



## **Customer-Driven Coaching Yields a Higher ROI: Let the Customer be your Guide**

*By Dr. Jodie Monger and Anne Nickerson*

We all see it...the new agent pool sitting in a large classroom, usually with computer monitors in front of them, waiting to be trained for their new contact center job. Each person in the room is trained on the same elements, at the same time, with the same pace. This part of the traditional training process is necessary, but what about its long-term effectiveness for a holistic approach? Customers say they want to be treated like individuals and not numbers; doesn't the same apply to your employees?

To encourage the idea of treating employees as customers requires that agents know what they are getting into when they sign on for the job. They need to understand company policy, products and services, how the technology works, workflow and basic customer service skills. Most critical is that they understand their job from the *customer's point of view* and are introduced to the Voice of the Customer (VOC) standards and expectations to which they will be held accountable. The truth is, in order to be successful, agents need both types of information and training from the start. All centers need this time to have the agents learn the basics of their job and for us to learn about the agents. Whether it is in the classroom, or on-the-job training, accountability introduced from the beginning creates the essential ingredients for optimal customer satisfaction.

### **Different skills and learning need to be considered**

Initial training focuses on skill development in an effort to provide best-in-class service to our customers. We close the loop between the company, the agent and our customers by referring to the elements of a quality program (call monitoring, call metrics). The affect on our training investment occurs after the initial training process is complete. Many centers provide on-going training as a group project and therefore, do not always factor in the individual to the process. Have you calculated the ROI on the various aspects of your training program? The success is certainly affected by the method, content and focus. Individuals begin the job with different skill levels. People do not learn the same way. And, they advance at different rates. Yet, we often overlook these facts when designing performance evaluations, ongoing development and coaching goals.

Once the initial training program is complete and the agents are settled into their routine, the next piece

is to ensure that customer satisfaction scores are used as part of coaching and on-going training. However, if you only collect numeric satisfaction scores, it only tells you part of the story about how the customer feels about their interaction. What you truly need is an effective VOC program under your quality umbrella that collects scores AND comments. Be certain that the customer can elaborate on their scoring about the service interaction... in their own voice. It's the *feelings* behind the scores and analysis that are critical to the coaching process.

### **Dreams can come true**

Including the complete response from the customer may sound like a dream come true. And it is! With current technology, it is easy to gather this important information for your Quality program, and then be able integrate it into a holistic and individual training and development plan.

This is the first article in a series of four that Customer Relationship Metrics (Metrics) and Call Center Coach will release on this topic. While each article stands on its own to provide you with the tools and information to create higher ROIs in your training, coaching and VOC programs, the intent is for the articles to build on one another and to educate you on this entire process. With this knowledge, you are better positioned to get the most out of your VOC and training/coaching programs. In the second article in this series, Metrics and Call Center Coach will be discussing the training program specifically. In the third article, we will focus on the coaching process. And to conclude, in the final article, Metrics and Call Center Coach will provide theories and specific examples of putting the process into action.

### **Do not coach to the monitoring form**

Some may argue that the traditional ways of training, coaching and customer satisfaction measurement is how it should be done. While the training programs may be to a large group, monitoring and coaching provide the individualized attention once agents are out on the floor. Although monitoring provides some individualized training when time permits, this is only a part of the process. In the majority of cases, agents receive coaching and/or monitoring on what the *monitoring form* deems necessary. But what do the customers think is going well and need improvement from a service delivery perspective? Very few contact centers include direct customer feedback in their programs. The irony here is that a successful customer experience is exactly what we are trying to deliver. Learners won't argue with live data, in fact, it is very powerful to hear directly from the customer what was done well, and where there

are opportunities for enhancement. The good news is that there is an effective way to incorporate VOC and also a quantifiable way to calculate (and therefore increase) the ROI on training, coaching and monitoring.

To get a complete view, three pieces of the quality scorecard are necessary - the quality monitoring based on communicated standards, the call metrics (e.g., AHT, ATT, adherence to schedule, etc.) and the most often forgotten – but all important – Voice of the Customer. The best way to get an accurate and reliable VOC measurement is through immediate post-call surveys. These effective customer surveys are completed after the interaction with the agent and allow the customer to answer both qualitative and quantitative questions about their interaction. According to scientific research, analysis from evaluations that are delayed has several biases (errors) and is, therefore, not as reliable. When using a delayed evaluation program after a service interaction, it is based on the caller's recall of the interaction. Anything other than real-time measurement inherently introduces this recall bias (error).

### **Qualitative information is crucial**

Through the “immediately following the interaction” method, all the customer information, including qualitative and quantitative feedback, can be directly and accurately linked to the CSR who handled the interaction. Qualitative information is collected through solicitation of customer comments about the interaction while quantitative information is through survey questions for ratings, i.e. agent knowledge, being treated as a valued customer and did the agent understand the reason for the call. This method gives you the VOC literally, in their own words, and is the best feedback model to train and coach your agents.

This powerful tool allows direct access to specific details about the interaction with the customer and pinpoints, better than any other tool, specific behaviors that agents can be trained upon. By using the Voice of the Customer this way, greater customer AND employee satisfaction is achieved. Agents are happier because compensation and scoring are tied to more meaningful Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and more meaningful feedback and development is possible.

### **You can not argue with the customer**

Even with the mounds of data at their fingertips, management can't argue with actual customer

feedback. Post-call surveys give you the right information, at the right time for the right agent. A continuous measurement program allows for an ongoing ROI assessment to occur. Improvement by the CSRs is recognized by the callers and evaluations continue to improve. The business case becomes possible when the voice of the customer is available. Then, it's up to you to take the information and train and coach the right way. As research continues to prove, with happier agents come happier customers. And in the follow up articles, Metrics and Call Center Coach will show you ways to increase your ROI and subsequently, how customers, employees and the company benefit from your customer-driven coaching efforts.

Dr. Jodie Monger, is the President of Customer Relationship Metrics, ([www.Metrics.net](http://www.Metrics.net)) and a pioneer in customer satisfaction research for the contact center industry. Prior to creating Metrics she was the founding Associate Director of Purdue University's Center for Customer-Driven Quality. Her expertise is working with organizations to help capture and analyze the Voice of their Customer.



Anne Nickerson, is the President of Anne Nickerson is principal and founder of Partners in Development, LLC and Call Center Coach, LLC ([www.callcentercoach.com](http://www.callcentercoach.com)), firms focused on executive coaching and management development. Her mission is to facilitate holistic and aligned human resource processes that support bottom line business results. She has just released her new book, ***Not by the Seat of My Pants***, focused on individuals moving from the front-line into supervision and leadership roles.



**\*\*For more information or to schedule an interview with Dr. Monger or Anne Nickerson please contact Jim Rembach at 336-288-8226 or [jim.rembach@metrics.net](mailto:jim.rembach@metrics.net).**