigger companies with more clients and workstations it has not necessarily led to greater market leverage, and higher prices.

"Companies will typically want at least two outsourcers on a program so if your two outsourcers who are merging happen to have the same customer, companies will pull that work to someone else, which helps keep prices down," explains Lyons.

The acquisition of SITEL by ClientLogic last year, now called Sitel, is arguably quite different. It has brought together complementary assets, capabilities, and client lists, with very little overlap. And as such there has been negligible client attrition.

Amit Shankardass, Chief Global Marketing Officer, reports that out of the 450 clients brought together by the merger, only nine of them used both firms. The post-merger Sitel





## Outsourcing Your Help Desk

There are times when your contact center needs help with IT issues yet your help desk is swamped. And if you are with a small/midsized firm you may not be able to justify having a full-time IT team yet you need their services when your operations go buggy.

Help desk outsourcing enables you to quickly and effectively resolve many problems for less money compared with expanding your IT desk or bringing in an outside onsite support professional.

The Utility Company ([News - Alert](#)) has made it easier for more firms to benefit from help desk outsourcing. It has come up with a new service aimed at small/midsized businesses, 1-866-My-Utility Per Minute ([News - Alert](#)) Live Helpdesk Service. It provides remote monitoring and management for IT (network, desktop, security, and storage), business applications, Web/Internet, copier/printer and telecommunications, 8am to 8pm ET.

1-866-My-Utility Per Minute dramatically reduces waiting times and time to resolution, with a 50 percent -80 percent savings over typical break/fix support contracts. There are no minimum charges or travel, the lack of latter also makes this option environmentally-friendly with no pollution or gas consumption.

retained 98 percent of its clients, of which 83 are Fortune 500 companies.

ClientLogic brought to the table strong inbound customer care, cross-sell/up-sell, support, plus data management and fulfillment, he explains. Legacy Sitel brought in robust outbound customer acquisition, billing/collections, customer care and IVR competencies.

While ClientLogic had strengths in the travel/transportation, ISP, and retail markets, legacy Sitel delivered heft in financial services and utilities. The new Sitel is now pursuing the energy and healthcare verticals.

"We've experienced strong growth, and so have our clients because there was very little overlap between the legacy firms," says Shandarkass. "We're now able to offer and deliver to both sets of firms' clients and to prospects a complete range of global BPO services that complement each other under one roof."

## Near/Offshoring

The increased emphasis on customer service and quality is impacting BPO offshoring and nearshoring.

There have been many published reports of dissatisfied customers, and companies with having their calls handled in India. Clients and BPO firms are in response moving their more customer-sensitive work to other nations and in some cases back to the US.

The chief offshore beneficiary is The Philippines, which has a strong customer service culture and whose residents have a greater cultural affinity to the US thanks to longstanding military/political and increasingly family ties between both nations.

Yet there are growing concerns that The Philippines' labor market may soon be saturated, at which point costs will begin to escalate.

The Everest Research Institute reports that offshoring including to India have been successful though for those BPOs and companies that made their metrics quality-focused, such as using customer satisfaction scores, and had agents undergo pre-going-live simulation-based training.

Meanwhile the weak US and stronger Canadian dollar has ruled Canada out as an alternative. Many clients have pulled nearshored programs from there, forcing BPOs such as Convergys, ICT Group, TRG, and West to shutter contact centers.

Africa and the Middle East are finally emerging as a quality offshoring option for North American clients as savvy BPO firms, seeing what has happened elsewhere, are marrying the region's large supply of well educated, highly motivated, and affordable labor with quality-oriented recruitment, training, and agent retention strategies.

## BPO at Home

There continues to be strong move to bring BPO home: to those of its agents. The home agent value proposition is access to larger, higher quality and more flexible labor pool without the capital costs of formal contact centers.

West, which has had a home agent program for the past several years, has addressed the issue of data security, which has been a key inhibitor on the part of many organizations, especially financial services firms, in letting these individuals handle their calls.

Its new West at Home Locked-Down Desktop Security Environment transforms employees' home desktop computers into a West proprietary environment. When its home agents begin work, the software only runs those applications or processes explicitly permitted to be operated, which locks down their computers. They cannot access other files, folders, or programs or go to West-authorized websites during this time, nor can they download, store and/or print information. When the agents have finished work, their desktops are restored to their former state.

APAC is taking a slightly different road. For the past four years it has had a similar large center/larger community-home agent constellation model to what Sitel has recently adopted. This fall APAC is branching out into small towns, with storefront locations of 10-12 seats that have training and HR functions that in turn will service outlying home-based agents.

"Our clients will benefit from this strategy because it will be reaching out to a high quality labor force that has not been tapped by contact centers because these communities have been too small to support traditional facilities," explains Lucera. **CS**

### The following companies participated in the preparation of this article:

**24/7-INtouch**  
www.24-7intouch.com

**Apac Customer Services**  
www.apaccustomerservices.com

**Avaya**  
www.avaya.com

**Convergys**  
www.convergys.com

**Everest Research Institute**  
www.everestresearchinstitute.com

**ICT Group**  
www.ictgroup.com

**InfoCision**  
www.infocision.com

**LiveOps**  
www.liveops.com

**Metro One Telecommunications**  
www.metro1.com

**Sitel**  
www.sitel.com

**The Utility Company**  
www.theutilitycompany.com

**West**  
www.west.com

**Working Solutions**  
www.workingsol.com

**Xceed**  
www.xceedcc.com

## Customer Retention

We all know it is much more expensive to acquire a new customer than to retain an existing one. In fact, studies indicate that it is somewhere between six and ten times more expensive. Companies that are fortunate enough to have a strong base of profitable customers should focus on a proactive approach to retention first with strong acquisition efforts as a second tier strategy. This approach to total lifecycle management brings out the best of both worlds – a healthy growth rate combined with sustained and predictable profitability.



*By Chris Wagner,  
Vice President of Marketing  
InfoCision Management Corporation*

### Acquisition: a costly proposition

A good example of the cost of acquisition and the effect of churn comes from the cell phone industry. The annual churn for this company is 7.08 percent and the cost to acquire a customer is \$305. The average annual revenue for each new customer is around \$630 and the net income is \$90. Without a strong retention strategy, this margin is highly unpredictable and strong growth rates become nearly impossible. The challenge is to create a lucrative stream of revenue without incurring the high costs of acquisition. Customer retention strategies can do this, as well as increase satisfaction and loyalty.

### Retention: how to build a successful program

The first step to developing a retention program is to analyze the database to find statistically valid indicators of customer churn. Some key timing indicators in the case of the wireless industry are:

- At contract expiration
- Three months after contract expiration
- Six months after contract expiration
- Nine months after contract expiration

- Customer just received a “high” (over their minutes) bill
- Customer received a bill within the last 90 days that was 20 percent above average
- Customer complained to call center about service/cost
- Age of customer hardware (phone, wireless device)

Based on these indicators approximately 5 percent of the customer base for this provider are indicated for churn at any given point in time. In the case of this provider, that means a half-million customers. The next step in the process would be to identify the customers in that half-million who would be worth retaining, allowing you to concentrate on customers who provide a good margin of profitability.

We are able to identify 360,000 customers per quarter that present enough margin opportunity to proactively save. We retain at a rate of 32 percent at a cost of \$28 per customer. Using this strategy, we cut overall churn in half. This means we run an ROI compared to acquisition of over 10 to one. Over the course of a year an additional 473,250 customers are retained at \$28 a person, for a total cost of \$13,251,000. To acquire this many customers at the \$305 acquisition cost would have cost \$144,341,250, resulting in a cost savings of \$131,090,250.

By concentrating on customers who have greater margins and offering plan and equipment upgrades, the average revenue per customer also grows by \$11 a month, adding additional revenue of \$5 million (at an 18 percent margin). The addition of a telemarketing component to the overall retention strategy has proven to be an essential part of the overall retention effort and is much more cost effective than making up for those sales lost to attrition by increasing new customer acquisition activities.

*Chris Wagner, Vice President of Marketing, InfoCision Management Corporation. In business for 25 years, InfoCision Management Corporation is the second largest privately held teleservices company and a leading provider of customer care services, commercial sales and marketing for a variety of Fortune 100 companies and smaller businesses. InfoCision is also a leader of inbound and outbound marketing for nonprofit, religious and political organizations. InfoCision operates 32 call centers at 13 locations throughout Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia. For more information, visit [www.infocision.com](http://www.infocision.com). CIS*

### Acquisition to Retention Comparison

	Acquisition alone	Acquisition plus Retention
Total yearly churned/average number of customers	7.08%	3.24%
Annual revenue per customer	\$629.88	\$629.88
Annual net income per customer	\$90.26	\$100.91

**ROI – Net income gain to call center cost** 9.99 to 1

*Identifying and retaining customers who are likely to churn decreases the amount of new customers needed to maintain the same customer base. The reduction in acquisition spending results in a substantial increase in net income.*



# THE CUSTOMER RULES

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# Contact Center Recording: More Than Logging Calls

**C**all recording used to be about taping, utilizing, and archiving calls to obtain better performance from agents or in case there is a customer issue and the information is needed to resolve the matter.



No more. Call recording is becoming a multifaceted tool whose data is being tapped by a growing range of complementary and sophisticated applications. These include performance management, quality assurance (QA) systems, and speech analytics, with linkages to eLearning, quality management and workforce management solutions.

Keith Dawson ([News - Alert](#)), Senior Analyst, Frost & Sullivan, sees bundling as an effective means by call recording vendors to grow revenues.

"Basic call recording technology is essentially commoditized, and prices have been dropping for some time now, thereby forcing vendors to try to expand the feature set up the value chain," Dawson points out.

These add-ons are becoming popular with contact centers. Donna Fluss, President, DMG Consulting LLC, cites speech analytics, whose sales more than doubled to 1,242 by the end of 2007 from 603 in 2006.

"The benefit of integrated suites is that you don't have to invest the time and effort in

integrating a number of different applications," explains Fluss. "They generally have a single administration environment and share data and key performance indicators between applications [which is handy]. For example, when evaluating the customer experience, you need to use data from the QA process that measures how well agents adhere to internal policies and procedures and data from a surveying solution to determine if customers are satisfied with these policies and procedures."

Rich Marcia, Marketing Director, Coordinated Systems, Inc. (CSI) is also seeing more contact centers of all sizes using call recordings as training tools to enhance performance.

"In the past, only the larger centers were able to take advantage of the feature sets such as e-learning, integrated screen capture, and media encryption which come with the industry-leading call recording systems because of high prices," he explains. "We're seeing this barrier coming down due to emerging products which have a strong quality and training focus and deliver a scalable solution."

## Integrated Offerings and Customers

One of the latest combined offerings is from Telstrat, which replaced its Call Parrot call recording line earlier this year with Engage. Engage encompasses call and screen recording with tracking and coach, agent scripting and call automation, and workforce management.

While Engage may appear on first glance to be a bundle, which implies buying a package at once, it is instead made up of integrated modules that lets customer start with call recording and add

additional functions and features at any time as their needs and budget allows. This lets organizations better match capabilities to their current needs.

"With distributed, multi-site operations and even agents working from home, contact centers' needs have grown beyond call recording," says TelStrat ([News - Alert](#)) President Kevin Smith. "Increasing agent counts and call volumes mean organizations require additional tools to maintain a consistent quality message and optimum operational efficiency."

## IBM Unveils Data Masking Technology

What if a simple phone conversation could leave your identity compromised? With attacks on Web browsers at an all time high, many security experts believe attacks on contact center phone systems and audio files will be next.

That's because such interactions offer a motherlode of sensitive like credit card, PIN, and Social Security/Social Insurance numbers that criminals want to get their hands on.

There are privacy regulations such as HIPAA and standards such as PCI that mandate masking cardholder data. Yet the traditional techniques to comply with them are slow, cumbersome, costly and not always accurate. Also PCI applies only to card transactions; it does not cover others.

In response to this looming threat, researchers at IBM's ([News - Alert](#)) India Research Lab have developed a first-of-a kind speech masking tool, now in prototype, that detects and masks private and sensitive information collected from audio recordings of phone conversations. The solution will be using methods including keyword spotting and phonetic based indexing.

The speech recognition technology will automatically erases all sensitive customer information from them before they are stored.

This speech tool promises to be quick, reliable, cost effective, and secure way in removing such data from calls.

IBM is piloting the technology in its contact centers and will be making refinements to it before rolling out the tool to the public.



## Regulatory compliance

When applying call recording, contact center managers must work with a growing array of regulations such as HIPAA and FTC guidelines, plus standards such as the payment card industry (PCI) standards.

The PCI standard has direct impact on call recordings as it affects how recordings are archived, reports Donna Fluss, President, DMG Consulting LLC. It limits how enterprises record credit card information shared with their agents during a phone conversation; it does not cover e-mail or chat.

The PCI operating guideline is that only people that must have access to credit card

numbers should be able to see them during the replay. Most organizations interpret this to mean that their quality assurance (QA) staff should not have access to credit card numbers during the QA replay.

"PCI compliance can be challenging because it changes the quality assurance process by limiting who has access to calls," Fluss points out. "Exacerbating this challenge is that there are many interpretations of the PCI standard so many organizations are not sure what they need to do to be compliant. Managers must work with their internal regulatory staff to decide how to comply with these guidelines."

If your contact center is planning to move to IP, be sure to find out whether candidate recording suppliers can capture encrypted IP packets.

"Several prominent IP providers are moving to encrypted environments," explains Kristyn Emenecker, director, solutions marketing, Verint ([News - Alert](#)) Witness Actionable Solutions. "Yet not every recording vendor is able to record them, so contact centers should enquire before selecting a vendor."

## Added Features and Delivery Methods

There continues to be an evolution in call recording features and in delivery method whether TDM or IP to make these tools more affordable to a wider range of contact centers.

CSI's Virtual Observer recording and monitoring solution now uses DMCC, which captures audio without packet sniffing or recording boards.

More significantly Virtual Observer now taps and archives e-mail and chat as well as audio. This feature would enable contact centers to obtain a complete multichannel view and record of customers' interactions. There is a growing need for this functionality as more people migrate from voice to e-mail, SMS, and chat.

Small contact centers and small/mid-sized businesses (SMBs) can now benefit from powerful, scalable, and affordable call recording solutions and their value-add features.

Verint's new Verint Witness Actionable Solutions' Impact 360 Express software is designed specifically for the smaller contact center.

With Impact 360 Express, these contact centers can record, evaluate and store customer interactions; automate and simplify forecasting and scheduling; turn recorded customer interactions into best-practice training scenarios; and deliver skills-improving courses and feedback to agents. They obtain comparable functionality, performance and productivity gains as the large, multi-site, distributed enterprises that many of them aspire to become; Impact 360 Express can grow with these companies.

There are more call recording solutions being offered through alternative delivery methods. Telrex has made its CallRex™ suite of IP call recording and call center optimization solutions available by subscription: firms simply pay a monthly fee for the number of users being recorded.

"We believe that our subscription-based offering lowers the cost of entry and makes call recording technology accessible to businesses of every size," says Telrex president Robert Kapela ([News - Alert](#)). **CS**

The combining strategy is paying off for both suppliers and contact centers. NICE's SmartCenter solution, launched last year, includes call recording, quality management, interaction analytics, performance management, workforce management, a customer feedback application, and agent coaching.

One of SmartCenter's latest and largest customers is the Salt River Project (SRP), located in the fast-growing Phoenix, Ariz. Area and is the third largest electric utility in the US with nearly 1 million customers. It chose SmartCenter solutions to help it manage and support the growth of its IP-enabled contact centers, which receive more than three million calls per year.

"We want to be sure that SRP maintains its high standards for customer service while further improving efficiencies," says Michael Lowe, Customer Services Executive Salt River Project. "We're confident that the NICE solutions will help us maintain outstanding telephone service to customers while we continue to grow rapidly."

## The IP Revolution

As reported in July's IP story, more contact centers are switching their networks to IP from TDM to reduce call handling and infrastructure costs, and to better enable flexible applications such as application hosting, telework and informal centers like at branch banks and retail counters.

That means more contact centers are deploying IP recording technology. As of the end of 2007, shipments of VoIP recording ports exceeded that of TDM ports, reports Donna Fluss.

IP recording solutions provide several key advantages over their TDM counterparts including lower costs, such as for archiving and storage, and the ability to more easily support the value-add solutions.

IP-based solutions have also been evolving and improving. The early IP-based recording solutions were hardware based. The current IP-based recording solutions are software based.

"With software-based IP recording, you do not need to upgrade hardware when you want to add recording ports, which gives you considerable operational flexibility and saves money," explains Fluss.

CSI's Marcia is seeing firms switch from harvesting calls with packet sniffing technologies to grabbing audio directly from the phone system software using APIs such as Avaya's device media call control (DMCC) and Cisco's Active Recording. Packet sniffers require extra hardware to capture calls whereas API recording harvests calls directly from the phone system.

The IP switchover is attracting developer interest, and new recording products. For example, Oreka's new IP-enabled Oreka TR recording solution can be indexed by time, agent/employee, date, and a variety of other fields, facilitating hassle-free and instantaneous record retention, search and retrieval. It allows for all-call, on-demand or selective recording while providing managers with options for live call monitoring.

The software is built on an open source platform, which the firm says offers increased flexibility and lower cost compared with closed proprietary solutions.

Oreka TR works by recording SIP sessions, passively listening to network packets. Both ends of the conversation are mixed together, and each call is logged as a separate audio file. The recording is logged using a standard sound device and can record multiple channels at the same time, storing each recording as a separate audio file.

# Maximizing Agent Productivity with Closed-Loop Coaching

In today's challenging economy, contact center managers are expected to meet seemingly impossible demands and are pulled in multiple directions by conflicting priorities. The executive team demands high levels of customer satisfaction while at the same time increase revenues and control costs. How can a call center manager reconcile these seemingly opposing goals?

One solution is to implement a comprehensive performance management process.

Agent salaries represent 60% or more of a contact center's budget, so improving the productivity of your customer-facing agents means significant increases to the bottom line.

Closed-Loop Coaching is a process, enabled by technology, to baseline, evaluate, and develop call center agents. Companies "close the loop" through an ongoing process of measurement, action, and re-measurement until the desired results are achieved.

In this article, we will explore the concept of Closed-Loop Coaching and show you how implementing a comprehensive performance management process will result in a powerful return on investment (ROI) for your organization.

## The Closed-Loop Coaching Process



Closed-Loop Coaching is a comprehensive performance management process that leverages audio and screen recordings to maximize agent productivity and reduce agent training time.

Closed-Loop Coaching:

- Closed-Loop Coaching is AN ONGOING PROCESS. Measurement, review, coaching and reassessment must be integrated into the company's culture and continued on an ongoing basis to effect long-term change. Imagine going to the gym once. Would that get you in shape? Of course not, it's only with regular and repeated workouts that you see improvement.
- Closed-Loop Coaching MUST EXTEND to include the workflow of your sales and service processes. Every organization has a unique sales or service workflow, supported by agent desktop applications. A key element of Closed-Loop Coaching is ensuring that agents are trained in the proper usage of such systems, accomplished through analysis of screen and audio recordings.
- Agent Performance Feedback MUST be timely. Critical to the coaching process is timeliness; i.e., agents must be coached as soon as possible after the interaction has occurred for maximum learning and retention.
- Recognizes that all of us LEARN differently. Some people respond to hands-on training, some respond to reading, some to formal or informal training and coaching sessions. Closed-Loop Coaching allows supervisors to train by example, allowing agents to hear specific areas of interactions where they have opportunities to improve.
- Reinforces a CULTURE and COMMITMENT to continuous improvement. It is critical that Closed-Loop Coaching is integrated into the culture of the call center. By supporting a culture of success, supervisors can promote a positive, competitive, and winning attitude among call center agents.

Let's take a closer look at each of the steps in the Closed-Loop Coaching process.

1. Plan and Establish Goals/Metrics/KPIs. The first step in the process is to establish KPIs that tie directly to an organization's corporate goals. In a sales environment, these goals will most likely be revenue-related. In a service environment, typical goals include first call resolution, average call handle time, and customer satisfaction ratings. This information will be used to create agent evaluation forms that reflect KPIs of greatest importance to the organization, and will also be used as a starting point for measuring improvements in agent productivity.

2. Review Results. The second step is needed to determine where each agent stands in the performance hierarchy. One method for segmenting agents is to "triage" them into three groups - the best performing 20%, the worst performing 20%, and the middle performing 60%. This serves as a baseline for measuring group performance in addition to individual agent performance. This process will give you a clear picture of which agents could benefit the most from additional coaching, training, and mentoring.

3. Record Interactions. In this step, agent/customer interactions are recorded using TDI's (News - Alert) Encore Enterprise Suite or other call recording systems. To obtain the most comprehensive evaluation, agent desktop screens should be recorded along with the audio. These recorded calls will be used for conducting agent evaluations.

4. Evaluate and Measure Performance. In this crucial step, agent interactions are evaluated based on the KPIs specified in the planning stage. The goal of this step is to identify WHAT developmental areas agents need additional coaching. The evaluation scorecard should include a mix of operational must-dos as well as sales or customer service-specific evaluation points. Each category on the evaluation form



serves as a reference point to specify training needs for that particular agent. Most full-featured agent evaluation systems include the capability to email a completed evaluation form along with the appropriate recording so agents can immediately hear, for themselves, what areas need improvement, and simultaneously see their evaluation score for a particular interaction.

5. Coach and Change Processes. In this step, action is taken to improve the agent's skills in areas identified as weak in the evaluation step, and to reward agents who exceed their performance goals. These actions may include:

- One-on-one coaching, including reviews of agents recordings as well as "best practices" clips.
- Formal training sessions.
- Modification of agent desktop tools. In many cases, inefficiencies and in desktop applications can be improved for greater productivity throughout the call center.
- Rewards and recognition for top performers.

At this point, after the changes in step 5 are made, the agent is reassessed to see if/how his/her performance has improved. If improved, the supervisor is free to work with other agents; if not, the agent should be re-coached in areas where they need improvement.

## Closed-Loop Coaching in Action

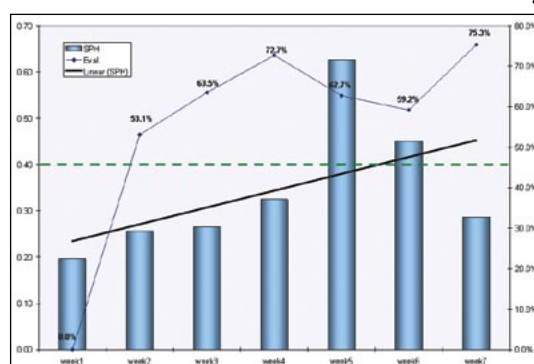
TDI, in cooperation with a key customer who is in the outsourced call center business, created a pilot program to implement a closed-loop coaching process. The customer operates a 200 seat in-bound/outbound call center and works multiple campaigns simultaneously, with an emphasis on up- and cross-selling. While this company had a performance management strategy in place, it was driven by manual processes that were neither efficient nor scalable. Managing evaluation forms and linking them to recordings was a manual process; there were major inconsistencies in evaluation scores between supervisors and QA; as a result, recordings and evaluations were not systematically used as agent coaching tools. Based on this scenario, the customer and TDI mutually agreed to focus on one objective: Improving the performance of the bottom 1/3 of performers who were working a specific sales campaign, a total of 24 agents.

Using TDI's Encore Performance Management Suite, the bottom 1/3 of agents were identi-

fied. These agents were recorded and evaluated on the key critical aspects of their customer interactions. Coaching clips were shared with the agents so they could hear themselves in live interactions, while viewing the evaluation forms being completed for that call. The agents also viewed clips of successful interactions (those resulting in a sale) from top performing agents.

The results from this group of previously struggling performers was positive. Over a seven-week period, as agents in the group received a greater focus from their supervisors, their evaluation scores as a team went from an average of 53% (out of 100) to over 75%. More importantly, their linear sales per hour (SPH) more than doubled, from .23 to .52! Additional "soft" benefits were realized through more effective coaching sessions, added ability to track the specific areas where agents had received coaching, and the ability to actively coach for tone of voice issues. These benefits can be directly attributed to implementing the closed-loop process and the customer is now in the process of extending the process to the rest of the agents in their call center.

## Could Your Call Center Benefit From Closed-Loop Coaching?



If you answer "no" to most of the questions listed below, then your organization could probably benefit from implementing a Closed-Loop Coaching process:

- Do you record 100% of voice interactions?
- Do you record agent screens to understand use of desktop applications?
- Have you established a formal process to communicate feedback to your sales and/or service team?
- Do you tie that feedback to your rewards/compensation system and performance metrics?

- Do you have a separate process to provide feedback to supervisors and QA team members?
- Have you automated your feedback processes?
- Is your training realistic, timely, and engaging?

## Request a TDI Discovery and Assessment

If you are considering changes to your company's performance management strategy, you can request a formal TDI Discovery and Assessment. This Discovery and Assessment is a comprehensive analysis of your contact centers status in the following areas:

- Current technology infrastructure and its ability to support an effective performance management process
- Analysis of your company's business goals and how effectively your contact center workflow reflects and supports these goals
- The gaps in technology and processes you need to address in order to achieve success in meeting key performance indicators

A Discovery and Assessment consists of meeting with your company's key personnel from sales, marketing, technology, including contact center supervisors and agents. Based on this discovery process, TDI will provide specific recommendations for improving your performance management process that will reduce attrition, increase sales revenue, and improve customer satisfaction. Contact TDI at [marketing@tdirect.com](mailto:marketing@tdirect.com) for more details. **CIS**

*Rick Reiman is responsible for Product Marketing at TDI, the developer of Liberation® and Encore™, a proven technology platform that helps companies increase revenues and develop their workforce. Liberation manages a contact center's entire sales workflow process, including campaign design and management, and agent effectiveness via an agent desktop; industry templates for ease of integration and operation, and performance management and reporting of results and trends. The Encore Suite maximizes the productivity of a contact center's workforce via integrated voice and screen recording, performance management, coaching, and its Portfolio™ reporting package. For more information, contact TDI at 800-531-6440 or visit [www.tdirect.com](http://www.tdirect.com).*

# Get Ready for Canada's New Telemarketing Regulations (eh?)

**O**n September 30, 2008, Canada will flick the switch on a long-anticipated new set of tougher telemarketing regulations including a national Do Not Call (DNC) list and calling hours, backed up by tougher enforcement including stiff new fines on violators.

*Beginning this issue we will be featuring a regular section on legislation and regulations that affect contact centers, covering issues such as but not limited to labor, workplace safety, privacy, and telemarketing, with suggestions on how to comply with them. We welcome your ideas, contributions, and viewpoints. Please e-mail them to [cispress@tmcnet.com](mailto:cispress@tmcnet.com)*

These measures are intended to better enable the country's 33 million+ consumers to limit unwanted telemarketing calls and to halt annoying practices such as 'dead air' from abandoned calls that had been made by predictive dialers, and early morning or late evening calls.

Up until now, Canada's telemarketing regulations, administered by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), Canada's communications regulatory agency, have been fairly lax and enforcement restricted.

The CRTC's rules primarily focused on auto-dialers, known as automated dialing and announcing devices or ADADs in Canada and junk faxes. Like in the US, the CRTC has also required telemarketers to keep individual DNC lists. Yet the CRTC relied on telcos to enforce individual DNC requests by suspending or disconnecting telemarketers. Consumers could then contact the CRTC if the telcos were not able to stop the unwanted calls.

The Canadian telemarketing industry also policed itself. Canadian consumers can register their contact information on the Canadian Marketing Association (CMA)'s Do Not Contact Service. CMA members are required to scrub their contact lists against the database as well as to follow set calling hours and other stipulations outlined in the CMA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice.

Even so, the combination of limited regulations and self-regulation did not prove sufficiently effective in meeting Canadian consumers' desires in not being bothered by telemarketers.

"Telemarketing was far and away top source of consumer complaints to our organization," admits Wally Hill, CMA Vice-President Communications & Public Affairs.

## The new rules

The Canadian rules are largely based on US legislation and American practices. Here are the key features of the new rules and how they contrast with US regulations:

### \* Do Not Call List (DNCL)

Canadian consumers will be able to register on the DNCL any number: landline, wireless, or fax, up to three numbers at a time. The registration will be valid for three years and will expire automatically unless individuals re-register the numbers.

Canada's DNCL has exemptions for firms that have existing business relationships (EBRs) with consumers, defined as 18 months from the last transaction and six months from the last interaction. There are also exemptions for registered charities, political parties (including candidates, nomination, and leadership contestants), polling, and newspapers.

Most organizations including those that are exempt must keep their own individual DNC lists for three years. The most notable exception is for those collecting information for surveys.

**US Laws:** Congress has now made the federal DNC list permanent; the federal government will now be responsible for ensuring the database is scrubbed of abandoned numbers. Consumers cannot register their fax numbers on the DNC. Both the US and Canada have specific provisions in their regulations covering faxes.

"The concern in Canada was to keep the costs of the DNCL registry down, and we felt that it was not an unwarranted imposition on consumers to re-register," explains the CMA's Hill.

Also, the EBR in the US from the last interaction is three months. Canada's longer interaction period reflects the more defined seasons in most of the country that for example would otherwise prevent lawn care firms that shut down in the fall from calling their clients in March or April, when the ground begins to warm up.

### \* Calling Hours

These are 9am to 9:30pm local time Monday-Fridays and 10am-6pm Saturdays and Sundays. The hours follow those set in the CMA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice.

**US Laws:** the federal regulations set calling hours as between 8am and 9pm seven days a week.

### \* Explicit Consent

Canada, like the US, allows companies to explicitly obtain consent from consumers whether they would like to call them even if the consumers have registered on the DNC list, and give them a chance to say no. An example could be asking them "would you mind if we called you from time to time?"

### \* Outbound Introductions

All calls must have either the real or fake names of the agents, the name of the marketer, and if being made by a third party e.g. a teleservices firm, that vendor's name.

**US Laws:** there is no specific requirement for naming third parties.

### \* Consumer Feedback

Telemarketers must have consumer-accessible local or toll-free numbers. Calls must be answered either by a live agent or a voice-mail system to take messages for the consumer, and be returned in three business days.

US Laws: there has to be some means of contacting consumers but the regulations do not spell this out.

#### \* Abandonment Rate

The predictive dialer abandonment rate is five percent, with abandoned calls defined as those that are not connected to agent within two seconds.

US Laws: The abandonment rate is no more than three percent.

#### \* Fees

The DNCL fees range from \$55 per month for one area code to \$11,280 for all area codes annually. Telemarketers also can obtain up to 100 individual numbers at \$.50 per number per query session.

US Laws: Data for up to five area codes will be available for free. Beyond that, there is an annual fee of \$62 per area code of data, with a maximum annual fee of \$17,050 for the entire U.S. database.

#### \* Jurisdiction

There are no allowances for separate or supplementary provincial regulations. There is also only one federal agency, the CRTC, in charge of telemarketing legislation, unlike the US where it is split between the FCC and FTC. That means the Canadian DNCL and other regulations are a one-stop-shop, thereby simplifying compliance and enforcement.

US Laws: Individual states are allowed to have DNC registries, calling hours, and enforcement provisions.

There is, however, telemarketer registration similar to that in many US states, which provinces are allowed to do as with any other business. So far British Columbia is the only province that requires it, according to CMA's Hill so far other provinces have not actively considered following suit.

The CMA, he says, has monitored the development, implementation, and administration of BC's registry to make sure that the provisions and costs are fair to telemarketers while maintaining the aim of the regulations, which is to protect consumers against unscrupulous firms. It had contacted the province during the drafting of these rules to help ensure this.

"British Columbia felt it was dealing with a different fraud-related challenge because it has a large percentage of seniors living there who are especially vulnerable to these

criminal activities," explains Hill. "The government felt that having a licensing regime would allow it to identify the bona fide telemarketers as an additional step to limit that from happening. Other provinces, however, may have taken the view that they can go after the perpetrators through law enforcements and consumer education, which BC also does, but without having a registry."

#### \* Enforcement and Penalties

The CRTC will, as of Sept. 30 have fining authority for all telemarketing regulations that it did not have before. It will have a third party, that it is in the process of seeking, to investigate DNCL and other telemarketing complaints.

This firm will work closely with Bell Canada ([News - Alert](#)), the national DNCL operator and the CRTC to ensure that complaints are dealt with consistently and in a timely manner.

The CRTC will have a third party to investigate DNCL and other telemarketing complaints. All telemarketers, including those making exempt calls, will pay fees to the investigator to cover its costs. The fee amount will be determined once the successful bidder has been selected and is expected to be approximately \$100.

If the CRTC finds that a telemarketer has not followed the rules, it will issue a notice of violation and impose penalties for each violation of up to \$1,500 for individuals and up to \$15,000 for corporations.

#### US Laws:

Telemarketers who violated Federal telemarketing regulations are subject to fines up to \$11,000 per violation. States may levy penalties on top of that if there are also violations of state laws.

The Direct Marketing Association (DMA) has been watching the Canadian regulations very closely as many DMA members have operations in and market to Canada.

Jerry Cerasale, senior vice president, government affairs, points out that there have been problems with maintaining a clean DNC list in the US. The government gets lists of abandonment numbers from the local phone companies and then scrubs the DNC registry for them.

Unfortunately in too many instances 'abandoned' doesn't mean that at all. When a carrier disconnects a customer's number for nonpayment but is reconnected when the

customer pays up that number is still abandoned even though it is the same number.

"Canada was following the US with these regulations as our marketers have had to live with them," says Cerasale. "There are two main positive approaches in Canada and they are one national standard and the shortened registration period that avoids the list cleansing issue. Time will tell if the latter is a better solution than cleaning the list. In the long run the Canadian approach will probably be the better one rather than a permanent filing as the US list may turn out to be full of errors."

#### Compliance advice

To get ready for the new Canadian rules, the CMA's Hill recommends telemarketers, and teleservices agencies to get their legal, operations, HR, and technical teams to review the regulations and requirements and make any changes to Canadian-targeted programs to ensure compliance.

For example these organizations would need to look at revising consumer agreements and or applications, supplier contracts, and scripts. They may need to implement toll-free or local numbers or adjust faxes. They should prepare for list download and new record keeping. Staff, both agents and supervisors would have to be trained on the new rules. Predictive dialers would have to be adjusted to meet the new Canadian specifications and records kept on their operation.

Also, US firms that are contracting with Canadian teleservices or American or other non-Canadian agencies to call on their behalf should make sure that the agreements cover off on Canada's rules.

The CMA's Hill is confident that most Canadian firms, and US and other foreign companies operating in Canada will follow the new regulations. He strongly recommends that telemarketers calling into Canada from the US and other countries obey the rules, including downloading the DNCL.

"While the CRTC does not have any jurisdiction outside of Canada we hope that companies calling into Canada will abide by them so that they don't annoy Canadian consumers, which will generate complaints to the CRTC and hurt their own brand," says Hill. **CIS**

*(Ed. Note: this article is for general information only. For specific details please contact the regulatory agencies or consult with attorneys who are well-versed on these laws and regulations)*





# Customer Interaction Solutions TMC Labs Innovation Awards 2008

This is our ninth installment of the TMC Labs Innovation Awards recognizing the truly unique and innovative products and services within the call center industry. We proudly bestow a TMC Labs Innovation Award on 20 deserving winners.

Picking the most innovative products and services is always challenging, however the contact center industry has always been — and will continue to be — at the forefront of developing and deploying bleeding edge communications and productivity technology.

The results will be published in two parts in order to accommodate our in-depth write-ups for the winners. The complete winners list will be published in both this issue and the subsequent October issue of Customer Interaction Solutions magazine, however we will write the detailed write-ups in alphabetical order beginning with Aplicor this month and ending with Numara Software. Next month, we start with OAISYS ([News - Alert](#)) and end with Toshiba.

## Aplicor, Inc. Aplicor Enterprise [www.aplicor.com](http://www.aplicor.com)

Aplicor offers a subscription-based hosted CRM and ERP Web-based software solutions for mid-market and enterprise organizations. The CRM application includes separate but integrated software modules for Sales Force Automation (SFA), Marketing Management, Customer Support and Partner Relationship Management (PRM). The ERP application automates accounting practices and delivers real-time and enterprise-wide performance visibility with dashboards, data warehouses and scorecard reporting. The ERP application is fully integrated with CRM and includes software modules for accounting, human resources, distribution and manufacturing.

Aplicor Enterprise is a zero footprint hosted solution requiring just a browser. Aplicor operates synchronized and redundant data centers in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia. The application is hosted using SQL Server database clustering, highly redundant Web farms and a multiple layer information security infrastructure that is audited and certified by ISO (ISO 27001) and NIST (National Institute of Science and Technology Certification and Accreditation) annually.

Aplicor claims they delivered the first enterprise-wide hosted business software solution targeted specifically for midmarket and enterprise organizations back in July 2001. Since the first release, Aplicor has acquired over 150 global customers and over 20,000 subscription users.

Aplicor Enterprise was the first on-demand solution to offer an isolated tenancy hosting model.

Unlike the more traditional multi-tenant hosting model, which requires all customers to share a common database and upgrade in mass without their consent, Aplicor Enterprise uses an 'isolated tenancy' hosting approach, which grants every client their own autonomous database. This architectural difference provides physical data segregation (from other clients), more flexible integration, more customization, predictable performance, increased security, assured privacy, and sure-safe backup. This architectural shift also permits version control whereby clients have the option to upgrade to the next software version based on their schedule and not the hosting vendor's schedule.

Aplicor told TMC Labs, "Perhaps the ultimate litmus test of this unique delivery architecture model is Aplicor's unmatched delivery uptime history. Since implementing this architecture in March 2003, Aplicor has incurred no downtime whatsoever. Since April 2003, Aplicor has maintained its performance visibility online with a public dashboard that displays uptime, latency, packet loss, jitter and host system speed."

Lastly, in the last six months they've added a new graphical ad-hoc report writer, PPC (Pay Per Click) integration to marketing campaigns, new Asian languages, including Japanese, Chinese simplified, Chinese traditional and Korean, enhanced dashboards by role, and more.

**Ascendent Systems ([News - Alert](#))**  
**Ascendent Voice Mobility Suite**  
[www.ascendentsystems.com](http://www.ascendentsystems.com)

The Ascendent Voice Mobility Suite ([News - Alert](#)) is targeted to mid-to-large sized enter-

prises looking to tie mobile devices into their corporate telecommunications infrastructure. The Ascendent Voice Mobility Suite is an enterprise-level fixed-mobile convergence (FMC) software solution that helps hectic mobile employees become more efficient by providing single-number reachability, consolidated voicemail and corporate phone functions to any mobile device, ensuring that workers will never miss a call regardless of where they are or what device (cell phones, smartphones, soft phones, home phones, etc.) they are using.

Workers simply use their mobile phones as a mobile extension of their office desk phones. They can make and receive calls on their mobile phones and have it appear as if they are at their desks. They have access to all of the desk phone features normally available on the wired phone such as extension dialing, transfer, park, hold. Mobile workers also have the ability to seamlessly move a call in progress from one device to another without hanging up and re-establishing a new call. Other built-in features include find me/follow me, easy conferencing, and broadcast notification capabilities.

The Ascendent Voice Mobility Suite software is simply installed on a server and integrates with a company's PBX. Ascendent Voice Mobility Suite can work with virtually any vendors' PBX (TDM, IP, or mixed environment) and connects to the PBX through either direct SIP or with PRI through a voice gateway.





## Introducing the Outbound Call Center Online Community

Five9's solutions deliver the benefits of million-dollar systems, but without their hidden costs. Five9's predictive dialer efficiently and effectively helps manage product campaigns, generate sales leads, process account collections, raise funds, administer research surveys, and conduct political and community initiatives. Outbound Call Center campaigns also help increase agent productivity, improve sales results, lower infrastructure costs and increase business agility.

Call centers around the world count on Five9's Outbound Call Center software for more profitable and productive outbound campaigns.

- Free consultations
- Free trials
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- Feature articles
- Case studies
- Technology briefs

<http://outbound-call-center.tmcnet.com/>



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Aplicor, Inc.	Aplicor Enterprise	www.aplicor.com
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IEX Corporation, a NICE company	IEX TotalView Workforce Management	www.iex.com
KANA Software	KANA Suite v.10	www.kana.com
Merced Systems, Inc.	Merced Performance Suite	www.mercedsystems.com
NICE Systems Ltd.	NICE Interaction Analytics	www.nice.com
NTRglobal	NTRsupport	www.ntrglobal.com
Numara Software	Numara FootPrints	www.numarasoftware.com
OAISYS	Talkument	www.oaisys.com
Openet	FusionWorks™ Policy Manager	www.openet.com
Premiere Global Services	Accounts Receivable Management	www.premiereglobal.com
Prosodie Interactive	Pro VACD 3.0	www.ivrinc.com
RingCentral	RingCentral 5.0	www.ringcentral.com
salesforce.com	Salesforce to Salesforce	www.salesforce.com
ShoreTel, Inc.	ShoreTel 8.0	www.shoretel.com
Siemens Enterprise Communications	HiPath ProCenter	www.siemensenterprise.com
Soffront Software, Inc.	Soffront CRM Version 8.7	www.soffront.com
Toshiba America Information Systems, Telecommunication Systems Division	Strata ACD IP Call Center Solution with Net Phone Presence	www.telecom.toshiba.com

The most recent upgrade, version 4.5, significantly advanced fixed-mobile convergence for the enterprise by offering an intuitive and secure integration with BlackBerry ([News - Alert](#)) Enterprise Solution Server with BlackBerry MVS Services to enable and provide usability enhancements for BlackBerry smartphone users. Additionally, integration with the BlackBerry Enterprise Server allows fixed-mobile convergence features to be built directly into the BlackBerry phone application, making it simple for users to access enterprise voice features (like extension dialing, hold, etc.) right from the visual phone menu on BlackBerry. Unlike other solutions on the market, there is no need for BlackBerry smartphone users to use and learn a separate application, they simply use the same phone client they have always used but now it has additional features available in the menu.

Ascendent Systems told TMC Labs they are “the first to provide an on-device, visual, fixed-mobile convergence solution integrated directly into the BlackBerry smartphone phone application. However, despite Ascendent Systems’ position as a subsidiary of Research in Motion ([News - Alert](#)) (RIM) — the company that brought BlackBerry to market — Ascendent Voice Mobile Suite continues to provide device- and carrier-agnostic support, enabling enterprises to garner the benefits of mobile while keeping the appearance of being in the office.”

**Cicero Inc.**  
**Cicero**  
[www.ciceroinc.com](http://www.ciceroinc.com)

The Cicero Platform is a framework for organizing, integrating, and enabling an organization’s enterprise software applications. Using Cicero, you can quickly provide three types of integration: First, Process Integration allows you to streamline workflow and business processes by simplifying navigation, eliminating searching for information, and reducing steps in business tasks without writing or altering application code. Secondly, Data Integration enables you to share data between applications and systems, reducing the need to copy/cut and paste or otherwise enter information in one or more applications. Thirdly, Visual Integration provides a logical organization of the information on the end user desktop using pass-through integration where applications are displayed and organized in their native user interface such as in a book and tab metaphor or using overlay integration where a new application such as a composite, mash-up, or dashboard is placed over existing applications. Cicero contains an extensive list of action libraries, which provide the logic to integrate applications running in a contact center.

Cicero technology leverages the relationship and communication that exists between applications and the underlying Microsoft Windows operating system. Using Cicero Studio you create a logical model or map of each application’s elements or objects (such as entry fields and push-buttons) and events (such as mouse clicks) regardless of when the application was created or the programming language that was used. This logical model is created without having to modify or access the source code of any application. After mapping each application,

you describe the business processes in terms of event-driven workflows using wizards and high-level commands, plugging in the application objects as needed and adding event-driven logic and workflow. For example, Cicero can be used to integrate CRM applications such as Siebel with legacy applications without writing new code. At run-time, Cicero Runtime listens for events between the applications and operating system and inserts the integration logic between the application objects (within a single application and across multiple applications) creating the integrated desktop.

Cicero told TMC Labs, “Cicero is the original or first desktop integration product developed to integrate applications at the desktop. We are the first company to bring this new paradigm and technology to the contact center space. In particular, Cicero, Inc., was the first to develop a comprehensive toolset that provides non-invasive integration solution for applications across platforms — Web, CRM, client-server, 3270/legacy, Java, etc. — for customer service organizations.”

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**CosmoCall Universe**  
[www.cosmocom.com](http://www.cosmocom.com)

CosmoCall Universe (CCU) brings unified customer communications to large, distributed enterprises. Essentially, CCU is an IP-based contact center framework for enterprises and service providers who require a scalable, multi-channel, communications infrastructure to serve both inbound and outbound contact center requirements. CCU is a high-capacity, high-availability, multi-tenant virtual contact center platform based entirely on IP. CCU leverages IP communication and open, standards-based interfaces, including standard SIP VoIP gateways, as well as software written in C++ and .NET ([News - Alert](#)), which is object-oriented. The platform unifies all communication channels, including telephone, videophone, e-mail, voice mail, and Web chat. It also unifies the contact center functions of automatic call distribution (ACD), interactive voice and video response (IVVR), computer telephony integration (CTI) ([News - Alert](#)), predictive, preview, and progressive dialing with campaign management, recording and quality monitoring, interaction history, and administration and reporting. Essentially, CosmoCall Universe is what its name states, supporting every communications technology in the known “universe” that can enhance contact center communications with customers and coworkers.

While CCU is equally beneficial in a premise-based environment, when deployed in an on-demand model, all of the servers sit at the hosting location(s) and all that is needed on the customer end is an IP-connected PC with headset (for softphone) and/or an IP





phone. CosmoCom's platform is what they call "Virtual by Design" and was architected from the ground-up as a unified, all-IP contact center platform more than a decade ago. CosmoCom's patents include "the" patent for multimedia routing over IP. CosmoCom's platform focus early on in multi-tenancy has made it a popular choice by telcos and other service providers. Further, CosmoCom has also pioneered many technologies including IVVR or Interactive Voice and Video Response and the video contact center and unique deployment models enabled by unified customer communications.

CosmoCom explained to TMC Labs, "CosmoCom developed and patented the first all-IP contact center. In creating its first system in 1996, CosmoCom actually worked with Dialogic (**News - Alert**) on board-level mods that, in effect, created the first VoIP gateway. CosmoCom was also the first company to create a unified customer communication platform, which queues and routes communication sessions via all channels in one U-Queue, and to one agent client. CosmoCom was also the first to unify ACD, IVR, and CTI in one platform. Finally, CosmoCom was the first company to provide an all-software contact center platform that works with any standards-based VoIP infrastructure and requires no special telephone interface hardware or DSP hardware of its own."

### **IEX Corporation, a NICE company** **IEX TotalView Workforce Management** **www.iex.com**

The IEX TotalView Workforce Management (TWM) system enables contact centers to deliver consistent service with lower operating costs and improve employee morale. It is designed to improve the scheduling and agent management processes in both single site and multisite environments. The system's advanced features include skills-based and multimedia scheduling, real-time and historical adherence, intraday and performance management, enterprise reporting and data exchange, vacation and holiday planning as well as short and long-term resource planning.

IEX (**News - Alert**) claims their platform is the first system to support skills-based routing in a multisite environment and with multiple call routing configurations. IEX along with its parent company NICE, has been the first optimization provider to leverage a service-oriented architecture (SOA) to bring together workforce management, quality management and performance management solutions.

The IEX TWM system is further enhanced with pre-built integration to other NICE SmartCenter solutions, such as quality management and performance management. They offer a single

server architecture that simplifies installation and maintenance. In the last year, IEX has added several new features, including home-based scheduling which creates optimal schedules for at-home agents by allowing them to bid for the schedules they want to work and giving them the ability to control the number of hours they work each day of each week. Another new feature is Express Messenger, which reduces the time management spends communicating last minute schedule changes by sending automated alerts via e-mail to agents and supervisors. Another new feature is "Intraday Shrinkage Management" which eliminates unnecessary overtime and identifies opportunities for meetings, training sessions and opportunities to send agents home early by helping the center more closely monitor unplanned shrinkage (tardy agents, those who call in sick, etc.). The new Overtime Bidding is pretty innovative as it enables agents to pick up extra hours by allowing them to bid on overtime. Finally, they recently added an Oracle database option.

### **KANA Software** **KANA Suite v.10** **www.kana.com**

KANA helps deliver exceptional service across every channel — phone, e-mail, chat and Web resulting in high customer retention and loyalty. KANA Suite v.10 is perfect for financial services, telecommunications, retail, travel, and hospitality where competition is often fierce leading to customer defections. KANA Suite 10 is a multi-channel customer service solution designed help companies increase customer satisfaction and loyalty. The solution helps companies reduce costs while creating service experiences that are proactive, interactive and intuitive. KANA integrates multiple communication channels — while blending knowledge management capabilities across the end-to-end service experience.

KANA enables organizations to engage proactively with customers before, during, and after the service experience to avert escalations and boost customer satisfaction. New features include proactive service alerts with specialized rules and delivery templates, powerful classification and auto-categorization capabilities, and proactive monitoring for Web self-service and chat with offer-acceptance analysis — including the ability to monitor any field on any Web site for activity or interaction. Two other new features include self-Service accelerators — including fly-over summaries of search results, look-ahead search, and streamlined navigation and proactive inquiry deflection with intelligent de-escalation. KANA explained, "The KANA Suite enables companies to capture the voice of the customer, learn from explicit and implicit feedback, and take action on these insights. With rules, routing, and queuing applied to knowledge feedback from agents and customers you get actionable feedback."

KANA offers advanced e-mail classification capabilities that automate the process of capturing, documenting, interpreting, routing and prescribing answers, as well as streamlining high-volume e-mail and Web form management. KANA offers survey dashboards to spotlight performance across queues, categories, and agent performance. Using KANA, a company can reduce costs, improve service levels and optimize agent efficiency, increase response consistency, and reduce reply time. Importantly, knowledge is blended in the service process across phone, e-mail, Web, and chat rather than being silos of information. This enables companies to manage customer conversations across every major communications channel while providing fast accurate responses to customer questions.

### **Merced Systems, Inc. (**News - Alert**)** **Merced Performance Suite** **www.mercedsystems.com**

Merced Performance Suite is a performance management tool that integrates data from disparate sources across the operation and automates critical processes, helping to improve productivity and customer satisfaction. One of the components of this Suite is Merced Incentive Management, which enables companies to better manage their sales productivity and customer acquisition efforts, automating the process of commission, bonus, and incentive administration in support of any type of variable pay strategy. The application offers organizations greater calculation process accuracy, improved sales force motivation and retention, and ultimately a pay for performance system, which rewards employees for achieving targets.

Through automated reporting and comprehensive employee dashboards, Merced Performance Suite and Merced Incentive Management not only integrate and consolidate data from across an organization to offer a holistic view of performance, the applications also deliver highly personalized information to every employee in the operation, helping staff to self-correct and improve their own performance.

They offer both on-premise and hosted solution. In both cases, Merced Systems' products are 100 percent Web-based and therefore only require a standard Web browser. The Merced Systems Hosting facility houses highly scalable, secure infrastructure of standard servers and databases to support hosted customers.

Merced Systems told TMC Labs, "Merced Systems has been and continues to be the Sales and Service Performance Management category innovator and first to have introduced integrated best practice workflows. However, with its acquisition of Practique Associates, the leading European vendor of incentive compensation



management software, Merced Systems is now the first and only company on the market to offer unified performance management solutions that serve both sales and service organizations, including contact centers, field sales, retail sales, partner operations, back office functions, and field service groups, in a unified fashion."

Sales and Service Performance Management (SSPM) enables organizations to drive performance across all customer-facing functions and dramatically improve customer lifetime economic value. Merced Systems' unified SSPM offering includes incentive compensation management, consolidated reporting, dashboards, analytics, coaching, and other applications that drive behavior change among customer-facing and servicing staff. Other features include automated best practice workflow, such as coaching and development activities, automated incentive calculations eliminating human error associated with manual systems, and predictive modeling, which enables strategic plan definition and analysis of projected results.

**NICE Systems Ltd. (News - Alert)**  
**NICE Interaction Analytics**  
**www.nice.com**

NICE Interaction Analytics offers mass analysis of interaction content, automatic categorization, trending and root-cause analysis of multi-dimensional customer interaction data. It leverages advanced new technologies such as Advanced Speech Analytics, enabling NICE Interaction Analytics to provide valuable information based on keywords, call flow, and mood and emotional parameters, on both the customer and agent side of an interaction.

NICE told TMC Labs, "The NICE solution provides a multi-dimensional picture by integrating speech information with data from additional sources such as the company's CRM system. This approach enables the organization to automatically identify key business issues, prioritize them and ultimately resolve them by performing an advanced root-cause analysis that is based on data-driven insights that were previously unavailable to decision makers." They added, "Customers using Interaction Analytics are achieving noticeable improvement in service level, operational efficiency, customer churn, and agent retention — and are moving forward to increase sales and marketing effectiveness."

Interaction Analytics from NICE utilizes speech analytics that analyzes 100 percent of the interactions in a cost-effective manner. Alternative solutions only take a sampling, such as every tenth interaction to try and gauge customer satisfaction and agent's aptitude. This capability to analyze all customer interactions allows it to proactively identify trends, anticipate opportu-

nities, adjust processes to meet business objectives and take action at the right time. It can for example flag calls for further analysis, such as customers at risk of defecting.

One unique capability is Fraud Detection, which enables corporations to prepare a high-risk profile database of known fraudsters' voice prints to be used in comparison with authenticated users, allowing alerts to be placed on events where no extraordinary transaction has taken place. Being the recording vendor as well as the analytics provider the solution extracts "voiceprints" from already recorded interactions with customers, hence no enrollment is needed. The creation of a black list to prevent fraud and of a "white list" of known users is used in conjunction with customer data, such as CTI transactions etc., and will alert a contact center when fraudulent activity is being perpetrated; stopping a known identity thief or helping identify one before any irregular transaction has been reported.

NICE's solution includes a range of speech analysis engines combined with advanced rules engines capabilities, that can determine what and when to analyze according to a wealth of information including CTI data, customer demographics, agent's screen content, transactional data e-mail and chat. NICE's multi-dimensional approach means that advanced analytics are performed not only on keywords, but are derived from a variety of additional sources such as call flow analysis, customer feedback, business data and screen events. NICE explained, "This contributes to the effectiveness and accuracy of the analysis and allows our customers to extract from their interactions insights that can help them address major business issues."

**NTRglobal**  
**NTRsupport**  
**www.ntrglobal.com**

NTRsupport provides innovative end-to-end on-demand remote support that enables organizations to deliver exceptional service quality while reducing costs for their customer interactions strategy. NTRsupport from NTRglobal now offers a suite of completely integrated tools including FirstHelp, a self-service portal, remote diagnostics, unified communication tools and two-way remote control. NTRsupport provides several different ways of interacting with customers, including chat, e-mail, visiting a Web site, answering a voice (VoIP) call, and even new video call capabilities. Without disrupting the customer session and interaction between customer and agent, NTRsupport deploys remote diagnostics to speed and support the analysis of the problem, which then can according to the expertise of the live agent, can be escalated to the appropriate level and type of communication

tool necessary to resolve the situation successfully all while staying within the same platform.

NTRsupport's chat sessions are streamlined with pre-scripted greetings, answers to common queries, and Push URL (opens a browser window to a specific page on the customer's computer). Customers can request chat logs for future reference while Operators can save logs to the incident history in the Helpdesk module. Proactive Chat, also known as NTRsupport Webcare, invites Web page users to a chat session after they've been browsing for a predefined period of time. Operators are able to helpfully intervene, offering assistance to clients or potential customers that have proven interest through an extended Web visit. It also features demonstration tools that enable you to draw, write or highlight areas on the customer's screen, enabling operators to quickly explain problems and how to resolve them. Customer-facing elements of NTRsupport can be branded with any corporate identity. Multiple brands can be applied to chat windows to show identity associated with the application being supported. Click-to-chat buttons, e-mail signatures, surveys, and other features can also be branded.

NTRglobal told us, "We offer an end-to-end remote support solution with self-service, remote diagnostic without user disruption, remote control by Agent, helpdesk to follow up incidences and Administration area. Some direct competitors offer self-service but through a partner, which means that you have to integrate both products."

By integrating NTRsupport with a CRM system, an operator can see all previous communications with the customers as well as all technical information such as previous diagnostic sessions. NTRsupport can be integrated with ACD or PBX rules functionality, allowing intelligent call routing based upon specified criteria such as language needs, product type, or customer classification, such as paid premium service levels. Customer groups can be created and specific agents assigned to those groups with priorities set to specify the order in which an agent receives a call.

Additional features of NTRsupport include, desktop sharing or co-surfing that allows the representative to see where the customer is browsing and transfer files and information via a secured chat; VoIP and videoconference; support in 15 different languages; preset and customizable chat responses.

**Numara Software (News - Alert)**  
**Numara FootPrints 8**  
**www.numarasoftware.com**

The Numara FootPrints family of service desk



management solutions are 100 percent Web-based service desk products and services that streamline and automate service desk and customer support operations. Their flagship solution, Numara FootPrints, provides comprehensive service desk automation with ease-of-use, fast implementation, on-the-fly customization, and flexibility for multiple uses. Numara FootPrints technology is available in multiple versions — Numara FootPrints, Numara FootPrints for eService, and the Numara FootPrints Hosting Service.

Numara FootPrints helps manage customer support delivery, maximize the efficiency of contact centers, speed customer problem resolution, provide agents with easy access to resources, and improve the support experience for both customers and agents. It tracks and organizes support requests, tickets, communications and issues through multiple channels, and ensures that customers' needs are met and do not fall through the cracks.

Numara FootPrints includes extensive, built-in workflow and automation functionality that incorporates an organization's existing best practices and business rules and processes. Organizations can use the pre-configured templates for customer support, help desk, compliance (such as HIPAA, Sarbanes-Oxley, etc.), development and bug tracking, IT resource tracking, facilities management, and more, or create their own template in just minutes. Organizations typically set up numerous separate, partitioned projects with different database instances and cross-project reporting can be easily implemented.

Numara FootPrints offers extensive customization capabilities without requiring costly and dedicated programming, consultants, and training. Core features of the product include a centralized repository to log all service and support requests (issues, incidents, trouble-tickets, etc.) coming in via multiple communication channels (phone, e-mail, Web, live chat, and wireless PDAs), a customizable and comprehensive business rules and workflow engine, self-service online, knowledge management, service level management, two-way e-mail management, live chat, and comprehensive reporting and dashboards. Expanded capabilities are available in add-on modules for dynamic links to corporate directories (SQL, LDAP, etc.) and sales automation tools, synchronization with PIMs, change management, telephony integration, dynamic access to proven solutions knowledge, and more. Typical support management features are included such as record, assign, escalate, track, manage, and report on all requests and problems throughout their lifecycle.

New features in Footprints 8 include a personalized drag-and-drop dashboard and the ability to display live external RSS data, such as news headlines. Also, new Ajax technology has been

implemented to increase the speed and usability of Numara FootPrints pages. Ajax works by exchanging small amounts of data with the server behind the scenes, so that the entire Web page does not have to be reloaded each time the user requests a change. An enhanced workflow, including multiple work calendars for service

level management, a pending clock available for SLAs, InstaCalc, AutoFields and drag and drop escalation rules was also added. One truly innovative feature is the ability to use Numara FootPrints Live eSupport to diagnose and solve issues through Web-based remote control, VoIP, live chat, a white board, and file transfer capabilities. **CIS**



# T R A C E R

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By Joe Fleischer



## Qualitative Improvement

How call center managers can influence their companies.

**W**hen I visit call centers, agents and managers often share with me why they have chosen careers in customer service. The reasons agents cite often include flexible hours, opportunities for career growth, and most important, the fulfillment that comes with helping people.

The best call center managers make the transition from agents to supervisors when they derive satisfaction toward achieving a dual purpose: assisting customers and enabling agents to develop in their careers. Managers with this mindset recognize that quality assurance, too, serves a dual purpose for their companies. By listening to recordings of agents' conversations with customers, supervisors identify ways agents can do their jobs better. Beyond the call center, the recordings reveal ways that the entire company can improve its communication with customers.

Let's say, for example, that customers call to complain about new late fees from a credit card company. Agents are typically the first people who hear the complaints, but they are not necessarily in a position to suggest that the company rethink the policy that led to the complaints. That is why the most effective call center managers share recordings with their colleagues and bring to light issues that the entire company needs to resolve.

In the scenario we've described, the call center manager with the credit card company refers to recordings to show that numerous customers are closing their accounts in response to the late-fee policy. Based on listening to the recordings, the manager recommends that the company clarify the late-fee policy that appears on customers' credit card statements, and suggests that the company consider alternatives that are less likely to alienate customers.

To influence colleagues, call center managers do not have to describe the day-to-day details of how they minimize hold times or how they devise schedules to maximize agents' utilization. These details are essential for call center managers to do their jobs, but they reveal little to the rest of the company about how customers behave. An interaction with a customer is a story that requires interpretation, and therefore, listening. That is why recordings are so valuable. By enabling your colleagues to listen to them, you present a far more compelling demonstration of how customers respond to your company's decisions than if you rely on spreadsheets alone.

Call center managers who pay attention to qualitative attributes of calls are better advocates for customers, and for the agents who assist them, than managers who limit their analysis to quantitative metrics. When I first covered call centers nearly 12 years ago, many managers I interviewed cited shrinking headcounts and declining handle times to demonstrate how they made their centers more efficient. They often attributed gains in efficiency

not to agents, but to call routing systems that shortened the timeframes for customers to connect with agents, and IVR systems that replaced agents as the primary source of information about their account balances.

The problem with this way of thinking is that it fails to account for the majority of a center's productivity. The speed with which we route calls is of little consequence if we don't evaluate what happens during them. In addition to measuring the productivity of these interactions in terms of how agents spend their time, we also have to find out if customers perceive that the time they spend communicating with agents is worthwhile.

Call centers have come a long way since the 1990s in their ability to integrate quantitative and qualitative observations. Yet even qualitative observations are inadequate if the only people who have the opportunity to listen to or evaluate agents' interactions with customers are in your call center.

You can evaluate interactions more thoroughly and accurately when you seek more perspectives. That is why, besides recordings, quality assurance ought to incorporate the results of surveys. Many of the leading providers of call monitoring systems let you generate automated surveys; these systems transfer a random selection of callers to an IVR system to complete the surveys after their conversations with agents. When you augment your company's internal evaluations of calls with customers' immediate feedback, your expectations for service better reflect those of your customers.

Quality assurance also entails collaboration. At the very least, companies ought to include call center managers not only in discussions about how they will execute marketing campaigns, but also as they plan these campaigns at the outset. When companies consider changes to policies involving customers and how they will communicate these changes, they would do well to ask call center managers how customers have previously responded in similar circumstances. Call center managers establish influence within their companies when they recognize that beyond recording conversations, quality assurance is about enabling their companies to learn from them. **CIS**

*— Joe Fleischer has covered the call center industry for more than 11 years. With Brendan Read, he co-authored the book *The Complete Guide to Customer Support*.*



## Contact Center Study Identifies Strengths and Weaknesses

A common theme throughout commercial enterprises is the emphasis placed on quality customer service and maintaining customer loyalty. At present, communication and financial services companies are doing a better job at using customer service as a strategic differentiator than other companies.

This success is due in large part to the fact that they are more sophisticated and proactive in terms of the type and depth of contact center technologies that are implemented.

Genesys Communications Laboratories commissioned a study among U.S. companies to gauge the success of contact centers. The result of this study revealed which industries are leading the charge in customer service offerings, and which are lagging behind.

To measure the overall state of customer service, the study polled 385 contact center managers from communication, financial services, insurance, government, utilities and healthcare organizations to determine what business practices and technologies were being deployed or planned for improving the customer experience.

One common characteristic is the strong likelihood that companies not currently using an IP-based contact center will likely

implement one in the next two to three years. The study found that 66 percent of financial services companies, 45 percent of communications companies, 58 percent of utilities and 83 percent of healthcare companies not using the technology are moving toward IP installations.

"Consumers often have intuition about which industries offer the best customer service experience, and which ones use more dynamic customer service technologies," said Paul Segre ([News - Alert](#)), CEO, Genesys, in a statement. "This research gives us insight into where each vertical segment is in the adoption continuum."

The results of this study also indicate that government organizations have more clearly defined measurements for contact center performance. Despite this progress, they still lag behind other industries, having installed fewer dynamic contact center technologies, such as outbound calling, customer-to-agent e-mail, instant messaging or Web callback.

The research also determined that while nearly two-third of the Financial Services companies are not currently using an IP-based contact center, more than half of them are likely to implement one in the next two to three years. In addition, insurance companies are the highest users of touchtone IVR with a 92 percent adoption rate.

Communication companies appear to be leading in use of SMS/text messaging and Web chat. Only 23 percent of healthcare contact centers are likely to attempt up- or cross-selling as they view the practice as inappropriate or time-consuming.

The results of this study highlight specific opportunities throughout multiple industries for advances that can be made within contact centers to actually drive higher customer satisfaction. While there is no one-size-fits-all in for contact centers, there are specific steps that can be taken that will not only improve performance, but also productivity. **CIS**

## Study Recommends Contact Center Self-Assess to Ensure Optimal Hiring Practices

Hiring in the contact center industry is one of the most daunting tasks as it is layered with high costs, high probability of attrition, a specific desired skill set for a job that can be both challenging and stressful.

For some individuals, the contact center environment can be the perfect job. Perhaps they have the option of a flexible schedule or they can work from home or perhaps the job is providing necessary skills for the next anticipated step in their career path.

The reality in this industry however, is that many people are placed in the position of contact center agent without the proper skills, training or a realistic view of the demands of the job.

It is for these reasons and others that many contact centers deal with high — and rising — attrition, battling to keep costs under control while the cost of hiring continues to climb.

Forrester Research ([News - Alert](#)) recently published a "Self-Assessment for Contact Centers" authored by Elizabeth Herrell. In this research

report, Herrell takes the position that all firms should perform an audit before making outsourcing or upgrade decisions.

Such self-assessment is essential to not only ensure that the customer is provided with the best possible customer service, but to also produce to most efficient contact center possible.

Consider for a moment that personnel typically accounts for roughly 65 percent of the total cost of contact center operations. When the contact center collaborates with IT managers, areas that drive up costs or lead to inefficiencies can be identified. The area that should always be at the top of consideration is hiring and training practices.

Herrell notes that contact center managers should carefully document skills required for agents that will promote efficient operations and only hire

those individuals who meet the criteria.

Those agents who feel better able and prepared to handle their duties are more likely to enjoy their work and remain on the job longer than those who feel the duties they face are overwhelming or far-reaching. Training plays a key role in ensuring that these agents are ready for the tasks to which they are assigned.

Once an agent is put in place, it is imperative that contact center managers deliver coaching and skills development tools, assign individual performance goals, identify career paths within the contact center and provide the necessary training for advancement.

One of the biggest shortfalls that will often plague the contact center is that the recruiting and retaining of contact center agents is not viewed on an ongoing process that is constantly changing.

Without an active and involved role in the process, the center is more likely to hire individuals not suited for the job. Such mistakes lead to higher attrition that generates higher costs. **CIS**



By Joshua Shale,  
Director of Marketing,  
VoltDelta

From The Hosted Speech Experts

## Already Spent Millions on Premise-based Solutions But Still Need More? Hosted Solutions Can Help.

“**H**osted solutions” is the latest revolution in contact center technology and it seems that every technology and provider has at least some hosted offering and contact centers have been taking advantage of what they have to offer. Centers that have made significant investments in premise-based technologies may tend to shy away from considering a hosted solution. Who would want to advocate a hosted, Op-Ex solution when an investment in premise-based solutions is still new to the center?

Hosted versus premise-based is not an all or nothing prospect; successful centers have learned to use a blend of both in order to maximize, affect and minimize capital expense. This is done by enabling hosted solutions to compliment premise-based in order to meet the needs of center.

### Hosted Solutions to Compliment Premise-Based Systems

Every implementation of contact center technologies involves some sort of compromise; no solution will address all needs and requirements. Expense and functionality considerations force decisions that are required by the laws of diminishing returns. There are several ways in which Hosted Solutions can compliment premise-based systems to provide a more complete and effective center.

### Hosted for Seasonal Volume Spikes

Contact centers that experience seasonal call spikes may have trouble justifying the purchase and maintenance of infrastructure that will be idle except for those peak volume times. Hosted solutions can be brought on board to handle the spikes on an operational expense basis reducing the capital expenditure on equipment that would handle high volumes.

### Hosted to Address Specific Needs

Almost all contact centers could realize some value from a speech automated IVR integrated into their premise-based platform but few can develop the business case for making the up-front investment necessary to implement it. A Hosted Speech-Automated IVR can be seamlessly integrated into any contact center's existing systems and without the capital expense to do it.

### Hosted for Promotional Events and Short-term Projects

A new product roll-out or a one-time promotion will increase traffic in the contact center and may require the center to invest in more capacity or to develop new call flows, use new software or new databases. The expense of delivering the capability to handle the limited time event or project, which will be difficult to justify as part of a business case, can be avoided by using a Hosted Solution.

### Hosted as Part of Disaster Recovery Planning

All contact centers have at least some level of disaster recovery planning yet few can afford to maintain complete redundancy. A Hosted Solution can be an integral part of the Disaster Recovery or Business Continuity

planning by delivering “Agent at Home” capabilities, by implementing automated ACD and failover, or by enabling voice and data transport to a back-up or overflow center.

### Hosted to Explore the Feasibility of New Technologies

Contact centers are always exploring and examining new technologies yet the business case is the instrument for making a purchase decision. Business cases are very good at stating the cost of an investment but stating the benefit can be hard to quantify without actual empirical data. Contact centers can implement a new technology without the capital expenditure to understand its exact worth and then make a more informed decision as to whether a full investment is worthwhile. The center may just decide to maintain the Hosted version of the technology. **CIS**

### About VoltDelta Hosted Solutions

*VoltDelta (News - Alert) Hosted Solutions provides contact centers of all types access to leading edge technologies including speech automation, IVR, ACD, VoIP transport, multi-modal messaging and outbound alerts on the per-minute used model. To learn more please go to [www.voltdelta.com/voltdelta-hosted-solutions](http://www.voltdelta.com/voltdelta-hosted-solutions).*

Please visit us at Call Center 2.0 in Los Angeles in booth # 306.

### When Disaster Strikes

Deploying hosted solutions can afford an enterprise many benefits, not the least of which is the ability to more readily implement a disaster recovery plan. In our post-9/11, post-hurricane Katrina world, the need to prepare for unexpected disasters is a clear objective that must be addressed in any deployment.

Traditional, premise based disaster recovery plans can be expensive when you factor in the multiple levels of redundancy, failover, networking between disparate locations, etc.

Hosted solutions offer a much less expensive option than traditional premise-based disaster recovery plans. If a disaster hits, call centers can simply redirect calls to a temporary number, enable their agents to work from home or relocate equipment to another facility serviced by the hosted solution. The call processing and the features associated with the individual applications are tied to network-based servers ensuring availability in the event of a disaster. And the plan can encompass resources spread across a vast geography allowing for widely dispersed locations to handle the call volume while the affected areas are brought back online.

— Greg Galitzine (News - Alert) is editorial director at TMC.





## Complementing...

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# Aumtech, with Help from Microsoft, Breaks Through Speech Rec Cost Barrier

**A**utomated speech recognition (ASR) or speech rec, where people converse with computers, has long been a 'tomorrow' technology. ASR's promise lies in its ability to provide near-contact center agent-quality customer care for basic interactions like obtaining flight information and order taking at a fraction of the cost: 50 cents per transaction compared with \$5-\$9 with live agents.

ASR, because it is conversational, is also much more end-user-friendly and versatile than keying in numbers and letters on phone keypads i.e. DTMF or Touch-Tone™. That means more people will use automated systems instead of or before they 'zero out' to agents. The applications have developed sufficiently and are in enough widespread use to gain acceptance by the public to the point where it has been 'trained' to speak to the computers.

Yet for all these benefits and feasibility ASR has been deployed in only 25 percent of contact centers. The barrier has been steep costs: up to \$3,000 for a single software license, which translates to \$150,000 for a 50-seat contact center or office, plus application development, installation and maintenance fees.

That barrier has now been smashed.

**For all these benefits and feasibility, ASR has been deployed in only 25 percent of contact centers.**

Aumtech, which makes IVR platforms, has, under contract and in collaboration with Microsoft, has broken through the cost barrier by developing and recently successfully deploying a unique software interface, writ-

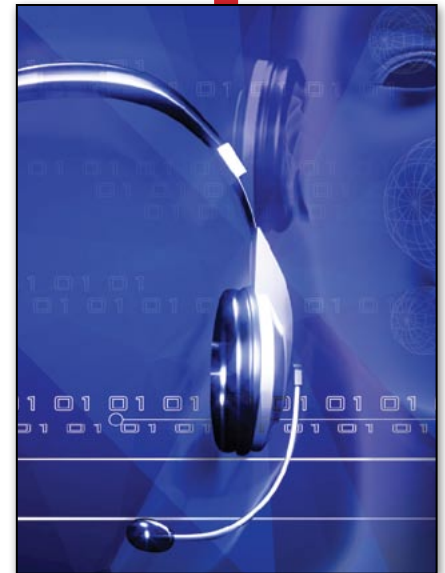
ten to industry standards, linking Microsoft's ASR tools to the IVRs.

This innovative tool and partnership has knocked ASR costs out of the sky, plummeting to as low as \$10 per license, and dropping the total cost of ownership by 75 percent.

Aumtech and Microsoft revealed the details during a webinar hosted via Technology Marketing Corporation's site, TMCnet.com, Thursday Aug. 14, on the eve of SpeechTEK, a trade show covering speech technologies that took place Aug. 18-20 in New York City.

The interface, the MRCP Connector, enables Aumtech's customers to use Microsoft Speech Recognition Services even if they do not have Microsoft platforms. MRCP is the industry standard for linking ASR engines with IVRs. Microsoft's Speech products do not have a built-in MRCP interface.

Aumtech is the only supplier of an MRCP-based solution that connects into Microsoft's ASR applications. The Aumtech platform is carrier-grade and works with VoIP and with TDM/PSTN phone networks.



While Aumtech also supports ASR products from other leading vendors such as Loquendo ([News - Alert](#)) and Nuance, it is with the Microsoft solution where the savings have been achieved.

Microsoft's leveraged its speech applications that are built into Office and Vista to offer a low-cost packaged solution that requires much less systems integration work, which its competitors charge extra for, according to Aumtech.

Microsoft's solutions are built on the Sphinx and HDK speech engines pioneered by Carnegie Mellon and Cambridge University respectively. They support both directed dialogue and natural language, which it calls 'Conversational Understanding', and in a small but growing list of languages.

JetBlue is one of the first customers and the first major corporation to have gone live with the Aumtech/Microsoft solution. JetBlue uses ASR to supply flight information: a strictly scripted, frequently tapped and customer-critical application that is ideally suited for this technology. The airline presented its case story for the first time on the TMCNet.com webinar.

The firm's CIO, Duffy Mees, went out on a wing with it in early 2007, which flew later that year, and which has since provided information to callers with amazing accuracy and few zero outs.



The Aumtech/Microsoft product replaced an application sold by Philips (News - Alert) in 2001 and deployed on an Aumtech IVR. Philips' ASR division was later acquired by ScanSoft, which renamed itself Nuance when it bought the firm of that name.

The Philips/Nuance ASR application had been reasonably successful. It achieved an over 88 percent accuracy rate, a 60 percent call completion rate, and an average 91 second call duration that together saved the airline money compared to having the inquiries answered by live agents.

JetBlue needed more, however. The current system could only handle 46,000 calls per day and the airline, and inquiries, were growing fast. Yet when the air carrier, which prides itself on high quality service at low costs, saw the price of a license upgrade, it became stricken with sticker shock: \$175,000.

Duffy Mees then approached Aumtech, which had been working with Microsoft on the MRCP Connector. Aumtech came back with a solution that could be delivered for less than \$47,500.

The new solution took flight in late 2007, and JetBlue could not be happier. Call completion rates rose to 82 percent, while recognition accuracy rose above 90 percent. Call duration shrank to under 60 seconds. The new system can now handle over 127,000 calls per day. Cutover was seamless; both solutions ran in parallel until the new one was off the ground, and calls were ported over with little or no dropouts.

"The Microsoft engine, connected to our Aumtech IVR, offered equal if not better quality ASR than our previous solution but at a much greater value for money than that product's newest model, and was far easier

and quicker to install," explains Mees. "We could not be more pleased."

So is Aumtech. It has four other clients already under contract. Immediately before and during the webinar it received several leads from potential new clients. Several IVR vendors are in discussions to provide the Aumtech Connector/Microsoft Speech Server combination to their own client base.

"With performance, accuracy, and tools to migrate existing applications, and with Jetblue having proven that high performance ASR licenses can be delivered on an Aumtech platform at costs 1/50th of the price of competing solutions, how can the rest of the industry maintain its premium price strategy?" asks Aumtech COO Tom Porter. "Not long, because existing and prospective customers are realizing that they no longer need to pay those high fees." **CS**

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# Planning For The Unforeseen

**D**isaster planning and response, also known as business continuity, is one of those key functions that no one likes to think about, and which costs money to set up right and execute. Yet when these events happen, and they will, those contact centers that put in well-thought-out plans will either continue to operate or be back in business sooner, and with less downtime and total costs than those who had treated this matter as an afterthought.

There are a great many tools available to help contact centers respond to, mitigate the effects of, and recover from disasters. They include multiple voice/data/power feeds, home agents, contact /data rerouting to safe locations in-house or outsourced, IVR/auto-attendants, outbound messages, employee intranet sites, uninterruptible power supplies (UPSes, see box) and onsite generators.

Contact centers can also take step to lessen potential damage such as by avoiding setting up in high-risk sites such as industrial areas, near airports, and in flood plains. They can site their equipment rooms and their backup power units away from potential sources of water damage e.g. not in basements. The growing popularity of home agents, cloud computing and voice networks, have made those organizations that adopted them less vulnerable to and can more quickly recover from disasters by reducing the numbers of people and assets that can be harmed by these events.

What is more important than these technologies and techniques is having a coherent business continuity plan or BCP. The plan will dictate what tools and methods you will need to carry it out. The key factor is deciding the level of importance of your contact centers to your overall functions i.e. what is the bottom-line impact of losing them. That will help you select the right response solutions.

There is not a moment too soon to consider setting up or updating your disaster plans. With the specters of global warming leading to weird and destructive weather, along with terrorism, earthquakes and volcanic activity, plus the much more common events such as fires, the next disaster is moments away from happening.

To give a complete perspective on business continuity/disaster planning and response, we

present the observations and advice of a leading expert in this field, along with one of North America's largest contact center firms that has had experience in coping with major disasters.

**Attainium ([www.attainium.com](http://www.attainium.com))**  
**Bob Mellinger, Founder and President**

Every business should have a plan that covers responding to and recovery from crisis, disruptions and disasters. A good plan contains:

- (1) Assumptions – what does this plan cover, under what circumstances will the plan be used or not used, what are the key business priorities, and defined recovery time objectives
- (2) Response – evacuation and shelter-in-place, how to deal with specific situations like fire, tornados, earthquakes, etc. What are the rally points? Where is the shelter in place locations? Lists of staff designated to monitor and assist with emergency response and their associated responsibilities. Inventory of emergency and first aid supplies. Communications procedures
- (3) Business Resumption – what needs to be done to get the contact center back online. Backup infrastructure, recovery procedures and staff. Where will staff work if the contact center facility is unavailable
- (4) Schedules – plan testing & exercising, plan maintenance, staff training and awareness
- (5) Staff and Vendor rosters plus any other information or documentation that could be needed if you had to operate or manage the crisis from another location

The four greatest disaster threats for contact centers can vary greatly based on geography, facilities, infrastructure, and staffing,



however, the priorities for dealing with any disaster threat are the same. They are:

- (1) Safety / Security of people – staff, visitors, suppliers – anyone under your roof
- (2) Communications – both internal (staff, customers, stakeholders, etc.) and external (media, first responders, as well as federal, state and local officials)
- (3) Continuity of Business Operations – getting the contact center back up and running as quickly and painlessly as possible
- (4) Asset Protection – minimizing the damage to the facility, infrastructure, equipment and any other assets owned or operated by the contact center

The key lessons learned from recent disasters are first, having a plan. Testing, exercising and maintaining it is a close second. Many organizations have spent time, money and resources to develop a BCP, but then it just sits on the shelf - never updated. As such, the plan is of minimal if any use. An out of date plan can be a disaster in its own right. Develop a master schedule of tasks that need to be performed on the BCP – monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, annually. Assign these tasks to specific people and manage the process like a formal project.

There are steps that contact centers do to avoid or minimize the damage from disasters ahead of time. These are:

**Mitigation** – This is everything you do to prevent or minimize the impact of a disruption -- activities aimed at reducing vulnerability or those performed in advance to decrease impact, loss, or damage. Mitigation is conducting thorough background checks on everyone in pivotal positions. It's planning how you'll communicate if the phones go



out. It's having a way to pay employees if the payroll system goes down for three days when checks are due. It's investing in and implementing the best and latest cyber-security measures for your data and network systems.

There's probably not a contact center on earth that has sufficient resources to mitigate or prepare for every potential incident or disruption; you have to concentrate on those that are most likely to occur. It is important to know, therefore, the risk of each potential disruption and to decide on which disruptions you will concentrate your resources. This universally accepted risk evaluation equation will help with this effort: Risk = Probability x Consequence (a.k.a. Impact).

Probability, logically, refers to the likelihood that something will happen, while consequence refers to its impact. For example, the probability of a meteorite hitting your contact center is likely quite small, although the consequences from such an event would be devastating. The meteorite, therefore, is probably a 100 on the consequence side and 0.0000001 on the probability side. The risks on which you want to concentrate your mitigation efforts are those in which both the likelihood of occurrence and the potential consequences are in the medium-to-high range.

Most of all, keep things in perspective. Any consequence that involves potential critical injury or loss of life must take precedence over less critical outcomes. It's important, therefore, to prioritize the risks as well as to identify the ones on which to focus.

**Convergys ([www.convergys.com](http://www.convergys.com))**  
**Carol Fox, Senior Director,**  
**Risk Management and**  
**Mike Epstein, Consultant,**  
**Business Continuity**

Our contact centers serve as our clients' face and voice to their customers. These transactions are often the only personal interaction they have to establish or enhance their customer relationship and increase a consumer's desire to begin or continue to do business with them. Business continuity plans (BCPs) serve to maintain that critical connection through adverse events, thereby building confidence and loyalty with our clients' customers.

A strong business continuity plan outlines the resources, actions and skills needed to respond to a diverse set of risks with effective and targeted activities. Convergys BCPs include:

- \* Risk assessment—Determines the general nature and potential range of adverse events, so that disaster recovery plans can be developed to meet the risks
- \* Emergency response—Develops procedures to activate an immediate, orderly response to emergencies, to provide for the reasonable welfare and safety of employees and to protect and/or recover critical assets and financial records
- \* Method to identify critical applications—Develops a methodology to identify current and future critical applications
- \* Critical file backup and off-site storage guidelines—Develops procedures for the retention, rotation, and retrieval of data and files

### UPS Systems: On Guard for Contact Center Disaster Response

Uninterruptible power supplies (UPSes), which provide emergency power from batteries and surge protection, are the business continuity guardians for contact centers, formal and home agents. Every contact center and home office should have them. Here's why:

- \* UPSes prevent computer failure—and in today's contact centers computers also include switches and routers—caused by voltage spikes by filtering the electrical supply
- \* UPSes provide backup power to span brief outages: typically up to 15 to 30 minutes depending on capacity based on the number of circuits and demand on them. That enables both ongoing operation and/or orderly shutdown that give enough time to save and backup data, switch on auto-attendant messages or IVR systems or reroute calls. The UPS capacity is enough to cover most outages, which are no more than five minutes.

UPSes are an essential component for generator-supplied emergency power systems, which are a necessity where contact centers provide a critical/can't fail function and in disaster-vulnerable locations. UPSes provide the electricity that spans the gap between the loss of utility power and generator startup, and from generator shutdown to restoration. They eliminate the voltage surges and sags that occur during these transitions.

UPS capacity is typically measured in volt-amperes (VA). The best practice when deploying any emergency power is connecting only essential circuits. That means in most cases no air conditioning or fans, and only emergency lighting. Applying those guidelines as a rough guide, a 100 workstation contact center that does not have an on-site data center would typically require a UPS in the range of 40 to 80 kVA (kiloVolt-Amperes).

UPS suppliers have been developing their solutions. Emerson Network Power ([News - Alert](#)) recently expanded the capacity of its Liebert NX UPS with Softscale™ technology to 120 kVA from 80 kVA. A 200 kVA model will be coming out by the end of this year. Softscale technology allows customers to increase their UPS system capacity in 20kVA increments (40 to 80, 80 to 120, and 120 to 200) without adding additional hardware.

While the smaller NX units can be paralleled to create additional capacity, the supplier does not recommend any more than three UPSes for availability and one for redundancy for maximum uptime and economy.

Home agents should also have UPS systems for the same reasons as formal contact centers. Residences are also subject to power surges and outages that UPSes protect against.

UPS makers have been devising new more effective products for the growing home and teleworker market.

American Power Conversion ([News - Alert](#)) (APC) has made its Back-UPS® ES product line more energy efficient, smaller, and more esthetically appealing. These new units are available from 350 vA to 750 vA.

The 750vA model features SmartShedding™ Technology, which allows the product's master outlet to sense when the computer has been turned off or has gone into sleep mode, so it can shut off power to unused peripherals plugged into the controlled outlets, saving electricity, and money.



- \* Critical resource planning—Identifies procedures to obtain critical resources necessary for recovery, including hardware, software, space, files, human resources, power, finances, and related considerations
- \* Disaster recovery teams—Identifies key team personnel, establishes and assigns team responsibilities, and trains each team member to perform specific duties
- \* Backup processing or service centers—Identifies processing/service sites and develops procedures for alternate operating sites when the primary processing or service site is inoperable
- \* Restoration of facilities—Develops procedures to promptly assess damage to the primary facilities, and to make possible an orderly restoration of site operations
- \* Testing and maintenance—Provides periodic updates to assess the relevancy of the plan and testing strategies to maintain its validity

At Convergys, we approach potential incidents from a different direction. Rather than focusing on an event type and developing a plan for each, we begin through a risk assessment by focusing on a potential worst case scenario, and the disruption it would have on our operations at a given site. We then focus on the resource impacts that event would have, and how we care for the replacement or reallocation of those resources. This methodology allows us to develop one plan which supports response and recovery in potential less severe situations, as well as worst case.

The Convergys BCP is designed so that the basic methodology, activation, and recovery process cover many different scenarios. Not all potentially catastrophic events will result in the activation of the BCP. The objective of the plan is to complement and enhance the standard operating procedures. Therefore, the BCP will be activated only when normal response procedures are no longer sufficient to handle the situation, and the disruption is expected to be of undetermined duration.

There are several key lessons that have been learned from 9-11, Hurricane Katrina, and the Midwest floods in terms of disaster preparedness and response that should be incorporated in disaster plans.

In the first days – you are on your own. Your continuity program must be robust enough to withstand a major disruption without relying on government support, your primary suppliers and in many cases much of your staff. That's why we rely on a modified incident command management system, bolstered by training and exercises, to provide our local incident command teams with the practice and confidence to deal with such situations. Each site team is composed of senior operations and staff managers,

who are trained to deal with both disaster planning and disaster recovery. The company-wide training encompasses incident response actions, such as providing for the reasonable welfare and safety of employees, and implementing specific plans for recovery operations. Site incident command teams have the authority to procure resources, as needed, to minimize work disruption, lessening the impact to your business. Site Incident Command Teams are supported by corporate resource areas such as global risk management, facilities management, and human resources.

The lesson we learned about the importance of disaster preparedness actually came from one of our employees after Hurricane Frances in 2004. She highlighted the personal economic impact of disasters risk while thanking our site leader for being prepared, "All I have left are the clothes on my back and the items in my purse. My house is gone, my car is gone, but I have a job and my neighbors don't."

There are a broad range of communication tools are on the market today to enable contact centers to stay in contact with employees, customers, and users before, during, and recovering from disasters. Given the ease of access to information on platforms from traditional media to the internet and mobile phones, multiple channels can be utilized. More important than any one tool is a cohesive integrated strategy for delivering messages to various stakeholders throughout an event. At Convergys, we use internally developed channels from IVRs and online postings for site updates and employee contact to broadcast messaging for incident command activations.

5. There are also multiple strategies e.g. shutdown, going to generator power, call rerouting to look at in enabling business continuity. They generally are considered depending on the client program, and the answers to a series of questions. Who will perform the work? What vendors will be supporting the same or related business for the client? What is the geographic distribution of the work? What skills are required, and where are they available? What are the needed recovery time objectives? The appropriateness of any particular strategy is driven by the environment and client needs. The choices and implementation of IVR and or call routing options are driven by customer expectations as well as our geographic diversity. In response to Hurricane Dolly, our Brownsville, Texas contact center remained open on generator power, but employee attendance was anticipated to be light (and it was). Therefore, the planned call routing to supporting contact centers was executed so that client operations were not disrupted.

To avoid or minimize the damage from disasters ahead of time contact centers need to 'Prepare, Prepare, Exercise, and Prepare'. While it is natural to experience stress during a disruption, panic really only occurs when people feel unprepared to deal with a situation. Protect your most valuable resource by giving them the material, training and experience to handle the situation. For those situations which simply cannot be handled, provide clear direction on what can be done, and who can provide assistance both for the business, and for your people. At Convergys, this means planning, prevention, preparedness, training, and communication, utilizing standardized processes and planning tools.

One of the key elements in the BCPs is the emphasis on techniques and strategies to prevent power failures, fires, missing data, and physical destruction of equipment or facilities. We have included these areas where prevention is the objective and have integrated these strategies into our normal business functions. Constructing to certain specifications, using generator power, rerouting calls, and delivering needed supplies to our employees from unaffected sites allowed us to continue business operations even in the devastated areas. **CIS**

### Rebooting Your Contact Center

When your power goes down, and if you have to close your center, you need a means to restore your operations following the 'event'.

Inova Solutions has developed a high availability (HA) solution that does just that. The HA tool is housed in a virtual server that resides on top your physical redundant servers, collecting the same contact center key performance indicators. In the event of a catastrophic system failure, this virtual server restores access to the information in as little time as it takes for the redundant server to reboot.



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## The New Contact Center: Virtual, and Virtuous

There appears to new type of contact center on the horizon, one that is becoming more a consultant to customers rather than as a lowly servant. A center that has moved beyond the old-fashioned call floor and into networks of empowered agents located anywhere.

The demand for this new center comes from a welcome business shift to customer retention and away from customer control, and by rising costs and quality labor shortages. It is being constructed and enabled with new and proven products and tools such as IP telephony, cloud computing and networks, SaaS, voice and web self-service, e-screening and eLearning, improved data security including remote computer management, and audio/data/video conferencing.

What does this new center have and look like?

\* A focus on solving issues that generate contacts

The traditional approach to managing contact centers has been reducing costs while retaining customers. Yet as firms are beginning to realize, and outsourcers such as Convergys are now offering to their clients as a service, a more productive technique is to identify why customers are contacting their organizations, and address those needs so that they don't have to reach for the keypads. Taking care of underlying issues such as confusing website design, poor product quality, lack of communication between sales, service, and delivery saves more money and results in greater customer satisfaction.

\* Voice self-service (VSS) as channel, rather than as a screen

Organizations have traditionally tended to deploy DTMF IVR and more recently speech recognition a.k.a. voice self-service (VSS) as a first level or screen in the customer care process. Yet too often this practice has resulted in too many customers frustrated with the punched-in or spoken menu options and responses.

VSS, no matter how advanced the technology, is not an in-line substitute for people when it comes to handling complex customer care issues. No more than web or e-mail self-service can provide the same function, or for that matter, the most widely-used self-service example there is: bank ATMs.

Instead, organizations should redeploy VSS as a separate channel from live agents, just as they have done with the web and banks have done with ATMs, handling specific tasks that befit their benefits. Customers will know what to use self-service for and what to call live agents about.

\* The professional agent

When customers speak to organizations' representatives they increasingly expect them to listen, think, solve, and resolve what they speaking to them about. They do not want to speak to those who are limited by their scripts and who are too often forced to say 'let me have you speak to my supervisor'.

This demand by customers is beginning to give rise to the 'professional agent', otherwise known as a 'financial specialist' or 'travel advisor' or 'installation technician'. Someone who is empowered to and who has the expertise to handle what they are being contacted about, and who is responsible enough to meet employer expectations without constant supervision. Professional agents are already happening in contact centers such as in higher level tech support and in 'dial-a-nurse' services.

Going to a professional agent approach requires, however, a radical overhaul of contact center operations. Emphasis would be placed more on selecting for education, maturity, and problem solving skills at screening and recruitment and less on heavy post-hire training and coaching. Gone is the big organizational pyramid, replaced by minimal escalations to a handful of top managers.

Yes, in some cases, where there is considerable job-specific expertise required, there may need to be a lower level like an 'assistant'. They will work with rather than report to the pros, who are not there as supervisors but as line workers, like apprentices to journeymen in the construction trades. That will motivate them to success by performing well.

\* The virtual (and virtuous) center

The 'new center' will be virtually invisible. Gone are the big 'call warehouses' that eat up too much money, have limited labor pools, and are directly and indirectly vulnerable to disasters. There will be much less need for people and those that will be recruited will not need extensive post-hire training and supervision as they will be professional agents.

Instead the contact center becomes virtual and virtuous, achieved by shifting it from the employer's doorstep to the employees', which dramatically widens the size and improves the quality of the labor pool: top people almost always prefer to work at home. If organizations go with the assistant/apprentice approach, these workers can be started in small low-cost storefront contact centers, helping each other with access to a remote mentor or foreman and then move home when they become full-fledged pros.

Reaching this new contact center will take time and effort, but the road forward has already been marked out and paved by industry suppliers and experts. With your customers prodding you in the back to deliver better service that this route promises, it is perhaps time to begin the journey. **CIS**



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## Ask the Expert: Impact of Agent Frustration on Customer Satisfaction



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

**Q** I've been seeing some of the wild stories from your Outrageous Interactions promotion. I am a supervisor of a fairly large call center, I hear a lot of stories every day like those submitted to your contest. In my call center,

I see just how frustrated some of my agents get on a daily basis and I know there can be tough customer circumstances to deal with, but there has to be a way to teach my agents how to better manage their stress. Working in a call center isn't easy, but I need them to perform at 100%. I wonder if they can really do that under pressure. Do you think it's ok for agents to express so much frustration?

**A** Being an agent in any call center is undoubtedly a difficult position. However, as a supervisor it's important to understand the potential impact of your agents' frustration and what you can do to control it. After all, a high level of agent frustration could be causing more damage than you think. Let me show you what I mean.

It's recognized that an agent's demeanor can directly impact the bottom line of the business. When an agent is frustrated, it often signals burn-out, which can ultimately lead to turnover (an internal concern). That turnover clearly leads to additional costs in recruiting and training thus affecting the bottom line. An agent's demeanor also impacts the quality of the customer experience, and is often a key "driver" of customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction (an external concern). In other words, if you provide poor customer service you will have poor financial performance.

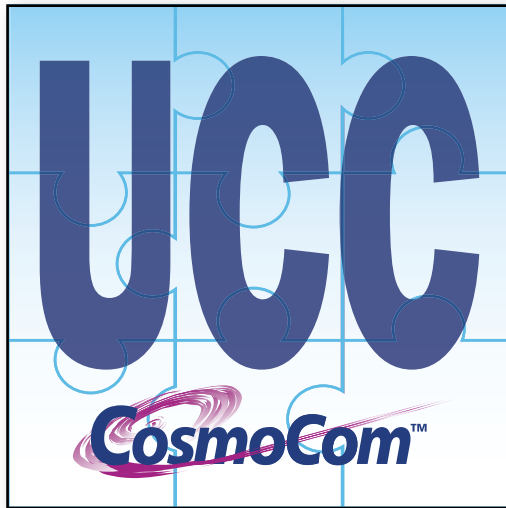
The CFI Group ([www.cfigroup.com](http://www.cfigroup.com)) developed the methodology used by the University of Michigan's American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI, [www.theACSI.org](http://www.theACSI.org)) that establishes a direct relationship between customer satisfaction and a company's financial performance. According to The New York Times, this ACSI is the "definitive benchmark for how buyers feel." The Harvard Business Review notes that a 1-point change in ACSI is associated with a 4.6 percent change in market value.

So, whether in a positive or negative way, agent demeanor can impact customer satisfaction, which in turn impacts the bottom line. Here are some suggestions to help you identify whether specific agent demeanor is something that should be raising a red flag, or making you wish you could mass produce clones of some of your agents:

1. Listen to the "voice of the customer" by implementing automated post-call surveys — Don't rely solely on internal performance metrics, but consider quality" as including external feedback from customers. There are numerous benefits to this suggestion:
  - a. Primarily because listening to the voice of the customer will help you determine what is causing the "highs" and "lows" in your customer satisfaction ratings.
  - b. Additionally, using automated surveys removes the agent from the process, thus eliminating the agent's influence on survey results.
2. Identify "drivers" of satisfaction — Ask questions based on what you want to measure: Is it really the agent's demeanor or is it the process the customer goes through to receive information or resolution that really drives them crazy? What is more important to your customers; agents who are knowledgeable or agents who are nice? (Both are essential, but the information will help you prioritize training and coaching activities.)
3. Monitor any gaps between internal and external perception — This is a crucial step that is not to be overlooked. By developing key performance indicators that measure not only the agent's performance on the call but also the customer's perception of the agent's performance, contact centers get a more accurate view of the overall customer experience.
4. Tie survey results back to specific agents — Identify who might need additional coaching and in what areas; use recorded calls of successful agents with high satisfaction scores as training tools.

Tim Passios is Director of Solutions Marketing for Interactive Intelligence Inc. and has more than 17 years experience in the contact center industry. Interactive Intelligence is a leading provider of IP business communications software and services for the contact center and the enterprise, with more than 3,000 installations in nearly 70 countries. For more information, contact Interactive Intelligence ([News - Alert](mailto:News - Alert)) at [asktheexpert@iinin.com](mailto:asktheexpert@iinin.com) or (317) 872-3000. **CIS**

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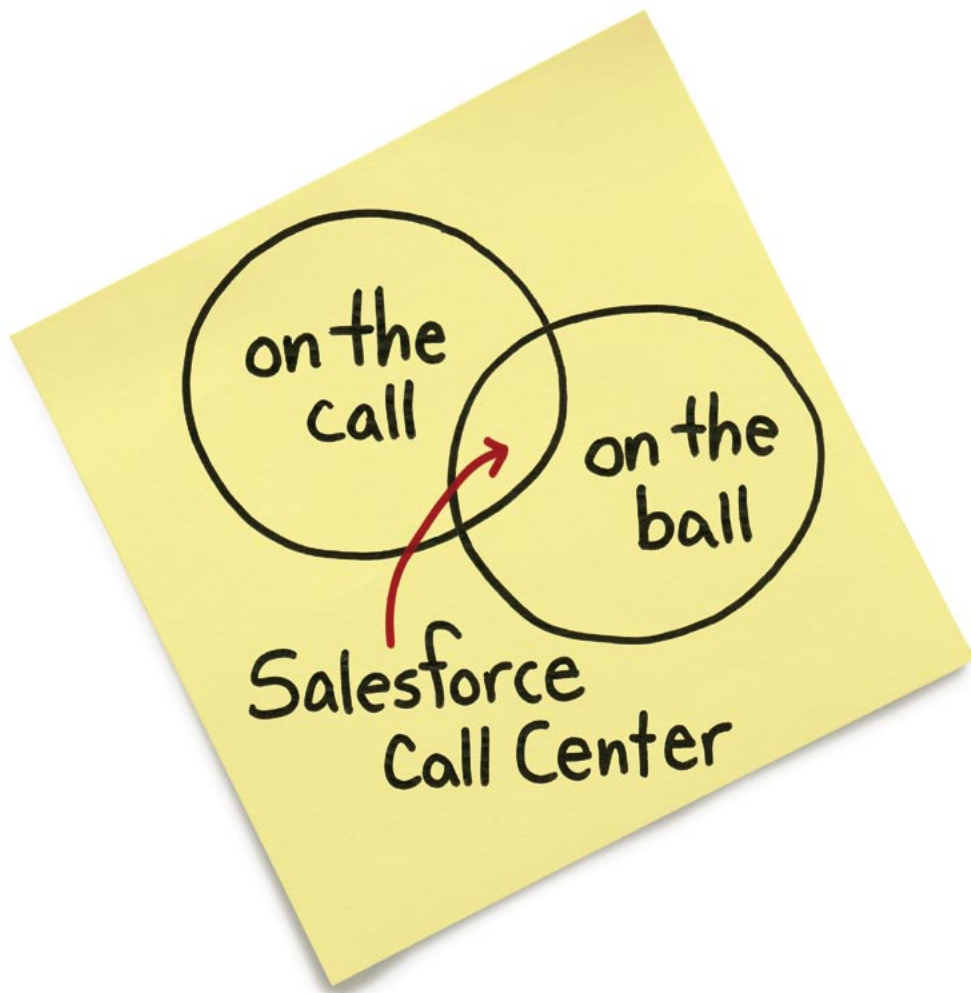
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