



## The 2004 Voice of the Customer Year in Review... and Plan for the Future

By Dr. Jodie Monger

It's the most wonderful time of the year...December. A time for holidays and celebrating, but most of all, a time for reflection. It's the time of year when we all sit back, look over the events of the past year and look forward to the upcoming year. Collecting, analyzing, and managing to the Voice of the Customer in the contact center is uniquely different than every other type of satisfaction measurement throughout the rest of the organization. Therefore, we here at Customer Relationship Metrics (Metrics) thought we would pass on some of what we learned to you, to help you in your own resolutions as you look forward and plan for 2005.

As a contact center professional dedicated to the delight of all callers and committed to bring out the best in my employees, I will:

### **1. Evaluate ALL surveys from a scientific perspective and base decisions only on data collected the right way**

Most of the time, we expend the most effort trying to convince our management teams that surveying is necessary. Instead, the bulk of the effort should be spent on the survey program design itself. It is important to remember that surveying is a *science* not to be taken lightly, so follow the guidelines of this science when developing, executing and reporting results of your program. If you don't, the consequences of a poor measurement program will have a profound and far reaching effect in the organization.

### **2. Do not live by the numbers alone**

In the contact center, we are never at a loss for numbers and seem to live by our center's statistics. What most managers forget is that the customer is the best one to answer how their experience went. From a scientific standpoint, you should immediately assess the level of service delivered on a particular call. While this rating appears to be subjective because it is not a hard metric such as ASA or AHT, if your customers are not satisfied, all of those metrics are meaningless.

**3. Use the customer preferred channel for measurement and not force another**

When trying to provide the best service to your customers, it is not a good idea to create a disservice by forcing all customers through one communication channel. It is not only the access point, but the measurement system that you use which must be congruent with the customer-selected channel of communication. If this is not done, “survey channel slamming” occurs. Survey channel slamming happens when a customer contacts you by phone and you send them an email survey. This is dangerous to your measurement program (and customer satisfaction) and must be avoided.

**4. Admit that one survey is not enough and an on-going program is required**

To get an accurate view of the contact center service experience, satisfaction measurement cannot be combined with the fulfillment evaluation without allowing bias (error) to be introduced into the results. The bias is created from the delay between the service interaction and the evaluation – a delay that is needed to evaluate fulfillment. To overcome the bias (and fix your program), you should create two separate measurement programs. Then, take the results of the two measurement programs and look at them holistically as actionable intelligence to implement positive change for your organization.

**5. Identify the ROI of my coaching and training programs**

In a time when contact centers are being forced to do more with less, training and coaching seem to be one of the first items to cut. This is a sure fire way to loose customers *and* employees. If you can direct your training and coaching costs to the right agents for the right skills, your return on investment (ROI) will increase tremendously. It is not always just about costs, the problem also lies in the traditional training, coaching and monitoring methods that contact centers use.

**6. Separate internal and external quality measurements**

Internal quality and external quality are two totally different things. Often, contact center professionals rely on internal quality scores to measure customer satisfaction. This is a common

misconception. In contact centers, monitoring and assessing an agent's call performance is—and should be—a standard practice. But, if you know how the customers perceive the service delivered and you have a good set of metrics and monitoring scores, the answer of how well your center is performing becomes balanced and valid.

**7. Correctly calculate First Contact Resolution (FCR) and make sure to identify the direct and indirect costs of FCR**

The goal of contact centers today and a main driver of cost via repeat calls is to provide FCR. This is one of the most important metrics, and yet is also the most illusive and miscalculated metric. Contact centers have employed various types of technology and manual solutions to help calculate their FCR rate, but the reality is that none should or could answer the question *on behalf of* the customer. Since the customer is the one experiencing the possible pain from your service strategy, then s/he is your single best source to determine this metric. Use your post-call survey to ask the customer if the problem was resolved.

**8. Manage to the fact that the customer has final say if we have best practices**

To create a competitive advantage, benchmarking became part of the way the contact center would set goals and operating targets. Without the customer to validate your metrics, your decision making process is flawed. Therefore, before you set out to make big changes in your contact center because of what the benchmark results told you, take some time and find out what your customers think and whether the desired changes would even improve their service experience with your company.

**9. Create an All-Star contact center team**

To provide your organization with actionable intelligence, there needs to be three aspects to take into consideration - the quality monitoring piece, the call metrics and the piece that is most often forgotten – the voice of the customer (VOC). The best way to get an accurate and reliable VOC measurement is through post-call surveys. This powerful tool allows direct access to specific details about the interaction and pinpoints specific behaviors that agents can be trained upon. It is like assembling an All-Star team. And with happier agents come happier customers.

## **10. Use my VOC program to avoid court/hearing dates**

The greatest weakness of a VOC program that is designed to hold agents accountable for their job performance is the failure to have a back-end quality control (QC) process in place. Without a QC process in place, the potential for error is amplified, which means the credibility of the measurement tool is decreased and your liability is increased. Terminating an employee based on performance, providing or withholding incentive pay, or giving a raise or promotion from unclean (non-QC'd) VOC data is a court date waiting to happen.

## **11. Go beyond the basics for analysis**

Looking at data from the contact center is just like a fishing expedition. At most centers, the data comes in the form of a sea of paper with pages upon pages of details and numbers that you may not even understand where they come from. It can get so overwhelming that many cannot grasp what all those numbers mean and therefore, the data does not get used effectively for decision making in the center. You cannot just randomly select or eyeball numbers for targets and goals, the data must drive these changes, not managers, representatives or other personnel in the organization.

## **12. Leverage the intelligence across the organization**

Many companies do not take advantage of the depth of knowledge available from the contact center. The contact center is the focal point that provides the organization with real-time data directly from the customers. This is where the voice of the customer can be heard – and heard often – and reported quickly and accurately to all parts of the organization. The actionable customer intelligence that the contact center collects (or could collect) can be leveraged by all parts of the organization. For instance:

- Marketing – Provide information on customer demographics; tracks trends; support segmentation; and provide customer surveys and feedback.
- Finance – Capture costs and revenue per segment; contribute to shareholder value and a means to control overall costs.
- Manufacturing and operations – Pinpoint quality or production problems;

provide input on products and services usability and clarity; and highlight distribution problems and opportunities.

- CEO and Board of Directors – Build shareholder value through strategic value contributions; and contribute to company market share, brand, and customer relationships.

All-in-all, as in years past 2004 has been another year in transition in the contact center. However, unlike other years some of our biggest gains have come from a focus on serving customers more effectively. As we head into 2005, we are excited about the continuance of this trend and not to use the words “customer-focused” as mere buzz words.

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