2010 BUYERS' GUIDE

COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS

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Also In This Issue:

- Changing of the Guard

- Do We Really Need Contact Centers?

- A Revolutionary Approach to BPA

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Nadji Tehrani, *Chairman and Founder, Technology Marketing Corp.*

Call Center Farewell and Time for the Changing of the Guard

After 28 years of industry leadership, it's time to ask my son, TMC CEO Rich Tehrani, to write my "publisher's outlook."

In the beginning…Wow, it has been 28 years? It's hard to believe! Where did the time go? It has been an incredible ride to be at the center of a market that we started, grew and evolved to the point where it is a global multi-trillion dollar market and changed the way all companies do business and allows consumers to have closer connections with the companies they purchase from.

It has been tremendously rewarding to be involved in taking this industry global, ranking many of the players via a number of awards and, moreover, helping service agencies get on the map and become the heart of a multi-billion dollar outsourcing/BPO market. How exciting it has been to apply for and receive a registered trademark on the term "telemarketing" back in 1982, when it was barely even beginning. This was five years before the term "call center" even became popular. Moreover, watching this publication evolve with an industry that changed the world of commerce and communications has been even more exciting and rewarding.

A plaque presented to me reads as follows:

25 Years of Excellence
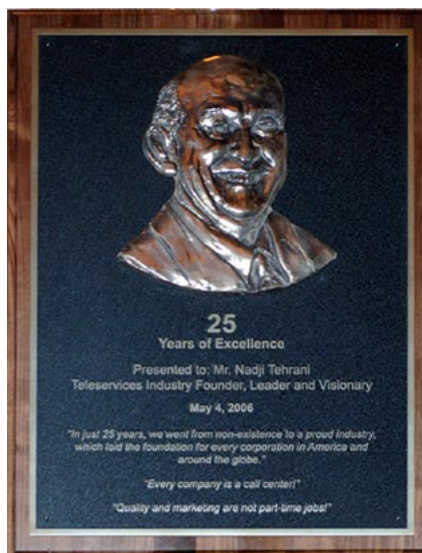
Presented to Mr. Nadji Tehrani

Teleservices Industry Founder, Leader and Visionary

May 4, 2006

"In just 25 years, we went from non-existent to a proud industry, which laid the foundation for every corporation in America and around the globe."

"Every company is a call center!"

"Quality and marketing are not part-time jobs."

On behalf of the industry, InfoCision Management Corp. awarded Nadji Tehrani this prestigious plaque recognizing him as "Teleservices Industry Founder, Leader and Visionary."

How We Got Started

In the early 1980s, I became disenchanted with advertising sales done by my traveling salesmen trying to sell for our magazines.

One day, I decided to pick up the telephone to try and sell something. Lo and behold, I was able to sell three to four pages of advertising during approximately one hour of phone calls. In order to confirm the telephone would really work, I decided to spend one hour a day selling on the phone

and the rest of the time managing TMC. By the end of the week, I had sold 15 pages of advertisements with no big expense accounts, no car allowance, no gas payments, no hotel, no reservations, nothing.

Mistake #1

The first thing I did was bring in my two outside sales people and put them on the phone and asked them to try to sell by telephone. By the end of the week, both salesmen quit. At that time, I did not know why they quit, and now I know: The skills you need to sell by phone are totally different than the skills you need to sell in person.

Mistake #2

I interviewed various candidates in person, none of whom could sell anything by phone. Once again, at that time, I had no idea why, but today, we know that if you want a telephone sales person to be successful, you must interview them on the phone.

In desperation, I decided to ask one of our secretaries to get on the phone and try to sell something. She was extremely reluctant and wanted to have nothing to do with selling. But, I asked her to come to my office and I told her, "You have a $500 bonus if you change your attitude towards selling and genuinely try selling before you decide you don't like it." And, to take the pressure away, I told her, "You don't have to sell anything. I just want you to give it a try." She asked, "I don't have to sell anything?" I said,
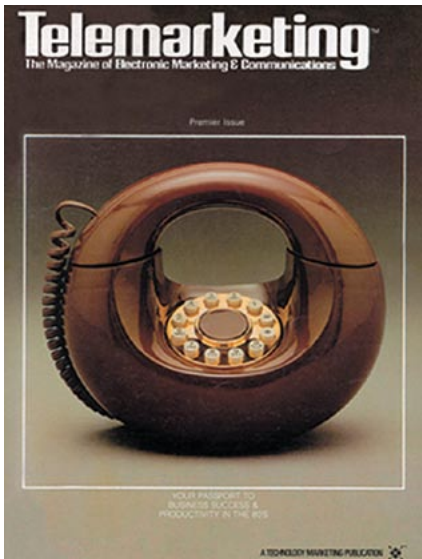
"That is correct, but I want a good effort."

So, in this manner, she got on the phone and, lo and behold, she started selling more and more ads every day and sales went up by 50 percent within the next three months. The only expense we had was the telephone charges, which were practically negligible. Now I became encouraged knowing that someone else besides me can sell by phone, so the first thing we did was apply for a registered trademark for the term "Telemarketing." Soon thereafter, the trademark was granted and, in June 1982, we started *Telemarketing*® magazine, which laid the foundation for what is now a multi-billion dollar industry.

After the first issue, we ran out of things to write about. My editor came to my office and asked "Are you sure this is an industry?" My answer was, "No, but we are going to make it an industry."

With Blood, Sweat and Tears, We Got This Industry Going.

Soon thereafter, in the spring of 1983, in this editorial, I called for the automation of the telemarketing industry and, sure enough, many entrepreneurs agreed with me and started developing all kinds of different software and hardware products to automate the handling of calls.

In 1985, we launched TBT (Telemarketing and Business Telecommunications), the world's first call center event in Atlanta,

Ga. To make a long story short, this show was extremely well received and, in fact, conferences sold out and people were actually standing in the hallway listening to the lectures inside the rooms. At that time, I recall receiving a phenomenal testimonial from the president of one of the software manufacturing companies which wrote me the following testimonial:

> "Dear Nadji:
>
> Congratulations on the success of TBT '86!
>
> Early, Cloud & Company applauds your grasping the leadership baton on behalf of the young telemarketing industry. Early, Cloud & Company will be back for TBT '87 as we had a very successful show.
>
> To date, we have proposed $3.4 million as a direct result of the contracts from TBT '86. As a vendor, the show was significant – not only did we go through 500 brochures in the first hour, but you brought decision makers to Atlanta which we had direct access to.
>
> ECC applauds your leadership, my compliments to you and your staff."
>
> Kindest regards,
>
> John P. Early, *President*
> Early, Cloud & Company

As such, TBT kept growing and growing and with it the industry kept growing and growing and our magazine and seminars and conferences continued to grow and grow.

Going Global

Then came the opportunity to go global. I was invited to take the show and the magazine to various countries, among them, Mexico, Brazil, Japan (twice), The Netherlands, Belgium, Canada, London, Hong Kong and France. In fact, our *Telemarketing* magazine was translated into Japanese for several years, and into Portuguese for use in Brazil.

The Evolution

TBT eventually evolved into CTI (Computer Telephony Integration) and then to Communication Solutions, which eventually spun off ITEXPO. Thanks to readers like you, ITEXPO has been a classic success

for the last 10 years, with happy attendees and exhibitors, all learning and buying, selling and networking. More recently, ITEXPO has seen exciting collocated events representing some of the most important new areas of technology markets:

- Smart Grid Summit
- 4GWE Conference
- M2M Evolution Conference (Machine to Machine)
- Cloud Communications Summit at ITEXPO
- Virtualization Summit at ITEXPO
- Digium|Asterisk World
- Startup Camp Telephony at ITEXPO

As such, ITEXPO continues to grow as the industry's top destination for information and the single place where you can see all of the important companies in a variety of markets.

I Could Really Write A Book

How could I possibly squeeze the excitement of the industry and the evolution of media we have witnessed in the last 28 years in a few pages of this editorial? It cannot be done in a few pages. But, I could provide the very few highlights. However, to do justice to it, I should write a book; maybe some day I will do just that!

A Few Highlights

The Japanese Exposure

As I indicated earlier, I was fortunate enough to be approached by a reputable Japanese publisher who visited us in our offices and asked to translate our magazine in Japanese. I was impressed with the charm of our new partner and agreed to do so. In a matter of weeks, our magazines were going to Japan and then the translated version in Japanese would come back to us. This was an exceptional feeling, as we were producing a publication that Japan, one of the most advanced countries in the world, was interested in translating. Moreover, I was fortunate enough to be invited to speak repeatedly at related industry events in the country. The country of Japan, with its rich history, was something beyond the scope of

my imagination and it was an honor to have been invited. The conferences themselves went exceptionally well and I must share with you a funny thing that happened during one of my presentations:

First of all, the Japanese requested that I speak for five minutes and then stop for translation, and then continue to speak again, and so on. During one of these five-minute speeches, I presented a joke to the audience, the majority of whom did not understand English. However, after the translation, the Japanese laughed as hard as possible. I was pretty shocked by this reaction, as the people at the conference seemed so serious up until that point and the joke wasn't funny enough to warrant this reaction. I went to the translator later and asked, if he modified my joke. He told me he said, "Our speaker has told a joke and I want everyone to laugh as hard as possible." Anyway, we made our presentations in Tokyo, Kyoto, and other cities, and were invited a couple of years later to come back to do it again.

The Brazilian Experience

At one of our TBT events, I met with a gentleman, believe it or not, by the name of David Letterman. He came and insisted that he wanted to take our TBT show to Brazil, and made many promises that that would be a tremendous opportunity for all of us. I agreed, and we took our show along with three of our top speakers – Steve Riddel, Judy McKee and Robin Richards – and it turned out to be another fantastic success. During my personal keynote, I talked about the differences between the requirements of inbound and outbound telephone calls. At the end of my speech (after one hour), someone raised his hand and asked, "what do you mean by outbound?" In other words, no one had a clue about this industry. I thought it was partly funny and, on the other hand, I gave him credit for wanting to learn.

The Mexico City Experience

In the early 1990s, as usual, I stayed late in my office to get caught up with work. At about 8 p.m. one Monday evening, the phone rang and a gentleman from Mexico City was calling me. The conversation went something like this: "Señor Tehrani, I want

to come to America and spend one million dollars to buy telemarketing technology, and I want to build a call center in Mexico City in the next two to three months." Then I said, "Do you know anything about the industry?" He said, "No." I asked, "How are you going to buy one million dollars worth of technology?" He answered, "I went to the telephone company in Mexico City and told them what I wanted to do, and they showed me a copy of your magazine with your picture on it and the general manager of the phone company told me, 'If you really want to have a successful telemarketing operation, you must go and meet with this man and whatever he says, you do.' Now, you tell me what to buy and I'll buy it."

Believe it or not, I invited him to attend our shows, I gave him all possible advice and he ignored 100 percent of everything we told him and bought whatever he felt like. Later, when I was invited by the Mexican Direct Marketing Association to come and speak to the audience, at that time, this same gentleman asked me to visit his call center. I could not believe my eyes. I noticed that everyone had a computer screen and computers on practically every station, but no one was using any of the computers and doing everything manually. I asked him, "But sir, why are these people working by hand? That is what technology is supposed to do" His answer was, "Señor Tehrani, in Mexico

City, it is more important for the bankers and other customers to come and think that we are using automation than actually using the technology!"

The Domestic Experiences

Of course, with producing a magazine, running several trade shows a year and traveling around the globe, not to mention traveling to Washington D.C., working with senators and the FTC trying to save our industry from harmful legislation, there was somehow time left for me to spend a good deal of time in putting the telemarketing service agencies on the map. These folks, like the old shoemaker, were wearing shoes with holes in them while they were trying to market for everyone else. In other words, none of them had any inclination for marketing or advertising or promotion or anything of the kind.

One day, when I was traveling from Chicago to New York, I happened to be sitting next to a senior executive of one of the leading consulting companies. I asked what he did. He said he was a marketing consultant for senior management. He asked me what I did and I told him that I published *Telemarketing* magazine. Then he asked if that was really working and I said, you bet. I asked, "Would you recommend it to your customers to use it?" He

TMC's founder and editor-in-chief of Customer Interaction Solutions magazine is an ATA Hall of Fame inductee and the recognized "Father of the Contact Center Industry." Pictured at right is ATA's Tim Searcy.

said no. I said why not and he said a.) I don't know anything about it: b.) it's too new: c.) I don't want to jeopardize our relationship with our customers. Then I asked "why can't you use service agencies" and his answer was "what is that?"

It was then that I realized that the service agencies in America needed a tremendous marketing push. I decided to become the friend of teleservice agencies, which are now known as (teleservices/BPO companies) and came up with ideas such as Top 50 Inbound Awards, Top 50 Outbound Awards, Rising Stars Awards, as well as MVP Quality Awards, with the main objective of introducing service agencies to corporate America. Those who won our awards received an emblem from Telemarketing magazine and used it religiously on their letterheads, online and everywhere else. For all practical purposes, this was the only claim to fame that the award winners had and one service bureau was honest with me and said, "You know, we get 75-80 percent of all of our new business from your Top 50 rankings!"

Among the elite service agencies that I worked with were WATTS Marketing of America, Gary and Mary West were the chief executives of this company and I was actually trained by Mary West who spent a week with me teaching me about every facet of telemarketing, inbound, outbound customer services, and more. In addition, I was later trained by Steve and Sherri Idelman on outbound technologies and later, we developed a tremendous relationship with a company called Infocision, which is owned by Gary Taylor. Since the inception of our relationship, I have noticed that Infocision alone has won 16 consecutive MVP Quality Awards and as such, they are indeed, one of the best, if not the best, teleservices companies in the U.S..

The Greatest Joy In My Life

In my judgment, the greatest joy in life is raising a good family, developing a great company, a great team, having many friends, and having a great vision and changing something in the world for the better. In other words, creating something that is superior to previous technologies and/or ways of doing things. Those of you who have followed TMC's past know that as technology has evolved and media has changed, we have always striven to be a change agent – helping to evangelize technologies like CTI, IP communications, Smart Grid, 4G wireless and numerous others.

Future Plans and Move to a New Building

I plan to remain at TMC with a new title of founder and chairman of the company. What's exciting is that I will begin the next chapter of leading TMC at a new address in a beautiful new office. After 23 years at Technology Plaza, TMC is moving to a state-of-the-art new location at 800 Connecticut Avenue in Norwalk, Conn. – just a few blocks away. The move is indicative of the new era begun here at TMC as we position the company to grow with the call center and CRM industries into the next decade, while expanding into new markets, building and serving new communities. **CIS**

All the best to each and every one of you. Please read Rich's editorials on this page in future issues and his blog online at tehrani.com and feel free to visit TMCnet.com often. As always, I welcome your comments. Please email them to me at nadjitehrani@tmcnet.com.

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PROGRAM ★ ™

Keith Dawson, *Senior Analyst, Frost & Sullivan*

Looking Ahead to 2010

It is with some amazement that I recall that in the early 1990s when I was a fledgling observer of the call center industry. I wrote an article predicting what the landscape would look like in the then-far-off world of 2010. That article and its prognostications are fortunately lost to the mists of pre-Internet time. But now, with just moments to go before we reach that future, I offer some better educated guesses about what the next year holds for contact centers, their technologies and their operations.

The last two years have been tough for the industry due to the economy and the pressure that's been put on operations managers to cut costs. But in the process, we have seen centers take on a much more vocal stance trying to educate their senior execs about the essential role those centers play in building customer loyalty and, hence, revenue.

For the first time, we see contact centers backing up the contention through the use of new metrics built from close analysis of the relationship between operations and customer value. Centers are using new types of analytics systems to create those metrics and justify their operations up the ladder. This will continue, become more refined, and when we look back at 2010, may well be the main story of the year. I think we'll look at 2010 and 2011 as the pivotal period when lines between enterprises and centers become utterly blurry.

That cost-cutting imperative has also forced many companies to come to terms with their wildly variable approaches to self-service. The paradigm of using IVR as a secondary call-catcher to deflect from expensive, agented service is still the default. But customers are so much more diverse and mercurial, and therefore likely to approach from so many different vectors. This being the case, it's crazy not to try something new. Frost & Sullivan research found last year that few centers were willing to invest in taking on new customer access channels in 2009. I think that will start to change in 2010 – but the channels that will be explored will be tentative, careful and more tightly integrated with the existing structures than in the past.

And that means that 2010 will be a good year for knowledge management and other integration technologies. KM takes information that's housed in separate silos and makes it centrally available to agents at the point of interaction. It has uses in training, customer management and product support and development. It's been underused in centers, and I think it sits there like low-hanging fruit, waiting to be exploited for the benefit of a lot centers.

Because of an incredible array of empowering tools, today's customers arrive at the interaction with a lot more raw data about their situation than they ever had before. Much of it may be wrong, misguided, opaque and different from what the agent knows.

How are you going to make sure that an agent doesn't just sit there responding like a trained parrot when a customer confronts him with something that "the Internet says is true" but the agent's script doesn't comprehend? Knowledge management, that's how. By leveraging the incredible wealth of information from inside and outside the company, organizing it and empowering the agent to use it to the company's advantage, that too will be the big story of 2010.

One of issues I've been tracking is the increased use of managed customer forums for support and intelligence. Customers often like to help each other, and they like to talk about their experiences as customers. Many companies have been slow to leverage that customer environment for their own benefit. But the benefit is real – having a place where knowledgeable customers gather and share information is a real boon to support organizations. It amplifies your own product support team's research efforts into solving problems. And it makes external solutions able to be vetted and repeated. It also provides a place for companies to hear – and deal with – negative feedback in a manner that's relatively unthreatening. We're seeing a lot of activity among the vendor community of CRM and support software tools to add forum management capabilities to their tools. Much of this movement is driven by contact center demand.

Conversations I've had with practitioners over the last few months lead me to believe we're also going to see a sharp rise in the use of proactive outbound messaging to customers. This has several values – first, it can lead to call deflection, by heading off problem-related inbound calls. It can foster loyalty, especially if the outbound allows customers to see some immediate benefit from the contact. And, perhaps, it can show revenue impact if the proper opportunity for cross-selling presents itself. Many people are looking at this as an option. Happily, people are moving slowly at this, tempered somewhat by the very real fear of alienating customers. But the movement is real. We'll see a sharp upsurge this year in proactive outbound, especially done by SMS text messaging.

Lastly, I predict that inside contact centers everyone will continue to describe the place where they work as a "call center," despite every pundit's best efforts at change. It's still mainly a voice world, friends. **CIS**

Communications-Based Process Automation

By Tim Passios,
Director of Product Management

As the economy has slowed down, companies have focused on cutting expenses, increasing efficiency and maintaining quality. To achieve this, many companies are investigating ways to automate processes. To find out more about the choices businesses have, I consulted Gina Clarkin, product manager with Interactive Intelligence, Inc. Their new product, Interaction Process Automation, demonstrates a fresh look at the way businesses can automate business processes.

Q: Can you give us a quick overview of business process management?

GC: If you think about business processes, you quickly realize that they are the lifeblood of every organization. A business process is a set of activities or "work" an organization performs, designed to create value for the customer that enables the organization to achieve its objectives. Our CEO says, "Processes make organizations tick."

BPM emerged in the 1990s as an approach companies can employ to evaluate and improve their processes. BPM focuses on how work gets done. BPM looks at the processes, people, technology, management and even the organization's culture.

Q: One of the problems with traditional BPM is that existing solutions often involve a high degree of cost, complexity and customization. How is communications-based process automation making the BPM process faster and less expensive?

GC: CBPA takes a different approach. Unlike traditional BPM solutions, CBPA has not evolved from an application development environment. CBPA has grown from the proven technologies and techniques of the contact center industry, an industry that has developed systematized processes to handle millions of interaction and transaction flows with great sophistication…an industry that optimizes people, technology and processes to serve the customer.

With CBPA, the all-in-one IP communications system becomes the process automation platform for the company. Instead of creating a dependency on complex programming, application development and customization, CBPA offers organizations a single system capable of providing everything needed to easily automate just about any common process.

Q: How does CBPA compare to communications-enabled business process?

GC: CEBP could be characterized as evolutionary, an incremental improvement. It's about embedding communications capabilities in existing applications or processes, enabling those applications or processes to automatically trigger a communication or notification based on a change in the business environment. For example, a customer's database record indicates a balance due greater than a defined threshold. CEBP can generate a phone call using presence to connect to available personnel. CEBP is predominantly focused on communications events, not managing the overall business process.

In contrast, CBPA is revolutionary. CBPA focuses on how we automate processes in the first place. CBPA uses proven communications technology and management practices that have been in use for decades in the contact center (queuing, skills based routing, presence, recording, real time supervision) then applies these advanced technologies to process automation. For example, an insurance company could queue up insurance applications for the next available processor, with the appropriate state license. The processor receives a form "popped" on the screen and pre filled with the correct information from the relevant back-office system. Alerts notify the processor and manager of approaching deadlines, so that work can be automatically re-assigned if necessary to ensure service levels are met.

Q: What other specific advantages does CBPA offer compared to other methods?

GC: Since CBPA relies on the power of an all-in-one IP communications platform, it offers the ability to associate human interactions (phone calls and voice and screen recordings, e-mails, faxes) with a business process. Imagine having a consistent way to capture customer dialog as part of a business process.

CBPA leverages industry proven technology and techniques for the "work center" that are designed to remove human latency and optimize resource balancing. Organizations can use those same advanced technologies to optimize how work gets done in any "work

center." ACD technology is recognized as one of the most powerful in the world to handle distribution, management and reporting of work activity. Contact centers use it to distribute calls, e-mail, Web chat and other communications. When this intelligent tool is used with work activities, managers receive insight into work flow and status. It can point out gaps to help management improve processes and reduce cycle time. Workforce Management can predict the headcount necessary to complete the anticipated amount of work. Historical data can be used to predict how much work there is to complete.

All these advanced technologies result in dynamic work "push" instead of static work "pull." This reduces the human latency inherent in many other solutions where work simply sits waiting for an employee to pick it up and take action.

Having these capabilities can help organizations automate business processes, respond faster, control costs and increase customer satisfaction. **CIS**

Tim Passios is director of solutions marketing for Interactive Intelligence, Inc. and has more than 18 years experience in the contact center industry. For more information, contact Interactive Intelligence at info@ inin.com or (317) 872-3000.

This article was reprinted from the March 2009 issue of Customer Interaction Solutions.

Get **OUT**

Rick Lawson

Vice President of New Business Development

During these tough economic times, it's not enough for a direct marketer to just answer the phones or mail mass marketing pieces; it takes thinking outside the box and being creative to generate ROI. A teleservices company must investigate data analytics when it comes to customer retention, acquisition and service. Utilizing business intelligence capabilities to develop and deploy a telephone and direct marketing campaign will bring a greater ROI to your marketing dollar.

Segmenting the database

Making the most of the national consumer database is critical to maximize the possibilities for creativity in a phone call or direct mail campaign. In order to get the most out of the data, a direct marketer must first cut the data into demographic, psychographic and even transactional segments. A demographic profile will give you information such as age, income, education level and location; a psychographic profile includes the personalities, values, attitudes, interests or lifestyles of your current and potential customers. A high-quality call center will also have a transactional profile, which is the historical data on a household that shows the best time to call, how to effectively reach an individual and past buying experiences.

Functional software solutions

It's not enough for a direct marketer just to have the data; it's knowing what to do with it that produces a higher ROI. A teleservices company needs a functional way to develop a phone or mail campaign using the data it has collected. A teleservices company with the appropriate CRM software has the ability to link the segmented data to the deployment of the phone and mail campaign, personalizing it for each individual. An additional capability a direct marketer should consider is branch scripting, which allows easy script transitions for up-sells and cross-sells. For inbound calls automatic number identification directs all calls through the database in order to gather information based on profile modeling. In this instant, caller information is passed to the communicator's screen, creating unique scripts for each individual caller.

of the **BOX**
to generate **ROI**

Capitalizing on your resources

Customization works with anything you sell. Outbound, you can avoid targeting people who will never respond; inbound, you can use targeted messaging to up-sell or cross-sell. In customer acquisition, retention and service, messages are tailored to take into account a customer's age, income level, interests and previous buying history. The best way to target your message is to look at a customer's past experience with your organization and then cross-reference the demographic and psychographic profiles. This allows you to tailor a message that will encourage your customer to buy.

Unlike typical mass-produced messages, customization allows you to communicate with customers based on their needs. During this economic downturn, customers are careful how they spend their money, so it is important to know what they want. With a little creativity from your direct marketer, you can create a message that is relevant to your customer and produces a higher ROI for your company.

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By Tim Searcy

Looking Forward to 2010?

Maybe it is the people I talk to in this business. Maybe it is the malaise brought on by the poor employment news. Whatever it is, I have to admit the people I talk to are having a hard time looking forward to the last year in the first decade of this new millennium. Don't get me wrong, I hope to be here to ring in this New Year and plenty to come, but people are struggling to find things to be positive about as we close out 2009. A little prognostication is good for the soul, particularly when you demand of yourself some optimism. So, what can we expect in the next year?

Ambiguity

That's right! What we are going to see the most of is what we cannot predict. That is not just in Washington or the state houses, but in business as well. Let's face it: we are limping out of the worst recession in a century. Consumer confidence is low, and purchases will ultimately fuel the work that arrives in our contact centers. Without more of the former, we will get too little of the latter.

Customer Acquisition Will Be Popular Again

Counter to what I just wrote, companies have been focusing for two years almost exclusively on generating more business from their current customers. This has been a good strategy, but as natural attrition takes place, every direct marketer is realizing that if they do not increase the customer house file, there will be insufficient add on business to make goals. For this reason, I have been hearing a revival of budget discussions around pure new account acquisition. This would be welcome news indeed.

'Shoring is Going to Go Crazy

Everyone wants to know what direction contact centers will be heading to get inexpensive labor. The answer is: every direction. Anticipate a spate of re-shoring initiatives by companies desperate to prove to legislators, regulators and their customers that they believe in the U.S. employee. However, margin pressure has not gone away, and a recent ATA/DialAmerica study found that 71 percent of companies using offshore contact centers were "somewhat satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their performance. When companies are satisfied, the work stays where it is. Additionally, these locations use the current satisfaction as a means to recruit more contact centers to their country.

Year of the Employee's Rights

Recent labor enforcement for wages that are unpaid at the beginning and ending of shift are just the tip of the iceberg. Expect disabled employees, potential union officials and attorneys to be suing in record numbers over employee issues this year.

Cross Border Enforcement of Laws

A Canadian firm just had the largest fine levied for fraud at $18 million. The government is fed up with companies not abiding by our laws, and they are in active pursuit of companies that have flaunted our rules. Expect enforcement in Latin America as well as India/Asia in the next 12 months.

I think there is a lot to look forward to in 2010. Gary Hamel says in his book, *The New Management*, "Businesses die when their internal rate of change is exceeded by the external rate of change." We don't need to fear the ambiguity or the change, but we do need to embrace the need to change. Check back with me at the end of this year, and let's see how I did.

You might think to yourself … "Not so fast Tim, what about last year's predictions, how did you do on those?" I made seven predictions at year end of 2008 for 2009, so let's see how I did:

1. Minimum wage is going to go up – Yep …it did.

2. Unions are going to enter the contact center in a big way – Not really, but rumblings in Denver indicate that some of the cable providers may be the first test of call centers unionizing.

3. Labor legislation will be contemplated and passed – Nope, however, I am making a similar prediction for this year. I forget how slowly the wheels of government grind.

4. Consumers are going to get lots of representation – Yep … regardless of whether it is enforcement actions, fines or stricter interpretations, we got all of those this year.

5. ATA's petition for exclusive jurisdiction will be answered, and we will win – a big fat "no" again. This is a little like cheering the Cubs and each year having to say, "We'll get 'em next year!"

6. Tax incentives and other efforts to keep work onshore will make no impact – This was correct. However, the reason is that very little was actually done about creating any incentives or penalties for these actions regardless of the saber rattling.

7. Everything is going to take longer than people [I] think – Amen to that.

Let's be honest, the ones I missed above are more about timing than inaccuracy. Like I said in number five above, anything that did not happen is a carryover to 2010 and maybe beyond. Until next time, I am on the line. **CIS**

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www.01com.com
Products/Services: 95,140

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Other: Hospital Call Center System Manufacturer

A

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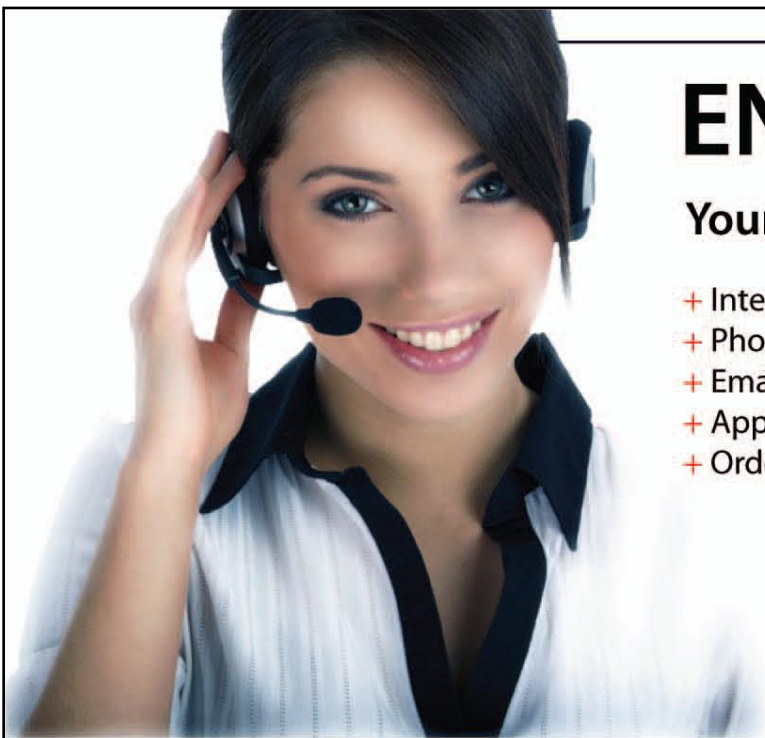www.ipitomy.com
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K-P

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www.parature.com
Products/Services: 22,95

Paraxip Technologies (C)
514-288-7111 x233
www.paraxip.com
Products/Services: 31,56,57,58
Other: IP Call Centers

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P-T

PhaseWare Inc. (C)
866-616-6629
www.phaseware.com
Products/Services: 11,94,95,114
Other: Customer Support Software

PhoneFusion
954-644-5007
www.phonefusion.com
Products/Services: 7,77,107,150,159

PowerDsine - PoE Systems by Microsemi (M)
508-478-2129
microsemi.com/powerdsine
Products/Services: 13,115,137,138,144

Premiere Global Services (V, S)
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www.premiereglobal.com
Products/Services: 44,73,77,133,163

Pronexus Inc. (M)
877-766-3987
www.pronexus.com
Products/Services: 85,147,159,166,168

PSS (V)
800-506-7119
www.psshelp.com
Products/Services: 31,46,49,166,163

Q

Quaero, a CSG Solution (S)
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www.quaero.csgsystems.com
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Other: Customer Data Management

QuickPhones (M)
877-417-1739
www.quickphones.com
Products/Services: 18,20,25,31,91

Qwest Communications (S)
720-578-6405
www.qwest.com/contactcenter
Products/Services: 22,103,111,124,127

R

RCCSP Professional Education Alliance (S)
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www.the-resource-center.com
Products/Services: 9,43,156,157,158
Other: Certification

Redwood Technologies Ltd. (M)
+44 1344 304 344
www.redwoodtech.com
Products/Services: 30,31,44,47,159

RightAnswers
732-396-9010
www.rightanswers.com
Products/Services: 111

S

Sage Software (C)
800-643-6400
www.sagecrmsolutions.com
Products/Services: 47,53,76,87,142

Salesboom.com (M)
1-877-276-7253
www.salesboom.com
Products/Services: 52,63,94,111,142

Salesforce.com (S, C)
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www.salesforce.com
Products/Services: 52,94,107,114,142

Sangoma (M, C)
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www.sangoma.com
Products/Services: 20,26,27,31,146

SDC Solutions, Inc. (C)
603-629-4242
www.sdcsolutions.com
Products/Services: 1,147,166,167,170

SECNAP Network Security (S)
866-732-6276
www.secnap.com
Products/Services: 173,46,74,144,152
Other: Anti-spam, Email Security

Sennheiser Communications (M)
860-434-9190 x152
www.sennheisercommunications.com
Products/Services: 92

Siemens (M)
800-310-6308
www.communications.usa.siemens.com/home.html
Products/Services: 20,22,31,159,166

Simple Sales Tracking (S, C)
250-277-1588
www.simplesalestracking.com
Products/Services: 52,53,111,109,142

Simplified Telephony Solutions Inc. (C)
800-387-5988 x323
www.sim-phony.com
Products/Services: 7,49,123,166,168

SIP Print (M)
866-655-3555
sipprint.com
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Other: VoIP Call Recording

snom technology AG (M)
978-998-7882 x507
www.snom.com
Products/Services: 91
Other: IP Telephones

Snowfly Performance Incentives (V,S)
307-745-7126 x7
www.snowfly.com
Products/Services: 61,97,136,139,171

Soffront Software Inc (C)
510-413-9000
www.soffront.com
Products/Services: 47,53,95,114,142

SoundBite Communications (S)
781-897-2500
www.soundbite.com
Products/Services: 22,150,160,166,163
Other: AVM, mass Text Messaging, Outbound IVR

Spectrum Corp. (M,C)
713-944-6200
www.specorp.com
Products/Services: 7,5,107,136,140
Other: Wallboards, IP Wallboards

SPIRIT (C)
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www.spiritdsp.com
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Products/Services: 29,30,31,113,143

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303-262-4416
www.startek.com
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Other: Care, Tech Support, Sales, Email/Chat, BPO, Activation & Provisioning Management

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503-579-8560
www.strategiccontact.com
Products/Services: 46

Synergy Solutions, Inc.
602-296-1600
www.synergysolutionsinc.com
Products/Services: 130,132,133,134

Sytel Limited (M, C)
+441296381200
www.sytelco.com
Products/Services: 30,57,143,150,166

T

Tacamor Inc. (S)
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www.tacamor.com
Products/Services: 61,130,131,132,133

TCO Development (S)
310-801-8769
www.tcodevelopment.com
Products/Services: 173,92,128,148

TeamSupport.com (S,C)
800-596-2820 x806
www.teamsupport.com
Products/Services: 52,53,94,95,114
Other: Software as a solution, Ticket management solution

Tel-Assist (S)
888-446-8854
www.telassist.com
Products/Services: 130,135
Other: 1st level help desk Service, Email Response

T-V

Telacquire Marketing Group Inc. (S)
604-677-7780
www.telacquire.com
Products/Services: 118,121,130,133,134

Tele Resources Inc. (S)
888-698-8787 x114
www.teleresources.net
Products/Services: 46,55,117,133
Other: Lead Generation

Telecom Brokerage Inc. (S)
847-353-1846
www.tbicom.com
Other: Master Agent

Telecorp Products Inc. (C)
248-960-1000 x6627
www.telecorpproducts.com
Products/Services: 7,5,107,136
Other: Quality monitoring, Real-time Recording

TeleDirect International Inc. (M)
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Products/Services: 53,57,142,150
Other: Customer campaign management Software & Services

Teleformix LLC (S,C)
630-285-6507
echo.teleformix.com
Products/Services: 136,156,157,163
Other: Voice and Screen Recording

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www.teleperformanceusa.com
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Products/Services: 43,46,53,130,133

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www.teleservicesdirect.com
Products/Services: 130,132,133

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www.telesoft-technologies.com
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Telrex (C)
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www.the-connection.com
Products/Services: 130,132,133,134,135

The Taylor Reach Group Inc.
416-979-8692 x200
www.thetaylorreachgroup.com
Products/Services: 13,46,145

Thomas L. Cardella & Associates (S)
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www.tmone.com
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Other: Telephone Account Management, Outsourced Inside Sales

Toshiba America Information Systems, Telecom Systems Division (M)
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www.telecom.toshiba.com
Products/Services: 7,1,6,20
Other: IVR, UM, Video, IP/digital phones/ softphones, wireless phones, text-to-speech

TouchStar Software (M)
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www.touchstarsoftware.com
Products/Services: 173,57,143,150,151

Touchtone Corp. (S, C)
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www.touchtonecorp.com
Products/Services: 47,52,53,142
Other: Marketing automation Software

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www.transition.com
Products/Services: 20,23,24,29,35

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800-777-6348 x4903
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Products/Services: 16,71,130,133,151
Other: Customer Service

U

UCN, Inc. (S)
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www.ucn.net
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800-662-2066
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Products/Services: 46,156,157
Other: Simulation-based e-Learning for CSRs, sales reps and managers

V

vCustomer (S, C)
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www.vcustomer.com
Products/Services: 22,53,55,73,98

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www.verint.com
Products/Services: 51,136,175,171,174
Other: Training

Vertica Systems (C)
978-600-1000
www.vertica.com
Products/Services: 54
Other: Analytic Database Management Systems

Vertical Solutions, Inc. (C)
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www.vsi-powerhelp.com
Products/Services: 52,53,95,142,171

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www.vicidial.com
Products/Services: 7,56,57,58,150

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www.vicorp.com
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Other: Professional Services

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Products/Services: 173,123,134,136,156

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Products/Services: 70,125,126,127

Voice Teleservices (S)
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Products/Services: 46,121,130,133,143

VoltDelta Hosted Solutions (S)
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www.voltdelta.com/ondemand
Products/Services: 7,104,107,166,163

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www.voxeo.com
Products/Services: 51,104,159,166,170

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510-545-5000
www.voxify.com
Products/Services: 71,147,166,163,170

VoxMedia Consulting Inc. (C)
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www.voxmediaconsulting.com
Products/Services: 46,143,147,166,170

VPI (Voice Print International) (C)
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www.vpi-corp.com
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X

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Other: Business Process Outsourcing

Z

zCONNEX GROUP (V,S)
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www.zconnex.com
Products/Services: 46,130,131,133,160

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www.zeacom.com
Products/Services: 7,44,49,159,160

Zultys Technologies (M,V)
408-328-5431
www.zultys.com
Products/Services: 7,1,20,101,166

AD INDEX

Brendan B. Read, *Senior Contributing Editor*

Do We Really Need Contact Centers?

Are contact center agents, which are still known as "operators" in the answering service world going the way of elevator operators? For every contact center opening and expansion heralded, there have been the understandably less trumpeted closures and cutbacks thanks to automation.

The automated trend is logical and seemingly inevitable. It costs less than $1 for a Web or IVR/speech-rec-handle transaction or outbound notification call versus $5 or more for that is handled by a live agent. While a home agent strategy can slice a guesstimated 50 to 75 cents or so from that sum and offshoring may chop that to say $4, with repeat and longer calls offsetting labor savings, they still do not effectively outbalance the savings from automatic tools.

The automated trend had been masked during the so-called "Ponzi boom" when companies added contact center staff and sites as demand and call volume bubbled. Yet these firms have also been slicing the rise with agentless solutions. Hiding the movement too have been downturn-driven call volumes resulting from financial and healthcare insurance worries, prompting these organizations to divert more calls into self-service and notifications.

Not surprisingly, even live agent-designed contact center solutions are being aimed at and used to shrink headcount. For example, presence/UC tools are being marketed to enable organizations to tap idle "available" counter and front desk staff to take calls, which avoids having separate agents and facilities to handle them.

There are many new self-service tools coming onto the market. One example is avatars that personalize and enable interactions with computers, which self service actually is. At the same time, hosted offerings cut product capital costs and install times while permitting greater flexibility.

This trend most recently came to light at the tail end of a *Globe and Mail* article on Telus (full disclosure, I am a Telus wireless customer), which is one of Canada's largest communications firms on its plans to reduce wireless charges so it can remain competitive. An airwave auction in 2008 is letting more wireless carriers into the Canadian market.

"Two ways Telus plans to support [profit] margins is moving customers to electronic billing and bolstering its online customer support centre so that fewer subscribers need to contact a call centre, he [Joseph Natale, executive vice president and president of consumer solutions at Telus] said."

Yes, there is no substitute for having individuals handle calls. One can argue that having them take care of customer care and purchases helps organizations stay competitive in today's and tomorrow's no-growth/slow-growth milieu. Yet with reliance on knowledge bases, tight scripting to comply with regulations and a reluctance to empower and pay for agents who can think and act out of the software box, is there that much difference between live and automated service?

Telus has one of the sharpest contact center operations there is, employing speech rec and home agents. Its staff are well-trained and managed judging from the prompt excellent service I receive from them. If it can't justify keeping the level of live agents presently employed, who can?

In today's environment, price is equally if not more important as service. As long as the quality is liveable compared to similar offerings, most customers will put up with tolerable if not ideal care – if the sticker amounts match what they think the items are worth and can afford. The airlines, hardware/software firms, retailers, and yes, communications (including wireless) firms have demonstrated proof of that. And if one or more groups can drive more customers to self-service and still maintain, if not grow, market share and profits, others will quickly follow suit.

Does this mean that contact centers and staff will disappear? Not altogether. Only where there is a demonstrated need for uniqely human intelligence and personal touch will there be the justification to pay for people and their attendant infrastructure: whether in bricks-and-mortars centers, other offices or settings such as bank branches and stores, in homes, and on the road, to handle customer contacts. **CIS**

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