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Tom Goodmanson,
president and CEO, Calabrio

Calabrio's

App-Based Performance Solutions

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- The Coming Social/CRM Convergence
- Creating A Winning Performance
- 2011 IP Contact Center
Technology Pioneer Awards



Lisa.

Not so big on piña coladas or getting caught in the rain.

But she is married, has two kids under ten, three shoe store credit cards, vacations in Florida twice a year, and LOVES Christian music artists.

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Rich Tehrani, CEO, TMC



Avaya's Support Strategy Emulates Successful Cancer Diagnostic Systems

It is an unusual occurrence for me to receive a call from any company to discuss their support. Generally, the media gets all warm and fuzzy about tangible things, like new product launches, scoops and items you can put in the category of breaking news. Ironically, though, if you ask most companies what differentiates them from the pack, service and support is typically the most common answer. Yet, I can't remember other companies asking me to meet their new head of global services.

One of the most important things you need to do when you have a complex system of networks carrying packets full of voice and video communication is ensure it all operates at peak efficiency. In other words, it is the area that could be most important to a customer – getting a communications and/or networking system back up and running after an outage is often an afterthought. It is hardly discussed.

But still, I was a bit surprised when the offer came from Avaya (www.avaya.com) to meet Mohamad Ali, President of Avaya Global Services. The company's PR team was so excited about the meeting I decided to take it. I was tentative – but walked away impressed.

Ali started the conversation telling me he is passionate about service. What is more interesting is that he doesn't come from the service and support space. In fact, his background is quite different and most impressive. He worked for IBM, where he led and integrated many acquisitions, such as Cognos, FileNet, Ascential Software, and he also was the program director of the GSM semiconductor business and co-led the PricewaterhouseCoopers acquisition, which transformed the company. He has also worked for Adobe and has an EE Bachelors and Masters from Stanford.

The reason this is important has to do with the fact that Ali can be doing anything – he could be heading up M&A at Avaya, managing the design of products and a whole host of other initiatives. When I mentioned this, the response was that Avaya CEO Kevin Kennedy is a visionary and has said the company should be investing heavily in services and service technology as a differentiator. Moreover he said Kennedy was willing to put a key person in this role, which, to me, says a great deal.

So, half the story is about the resources Avaya is dedicating to support; the other half is that Ali is looking to radically simplify support and to dramatically reduce time to resolution. Where he received his inspiration is interesting. It turns out that he heard a presentation from a cancer researcher at Mass General, who spoke of the evolution of cancer treatment. It was once neces-

sary for doctors to try treatment after treatment to determine the correct drug to prescribe – a hit or miss process. But then, a machine was built that matched biopsy results to the right type of gene mutation, allowing improved results.

The goal, then, is to imitate the workings of the machine described above – and, in doing so, create true service innovation and of course, differentiation. One point he made was that Avaya systems have diagnostics and alarms allowing for lots of output on which to perform diagnostic analysis. He contrasted this to a competitor (he didn't mention any by name but, obviously, Cisco), which has a lot of disparate boxes making this task more difficult. Of course, Avaya recently acquired Nortel – bringing a few disparate boxes into the mix as well.

One of the biggest pieces of news from Ali's department is the new Avaya Support Advantage model, which features two packages – Essential Support and Preferred Support. Moreover, support pricing has been detached from the underlying product, making it easier to determine the price based on a standard schedule. For customers who have multiple support contracts, there is the option for co-termination and synchronized billing going forward. Some of the benefits to customers are easier management and budgeting, less paperwork, less bills, reduced time to resolution and better customer service.

Like I mentioned at the top – service and support is usually a talking point in my vendor discussions and it rarely comes up in detail. Avaya seems to be committing serious resources into differentiating itself in this important area. Now the question is, how important does this become to enterprises? We know IT departments are constantly being asked to do more with less – perhaps now is the best time for Avaya to be making this push. In addition to customers, I am looking forward to seeing how the rest of the information technology and telecom markets respond to Avaya's cancer treatment-inspired support improvements. **CIS**

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Social Media:

The Impact on the Multichannel Contact Center and Your Customers

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Social media isn't about you; it's about everything around you. As you consider how your customers want to communicate with you, social media is something that can't be ignored. But what should your strategy be? Is social media "just another channel?" What kind of a plan makes sense for your contact center and for your customers? Join our experts as they share their insight and research results about...

- What foundation you need to have in place before adding social media as a communication channel
- What metrics matter in social media
- How customer service can flourish in social communities
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- What technology is available that will help you succeed

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Erik Linask, Group Editorial Director, TMC



Why Your Business Must Form a Social Media Strategy Today

There has been an unworlly volume of social media related content filling the pages of media sites of late – and you’ve certainly read a fair amount within the pages of Customer Interaction Solutions as well over the past 18 months. Many arguments have been made for why social media should be part of customer service organizations, and how, particularly on the inbound side. But, one of the reasons social media can be such a tremendous asset is its nature as a two-way medium, allowing businesses to follow a basic principle of marketing: In order to succeed, your brand must be where your customers are because that’s where the power lies.

Where are your customers? In two places whose parallel growth is no coincidence – mobile devices and social media.

A very recent show of power by social media comes from the Great White North, where rabid hockey fans anxiously – and in futility – anticipated a Stanley Cup title from the Vancouver Canucks. When the team was bested in seven games by the Boston Bruins, riots broke out across the city, creating significant damage and a mess to clean up.

When a new day dawned, a Facebook event calling for citizen action in helping the cleanup effort reportedly netted more than 11,000 followers, with more than 1,000 rallying to erase much of the evidence of the previous evening’s unfortunate devastation. The event organizer posted: “Once the embarrassing rioting has ended in Vancouver, let’s all show the world what Vancouver is really about by helping rebuild and clean up so it is better than it was before.”

And throughout the day, many of them posted updates and posts via Twitter, Facebook and other social media sites:

“Papa Glenn on way with garb bags and big van for garbage. Let’s clean up our beautiful city.”

“Just saw a 4-yr-old boy with a cast on one arm helping to clean. Now that’s what Vancouver is all about.”

“Getting word that everywhere is pretty close to clean. Let’s not leave anything. Let’s be able to eat food off the streets tonight!”

That the city was able to be cleaned so quickly is a testament to the pride and determination of the people of Vancouver. That the event was able to be coordinated to such scale within hours is a testament to the power of social media, which is why businesses can ill afford to ignore it.

Now, take that power and combine it with mobile advertising, which is steadily increasing and predicted to eclipse \$26 billion by 2016 – equivalent to total online ad spend today – according to ABI Research. Among the most obvious channels for delivering mobile ads – and one that is already being leveraged by many smart businesses – is social media. Whether via Twitter or Facebook, customers are already receiving ads and offers directly, often directly to the mobile devices they use to access social media sites. Furthermore, in addition to direct access to customers by way of Likes, Friends and Followers, there is the added benefit of pass-through advertising, when customers post those same ads and offers to their Facebook pages or retweet them. Suddenly, you too can have access to 11,000 or more potential customers within a very short period of time.

Social media has become an almost unstoppable presence for a number of reasons – the same reason businesses must give it an ear – and a mouth. It’s a binding phenomenon, often bringing users with like interests together, ignorant of geography and technology. People engage in social media (just look at the numbers). It crosses the social barriers that traditional advertising has often struggled to overcome, relying on interpersonal relationships to create links. It’s simple, quick and cost-effective. It’s measurable – with the right technology businesses can easily determine the effectiveness of their social media efforts.

To learn from the experts in the field of social media and to find out how your business can leverage this vast resource in both inbound and outbound capacities, join us for three days of Social Media and Contact Center sessions at ITEXPO West in Austin, Texas, September 13-15, 2011. Our panelists, including representatives from Avaya, Genesys, Interactive Intelligence, Mzinga, Nuance, SugarCRM, and many others will discuss not only the strategies your business can implement for generating interest via social media, but also the technologies available to enable your customer service organization to react quickly to social media-based feedback and create customers for life. For more, visit www.itexpo.com. **CIS**

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Calabrio's App-Based Performance Solutions

There are new ways of enabling contact centers to provide superior performance through technology. The first is cloud/hosting delivery that offers flexibility and upgrades at low or no capital costs. The second, which is starting to happen, is the app model that is taking its cue from the mobile web. This is an integrated platform that is individual-user-customizable via small-footprint subapplications, or “widgets”, for specific needs.

Calabrio (www.calabrio.com) has embraced the app/widget model for its performance management/workforce optimization (PM/WFO) contact center solutions. It is also engineering its products for resale by hosting companies from these firms' servers. Both moves have arguably positioned the company well against its competitors.

The Widget-Enabled Calabrio ONE

Calabrio ONE, the firm's PM/WFO solution added a growing library of apps/widgets in its latest February 2011 release. Users can download the ones they need then position and configure their dashboards. For example a supervisor can download a widget enabling them to monitor quality scores while an agent can install one that would allow them to track their schedule.

Widgets can be installed in minutes, compared to days or even weeks for conventional client-side apps. They are small enough to be installed on mobile devices.

Calabrio's widgets differ from thin-client applications in that the latter has fixed, inflexible layouts. Moreover, widgets can reside within application components written by others, including multiple vendors. This becomes useful for pulling in third party components that may add value, like social media and dashboard components from CRM/ERP systems within the WFO framework or other third party container.

All widgets within an application set, such as call recording and quality monitoring (QM), come in a standard set. The firm's vision is for a library of widgets to extend the core set, some of which may be purchased separately.

Calabrio released 20 widgets covering core functionalities including recording, scoring and workforce management (WFM). The firm is working on speech and desktop analytics platform additions and supporting widgets for Fall 2011. It will be releasing other widgets as customers need them.

“While you have all these pieces in WFO – PM/WFM/QM – coming together on a platform or offered modularly, not all of them are put together in a comprehensive suite with single-sign-ons and easy user customization and interaction,” points out Tom Goodmanson, president and CEO of Calabrio. “We've managed this with our app/widget-utilizing and integrated Calabrio ONE solution.”

The App/Widget Drivers

Driving the app/widget integrated platform approach are the needs by contact centers to bolster individual as well as center performance and productivity while reducing costs. Ensuring customer satisfaction by enabling top quality experiences via minimal queues and helpful agents has become increasingly vital for companies. Their reputations – and potentially sales – can be altered in minutes through buyers relating their experiences over social media and increasingly via mobile devices.

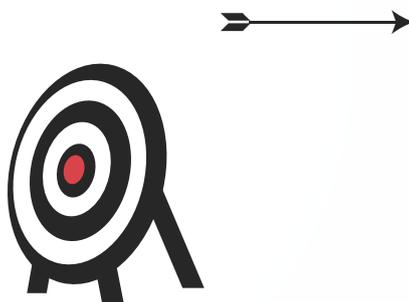
Goodmanson sees contact centers wanting tighter connectivity between PM and other WFO applications to ensure agent adherence and seamless links between WFM, QM, call and screen recording and analytics to catch and resolve any issues before they go viral. Yet traditional software is so heavy with data that it slows down supervisors, agents and support staff in toggling through screens. Applications often take a long time to install and navigate, wasting scarce time and reducing service levels.

The benefits of this parcelization of software into widgets include speed, relevance and productivity. A widget app can be designed, written and tested in a week or two and be running side by side with other applications without waiting to modify the full set of application code, which is generally on a six-to-12 month release cycle.

The method also avoids extensive software training and the need to reference it. Goodmanson hopes that Calabrio can eventually do away with manuals as Apple has done.

“While you will continue to have these huge enterprise systems, contact centers will increasingly want to see them rendered into bite-sized chunks whoever the relevant user is, rather than inundating screens with information that may not be important to them,” says Goodmanson. “They are screaming out to reduce complexity, to make software smaller while maintaining application control. Less is indeed more.”

Selling the right product to the wrong customer?



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Contact centers are also realizing that they now have to get a grip on turnover. It is hovering around 30 percent, reports Goodmanson, which is already unacceptable; it may climb as the economy rebounds and job opportunities expand. Exacerbating this issue is the newer generation of contact center agents that expect instant information and gratification. Calabrio has researched this new workforce and found that they are demanding feedback, and if necessary, coaching and training ASAP; they will not tolerate traditional monitoring and coaching.

The app/widget/integrated platform approach that Calabrio is taking will help contact centers respond to these issues by enabling them to give agents real-time feedback and training. It also empowers them, within limits, to self-monitor and correct performance and perform self help.

“The new generation’s attitude is this: ‘If you told me I did something wrong yesterday, I discount it and don’t really want to talk about it,’” explains Goodmanson. “‘If you tell me in real-time what I’m up to and where I’m going and how I can correct that and give me that pat on the back and some training’ that gives them real job satisfaction, reducing turnover.”

The Calabrio Difference and Future

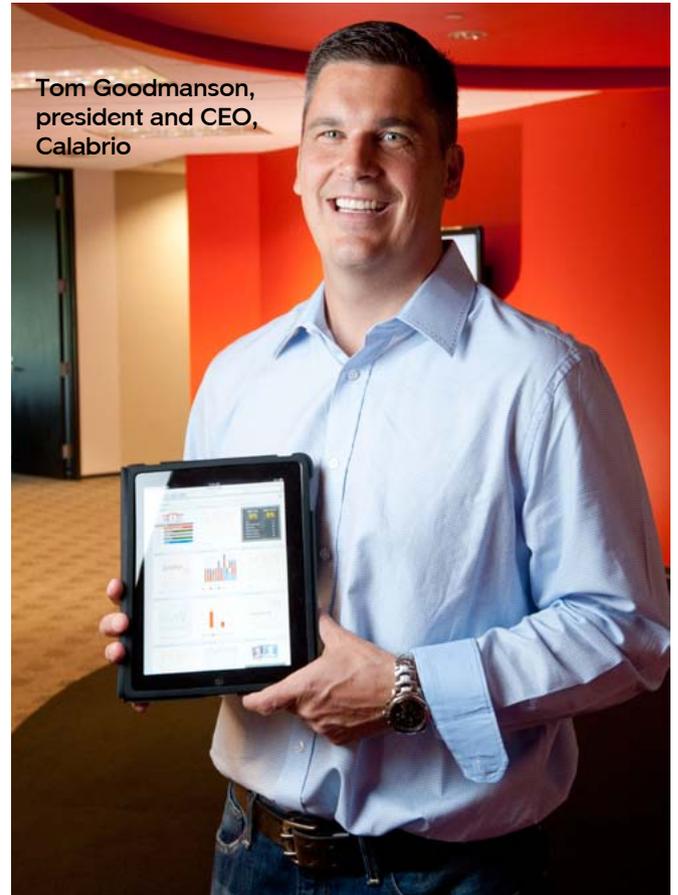
Calabrio in Calabrio ONE is increasing the firm’s ability to differentiate itself in the marketplace. The solution is built – unlike most other PM/WFO products – on CTI. CTI provides the data integration between the ACD and Calabrio ONE apps. It also supplies the pop of the CRM/ERP application on the agent desktop, giving Calabrio ONE access to call metadata to use for metrics and measurement like ACD/call data, WFO and incorporating CRM/ERP data. Data integration that must be customized with other WFO systems is therefore built into the core of the Calabrio ONE suite, which speeds access to real time data and saves on installation time – and money.

Calabrio has seen its sales grow by 100 percent from 2009 to 2010. With Calabrio ONE, which debuted in March 2010, the firm expects the growth to continue on the same trajectory. As of February 2011 it has sold and deployed more than 780,000 seats.

“We’re expanding what we’re offering, we’re coming up the value stack, we have a significant number of installed seats and continue to have significant growth,” says Goodmanson. “I owe this to our combination of widgets and a more robust product.”

The buzz with Calabrio ONE is there the CEO says from contact centers and partner switch suppliers such as Avaya and Cisco. Yet it has grown much louder with the widget enablement.

“Before Calabrio ONE and our widgets came along, when we announced new releases, customer and other vendor reactions were, ‘OK that’s great, now what?’,” recounts Goodmanson. “When we demo Calabrio ONE and six to 10 widgets pop up they now say ‘wow this changes things!’”



Tom Goodmanson,
president and CEO,
Calabrio

With an eye to potential customers that are increasingly interested in cloud-based solutions, Calabrio is preparing the Calabrio ONE for software-as-a-service/third party hosting. The firm is writing the architecture to enable multitenancy and expects it to be ready later this year; it is already actively talking to hosting companies. Calabrio’s applications will be repackaged and resold to clients such as contact centers.

Goodmanson sees the demand for a hosted Calabrio ONE coming especially from SMBs that still use spreadsheets and from contact centers seeking high flexibility to meet demand changes and wanting to avoid capital and supporting outlays for licenses that they may not always need. He is confident that the hosting firms will pick up on Calabrio ONE. Many of them he says “take two steps into WFO world and realize would rather rent it upstream than build it themselves.”

“I come from the SaaS world and love the model because it provides flexibility for users while for vendors like us it minimizes upfront customization that is the bane of premise licenses, though our widget model has reduced that need significantly,” says Goodmanson. “We are confident that our software will work very quickly in a hosted model.” **CIS**



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8 Healthy Habits for Highly Effective Call Centers

Customers want their problems resolved efficiently and without the hassle of being transferred –or worse, having to call back. Executives expect call center managers to figure out a way to have agents improve their first contact resolution rate, but without losing any recent efficiency gains.

When everybody wants more, your call center needs to deliver. And this means that call center managers need to ensure they are continually engaging in healthy habits that keep agents' performance top of mind – to delivering quality service as efficiently as possible.

Here are 8 healthy habits to help ensure your call center is highly effective:

1. Train agents to be well-versed in your products, policies, procedures, services, etc. Agents are the face of your brand. In order to do their jobs well and perform at a superior level, they need knowledge to handle calls and do so with efficiency. This competency is rendered when agents have the right skills that come with training.
2. Provide targeted coaching. Quick agent-supervisor chats can be worked into the day to review issues that arise during a call. Letting agents have the opportunity to review issues with their supervisor helps to clear up confusing issues immediately and prevents mistakes from reoccurring.
3. Give agents access to information they need to succeed. Agents won't and shouldn't always have to remember all of the information they need to perform well. It's much more realistic to provide access to the blogs, forums, knowledge base or your internal systems that help promote informal learning.
4. Deploy important, must-read communications at the right time. Some-

times an urgent message has to hit the floor fast. Get the word out without disrupting calls. And, be strategic about it. Send it out in waves, and be sure to alert the agent that an urgent communication is ready for their review – in between customer interactions.

5. Motivate agents to perform at superior levels. Let them know that great customer service matters just as much as efficient call handling and they will be rewarded for hitting all of their targets. Also provide incentives for timely completion of training or coaching courses as these activities enable agents to accomplish the performance you're requesting from them.
6. Allow time for agents to complete administrative tasks, paperwork or call follow up. Give them a 10-minute slot in between customer calls to complete the tasks necessary for fulfilling the customer request or completing follow up calls. When agents know that they have time to do this type of work it removes the pressure of having to complete the work at other, less convenient times.
7. Use idle time to your advantage. Idle time is available and most often overlooked as usable time – simply because it's so unpredictable. But idle time can be put to good use. When gathered and reassigned, it can be used to complete any of the activities mentioned in steps one through six.
8. Reduce shrinkage by rerouting the activities that you need to create the

knowledgeable agent who delivers quality service with efficiency and deliver these activities during idle time.

When everyone wants more, you need to practice these healthy habits. It's about the quality of the agent, the knowledge they possess and how to groom agents to be everything you want them to be. At one time, the demand to enhance the customer experience conflicted with the need to keep costs low. When using idle time to promote agent development, this is no longer the case. **CIS**

Want Healthy Habits that Ensure Your At-home Agents are Highly Effective?

Sometimes it's even harder to apply the same eight healthy habits for your agents who work from home. It's important to find ways to keep your at home agents as connected as the agents who sit in the center. Don't skip on any of these steps for producing quality at-home agents and delivering the activities that keep agents effective without losing efficiency gains.

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Cicero Inc (www.ciceroinc.com) and **Co-nexus (www.4cxm.com)** have developed a new desktop analytics product called Cicero XM Discovery. The offering will be added to Co-nexus' CXM Call Recording and Quality Monitoring Solution. Cicero XM Discovery features include information about the applications and windows that a user works with, the web pages they visit, when data is cut or copied and print screens. It comes with a set of preconfigured reports and a user-defined dashboard that can be accessed in a browser with a secure connection.

Coordinated Systems, Inc. (www.csiworld.com) has released Virtual Observer 4.0 which features several enhancements. These include a web-based interface and an overhauled analytics offering to include an array of powerful user-specific dashboards. It also offers integrated scoring, screen capture, performance and trending reports, e-learning, VO Live for real-time agent monitoring and assistance and integrated speech analytics.

dvsAnalytics (www.dvsanalytics.com) Encore Technology Suite 2.3.0 recording and analytics solution has been validated with the latest unified communications system from ShoreTel (www.shoretel.com). With this, Encore can record calls via three different methods: station-side, trunk-side or subscription-based. Encore supports the ShoreTel product's ability to notify all parties that the calls are being recorded via beep tones.

Five 9 (www.five9.com) has agreed to host and resell **NICE Systems (www.nice.com)** products. These including quality management, comprising PCI-compliant call recording, screen recording, analytics-based call scoring and quality optimization and workforce management. These are to be integrated with Five9's hosted contact center offerings.

Globalpark (www.globalpark.com) has released version 8.0 of its Enterprise Feedback Suite (EFS). EFS 8.0 now includes a previously-introduced Facebook interface as a standard component. It now offers the Analysis Suite that consists of two modules: Reporting+ and Qualitative Analysis.

inContact (www.incontact.com) has come out with inContact Reports 2.0, which is an integrated reporting and analytics platform. It provides an intuitive dashboard view of contact center results and enables users to choose from a wide variety of precalculated metrics to easily customize reports with just a few clicks of the mouse and save those reports for future use.

Medallia (www.medallia.com) has come out with the newest Medallia Contact Center Experience solution. It offers more granular reporting down to the agent level and tighter integration with other contact center applications such as CRM, IVR and WFO through the Medallia API. Medallia Contact Center Experience also alerts managers instantly when custom-

ers report problems. Follow-up activities are tracked, analyzed, and shared with managers and coaches.

Pitney Bowes Business Insight (www.pbinsight.com) has launched the Pitney Bowes EngageOne Liaison self-service solution, a set of customer self-service and self-care capabilities. It is comprised of customer and data analytics, billing intelligence and electronic bill presentment and payment, with mobile as well as desktop access. EngageOne Liaison enables creating "smarter bills" based on customer behavior and preference that permit tailored and highly relevant offerings to specific customer segments to increase sales and loyalty. Intelligent e-billing enables customers to access additional information about their bills, such as utility use, thereby reducing calls to the contact centers and customer churn.

Red Hat (www.redhat.com) Red Hat Global Support Services support ticketing system has been integrated with **SAP (www.sap.com)** SAP Solution manager application management solution. Red Hat and SAP customers benefit by gaining a single point of contact for support issues, streamlined resolution of incidents and continued collaboration for running SAP applications on Red Hat Enterprise Linux.

SpeechCycle (www.speechcycle.com) has now deployed technology that dynamically adapts voice self-service to callers' behavior that then automates and continually optimizes the user experience. The software is based on machine-learning principles and has been integrated into SpeechCycle's LevelOne Agents speech applications and is available as part of the RPA On-Demand platform. This innovation it says can dramatically increase voice self-service use and adoption and achieve higher customer satisfaction.

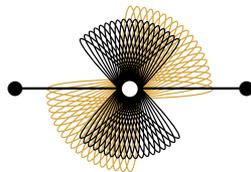
Verint (www.verint.com) has a new "fifth-generation" Impact 360 Workforce Optimization (WFO) software. It more tightly unifies WFO with quality monitoring and recording, "Voice of the Customer Analytics", workforce management, performance management, coaching and eLearning. There is a new unified dashboard that allows users to move from one WFO function to the next using a central navigation bar that provides drop-downs and centralized views. There is added scalability, an advanced technology stack (including Windows 2008 support), virtualization, resiliency and redundancy. There is also a single consolidated server and simplified installation and maintenance.

West Interactive (www.westinteractive.com) is offering its clients a new solution to strengthen customer engagement via social media channels. Through an arrangement with Radian6, West is now providing the West Social Engagement Solution, a suite that provides Radian6's monitoring platform integrated with West's contact center offerings.



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Today's customers; they control the business conversations with vastly increased ability to find out information on products, services and suppliers and, through social media, to influence others' buying decisions, not just their own.

For these reasons more customers are anecdotally going to self-service: web, mobile apps, IVR/speech recognition, and peer service/support via social media first and then only reaching out to contact centers if their needs cannot be met.

Those channels are changing. Voice is still the primary means with e-mail second, but there is a big rise in the number of centers handling chat and SMS, reports Keith Dawson, principal analyst at Frost and Sullivan. This growth in these channels is not necessarily at the expense of voice but as incremental additions, as more sophisticated switching systems get put in.

"So that when things begin to get better and contact centers start to replace their switches, perhaps in 2012, 2013 we will see a lot more of those which handle the different channels come online," says Dawson.

Chat/SMS/IM Growth

Customers are reportedly relying more on chat, e-mail, instant messaging (IM), SMS/text messaging or a combination of these and on Web co-browsing to communicate with agents and less so on voice. The key reasons are increased speed and effectiveness. These methods can also permit quicker access to live agents. Tim Passios, director of solutions marketing at Interactive Intelligence reports that when a chat does lead to a call, customers find that they typically can reach a live agent faster than if they had dialed in from the very beginning.

Aspect is bullish on IM as it enables contact center agents – and ultimately customers – through the Web along with business partners (see sidebar) to see if there are subject matter experts available to help them via presence and then send them an instant message. IMs may ultimately replace chat for that reason and also because it is easier to

send links such as video how-tos with. IMs are the most popular for service issues when there is a logical, well-defined series of steps that can be walked-through with the agents' help," explains Nancy Dobrozdravic, vice president of solutions marketing, Aspect. "Think about trouble-shooting a PC issue or filling out a mortgage application."

Ryan Joe, research analyst with Ovum, is seeing more suppliers putting chat in their product stacks. This is being motivated by the ability of chat to drive in leads and sales as pop-ups typically appear on product pages. Chat offers a unique personalized interaction on web pages. It can also save money because calls cost money and take up agent time.

Whether chat can effectively divert calls from live agents remains to be seen. "Chat isn't a substitute for voice is because a voice call with an agent remains the preferred method for customers to request assistance," says Joe. "After all, people need to reach customer service whether they have easy access to a computer or not."

Don Greco, director of customer interaction practice at Siemens Enterprise Communications is seeing chat growth with 60 percent of proposals in 2011 compared with 20 percent for 2010. Moreover, most of these are for multichat, enabling agents to handle up to six sessions at once, which boosts their productivity.

He cautions that there may be a limit in multichat, especially if it is combined with the other channels that are handled by the same agents, who would then suffer from employee burnout.

"I have a guy who works for me and who ran call centers for 20 years and he says 'if I was an agent and you put the ability to me to have six web chats and e-mail and a voice call I'd probably quit'," says Greco.



Going Social

Social media ranks far behind voice, e-mail and chat in volume reports Interactive Intelligence's Passios. Yet it is climbing to prime importance for firms because the comments made on it can and will – and sometimes in dramatic fashion – affect brand reputation, sales and service. They can then prompt customers to reach out to contact centers with little notice.

Consequently, many firms carefully monitor, analyze and triage social media comments. Jorge Blanco, vice president of marketing and contact center solutions at Avaya reports that most companies that have activated social media as a service delivery channel do not route these types of interactions to contact centers. Instead, a dedicated group that typically resides outside of the contact center manages the identified interactions.

"Avaya's Social Media Manager (ASMM) bridges that gap," says Blanco. "It (ASMM) delivers a relevant social media interaction directly to an agent desktop where it can be managed and measured like any other channel – voice, e-mail, chat."

Contact centers are cautiously researching and adopting the social channel and integrating its processes with other channels. And for good reason, for social media is media. Anyone who communicates on it on behalf of a firm is acting as a spokesperson: no different than if they appeared on TV, on the radio or

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in print. Agents' words can impact their firm's (or clients', in the case of BPO firms) image and bottom lines in near real-time.

Passios points out there are risks of wrong, inappropriate or inefficient responses from agents, which can turn minor customer annoyances into major public crises. Contact centers will need to look for social media solutions that include integrated routing and tracking functionality. This requires performing sentiment analysis on Facebook posts and Tweets. The tool permits contact centers to determine message urgency, whether positive or negative, so that it can be combined with key word analysis to route it to the right-skilled agent with the right priority.

"Contact centers are still sorting out their social media objectives from improving customer service and retention, to developing better products and services," says Passios. "As they begin to dip their toe further into the social media waters, however, putting processes in place to effectively route and respond to these interactions will become paramount."

The CSR Shift

Where the rubber meets the road in customer interactions is with voice calls to live agents. These are the most expensive to process, yet critical to service and loyalty to route and handle right. Eternity queues, overlong, repeat and escalated calls and those not delivered to the agents that are best able to manage customers' issues can make them impatient and with this drive costs up and loyalty and satisfaction – and future revenues – down.

Adding to this urgency is that when customers do call they are increasingly more likely to use their smartphones than landlines. While these devices level out costly call volume peaks and valleys – consumers no longer have to wait to get home to make personal calls – they eat up expensive minutes and do not permit multi-tasking as readily as traditional phones and computers.

Conversational or Customer-specific-routing (CSR) is emerging as a key method at the contact center level to meet these demanding and disparate needs. CSR is applied through intelligent routing to agents that customers have interacted with before and/or best qualified based on customer interactions across channels tied into one conversation. CSR promises to shorten calls, slice escalations and repeated calls while improving satisfaction and results.

Interactive Intelligence employs the same concept that it calls bulls-eye routing. Interactive Intelligence's Passios sees IVR becoming more used on the front end of calls. Contact centers can use this resulting information to perform skills-based routing, or the more advanced bulls-eye routing, to increase first-call resolution rates and lower average handle times.

At the core of CSR and its ilk is analytics. Applying these tools to previous customer interactions provides vital intelligence on who should receive the contacts as well as alerting and popping the records to the agents. Aspect's solutions track the interaction history to understand which agent the customer interacted with last. On a subsequent contact, the business rules in its unified platform can identify if the same agent is available and can therefore connect the customer to the same agent.

Genesys employs CSR through its intelligent Customer Front Door or iCFD solution. It applies analytics to the customer conversation – linking web, mobile and social engagement interactions into one customer conversation – to decide whether to send the contacts to self-service or to those live agents that can best meet customers' needs.

"If we know more about the customers, their individual needs, the better the chances of finding better matches of people who can resolve their issues," explains Eric Tamblyn, vice president, product marketing at Alcatel-Lucent, (Genesys). "Using CSR is a great opportunity to customize experience based on the needs of the callers." **CIS**

The following companies participated in the preparation of this article:

- Aspect**
www.aspect.com
- Avaya**
www.avaya.com
- Frost and Sullivan**
www.frost.com
- Alcatel-Lucent (Genesys)**
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Creating A Winning Performance

Contact centers need to work even harder to create winning performances. A slow-growth economy, financial pressures and rightfully demanding customers are forcing the bar upwards. To coach the centers Customer Interaction Solutions interviewed several leading experts and firms, asking questions on:

- Emerging trends and drivers, including on metrics
- Issues faced, among them back office impacts
- Best practice methods

Here are the highlights of these interviews. A complete view of them can be found on TMCnet (www.tmcnet.com/58980.1).

Envision (www.envisioninc.com)

Rodney Kuhn, CEO

The contact center is being asked to do more and being stretched in many areas. While technologies, such as the Web and self service, have provided outlets to customers for simple customer service inquiries, the contact center is being asked to handle more complex transactions. This places significant focus on the agents' performance and capability to handle customer issues arising in a number of different mediums including calls, e-mail, chat and now social media.

The importance of having well coached, effective and agile agents capable of handling the most complex of customer interactions will be the differentiator that successful companies and contact centers will realize.

Clearly many performance measures, such as first call resolution, are still in place and make sense. However, additional measures of how agents are driving performance around measures such as customer satisfaction, cross selling and customer retention are now in play. And more frequently, companies also begin to directly connect contact center performance to sales, recognizing the strategic importance of the contact center.

A solid coaching program that provides agents with the information they need to perform optimally is critical. Incorporating topnotch coaching during idle time, utilizing social media and other methods need to be embraced by organizations if they are to achieve their objectives. Contact centers should continue to utilize workforce management (WFM) to forecast scheduling and also have technology in place to allow for iden-



tifying changes in the assumptions that drove the original forecast to ensure adequate staffing after the forecast. Technologies such as speech analytics and business intelligence (BI) provide the metrics contact centers need to be agile and to provide the best customer service while staffing correctly.

Frost and Sullivan (www.frost.com)

Keith Dawson, principal analyst

Contact centers have already reached a high level of performance and productivity in terms of operations. They have recently been asked go outside – to handle different channels, customers with vastly inflated needs and desires and mobile customers. This has created an explosion of complexity.

The way contact centers measure performance is no longer sufficient to accurately indicate what is going on in the centers and to give decision makers outside of them an accurate view. Firms are now looking for value metrics: those that concern themselves with customer information, customer revenue, longevity and churn, that can be different based on their verticals. Those metrics are not the ones typically captured by contact centers. The system that measures average speed of



answer is not the same one that tells you customer longevity or value. Instead, these metrics gauge performance not just on call handling skills but on the ability to identify and execute on a cross-sell opportunity that might not be apparent.

Social media has introduced an enormous wild card into ensuring contact center performance. Traditionally agents have the information; when a customer calls in and raises issues the agent looks it up in the knowledgebase with a certain amount of leeway to deviate from that and manages the customer's issue.

Today when a customer calls in they may have information picked up from social media that may or may not be true but they think is true. This creates performance issues with agents through what the agent knows and what the customers knows. And it is hard to reconcile those realities; the contact centers' hands are tied. Social media management is at present highly uncoordinated in many outfits. You have marketing departments in charge of brand management who are manipulating the social stream without coordinating with the contact centers. This can lead to damage control or unwitting damage creation; marketing staff can say something that unwittingly leads to a flurry of calls that impacts center performance.

Another element is technology. If contact centers do not have SMS/text or social media tools on their agent desktops, in a controlled environment, the next generation of agents may go rogue to solve customers' problems on their own devices. This will have introduced a whole new variable into the service equation, one that cannot be tracked or vetted.

Contact centers will be subjecting agent performance to a much richer, more sophisticated set of analyses. They will be asked to use different kinds of skills to handle new channels, identify and capitalize on sales and revenue opportunities and to track different kinds of variables during calls, rather than relying on simple scripts and prompts.

Contact centers also need to collaborate with peers in other departments, such as marketing, to know if there is a social media issue that could lead to a flood of calls or e-mails. Collaboration has another benefit: joint use of the same analytics tools. They are expensive to deploy and it is hard for call centers to make the case on their own. When they can bring in marketing, the ROI from understanding real voice of customer goes up, and the more likely the request for analytics will be approved.

Alcatel-Lucent (Genesys) (www.genesyslabs.com)
Randy Brasche, director of product marketing
We have seen two main trends affecting every contact center

and customer service operation. I like to call them "O2" or "oxygen for customer service": Outcomes and optimize.

Outcomes: In today's environment traditional contact center performance metrics (average handle time, number of calls) provide limited business visibility on which to make decisions or set objectives. As a result, performance must measure business outcomes associated with traditional contact center metrics. For example, if 100 calls were processed in the past hour, how many of these qualified for the new promotion and how many were successfully converted?

Optimize: Empowering resources to provide the best customer service is a priority for every company. As a result, companies have embarked on WFO initiatives to measure performance and provide the tools and training to close identified skill gaps. At the same time companies are trying to "do more with less."

Finally the plethora of voice, web, social and mobile interaction channels are placing additional stresses on companies to adequately train resources to manage more than one interaction type, especially as customers jump between channels.

Contact centers and customer service operations must incorporate business outcome metrics associated with their traditional operational metrics. So, visibility that incorporates revenue, sales or business performance metrics helps guide the business decision making process.

We are also seeing the emergence of analytics. Companies want to mine the plethora of data produced by the millions of phone, web, social media and mobile interactions for the golden customer service nuggets. Speech, cross-channel and next-best-offer analytics are uncovering key insights to help illuminate new metrics and customer service behaviors affecting companies.

Today, every Global 2000 organization is adopting a mix of WFO methods and solutions to ensure superior performance. These include WFM, quality monitoring (QM) and management, coaching and eLearning, performance management, speech analytics and surveys. These technologies/solutions definitely improve the lives of both customer service managers and agents. However, companies should create a well-integrated operation across these tools and processes; each of these systems and processes are highly interdependent. For example, QM should immediately determine what training modules an agent requires. The WFM system should automatically schedule the appropriate training. Once the training is complete should automatically update agent skill sets, which should influence interaction routing strategies. **CIS**



The Coming Social/CRM Convergence

A little over a decade ago e-mail, chat and the Web became viable customer interaction channels and impacted CRM, classified as “eCRM”. They offered an exciting and useful new interaction option to phone calls, faxes, “snail mail”, paper catalogs and in-person retail and meetings. Yet while these text-based “e” means took over some of the customer conversations, most continued on the other channels – the newer and older methods gradually became integrated, and with this eCRM converged with CRM.



A similar process is now underway with the social channel/media i.e. Social CRM.

Vinay Iyer, vice president of CRM solution marketing, SAP says that Social CRM offers two advantages to firms. First, it permits following unstructured conversations among customers, or customers and companies. Second, it adds a new touch point to the existing channels.

“Social CRM will not replace the other channels of communications,” Iyer points out. “However, the social CRM category is an important and growing element of the overall CRM approach.”

Once firms have figured out how to successfully fold the social interactions and knowledge with those from the other channels there will be a convergence that incorporates social into CRM akin: to eCRM and CRM. So will the companion concept of “the social customer” who will be simply “customers”. We are at our core “social customers” by obtaining information from others about the products and services we need and passing our knowledge on them in kind. That point has not yet been reached – for most companies.

“Social media is a broadened communication channel to connect to the community in new ways, but still within the framework for the business,” explains Ric Pratte, director of Meltwater Buzz at Meltwater Group “For the short-term, talking specifically about Social CRM highlights the need to integrate the new reality of social media into the business.”

The Social Drivers

The social channel has enabled customers to discover the social experience in their buying decisions: a practice that had faded over the past 60 years when mass marketing grew and ruled. It has broken down the compartments between customers and companies and between customers. Customers have much more information – though its accuracy can vary – with which to make their choices.

“Social CRM has brought customers back into the customer equation,” says Fergus Griffin, vice president of Service Cloud product marketing at Salesforce.com. “Customer interactions have become transparent. The whole world can see how companies are treating their customers. And it is forcing companies to think about their customer first and what their experiences are.”

This openness can be scary to many companies, Mike Merriman, director of strategic services at Mzinga points out because they have to give up trying to control the customers’ conversation. Yet firms should not fear it because, if executed properly, it can enhance customer relationships.

“Customers are going to talk whether you are in the room or not,” Merriman points out. “Being in the room, participating in the conversations and not shutting them down provides a level of transparency and an ability to generate and foster trust with customers that they value. It can also make customers raving fans.”

Driving social media and its power is literally the explosive expansion of wireless use that makes it available to anyone, anytime, anywhere. It has accelerated customer commentary – and brand consequences – and presents opportunities. Companies can discover, track and respond to brushfire issues before they become conflagrations or find out what products and services have become hot so they can meet demand. Salespeople can assess – and capitalize on leads in real-time.

“Smart companies use the mobile channel as an additional way to listen and respond to their customers,” says Iyer. “[Using mobile] has become a competitive advantage.”

IDing The Social Customers

A key CRM principle is identifying customers to know them and with this, how to most profitably serve them. That is readily done in a call or via e-mail. Yet social media commenters often tend to be anonymous. The challenge is finding out who the customers on social media i.e. the social customers are to link their social channel and other customer behaviors to get a complete picture of them, their issues and interactions and to establish their value.

Clint Oram co-founder and chief technology officer of SugarCRM sees the social channel performing a vital service in stripping anonymity from customers, prospects – and contact center agents.

“You need to know to whom you are talking, to build and maintain a real and valuable relationship,” says Oram.



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One key tool that has been developed is social profiles, which is mapping multiple online personas to a single social profile/contact. These are customer profiles that contain their social media handles, comments, conversations, influence ranking and ideally their identifiers that link into their customer records. Contact center agents and others in enterprises such as marketing personnel can then look up this information. They can be alerted to these customer comments, post and/or tweet and this content is then harvested and files automatically updated.

“The idea behind social profiles is that if you know someone’s Twitter handle, ultimately you would like to map that social media profile to a single customer contact in your CRM system to provide them with individualized one-on-one service,” explains Griffin. “You can then correlate their products they have and the service you provide to ensure they get what they need.”

The Salesforce executive illustrates how the social profile works in a service environment. An anonymous customer tweets about their bank account. A contact center agent responds, saying, “Sorry to hear about this, how I can resolve this?”— an interaction that is typically transitioned into an invitation to a call or e-mail. The customer then interacts with the agent over these channels, the agent solves the issue and then responds to the customer over Twitter, tweeting, “Glad to have that resolved for you, let us know if you have any questions.”

This tweet is critical as it publicly shows that the issue has been handled, Griffin points out; it is no longer enough in today’s social world just to solve the matter. In the meantime, the contact center has the customer’s Twitter handle to contact them, has created and populated the profile with their contact information, and the matter raised and resolved.

SugarCRM has preinstalled InsideView in its platform, providing its users with immediate access to InsideView’s sales intelligence. The mashup includes customers’ publicly-available financial and contact information. This social profiles captured by InsideView are then mapped to the customer information stored in SugarCRM.

When these social customers’ identities are unknown Oram reports that tools like Adaptive Intelligence are being developed to automatically unveil anonymous posts that then permit personalized interactions. They will also protect brands he says through spotlighting paid commenters and stopping other guerrilla marketing strategies.

The Social Strategy and Value

One key question in social CRM is whom to pay attention to and to target in the social channel. Jamie Anderson, senior manager of customer experience management, customer marketing at Adobe, points out that firms are looking to target commentators “with influence” and these people tend not to be anonymous. At the same time monitoring both known and unknown commenters have value in providing a pulse of what is happening amongst customers.

Another key question is how to assess customers’ referral values. This is not easy; referral value varies from company experts. They can be derived by examining through social media monitoring how active customers are on social media, how many followers and what kinds comments are they making and how often.

Salesforce now owns Radian6 and has incorporated its software into Service Cloud 2. Radian6 monitors public and company-sponsored social media sites for comments and companies filter out what matters

to them, positive, neutral and negative, including flagging and alerting staff to self-defined critical issues. It also has automatic social business rules that fire certain issues to right agents with right expertise.

The Radian6/Service Cloud 2 mashup works with social profiles by reporting social comments back into those on each customer. This way the next time they interact with firms companies have a richer picture not just in CRM database but in their social world, enabling them to analyze customer patterns.

“Companies now realize they have to smartly monitor, measure manage the information they are finding on social channels and be able to track trends over time, just like any other CRM data,” says Griffin. **CIS**

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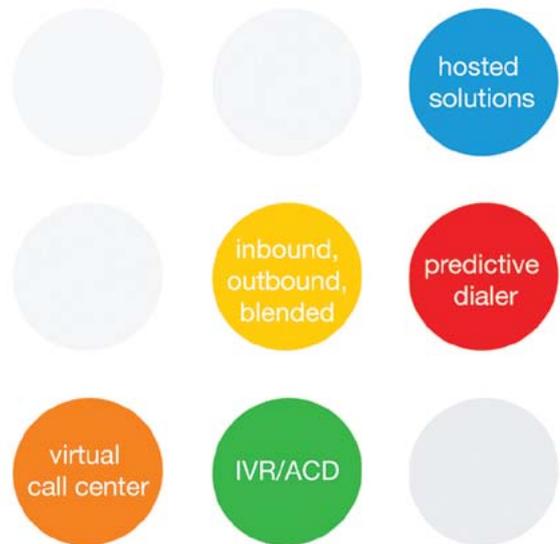
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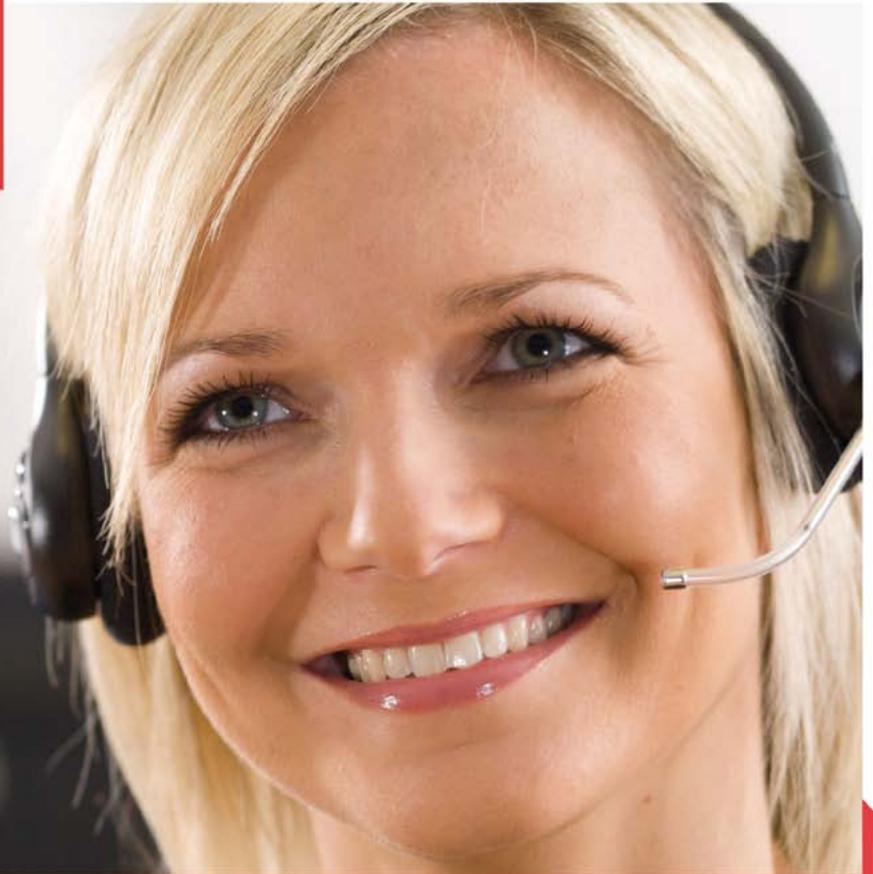
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The Hosting Experience

The proof of any concept or innovation lies in the doing. Here are two examples of contact centers' experience with hosting:

CLEARLINK's Clear Choice

CLEARLINK is a leading provider of content and conversion services for top consumer brands and small to medium businesses. The firm has a 250-seat contact center located in Salt Lake City, Utah, handling inbound sales and service.

CLEARLINK realized by summer 2007 that its on-premise solution lacked sufficient routing flexibility to different agents and that it needed to handle changing marketing campaigns. It also wanted business continuity/disaster recovery functionality and the ability in the future to support home-based agents that the existing installation could not provide.

CLEARLINK had considered upgrading its existing contact center hardware and software. Yet that choice would have cost \$2 million-plus, both upfront and over the next five years in added features, maintenance and updates, explains Brandon Russell, director of call center operations. Newer premise-based solutions still would not have provided the desired flexibility.

In summer 2007, CLEARLINK began researching hosted suppliers and later that year selected and went live with inContact (www.incontact.com). inContact provided CLEARLINK with IVR, skills-based call routing, customer survey, eLearning, recording and workforce optimization (WFO). The reasons included flexibility and technology and the hosting firm's commitment to keep the solutions current.

CLEARLINK did have initial concerns over uptime with the hosted solution: "You can't go over and look at it to see if it working," says Russell. These were assuaged by InContact's reassurance and by the firm's own and positive experience hosting its Microsoft Exchange server.

The hosted inContact solution has been a success. With it CLEARLINK, avoided

the capital outlays and it has saved over \$100,000 in payroll costs from WFO, plus it eliminated downtime and associated lost revenues from premise-licensed upgrades.

The outsourced deployment permits CLEARLINK to scale agents up or down depending on demand and change IVR features and recordings in under an hour. The skills-based routing helps the firm grow its revenue. It can for example automatically route more profitable marketing channel calls to its tier 1 agents or to a specific agent that is best able to handle those calls.

"InContact's solution gives us the ability to manipulate the phone system based on our continually changing marketing needs and that's a really big deal for us," says Russell. "The high degree of flexibility that inContact provides has become a significant profitability driver for CLEARLINK as well. We're always experimenting with better ways to attract customers."

AmeriFlex's Integrated Solutions

Hosting can encompass more than just the contact center applications. It can include the core PBX, auto-attendant and include voice/data connectivity for seamless, robust delivery.

AmeriFlex is a midsized independent benefits administrator providing technology-based, consumer-driven benefits and compliance solutions. It has 100 employees working from two primary operations centers, in Mount Laurel, N.J. and in Frisco, Texas, where it is headquartered.

The firm had a PBX that by 2008 was aging and no longer meeting its needs, recounts Bart McCollum, chief operating officer. The solution also required additional telephony knowledge that it did not have on staff.

In early 2009 AmeriFlex decided to go hosted rather than to stay with premises equipment. It implemented that move in March.

"Hosted seemed like a better option for us given the price comparison between the two options (on-premise and hosted) and how it coincided with our growth, expansion goals, function and feature requirements," explains McCollum. "The hosted solution also allows us to have a more advanced and managed MPLS network between our two locations as well as a more protected WAN infrastructure."

AmeriFlex selected Evolve IP (www.evolveip.net) to provide a wide range of hosted solutions. These include Evolve IP's IP PBX, auto-attendant, ACD functionality, voicemail to e-mail and ACD and toll-free reporting. The firm also selected Evolve IP for its fiber and copper connections, T1s, DS3s, connectivity to the Internet and managed firewall services.

"We picked Evolve IP due to its local presence, pricing considerations and overall slickness of product; especially considering our firm's size," says McCollum.

The Evolve IP implementation took approximately one month. It encompassed extension numbering design, network segmentation to assure VoIP quality of service, ACD and contact center software roll-out as well as employee training on new handsets.

AmeriFlex is pleased with the move to the Evolve IP solution. So much so that the hosted application is "evolving"; the firm has tapped Evolve IP to provide it with IVR, replacing a legacy product, via a vendor that the hoster has forged a relationship with and which will rest on that supplier's server. The hosted IVR will go live at an as-of-deadline undetermined date.

"With Evolve IP we've had the ability to take advantage of the software and service offerings as well as of the network infrastructure provided to us to facilitate internal communications and Internet communications," says McCollum. "We look forward to continuing to work with Evolve IP to figure out ways to cost-effectively add the latest and greatest enterprise-level phone system features to a mid-sized operation like ours." **CIS**

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2011 IP Contact Center Technology Pioneer Awards



Customer Interaction Solutions realizes that technology is the key to success of every contact center, and we have been editorially detailing the evolution of contact center and CRM technologies for our readers for the past 30 years. We also realize that, with an ever-expanding range of new products and services in the contact center space and new categories of them, it can be challenging for our readers to keep up with the latest and greatest in these solutions.

effort and capital, while enabling increased quality and flexibility to permit them to deliver award-winning service, anytime, anywhere. Winners have been judiciously selected based on the IP contact center solutions or services that offered stand-out features, functions or capabilities which set them apart from others in the space.

This is why we research and present the IP Contact Center Technology Pioneer Awards, so we can highlight

for our readers many of the best players in this emergent technology that is saving contact centers globally time,

The 2011 IP Contact Center Technology Pioneer Award winners are listed below. To all of the recipients, we offer our congratulations. **CIS**

Company	Product
Autonomy	Autonomy (News - Alert) ICE
Broadview Networks	OfficeSuite ACD
Calabrio, Inc.	Calabrio (News - Alert) ONE
Contactual	OnDemand Contact Center
Contact Services, L.L.C.	CallScoreLive
CosmoCom	CosmoDialer
FrontRange Solutions	FrontRange Customer Service Management
HyperQuality	ClearMetrix 2.0
Interactive Intelligence	Customer Interaction Center (CIC), version 4.0
IntelliResponse Systems Inc.	The IntelliResponse Answer Suite
NICE Systems	NICE SmartCenter VoIP Solutions
Noble Systems Corporation	Noble enterprise Hosted
TelStar Hosted Services, Inc.	TelStar Hosted Services, Inc. Hosted Call Center
Verint Witness Actionable Solutions	Impact 360 Recording
Zultys, Inc	Zultys (News - Alert) Contact Center Solution

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The New Customer Service Model in Insurance:

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Think about the following important objectives in managing an insurance business: increasing sales, controlling expenses, enhancing customer service and reducing loss costs. Each objective is vital to an insurer's strategy, although a strong case can be made that exemplary customer service is the most pervasive and meaningful. Yet the question remains, "How can we best achieve great customer service?"

Insurance customers most frequently interact with insurers via local agents, call centers, claim adjusters and online. Certain commercial customers might also interact directly with underwriters and loss control specialists. Unfortunately, many insurance companies don't have the proper business and technology capabilities in place to connect various channels for customer service, especially across the enterprise.

The Unified Solutions Imperative... Enabling Integration And Workflow

The key to great customer service is effectively provide it across the the entire business with consistent, timely communications between policyholders and the organization. Do so, and customer retention improves. A unified customer service capability readies the organization to execute quickly when opportunities arise to enter a new market or launch a new product. Insurers must build a unified organization, and the best first step is to take an outside-in view of their organization and assess interaction capabilities from the customer's perspective.

In pursuing the ability to offer superior customer service, proactive insurers are leading the way with multichannel sales and service, up-to-the-second information and warm transfers. The unified solutions that enable these capabilities are becoming an imperative, and require two main technology attributes: the full integration of technology across the enterprise and advanced workflow.

There are integration challenges and solutions. The systems an insurer utilizes for sales, underwriting, policy servicing, billing and claims should all be linked together to speed the flow of information and service. Yet, many insurers still maintain a hodgepodge of systems and applications that make it difficult to ever fully achieve effective integration and information flow between systems.

To improve systems integration, some insurance companies have turned to open architectures and integrated software suites, and others have adopted a disciplined development approach based on a service oriented architecture (SOA). But the best way to manage connectivity and integration issues is to deploy a "connection-savvy" infrastructure that can reach a variety of policy, billing and claims systems. It treats each connection in small, easy to maintain, and discrete components, allowing an insurer to easily accommodate old as well as new systems, and adding new lines of business when appropriate.

Consider advanced workflow solutions. Characterized by a stream of interactions with customers over time, insurance is different from many other industries.

Policyholders expect the interactions and information exchanges with their insurer to be timely and accurate. If they've made a payment online or via an SMS/ text message, they expect the information about that payment to be immediately available to the agent and the CSR. All current policy, payment, and claims information should be immediately available to employees and customers alike, via any channel.

A Few Recommendations

Taking a critical look at current customer service technologies and strategies, and asking a few key questions, can ultimately lead to an enhanced new customer service model.

- Are voice and data integrated beyond the contact center? How many different vendors are involved in your systems?
- What transactions cross departmental boundaries? Are multiple individuals involved in servicing the request, and must they access multiple systems and databases to provide a response? Do workflow systems facilitate the timely and accurate servicing of transactions?
- Do your current providers offer integration of communications and IT solutions? What solution provides the best opportunity to integrate workflows across the enterprise? Do your solution providers and those you might consider offer flexible delivery models — on-premise and hosted?

Finally do you have a future state defined for your customer service environment, complete with specific objectives and goals, an achievable, affordable plan to meet them? Have you identified the strategic partner(s) to get you there? Having and doing so are the keys to great customer service. **CIS**

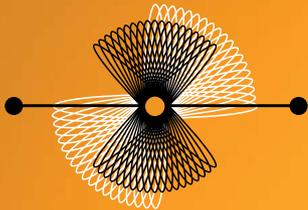
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Brendan B. Read, *Senior Contributing Editor*



9-11-01 to 5-01-11...

I still have not yet found the words to adequately describe my reaction when the news came late Sunday night, 05-01-11, that Osama bin Laden had been killed by U.S. forces.

For my wife and I and my sister-in-law were amongst the many New Yorkers and Washingtonians...and commuters and travelers and workers and visitors who were going about our business...when all hell literally broke loose on a bright and sunny morning, 9-11-01.

My wife and I were commuting from our then-home on Staten Island to midtown Manhattan, riding on the M6 bus from the Staten Island Ferry terminal when the driver stared through his rear view mirror and screamed, "The World Trade is on fire!" We ran to the left side of the bus, craned our eyes upward and saw the smoke billow from the north tower. I got out near my office in the Flatiron District, staring down Sixth Avenue at the towers with the hordes of others, listening to a radio in a white van, trying to figure out what was going on...and then watched the second plane crash into the south tower. In the meantime my sister-in-law heard a loud bang as her subway train passed beneath the site.

What I do have is a heartfelt thanks to the brave men and women both uniformed and civilian who responded to save lives. Like our son, a paramedic who was called in from his home on Staten Island to perform triage near what became known as "Ground Zero". We didn't know if our son was alive or dead – or him us – for two days.

I also have a salute to those in the military and intelligence and law enforcement agencies who have been relentless in pursuing the perps and bringing them to justice at the risk to their lives. I bow to the families who have and who continue to support them.

Yet at the same time, I have a strong appreciation to the many hundreds of the unseen but heard individuals who were there for everyone at their time of need: the contact center agents. The ones who took the calls for the 9-1-1 dispatch, the airlines, especially American and United, the public agencies notably the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and the military and for

I have a strong appreciation to the many hundreds of the unseen but heard individuals who were there for everyone at their time of need: the contact center agents...We owe them special gratitude. Staying calm yet empathetic, asking what needed to be asked when listening to the fear, the worry and the anger and the upset as the horror unfolded and collapsed required (and requires) a unique kind of strength.

With strong memories of evacuations and "security alerts" while living in the U.K. during terror campaigns and having interviewed experts in the wake of the first World Trade Center bombing, I called my wife and sister-in-law and said we're getting out. Our offices were located near the Empire State Building and Madison Square Garden and nobody knew then how many planes were still in the air. And shortly afterward our companies gave us the evacuation order.

I left carrying my laptop and my now useless cell phone – much of the wireless along with the landline communications collapsed with the towers – on the long walk to the Hudson River to catch the ferries to New Jersey. On the way my sister-in-law suffered a heart attack. The line waiting to board made way for her and she was rushed on the other side with my wife to a nearby hospital; there was a long line of ambulances waiting for the survivors. I made my way to a friend's home where I logged in and made – and answered – "Are You OK?" e-mails.

the communications carriers and the hospitals. We owe them special gratitude. Staying calm yet empathetic, asking what needed to be asked when listening to the fear, the worry and the anger and the upset as the horror unfolded and collapsed required (and requires) a unique kind of strength.

The September issue of Customer Interaction Solutions has a feature on business continuity/disaster response. I want to know about products and services that can help contact centers effectively get through the next disaster, large and small. Equally if not more importantly I want to hear from contact centers and their managers who were running their operations on 9-11-01 so I can tell their stories and find out what has changed in their processes, to be ready the next time.

The hard fact is that the victory in the war on terror on 05-01-11 will not be the last that is needed. And that contact centers, and their agents, will be called on again in such events, being there, on the line when they are most needed. **CIS**



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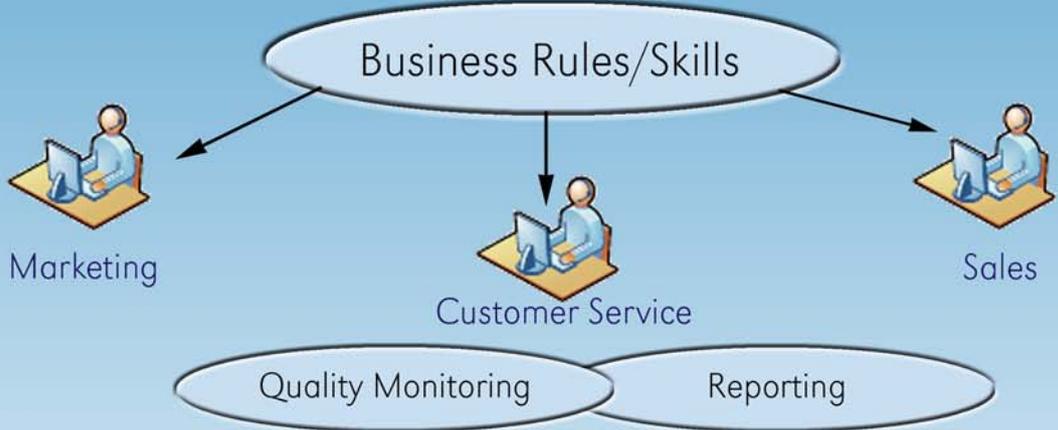
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