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Volume 32/Number 3 • April 2014

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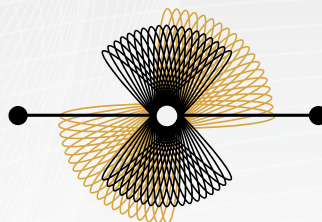
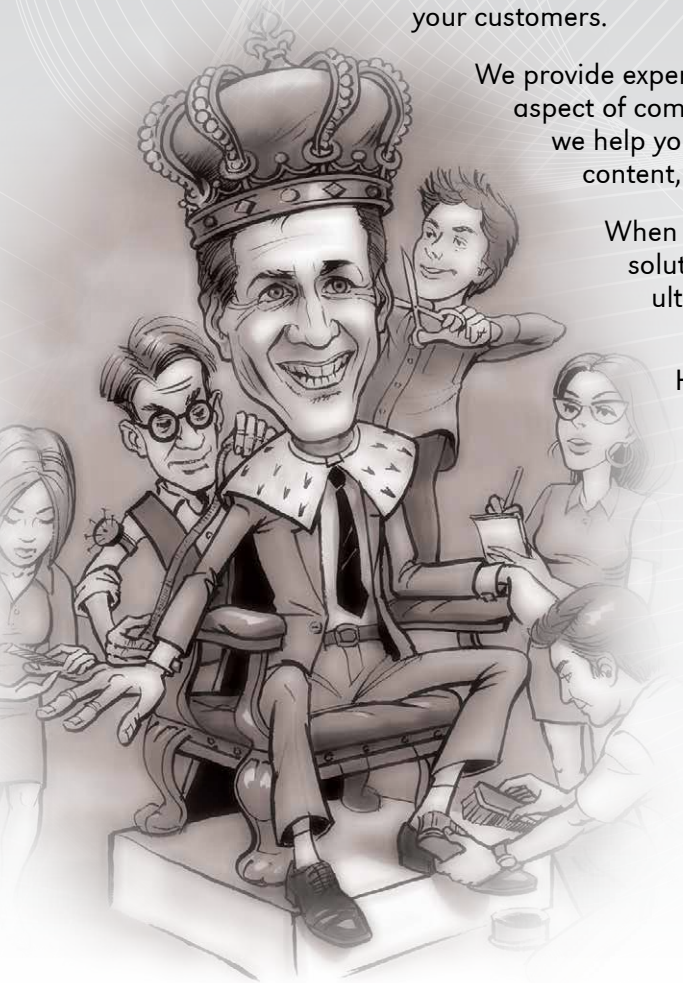
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Rich Tehrani,
CEO, TMC

Openwave Uses Push To Boost Consumer Relationships with Carriers

Mobile carriers aren't communicating with subscribers as effectively as possible and as a result Openwave Mobility is providing its MOTIFY solution, which solves the problem by using a push notification on iOS/Android devices to begin user engagement. At that point they communicate with an app on the device, which connects with Openwave Mobility's backend system which receives data over the push channel.

The cloud-based solution can be used to send marketing campaigns to users and can then determine the uptake through reporting.

For example, if there is a new video feed to a local sporting event that the carrier wants to promote, it can send a message letting the appropriate subscribers know.

The system lets you determine what happens when users respond. The Message Builder function is an integrated marketing GUI environment, which also supports a preview function to see what it will look like on the target device. Each push campaign can be mapped to specific events such as when a user begins roaming or is over quota, dealing with service denial, near quota, etc. Basically, network charging events can be used as upsell opportunities.

According to company representative Michael Rodgers, SMS is not as effective as the push channel as it doesn't allow the introduction of rich media and moreover it doesn't support tablets.

Obviously the carrier needs to ensure the data communicating to this application is not blocked in a data overage situation.

The company provides broadcast tools that allow importing from an external source, enabling carriers to segment users via analytics. This allows, for example, a soccer promotion to be sent to sports enthusiasts.

Rodgers said his company understands user behavior and the mobile space very well and has made a tremendous investment in user engagement. He believes this

knowledge (and he tells me current customers agree) leads to tremendous data-driven upselling results.

"In business, as in life, great timing really matters," said John Giere, CEO at Openwave Mobility. "Get it wrong and you've missed the opportunity, but get it right and you are building customer loyalty." **M**

"In business, as in life, great timing really matters."

- Openwave Mobility CEO John Giere



On the Cover

8 Customer Satisfaction Takes a Hit

**SUBSCRIBE
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INSIDE Every Issue

- 3 Perspective**
By Richard Tehrani, CEO, TMC
- 6 Angle**
By Paula Bernier, Executive Editor, TMC
- 14 Voice of the Customer**
- 26 Click**
News brief

- 52 The Integrated Marketplace™ Advertising Index**
- 54 Experience**
By Erik Linask,
Group Editorial Director, TMC

Sections & Series

STRATEGIC SOLUTION SERIES.

- 11 Certification – Great Programs Help Your Brand; Bad Ones Can Hurt**
Brought to you by J. D. Power
- 15 HigherGround Can Take Your Contact Center to New Heights**
Brought to you by HigherGround

ROUNDUP.

- 18 Call Recording Roundup**

ASK THE EXPERTS.

- 50 A Contact Center Crystal Ball: Marrying the Analyses of Service, Cost, Revenue, and Now, Customer Experience**
Brought to you by Interactive Intelligence

TARGET.

- 28 How to Make Your Post-Call Survey Results More Accurate**
- 30 Personalization: Big Data Analytics Help Identify, Recognize Personal Life Events**

ENGAGE.

- 32 Customer Engagement's Impact on Brand Loyalty**
- 34 What Amazon and Amex Can Teach Us About Customer Service on Mobile**
- 36 Earning Trust with Chat 2.0**

DELIVER.

- 38 Lead Scoring: Predictive Analytics Can Unearth Hot Leads and Lower Marketing Costs**
- 40 Virtual Agents: Bringing Benefits Home with the New Cloud-based Contact Center**
- 42 Using Big Data for More Effective Call Center Hiring, Other Improvement**

ACCOLADES.

- 44 2014 CUSTOMER Top 50 Outsourcing Awards**

TABLE OF CONTENTS • AD INDEX

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CUSTOMER® 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.

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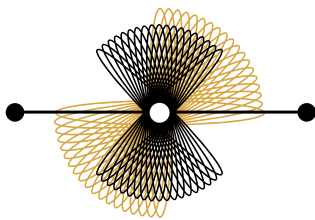
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Paula Bernier,
Executive Editor

Internal Processes & Customer Service

Whether you're building a widget, selling a car, or publishing a magazine, getting a product from concept to reality is an intense and many-layered process involving an array of people and organizations.

The widget maker not only has to employ engineers to design the product, it may work with partners to source its parts, engage another company to manufacture the final solution, have a separate group to do quality control testing, leverage a marketing staff to promote the offering, and engage a network of distributors to bring the product to market.

An automobile brand follows a pretty similar process, as I understand it.

Publishing a magazine – an effort with which I have a bit more familiarity – involves editor types like myself planning a magazine issue; interviewing sources for the articles; acquiring and editing articles from companies in the industry; working with internal editors to get their content; and getting all the proper information, content and approvals from those who run advertorials. Meanwhile, the advertising and production staffs are working to sell ads in the magazine and attain from clients the creative related to those efforts. The art division then brings it all together in page format, which both editorial and production staffs then shepherd through multiple proofs. And when it's finalized, it is formatted by the art staff and goes to yet another organization – the printer, which produces and ships the final products, with input from the circulation, management and/or marketing staffs as to any special requirements, such as sending a subset of the issues to a particular trade show.

Keeping track of all the moving parts of a project like a magazine – or any such project – can be difficult, especially given that deadlines and expectations often shift during the

life of a project, the individuals involved in the process may be at remote locations so might not get the opportunity to interface as frequently as they might like, and different people contributing to the effort may have varying views as to where the effort should fall on their priority lists.

That said, having systems in place in which a manager with an overall view of the process can input deadlines and deliverables – and the most current version of the materials being used for the project – so everyone in the process can stay abreast of what's current, what's required, and when it's needed to keep things moving forward can be an invaluable tool. That's important not only for internal purposes, but also to ensure communications with customers are consistent.

The ability to not just have this information available for users to proactively check, but rather to send out alerts when deadlines are coming soon or have already passed, is also important.

When processes
and shared
expectations are
in place things
get done more quickly
and efficiently.

In the end, of course, even an automated system of this type relies on people to input the latest information in a timely manner and the rest of those involved to meet or come as close as possible to the published deadlines.

So, what, you might be wondering, does all this have to do with the customer experience?

When processes and shared expectations are in place things get done more quickly and efficiently. As a result, employees know what's expected and when, and there's less confusion about expectations; businesses benefit by having more productive and happier employees; and customers benefit by receiving solutions that typically meet the mark both in terms of quality and delivery date. And businesses then benefit again by having more loyal customers. **M**

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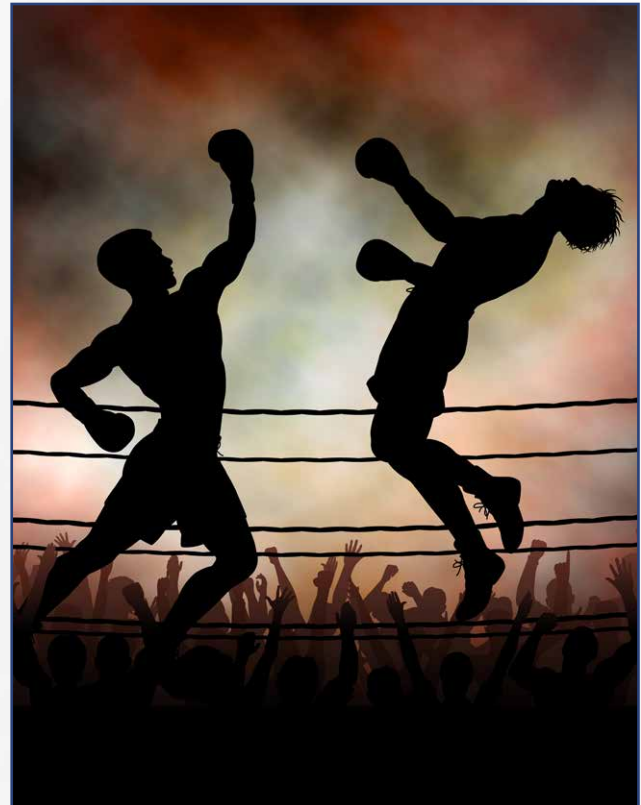
Customer Satisfaction Takes a Hit Now What?

Hardly a day goes by without an item about how improving the customer experience is now the intense focus of C-levels globally. In fact, the job of chief customer experience officer, or a title very similar, is arguably the fastest growing C-level position in enterprises around the world. The reasons are obvious. They are also what are driving the adoption of new contact center solutions and the use of big data analytics as enterprises large and small seek to create sustainable advantage by enhancing how they interact with all of us.

One would think that all of this attention would lead to customer satisfaction ratings that were on the rise. Unfortunately, the CFI Group's Contact Center Satisfaction Index, now in its seventh year, tells a different story. In fact, the recently released index finds customer satisfaction with contact centers "dropped a whopping 10 percent in 2013." In addition, as CFI Group notes, with a score of 69 (on a 100 point scale), the 2013 score reflects an eight-point pull back from the record high of 77 in 2012.

There is a lot of grumpiness out there.

The 2013 CCSI collected data from more than 1,500 consumers across six major industries: banking, cell phone service, health insurance, property insurance, retail, and cable or satellite TV. The 38-page report documents with incredible granularity the growing dissatisfaction with contact center interactions in the sectors covered. It also provides theories on

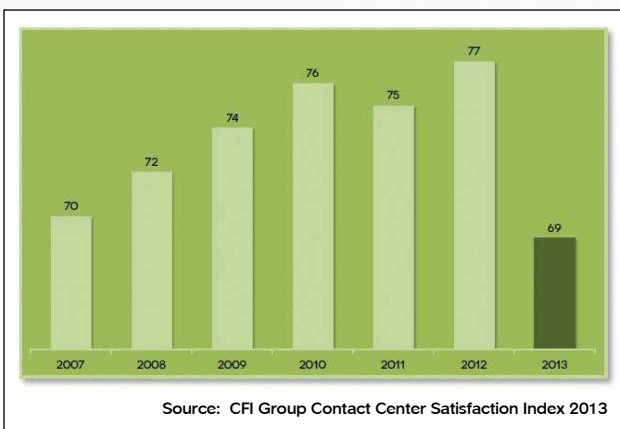


what is going on along with pointers on what can be done to reverse the downward trend as depicted in the seven-year look.

"With such a large drop in customer satisfaction, companies need to focus on improving their contact center's policies and procedures currently in place as they look for ways to return to prior year's satisfaction levels," says Terry Redding, vice president of marketing and product development for CFI Group. "This focus will aid more than just scores; it is vital from a company profit perspective as satisfied customers buy more and recommend the companies to others more frequently, all of which contributes to the bottom line."

Beyond basic policies and procedures, CFI Group sees two explanations for the drop.

1. Consumers have low confidence with the economy and government and are generally fatigued as the economy continues to stall, leading to the score backlash.
2. After years of steady growth in performance, consumers have built an expectation of great service, and contact centers failed to meet it this year.





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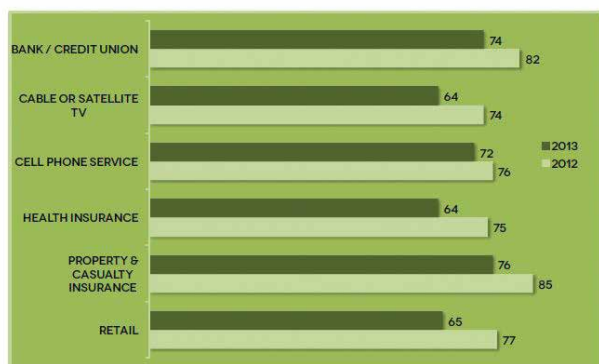
Interestingly, the report shows there are ways for contact centers to increase satisfaction, especially through the use of non-call channels. In fact, one of the key findings is the growing desire for self-paced help. This is an area where almost half of respondents said their preferred method of contact would be a non-call communication, such as e-mail, chat or via the company's website. Chat in particular is singled out with 63 percent of this year's respondents saying they actively look for the chat function when visiting a company's site.

"As non-call channels continue to grow in use and popularity, now is the time for contact centers to begin training, testing and monitoring these channels for improvement in the customer's experience," says Redding. "To better serve customers, companies need to continue to look at the service aspect of their website with an eye toward customer self-service and not just traditional marketing and sales activities."

The CCSI also found that social media is growing as an avenue for customers to share and voice opinions in a community setting and for businesses to conduct damage control. Nearly 40 percent of respondents turned to social media to voice a concern, increasing from 17 percent of respondents in 2012.

"Successful companies are monitoring this channel and reaching out to consumers through the same social media to address consumer issues. When done successfully, companies are seeing the payback as the study shows significant increases in customer satisfaction, loyalty and likelihood to recommend as a result of these efforts," says Redding.

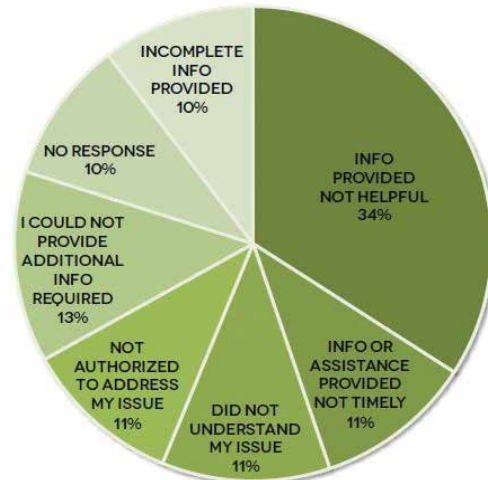
As noted, there is a real trove of valuable information and insights in the report. The two charts below are indicative of this. The first shows that the decline is evident in all industry segments surveyed.



Source: CFI Group Contact Center Satisfaction Index 2013

The second is part of a series that delves into the customer experience and breaks down why first contacts fail.

The report goes into several important areas including: satisfaction drivers and how improvements can raise sat scores; reasons why people reach out to contact center support in the first place; the way people currently contact enterprises and the shifting nature of this as those non-call channels become more important, especially in terms of what becomes



Source: CFI Group Contact Center Satisfaction Index 2013

the first point of contact; and looks at each channel of interaction (call, IVR, chat, e-mail, website, Facebook and more) and their impact on moving the bar back up.

CFI Group concludes from its analysis of the data a few points to consider:

- People want options beyond the phone.
- First call resolution is everything.
- Chat as a service channel is growing, especially with Millennials.
- Social media is used as damage control, i.e., it is not the primary way people wish to interact but is where they vent and thus needs to be monitored closely for brand protection.
- Offshore contact centers remain a problematic area, particularly as people's expectations continue to rise. Their patience gets shorter, and alternatives for future business are widely available.

There is a nice quote at the start of the index that really says it all: "In the growing environment of continuous connectivity, contact centers have become, for many, the primary face of the companies we do business with – always there, always on, and always expected to deliver on the company promise."

Making the contact center the brand ambassador, hence improving the technology and the skills of the people who are the front line of customer interactions, has taken on increased importance.

The advent of social media and the ability to make bad experiences viral along with rising expectations, fickleness and instant availability of alternatives, are why all of those CCEOs have been put in place. This is clearly a report that they are going to find illuminating to say the least. **M**

Peter Bernstein is a senior editor at TMCnet, the online entity of CUSTOMER magazine parent company TMC.

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Certification—Great Programs Help Your Brand; Bad Ones Can Hurt

CUSTOMER Magazine recently spoke with Herb Williams-Dalgart, senior director of certification and performance improvement at J.D. Power, a leading market research company. We asked Herb to explain why organizations seek certification and to help us understand the benefits and challenges such organizations might face.

What are the benefits of a certification program?



There are seemingly countless types of certification, from compulsory certification to performance certification. No matter what type of certification an organization chooses to pursue, the most meaningful certification programs will help

organizations build and support a culture of excellence, highlight performance efforts to internal and external parties, and ensure key standards are consistently met. Call centers often look for these benefits, but they don't always materialize when the wrong certification programs are chosen.

What are the main elements of a great certification program?

The right certification program for any organization should offer these three key elements:

1) Put customers first

The best certification programs begin with identifying the activities that matter most to the *customers* of the organizations being certified. For example, when a call center focuses on its own operational goals or business-related metrics without a connection to what customers want (or need), they convey the wrong message to employees and customers while emphasizing the wrong priorities. They'll

be admiring themselves, while their customers are admiring the competition. The best certification programs base their criteria on those activities most connected to delivering the experience customers want and need.

2) Go deeper than metrics

Certifying the elements of an excellent customer experience doesn't mean simply measuring the outcomes. For certification to be truly meaningful, it has to measure the underlying processes. This is how organizations can be sure the experience they provide can be sustained. For example, we know that customers who call a contact center want their issue resolved within the first contact. Some practices that are implicit in successful first-contact resolution processes include the establishment of an effective call model, special emphasis in training, rep coaching, and an integrated quality assurance program. Metrics alone, such as first-contact resolution numbers, don't always demonstrate that the practices underlying the results are either sustainable or appropriate. Sound certification programs dive much deeper so that when standards are met, they mean something important. Even when standards aren't met, a deeper dive can help identify the most effective ways to correct the problems.

3) Offer credibility and impact

Finally, a truly effective certification program allows organizations to leverage the certifying entity's brand reputation for independence, credibility, and high awareness by customers and employees. It's important your customers understand that your certification isn't a baseless marketing gimmick, but that it is the outcome of an independent and rigorous assessment conducted by a reputable company. Not only are J.D. Power certification programs built on factors known to drive customer satisfaction and other critical business results, but they are also backed by the expertise gained

over 45 years of market research across numerous industries. For these reasons, J.D. Power certifications carry substantial weight among an organization's internal stakeholders and customers.

Can certification ever be bad?

Pursuing the wrong certification standards can be costly. It's important for organizations to ensure their certification efforts align with their business goals, have the appropriate impact on customer satisfaction, and have a positive cultural impact among employees and executives who work together to achieve certification. People support what they believe in. J.D. Power bases its programs on the customer experience delivered by top performers and the expectations their customers have, even as those expectations evolve. We update our criteria and benchmarks annually—and we base those benchmarks on cross-industry best practices—all in service to organizations that want to use our certification programs to differentiate themselves from competitors.

Are there pitfalls to avoid when pursuing even good certification programs?

Abraham Lincoln said, "Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe." The greatest pitfall in pursuing certification is the lack of adequate preparation. The most credible programs also provide the tools and assistance organizations need before pursuing certification. J.D. Power has many legacy clients who pursue certification year after year because they know we'll be there to support their efforts all along the way.

To learn about J.D. Power's suite of solutions for the contact center industry, visit jdpower.com/contactcenter.

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VOICE OF THE CUSTOMER

Elaine Cascio

Five Ways to Amp Up Your Customer Conversations

Regardless of channel, our conversations with customers should be consistent and polished. And it doesn't hurt to provide that little bit extra that shows customers that they are valued.

Fill in the blanks

Too often, I've gotten e-mail that started with "Dear _____" or "Dear Cascio, or "Dear Mr. Elaine." Sound familiar? With the wealth of data and tools that we have, there's no excuse for not using my name, spelling it right, and using it correctly in correspondence.

Connect the dots

Train reps to look at the customer's record right away to anticipate customer needs or thank them for their business. Did they just receive a late payment notice? Have they recently stayed at one of your hotels or placed an order? Land's End garnered loyal customers by training reps to ask about a recent purchase or gift and remember special occasions like birthdays and anniversaries. Let customers know that they are valued and important to your company, and you'll be guaranteed repeat business.

Make a match

Ok. It may sound like online dating, but one way to go the extra mile is to match common interests and abilities of CSRs with your customers. You may have some CSRs who are adept at working with an elderly population, or others who are in tune with the needs of another demographic. Match them to callers. If you run a P&C insurance call center, have reps who are motorcycle or boating enthusiasts handle contacts for motorcycle or boat insurance. Not only will it improve your customers' experience, it will keep your CSRs engaged.

Understand the journey

What brought the customer to you today? Sometimes you can connect the dots (for example, a late payment notice), but often you need to understand what other channels they've traveled

before they e-mailed, selected chat – or, as a last resort, picked up the phone to call. Take the time to understand their needs and what they've tried. If you can't track multichannel contacts yet, at least see what they tried in the IVR, and listen to the story of their journey with a sympathetic ear. Train your reps to be empathetic and understanding of the issues, "I see you're trying to get a replacement cable modem. Let me get that taken care of for you."

Don't ask them AGAIN

Finally, if you know that a customer has tried other channels before reaching you, DON'T ask for the same information again. If they've already entered their account number two times in two different systems, asking for it again is sure to put them over the edge. If you must ask, find out why they're calling first, then explain to them why you need the information to take care of their request. "Ok, I can take care of that for you right now. All I need is your account number and we'll get it squared away immediately...."

It may sound like online dating, but one way to go the extra mile is to match common interests and abilities of CSRs with your customers.

As you can see, some of these suggestions may be simple to execute, while others may require tools or technology you don't have today. Think about how you can get data you need to improve the customer experience today, don't wait until you get shiny new technology. And measure success: If you train reps to check customer records right away and connect the dots, include it in your quality monitoring, too. By making better use of the tools and technology you have, as well as training your reps wisely, you can turn up the volume – and the quality – of your customer conversations. **M**

Elaine Cascio is a vice president at Vanguard Communications Corp. (www.vanguard.net), a consulting firm specializing in customer experience, self-service, contact center processes, operations and technology.

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HigherGround Can Take Your Contact Center to New Heights

Technology can be a great help in making a contact center more efficient and effective. But, in the end, the success of a contact center – or any organization, for that matter – hinges on the contributions and skills of its people.

Addressing that reality, HigherGround delivers solutions that both provide contact centers with the tools they need to run their operations, and customizes those solutions to the precise needs of the users, so those individuals can expend less time and energy on low-value pursuits and more time on improving their skills, serving their customers, and meeting their business goals. That can enable contact centers to reach new heights.

HigherGround helps contact centers do that with its call recording and advanced dashboard solutions.

Calibre, the call recording solution, is extremely simple to use, says Terry Ryan, CEO at HigherGround. The Calibre user interface can easily be customized via click-and-drag maneuvers that allow people to move and dock different panes, group agents and performance parameters by teams, and more.

“The user interface makes everything one or two clicks away,” notes Ryan.

Calibre Analytics Dashboard, which HigherGround introduced in September, provides a heads up display of customer-defined metrics for measuring contact center performance. Graphic interfaces present measurements on such parameters as average handle time, speed to answer, or any metric you want to measure.

Using Calibre Analytics Dashboard, contact center administrators and managers can set upper and lower control limits of various performance parameters over any window of time, so if performance during that time falls outside the allowed measure, users are alerted. Those alerts can come in the form of a desktop popup, a text, or via another medium. That helps contact center managers ensure that the desired performance is maintained whether they are trying to meet specific service level agreements for those

to which they provide contact center operations as an outsourced service, or whether they are just trying to maintain their own internal performance standards.

The notification feature of the Calibre Analytics Dashboard is also noteworthy because it frees up supervisors – who once had to spend hours combing through contact center performance reports to spot degradations and trends – so they can dedicate more time to coaching agents.

HigherGround solutions can be easily customized, even by people who are not highly technical, but the company also offers professional services to help contact centers take customization to the next level via integration with other vendor's solutions. Its solutions have been tested and validated by Avaya and Cisco, so its products are guaranteed to work with the contact center platforms by those providers. For example, HigherGround has a partnership with Cisco Systems through which it offers integration between its own Calibre call recording solution and the Cisco ICM (CallManager) and Cisco IPICS solutions. HigherGround also does a lot of custom integration to enable its solutions to pull in unique data sets from customers' existing CRM systems.

“We truly customize solutions to meet our customers' needs, and we stand behind our product.”

– CEO Terry Ryan

“We truly customize solutions to meet our customers' needs,” says Ryan, “and we stand behind our product.”

Founded in 1973, HigherGround is an established company that delivers 24/7 support on its proven contact center solutions. Those solutions today are used by thousands of customers in North America, including Care 1st, NASA Federal Credit Union, and Parkland Health and Hospital Systems.



HigherGround®

**MULTI-SOURCE RECORDING,
PERFORMANCE EVALUATION,
AND ANALYTICS FOR THE
CONTACT CENTER**



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www.higherground.com

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Suite 105 Canoga Park,
CA 91303

Call Recording

Whether used for coaching, productivity enhancement, regulatory compliance, or other purposes, call recording is garnering a lot of interest lately for its ability to make organizations more efficient and effective. Here's a run down of some of the leading players in the call recording market place.

3CLogic www.3CLogic.com

3CLogic offers a full suite of cloud-based inbound, outbound and blended contact center solutions. Covering all customer interactions including voice, chat, e-mail and social media, 3CLogic seamlessly integrates with existing CRM software to provide businesses with a 360-degree view of customer interactions regardless of channel. 3CLogic provides contact centers with accurate and timely information about prospects and customers so they can efficiently respond to communications, ensure satisfaction, and drive toward a larger lifetime value for each customer. 3CLogic's technology is flexible when it comes to recordings. First, customers can choose where they want the recordings to be stored. Recordings can be stored on the customer's server or on the cloud. Second, they can choose what percentage of calls are recorded, depending on their needs. Finally, APIs can be used to mark or process the recordings. A SaaS contact center solution, 3CLogic is built on a distributed architecture that eliminates the pitfalls and limitations of legacy centralized server architectures found in many contact centers. Unlike existing hosted offerings, 3CLogic unleashes the full power of the cloud with the benefits of VoIP to provide unprecedented security, reliability, flexibility and scalability. Equipped with its Virtual Telephony Application Grid technology, 3CLogic pushes telephony functions to the edge of the cloud, which removes bandwidth bottlenecks, avoids outages, ensures data security, and enables contact centers to increase capacity as needed.

Agero www.agero.com

In the early '90's, we invested in our first call recording system, Auto Quality. At the time, the new monitoring system enabled us to obtain and listen to a wide sample of recorded calls. The best feature of the system was that the associates did not know when they would be monitored. This allowed us to capture a true sample of their call quality. A few years ago, we purchased the Witness eQuality

call monitoring system. Witness has enabled us to capture both the voice and data portion of a recorded call. As an added benefit, the monitor form has been integrated into the system to allow us to simultaneously monitor and grade phone calls. The ability to run complex queries on the quality database has enabled us to identify trends and create training modules to correct them faster than we have ever been able to do in the past. In addition to internal monitoring, our associates are graded from the point of view of the customer (by the voice of the customer), which is captured in real time via IVR, and also receive feedback from sessions where associates from each site gather to listen and critique calls from other sites.

AudioCodes www.audiocodes.com



SmartTAP is an ideal solution for companies in the financial services, manufacturing, hospitality, medical, branch office, and many other highly regulated industries. Historically voice recording focused on the call center or public safety, but today's UC platforms make it cost effective to record anything and anyone. SmartTAP is a security enhanced call recording solution that enables the recording of key business interactions. Capable of recording any call type including but not limited to mobile, remote and conference all from the same solution. SmartTAP is a fully IP-centric software application built on open standard protocols like SIP, HTTP, SNMP and REST utilizing the latest design methodologies. It can be used for recording not only Microsoft Lync but also any other IP or TDM interface at the same time. Built on proven technology and based on years of experience in developing and integrating call recording solutions, SmartTAP is compatible with many VoIP, TDM, and hybrid telephony environments including Microsoft Lync and ShoreTel UC. The solution will unify all your locations even if there are disparate voice platforms. Easily record any conversation including those by mobile and work at home users. The solution can be configured and centrally managed using an intuitive web-based interface, simplifying system deployments and reducing ongoing support requirements.

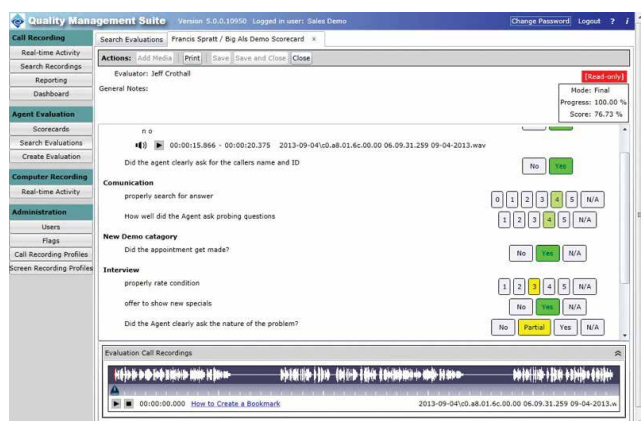
Cisco

www.cisco.com

Call recording capabilities within Cisco WebEx Meetings allow users to get more from a meeting and focus on interactions instead of taking notes. WebEx Meetings, the top-rated business productivity solution available across platforms including Android, iOS, BlackBerry and Windows 8, and accessible via desktops, smartphones and tablets, provides video and voice recording with easy file retrieval and editing capabilities. WebEx allows users to record and capture the full meeting dialog for anyone unable to attend, including voice and active speaker video, desktop or file sharing, and chat. The meeting recording is then available through Meetings Spaces and can be downloaded with a copy and paste URL for sharing via e-mail, chat, social media, or on a website. Recording as either .ARF or .WRF files, the meetings are easily watched, edited or converted. In addition to recording via WebEx Meetings, Cisco also offers customers the ability to capture and record video for both live streaming and video on demand viewing via the TelePresence Content Server, part of Cisco's Capture Transform Share solution. The TelePresence Content Server is compatible with Cisco TelePresence or third-party standards-based video endpoints.

Enghouse Interactive

www.enghouseinteractive.com



Enghouse Interactive Quality Management Suite (formerly CallRex) is comprised of call recording, agent evaluation, and desktop recording software; tools that make the suite ideal for emerging contact centers. Enghouse Interactive Call Recording software features a web-based user interface that is designed for ease-of-use and simplicity. Authorized users can view the status of users in real time, silently monitor calls, and set triggers for call recording. Calls can be recorded full-time, on-demand, or using triggers. Export call recordings for e-mail, linking to CRM or other business systems. Capture

the entire interaction – telephone and computer activities – using desktop recording software in concert with Enghouse Interactive Call Recording software. Desktop monitoring software enables you to ensure consistent and correct use of business systems, identify training opportunities, and remove barriers to employee productivity. Administrators can set recording profiles to suit their business needs, from recording computer activity throughout the day to recording screen activities exclusively when users are on the telephone. After-call work can be recorded for comprehensive quality monitoring programs. Using Enghouse Interactive Agent Evaluation software, contact center managers can quickly and easily evaluate customer interactions.

Genesys

www.genesys.com

Genesys Call Recording for Compliance and Quality Management records calls to gain insight into what your customers are saying and how your service impacts satisfaction and churn rates. Enterprises can set criteria for automatically recording certain calls or all calls, or record calls on demand as situations arise, and can encrypt sensitive recordings as needed to meet compliance requirements. Genesys lets supervisors and evaluators search for calls using call flow data and business parameters, such as agent ID, customer ID, and order number. Enterprises can play the entire call from the customer's point of view, including IVR prompts; transfers; holds and conferences; and in its entirety to gain a complete view of the customer experience. Share and send call recordings via e-mail to agents, managers, or a customer. Every time a call recording is accessed, an audit trail of information is kept to ensure that sensitive data is kept secure. The modular and scalable architecture provides flexible deployment options whether distributed or centralized in design. Unlike legacy recording systems, this is entirely SIP based, specifically designed for voice over IP recording. There are flexible call search options, and support for regulatory compliance requirements for PCI-DSS, HIPAA, Sec 17a (3, 4) and SOX.

Hewlett-Packard Co.

www.hp.com

HP Autonomy delivers a contact center management solution with HP Qfiniti 10, which brings the next generation of workforce optimization and advanced, real-time multi-channel analytics to the contact center. The product offers a flexible solution that simplifies complex business processes, increases effectiveness, and lowers overall costs. HP Qfiniti 10 delivers the advanced tools needed in today's global and multisite contact centers, including solutions for workforce management, quality monitoring, liability recording, coaching and eLearning, performance management, surveying,

desktop analytics, and multichannel analytics. Built on the HP Intelligent Operating Layer (IDOL), the solution has the ability to truly understand the voice of the customer. HP IDOL extracts meaning from all forms of human information, including audio. By leveraging this advanced analytics platform, HP Qfiniti 10 can automatically identify patterns in customer communications as well as classify calls – both on historical data or in real time. It offers highly integrated workforce management modules, each performing a specific contact center management function. Individual components can be deployed to allow customers to get the modules they require, offering them a customizable solution that best fits their needs.

HigherGround **www.higherground.com**

HigherGround's Calibre product suite offers a unified call recording, agent evaluation, and reporting solution for multi-source contact centers. With today's stringent requirements of contact centers to keep customer data secure, these tools work to provide full regulation compliance. The HigherGround Calibre product suite ensures customer data security and PCI and HIPAA compliance as well as support of a myriad of rules and regulations. Contact centers have the ability to record analog, digital, and IP phones; ACD, CTI, PBXs, and e-mail communications from a single unified platform providing a holistic view of call center, team, and agent performance.

inContact **www.inContact.com**



inContact provides synchronized voice and data recording to capture conversations between your customers and agents, as well as the corresponding activities taking place at agents' desktops, such as keystrokes, data entry, screen navigator, and after-call wrap-up. Recorded interactions are tagged and stored automatically for easy, intuitive search and replay. This can enable authorized users throughout your company to view the entire flow of the contact. With the proper security, you can export these interactions to non-system users for review on any multimedia PC. The intelligence of speech analytics adds a unique dynamic to any audio recording. Understand why customers are calling, without ever listening to the call. Through LVCSR technology, the speech analytics engines identifies what is said and displays those key words and phrases that you

need be aware of to drive change in your business. With our Analytics-Driven Quality recording tool, understanding customer emotion during a call, and what drives that emotion, has never been easier.

InfoCision Management Corp. **www.infocision.com**

InfoCision Management Corp. offers both audio and video recording of all sessions within its environment. When video recordings accompany audio recordings, the playback is synchronized. Over 500,000 call recordings are created and maintained on a daily basis. All recordings are harvested and stored securely in accordance with Payment Card Industry standards. Access to recordings is made possible internally through InfoCision's proprietary web-based interface called Contact Search and externally to clients via extranet, which allows users to locate and play calls based on criteria such as date and time, campaign, phone number, agent and call result.

Intelligent Recording Ltd. **www.usbcallrecord.com;** **www.callrecordingsolutions.com**

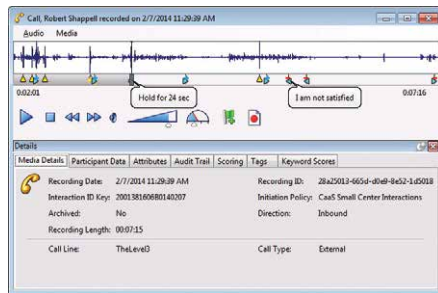
Intelligent Recording offers solutions for recording IP, digital and analog phones as well as line-side solutions for analog and PRI with integration to most phone systems that enables tracking the call to the extension that made or received the call as well as the flexibility of excluding certain phones from recording. A combination of hardware and software solutions allow for simple to install desktop solutions as well as more robust back office solutions for enterprise-wide recording. This flexibility scales the cost down to a very affordable level whether for one user or hundreds, which is unique in the industry. For the home office or mobile user we also offer simple devices that allow recording from mobile phones or your home office. These record in the same format as our other solutions, allowing the user to manage and playback all calls using the same software. The Intelligent Recording solutions cover you when at home, in your car, or in your office.



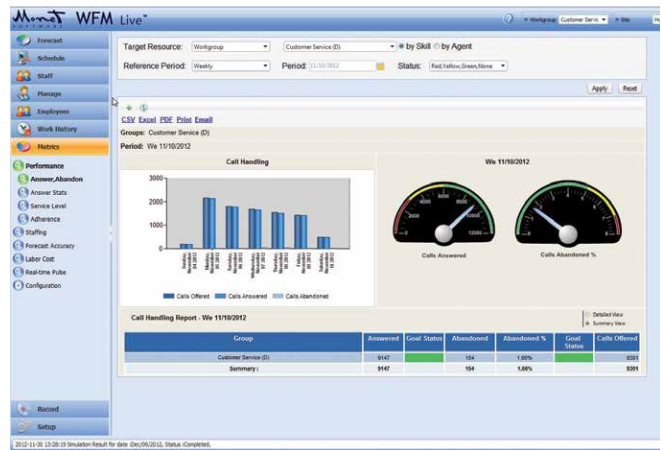
Interactive Intelligence **www.inin.com**

Interaction Recorder is an interaction capture and quality management application that provides multichannel recording and quality evaluations for contact centers and enterprises of all sizes. During calls, it records audio and

screen activity, and provides cradle to grave capture, including IVR portions. Interaction Recorder uses rules-based policies to manage recording initiation, storage, access and retention options.



Monet Software Inc.
www.monetsoftware.com



LiveOps
www.LiveOps.com



LiveOps Inc. offers a cloud-enabled multichannel recording application for quality monitoring and management. LiveOps Recording, an integral part of LiveOps Management Applications, provides contact centers with the ability to record any agent's interaction activity, including screen captures, and voice recording, from anywhere in the world. Companies can significantly benefit from this integrated solution by improving agent performance and maximizing the effectiveness of every customer contact. LiveOps Recording is a true-cloud application with zero on-premises hardware or software, and no IT management requirements running on an industry-proven platform with high scalability, reliability, and security. All recordings are encrypted securely in LiveOps data centers and can be retrieved for playback from a web browser at any time using advanced search capability such as call ID, agent ID, or other call context. Other key features include zero recording capacity limitations; in-browser playback of the screen recording and audio call; on-demand scalability that captures as many concurrent agent interactions as needed; recording transparency with seamless and uninterrupted agent desktop experience; fine-tuning configuration that is able to configure at the contact center, campaign and agent level; and compliance and fraud detection analysis.

Monet Record provides an easy and affordable web-based solution to record, archive and retrieve customer interactions that help contact centers improve customer service as well as ensure regulatory compliance. The system automatically captures and securely stores call transactions to protect data and comply with legal, security and company regulations and policies. Comprehensive search allows users to easily and quickly retrieve calls based on phone number, agent, tags, date, time and other user-defined parameters. A comprehensive security model ensures that only authorized users get access and are able to export calls using standard audio formats. Managers can easily identify patterns and analyze metrics at various levels for training and quality assurance. With fully integrated quality monitoring, Monet Quality contact centers can even go one step further and establish the foundation for a robust and effective quality management system based on their unique needs. Monet Record is fully integrated with Monet's Workforce Optimization suite and delivered as a cloud-based subscription service. Monet's cloud-based WFO platform efficiently and securely delivers web-based applications that are fast to set up, easy to learn, and highly scalable to grow with the customer's needs.

NICE
www.nice.com

NICE Real-Time Authentication significantly reduces average handle time and improves the customer experience by utilizing voice biometrics to authenticate customers in real time. Voice Biometrics uses more than 50 physical and behavioral factors, including pronunciation, emphasis, speech rate, accent, and unique physical traits of the vocal

tract, etc., to verify callers' claimed identity against the voiceprint stored on file for accurate and reliable speaker identification and verification. Seamless Enrollment is patent-pending technology that leverages NICE Interaction Recording to effortlessly create voiceprints for a large proportion of customers – those who call into your contact center annually – all with no customer effort or impact. Context, Telephony and Transaction Analytics can automatically analyze IVR events, caller geo-location, automatic number identification matching, and other data from agent desktops to fuel the authentication process. To close the loop, automatic decisioning draws on insights from analytics to verify identity and generate dynamic security questions as the call unfolds and cues agents through the customer authentication process, automatically notifying agents whether callers have been positively identified or guiding them with dynamic security questions.

OAISYS www.OAISYS.com



The OAISYS Talkument voice documentation and compliance management software utilizes patented OAISYS Portable Voice Document technology to create digital media documents from business telephone calls, making them available to organize, retrieve, play back, annotate, and share as needed. It provides company-wide control over compliance management, risk mitigation, dispute resolution, and other critical business concerns. OAISYS Tracer is the contact center interaction management application used in conjunction with the Talkument voice documentation software. Tracer also leverages OAISYS PVD technology paired with advanced contact center management features, including customizable employee performance evaluations, live

and automatic call monitoring, quality and resource utilization reporting, and synchronized desktop video recording capabilities. Engineered to support virtualized deployments and compatible with leading IP business telephone systems and SIP-based communications services, including those from Avaya, Mitel, ShoreTel and Toshiba Telecommunication Systems Division, OAISYS' Talkument and Tracer call recording solutions empower user organizations to improve customer service, mitigate risk, adhere to compliance regulations, reduce costs, increase revenue and drive overall profitability. Version 7.4 of the OAISYS software solutions, announced in October 2013, features enhanced integration capabilities with industry-leading business communications platforms from Avaya, Mitel and ShoreTel. Version 7.4 also includes new feature functionality to support cloud services.

Red Box Recorders www.redboxrecorders.com

Red Box Recorders is a global provider of voice and data recording solutions that solve often technical and complex business challenges in the most simple and effective manner possible. This ensures that financial services organizations are not only fully compliant, but can also become more competitive, productive and efficient. Red Box's software enables the capture, authentication, analysis and evaluation of multimedia communications from a wide range of data sources including fixed line and mobile calls, radio, screen, SMS, instant messaging and social media. Red Box Quantify Recording Suite is a user-friendly and intuitive voice and data recording software solution that is suitable for companies and organizations of all sizes. It can be tailored to meet precise customer requirements with a wide range of functionality including quality management, PCI compliance, call management and billing, event reconstruction, and audio analytics.

SIP Print Inc. www.sipprint.com

SIP Print is a global leader in VoIP/SIP-based call recording for the SMB market that integrates with most IP/PBX systems. Our products, Express, SMB & SME, are globally known and provide the very best in pure VoIP call recording. From 15 to 500 users, SIP Print products can be used by any and all companies worldwide to protect and secure the integrity of those companies. SIP Print also released our new carrier grade solutions for the ITSP, hosted, SBC and WebRTC market. Our recently announced SIP-based call recording solutions for the SBC market have allowed those markets to have an affordable call recording solution.

Spoken Call Recorder provides end-to-end call recording in a cloud-based environment. Cloud-based recording solutions such as the Spoken Call Recorder offer distinct advantages over on-premises recording, including freedom from selective recording pitfalls, zero infrastructure investment, active-active configuration included in the core design, automatic SIP and TDM trunking support, zero licensing or list management, and cost efficiency with usage-based, per-minute pricing. Additionally, Spoken Call Recording operates independently of the ACD to enable cradle-to-grave capture including all IVR interactions, agent interactions, transfers, and even post-call surveys. To ensure security, all calls are encrypted using AES 256-bit encryption and are encrypted from the moment the interaction begins. For interactions requiring PCI compliance, capture restriction and secure masking of calls or call segments is available. As for call tracking and searching, each call is associated with a unique call identifier as well as related metadata, and all calls are accessible through a secure web interface, available 24/7. Advanced search elements enable the creation of complex queries to quickly and efficiently locate the desired calls. Media files are streamed for playback but are not downloaded without specific security permission. Spoken Call Recorder is license-free and offered on the cost-efficient, per-minute pricing model.

TantaComm's focus is on interaction recording and performance management solutions for contact centers of all sizes. Built to handle the extreme scope and scale of large, outsourced customer service organizations, TantaComm has implementations around the globe, servicing large scale operations well in excess of 10,000 seats. The ability to service these dynamic operations relies on TantaComm's open, modular and highly scalable infrastructure. With extremely diverse administrative capabilities, facilitating multitenant and detailed interaction recording rules, TantaComm's Capture Advanced Enterprise is built to excel in the most demanding environments. TantaComm has taken the most essential elements of Capture Advanced Enterprise and developed a powerful and compact solution, specifically designed for smaller operations. With Capture SMB, TantaComm offers complete solutions beginning as low as \$15,000 (inclusive of infrastructure, licensing, and implementation). Our industry experts can assist you by

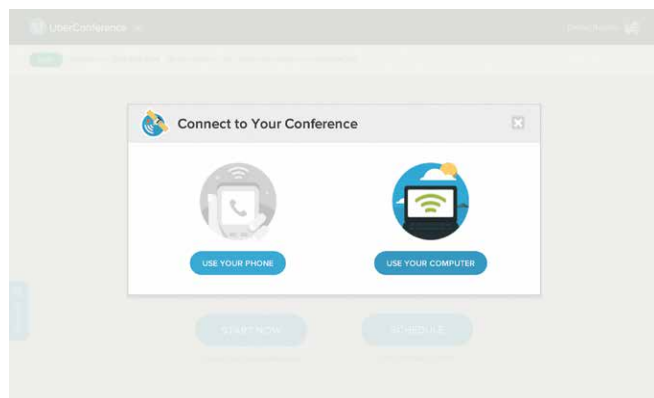
designing a solution that meets your specific needs at a cost-competitive price point. Having worked with clients across dozens of industries, TantaComm can address your must have list of features and functions. Whether you are a small contact center, a global customer service outsourcer, a product integrator, or a reseller, TantaComm has solutions to fit your needs.

[illegible]

Engage Record provides advanced WFO capabilities at an attractive price. It features auto or on-demand call recording using exclusive Conversation Save technology to capture the entire conversation back to call initiation. Engage Record's clear, intuitive Web 2.0 user interface allows rapid end user adoption. It readily adapts to almost any business need, with streamlined installation and training in typically one to two days, and very low operational and maintenance costs. From PCI DSS and HIPAA to Dodd-Frank, regulated industries can rely on Engage Record to meet their requirements for regulatory program compliance. Its DOD-grade security capabilities include end-to-end AES 256-bit encryption, secured multi-tenant/department partitioning, watermarking, and SSL/HTTP web access, ensuring rock-solid security and data integrity. An included SDK lets Engage integrate with third-party CRM and other back office solutions. Supporting multiple voice technologies and PBX platforms on the same server, Engage is scalable, with up to 1,000 call recording channels per server. Efficient bandwidth usage, storage area network support, and convenient web-based centralized management accommodate system growth. Clustering and centralized archive support simplifies implementing resilient systems. Engage Record is available for SMB, large customized

enterprise deployments, and cloud-based environments with perpetual or subscription purchase options.

UberConference www.uberconference.com



The conference call has just ended, and you all accomplished a lot. But exactly what was said? Remembering that is not a problem with UberConference. Call recording is an integral feature of UberConference's teleconferencing service. When you set up your conference call, all you have to do is click on the Record button in the lower right corner of the call setup screen, and that's it. Your conference call is then recorded and saved in .mp3 format for you to use for future reference. How accessible is this recording? You'll be able to grab it from the Past Conferences section of your account, as well as in the Call Summary e-mail that is sent to all callers after the call. With the call recording feature, the problem of remembering what everyone said – and agreed to do – is now solved because a permanent reference of the actual call exists.

Verint Systems Inc. www.verint.com

Verint Impact 360 Recording is an enterprise recording solution designed to meet the needs of large, multi-site, virtual, and outsourced contact centers. This software-based recorder provides full-time recording and compliance recording to help larger contact centers increase operational effectiveness, reduce liability, comply with the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard and other industry standards, and expedite dispute resolution. Verint's call recording solutions provide synchronized voice/data recording and real-time monitoring across traditional TDM, IP and mixed telephony environments. In addition to recording conversations between customers and agents, Impact 360 Recording can also capture the corresponding activities taking place at the agent desktop, such as keystrokes, data entry, screen navigation

and after-call wrap-up. The solution immediately works with most major telephony environments and offers application programming interfaces to facilitate integration with proprietary systems. Because Impact 360 Recording can support many channels of IP voice and screen recording on a single server, it can help reduce the space, energy, and maintenance costs associated with traditional, multi-server recording systems. It provides a range of functionality that's offered in a flexible, service-oriented architecture, helping to reduce the cost of ownership.

Versadial Solutions www.versadial.com



The Versadial call recording solution offers enterprise features at a small business price. Available as a plug and play system or as a budget friendly call recording kit, Versadial recorders are compatible with most PBX systems, capable to record digital, analog or VoIP lines and devices. Expandable architecture allows systems to grow and change with your business for years to come. Included is a quality control module that allows managers to grade calls and share recordings among employees or outside personnel. For large-scale deployment, multiple recorders may be installed across a network and configured with centralized or distributed storage. Standard operations such as search/playback, reports, export, silencing, bookmarking, notes, flagging and live monitoring are just a few of the robust features included with each solution. Recreate incidents, improve customer satisfaction, conduct employee training, and reduce business liability with solutions from Versadial.

VirtualLogger LLC

www.virtuallogger.com

VirtualLogger offers PCI-compliant, cloud-based, pay-as-you-go call recording, screen capture, speech analytics, and quality monitoring. VirtualLogger records IP, TDM and POTS phones from more than 30 PBX brands, with or without on-premises equipment.

Unique features include Numerase, which deletes PCI-sensitive data; RecordingMagic, which cost-effectively records the smallest offices; VirtualSmartView, which captures screen images and screen analytics on any PC; AgentPrescience, to identify agents without CTI or mapping; and BackIP, a radical approach to IP recording that can achieve 99.999 percent reliability. IP recording is available using SPAN, network taps, SIPREC, SIP forking, and single step conferencing. PCI compliance features include 256-bit AES encryption and leading edge key management. Quality monitoring users can build and use agent evaluation forms using just a web browser. And the VirtualLogger QM application can be integrated into other web-based recording systems for customers using cloud-based IP PBX systems. Customers with older equipment can integrate their legacy call recording systems to minimize the cost of replacing recorders that work, but are too small or have limited features. Finally, VirtualLogger offers a powerful, easy-to-use API that provides for integration with other call center applications and provides many of its features separately to upgrade legacy recorders. **M**

Admin > View Scorecard - Call Scorecard

Name: Agent Performance

Description: This default Scorecard can be copied to a new Scorecard name and then edited to meet your company's needs.

☐ Allow 'auto-fail' ☐ Display agent name [Add Section](#)

Customer Welcome Section Score: 40 (0%)

[Add Question](#)

Did the customer indicate this was a repeat contact for any reason? -- select from below -- ☐ N/A 10

Was the customer allowed to fully voice his desire or concern? -- select from below -- ☐ N/A 10

Was the customer's desire/concern understood and acknowledged? -- select from below -- ☐ N/A 10

Did this interaction set the stage for a positive transaction? -- select from below -- ☐ N/A 10

Customer Handling Section Score: 50 (0%)

[Add Question](#)

Was the customer given as many options as possible? -- select from below -- ☐ N/A 10

Was the customer given the appropriate details/information to make a clear decision? -- select from below -- ☐ N/A 10

Did this process show our willingness to help? -- select from below -- ☐ N/A 10

Were other resources sought if the customer was not going to be satisfied with the outcome? -- select from below -- ☐ N/A 10

Was time (holds or length of call) a factor? -- select from below -- ☐ N/A 10

Training Assessment Section Score: 40 (0%)

[Add Question](#)

Was there a need or opportunity for customer handling training? -- select from below -- ☐ N/A 10

Was there a need or opportunity for policy and procedure training? -- select from below -- ☐ N/A 10

Was there a need or opportunity for tools or technology training? -- select from below -- ☐ N/A 10

Did our training provide the customer a commitment to serve? -- select from below -- ☐ N/A 10



Time to Talk VALUE.

- Premium interaction recording
- Sophisticated quality management
- Regulatory compliance including PCI
- Rapid implementation
- Ease of administration

All for significantly less than you're paying now.

Contact centers are making the switch away from over-priced, over-bundled solutions they're not fully utilizing. What is your alternative? Well, our customers love the innovative, easy-to-manage and flexible configuration of the TantaComm Capture platform.

TantaComm is a global innovator in customer interaction recording, compliance and quality monitoring solutions. For the past 20 years and counting, many of the world's largest BPOs and contact centers have relied on us to help them deliver great customer experiences.

You could be saving 20%-50%. Now that's value to talk about.

**Save
up to 50%**

www.tantacomm.com/value

1-800-444-8522 Press 1

 **TantaComm**
Compliance Recording • Quality Management

NEWS



Bitcoin Outfit Turns Up Call Center

Japan-based bitcoin exchange Mt. Gox has reportedly set up a call center to address customer inquiries related to its bankruptcy filing and loss of bitcoin value. Reports indicate the move appears as if it was prompted by regulators involved with the entity.

Mitel Buys OAISYS

OAISYS has been acquired by Mitel, expanding the latter company's play in the contact center space. The value of the deal was not disclosed. OAISYS provides integrated call recording and quality management solutions. "Contact centers

have become the front line for businesses looking to harness customer insight and intelligence to deliver competitive advantage and drive growth, and the acquisition of OAISYS is a logical next step in Mitel's strategy and solution to address that market demand," said Richard McBee, president and CEO at Mitel. "With OAISYS, Mitel partners and customers will have the critical capabilities they need to unlock, extract and leverage business data."

Self-Service Delivers Savings

The average cost of a telephony IVR self-service session is 98 cents, compared to \$7.76 for a live agent call, \$2.37 for an

agent-handled e-mail, and \$3.52 for a web chat session, according to new research from ContactBabel. The firm says that U.S. businesses could save almost \$15 billion annual as a result of automating their customer identification and security processes.

Mobile Customer Experience Falls Short

Consumers overwhelmingly agree that their customer service needs are not being met, especially within the mobile channel, according to a 2013 survey of 1,200 consumers by Contact Solutions. The company says there's a break in mobile brand experience when it comes to customer care.



The only industry event where CEM strategy meets customer operations!

- The latest thinking in CEM best practices for call centers
- Case histories of successful CEM implementations
- CEM/CRM technologies that boost agent productivity and the customer experience

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How to Make Your Post-Call Survey Results More Accurate

The post-call customer survey omits the most important question. I have home Internet service with Charter Communications. It is rated as one of the fastest ISPs in the U.S. Even so, I have relatively frequent service outages – around once a month.

When the service goes out, I always call the customer service center to let them know I noticed. After pushing past the automated attempts to deal with the call without a human, an agent answers quickly. My usual experience with Charter agents is good. They are courteous, helpful and, well trained. After each call I am routed to a customer satisfaction survey. This is good.

Unfortunately for Charter, this survey almost certainly yields misleading results, because it never asks if the issue was resolved. This may make sense from

Charter's point of view if it is using the results of the survey to rate the quality of its customer service. But customers aren't primarily interested in that. Their answers to the survey will reflect how they feel about the service (or lack thereof) they are paying for.

The first time through the survey, I answered all the questions with a 5 on a scale of 1-5 where 5 is excellent. The agent was courteous, knowledgeable, and well trained. But the agent was incapable of resolving my problem, which was a service outage. So I remained a dissatisfied customer. There

is no way to convey this to Charter in the survey. From the results of the survey, I look as happy as a clam. So if I am interested in letting the company know that it has a dissatisfied customer, my only recourse is to rate the customer service agent with ones instead of fives. Presumably plenty of people do that, yielding survey results that are misleading to Charter.

The way to fix this is obvious. Put yourself in the customer's shoes. Ask first the question that is most important to him or her: "Was your issue resolved?" Once they get that off their chest, they will be able to answer the questions that are of more interest to Charter, the ones concerning the quality of their call center training. **M**

Michael Stanford has been an entrepreneur and strategist in VoIP for more than a decade. (Visit his blog at www.wirevolution.com.)



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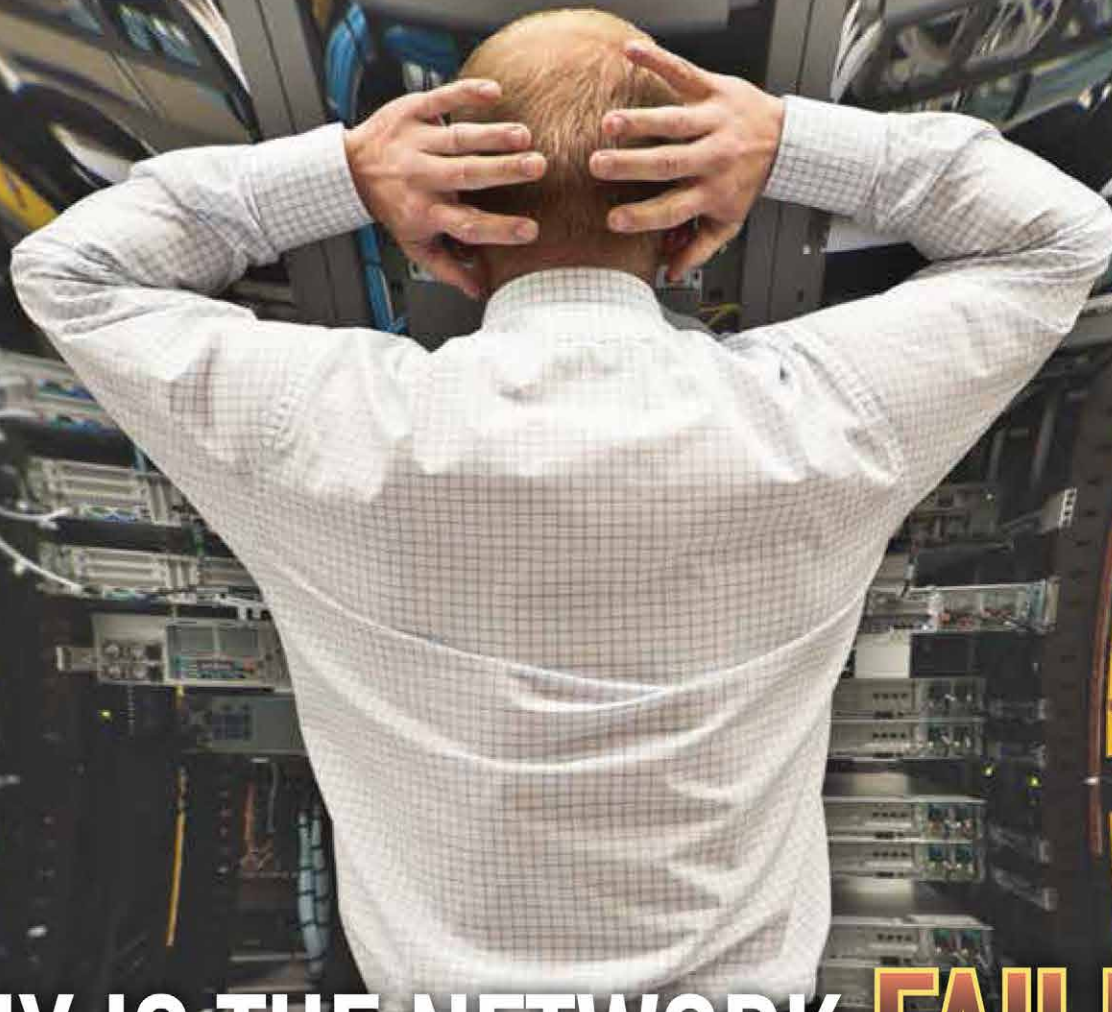
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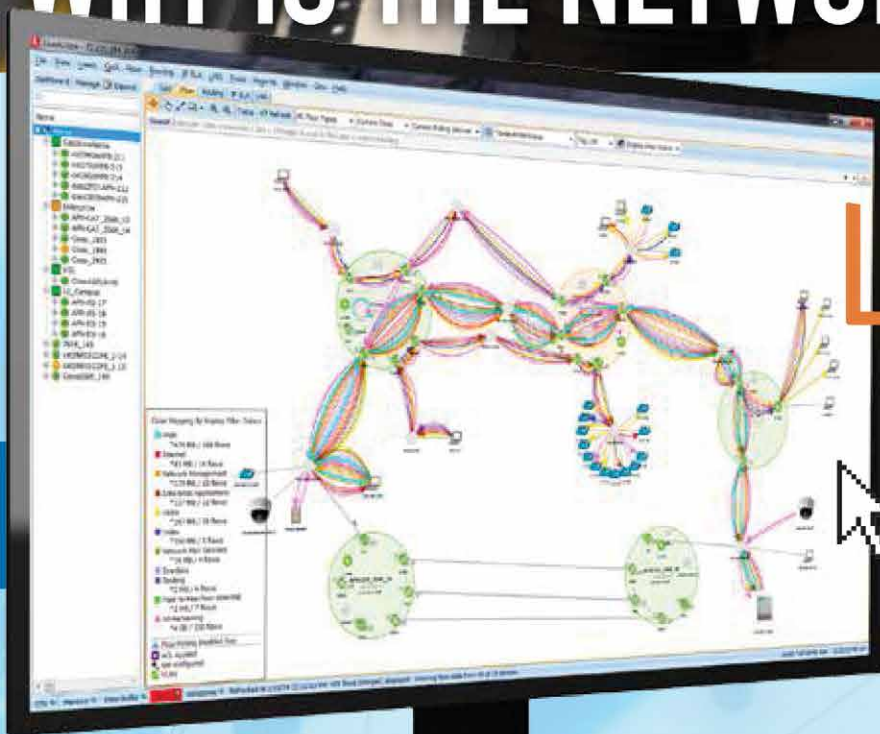
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Personalization

Big Data Analytics Help Identify, Recognize Personal Life Events

It's your birthday. Your child is graduating high school. Today was your first day at work. All of the above are just a few examples of momentous life events many of us experience, might like others to recognize, and could potentially trigger new purchase decisions.

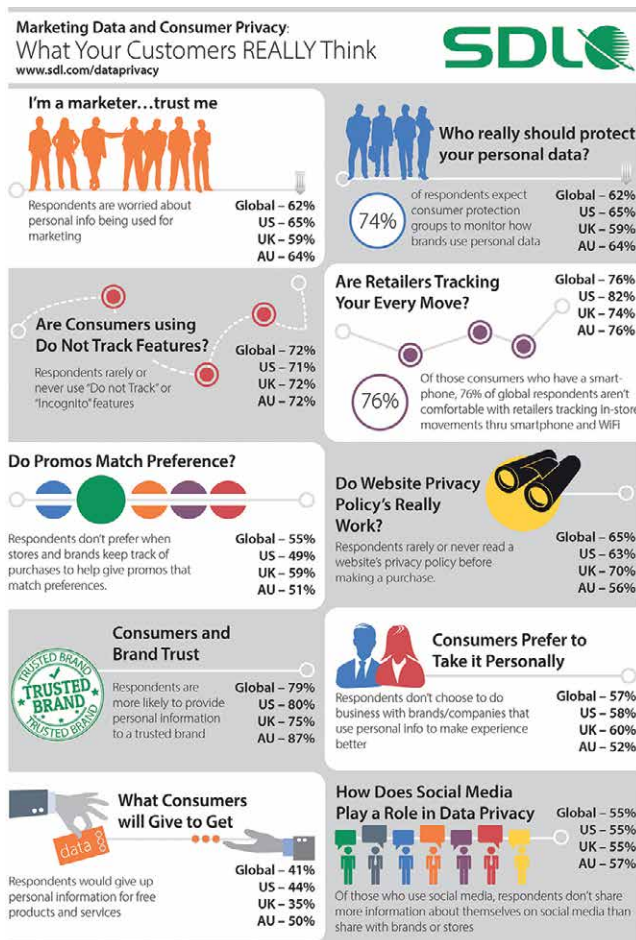
In the quest to deliver more personalized experiences and promotions to customers and prospects, tech companies are positioning businesses to identify and speak to people related to such important life events.

IBM is among the companies leading the charge, as reported by TMCnet contributor Michelle Amodio in a recent article. Big blue's new consulting practice, IBM Interactive Experience, is providing businesses with tools that can allow them, for example, to pick up on such simple queues as a Facebook profile status changes to recognize life events around which they can build personalized communications with the consumer.

"Our clients understand that the experience any individual has with their brands, products, services or strategy is the new point of entry to sustainable business relationships," said Bridget van Kralingen, senior vice president of IBM Global Business Services. "That experience will generate the most valuable information any enterprise can ever possess – information on individual preferences. So as our clients' front-office agendas drive the next era of business transformation, we're going to see traditional distinctions between strategy, analytic applications, and the design of the individual experience, disappear."

New this year from IBM to enable this kind of thing is Life Event Detection, which analyzes unstructured social media data to detect important events in customers' lives and then make correlations to a range of financial decisions; Behavioral Pricing, which uses historical transaction data to help retailers design personalized pricing strategies to particular consumers; and Psycholinguistic Analytics, which combines the psychology of language with social media data to understand individuals' personalities and identify their preferences for how they receive and consume information and offers.

Another company that is helping companies better connect with customers related to their life events is



Hallmark Business Connections, the B2B division of the greeting card company that is focused on customer and employee engagement.

Rhonda Basler, director of customer engagement at Hallmark Business Connections, tells CUSTOMER magazine the division she works for helps create "human moments" between companies and their customers. It does that by enabling organizations to connect with individuals by sending them prepackaged, but personalized, e-card greetings. Not only has Hallmark created mini apps to enable organizations, like one of the world's largest banks, send those e-cards, but it also provides a system through which organizations can set budgets and approvals for such greetings, which Hallmark typically charges for per send.

The most common greetings users of this service send are general thank you e-cards or apologies. But e-cards can also be built around birthdays, thanking veterans for their service, or congratulations or other messaging related to major life events.

The payoff for businesses is an increase (10 percent) in customer retention and higher job satisfaction (an increase of 18 percent) by customer-facing employees to which these customer e-cards are available, according to Hallmark surveys. That's because customers feel more cared for and employees feel more in control, Basler says. She adds that one employee of a bank that uses the Hallmark solution got a call from a person who lost his ATM card in a house fire, so that worker sent the caller a note and a \$50 gift card, which created good feeling on both ends.

Of course, most interactions employing the e-cards are personalized but much less personal in nature. Still, companies like Hallmark and IBM are starting to move the needle on efforts by companies that actually take into consideration what's happen with an individual customer in their communications.

To further the effort to make communications seem more personalized, Hallmark is also introducing a digital handwriting solution that businesses can leverage to make messages look as if they are hand written. Of course, there are plenty of fonts that have that appearance, but Basler explains that the proprietary Hallmark Digital Handwriting solution introduces imperfections to make it look like it came from the hand of a human. **M**

Making the Online Experience More Personal

And Marrying the Back Office Systems of Online and Real-World Environments

By Paula Bernier

Most people are so plugged in these days that it doesn't really make a lot of sense to draw clean lines between their online and in-store experiences, so businesses are making their online portals like real-life shops, and connecting the back end systems of both environments for a more consistent capabilities between the two.

Vee24, for example, allows brands to deliver live personalized service to their customers over the web with video, voice, text, and co-browsing.

"The idea is to allow brands to make their online shopping experience much more in line with their in-store experience and to give online only retailers the opportunity to offer that high touch experience through the web," said Jim Keller, CEO. "Many of these retailers have built their brand and customer loyalty on the great one-to-one retail practices they have developed over generations. Until recently, these companies have not been able to offer the same type of experience on their websites as they offer in store."

Vee24, which began in Europe and recently moved its headquarters to Boston, works with more than 60 brands, including Audi, Fox Sports (Europe), Land Rover, Lexus, Sky TV, and Vodafone. Land Rover, for example, allows car shoppers to configure cars with the real-time assistance of a personal Land Rover agent.

This kind of real-world type of online experience is a match for anything from a high end vehicle to a pair of loafers, according to the company.

"We are now working with three top footwear retailers," said Keller. "In that category, we are delivering four to five time increases in conversion with assisted sessions, more than 30 percent lift in average order value, and record customer satisfaction scores. These increases are above and beyond traditional self-help and live assistance tools."

Retailers can build their businesses even further as they begin to leverage big data and CRM across both their online and in-store environments, Keller added.

"We can now use big data and CRM to drive the strategy for personalized high-touch engagement, a level of customer experience that has historically been limited to in-store," he said. "Now, for example, with analytics tools like behavioral and audience targeting, we can offer the right experience to the right customer and leverage their historical buying behavior to offer them a truly personalized service wrapped in a rich multimedia experience."

Neil Hamilton, director of personalization sales at SmartFocus, agrees. He said leading U.K. butcher Donald Russell is a pioneer in delivering very personalized online experiences that mimic the real-world buying experience. It does so by remembering shoppers' preferences in terms of taste and pricing.

For those businesses with both online portals and bricks-and-mortar locations, Hamilton added, marrying the back office systems of the two can allow for more consistent services and the opportunity to leverage more available data to deliver a more personalized experience to customers wherever and however they interface with the company – or vice versa.

Customer Engagement's Impact on Brand Loyalty

Connecting with a brand is a lot like initiating a conversation with a stranger. Encountering an individual whose body language is stiff with tepid eye contact that lasts but a mere second or two is not a recipe for engagement. On the contrary, an individual who holds eye contact, smiles genuinely, and willfully initiates a conversation is much more likely to increase engagement. There is a colossal difference in the welcoming perception that is given.

Brands behave in the same way. Are brands fostering an environment that encourages customers to feel eager, willing, and readily able to engage? Customers communicate with brands in the same way they would communicate with other people, and it's up to the brand to open the door for engagement and create the type of environment that not only welcomes it but encourages it.

There are a number of reasons why customer engagement is critical to the bottom line and long-term success, and perhaps the most significant is that customers today simply have high demands. They've evolved, and as they've evolved their expectations of customer service have substantially increased. According to a report published by Nielsen, one out of three customers prefer to contact a brand through an alternative means of communication than traditional phone support. More and more customers are expecting brands to provide these alternative methods of contact, i.e. via social media.

Bain & Co. found that when companies engage and respond to customer service requests over social media, customers end up spending 20 percent to 40 percent more with the company. Multiple platforms on which to engage customers, however, can impact response time. In fact, Forrester reports that 45 percent of U.S. consumers will abandon an online transaction if their questions or concerns are not addressed quickly. Study after study have provided similar

data sets – trends are evolving to include multiple digital touch points and driving the evolution of customer care.

This evolution is being defined by the likes of social media, live chat, texting, and rapid e-mail response. This is the future of customer care.

The brands that are embracing this evolution are the brands coming out on top. What was once a one-way conversation with businesses broadcasting information to their customers is now a two-way conversation with the same businesses. Today's consumers demand interactions that involve brands that talk with their customers, solicit their thoughts, opinions, and feelings, and respond accordingly. Customers reward those brands that provide such experiences and personalize their brand.

The reward is perhaps the greatest gift of all – brand loyalty. Engagement has the fascinating ability to turn what might otherwise be a one-time purchase into a long-term customer and brand ambassador. The March 2010 issue of the Harvard Business Review showed that Facebook pages can increase customer loyalty by 36 percent, and customers that engage a brand via their Facebook page had an increase in emotional and psychological loyalty to that brand.

Real world examples of this are prevalent with 21st century customer engagement centers.

Take Raphael, for example. Raphael originally messaged a company through its Facebook page. He was extremely upset, but unbeknownst to him, he was mistaking one company for another. The company he messaged through Facebook had no account with him whatsoever, but was happy to help him however it could. Its customer care team, acting through social media, advised him of the best methods to find the correct company and offered him additional advice on his particular issue. It wished him luck and invited him to contact the company again if he ever needed help in the future. That same evening, Raphael placed an order with the company he mistakenly messaged. He then posted his thanks for outstanding customer service to its Facebook wall. **M**

Jason Levesque is the founder and CEO of Argo Marketing Group (www.argomarketinggroup.com).

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What Amazon and Amex Can Teach Us About Customer Service on Mobile

Amazon took a big gamble and during last year's holiday season the bet paid off. Mayday calls were answered by reps in just 9 seconds on average – delighting customers and driving loyalty. The solution was a clear win-win for all involved, and Amazon proved that the model worked.

American Express took notice. On Feb. 10, it quietly released a video customer service feature on its iPad app. This move makes perfect sense for Amex on a few levels. First, it's a brand enhancer. The foundation of Amex's brand promise is to deliver great customer experiences, and it is constantly raising the bar to enhance cardholder benefits to stay competitive in a crowded and noisy market. And second, iPad demographics generally overlap with Amex users. Amex cardholders are relatively high net worth and are more likely to have the most recent iPad, making video delivery of customer service possible. It's important to deliver this service on a high-end device so that the experience is optimal.

Both Amazon and Amex are signaling the future of how companies will deliver customer service on mobile. Although few organizations have integrated customer service into their apps, this will certainly become the norm within a few years. The organizations that are interested in experimenting with this feature should keep the following things in mind.

Mobile Can Help Deliver a More Relevant Customer Experience

If the mobile device is GPS-enabled and connected to the Internet, a customer service agent can immediately know much more about the consumer to deliver better value.

Assuming that the consumer has allowed this information to be shared, the brand can understand where consumers are, what they are doing, and when they are doing it. And, if a customer is logged in, then they also know

all of a consumer's account information. All of these things together provide a powerful context for a successful customer interaction.

One-Way Communication is the Key

It's important to understand that this is not about videoconferencing with customers, which can open up a huge can of legal and privacy worms.

This is about one-way communication, using WebRTC technology, where a consumer can see and hear a customer service agent, and the agent can take control of the mobile screen to help troubleshoot an issue or show a consumer how to do something.

Video Humanizes the Interaction and Inspires Loyalty

Consumers want to be heard and understood. By introducing video, consumers have a real human to help them, and the experience immediately feels more personal and authentic. It lowers frustration levels, as it's less likely that consumers will vent if they see the person that they are talking to. It also forges a stronger connection to the brand. On a live video stream, customer service agents are transformed into brand ambassadors who become custodians and representatives of the brand.

We are at the very beginning of this technology wave, and it's inspiring to witness organizations like Amazon and Amex demonstrate what's possible and where the industry is headed. But the real underlying lesson behind these moves is that delivering customer service on mobile devices will soon become an imperative and an important point of differentiation. Although most companies aren't ready to take the leap into video, all businesses with mobile strategies should consider incorporating live chat into their apps. With the overwhelming adoption of smartphones and tablets, the organizations that deliver great customer experiences on mobile devices will drive customer service efficiencies and – more importantly – win the hearts and minds of consumers. **M**

Keith Pearce is vice president of corporate communications at Genesys (www.genesys.com).

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Earning Trust with Chat 2.0

You may not think of live chat on your website in terms of social media, but as consumer expectations evolve, a shift in that mindset becomes necessary. Every interaction you have with prospects and customers, especially “live” ones, affects their perception of you and creates an opportunity to build trust and make a good impression from the get-go. After all, your website is a key transaction point. What better arena to use to foster trust? Starting with your website means starting by engaging with people who already express a strong interest in your products or services.

Unfortunately, live chat innovation has stagnated, resulting in the same old text-based, wait-your-turn-in-line model that makes consumers loathe call centers. Chat reps are often low-paid employees or even outsourced help who have little actual product knowledge aside from the pre-scripted answers they’ve been given – and that’s if you’re lucky enough to have an actual person on the other end.

Such poor service interaction leaves a bad impression on prospects. If they don’t get the information they’re looking for from the chat system, they’re likely to hit the road. The proof is in the pudding: A RightNow Customer Experience Impact Report found that 89 percent of consumers have stopped doing business with a company after experiencing poor customer service.

The fact is, current chat models aren’t working. Customers want real live engagement with actual people who can answer their specific questions and don’t send them to other sources to find answers. The next evolution in live chat – we’ll call it live chat 2.0 – involves an integration with your brand’s overall user experience and a back-to-basics focus on good, old-fashioned customer service. Here’s how to do it.

Earn back the trust.

Companies have really mucked things up when it comes to customer service, and consumers have learned not to expect a whole lot. Echo Research found that nearly a third of consumers believe that businesses aren’t concerned about providing good customer service, with around the same number reporting that businesses failed to meet their expectations.

Be there when they need you.

You don’t have to offer 24/7 availability, but having a consistent schedule with clearly posted timeframes can go a long way. Your prospects want to chat, and being there for them creates a favorable impression: According to Forrester, 44 percent of online consumers say that having questions answered by a live person while in the middle of an online purchase is one of the most important features a website can offer.

Be real and authentic.

Chat 2.0 is all about putting a real human face and name to these crucial interactions. Knowing someone’s name, title, and even location can create a more personal connection at the outset. It lets prospects and customers know that this company has real people offering real answers, not just stock quotes.

And while it’s helpful to provide answer guidelines to those handling the chats, it’s just as important that these interactions tie in with your overall brand experience. Chat representatives should be warm, understanding, and patient. And above all, they should focus more on listening than talking.

Go above and beyond.

Whether someone has a good interaction with your brand or a bad one, they’re going to tell people about it. And those people are going to put a lot of stock into what’s said. A Nielsen study shows that a whopping 92 percent of people trust recommendations from people they know, far exceeding any other source. If you focus on giving each prospect an exceptional experience, they’ll let people know – and those people will likely come to you over your competitor when they’re ready to buy. **M**

Lief Larson is CEO of Workface Inc. (www.workface.com).

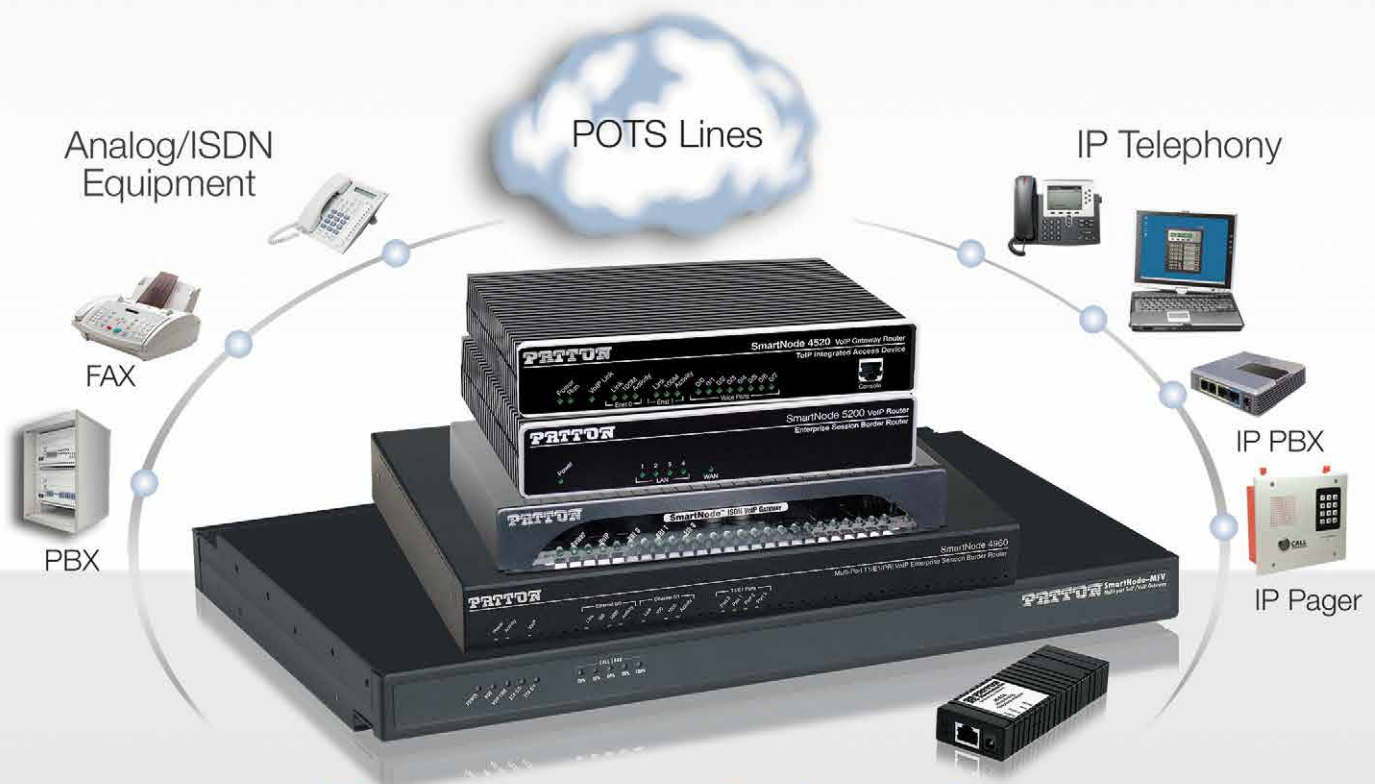
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Lead Scoring

Predictive Analytics Can Unearth Hot Leads and Lower Marketing Costs

Generating leads has traditionally involved cold calling, hitting up trade show booths, knocking on doors, and purchasing lists and targeting those on them via telemarketing and direct mail appeals. The advent of the website, with request for information and chat functionality, then created a new channel through which leads could come to businesses. Now big data and analytics are making lead generation and scoring a much more scientific process – and one which is expected to yield greater efficiencies and earning potential for businesses.

About 79 percent of marketers have not yet even established lead scoring, according to Marketing Sherpa.

Many of those that do lead scoring do so using subjective or otherwise uneven assessments. For example, some companies simply rely on sales people to make the call. Loren Padelford, executive vice president at Skura, said that leads that come in related to non-core products frequently get lower scores even if the lead itself is a hot one.

Employing predictive models, however, can enable a company to be more consistent in scoring based on a lead's true propensity to make a purchase. It does that by assigning points to people or companies based on whether they own your product, have been to your website, and/or follow you on Facebook, for example. Then, your company can decide to which groups of leads it wants to target particular e-mail campaign, for example.

"Eloqua has found that organizations that use lead scoring increase their close rates by 30 percent, increase their revenues by 18 percent, and revenue per deal increases by 17 percent," product marketing manager Jody Mooney wrote on the Oracle/eloqua blog. "These marketers are using buyers' online behavior and demographic data to determine if a lead is a good

fit before they pass it to sales. Improving lead quality and reducing some of the tension between sales and marketing, they are using technology to only pass the leads that are more likely to result in a closed opportunity over to sales."

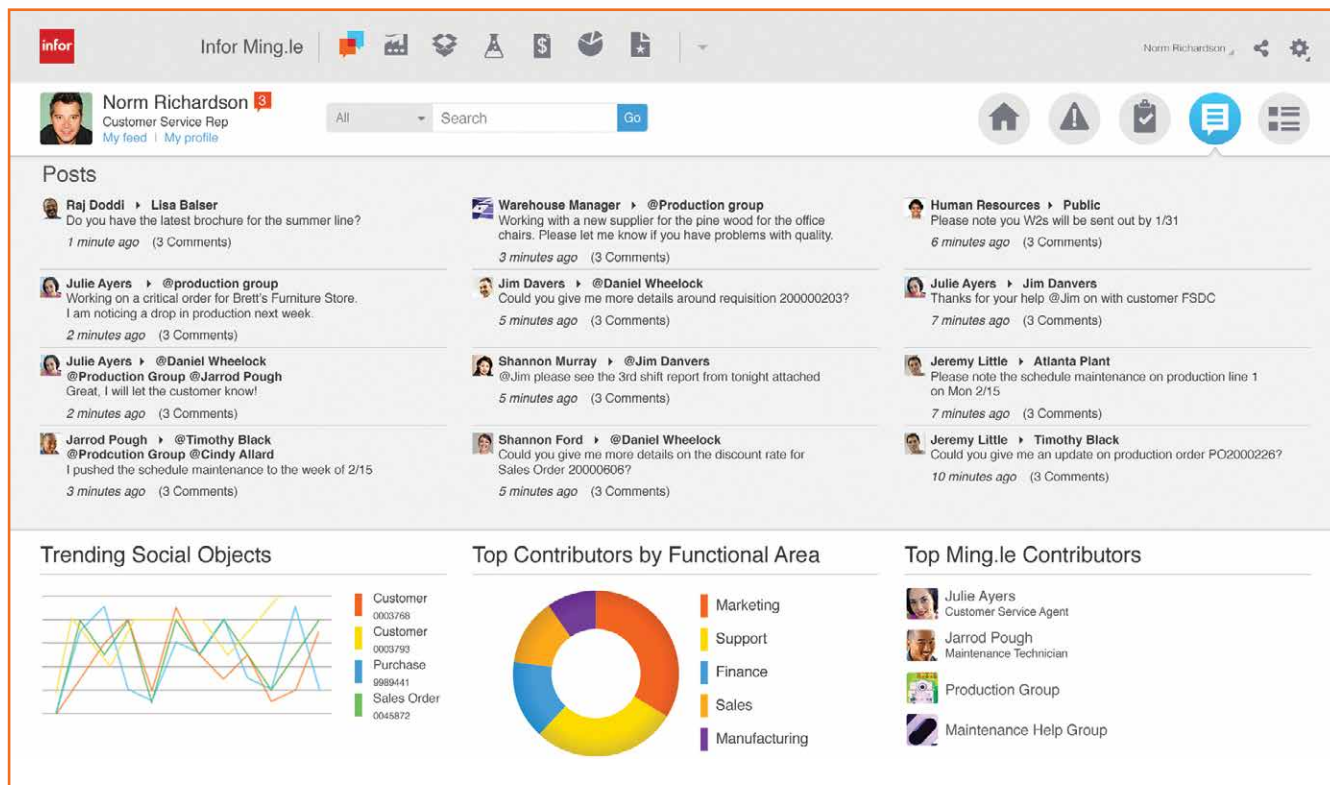
Infor, a software company with \$3 billion in annual revenues, offers tools and services that allow for predictive scoring, the ability to reach out to leads, and measurement of the success of such campaigns, said Bob Dunfee, director of CRM solutions and field CTO at the company.

Many customers think they need lead scoring, he added, but they don't know what they need or how to get there. One powerful tool that most companies are not leveraging but might want to consider, he says, is real-time scoring. Most companies today do batch scoring, which involves the generation of scored lists on a weekly or monthly basis. With real-time scoring, however, a company can see which customers are on its website at this very moment and can watch and score those individuals immediately, he said, adding it can also identify whether a visitor wrote about the experience elsewhere on the web. That enables the company to reach out to those people it deems as high-value prospects immediately, and also – if the website visitor posted a comment on a social network – to score and reach out to the online friends of those individuals.

This kind of capability requires the use of a real-time engine, added Dunfee. Infor Epiphany Interaction Advisor is such a solution, he said, adding that this self-learning offering is in use by around 175 companies today.

"Every one of our customers gets unbelievable results from IA," Dunfee said. "Microsoft is using IA in the e-mail channel and is getting... a 22-67 percent lift just in click through rates, and for e-mail that is just an astounding number."

The particular Infor product Microsoft leverages in this case is the Epiphany Email Advisor, which sits on top of Interaction Advisor to enable Microsoft to populate the e-mails it sends out with content that most closely matches what particular customers recently seemed to be looking for. Because the e-mails are targeted to the particular interests of those that receive them, he said, they are viewed as more relevant and are more likely to be opened and acted upon.



Other Infor customers of IA include AOL, which is also using Email Advisor and has as a result seen a 30 to 40 percent lift in acceptance rates, and Navy Federal Credit Union, which in the past three years has seen \$2.2 billion in incremental revenue due to new auto loans and mortgage loans resulting from its marketing efforts, said Dunfee.

So important are these predictive lead scoring solutions to businesses that many of the companies in this space are being snapped up by larger entities – with Oracle’s purchase of Eloqua as just one example. At the same time, new players are expanding into the leading scoring marketplace.

For example, Tony Sidor told CUSTOMER magazine that BPO and call center company Alorica is developing a lead scoring solution that leverages predictive analytics. Sidor, Alorica’s senior vice president of business development, views lead scoring as doing an analytical assessment of current profitable customers, and well as prospects, and scoring them based on their likelihood of becoming a client. But whether you’re talking about Alorica’s customer service and support, win-back and retention efforts, or BPO, the company is aggressively building data marts for its customers and then doing predictive analytics to identify and reach out to those segments via any mediums that make sense, he said.

Alorica already offers a lead scoring solution aimed at the health insurance sector. And when CUSTOMER interviewed Sidor in late February, Alorica was preparing to launch a sales product for lead surveying and scoring, which it built in collaboration with a partner. Sidor added that the company is also considering an acquisition in this space.

Everybody is frustrated with the traditional practice of lead generation by buying lists, Sidor said, so a lot of boutique lead scoring companies have popped up, and the smart BPOs are partnering with them to make lead acquisition and scoring less frustrating and more profitable for businesses. This is part of a larger move into analytics, not just for lead scoring but also to upsell customers. It also goes hand-in-hand with the new multichannel way of doing business, he added, noting that businesses can’t afford to reach everyone by phone, so they need to figure who it makes sense to reach out to via phone and who to contact via other methods.

In the end, Sidor said, it’s also about moving to a more rifle-type approach to marketing and sales as opposed to the more traditional shotgun approach – and that means reduced costs and more top-line revenue growth. **M**



Virtual Agents

Bringing Benefits Home with the New Cloud-based Contact Center

Employing work-at-home agents can help companies build more successful customer care and outreach programs by enabling them to call on a larger workforce, pair callers with certain affinities with like-minded agents, and lower their costs in the process. And new cloud-based contact center solutions are facilitating all of the above.

As noted in inContact's Feb. 24 blog: "The skills and motivation and productivity of at-home agents are often unmatched. And on the company side, having these flexible, skilled remote agents enhances the customer experience and reduces operating costs (estimated at as much as \$25,000 per at-home agent, as compared to their premise-based counterparts), both of which drive dollars to the bottom line."

Organizations contemplating the use of at-home agents may be concerned with how to manage hiring, quality management, and workforce management relative to this new, remote workforce, inContact adds, but they needn't be if they have the right tools at hand.

"The at-home model gives companies a much wider candidate pool from which to hire, since location is no longer an issue," blogs Lynn Weil, manager of field marketing at inContact. "Turnover is reduced, too: When agents move or their circumstances change, they can be automatically retained on staff."

Quality management is also no barrier to at-home agent adoption, she says.

"At-home agents are proving to be game-changers for contact center capability and responsiveness and the customer experience," she writes. "Sophisticated cloud solutions make hiring, integrating, managing and monitoring at-home agents a breeze."

The same can be said for WFM related to remote agents.

"The use of at-home agents requires no installation of hardware," she says. "Instead, a variety of cloud solutions, tools and techniques make tasks like scheduling, monitoring and communicating seamless and virtually identical to those in a brick-and-mortar setting. Even training is easily accomplished for at-home agents, with tools such as webinars effective alternatives to in-house classes."

The more expansive workforce that instituting an at-home agent program ushers in opens the door for companies to hire people whose expertise or interests dovetail with the interests of companies and the individuals reached by their call centers, adds Felix Serrano, senior vice president and general manager at Sitel. For example, he says, a beverage retailer could ask a partner like Sitel to recruit contact center agents with a high level of brand affinity for its coffee and other beverages. When Sitel has implemented this kind of "human to human interaction," as Serrano calls it, Net Promoter Scores went way up and complaints went way down.

This kind of thing clearly speaks to the new focus many companies have on customer experience and taking service to the next level.

When Sitel has implemented this kind of "human to human interaction," as Serrano calls it, Net Promoter Scores went way up and complaints went way down.

Raj Sharma, president and CEO at 3CLogic, adds that a subtrend on this front is to use a contact center model of what he refers to as fronters and closers. Fronters are agents on the front lines who can address more basic customer issues and might have a higher-level view of the organization and the solutions it offers. Because these individuals are not as experienced, and may be working in other countries, companies may want to consider using avatars for ease of communication and to allow these agents to get assistance from their managers without letting callers know, he says. Closers, meanwhile, are more skilled agents, and may be either on site or working remotely, he says. The fact that cloud-based contact center solutions can now call on agents located virtually anywhere means that more of these experts are now available to them. **M**

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Using Big Data for More Effective Call Center Hiring, Other Improvement

Your frontline agents are the face and voice of your call center. They are the most direct point of contact that you have with your customers. A positive experience can leave a lasting impression, but a negative one can have just the opposite effect. In fact, one study by Accenture found that two out of three customers switched due to poor customer service.

The upshot of this insight, however, is that there is some opportunity here. Large companies can achieve big gains by improving that experience. In the same study, Accenture identified one North American telecommunications provider that boosted incremental margin by \$1 million a month as a result of a 10 basis point improvement (e.g., moving from 0.5 percent to 0.4 percent) in its customer churn rate.

It is for this reason that many of the largest call centers are using big data to optimize their workforce and create a better customer experience. They do this by leveraging workforce and performance data from a variety of different sources to make better decisions about how to manage their talent through all stages of the employee lifecycle: Which job applicants will provide the best customer experience? What sort of training teaches them most effectively how to handle customer problems? How much overtime yields the best customer satisfaction scores? Data can provide more informed, predictive answers to all of these questions and can help you achieve the best possible outcomes.

Consider the hiring process. Traditionally, these decisions were made by hiring managers on the basis of intuition. However, research conducted by Evolv, done in conjunction with academic partners such as Yale School of Management, found that traditional indicators of success such as previous work experience were not nearly as predictive of good customer experience as an employee's personality traits. Some of these traits include the extent to which someone has a strong service orientation, how relatively conscientious a person is, and attributes that suggest an individual is honest. How do you find these people?

By measuring these traits in a systematic way at the point of application and then tying them to customer experience metrics to determine what types of applicants will provide the best possible customer satisfaction.

Let's consider the real-life example of one call center – a BPO for a large telecommunications company – that was struggling with its customer service scores. Agents were not providing the level of service expected by the end client, and the BPO was being hit by financial penalties. It realized that it wasn't hiring the right talent to hit those customer experience metrics, so it put in place a data-driven hiring tool that assessed all applicants and assigned them a score based on their responses, putting them into three categories: green (optimal employee), yellow (qualified, but may need additional training) and red (probably not ideal for the role). What it found was that the green applicants reached proficiency 18 days earlier than its historical hires. By focusing its hiring on the greens, it was able to achieve an aggregate of 1.5 percent improvement in customer satisfaction scores and eventually became the top-ranked BPO within that telecom company's entire network.

Although this one example focuses on hiring, it's important to realize is that call centers are using big data to generate insight throughout all stages of the employee lifecycle. They're learning more about how to train their frontline representatives and uncovering who should supervise them, as well as how and who to promote or separate among their employee population. By injecting big data techniques and methodologies into talent management processes that were previously fraught with human error, they're able to continually optimize the workforce and provide a better customer experience than ever before. The result is a more engaged and, ultimately, a more loyal customer base.

It is because of success stories like this one that these approaches are being rapidly adopted across the call center space and are increasingly becoming the rule rather than the exception. Much like the classic Moneyball example, it starts with just one visionary organization and gradually reaches a tipping point when everyone adopts. Eventually, no one will rely on the old approach to talent evaluation and management. Call centers can lead that transformation. **M**

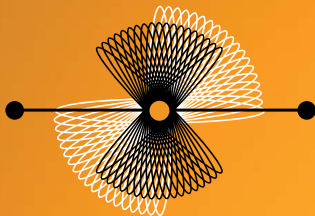
Michael Housman is vice president of workforce analytics at Evolv (www.evolv.net).

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TMC Announces Winners of Top 50 Teleservices Agency Awards

At the start of the second quarter of each year since 1986, TMC has delivered its Top 50 Teleservices Agency Ranking lists. In this issue, we are pleased to present the 29th edition of this service, listing the top teleservices firms in the world.

Our rankings are derived from extensive detail gleaned from an exhaustive application process in which teleservices vendors quantify their service delivery in terms of minutes of usage in their various call center locations. Through more than a quarter century of consistency in processing and evaluating applications, the Top 50 ranking has become the benchmark for businesses seeking high-capacity teleservices agencies. While we recognize that volume isn't – and, indeed, shouldn't – be the sole criteria for selecting a vendor, we believe it is a criteria in many decision-making processes. In conjunction with our annual MVP Quality awards (published in the March issue), CUSTOMER magazine provides two significant resources as businesses begin their quest for an outsourcing provider.

Ranking Criteria

Because the primary factor in our rankings is agency size, based on annual call volume, we have always relied on measurable, third-party-verifiable data to determine our agency rankings. Specifically, agencies are ranked based on the number of minutes each was billed by each of its phone companies for telephone services for the previous 12 months.

Qualification

Qualifying teleservices agencies in this year's Top 50 were required to submit responses to a detailed questionnaire, indicating the nature of their operations and listing the number of billable minutes for the 12-month period. Verification, in the form of the signature of each agency's president/CEO, was required, in addition to submitting a letter of verification from each of the telephone service providers used, certifying the number of minutes for which the providers billed the agencies during the evaluation period.



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If a contact center executive could have anything, it would be certainty... of contact demand, resource availability, operational efficiency, and, most importantly, of agent performance and customer experience delivery. Certainty in the complex environs of a contact center operation, however, is wishful thinking.

Mathematical models provide the next best thing to certainty. They alert, evaluate operational risk, and propose business and resourcing solutions. And now, the best of these models also determine expected experience delivery.

Enter customer experience metrics

The nature of customer experience metrics implies that they can be captured in a contact center plan as a time-series metric. Such metrics exhibit seasonality. This further implies they can be forecasted using the same sorts of methodologies that the best planners use to forecast call volumes and sick time. For instance, analysts forecasting metrics that exhibit a time-series trend might utilize exponential smoothing or regression models. If the metric displays seasonality, it might make sense for the analyst to use methods like Holt-Winters.

The better news is that these custom metrics for experience delivery can be modeled, predicted, and used in the normal course of strategic planning. For each resource plan, these metrics can determine the expected week over week service level, abandon rate, occupancy, cost, revenue, and average speed of answer. They can also determine customer service metrics like Net Promoter Score or agent quality score. Therefore, there's no reason that expected customer experience isn't part of the regular capacity plan, forecasted along with all other service metrics.

Technologies enable great decision-making

Simulation and mathematical modeling systems — a.k.a. strategic planning systems — automatically develop forecasts and resource plans for multichannel and multi-skill contact center operations. Strategic planning models such as those used in *Interaction Decisions™* from Interactive Intelligence have some terrific advantages over homegrown spreadsheets.

First, strategic planning models work in two directions. They evaluate for any week over week scenario the service, revenues, costs, and customer experience scores expected under any planning scenario. In the other direction, they determine the least cost staff plan required to hit the service goals associated with any scenario.

Second, they are proven accurate. The best planning systems include a validation step to prove that, for each of the contact types and contact centers in a network, the model is accurate when compared to real contact center data. This is not easy, since every contact center and contact type is truly different. The models must be smart enough to consider these differences and be recalibrated as the operation changes.

Third, systems for strategic planning must be fast. It helps no one if the models are too slow for decision makers. The best systems can be run interactively, requiring only minutes to evaluate any scenario. In all, speed, accuracy, and breadth of analytics enable a different sort of decision-making process.

In the past with a static, spreadsheet-based planning process, decision-making and analytics were only passing acquaintances. Analysts had little time available to answer executive what-ifs. Using advanced modeling, however, an analyst can now answer the executive's query in real-time, interactively.

It's a process that enables a different relationship with decision-making, where all major decisions are vetted and all repercussions of resource decisions are known, including the expected customer experience. For the contact center executive, strategic planning systems are the closest thing yet to a crystal ball.

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Erik Linask,
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Networks + Customers = Opportunity

The past year has seen the real emergence of the concept of customer experience, with most every business starting to use the term to explain its methods for interacting and engaging with customers. New concept? No. Rather, a new term for a new era of customer. It's been largely driven by the mobile trend, where multiple variables play into the user experience, including the wireless network infrastructure delivering services. This is where something unique happened during a series of meetings recently.

Typically, it would have seemed odd to have a conversation around customer experience with HP, Motorola Solutions, and Cisco. After all, they are in the network world, not customer facing – that's the domain of the CRM and contact center teams, right?

Alas, the tables have turned. The mobile explosion has delivered an opportunity for businesses to engage with their customers at the most appropriate times. We're already seeing an increase in mobile advertising, loyalty apps, mobile coupons, and other means of driving offers and information to customers.

But, most of those offers don't come when customers can actually use them. On the other hand, the retail market, for instance, represents a tremendous opportunity for engagement within physical stores, giving added value to the brick and mortar operations that some believe are becoming extinct.

Here's where the network vendors become interesting – the physical store mirrors the range of the WiFi network and, if one thing is certain, it's that customers are typically happy to jump off of cellular to WiFi networks whenever possible to save data usage on their plans. That puts them within the sphere of influence of the WiFi network operator (the business owner), so how can

retailers, hotels, resorts, metro areas, and other similar operations leverage their infrastructure investments to create an enhanced customer experience?

Location, location, location.

From the moment a customer enters a WiFi zone, he is identifiable as an anonymous guest. There's engagement opportunity number one, with the hope of enticing the customer to log onto the network, at which point, more specific information and offers can be provided. The connectivity can even be used to provide an in-store GPS system – Motorola Solutions, Cisco, and HP have all said they are close to delivering much more accurate location technology, as accurate as a few feet even.

With the enhanced location sensitivity and customer opt-in and loyalty program options, the opportunity to combine real-time location data and customer histories through back-end big data analytics to drive real-time insight is can bring about a new level of not only satisfaction, but a deeper understanding of customer trends for marketing, sales, and inventory initiatives.

Upon entering the network's range, an offer can be pushed out to log into the network as a guest or registered user (loyalty program member, registered hotel guest, etc.), with other relevant options, such as offers for assistance, directions, services, etc. This immediately engages the customer and builds a relationship with the brand. Once they've opted in, the possibilities are endless.

If customers are standing in front of a product for an extended period of time, an opportunity arises for providing

information about it or competitive products, or an offer for having an agent or on-site sales rep help answer any questions they might have. The action item might be a savings coupon for the customer that helps make his decision easier between two brands of breakfast cereal, or it might be calling a salesperson to help with questions about the LED TVs the customer is considering (or connecting with a customer service agent immediately).

If customers build buying patterns over time, it will soon be possible to identify items that may have inadvertently been missed, alerting them before they check out and leave the store. Or, it will be possible to use aggregate buying patterns to identify additional items that customers might need, such as rollers or paint brushes after picking up a gallon of paint at the hardware store – including providing mapped directions to the brushes.

These are only a few simple examples of what we can – and should – experience in the not-so-distant future, in our visits to grocery stores, amusement parks, hotels, sports venues, shopping malls, and nearly any other facility with a robust WiFi network – which is why these vendors are keen to drive an awareness of what can be possible with a properly deployed and managed network. 

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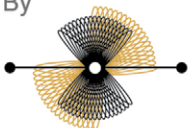
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