



Escalated but Satisfied: Your Best Defense Against Market Damage

By Dr. Jodie Monger – President, Customer Relationship Metrics

All contact centers have escalated calls that must be handled. Your strategy to handle escalated calls is an extremely important part of your customer service delivery plan. Customers that have problems that have not been handled to their satisfaction are the customers that can inflict the most market damage to your company's reputation. On average, each dissatisfied caller will tell more than twenty people about the experience however an effective service recovery negates the negative effect and actually increases loyalty to the company.

In most cases, the problem was not caused by your contact center but you are responsible for it now. How effective is your escalation team? You must depend on them to complete an effective service recovery and preserve the relationship (asset base to the company). Research indicates that customers who have had a problem that has been effectively addressed are more loyal to the company than those customers who never had a problem. Go figure, but it underscores the importance of the escalation team to your company.

Quantifying the customer satisfaction with the CSRs that handle escalated calls often meets with resistance. The knee-jerk reaction is that customers handled by the escalation team CSRs are unhappy with the situation and will certainly give low evaluations of the service provided; the thought is that there is nothing that will make these people happy, short of giving them free products or services. Omitting the escalation team from your caller satisfaction measurement program and thereby not holding the team accountable to the caller evaluations of services can be a costly mistake.

Callers with issues for the escalation team are part of the reality within your overall service delivery. This portion of your strategy must be measured and must demonstrate continuous improvement over time as expected for all teams. The same post-call survey questions should be asked of the customers to insure an apples-to-apples comparison is possible across the teams in your contact center.

While scores are not as impossibly dismal as these CSRs may expect, Customer Relationship Metrics' research indicates that the scores will be slightly lower which can as easily be contributed to being transferred during the interaction. The graph below illustrates the results from a 3-month study and proves how slight the results actually are.

Front-line vs. Escalated - Customer Satisfaction

	Company Sat (mean score)	Call Sat (mean score)	CSR Sat (mean score)	Issue Ownership
Front-line	78.5	82.5	86.2	86.6
Escalated	77.1	79.6	81.7	85.3

3 months of data: 519 Escalated team surveys and 6024 Front-line surveys

Proprietary Research - © Customer Relationship Metrics

After your post-call survey program has been in place for two months, you can quantify the consistent gap in scores (if any) between the escalation team and the first tier CSRs. As with any team, the goal and expectations for improvement are based on a calculated month-to-month improvement to reach the Year End Goal. While the escalation team may have a slightly lower goal, it should be challenged to stretch in the same proportion as any other team. Considering the contribution to the company's bottom line, you cannot afford to overlook or to not include the Voice of the Customer quantification for the escalation team.

Don't underestimate your customers. They are quite capable of understanding the underlying effectiveness of the resolution and bestow scores accordingly. Hopefully, your escalation team is trained to problem solve, to think outside of the box and to even say "No" in a way that leaves the customer satisfied. You must measure the customers' perception in order to prove the value of this team and the amount of revenue saved by them. Loyalty is at stake.

Dr. Jodie Monger is the President of Customer Relationship Metrics, L.C., (www.Metrics.net). Prior to joining Metrics, she was the founding Associate Director of Purdue University's Center for Customer-Driven Quality. Her expertise is working with Fortune 1000 companies to help them create post-call survey programs using CATs® (Completely Automated Telephone surveys).



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