



March 16, 2011

Elevate Chat From OK To Outstanding By Reinventing The Contact Center Culture

Reinvent Your Call Center Culture To Create Amazing Customer Experiences

an introduction by Diane Clarkson

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Most chat experiences are fine. When well implemented, wait times are short and answers are quick and relevant. However, chat has an opportunity to go far beyond having a live person extract knowledge base content and deposit it into an instant message box — it can be an outstanding customer experience. When chat is a meaningful interaction, it can bolster brand and boost loyalty. eBusiness and channel strategy professionals must understand that the contact center's culture can have a profound impact on the quality of a chat interaction and work with the contact center to ensure its culture takes chat from OK to outstanding.

CHAT CENTER CULTURE CAN HAVE A PROFOUND IMPACT ON ITS SUCCESS

In the words of a chat representative at a major telecommunications company, “I’ve spent years having people yelling at me — chat is a nice change.” However, chat should not be the resting place for telephone-weary service representatives. eBusiness professionals are looking to chat to achieve multiple business goals including providing customer service, driving sales, and enhancing customer satisfaction. While chat is an online channel, the contact center providing the live help may or may not fall under the purview of eBusiness. Savvy eBusiness professionals will interact extensively with contact centers to ensure that their organizations:

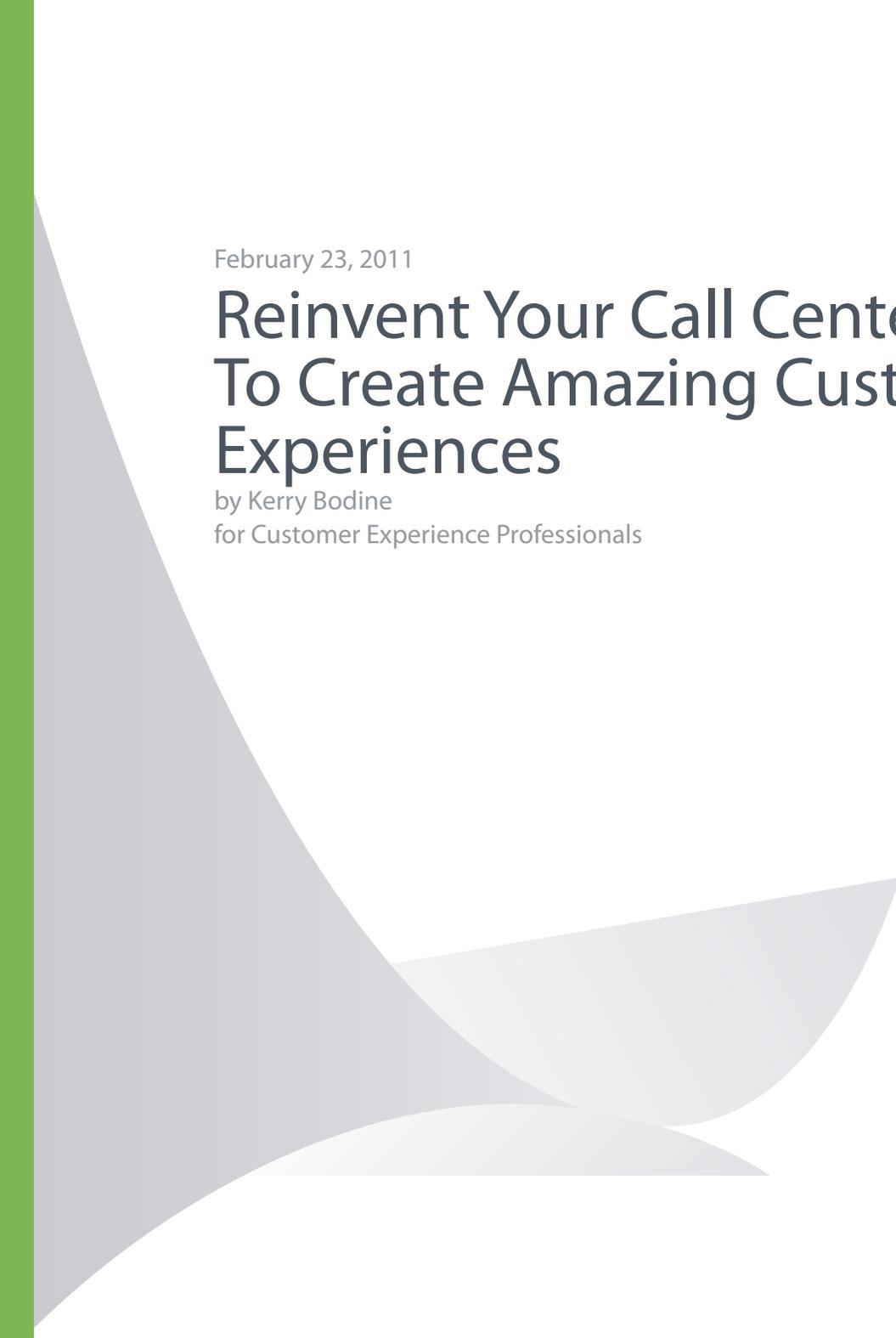
- **Leverage chat’s potential to be a highly personalized customer experience.** Unlike the telephone where contact center representatives may have limited insight into a caller’s identity and issue, chat pushes session data to the chat representative and allows the representative to see information ranging from that customer’s current online session to insight held in a CRM system such as a customer’s purchase history or overall value to the organization. As a result, chat representatives have an opportunity to offer a personalized experience.
- **Celebrate the right tone.** In a chat session, the majority of a conversation often includes responses pulled from a knowledge base limit. This limits the opportunity for unscripted and personal conversation, however, making it even more of a challenge to find a way to make an emotional connection that will communicate empathy, offer friendliness, and inspire confidence. Training, highlighting successes, and bringing talented chat reps to the forefront will go a long way toward helping chat become an efficient and yet personal channel.

- **Align feedback to the metrics that matter.** One of the benefits of chat is that it can reduce handle time compared with the telephone. Average chat length is typically between six and 15 minutes, varying depending on the complexity of the issue. While this metric is useful to the extent that it measures agent efficiency, it does not take into consideration parameters such as customer typing speed or customer eloquence in describing an issue. eBusiness professionals must be wary not to overemphasize time-based metrics. Customer exit surveys will provide insight that will encourage better customer experiences, particularly when additional questions are asked such as “Did the chat session increase your likelihood to purchase with us?” “Did the chat session increase the likelihood that you will recommend us?” or “Did this chat session give you a positive impression of our company?”

The following report provides detailed information about how to reinvent your contact center culture to create amazing customer experiences. eBusiness professionals can expand this insight to work with their contact centers to make chat an amazing online customer experience.

I encourage you to read the full report below.

Diane Clarkson, Analyst, eBusiness & Channel Strategy



February 23, 2011

Reinvent Your Call Center Culture To Create Amazing Customer Experiences

by Kerry Bodine
for Customer Experience Professionals



February 23, 2011

Reinvent Your Call Center Culture To Create Amazing Customer Experiences

Focus On Hiring, Training, Incentives, and Metrics

by **Kerry Bodine**

with Harley Manning, Art Schoeller, Kate Leggett, Elisabeth L. Bocal, and Allison Stone

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Call centers offer companies daily opportunities to create meaningful connections with customers. When this happens, businesses increase customer loyalty and generate incremental revenue. But customer experience professionals largely ignore call centers in favor of sexier digital touchpoints. And consumers have noticed — they're less satisfied with call centers than they are with websites and in-person interactions. Now companies face a major decision: continue to disappoint customers and agents by conducting business as usual or embark on a journey to drastically improve the customer experience. Customer experience professionals can help their firms down a better path by working with call center leaders. Together they must start by changing their hiring practices and end by overhauling their call center culture.

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Forrester interviewed 15 vendor and user companies, including American Express, Beyond Philosophy, Circles, Convergys, Esurance Insurance Services, Genesys Telecommunications Laboratories, Human Factors International, Lands' End, live|work, Porsche, Sitel, User Centric, User Interface Engineering, Verint Systems, and Zappos.com.

Related Research Documents

["How To Build A Customer-Centric Culture"](#)
November 19, 2010

["How American Express Empowers Call Center Employees To Deliver Great Customer Experience"](#)
September 3, 2010

["Lessons Learned From Three Award-Winning Voice Of The Customer Programs"](#)
August 12, 2010

CALL CENTER CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES COULD BE AMAZING — BUT THEY'RE NOT

Call centers sit on the frontline of customer experience where they provide sales, support, and customer service functions. They're often customers' first — and sometimes their only — human interaction with a company. And even though phoning an agent may not be as sexy as using an iPad or strolling the aisles of a boutique, a great call center experience has the ability to help firms:

- **Bolster brand image.** Call center agents spend all day, every day, building intimate one-on-one relationships with customers. Even with conservative estimates, it's easy to make the case that a large call center has customer influence on par with, if not greater than, that of mass advertising campaigns.¹ Zappos' chief executive officer, Tony Hsieh, agrees. He wrote in *Delivering Happiness*, "Our belief is that the telephone is one of the best branding devices out there."² eHarmony execs leverage the branding potential of their phone interactions by defining "Daily Must-Have" character traits for their agents — like "empathy," "heart," and "adaptability" — that guide conversations with customers.³
- **Garner customer loyalty.** In *Delivering Happiness*, Hsieh continues, "You have the customer's undivided attention for five to ten minutes, and if you get the interaction right, what we've found is that the customer remembers the experience for a very long time and tells his or her friends about it." Hsieh has the Net Promoter Scores to prove his point. Customers who connect with the Zappos call center give the company higher scores than those who shop online. And American Express customers who learn about their card benefits and features from phone agents show an average increase of more than 10% in "Recommend to a Friend" scores.
- **Boost revenue.** At Lands' End, call center execs understand that a great customer experience influences branding and customer loyalty — but they also track its impact on conversion rates and average order value. Customers often call the retailer because they need additional product information. When agents help customers feel more comfortable about a purchase decision, those customers are more likely to buy. Once they've built rapport, agents can share information about coordinating products that customers are more likely to find interesting. Such benefits aren't limited to companies that serve consumers. CDW, a business-to-business company, has a call center strategy that helped generate millions of dollars in incremental revenue in 2009 alone.⁴

Call Center Interactions Disappoint Customers And Fail Brands

Yes, the call center has great potential. But most companies don't take advantage of the opportunity. Forrester's data shows that:

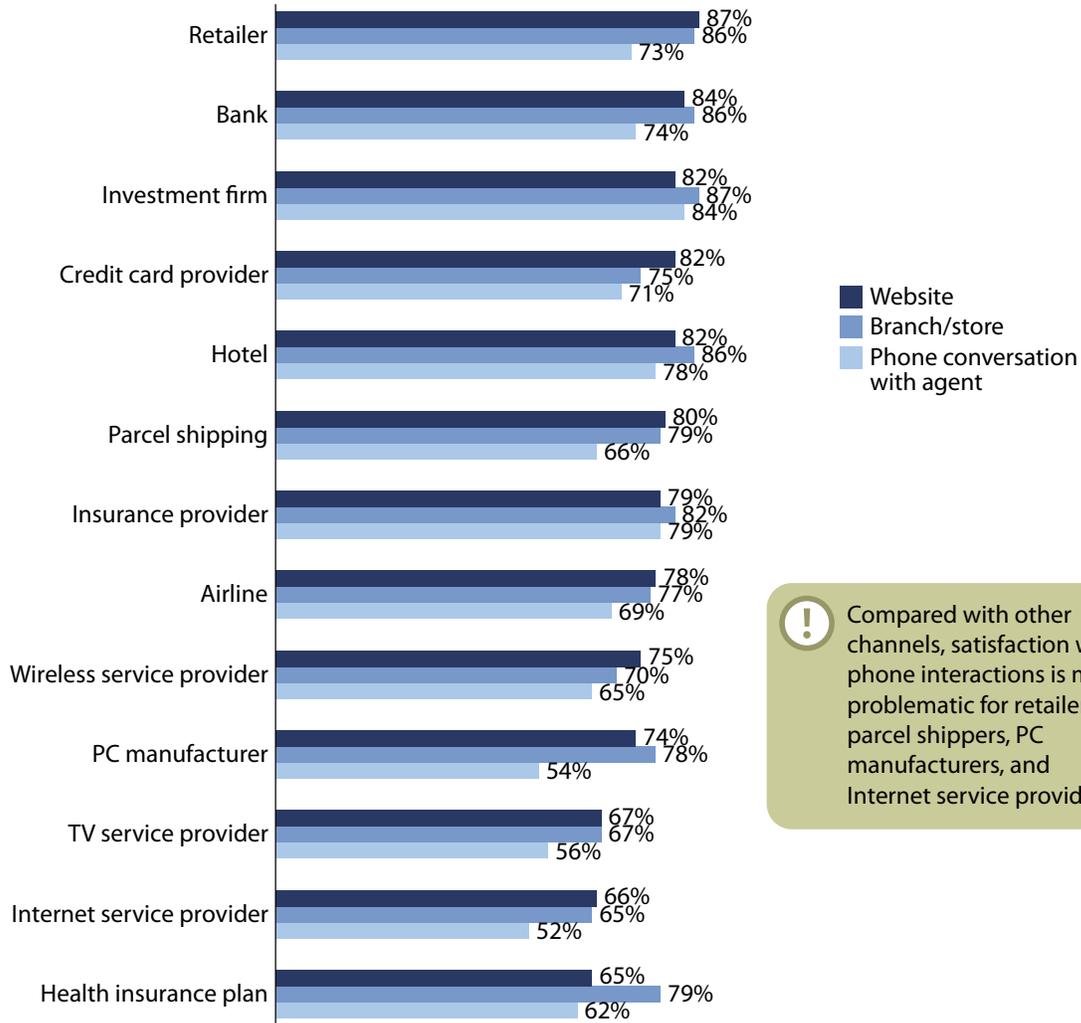
- **Customers report lackluster interactions with call center agents.** We asked consumers about how satisfied they were with their interactions with brands across 13 different industries. For all 13, satisfaction rates for phone interactions with call center agents were lower than those for

the branch or store, where interactions are presumably more rich and personal (see Figure 1). And with the exception of investment firms, phone interactions also fared worse than nameless, faceless website interactions. This problem was most pronounced for PC manufacturers, where store and website satisfaction rates outstripped that of phone interactions by 24 and 20 percentage points, respectively.

- **Younger consumers are the least enamored with phone interactions.** Across most industries, Seniors and Older Boomers had the highest satisfaction rates for phone conversations, while Gen X and Gen Y generally had the lowest. The difference of opinion between the older and younger consumers was striking in some industries. In the case of the airlines, the difference between Seniors and Gen X was nearly 30 percentage points. Even for Seniors' least favorite industry, TV service providers, the percentage of satisfied Senior consumers exceeded that of satisfied Gen X consumers by a 15-percentage-point margin.
- **Phone satisfaction rates have dropped for four years straight.** We've been tracking consumer satisfaction with phone conversations across multiple industries since 2007 and 2008. All but one industry saw their satisfaction rates sink during this time period (see Figure 2). Only investment firms bucked this trend, and even there, the story isn't a whole lot better: Satisfaction scores have been effectively flat since 2007.

Figure 1 Satisfaction Rates For Interactions With Call Center Agents Trail Those For Other Channels

Percentage of consumers who were satisfied with their most recent interactions with companies in each channel
(4 or 5 on a scale of 1 [not at all satisfied] to 5 [very satisfied])



! Compared with other channels, satisfaction with phone interactions is most problematic for retailers, parcel shippers, PC manufacturers, and Internet service providers.

Base: US consumers who have interacted with firms in these channels

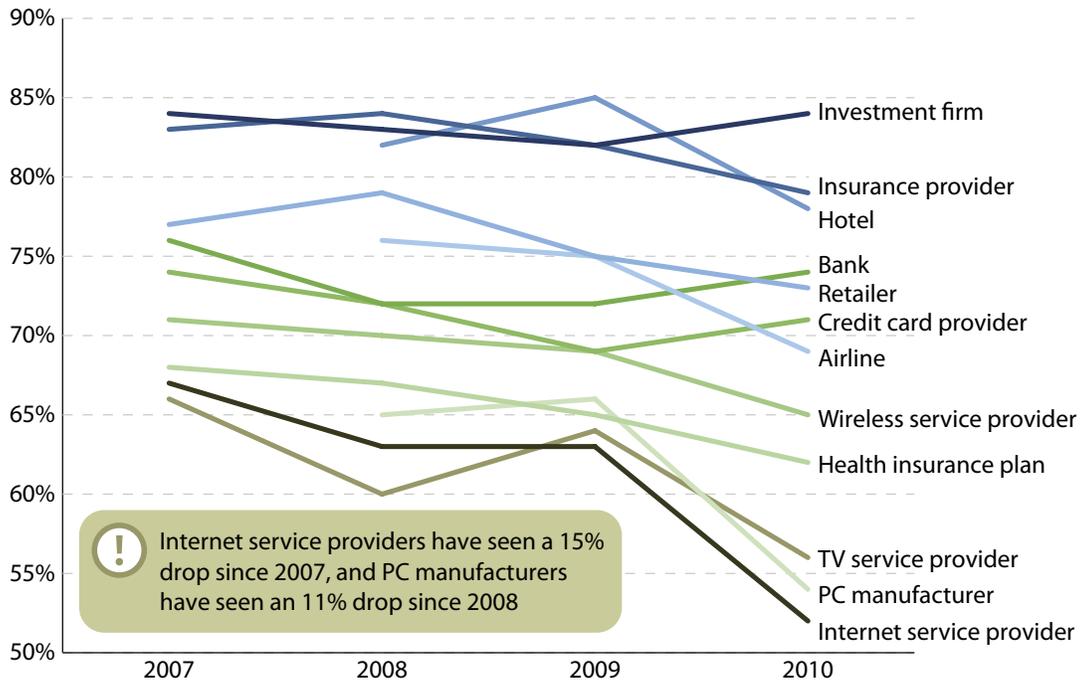
Source: North American Technographics® Customer Experience Online Survey, Q4 2010

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Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

Figure 2 Call Satisfaction Rates Have Dropped Over Time

Percentage of consumers who were satisfied with their most recent phone conversations with agents
(4 or 5 on a scale of 1 [not at all satisfied] to 5 [very satisfied])



Base: US consumers who have interacted with firms in these channels

Source: North American Technographics® Customer Experience Online Survey, Q4 2010, Q4 2009, Q4 2008, and Q3 2007

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Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

Companies Intentionally Ditch — Or Inadvertently Miss — The Path To Improvement

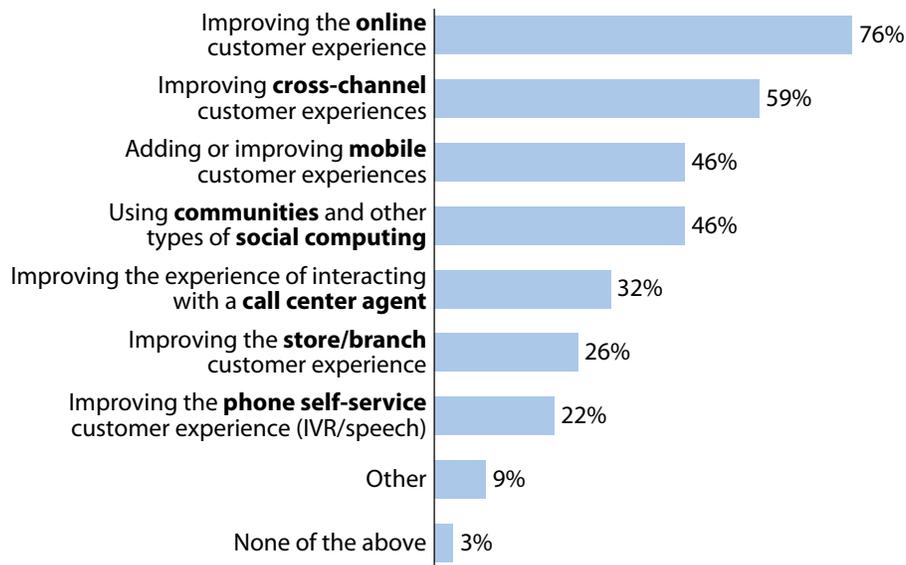
Consumer satisfaction with phone conversations is low — and getting worse by the year. So why haven't firms been able to make improvements? Our research shows that companies:

- **Ignore call center customer experience in favor of sexier channels.** Customer experience professionals are partly to blame for this situation. We asked our Customer Experience Peer Research Panel about their major objectives for 2011 and found that only 32% say that they'll focus on improving interactions with call center agents (see Figure 3). Contrast that with the whopping 76% of respondents who say that they'll be improving the online customer experience. Meanwhile, 46% say that they'll be focusing on mobile interactions and social computing — gravitating toward the latest hot topics while practicing benign neglect for one of their oldest and most impactful channels.

- **Invest millions in misguided technology improvements.** When companies do invest in the call center, it's often in the form of technology improvements. Multiple consultants told us about receiving requests for proposals to fix or replace complex call center technology, only to go on-site and discover a relatively simple workflow or training solution for a fraction of the cost. And while recent tech advancements allow call center management to better understand customer sentiment, track customer activity across multiple channels, and proactively contact customers, these technologies simply do not make or break the conversation that takes place between an agent and a caller. As the vice president of customer service at Esurance told us, "Technology is an enabler, but you can provide a great customer experience without great technology."
- **Treat call center employees like slave labor.** Some large call centers hold agents accountable for strict metrics like time to answer, average call handle time, talk time, idling time, nonproduction time, and adherence to script — just to name a few. Other call centers literally make agents raise their hands in order to use the bathroom or only permit them to display one photo on their desks. In return for adhering to these draconian practices, agents get paid low wages. Not surprisingly, companies that take this approach count employee tenure in months — not years — and see employees quit to go elsewhere for raises of less than \$1 per hour.

Figure 3 Call Centers Receive Less Attention Than Self-Service Channels

"Which of the following are major objectives of your customer experience program in 2011?"



Base: 118 customer experience professionals
(multiple responses accepted)

Source: Q4 2010 Global Customer Experience Peer Research Panel Survey

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Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

DEVELOP A CUSTOMER-CENTRIC CULTURE TO IMPROVE THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

To find out how customer experience professionals can help transform their call center customer experience from lackluster to amazing, we talked with the executives who run some of today's best call centers as well as call center technology vendors and design consultants. We asked this diverse group to name the factors that contribute most toward this transformation. Their answers all pointed to one thing: a major overhaul of the call center culture.⁵

For companies that have been ignoring their call center or find themselves mired in a factory mindset, a cultural shift will mean big changes. To start down this path, call center execs will need help developing new hiring and training practices and then revising internal incentives and metrics.

Hire For Passion And Cultural Fit

The companies we talked to emphasized one thing that contributes to a customer-centric call center culture more than anything else: the agents' passion for delivering outstanding customer service. To ensure that the agents can deliver a great customer experience, companies need to adjust their hiring practices and:

- **Seek out people who love working in customer service.** From retail and financial services to high-tech firms, top call center managers agree that technical knowledge and previous call center experience shouldn't be prerequisites for employment. In fact, some of the companies we spoke to specifically look for candidates who don't have call center jobs on their resumes in order to avoid undesirable habits and attitudes learned elsewhere. Instead, these hiring managers look for candidates who have worked for retail stores, ski lodges, cruise lines, supermarkets, and nursing homes — essentially any position with a service focus. Then they ask for examples of how candidates have handled tricky customer interactions — or about great service experiences they've had from the customer side.
- **Run candidates through a simulated call.** Candidates applying to Porsche's Customer Assistance Center in the UK get 10 minutes to read through a brief explaining that they'll play the role of an agent taking a complaint or request from a caller, played by a human resources rep. As the call unfolds, interviewers assess how well the candidate is able to listen to and empathize with the caller, pay attention to key details, manage the dialog, and think on his feet. Toward the end of the conversation, the "caller" ensures that some agreement is reached. Porsche then asks the candidate to compose a letter summarizing what was agreed upon, which enables the team to evaluate written communication skills.
- **Invite candidates to sit in the call center.** To gauge how well candidates will mesh with their existing call center culture, several of the call center execs we spoke to ask candidates to sit with working agents for at least 30 minutes. Then they observe how closely the candidates listen to the calls and how they interact with the team. Good candidates will be engaged and interested

in what's happening around them and will ask the agents questions like, "Do you like working here?" and "What are the customers like?" Of course, cultural fit is a two-way street — and this part of the interview also gives candidates a better understanding of their potential teammates and the work environment.

Train To Fine-Tune Conversation Skills

Agent training must of course include whatever industry-specific technical knowledge is required to answer callers' questions. But the companies we spoke to have begun to focus more of their training programs on tactics that help agents create a strong connection with customers over the course of a call. These conversation skills include:

- **How to create an emotional connection.** American Express used to allocate roughly 70% of its training time for industry- and company-specific technical skills and 30% for softer personal skills — but it's flipped that equation around. Today, 70% of agent training time focuses on skills such as actively listening to what the caller is saying and helping customers understand the value of their relationship with American Express. For example, agents are trained on how to assess the caller's mood — and not just to rely on the demographic information that's in the caller's customer profile. Another company we spoke with instructs agents to focus first on the caller's need and only verify the caller's identity when that need is well understood or a key piece of information is needed.
- **What to say and how to say it.** Scripted conversations immediately feel fake to callers — but agents still need some guidance on what to say. Esurance gathers agents into small group settings to role-play various situations, with one agent playing the customer and another playing the agent. With good humor, the agents find out how different conversations feel and suggest alternative language for each other. Zappos guides agents on what to say through one-on-one coaching sessions in which a supervisor and agent each take a call and then the two discuss what the agent did well and what could be improved next time around — without relying on grading or scorecards. Zappos also has a "Wow Library" of recorded calls, which agents can tap into at any time to listen for new ideas on how to open a call or explain a company policy.

Motivate With Meaningful Incentives

The cultural transformation doesn't end with hiring and training. Once the right agents are in place and understand how to create a connection with customers, they need continual encouragement to deliver great customer experiences. To this end, call center execs need to:

- **Give agents titles and perks that make them feel important.** Zappos' call center agents, who report into the company's customer loyalty department, each get their own desk to decorate any way they like. American Express refers to its agents as customer care professionals and provides each agent with personalized business cards. A large European insurance company changed

agents' titles from case managers to customer managers. Why do these things matter? They focus agents on their primary role — creating amazing customer experiences — and provide daily reinforcement of agents' value to the company.

- **Provide recognition and bonuses for excellent service.** Circles, a provider of virtual concierge services, has an array of programs that reinforce the importance of going the extra mile for callers. For example, its Top Dog award recognizes employees who help out with unbelievable requests. Recent winners include an agent who sent a caller night-vision goggles to help locate her lost cat — and another who helped a family find a place to stay after the family's home was destroyed by a natural disaster. In addition to awards, Circles agents can accumulate points based on customer satisfaction surveys and redeem them for prizes, including additional time off. American Express takes employee recognition to a completely different level by structuring bonus payouts, which have the potential to account for an incremental 25% to 35% of agents' base pay, around customer feedback.
- **Create management and frontline career progression plans.** Most call centers fill their management positions by promoting from within. To prepare team leads and senior agents looking to move up the ladder, Zappos created a leadership development program. Another call center exec brought in a professor from a nearby university to lead a series of classes on leadership, management, and coaching. However, many call center agents are happiest in frontline jobs that provide direct customer contact. To ensure that these agents also have continued career development opportunities, Zappos created optional three-month to six-month rotations in areas like online chat, email, and Twitter that let high performers learn new skills and earn a bump in pay. Circles has a similar program that encourages agents to rotate between clients or concierge specialties — like sports tickets, dining, or travel.
- **Develop programs that encourage agents to stick around.** In an industry plagued with high turnover, it can help to give agents explicit incentives to stay put. At each year anniversary, agents at Circles get a monetary award plus a sizable gift — like a golf bag — that they can select from a catalog. And for every five years of service, agents receive a four-week paid sabbatical and start accruing an extra week of paid vacation per year. Other programs may not be initially designed to encourage tenure, but execs discover that it's a nice side effect. For example, Esurance found that agents participating in its work-at-home program stay with the company longer than those working solely from a centralized office.

Abandon Metrics That Encourage Bad Behavior

Why are metrics a part of a discussion on changing corporate culture? In many cases, employees do whatever it takes to meet internal numbers and avoid management scrutiny — even if that's to the detriment of the customer experience or larger corporate goals.⁶ To adjust employee behavior, companies need to:

- **Ditch the one-size-fits-all mentality.** Many well-meaning managers institute metrics that just don't have a material influence on customer experience. For example, many companies aim to answer 80% of calls within 20 seconds. But a large telecom company found that up to a certain point, time to answer had absolutely no bearing on customer satisfaction — as long as agents could resolve the callers' problems. And a large parcel shipper found that callers' tolerance for wait times varied by the type of issue they were calling about. The bottom line: Call center execs need to figure out what drives a great customer experience for their specific customers and then develop metrics that encourage agents to pay attention to the elements of a call that matter most (see Figure 4).
- **Throw out meaningless quality assurance checklists.** The metrics used on most call center quality assurance (QA) checklists are the same ones that the industry has been using for more than 30 years. Not surprisingly, they reflect that era's focus on operations and efficiency — and not today's imperative for great customer experience. As one call center exec put it, "We've decided that we've provided a good experience, but it's an internally driven measure of quality that isn't calibrated with what customers think." Zappos dropped its QA process after agents raised a valid point: Customers were leaving happy, but agents were still getting dinged for not adhering to the checklists. Now the Zappos call center management asks agents to listen to their own calls and score themselves on various aspects of the interaction. Not surprisingly, the agents are their own worst critics.
- **Relieve agents from average call handle-time targets.** Call center execs have long relied on metrics that conveniently roll off the automated call distributor that routes calls to agents. Among all of these metrics, every single one of our interviewees identified average handle time (AHT) as the least effective and potentially most damaging. After all, agents bumping up against their target time will do just about anything to end the call — regardless of whether the customer's problem was resolved. One consultant observed an agent at a credit card company tell a caller that her card's protection would cover a couch she was purchasing with cash — just so the agent could get off of the phone quickly. But can companies really drop AHT as an agent target?⁷ A large utility company did just that — and while average call time increased by 20 seconds, the number of repeat calls dropped by 40%.

Figure 4 Example Call Center Metrics That Focus On Customer And Company Value

Metric	Why it matters	Recommendation
Net Promoter Score (NPS)	NPS is the most broadly accepted standard for measuring customer loyalty.	If your company isn't big on NPS, consider similar questions. For example, Zappos asks: If you started a service company, how likely would you be to hire the representative you talked to?
Customer Experience Index (CxPi)	Forrester's CxPi questions examine a caller's perception of different aspects of the call itself.	Ask three questions: How well did we meet your needs, how easy were we to do business with, and how enjoyable were we to do business with?
First-call resolution	This benefits callers, who want a "one and done" resolution to their problem, and call centers, which don't want to incur the cost of repeat calls for the same issue.	You can ask customers if you've resolved their issue, but they may not actually know the answer until some point in the future. For a truer gauge, resurvey a subset of callers within a time frame that's tailored to the type of question or issue they had.
Effort to resolve an issue	A large bank found a 30% gap in satisfaction scores between callers who immediately picked up the phone versus those who called in after looking for answers in other channels.	Ask: Prior to calling, did you try to get your issue resolved through our website; through a branch? Include an open-ended question so callers can explain what happened.
Number of escalations	Empowering agents to resolve callers' issues without escalation makes customers happier, boosts agent morale, and increases call center efficiency.	Don't ding agents for escalating more than their targeted number of calls. Instead, approach the situation as a coaching opportunity, and help agents determine where the escalated calls went awry.
Agent attendance	Life sometimes gets in the way of getting to work on time — or at all. But staff availability has a direct impact on a call center's ability to handle customer calls.	Consider point systems, the ability to swap hours, or work-at-home arrangements that give agents flexibility while ensuring a fully staffed call center.
Agent productivity time	Agents don't want to feel chained to their desks. But like attendance, staff productivity has a direct impact on a call center's ability to handle customer calls.	Don't give agents a productivity target. Instead, monitor productivity in the background, and approach agents only if it becomes a problem.

Source: Forrester Research interviews

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Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

RECOMMENDATIONS

STOP SQUANDERING MILLIONS OF OPPORTUNITIES TO DRIVE VALUE

Medium-size to large call centers have literally millions of chances every week to create lasting connections with customers and drive business value. If you're a customer experience professional working on enterprise projects, you have a responsibility to try and save your firm from wasting these precious opportunities. You should work with call center executives to:

- **Figure out whether you've got the right people on the phones.** All of your efforts will be for naught if your frontline employees just aren't interested in providing great service — so start by separating those agents with true passion from those who are phoning it in. When a large telecom company restructured its call center operations, it gave its 3,500 employees the option of moving into back-office positions. The execs also administered a psychometric survey that evaluated each employee's innate emotional abilities in areas like trust and caring that were critical for creating customer connections. Fifty percent of the frontline agents either didn't have the emotional skills that execs were looking for or voluntarily stepped away from their phones.
- **If you can't foster the right culture, recommend outsourcing to someone who can.** On the whole, call center outsourcing firms don't have a stellar reputation for customer experience — but that doesn't make this tactic a nonstarter. Look for a provider that will work with you to design the call center experience your customers want. Then interview the provider about its hiring and training practices as well as its standard incentives and metrics. But hold the phone! You might be surprised to find that some companies with reputations for amazing customer experiences also provide outsourcing services. For example, Lands' End offsets lower demand for its full-time staff outside of the busy holiday season by handling calls for other companies. When in doubt, ask!

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

Methodology

Forrester conducted an online survey fielded in November 2010 of 7,728 US individuals ages 18 to 88. For results based on a randomly chosen sample of this size ($N = 7,728$), there is 95% confidence that the results have a statistical precision of plus or minus 1.4% of what they would be if the entire population of US online individuals ages 18 and older had been surveyed. Forrester weighted the data by age, gender, income, broadband adoption, and region to demographically represent the adult US online population. The survey sample size, when weighted, was 7,717. (Note: Weighted sample sizes can be different from the actual number of respondents to account for individuals generally underrepresented in online panels.) Please note that this was an online survey. Respondents who participate in online surveys have in general more experience with the Internet and feel more comfortable transacting online. The data is weighted to be representative for the total online population on the weighting targets mentioned, but this sample bias may produce results that differ

from Forrester's offline benchmark survey. The sample was drawn from members of MarketTools' online panel, and respondents were motivated by receiving points that can be redeemed for a reward. The sample provided by MarketTools is not a random sample. While individuals have been randomly sampled from MarketTools' panel for this particular survey, they have previously chosen to take part in the MarketTools online panel.

Forrester's Q4 2010 Global Customer Experience Peer Research Panel Survey was fielded to 118 customer experience professionals from our ongoing Marketing & Strategy Research Panel. The panel consists of volunteers who join on the basis of interest and familiarity with specific Marketing & Strategy topics. For quality assurance, panelists are required to provide contact information and answer basic questions about their firms' revenue and budgets.

Forrester fielded the survey from December 2010 to January 2011. Respondent incentives included a summary of the survey results.

We have provided exact sample sizes in this report on a question-by-question basis. Panels are not guaranteed to be representative of the population. Unless otherwise noted, statistical data is intended to be used for descriptive and not inferential purposes.

If you're interested in joining one of Forrester's Research Panels, you may visit us at <http://Forrester.com/Panel>.

Companies Interviewed For This Document

American Express	live work
Beyond Philosophy	Porsche
Circles	Sitel
Convergys	User Centric
Esurance Insurance Services	User Interface Engineering
Genesys Telecommunications Laboratories	Verint Systems
Human Factors International	Zappos.com
Lands' End	

ENDNOTES

¹ Assuming a large call center with 3,000 agents and an average of only 50 calls per agent per day, a company has the opportunity to make 1.05 million customized impressions each week — and 54.6 million personal connections each year.

- ² Source: Tony Hsieh, *Delivering Happiness*, Business Plus, 2010.
- ³ eHarmony can be classified as a segmentor: a company that can use its deep customer knowledge to create levels of intimacy and trust that less-focused competitors can't match. See the September 28, 2010, "[What Is The Right Customer Experience Strategy?](#)" report.
- ⁴ Forrester's 2010 Voice Of The Customer Awards recognize voice of the customer programs, like CDW's, that drive action and deliver business results. See the August 12, 2010, "[Lessons Learned From Three Award-Winning Voice Of The Customer Programs](#)" report.
- ⁵ A customer-centric culture is a system of shared values and behaviors that focus employee activity on improving the customer experience. See the November 19, 2010, "[How To Build A Customer-Centric Culture](#)" report.
- ⁶ "Dysfunctional behavior is ubiquitous and systemic, not because people are wicked but because the requirement to serve the hierarchy competes with the requirements to serve customers." Source: John Seddon, *Freedom from Command and Control*, Productivity Press, 2005.
- ⁷ This isn't to say that metrics like AHT shouldn't be tracked at all. They're valuable for scheduling purposes and can help call center management spot potentially problematic trends. But execs should resist the urge to give explicit targets to agents. You'll encourage them to focus on efficiency, not customer experience.

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