CUSTOMER INTER@CTION Solutions®

September 2009 • Vol. 28/No. 4
www.cismag.com

28 Years of Excellence

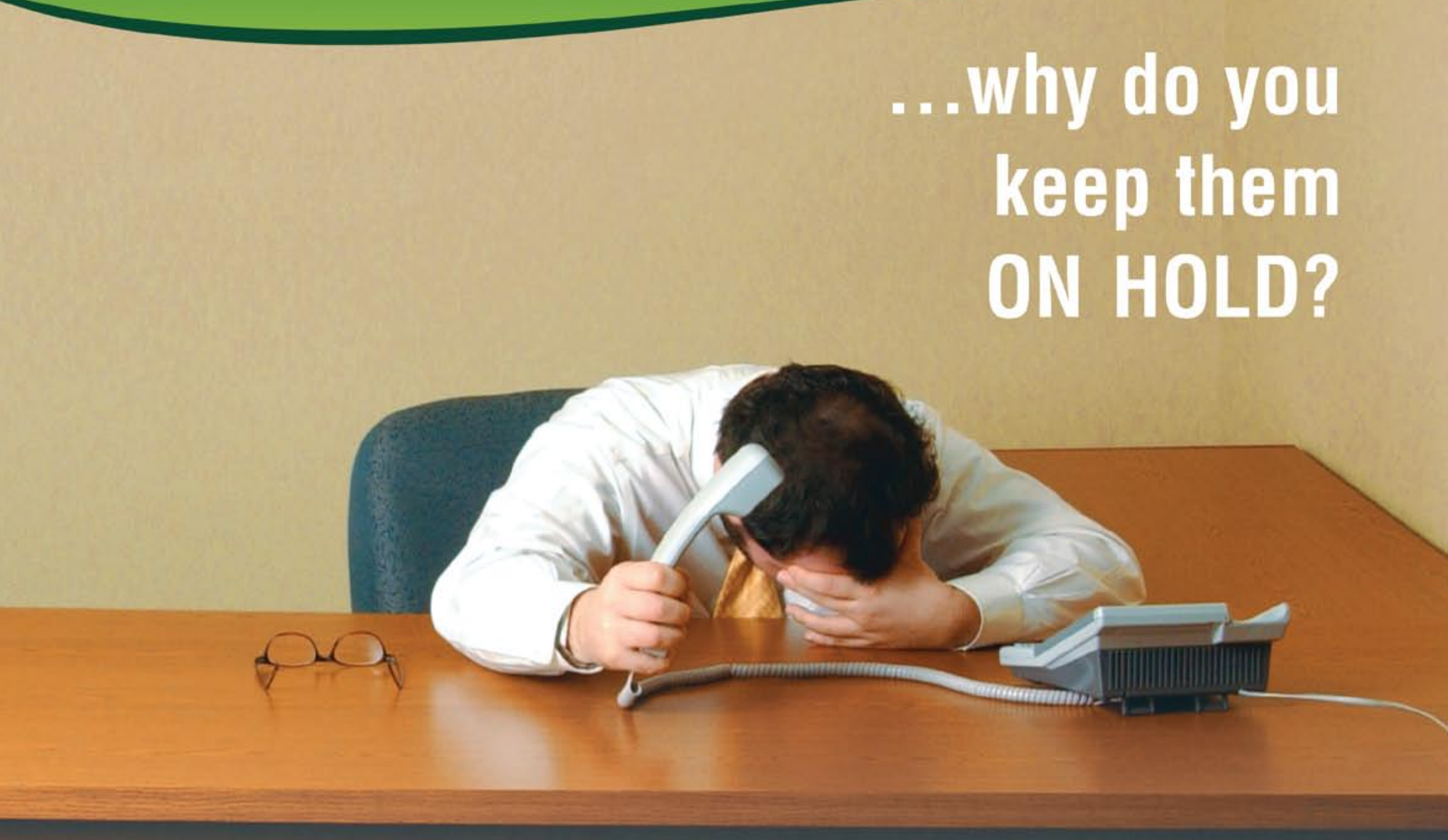
#1 In CRM, Call Centers And Teleservices Since 1982™

Protecting Your Customers' Data

Also In This Issue:

- BPO for the Contact Center
- Recording For Service
- TMC Labs Innovation Awards, Part 1

If you value your customers...



With InfoCision, they won't be. We answer your calls quickly and develop a lasting relationship with your customers. A few minutes on the phone with InfoCision means a lifetime of customer loyalty for you.

9 seconds
Average time to answer inbound calls.

92 percent
Percent of inbound calls answered in 20 seconds or less.

3 percent
Overall percent of inbound calls abandoned.

INFOCISION MANAGEMENT CORPORATION
25 years
1982 - 2007

InfoCision
THE highest quality call center company in the world!®

1-866-670-4IMC www.infocision.com

*InfoCision is the only teleservices company to win the MVP Quality Award, presented by *Customer Interaction Solutions* magazine, all 16 years since its inception.

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

On Differentiation and Positioning:

Every Company Wants To Be A Peacock In The Land Of Penguins But Few Companies Know How To Do It Right! Part II

Editor's Note: Exactly 10 years ago, I wrote this editorial. To the extent that problems explained herein still exist, I felt compelled to reproduce it. And here it is:

The Missing Link In Marketing: Differentiation and positioning. Your customers must have a reason to buy from you; that reasoning comes from positioning and differentiation.

Influencing the mind

In his book, *The New Positioning; The Latest on the World's #1 Business Strategy,* Jack Trout defines "positioning" as follows: We have always defined positioning, not as what you do to the product, but what you do to the mind.

Trout further believes the ultimate marketing battleground is in the mind, and the better you understand how the mind works, the better you will understand how positioning works.

Positioning must be adjusted to the rapidly changing market conditions

In today's ultra-fast-moving and rapidly changing environment, one can practically assume that market conditions also change month to month, maybe even day to day. Consequently, one must always remain 100 percent focused on the marketplace as well as on the validity of positioning vis-a-vis the current conditions of the marketplace. It would be a disaster if one were to lose sight of adjusting positioning to reflect the changing marketplace requirements. The next important item is when companies fail to change their positioning, they lose market share and lose considerable revenue. In fact, such companies may not even survive when markets change so rapidly.

What, then, is the proper course of action?

In all cases, one must remain extremely flexible and change as rapidly as the market. This process is called repositioning, which is crucial to the survival of any successful and progressive organization. Trout's book spends considerable time explaining this process.

How to cope with information explosion

In today's extremely complex, information-jammed world, we are exposed to thousands of advertisements, promotions of various kinds and, in short, are inundated with information explosion. It has been said that in the last 30 years, more information has been produced than in the previous 5,000 years. The emergence of the Internet has added ultrasonic speed to the growth of information available. Therefore, to make your products and services stand out in the marketplace, you must do a superb job of positioning, differentiation, marketing and advertising.

You don't want to be a penguin, you want to position yourself as a peacock

Consider a peacock and a penguin. What makes the peacock stand out? The magnificent colorful feathers and its artistic design versus the bland black-and-white feathers of the penguin. If you were to buy one of them, which would you buy? Those who would buy the penguin should see a psychiatrist. The bottom line is the peacock is different from the rest of the crowd; it stands above the rest with magnificent and attractive colors in the bland land of penguins. If you truly want success in your positioning, you don't want to be a me-too or a penguin. You want to be unique and position yourself as such – as a peacock in the land of penguins. That is how you gain market share, penetrate the minds of the buyers and become a leader.

The first law of positioning

The first law of positioning states that it is better to be first than to be better: I will prove it to you in less than one minute. Who was the first man to fly across the Atlantic? Charles Lindbergh. Who was the second person do it? Nobody knows and nobody cares about number 2. What was the name of the horse that won the Triple Crown in 1973 and broke practically all racetrack speed records? Secretariat. What was the name of the horse that finished in second place behind Secretariat in all three races? No one remembers and no one cares about number 2. Only horse racing fans, such as myself, would remember it was Sham. The bottom line: the first law is true and if you really want to be a market leader, you must position yourself as such every minute, every hour, every day, every month.

The second law of positioning

If you are unable to be first in your field, then find a niche in which you can be number 1. I think you can find a way of justifying the validity of this law also by looking at the first law.

Finally, don't forget repositioning as the markets continue to change.

As always, I welcome your valued comments. **CIS**

Sincerely,

Nadji Tehrani
ntehrani@tmcnet.com

CONTENTS

SEPTEMBER 2009
VOLUME 28 • ISSUE 4

IN EVERY ISSUE

1 **Publisher's Outlook**
By Nadji Tehrani, Chairman and Founder, Technology Marketing Corp.

4 **High Priority!**
By Rich Tehrani, CEO, Technology Marketing Corp.

10 **Headset**
By Keith Dawson

11 **From the TMCnet Blogs**

12 **Customer Interaction News**

18 **Ask the Experts**
By Tim Passios, Interactive Intelligence

24 **On The Line**
By Tim Searcy

31 **The Integrated Marketplace**

31 **Advertising Index**

32 **Logout**
By Brendan Read, Senior Contributing Editor

What's on the Cover

Protecting Your Customers' Data

pg 20

INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS FROM THE TELESERVICES EXPERTS

8 **Infocision: Driving Response Through Extraordinary Customer Experiences**
By Steve Boyazis, Vice President of New Business Development InfoCision Management Corporation

WORKFORCE OPTIMIZATION

14 **Call Recording: It's Not Just For Compliance Anymore**
By Brendan Read, Senior Contributing Editor

CALL CENTER TECHNOLOGY

20 **Effectively Protecting Your Customers' Data**
By Brendan Read, Senior Contributing Editor

CRM, BPO & TELESERVICES

26 **BPO: Higher Quality, Competitive Costs**
By Brendan Read, Senior Contributing Editor

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

30 **TMC Labs CIS Innovation Awards, Part 1**

To receive free information from our premium advertisers, please visit freeinfo.tmcnet.com.

TMC CUSTOMER INTER@CTION Solutions®

Executive Group Publisher and Editor-in-Chief
Nadji Tehrani (nadjitehrani@tmcnet.com)

Group Publisher
Richard Tehrani (rtehrani@tmcnet.com)

EDITORIAL
Group Editorial Director, **Erik Linask** (elinask@tmcnet.com)
Senior Contributing Editor, **Brendan B. Read** (bread@tmcnet.com)
Senior Editor, **Erin E. Harrison** (eharrison@tmcnet.com)

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
David Sims, Susan Campbell, Stefania Viscusi, Keith Dawson

TMC™ LABS
203-852-6800 (tmclabs@tmcnet.com)
Executive Technology Editor/CTO/VP, **Tom Keating**

ART
203-852-6800 (cisart@tmcnet.com)
Creative Director, **Alan Urkawich**
Graphic Designer, **Lisa A. Mellers**

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS:
Nadji Tehrani, *Chairman and Founder*
Richard Tehrani, *Chief Executive Officer*
Dave Rodriguez, *President*
Michael Genaro, *Executive Vice President of Operations*
Tom Keating, *VP, CTO and Executive Technology Editor/SEO Director*

To Subscribe, Call: 203-852-6800

Or write to the circulation director at srusso@tmcnet.com. Subscription rates (published monthly): Digital Subscriptions free for qualified U.S., Canadian and Foreign subscribers. Print Subscriptions free for qualified subscribers in the U.S.A. only. For non-qualified U.S.A. subscribers, $59. All Canadian subscribers, $89. All Foreign (air mail), $109. All orders are payable in advance in U.S. dollars drawn against a U.S. bank. Connecticut residents add applicable sales tax.

Circulation Director, **Shirley Russo** (srusso@tmcnet.com)

Reader Input: *CIS* encourages readers to contact us with their questions, comments and suggestions. Send e-mail (addresses above), contact our Web site (www.cismag.com) or send mail.

We reserve the right to edit letters for clarity and brevity. All submissions will be considered eligible for publication unless otherwise specified by the author.

Reprints: For authorized reprints of articles appearing in CIS, please contact Reprint Management Services at 1-800-290-5460 or e-mail them at tmcnet@reprintbuyer.com.

Lists: For list rentals, please contact Glenn Freedman at glennf@l-i-s-t.com or call 516 227-2010, ext. 101.

ADVERTISING SALES: 203-852-6800
Karl Sundstrom, ext. 119 (ksundstrom@tmcnet.com)
Executive Director of Business Development
Eastern, Western, International

EXHIBIT SALES: 203-852-6800
Global Events Account Directors
Companies whose names begin with:
A-L or #s: **Maureen Gambino** (mgambino@tmcnet.com)
M-Z: **Joe Fabiano, ext. 132** (jfabiano@tmcnet.com)

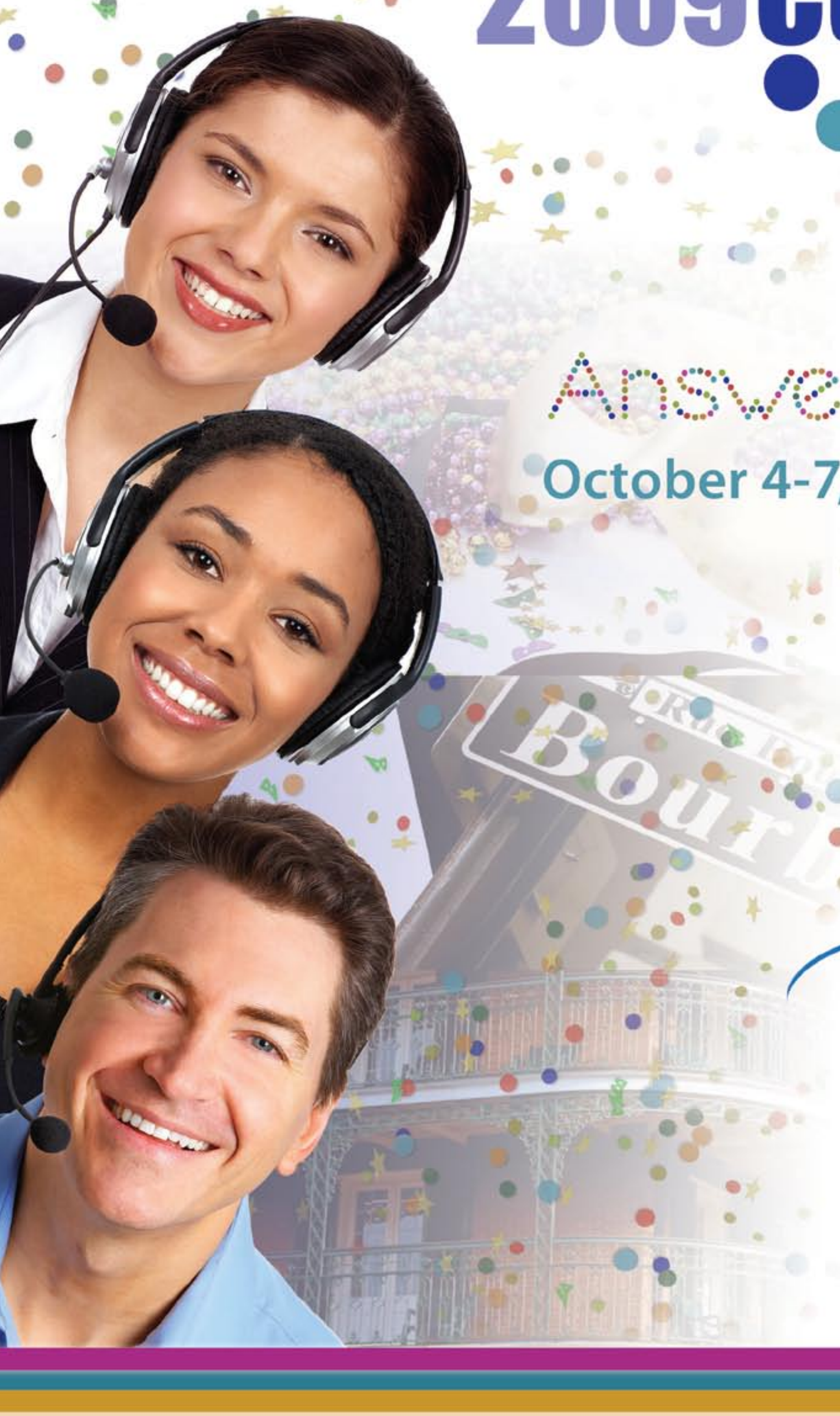
Editorial Offices are located at One Technology Plaza, Norwalk, CT 06854 U.S.A. **Customer Service:** for all customer service matters, call 203-852-6800.

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.

Copyright © 2009 Technology Marketing Corporation. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or part without permission of the publisher is prohibited.

Customer Inter@ction Solutions® and the TMC Logo are registered trademarks of Technology Marketing Corporation.

A Technology Marketing Publication
TMC®
One Technology Plaza, Norwalk, CT 06854 U.S.A.
Fax: 203-853-2845 Sales Dept. Fax: 203-838-4070

American Teleservices Association

2009 Convention & Expo

Answering The Call

October 4-7, 2009 ⚜ New Orleans

Register Now!

ATA™

American Teleservices Association

www.ata2009convention.org

Want to learn more?
Call the ATA at: **317.816.9336**

New Social Media Content • Inspirational Keynotes
More Case Studies Than Ever • Four Additional Sessions This Year
Over Six Hours of Dedicated Exhibit Time • Interactive Workshop Formats
Innovative Technology Solutions • Industry Expert Presenters

Rich Tehrani, *CEO, Technology Marketing Corp.*

Volkswagen Dealer Looks to IP Communications for Better Customer Service

Imagine my happiness when I saw a local dealer, Riverbank Volkswagen, deploying leading-edge IP communications solutions. The news brought back fond memories from the mid-1990s when I gave away a brand new yellow Volkswagen Beetle at a TMC trade show because I happened to see one at this dealer. It also reminded me of my recent trip to Northern California where I visited with Megapath, who supplied the dealer with their voice-optimized, private IP-based Duet service, which is designed to increase productivity and customer service levels.

According to Andrew Goldstein, president of Riverbank Volkswagen, "MegaPath's cost-effective, fully managed Duet service gives the entire team from sales to technicians to office personnel a reliable voice and data service that translates into superior customer service and improved interaction with corporate headquarters." He continued, "While we've had other providers in the past, there was an issue of reliability and excessive downtime in the service. Time is money and when the system is down, it has a trickledown effect from sales to the service department. In just four months as a MegaPath Duet customer, we've experienced no downtime, so we are always able to communicate with customers, vendors and corporate."I met with Rich Sabin, director of marketing, and Dan Foster, senior vice president of sales, who explained that the economy has actually benefitted them – their ability to save money for their customers while enhancing their customer service capabilities has resulted in a 20 percent increase in business year-over-year.

Much of the company's business has been growth and replacement of WANs with MPLS-based services. MegaPath sells broadband-based solutions for teleworkers, small businesses and enterprise customers, with an emphasis on vertical markets, such as retail, hospitality, restaurant, healthcare, legal and insurance/finance.

Another area of growth has been SSL, where the company has a Java-based client which is downloaded on the Web, allowing secure connectivity to a corporate network. This works much like a remote desktop or a Citrix solution, with similar benefits, including reduced complexity, no need for a standalone VPN client, and few, if any, thorny firewall issues. While it is replacing IPSEC with SSL in many cases, it does support IPSEC as well, along with providing intrusion protection, DPI, and unified threat management products.

As companies look for ways to save money, while improving their ability to deliver to customers, it thrills me to see technology and, in this case, IP communications, being one of the major ways for them to achieve their cost-cutting goals while simultaneously boosting productivity through a variety of teleworking and remote access solutions. **CIS**

It's all fun and games until someone loses every photo they ever took

Years back, I started to utilize ofoto to store my pictures – what a great service with its ability to share your photos immediately with others. Kodak purchased the company and integrated it into its back-end photo processing systems. I am still a loyal customer of what is now called Kodak Gallery but recently, the company changed its policy, forcing users to order a certain dollar amount in order to keep from having their photos deleted.

I am a big fan of printing photos, but haven't had much time for it lately. I do understand Kodak needs to make a living, and I also understand how hard it is for a company that once was a virtual monopoly to reposition itself in the digital era. But, rather than rushing to print more photos, this experience made me pause a bit. I am not thrilled to have a company change its policy on me after it told me there would be no charge to store photos. This is not what you call a stellar CRM experience.

This is probably the reason I didn't act more quickly, and logged on today to find all my photos gone, wiped clean. My kids being born, my wife as fiancée, my cousins, parents, sister, friends… all gone.

I did learn when I called the company that my photos are actually not deleted but hidden. I suspected as much, but I am still having seriously mixed emotions about the company. After all, if they did delete my photos, I would likely be on my way up to Rochester to have a frank talk with the CEO.

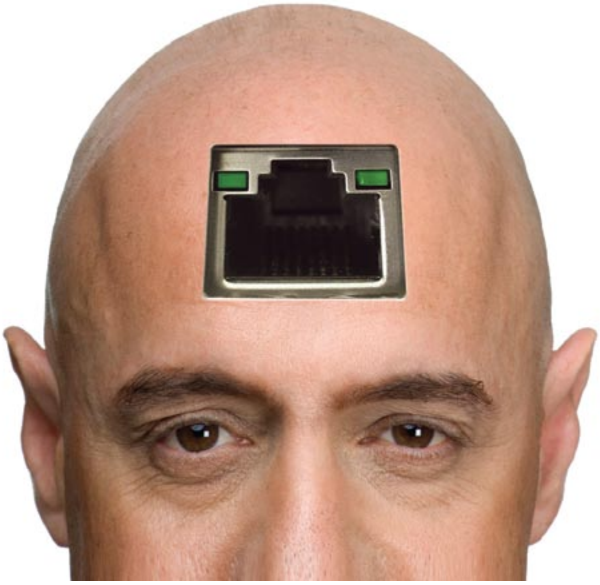
Kodak is also looking for help from its community of fans to help it name its new pocket-sized video recorder. I invite them to use their own online photo storage practices, and proceed to call it the "Kodak iHostage."

Their computer.
Your brain.

GoToAssist® Express™ lets you view and control your customer’s computer online, so you can use your expertise to instantly fix the problem. You'll solve technical issues faster while reducing travel costs and increasing customer satisfaction. Support Smarter™ with GoToAssist Express.

FREE 30-Day Trial

gotoassist.com/solutions



GoToAssist®

by CiTRiX®

CALL CENTER FOUNDATIONS TRAINING

AN INTRODUCTION TO CONTACT CENTER SERVICES FOR THE ENTIRE ORGANIZATION

- IT Managers and Analysts
- Telecommunications Professionals
- Human Resources Generalists and Specialists
- Financial Analysts and Directors
- Operations Executives
- Training Managers and Specialists
- Professionals that Sell to Contact Centers
- Technicians that Support Contact Centers
- Account Managers
- Consultants
- Outsourcing Entrepreneurs
- Any Management Professional Transferring to a Call Center

This course presents the "big picture". Participants will learn about the contact center's business, functional components, job roles, and performance factors, as well as the industry terminology needed to communicate with call center professionals.

Learn the basics that enable you to:

- Set realistic targets for call center performance
- Identify shortcomings in customer interactions and devise winning solutions
- Understand call center metrics and what they say about the business
- Identify technology needs and opportunities
- Convey your ideas using industry vocabulary
- Work consultatively with call center leaders
- Create innovative plans and business models for new call centers

For a complete and detailed agenda, visit the-resource-center.com/seminars/RCC-3.htm

$1,795 per person. In-house private delivery for four or more participants is available, starting at $7,200.

CALL CENTER MANAGER TRAINING & CERTIFICATION

HANDS-ON TACTICAL SKILLS TRAINING FOR EVERY CONTACT CENTER MANAGER

- Call Center Managers
- Help Desk Managers
- Support Center Supervisors and Team Leads
- Managers New to the Call Center
- Quality Assurance Managers
- Workforce Managers
- CRM, BPO, and Teleservices Managers
- Executives with Call Center Oversight

This highly acclaimed, newly-updated best practices curriculum focuses on the skills and knowledge you need to manage day-to-day operations, implement process improvements, and increase customer satisfaction and loyalty.

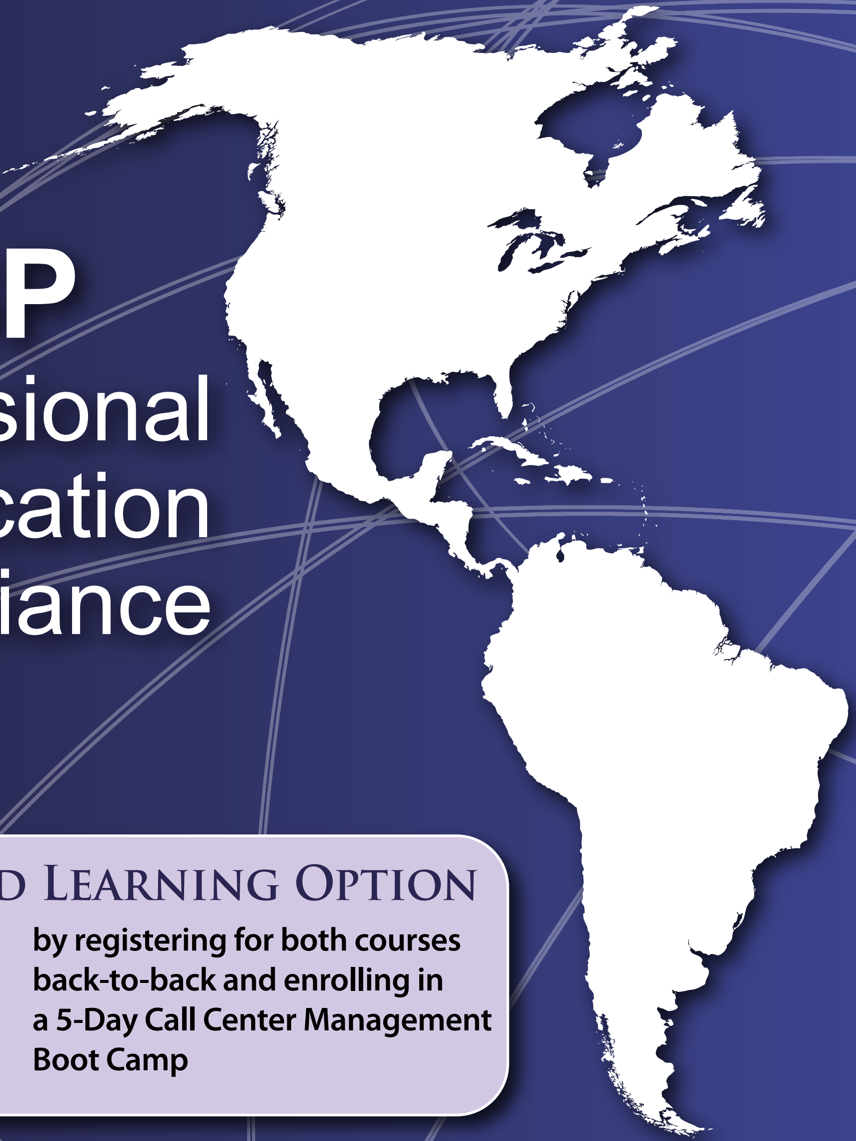
You'll learn to:

- Assess the state of your call center
- Analyze metrics and track key performance indicators
- Create effective Service Level Agreements
- Forecast call volume and work load
- Calculate staffing requirements
- Plan for new hire, mentoring, and on-going training programs
- Create a Standard Operating Procedures manual
- Implement motivation and retention programs
- Establish quality assurance processes
- Conduct coaching conversations
- Plot a road map for implementing improvement projects identified in class

For a complete and detailed agenda, visit the-resource-center.com/seminars/HD2-6.htm

$2,495 per person. Includes 3-day course, exam fees, and CD-based toolkit containing forms, examples, software, benchmarks, and action plans. In-house private delivery is available for groups of four or more participants, starting at $9,995.

RCCSP
Professional Education Alliance



ACCELERATED LEARNING OPTION

SAVE $395 by registering for both courses back-to-back and enrolling in a 5-Day Call Center Management Boot Camp

CALL CENTER FOUNDATIONS TRAINING

2009 PUBLIC SCHEDULE

Aug 31-Sept 1 - **Dallas, TX**
Sept 14-15 - **Washington, DC**
Oct 5-6 - **New York, NY**
Oct 19-20 - **Houston, TX**
Nov 16-17 - **Atlanta, GA**
Dec 14-15 - **Las Vegas, NV**

2010 PUBLIC SCHEDULE

Jan 25-26 - **Tampa, FL**
Feb 15-16 - **Phoenix, AZ**
Mar 8-9 - **Orlando, FL**
Apr 12-13 - **Chicago, IL**
Apr 26-27 - **Washington, DC**
May 3-4 - **Las Vegas, NV**
May 17-18 - **Austin, TX**
May 24-25 - **Toronto, ON**
Jun 7-8 - **Boston, MA**
Jun 21-22 - **Atlanta, GA**

CALL CENTER MANAGER TRAINING & CERTIFICATION

2009 PUBLIC SCHEDULE

Sept 2-4 - **Dallas, TX**
Sept 16-17 - **Washington, DC**
Oct 7-9 - **New York, NY**
Oct 21-23 - **Houston, TX**
Nov 18-20 - **Atlanta, GA**
Dec 16-18 - **Las Vegas, NV**

2010 PUBLIC SCHEDULE

Jan 27-29 - **Tampa, FL**
Feb 17-19 - **Phoenix, AZ**
Mar 10-12 - **Orlando, FL**
Apr 13-15 - **Chicago, IL**
Apr 28-30 - **Washington, DC**
May 5-7 - **Las Vegas, NV**
May 19-21 - **Austin, TX**
May 26-28 - **Toronto, ON**
Jun 9-11 - **Boston, MA**
Jun 23-25 - **Atlanta, GA**

WWW.THE-RESOURCE-CENTER.COM • 708.246.0320

Comprehensive Training for Career Development Paths at Every Level of the Organization

Driving Response Through Extraordinary Customer Experiences

By Steve Boyazis,
Executive Vice President
InfoCision Management Corporation

There are only a handful of opportunities to build your brand outside of advertising – point of sale, point of use, or when a customer has an issue are a few. Each of these instances creates a make-or-break moment. Provide a truly fantastic customer experience and your brand will flourish; provide a subpar experience and watch it flounder.

So, how do you assure your customers (and potential customers) will have extraordinary experiences every time? That's a question those of us in the call center industry grapple with on a daily basis. Fortunately, with each and every call, we continue to more clearly define the answer, which is simple: you have to do it all.

Breaking down customer satisfaction

So just what makes a customer deem a service experience "extraordinary"? At InfoCision, we recently ran a customer-care program for a client that dealt with customers looking to downgrade or cancel a service. This particular program was incredibly successful, but, as far as we could tell, there was no one single thing we did that drove this success. Rather, it was the culmination of a lot of little things.

On average, we answered customer calls 30 percent faster - which led to fewer angry callbacks. We also equipped our communicators with better training and data, helping them identify alternatives and solutions faster (this made the average call about 30 seconds shorter, and helped to resolve 10 percent more issues on the first call). Finally, we called back twice as many customers to follow up on unresolved issues within the first 24 hours.

All of these things added up to the fact that customers were more satisfied (by about 11 percentage points), and 75 percent fewer customers actually cancelled than were planning to before we started working with the client.

Identifying sources of dissatisfaction

Another study we completed looked at the impact of customer satisfaction on long-term customer value. This study was for a client that sold a product with monthly renewals, and the research looked at three common aspects of every call: (1) Did the client's call get answered? (2) Did the client feel his or her call was dealt with appropriately? (3) Were concerns and/or issues handled quickly and efficiently?

As a result of this study, we found: when a customer's call went unanswered, that customer stopped purchasing 4 percent earlier; when a customer scored his or her call experience at 79 percent or less (done through an end-of-call satisfaction survey), he or she stopped purchasing 6 percent earlier; and when a customer failed to get a problem resolved quickly, he or she stopped purchasing 12 percent earlier.

These may not seem like huge numbers, but when you improve all three areas – client satisfaction, first-call resolution and service rate – long-term retained customer value improves dramatically.

Facilitating prospect decision-making

A final study I'll mention was used to determine the effect of time lag on eventual response when a prospective customer is requesting more information. Our hypothesis was that, when people were considering a buying decision but sitting on the fence, the timeliness of when they received requested additional information would affect their decisions.

To test the effect of timing on the fulfillment of collateral material for noncommittal prospects who wanted more information, a controlled test was organized at our fulfillment center to compare sending the materials: 1) within 24 hours of the phone call; 2) at the 72-hour mark (twice a week deliveries); 3) at the 168-hour mark (once a week deliveries).

We found that the group that sent its collateral packages within 24 hours converted at a 3 percent higher rate than those mailed twice weekly, and at a 22 percent higher rate than those mailed weekly. Of even greater significance, those who had their information sent within 24 hours had a 14 percent higher average spending rate than those in the second group.

Recognizing characteristics of extraordinary service

So what does all this ultimately tell us? First and foremost, it tells us an extraordinary customer experience is not made by doing one big thing right – it's made by doing a lot of little things right. With that in mind, there are several overlapping touchstones of great customer care that seem to emerge from these studies:

Timeliness

Time is decidedly not on your side. The longer people are on hold, the more difficult the interaction. Every second, minute or day that goes by where a customer remains unfulfilled can cost your brand. Complaint, question and change calls need to be answered quickly (generally, in less than 30 seconds). And, whenever possible, requested materials should be mailed within 24 hours.

An extraordinary customer experience is not made by doing one big thing right – it's made by doing a lot of little things right. From the front end to the back end, building outstanding customer experiences means managing everything in the value chain well. From data preparation to the voice on the phone, all the gears need to be churning flawlessly in unison.

The lessons of timeliness learned in our fulfillment study translate to the phones, the Web, or any other medium. We've tested this theory repeatedly – across commercial clients and nonprofit 'maybe' donation responses alike – and the results are always similar. Specifically, you get a better return by responding to your clients quickly and personally.

Efficiency

Making things as easy as possible for the customer is essential to both saving time and ensuring customer satisfaction. Reduce the steps the customer has to take to upgrade a service, get more information about a product or make a donation, and response rate and satisfaction will improve. An extraordinary experience is an easy experience - one that requires minimal work from the customer's end.

To streamline calls for your customers, make sure your communicators have access to all the appropriate product and/or service information so they can answer questions quickly and efficiently. And try to eliminate having to escalate issues to other people in the network. This should occur less than 10 percent of the time.

First-call resolution

Perhaps most importantly, try to resolve the customer's issue or answer their question on the first call. When a customer hangs up knowing their issue has been resolved, their question has been answered or additional information is on its way, they feel good about the experience. There is a sense of closure, accomplishment, satisfaction. That's when brand strength soars.

You should strive to provide a resolution for clients the first time they call every call. No matter what program you're working on, the goal should be to end the call with a resolution or a decision. Though the actual metric depends on the industry and product, shooting for a resolution rate higher than 85 percent is a good rule of thumb.

Follow up

When issues cannot be resolved, provide a timeline of when they will be and follow up. Make sure the action items were completed as promised, and do everything you can to spin the experience into a positive one for the customer – even if the interactions leading up to that call have been primarily negative.

From the front end to the back end, building outstanding customer experiences means managing everything in the value chain well. From data preparation to the voice on the phone, all the gears need to be churning flawlessly in unison. When they are, the customer will almost invariably reward you with their trust, confidence and loyalty. **CIS**

Steve Boyazis is the executive vice president of InfoCision Management Corp. Reach him at steve.boyazis@infocision.com or (330) 670-5877. In business for over 25 years, InfoCision 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. Along with call center solutions, InfoCision offers business intelligence, digital printing, direct mail solutions and fulfillment services. For more information, visit www.infocision.com.

Keith Dawson, *Senior Analyst, Frost & Sullivan*

The Case for Workforce Management

It's hard to imagine that after all these years, we still need to make the case for WFM – is one of the most effective tools available for call centers to make resource allocation decisions. And yet, a lot of people still don't use it, or use it to its full potential.

About six months ago, Frost & Sullivan did an end user survey of contact center managers. We asked all sorts of questions about their centers, how they operate and what kinds of technology they use. When we asked about WFM, we found that a solid 58 percent of American centers were using it. On one level, that seems pretty good: you'd think if three-fifths of a group is using something that it would represent a pretty solid consensus that something works, right?

But then you have to put that in context against the fact that WFM has been around for decades and so is a very stable, well understood set of technologies. It makes you wonder about the other 42 percent who aren't using WFM. What are they doing to manage their workforce? The answer, unfortunately, is that there are still an awful lot of homegrown, manual systems out there.

When we asked people who were not using WFM what factors had gone into their decision to bypass this tried and true technology, they far and away answered: cost. That was the No. 1 answer, cited by 53 percent of respondents in our survey. Historically that makes a lot of sense. Back in the old days – and by old days I mean the 1990s – WFM was a pretty expensive and complex proposition. It required a lot of computational horsepower at a time when processing hardware was very expensive, and it required a contact center to devote a team of experts to managing the system itself, as well as the schedules and workforce.

For a lot of mid-range centers 15 years ago, that put automated scheduling and forecasting out of reach. The product and technology landscape has changed a lot since then, making the ROI case for WFM a lot plainer, and the initial outlay for it a lot more manageable. But cost is still the first thing people think of, and represents a hurdle that we really need to get past because WFM is really the most effective single way to boost performance and make better resource decisions.

A surprisingly high portion of call center managers said that they were satisfied with manual methods of forecasting and scheduling. The entire labor supply chain, from on-boarding through training and then agent deployment, through the inevitable turnover and attrition, all of that costs a fortune, vastly more than just the hourly cost of the labor in the seats. But centers have vanishingly little control over most of the elements that go into that process – the easiest place to be more efficient is in having the correct number of people available for the number of calls that you have to handle.

There's no lack of ROI in this scenario – there is a lack of will to articulate the ROI to the people outside the center who control the spending, especially IT. IT tends to think of problems as technology problems, not human resources problems, and that keeps them from seeing the big picture, and the value of human-focused technology.

So when people in call centers say that they are satisfied with manual methods of doing their forecasting and scheduling, what I think they are really saying is that they don't have the will or the ammunition to tangle with people who aren't going to understand that the call center is a labor-driven institution. And just as you wouldn't consider doing your payroll by hand or with a homegrown Excel spreadsheet, you really shouldn't be doing something that's as impactful to company costs as matching headcount to volume. It's just too complex and important, and chances are you're going to get it wrong.

I can almost guarantee that if you are running over 1,000 seats, and you are still scheduling by hand, you are not running a best-in-class contact center. For one thing, you simply don't have the flexibility to adapt quickly to changing business conditions. For another, if you're scrimping on the tools to match your labor to your calls, you are probably also cutting back on some of the other essentials, probably in the areas of quality assurance, coaching, training, maybe even in self-service.

The most compelling argument is found in reduced overall operating expenses. More efficient scheduling is going to produce tangible and measurable benefits in other call handling metrics besides labor – you'll have shorter ASA times, lower call abandonment, the need for fewer lines and fewer callbacks, shorter connect times, and so on. The better your forecast and schedule, the more efficient the overall operations of the center will be. CIS

SugarCRM

In his "First Coffee" blog, TMCnet's David Sims writes:

A SugarCRM tutorial site, CRMStage.com, has been launched "to assist SugarCRM developers, partners and customers to speed up development time."

In the past SugarCRM developers "would have to spend hours in forums or going through code in order to make customizations," says Josh Sweeney, founder of CRMStage.com.

The site offers "tutorials and articles" to provide steps for conquering what site officials say are "common and difficult SugarCRM customization tasks."

CRMStage officials said they see their offering as complimentary for SugarCRM by offering not only articles and tutorials but "and pre-built custom modules" for SugarCRM: Users "can read a tutorial that will guide them through both basic and advanced customizations, saving time and money," Sweeney says.

Visit David's blog at http://blog.tmcnet.com/telecom-crm

UC and the Chief Innovation Officer

In his Hyperconnected Enterprise blog Tony Rybczynski writes:

Kim Tae Keuk, the CIO of LG Electronics gets it.

"A lot of CEOs want their CIO to be a business partner, not just a master technician. One way to do that is to become true experts at the company's business processes and then help innovate those processes."

To me, the business value of unified communications comes when UC is integrated into business processes leveraging vendor-agnostic integration software such as Nortel's ACE. It's all about accelerating these business processes by reducing human latency.

Kim is right when he says that CIO can mean chief innovation officer... and software-centric UC can be a key enabler.

Visit Tony's blog at http://blog.tmcnet.com/the-hyperconnected-enterprise

Stop 'Too Big to Fail'

In his Communications and Technology Blog, Rich Tehrani writes:

When I was younger there were many regulations in place which stopped banks from growing too large. Over the past decades, these regulations have been washed away and banks took the opportunity to acquire their way to becoming ever larger. Eventually we ended up with a system of banks and insurance companies which were such a large part of financial markets that they had too many hooks in everything to be allowed to go under.

What we have now is the exact opposite. The majority of bankers – especially the ones who took home billions in bonuses – took extreme risk and bankrupted their industry and much of the world with them. Various governments stepped in to save the system and in doing so perverted capitalism.

What is most shocking to me is that five percent of the U.S. workforce has lost jobs due to the banking/insurance problems of the past half-decade and now, many of the bankers are back to getting their massive bonuses – in the billions. These are the same bankers who would be out of work if it wasn't for the tax dollars of the people they put out of work.

The injustice is staggering and the system has indeed been royally screwed up.

Having said that it seems in hindsight like much of what was done to bail out these firms had to be done.

This leads me to the next point, which is "too big to fail" must go away as of today. Let's stop the practice of bailing out the most incompetent people at the expense of the little guy who is working hard and managing his finances effectively.

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

CUSTOMER INTER@CTION NEWS

- **Altitude Software (www.altitude.com)** now offers the Fast ROI Initiative that ensures partners and customers can pre-determine the return when considering Altitude uCI solutions for new technology investments. The initiative provides ROI assessment tools and methodologies, helping decision-makers build a business case and understand the potential business value of an Altitude uCI solution.

  Altitude Software is also making available a new online tool to provide an early estimate of the financial benefits arising from deploying Altitude uCI solutions to address new business needs. These tools and methodologies cover five operational areas mapped on top of Altitude uCI's main customer interaction channel functionalities, namely voice inbound, voice outbound, IVR, email and Web collaboration.

- Enhancements to **Aspect's (www.aspect.com)** contact center-oriented unified communications application are now available. The new features – accessed through the Aspect Unified IP 6.6.1 platform product – include enabling customer interaction with contact center agents through Microsoft Office Communicator and over the Web with click-to-IM. Customers can incorporate the IM address for the companies that they do business with as part of their "buddy lists" and can interact with the contact center via IM. IM routing also offers an auto attendant capability, or interactive messaging response, allowing the contact center to fully automate and script a response to an incoming instant message and/or intelligently route the customer to an IM-based agent.

  Hybrid integration between the Aspect platform and Tellme's on-demand voice portal platform helps companies leverage network-based services. These include proactive customer contact, post-call surveys, automated appointment reminders, notifications and business continuity with on-demand self service.

- **InVision Software's (www.invisionwfm.com)** InVision Enterprise WFM 4.7 features several program enhancements that make optimized staff planning more reliable. It lets users enter local laws and individual contract regulations into the system. They can save time and calculate working times by making use of the 40 new functions available for integrated time management. It also has an Absence Planner feature, which facilitates long-term staff planning and provides an overview of all scheduled absences in the selected monthly view of a given planning unit.

- **LiveVox (www.livevox.com)** has released Agent@Ready, a feature that reduces abandoned calls associated with hosted-broadcast blasters and robo callers. With Agent@Ready, LiveVox procures local direct inward dial numbers for clients at no additional charge. This allows organizations to tap their agents into to the LiveVox ACD, which drives the hosted dialer's powerful call pacing and routing features that improves the calling efficiency.

- **Nexidia (www.nexidia.com)** has come out with the Nexidia Enterprise Speech Intelligence 8.0. It has new first call resolution analysis tools that are fully integrated into existing customer transaction data and which leverage Nexidia's speech analytics to provide deep insight into the most critical metric impacting operations costs and customer experience. ESI 8.0 can now analyze calls by individual speaker – agent or customer – providing more relevant results. It has the ESI Forensic Search tools, which provide easy ways to query, report on and visualize that data; the user can view a speaker-separated player showing tracks, results, cross-talk, and non-talk. ESI 8.0 also has expanded scalability with the lowest total cost of ownership. While a single server can process more than 20,000 hours of audio per day, with ESI 8.0 customers can now integrate multiple servers together to provide practically unlimited capacity.

- **RightAnswers (www.rightanswers.com)** has launched the "RightAnswers Enterprise Gateway," an add-on component to the company's Unified Knowledge Suite. Designed to maximize search capabilities across an organization, the new tool provides users with more resources to find answers to their support issues. The new tool integrates with enterprise search systems to provide a single point of access to organizational knowledge, IT solutions and support. The integration delivers several benefits such as faster resolution to support issues, more satisfied users and reduced calls to the help desk. Enterprises can now seamlessly extend content from the RightAnswers Unified Knowledge Suite to the rest of their enterprise.

- **The Resource Center for Customer Service Professionals (www.the-resource-center.com)** has expanded its next generation contact center training curriculum with the addition of **COPC's (www.copc.com)** Global Best Practices Training for Customer Service Providers. The four-and-a-half day course takes place Sept. 28 to Oct. 2, 2009, at the Hartland Plaza Center in Austin, Texas. The program registration fee is $3,795. Attendees can earn the prestigious COPC CSP "registered coordinator" status.

  Participants will learn about operational practices used in high performance customer contact centers, common operational pitfalls and how to avoid them, and high performance benchmarks and how to set targets for service levels, quality objectives and unit costs. They will also be taught how to optimize operational performance and balance service, quality and cost and improve operational capabilities that achieve higher levels of client and end-user satisfaction while reducing costs. They will obtain the requirements for implementing the COPC-2000 CSP "gold standard" in a customer service organization

- **Siemens Enterprise Communications (www.siemens-enterprise.com)** has made unified communications more affordable and practical for small-midsized businesses and their contact centers. The OpenScape Office UC application suite scales so that organizations of up to 384 users can access voice and conferencing services, presence, mobility, voicemail, messaging, and contact center capabilities. As OpenScape Office now operates on Siemens' HiPath 3000 platform, UC can now be deployed through a simple software upgrade across not only IP but also TDM and analog environments. This gives Siemens' customers more flexibility in migrating to UC. That means SMBs can upgrade to UC even they do not have IP, which avoids CAPEX costs.

  OpenScape Office is also now available on HiPath OpenOffice ME. This is an all-in-one unified communications appliance that provides a high-quality toolset that can enable organizations of 20 to 150 workers to benefit from productivity, mobility and collaboration features that are typically only affordable for much larger organizations.

- **Syntellect (www.syntellect.com)** new VoiceXML Studio 7.2 accelerates creating of VoiceXML-based voice solutions by 50 percent or more. It is also tightly integrated with the Syntellect Communications Portal, providing developers with a comprehensive VoiceXML offering. It supports VoiceXML 2.1 and 2.0 specifications and has a graphical programming environment that eliminates the need for manual coding and generates VoiceXML suitable for high-performance applications. Java, XML and Web Services capabilities allow developers to integrate easily with existing software applications and leverage prior investments in software and solution development. An integrated debugger streamlines development and testing time while sdvanced database controls enable business process and transaction automation

- In what will be a series of new products **VXi Corporation (www.vxicorp.com)** has launched two new headsets aimed at contact centers, the Passport 21 and the VXi Tria. With a lightweight design, the VXi Passport 21V binaural single-wire headset incorporates the sound quality and durability of the Passport 20 and has a single-wire design, which allows for greater range of motion. VXi Tria V's monaural design allows an ear free to hear other conversations. It provides clear and consistent communications with its quality audio receiver. It is also compatible with Passport V-series amplifiers and direct-connect cords. Both models have noise-canceling microphones filters out unwanted background noise and gooseneck mic tubes that ensures consistent, proper, and kink-free microphone placement.

NexInteractive

Next Generation
Call Center Solutions

Premise or Hosted Call Center
- Predictive Dialer
- Vertical Dialer
- Predictive Dialer without a PC
- Dynamic ANI Display
- Inbound IVR / ACD
- Inbound Data mining
- Text_to_speech Broadcasting
- Operator Intercept Identifier
- 100% call recording
- 100% WEB access

Benefits OF iNexus dialer
- Increase agent productivity rapidly
- Increase sales by 400%
- Rapid implementation same day
- Minimize Capital Investments
- Uptime 99.9

Industries
- Collections
- Healthcare
- Financial Services
- Sales
- Customer Service
- Fundraising
- Mortgage
- Market Research

NO CONTRACTS • MONTH TO MONTH
FREE TRIAL up to 20 agents
Best in stability, Reliability, Scalability

Best price in the industry

SPECIAL OFFER
$59.99 mo/per agent/1.5 cents per minute

HIGHEST DIAL RATIOS IN THE INDUSTRY

Free On-the-Spot Quote

NexInteractive
Call now: (213) 268-2557
sales@nexinteractive.com

www.nexinteractive.com

by Brendan Read

Call Recording: It's Not Just For Compliance Anymore

Gone are the days where call recording was a necessary and expensive evil, performed minimally if possible for compliance reasons and just to keep the contact center agents on their toes. Now more organizations see recording as heaven-sent means to improve customer satisfaction and revenues and boost productivity. They are also seeking these tools to slice expenses like average handle times and new customer acquisition costs, which are five to 10 times the pricetags of retaining existing buyers.

"In this recession there is an increased awareness by companies to make sure that customers keep on getting a good experience, compared to the last recession where cutting costs was all that mattered," explains Jim Davies, research director of Gartner. "If customers don't get a good experience then they are much more likely to leave when the market picks up. Investment in recording, quality monitoring and coaching solutions to make sure that they get that enhanced experience and in doing so reduce churn are getting the green light."

In short, call recording – like contact centers – are migrating from being cost-sources to profit tools. And, like contact centers, are becoming effective thanks to new features and functionality. The shift from TDM to IP in contact centers has enabled and prompted firms to deploy new IP-based products that permit easier centralized recording and system administration, and management especially when there are multiple centers and home agents.

"We're headed for a near-100 percent recording environment from partial recording capacity due to decreased storage costs, increasing use of the cloud for recording and the ability to do more with the recordings than just listen to them randomly for quality monitoring purposes," reports Keith Dawson, a senior analyst with Frost and Sullivan.

For such reasons there appears to be an increase in call recording sales as the economic downturn bottoms out; demand for these products had also nosedived in the financial morass of the past year. Datamonitor reports that its global market forecast model shows call recording growing at a steady compound annual growth rate of 6.5 percent between 2009 and 2013.

"Enterprise risk management strategies that were previously focused on securing systems and rapid data recovery have advanced to include an increasing focus on the management of customer data," explains Aphrodite Brinsmead, an associate analyst of Datamonitor. "Not only is basic recording and monitoring of calls a necessity in many industries, but enterprises also need to be able to sort information and analyze trends."

Not that compliance has gone away as a rationale. If anything, there will a greater need for recordings for that purpose.

"In fact, the current legislative response to the present economic turmoil typically includes stricter regulations," says Brinsmead. "This trend should actually drive slow but steady growth in the recording market."

Product Upgrades

Recording is becoming easier and more cost-effective thanks to continued enhancements being made by call recording suppliers to their solutions. For example CyberTech's CyberTech Release 5.3, offers improved security, compliance, resilience, connectivity, archiving and screen recording. It now provides Active IP Recording for Cisco systems with an advanced connection with the Cisco Call Manager that simplifies monitoring and recording.

Also, Newfound Communications's Newfound IP Call Recorder Version 1.5 has a "record and save" feature that gives contact centers the option to store only the most essential recordings. It initiates recordings at the beginning of calls and keeps the recordings only if escalations occur. It also enables pausing and resuming recordings to omit capturing sensitive information such as account numbers. The feature reduces file size by not recording while calls are in queue or hold music is being played.

Telrex now includes full-motion video capture, including voice and data and live monitoring of employee desktops or taking screen snapshots at pre-determined intervals in CallRex Computer Recording 3.9 software. It captures desktop images and videos to completely assess agent-customer interactions. Full-motion videos, synced with call audio, provide a holistic view, allowing contact center managers to identify positive experiences or areas for training.

Zoom International's CallREC 4.4 permits 100 percent voice capture via SPANless recording; it also eliminates the time-consuming need for network administrators to configure and maintain SPAN ports on network switches. The version has other key features including support for configurable thresholds for disk space; calls are stored and moved between internal disks/NAS/SAN based on lifecycle management settings. Also, calls can now be backed up and archived based on customer profiles, skill groups or other business related data.

Speech Analytics/Call Recording Impacts

The arrival of speech analytics software to derive actionable intelligence from interactions based on understanding what was said, by agents or automated IVR or speech rec systems and customers is a great spouse for call recording. There is synergy in that call recording makes these analytics possible while the added demand for recordings bolsters those solutions.

One of the companies at the ceremonies is OrecX. Its Oreka Total Recorder software allows customers to make Oreka TR speech analytics ready for most commercially available speech analytics engines.

Another firm at the altar is CallCopy whose new cc: Discover 4.0 recording solution had been released ahead of the firm's new speech analytics and performance management solutions with support already built in for these features. It also has an agent coaching portal aimed at improving agent performance by delivering agent access for reviewing call recordings and viewing performance reports and delivering personalized coaching. A browser-based interface to permits listening and acting on recording without additional software. Reporting is simplified via additional ready-to-use reporters and integration with Microsoft SQL Server Reporting Services.

The arrival of speech analytics solutions as a means to boost customer satisfaction/retention, productivity, and quality may require firms to change out or upgrade their call recording tools to fully appreciate the potential benefits. That is because older recording platforms did not support stereo recording, making it difficult to separate the various participant's audio and thus determine who said what, Gartner's Davies points out. For example, was it the customer getting annoyed or the agent?

"However, even with older recordings you can still identify interesting insights such as the mention of a competing company or product or the referral to a recent marketing campaign," says Davies.

Contact centers may also need to add recording storage and processing capabilities. That is because more calls will get recorded, and those recordings will need to be accessed quickly.

Ed Templeman is director of marketing, TelStrat, which earlier this year released Engage Analyze, its speech analytics solutions that is integrated with the Engage Contact Center Suite. The Engage Suite blends voice and screen recording; agent performance evaluation, tracking and coaching; agent scripting and call automation; and workforce forecasting and scheduling.

"Implementing speech analytics doesn't really change call recording methods but what it does do is become a driver to prompt more frequent and widespread recording," says Templeman. "This means contact centers must make sure their recording systems are scalable from an agent count/server capacity standpoint, as well as a server management standpoint."

Keep in mind, though, in the push to record the maximum number of calls the chosen voice analytics solution must be able to effectively process them, he points out. Due to processing time and server horsepower constraints, traditional large vocabulary conversational speech recognition or speech-to-text analytics solutions rely on a 3-to-5-percent statistical sample of calls. So, even if you're recording 100 percent, you're actually analyzing nowhere near that amount.

"On the other hand, newer speech analytics technologies, such as phoneme-based approaches, have much greater speed and capacity," says Templeman. "Their ability to process call content in order of magnitude faster than LVCSR systems makes analyzing 100 percent of large call volumes a practical proposition."

He also recommends that recording servers should also be equipped to simultaneously handle multiple voice technologies such as VoIP, TDM, analog and even radio.

"This will allow speech analytics to provide a truer glimpse into all types of an organization's customer interaction," Templeman points out.

Suites Versus Standalones and Hosting

Call recording is now being bundled into workforce optimization suites or being offered as modules in integrated multivendor WFO solutions that make buying, installation, management and support simpler and less costly. Hosting is becoming a popular delivery option for recording for those reasons, along with greater flexibility to meet needs.

There is still a debate over which way to buy call recording solutions: best-in-class or pre-integrated suites with WFO solutions. Best-in-class can be more cost effective in that not all companies use all the modules available in today's suites and/or that they have don't have the needs for the rest of their features. Firms can therefore buy only what they require to perform the tasks at hand.

Yet suites allow for a single administration environment, along with smooth and efficient data collection, analysis and presentation across multiple modules with minimum hiccups. Maintenance of all modules in the suite requires dealing with one vendor, which provides advantages in financial and time efficiency over point solutions.

The trend is clearly towards suites. A recent Frost and Sullivan survey reports that 34 percent of centers source their agent performance optimization – or APO, a catchall term for analytics, performance management, quality monitoring and workforce management systems – from single vendors via integrated suites. Another 17 percent source their systems from multiple vendors that have since merged. That puts a clear majority of APO implementations in the hands of consolidating suite vendors.

This movement is backed up by what is happening in the marketplace. Many WFO suppliers now offer call recording in their suites.

To compete, standalone recording suppliers are partnering with WFO/WFM suppliers to offer products that integrate both solutions in single packages. For example Zoom International is partnering WFM firm GMT. Branded as WorkFORCE the agreement brings together Zoom's CallREC and ScoreCARD products with GMT's Planet solution.

At the same time more CRM, CIM and routing suppliers are incorporating recording into their suites. To illustrate, Syntellect has integrated its new Syntellect Call Recorder with the Syntellect Customer Interaction Management suite.

"Vendor consolidation has pushed recording in the direction of suites," says Dawson. "Then, in response, most of the standalone vendors have established ad hoc suites or 'ecosystems' to add value to their niche products. So whether customers want suites or not, they will increasingly benefit from a higher degree of inter-company integration."

Hosted delivery is a viable choice as it enables companies to obtain, ramp up, down and, if need be, exit recording solutions. VirtualLogger has tapped into these features to draw attention to its hosted recording solution. It has been expanding existing programs and offering new risk-minimizing programs as well. For example, its business protection plan allows clients to reduce costs immediately in response to changing business demands. It has been marketing for limited periods, free recording and quality monitoring services in exchange for signing multiyear agreements.

"Enabling clients to pay-as-they-go for hardware and software is an ideal solution for contact centers that want current technology without the risk of being overextended," says the firm's president, Jim Veilleux. **CIS**

Call Recording Tips

Verint offers these suggestions to get the most out of call recording and quality monitoring solutions:

- Plan, communicate, and formalize the rollout process. All three are vital to initial and ongoing use, and in gaining agent buy-in and acceptance. Agents and supervisors need to feel that they're part of the process: understanding how and why it's valuable to the business, the ways it will benefit them, and how it can help them become more proficient and advance in their roles.
- Think multi-channel and big picture: recording not only voice conversations, but also the data entry, screen navigation and desktop activities that agents use. This full picture delivers a complete view into how customer experiences unfold: and how the organization's agents, technology, and processes performed in doing so. Recording can be used to capture e-mail, chat and Web transactions, along with back-office department workflow such as claims processing, order entry and billing that have definite impacts on the resulting customer experience.
- Develop customized forms to evaluate contact center interactions/recordings and agent performance. Evaluation forms can be tailored and weighted to the specific and unique needs of the particular contact center, company and industry it serves. In creating forms, another best practice is to structure them so as to ensure the right and desired behaviors are being tracked and measured. Forms should be correlated to and measured against a balanced scorecard of key performance indicators and goals to ensure that the improvements in the desired behaviors produce the desired big-picture results and are consistent with overall center goals
- The protection of customer data is a growing concern. Call recording solutions should feature encryption, secure storage environments, and options not to record certain credit card authentication data

The following companies participated in the preparation of this article:

CallCopy
www.callcopy.com

CyberTech International
www.cybertech-int.com/

GMT
www.gmt.com

Newfound Communications
www.newfoundcomm.net

OrecX
www.orecx.com

Syntellect
www.syntellect.com

Telrex
www.telrex.com

TelStrat
www.telstrat.com

Verint
www.verint.com

VirtualLogger
www.virtuallogger.com

Zoom International
www.zoomint.com

SENNHEISER
COMMUNICATIONS

BW 900

SH 330

Introducing the

Global

Headset Community

Sponsored by Sennheiser Communications

The customer service business environment changes at a moments notice. Will you be the last to know? Get up-to-the-minute news, trends and insight on critical technological advancements for your headset users at the world's premier destination for tech information.

As they say in customer service–every second counts.

Visit the community at: headsets.tmcnet.com

Powered by:

TMCnet™

Incentive Programs Can Make a Difference

By Tim Passios,

Director of Product Management

The premise sounds so simple at the beginning. We have work that needs to be completed. You need money. Perhaps we could pay you money to do our work. Unfortunately, that's where the simplicity ends.

The actual "doing" of the work gets tricky. Some people do more than others. Some accomplish more, but make more errors. Employers want to reach their goals of getting as much work done with the highest quality possible. Employees want to work some place they enjoy, are treated with respect, have opportunity, and are compensated well for their work. This is especially important in contact centers where agents are speaking to customers. In outsourced contact centers, they may represent different companies at the same time.

How do we reconcile the needs and desires of employers with those of the employees? Many people have tried to design incentive plans to do just that – and failed. But wait. That doesn't mean the idea was bad. It's much more likely that the way the incentive plan structure was flawed.

Many employers struggle to find an incentive plan that really works. Certainly, some constraints can't be overcome. If the reward for achieving an excellent result is $1 extra at the end of the week, that has to be addressed. However, the reverse is true also. If the reward for satisfactory result is $5,000, you may never have anyone work harder for $5,500. Let's look at some principles that can help create the right framework for an incentive plan.

Make feedback and rewards continuous. The faster you reward your employee, the stronger the reinforcement. Rewards that come at the end of a quarter, month, or even week are too delayed to tie the performance to the reward.

Keep the incentive program going. If the program stops and starts, you'll never build trust and you'll lose momentum.

Use more frequent but smaller rewards. You can improve attendance by making it something people get small rewards for daily. Use bigger rewards on Monday and Friday to reduce absenteeism. This will be more effective than rewarding perfect attendance.

Give employees reward choices. You will never find a reward everybody values in the same way, so don't even try. By using reloadable debit cards, employees get to pick their own reward and that increases the value of your reward to them. If you decide to offer choices, be flexible and factor in the extra time to manage those choices.

Make rewards special. When it's time to give a reward, make a big deal out of it. Make other people aware of it and desirous of it. Don't include it in their payroll. They will notice it but it will not get the recognition you are seeking. Update payroll with the reward, but don't disburse it in payroll.

Make some rewards random. Not everything in life is performance-based. Let everyone get a raffle ticket and then have someone draw out the numbers that win. Make one reward bigger to create anticipation and desire.

Involve your management. Team leaders, supervisors, and managers should all participate in the incentive program. Establish goals and levels of achievement and reward for them too. Their goals should dovetail with the goals of their team members.

Ask for suggestions. There's nothing like giving people what they want – and you have to ask them. Don't assume you know. People will often surprise you. Try to incorporate their feedback.

Promote your incentives. When you have positive feedback from your program, use it when promoting your company to other prospective employees. There is nothing like real-world comments to reinforce the value of your program.

Don't spend more than necessary. Find a reasonable amount that works in your budget and provides an effective incentive. Don't go above that. Going higher doesn't produce more benefits or better performance. Staying within your budget ensures that the program can be sustained and continue to deliver the benefits your company seeks and the rewards your employees desire.

Most of all, realize that you can have a positive effect on your employee's performance and satisfaction. A properly designed incentive program rewards your employees because they have made important and significant contributions to the company's revenues and profits. If your incentive program isn't doing that, it's time to shake things up.

Here's a great example. I heard about this and I wish I had thought of it. A manager took his incentive budget and filled a bag with $1, $5, $10, $20 and $50 bills. When it was reward time, employees pulled a bill from the bag. The reward was random. If the employee pulled a $50, everyone cheered. If he pulled a $5 bill, they all knew that there were still more $50 bills left in the bag. Brilliant. CIS

CALL OUR SALES REPS TOLL FREE 1-800-553-8159

five 9

Call Center Software Online Community

http://call-center-software.tmcnet.com

In today's complex global environment of new technology, product sourcing, and labor markets, Five9's call center software is at the forefront of accelerating call center performance.

The Call Center Software community addresses issues important to decision makers in the call center market. Visitors can find valuable resources such as free product trials, feature articles, white papers, industry news and free consultations.

Five9 call center software applied to your operations delivers high-impact results for:

- Customer service and support
- Call center virtualization
- Sales generation activities
- Customer insights and experience
- Business continuity options

Powered by:

TMCnet™

Copyright 2001-2008 Five9, inc. All rights reserved.

by Brendan Read

Effectively Protecting Your Customers' Data

Today's organizations depend and thrive on data for marketing, customer service and staff management, and like anything that is valuable, criminals have been seeking it to commit ID other fraud, blackmail or other crimes.

The 2009 Identity Fraud Survey Report by Javelin Strategy and Research reports that the number of identity fraud victims has increased 22 percent to 9.9 million adults in the U.S., while the total annual fraud amount increased by seven percent to $48 billion over the past year. The reasons include profitability, safety and simplicity, explains Greg Young, research vice president, Gartner.

To limit ID fraud U.S. Federal Trade Commission requires financial institutions and creditors to comply with its new Red Flags; after much delay enforcement begins Nov.1, 2009. The regulations mandate these firms to implement programs to identify, detect, and respond to the warning signs, or "red flags," that could indicate identity theft.

Unfortunately firms have been launching new data-using processes without having the tools in place to adequately protect users and themselves.

"The business uses of data have gone far beyond what the security architectures and procedures are designed for and these have not caught up," explains Young. "There is a disconnect between what businesses do and intended to do with data and what security fence system is in place to enforce those policies."

Also companies have been erring in favor of not inconveniencing customers as opposed to security such as asking for authentication through passwords and answers to challenge questions. These methods have become more difficult because the secrets used for authenticating users via passwords are readily available. This matter comes to a head with contact center agents who face annoyed buyers on the phone and who have to keep handle times short.

"There is a line between customer access and customer service that is tread more often than not on the customer satisfaction side, because firms don't want to make it difficult for customers to get at data and risk annoying them," says Young.

Limiting the People Threat

Contact center staff are on the data security front lines. Properly trained they can thwart intrusion. Unfortunately contact centers too frequently have environments that foster data loss and theft. Employees are typically low-paid and have minimal or no benefits, are often poorly supervised, rushed to meet metrics, and face enormous stress from demanding customers and management. Agents also tend to be young, sometimes immature, with little workforce experience and financially struggling.

To limit the risk requires properly staff selection and management, keeping an ear for and acting quickly on any serious morale and performance issues. There needs to be work environments where employees look out for their company rather than looking the other way.

Thomas L. Cardella and Associates applies background including credit and work experience checks on new hires. It also provides them an excellent work environment. Its pay is slightly higher than its competitors while benefits that are the same from the agents to the CEO, and an employee stock ownership plan.

These processes and features have helped the BPO firm attract what CEO and founder Tom Cardella considers a superior quality agent. The average age is 34 years old, which is higher than some of its competitors, leading to a more conscientious and responsible work force, one that sees employment there as an investment in their future.

"Having a vested interest in our company helps manage data security issues, because it isn't 'management' they are hurting either deliberately or through neglect but themselves," explains Cardella.

Managing Data Access

To prevent theft while enabling quality customer services requires carefully managing data access. There are many data access methods. Among them are data masking – which replaces confidential data with fictitious material – shortening identifiers, data obfuscation and encryption.

Axis Technology, which makes the DMsuite data masking tool, argues that this method is far more effective than encryption because encrypted data is merely a puzzle that takes a little time to decode, explains company founder and president, delivery and operations Michael Logan. In contrast masked data cannot be reversed if it is removed from its environment. Also, by using data masking, companies do not have to disclose if there is a breach because the private data is unable to be used by thieves, therefore eliminating the risk.

Access management includes employee and user authentication, and there is a growing range of new biometric-based solutions to enable just that. For example Convergys has a new platform-independent on-demand voice authentication solution that is implemented by enrolling voice signatures. Companies can then authenticate agent-assisted and consumer transactions more securely than with traditional ID + PIN authentications.

The data access issue comes to a head with CRM systems because many more people have differing access to the vast amounts of valuable information to perform their tasks. This renders the traditional data control method of separating access by users unworkable.

Larry Ritter, senior vice president and general manager of Sage CRM Solutions, says for those reasons his firm incorporates multiple security models and tools into its applications. These allow customers to apply the appropriate layers of security to their business needs and the right balance of security versus accessibility to their CRM data.

"For CRM, enforcing the appropriate role-based security along with functional/feature security is important for information management and interaction standards compliance," says Ritter. "From data access security, to segmented record views, to field-level security, to feature/functionality, role-based security and user grouping/management, any combination of security implementations may be relevant to one customer and overkill for another."

Outsourcing, Hosting, Offshoring and Home Agents

There have been concerns raised by firms and customers whether there is a greater risk of their information being stolen by third parties, staff outside of the U.S., or in their homes. Fortunately these fears say experts may be overemphasized.

Outsourcers have to comply by the same strict laws that regulate individuals' health information and payment card industry data security standards. It is also in their best commercial interests to do so; keeping their clients' customers' data safe and secure helps keep clients and attracts others.

For example, InfoCision Management Corporation has

FIND THE NEEDLES IN YOUR HAYSTACK

New!

engage™ analyze

speech analytics. understood.

See Engage Contact Center Suite in the TelStrat booth at:
Fall DAC
&
Avaya Global Sales Conference

They're out there. The words, the terms, the phrases that are key to increasing productivity, improving compliance, and enhancing your business and customer intelligence. You know. You've found them. Buried in thousands of calls. Or hundreds. Or just that one. Using Phonetic Audio Search technology you've mined massive call volumes in record time. Now, you've got the knowledge to optimize your operation. You've got Engage Analyze, part of the **Engage Contact Center Suite** from TelStrat.

The Engage Suite combines TelStrat's award-winning call recording technology with an array of best-practice product technologies from across the contact center industry, yielding an easy, affordable, total contact center solution. From capturing complete customer interaction with its exclusive Conversation Save™ recording, to sophisticated workforce management, and now, advanced speech analytics, Engage Suite optimizes each major aspect of contact center operation. With its modular design, every component augments and enhances the next, so your organization can start with call recording and add capabilities as your needs change. Engage lets you grow at your own pace. Within one suite. From one source. TelStrat.

Call Recording | Screen Capture | Agent Scoring & Reporting | E-Learning & Performance Tracking
Speech Analytics | Workforce Management

engage™ Contact Center Suite from TELSTRAT®

sales@telstrat.com | 972-543-3500 | www.telstrat.com

become a Level II merchant by PCI, which means that it can safely process between one and six million credit card transactions a year, reports Steve Brubaker, Senior Vice President, Corporate Affairs. It is now working on its annual audit to ensure compliance in addition to monthly audits. Level II firms must complete an annual self-assessment questionnaire.

Hosted solutions such as contact management and CRM platforms are systems can be equally safe as their on-premises counterparts. And for similar reasons as outsourced live agent applications: because they have to be.

"Hosted applications may not provide dedicated secure tunnels to the users' sites while premise solutions can be as secure as money can buy," reports Bernard Drost, chief technology officer of Innoveer Solutions. "[Yet with premises solutions] I usually see that security is an afterthought or the people deciding on how to handle security are not security experts. The good thing with hosted solutions is that a lot of very big companies host their CRM with the hosting providers so much research has been done to make the hosted system as secure as possible."

Premises-based tools may require creating costly security updates involving patches or complex configuration changes that would need to be created, issued, and distributed to customers and then installed. Which may come too late if the crooks have figured out how to punch through the security.

"If a security weakness is identified, the cloud computing model enables updates to be quickly identified and instantly updated to all customers," says Niall Browne, chief information security officer, LiveOps. "The cost of implementation, compliance and 24/7 security monitoring and support can be spread across multiple clients, so every client has the security benefits and controls at a fraction of the cost and effort of implementing them individually."

There is little or no increased danger in having Americans' data handled by contact centers whether internal or outsourced in other countries, reports Gartner's Young. This includes popular contact center locations like India, the Philippines, Latin America and Canada, which have similar if not more stringent laws and agreements that respect intellectual property and privacy.

There is a risk, though of data loss if firms set up or do business with firms in countries where there is a culture for data and intellectual property theft and/or strong government controls, and industrial espionage. Young recommends performing due diligence on these nations.

Similarly home agents are at no more risk from data theft than those in bricks and mortars centers. If anything the threat is less because these individuals tend to be higher quality, better educated, older, and more responsible than those in traditional sites. They also treasure the privileges and are not about to endanger them.

The one common technology weakpoint in home offices, one that it also shares with traditional settings is wireless networks that can be a source of unauthorized access. These can be managed by prohibiting them or remotely shutting them down when agents are at work. A similar data armor chink, wireless keyboards, can also be prohibited.

Firms can also deploy the same common authentication tools such as fingerprint, scan, and voice print scans and webcams as in bricks-and-mortar centers. For example West will soon be beta-testing voice biometrics for its "West at Home" agents. It is also evaluating webcams to ensure that its certified agents are in the seats.

Home agent security has been bolstered by remote control tools that capture users' computers when they logon, preventing them from gaining unauthorized access to files and installing malware, relinquishing the units when they logoff.

These tools have become more powerful. The latest version of West's internal solution, the West at Home Locked-Down Desktop Security Environment 2.0 now restricts wireless networks and unauthorized ports or virtual machines. Self-deleting code ensures that once the agents exit the Locked-Down Desktop; no traces of the program or applications that run inside of it remain on the agent's computer. Code obfuscation blocks attempts to reverse-engineer the program's proprietary code, thereby protecting intellectual property without affecting application functionality.

Checking and Responding

The best means to protect data are the most fundamental. These include checking to see if access credentials are up to date, frequent password changes, dumping unneeded sensitive data, and when staff members leave organizations, removing their permissions immediately. They also entail the virtual equivalent patrols using a combination of checklists and observations for anything out of the ordinary, such as increased traffic from a server that has been quiet.

And if, or more likely when data is exposed, there should be a tested response plan, including handling calls and notifying customers in accordance with the laws. That procedure can involve having a third party pre-arranged on call to manage volume spikes.

"We have been asked, on occasion, to help an organization who has experienced a data loss or breach in security," says InfoCision's Brubaker. "Typically we have assisted by providing inbound customer service for calls generated from security breach letters sent to those whose information might have been compromised." **CIS**

The following companies participated in the preparation of this article:

Axis Technology
www.axistechnologyllc.com

Convergys
www.convergys.com

InfoCision
www.infocision.com

Innoveer
www.innoveer.com

LiveOps
www.liveops.com

Sage
www.sagecrmsolutions.com

Thomas L. Cardella Associates
www.tlcassociates.com

West
www.west.com

CONTACT CENTER SOLUTIONS
GLOBAL ONLINE COMMUNITY
SPONSORED BY:

INTERACTIVE INTELLIGENCE

http://callcenterinfo.tmcnet.com/
Log On Today!

POWERED BY: TMCnet

By Tim Searcy

Regulating Text Messaging and the Contact Center

The oil slick is lapping at our shores again – text messaging and the contact center. Regulatory interest and asserted power will spread out like an oil slick unless held in check. In the case of teleservices, the industry has for a long time been the recipient of unchecked jurisdictional expansion. Theoretically, the way government operates is fairly simple: if jurisdiction is not specifically denied, then it is implicitly granted. A perfect example of this spread has been provided by the states. Because the FCC in its rulemaking told states that their laws for interstate telemarketing would be almost certainly pre-empted, states saw an opportunity and jumped into the breach with lots of laws..

Because of this, we have a patchwork of hundreds of state and federal regulations instead of one clear standard. Oh well, I have chased that frustration in the past, and that is not the purpose for this month's missive. No, the latest victim of regulatory expansion through judicial review is social networking, and that is the new shore upon which we must guard against the pollution which has poisoned our other oceans of existence such as inbound and outbound teleservices.

A Little Background

In June, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals found that the Telephone Consumer Protection Act also applies to unsolicited text messages. Up until now, it was unclear whether the text messaging that was generated using "automatic telephone dialing systems" was covered under these rules. The court has said it does.

The court also reaffirmed the definition of express consent for the purpose of affiliate marketing. Although the customer in question had consented to additional communication from the company in question and its affiliates, that did not allow a third party to enjoy that same consent. This is a common misconception about the re-sale of data and express consent, which the court simply reinforced in this particular ruling.

Obvious Risks

Of course, this ruling is troubling for any firm that is interested in broad spectrum or narrow-casting text messages to individuals for the purpose of commercial promotion. The rules are not that hard to understand, and at the ATA we conduct many seminars for the proper interpretation of the TCPA and TSR.

Additionally, the entire SMS industry has welcomed a relative lack of regulatory oversight. Although the use of the automatic dialing technology has been under the purview of the FCC on text messaging for awhile, the court case effectively expands the rule to include all aspects of the TCPA about content of messages as well. In some ways, this is a natural next step, and therefore not surprising. However, the changes in Washington, D.C. related to new commissioners and leadership at both the FTC and FCC present new areas for potential agendas by new leaders.

Not So Obvious Risks

We don't have the time we have enjoyed in the past to examine technologies and their potential uses and abuses. Regulators need to satisfy a rising tide of demand for action from their constituents on the commercial application of text, social networking and Web to phone. For this reason, the industry must frame its answers and suggestions in the next few months instead of over the next several years. Time is not our friend, and the future of the unified contact center is at stake.

In the past, the teleservices industry has been the "smart" technology player in the room with the regulators and legislators. Unfortunately, this new commercial toolbox has developed with everyone operating at roughly the same speed. Consequently, when we talk to the regulators, they are also the consumers that are either annoyed or pleased by the technology that is being discussed. For this reason, the real world applications are very personal, and the dialog moves to first person as in, "When I get an unsolicited text from you people (implied bad teleservices practicioners)," instead of something like, "We have heard of cases of abuse using text messaging." When regulators start to take the subject of regulation personally, it can certainly create a strong motivation for more expansive rules.

Let's not move past text messaging without the acknowledgement that this form of communication is the well-accepted kin to the social networking phenomenon. This is all about how we find out who to contact, what we say to them when we reach them, and which new Web 2.0 or 3.0 channel we employ for that contact. Everything new will go through the same old pattern of regulatory consideration. **CIS**

Editor's Note: The numerous aspects of these new channels will be the focus of ATA's annual convention in New Orleans, Oct. 4-7. To learn more about this event, visit www.ataconnect.org.

Sponsored by:

POLYCOM®

Polycom's HD Voice Community on TMCnet

The gathering place for vendors, service providers, and users of
HD Voice and wideband audio IP telephony.

Tap into a vast array of resources helping you select HD Voice services

- Whitepapers
- Podcasts
- Webinars
- Blogs
- "Ask the Expert" Commentary
- Breaking Industry News

http://hdvoice.tmcnet.com

Powered by: TMCnet™

by Brendan Read

BPO: Higher Quality, Competitive Costs

The quality revolution that is underway in organizations: focusing on customer retention by delivering excellent service rather than costlier acquisition is making its way through to business process outsourcing. Firms are now selecting suppliers on their abilities to deliver high customer satisfaction plus cross-sell/upsell revenues, instead of just on price alone. While the downturn has dampened volumes more organizations are interested in BPO because these vendors can provide the higher quality being sought at lower costs than in-house operations.

"Price stopped being the 500-pound gorilla in the room in talks between outsourcers and clients," reports Peter Ryan, contact center outsourcing and services analyst, Datamonitor. "Companies want to make sure that they will come back to use them. If people have a bad customer service experience whether in-house or outsourced they are likely to churn."

Top tier providers that have greater capabilities than their clients in technology processes, scale, global footprint, and efficiency will benefit, reports Mike McMenamin, associate partner, contact center services, TPI. They drive greater agent productivity and they use technology, tools and process to efficiently and intelligently route calls, capture customer information and address and solve customer needs, and achieve client service levels. Budget cuts have led to clients' internal centers not receiving adequate investments to provide topnotch service while staff have been laid off.

"Many companies are now admitting 'we're not that good at running these contact centers anymore' so they are handing this work off to companies whose core capabilities and single focuses are on contact center operations and customer service," explains McMenamin. "The top tier service providers have tens of thousands of agents in major centers [worldwide] equipped with some of the best available tools, technology and standardized processes. They have built global delivery platforms to leverage their scale and efficiency in ways clients cannot compete with."

Smaller BPO firms are also delivering quality. Charlton became the first to be accredited by the American Teleservices Association Self Regulatory Organization. Accreditation is granted to firms that meet a broad set of regulatory compliance standards with best practices, documentable procedures, and measurable tools. Also, Appletree Answers received multiple quality awards from the Association of TeleServices International. Ten of its locations earned ATSI's Award of Excellence; the firm's Portland, Maine facility for the sixth consecutive year while its St. Louis, Mo. office was honored for the fourth consecutive year with an Award of Distinction.

Such is the emphasis on quality that Thomas L. Cardella Associates reports that some clients are willing to pay more, even in a slow economy. One reason is the company's approach. Unlike many of its competitors it doesn't nickel-and-dime them on fees. Instead it offers one inclusive hourly rate.

"We've had several clients recognized over the past few months that just because they are paying a low price that doesn't mean they are getting the quality of service they need," says the firm's Founder and CEO, Tom Cardella. "While clients have had that message for a number of years that when they measure reduced attrition, increase sell, cross sell/upsell and they start to build that into the equation of what making sure they get what they paying for."

Sykes Enterprises has seen modest growth in 2009 and expects to see it accelerate slightly later this year. Enough so that it plans to add more capacity than expected in the U.S. and in other countries in 2009: to 1,700 to 1,900 seats from 1,200 to 1,400 seats. Earlier this year it opened three centers, one in Kentucky and two in South Carolina.

"Our plans are very controlled with a revenue growth of 15 to 20 percent and given what we've seen so far, we do not see any threat to our growth objectives," explains Dan Hernandez senior vice president, global strategy. "We continue to see increased demand for outsourcing. We've had no adjustments, and continue to keep a strong focus on service and operational excellence."

Quality-focused expansion is also taking place at a smaller scale. Customer Direct has added 22 workstations at its Chesterfield, Mo., center, bringing the total to over 100 stations. This facility expansion, in conjunction with growth in its home agent program “provides a significant platform for the capacity required to service future growth.”

Managing Operations

Cost is still very much in the outsourcing equation and BPO firms are being asked to do even more by clients with less. That is prompting them to tighten the operations even more.

Convergys is seeing more demand for higher first call resolution, to increase performance and reduce costs. To make this happen it has been deploying outlier management. This method studies on bell curves how agents are performing, looking at the best of best, to determine what elements make them superb then training others on them to move these staffers to the top to raise output.

Infocision Management Corp. has been investing in personalized CRM solutions. These include business intelligence, personalized URLs, on demand variable printing, chat and Web: components it says can be used as part of multichannel efforts to meet the diverse needs of customers. The firm feels that by investing in improving the quality of their experience, customers will form a stronger bond with clients’ organizations, thereby increasing their profit potential.

“We’re in an age where technology is bringing businesses and customers closer together and we believe that this is a prime time to invest in technology and services,” says Steve Boyazis, executive vice president. “As the weaker companies fold under the economic pressure, we’ll maintain our strong market position.”

TeleTech is implementing several customer-focused technology-based solutions aimed at cutting costs and improving quality. These include single sign-ons that logs agents into their applications at once and surface integrations which populate numerous fields in numerous databases with solo entries. These tools avoid re-entering the same customer information and reduce average handle times and in the latter also cut customer-annoying errors.

TeleTech is also launching a sidebar solution that lets supervisors broadcast instant messages such as sales promotions and critical product information into to the agents’ desktops. It is putting in an associate announcement tool that enables agents to record a 30-second disclaimer, fine print or other standard messages ahead of time. Agents can play the script is while completing work on the calls, which reduces the cost per call.

In turn more BPO firms are leveraging, and seeing increased client interest in their platforms for value-added hosted services. West has recently been seeing greater demand for its hosted contact center solutions, including network ACD and multi-channel notifications.

“Businesses are recognizing that they need to upgrade their technology with state of the art capabilities, but they no longer have the capital expenditure budgets they are used to having,” says Mark Frei, senior vice president of sales. “The benefit of outsourcing this is that it allows companies to obtain the latest feature functionality without the large investment and resource cost.”

“With the economy being where it is, they are saying ‘why wouldn’t we want to outsource this if companies like West have already invested in this technology? Why do we need to spend that money?’ This allows both a capital and operational expense reduction, to which companies can now focus on their core competencies of growing their business and improving their level of customer care.”

Nearshoring/Offshoring

Nearshoring and offshoring continue to be viable strategies for clients and tools for BPO firms to meet their needs because these locations are still one-third to half less expensive and, when managed right, offer more satisfactory service than onshore sites. Consequently the BPO firms are adding to their offshore sites and bolstering training.

For example Convergys recently opened its second Philippines center, in Makati City. And to ensure that their customers’ experience is uniformly positive, it has developed a global operating model that deploys the same client-agreed metrics and training and coaching staff to meet and exceed expectations.

“Our clients want balanced quality solutions: onshoring, nearshoring, and offshoring and work at home,” explains Christine Timmins Barry, senior vice president, operations, customer management. “We are looking at each center and at clients’ programs to make sure that the calls that land in Costa Rica are handled the same as the one that lands in Pocatello.”

There are a growing array of full-featured BPO firms based in widening number of nearshore and offshore countries that are expanding their operations and seeking business from North America, Europe, and Australia. Teledatos, which is headquartered in Colombia with contact centers in Bogota and Medellin, is expanding to Guatemala and Peru as part of a regional expansion plan. Xceed, which is Egyptian-owned, is providing customer service and support for Cisco’s customers and is expected to employ up to 300 agents on Cisco’s program in three years at the BPO firm’s Cairo center.

Even so there are BPO and in-house contact center programs that are being kept in or pulled back to the U.S. for reasons including customer concerns, namely bad experiences with offshore agents and employee – especially union – opposition. Also many organizations also have/or they are seeking government work, and need to show the flag.

Contact Centers of America is a new company based in Orlando, Fla. that aims to make onshoring competitive when quality translated into churn and call lengths and repeat calls are factored in. It does so with a high-productivity mix of savvy site selection: on college campuses plus home agents, hosted as opposed to installed contact center platforms, and per-call pricing and shared-agent programs compared with per-hour and dedicated agents.

"Customer satisfaction is in a deep decline, customer loyalty is decreasing and churn is sharply increasing," says President, CEO and Founder Joe Jacoboni. "Companies are becoming increasingly dissatisfied with outsourced solutions that do not respond well to the cultural context of the customer. I call our approach ExtremeCustomerSatisfaction and we deliver it because we combine staff that is our natural and abundant resources who can increase first call resolution, and customer loyalty and shorten calls with state of the art technology."

The Home Agent Shift

BPO firms are seeing more demand for and are shifting more of their work to home-based agents. The demand has come from both new clients and existing ones that are looking alternatives to onshoring in domestic contact centers and nearshoring/offshoring. The drivers are reduced facilities costs, diminished internal feuds as to sites arising from mergers and acquisitions, greater access to higher quality more loyal staff, increased flexibility, greening corporate consciousness by limiting commutes and enabling business continuity.

Michael DeSalles, strategic analyst with the Frost and Sullivan reports that in the past year ACS, Sitel, Teleperformance and TeleTech have begun offering home based agents.

"There is growing awareness of the benefits home agents, and more firms are embracing the model, relying on BPO firms' expertise to set up and manage them," says DeSalles.

West is seeing growth and interest accelerate for its West at Home program, prodded by the launch of its Locked-Down Desktop Security Environment last year. This solution remotely controls home agents' computers to prevent potential security breaches and to effectively eliminate agent intrusion into clients' systems.

"Security-conscious firms like financial services and healthcare companies that have had reservations in the past about using home agents are now seeing that it is feasible to use them thanks to West at Home's Locked-Down Desktop," reports Frei.

There is an ongoing debate between BPO employee and independent-contractor home agents. There is greater control with employee agents, including training and how the work is performed. On the other hand independent contractors are considered by some providers as more flexible, and motivated; the higher their performance, the greater their income.

Frost and Sullivan's DeSalles says independent contractors are being touted as well suited to traditional sales work including cross-selling/upselling. The hourly wage may be less because the contractors cover their overhead expenses out of their pockets rather than being wholly passed on to clients. Most work on a pay-for-performance basis.

One such independent contracting firm, LiveOps, received 2008 North American Frost and Sullivan Award for Growth Strategy Leadership for its winning marketing strategy and for successfully delivering its hosted platform to the enterprise market.

"We believe that LiveOps is unique in the market, offering two complementary mission-critical services: software-as-a-service contact center technology and its virtual contact center solution that leverages a community of 20,000 independent home-based agents," says DeSalles.

Jon Kaplan, president of TeleDevelopment Services thinks that on balance BPO employee home agent are gaining ground because the agents show more dedication to clients' customers than contractors.

"Just by the nature of the relationships contractors for outsourced firms tend to be not as 100 percent dedicated to end users as compared to employees for outsourcers," says Kaplan. "There is that additional business layer: contractor to contracted firm that in turn has been contracted by clients that further diffuses the customer service focus." **CIS**

The following companies participated in the preparation of this article:

Appletree Answers
www.appletreeanswers.com

Charlton
www.tcgcorp.net

Convergys
www.convergys.com

Contact Centers of America
www.contactcentersofamerica.com

Customer Direct
www.customerdirect.com

InfoCision
www.infocision.com

LiveOps
www.liveops.com

Sykes
www.sykes.com

Teledatos
www.teledatos.com

TeleTech
www.teletech.com

Thomas L. Cardella & Associates
www.tlcassociates.com

Xceed
www.xceedcc.com

West
www.west.com

Introducing the

Outbound Call Center Online Community

five9
Outbound Call Center Community
Free Trial
Free Quote
Free Consultation
Sign Up

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**
- **Free quotes**
- **Feature articles**
- **Case studies**
- **Technology briefs**

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

Powered by:

TMCnet™

Copyright 2001-2008 Five9, inc. All rights reserved.

by Tom Keating

2009 TMC Labs Innovation Award Winners Announced

This year marks the 10th anniversary for the prestigious TMC Labs Innovation Awards. The call center industry is constantly evolving with new innovations that improve training, increase productivity, reduce turnover and increase efficiency. The goal of the TMC Labs Innovation Awards is to distinguish unique products and services with innovative features that set them apart from their competitors.

With the advance of IP communications, unified communications, data collaboration tools and other communications technologies, the contact center has seen an explosive growth of products and services which optimize agent productivity. TMC Labs researched several dozen applications and were especially strict this year, our 10th anniversary, to spotlight only the truly innovative products, which resulted in 11 winners. In the next issue, we will provide information on the winners detailing why we feel their products merit this esteemed award. Congratulations to our winners!

Company	Product
Angel.com	*Angel.com SupportbyFone with Salesforce CTI*
Aplicor	*Aplicor ENTERPRISE*
Contact Center Compliance	*SmartBlock*
Cypress Communications	*C4 IP ACD*
Epicor	*Epicor 9*
NICE Systems	*IEX TotalView Version 4*
Noble Systems Corporation	*Noble® SIPhony*
Pegasystems Inc.	*Pegasystems Customer Process Manager (CPM)*
Transverse	*Business Logic Execution Environment Platform- aka: bleep*
Upstream Works Software Ltd.	*UpTake*
UTOPY	*UTOPY SpeechMiner*

AD INDEX

AbilityOne .... Cover 3
www.abilityone.org

ATA 3
www.ata2009convention.org

Call Center Software Solutions 19
http://call-center-software.tmcnet.com

Citrix 5
www.gotoassist.com/solutions

Contact Center Solutions 23
http://callcenterinfo.tmcnet.com

HD Voice Community............ 25
http://hdvoice.tmcnet.com

Headset Community............... 17
http://headsets.tmcnet.com

InfoCision....................... Cover 2
www.infocision.com

NexInteractive 12
www.nexinteractive.com

Outbound Call Center 29
http://outbound-call-center.tmcnet.com

RCCSP 6-7
www.the-resource-center.com

R.L. Bencin 31
www.rlbencin.com

Stratasoft .... Cover 4
www.stratasoft.com

Telstrat 21
www.telstrat.com

Used Dialers 31
www.useddialers.com

Xceed Contact Center 31
www.xceedcc.com

UsedDialers.com

Blue Streak Predictive Dialer Prices:

2 agents : $2,892
4 agents : $3,592
8 agents : $ 5,577
12 agents: $ 8,452
24 agents: $11,882
36 agents: $18,348
48 agents: $21,392

(620) 860-4205

A global provider of BPO services and contact centers, with multi-site in multi location is offering highly educated and qualified agents all shifts in English, French and Arabic up to **500 seats** for as low as **7 - 9 $ / hour**

For more information call us on:

(888) 567-1346

Professional Telesales/Customer Service Management Searches

- Search consultants to most of the top ten service agencies in the U.S. and over 50 of the Fortune 500 companies. Small companies, too.
- All custom searches using a 25,000 resume file plus extensive proactive calling.
- Dedicated telesales/customer service searches since 1981..the first and the best!

R.L. Bencin & Associates
Resumes welcomed!
E-mail: rlbencin@netzero.net
Web site: www.rlbencin.com

2616 Hidden Canyon Dr.
Brecksville, OH 44141
440-526-6726

IDENTIFICATION STATEMENT

CUSTOMER INTER@CTION SOLUTIONS® magazine (ISSN: 1533-3078) is published monthly by Technology Marketing Corporation, One Technology Plaza, Norwalk, CT 06854 U.S.A. Periodicals postage paid at Norwalk, Connecticut and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to: **CUSTOMER INTER@CTION SOLUTIONS**®, Technology Marketing Corporation, One Technology Plaza, Norwalk, CT 06854 U.S.A.

To subscribe, call toll-free: 800-243-6002. If busy, call 203-852-6800 or write to the circulation director at srusso@tmcnet.com. Subscription rates (published monthly): Free for qualified subscribers in the U.S.A. only. For non-qualified U.S.A. subscribers, $59. All Canadian subscribers, $89. All Foreign (air mail), $109. All orders are payable in advance in U.S. dollars drawn against a U.S. bank. Connecticut residents add applicable sales tax.

Brendan B. Read, *Senior Contributing Editor*

The Flexible Revolution

If there is one word that is the key to getting through this current economic climate and to enable taking advantage of opportunities when conditions turn brighter, that is “flexibility”.

Call it the “flexible revolution.” With a recovery that promises to be slow and painful, firms that are encumbered by expensive fixed buildings or hardware, processes and thinking are unlikely to make it and if they do they will struggle. Companies that have instead embraced flexibility: opex not capex, leasing and hosting software; hardware, and hardware only if necessary, video/Web conferencing not travel, and telework not bricks-and-mortar, are more likely to shine through. Why? Flexible solutions and techniques are less expensive, more adaptable to changing conditions, and provide greater disaster survivability than hardware/infrastructure-intensive products and methods.

The past boom and the milder miasma punctuated by tragic events set the stage for the “flexible revolution”. The dot-com blowout followed by the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks began waking up organizations to the harsh reality that rigid assets and approaches sometimes literally crumble in a world of rapid change, upheaval and disaster.

In the rebound that followed smart entrepreneurs, firms and management began developing and implementing flexible tools and methods that are now becoming popular. Witness the hosted/software-as-a-service boom as exemplified and evangelized in the CRM space by Salesforce.com and which has attracted me-tooers. This heightened awareness opened customers’ eyes to other on-demand offerings such as IVR and routing platforms. A similar evangelism by Cisco with telepresence is doing likewise for videoconferencing where the major stumbling block is less technical and cost but that everyone wants to use these tools rather than travel.

At the same time teleworking, led by adoption in contact centers, is finally reaching critical mass to where it is now setting off a chain reaction throughout corporations. There are more teleservices companies that offer home working while growing numbers of companies that are enabling it for their internal staff than ever before.

Yes the percentages of telecommuters are small – 10 to 15 percent at best – compared to those who must squeeze themselves into a tax-subsidized environment-killing cars and lesser-evil mass transit to accomplish the same tasks in organization-subsidized offices that they can done at home. Yet as any revolutionary will tell you, such numbers are sufficient to build momentum. That also goes for software and videoconferencing.

Granted, none of these flexibility-enabling products and techniques is exactly new. Phone companies have long offered hosting switching (i.e. Centrex). Journalists like me have teleworked for years. My first computer was ahead-of-its-time: the Tandy TRS-80/T200 fully loaded (with built-in modem) clamshell laptop supplied to me in 1988 by my newspaper so I could work remotely. And videoconferencing has long been touted as a tomorrow technology that never seems to have arrived.

Making the difference for hosting, conferencing and teleworking have been a coming together of technology, experience and awareness. The rapid evolution of voice over IP/SIP and the commercial and residential broadband boom have given employees and managers access to the same capabilities, processes and internal compliance via hosting and teleworking as they had enjoyed with premises-based products and in offices. These include app-sharing, instant messaging, monitoring, staffing/training, presence/unified communications and workforce management. Fewer tasks therefore need to be done by having people physically present.

These solutions also give them peace of mind. Broadband-enabled remote control tools such as West’s Locked-Down Desktop that is used by its home agents prevent access to non-work applications, thereby providing greater security.

In turn, experience with hosting, conferencing and telework leads to more of it deployed and more effectively. And as others see what those who have used these solutions and tools have achieved in the way of greater results, the smart ones among them will likely adopt these methods and products.

The case for joining the “flexible revolution” is there, in your bottom line now and going forward. The question that remains: for organizations and suppliers alike is this: are you going to climb on board or do you want risk being left behind? **CIS**

reliability

With the lowest attrition rate in the industry (10% annual average), you can count on AbilityOne Contact Center Services to improve customer service and lower operational costs.

AbilityOne fulfills your federal contract needs while enabling you to create employment opportunities for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities. Our competitive Teleservices offerings include:

- Contact Center operations (including mail processing, warehousing and distribution)
- Help Desk services
- Technical support
- Switchboard services
- Answering services and staffing
- Field services and logistics (dispatch)
- Medical transcription
- Disaster recovery and redundancy operation

AbilityOne.org

AbilityOne PROGRAM ™

hosted solutions

inbound, outbound, blended

predictive dialer

virtual call center

IVR/ACD

contact center solutions you need to create. manage. succeed.

Introduce your contact center to a new set of solutions that will help you stand out from your competitors—say hello to the new Stratasoft.

We have repeatedly been recognized for our industry-leading software. And we know that contact center managers are under constant pressure to reduce costs while increasing services to the business. That's why Stratasoft has a portfolio of solutions for enterprise, mid-market, and small business clients that allow them to streamline contact center infrastructure while integrating more intelligent software to increase productivity.

See how we can help you stand out from competitors. Give us a call at 800.390.1157, or visit stratasoft.com.

stratasOFT

Stratasoft proudly announces two new exciting applications to our award winning Stratadial VC2 Contact Center Software. Strata WFM, web based Work Force Management Software. Strata Windebt, fully integrated collections software.