

# Call Center Times

Reaching over 5,700 Call Center Professionals Monthly! September/October 2002

## *From The Publisher's Desk*

What's the real purpose of the Buyer's Guide? What's a reasonable return on investment in a Buyer's Guide? Why should a company be listed in a Buyer's Guide?

These questions have been posed to me over and over again by well meaning Directors of Sales & Marketing, who have tried to justify the expense of promoting their organization's products/services in a Buyer's Guide. I'm not sure what other Buyer's Guides offer, but here is why you should be listed in ours today:

Listed companies are actively promoted in our monthly newsletter  
Our subscribers are mostly decision makers in call centers  
To promote Brand Awareness, we offer the Rolling Banner listing of all listed companies for 12 consecutive months

If you are a decision maker in your organization, please answer the following:

Is your company currently listed in our Call Center's Buyer's Guide? If not, why?

Have you considered promoting your product/ service/ organizational announcement in our monthly newsletter? If not, why?

Have you subscribed to our Call Center book of Lists? If not, why?

We staunchly believe that in spite of tough market conditions, there is a way to convert a low investment into high opportunity.

This can be achieved through branding, cost effective marketing and in some cases, the procurement of a new account.

Contact us today at (972) 395-3225 to learn more about our programs. You can also e-mail me directly at [neke@callcentertimes.com](mailto:neke@callcentertimes.com).

Enjoy!

## **SandCherry and ASA Solutions Sign VAR Agreement**

Boulder, Colorado and Scottsdale, Arizona, September 23, 2002 – Catapulting call center operations into a new era of voice-enabled systems, call center solutions provider ASA – renowned for its groundbreaking applications provided to clients such as Charles Schwab and American Express – joined forces with innovative communications software company SandCherry, Inc. through a Value Added Reseller (VAR) agreement for its SoftServer platform. ASA will use the SoftServer solution as the foundation for enterprise Interactive Voice Response (IVR) and speech-based Customer Relationship Management (CRM), Work Force Management, and mobility solutions.

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SandCherry**



# How *WILLOW CSN* Provided a Flexible Remote Workforce For *AAA ARIZONA*

“We’re in the business of providing emergency roadside assistance to our members. If they can’t get through to one of our call center agents, we simply can’t help them,” said Gary Gibbs, AAA Arizona’s vice president of member services. “We cannot afford to have calls go unanswered, but in early 2001, we saw a scenario unfolding that would have eventually made it very difficult for us to field our members’ emergency calls.”

At the beginning of 2001, AAA Arizona was faced with the logistical nightmare of answering 1.2 million emergency calls a year. The motorist club needed enough workers on-hand to field the onslaught of calls that flood in during every rush hour while avoiding the high cost of paying agents by the hour to sit idly during off-peak hours. Also, since the number of emergency roadside assistance calls in Arizona moves in lockstep with the thermometer’s rising mercury, Gibbs needed a call center that could respond to unpredictable changes in the region’s sweltering temperatures.

“Between planning for the thermometer and the usual spikes at rush hour, it was becoming extremely difficult for us to maintain appropriate staffing levels. That was just one of our problems, though,” Gibbs recalled. Phoenix is a hotbed for call centers, and in 2001 there was a particularly low regional unemployment rate of three percent. These factors combined to leave area call centers in fierce competition for employees, making it particularly

difficult for AAA Arizona to attract and retain quality call center agents. As a result, Gibbs saw his in-house turnover rate explode to a jaw-dropping 108 percent.

“We placed ads in the paper to try to temper the impact of our turnover, but most of the people who responded didn’t meet our qualifications. Between our need for staffing flexibility and our overwhelming employee churn rate, we needed to address several problems before they began to interfere with our quality of service. That’s when my colleague from another AAA club told me that the best thing he’d ever done for his call center was engage the services of Willow CSN,” explained Gibbs.

Unlike traditional contact centers, Willow CSN does not maintain a facility staffed by customer service representatives (CSRs). Rather, Willow uses a network of highly qualified independent contractors, called CyberAgent CSRs™, who answer calls from their home offices and are managed by clients through Willow’s workforce management technology, StarMatic™. Willow’s customers choose the CyberAgents themselves and train them to comply with specific policies, procedures and technology.

StarMatic™ works in conjunction with other workforce management tools to help contact center managers determine how many CyberAgent CSRs



they will need to compensate for call volume. The technology pushes these available hours out to the CyberAgent CSRs, who then select their schedules on a first-come, first-served basis. The CyberAgent CSRs schedule their time in 30-minute blocks and are paid by the client on a per-call basis.

After visiting Willow CSN and a CyberAgent CSR's home, Gibbs partnered with Willow CSN in June 2001. He commented on the flexibility of Willow's home-based CSRs, saying, "The system works for everyone involved. Willow allows us to pay for the help we need when we need it while allowing the CyberAgents to have more control over their personal and professional schedules. Since the CyberAgent CSRs don't have to commute, they can schedule themselves for a half an hour or so when our volume peaks, then take some time to pick up their kids from school or take calls for another client. Afterwards, they can schedule more time with us to meet our needs."

Gibbs added, "This flexibility would be impossible with a conventional in-house agent, because a manager cannot reasonably ask an employee to commute in during the morning when volume is high, leave for a few hours during a predictable lull, and come back to the contact center again in the afternoon when call volume increases again."

Today, AAA Arizona's performance is in sharp contrast to the time when it was strapped to find enough qualified employees to answer its emergency roadside assistance calls. Since partnering with Willow, AAA Arizona's internal employee turnover has been sliced to a more manageable 56 percent, the number of calls it answers has increased by 12 percent, and its average speed of answer has improved by 78 percent.

"Willow has simplified our staffing so that we can concentrate on other important managerial responsibilities," said Gibbs. "Without Willow, it would have been difficult to maintain appropriate staffing levels without sacrificing quality of service. We feel like the CyberAgent CSRs are an extension of our contact center. We get to pick them, train them and coach them, so it is no surprise that their performance ratings are almost identical to our superb in-house agents. I think CyberAgent CSRs perform so well because they view their work with Willow as a career rather than a job."

The entrepreneurship that Gibbs described stems from the fact that the CyberAgent CSRs are an invested workforce. As independent contractors, CyberAgents are compensated by clients on a per-call basis, so they only get paid for the number of calls that they handle.

"We have been so impressed by the CyberAgent CSRs that they now answer 35 percent of our emergency calls," Gibbs commented. "Our experience with Willow has proven to us that we can manage people effectively even if they're not in the same room. As a matter of fact, we're starting to offer remote work to our in-house agents because Willow has demonstrated the viability of remote work. I would definitely recommend Willow to my colleagues for the flexibility of its model and the quality of the CyberAgent CSRs."

# # #



## **Hispanic Teleservices Corporation Announces Agreement With America Online To Offer Specialized Bilingual Customer Service for AOL's U.S. Hispanic Members**

Hispanic Teleservices Corporation, a leading provider of outsourced customer support for the Hispanic market, has announced an agreement with America Online, Inc., the world's leading interactive services company, to offer in-language customer service to AOL's U.S. Hispanic market customers.

Keith Jenkins, Executive Vice President of America Online's Member Services department, said: "As our Hispanic member base expands in the U.S., we have made great strides in bringing this important audience the content and services they know and trust. We believe this new agreement with HTC to support our bilingual offering will continue to improve the online experience for our U.S. Hispanic members."

Kit Cooper, Executive Vice President of HTC stated: "We are pleased that America Online has selected HTC to support their Spanish bilingual contact center requirements. Implementing scalable in-language call center infrastructure is truly going the last mile in both acquiring and retaining this important market."

### **About Hispanic Teleservices Corporation**

Hispanic Teleservices Corporation (HTC) is a leading provider of outsourced customer support for the Hispanic market. Through combined expertise in customer service, telecommunications and the Hispanic market, HTC offers best of breed service to corporations with significant focus on the Hispanic market. HTC serves as a "remote office" for bilingual contact center operations, offering customer care, technical support, customer acquisition and Internet customer support services. With operations strategically based in Monterrey, Mexico, HTC extends to its client the competitive advantage of accessing the world's most efficient bilingual customer service workforce. HTC is a U.S. corporation with headquarters in Houston, Texas and contact center operations in Monterrey, Mexico.

For additional information, please visit <http://www.htc.to>



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## RightForce Wins TMC Labs Innovation Award

**Fort Lauderdale, FL** — RightForce announced that TMC's Customer Inter@ction Solutions magazine has selected RightForce to receive this year's TMC Labs Innovation Award for the company's workforce management products. New product functionality such as Outbound Planning<sup>TM</sup> for blended call centers and the new Agent Desktop<sup>TM</sup> are among the trend-setting features evaluated for this award. RightForce was chosen as one of 23 finalists from over 200

product reviews.

The TMC Labs Innovation Awards were implemented to honor products that help to carve new markets. These awards are bestowed on trend-setting products that meet product criteria that set them apart from their competitors due to one of more unique features. This is TMC's third annual award recognizing product innovation in the industry.



## **DIAL LEGALLY in ALL 50 States with the SalesStationPRO™!**

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## NetLert Releases N-Contact beta Compliments.... NetLert's current suite of Instant Customer Service solutions

ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA – September 19, 2002 –NetLert Communications Inc. is pleased to announce a new product planned for release in the 3rd quarter of 2002 to compliment the company's suite of contact center specific real-time communication solutions – NetLert N-Contact v1.0

In 1999, research showed that there were approximately 15 billion customer contacts made in North America. 85% were by telephone, 5% web or email and 10% other means. For 2002, it is estimated that total customer contacts will exceed 30 billion – double the rate just two years ago! However, unlike two years ago, it is estimated that 54% will be making contact via the Internet as emails, web contacts, chat rooms, message boards, e-faxes, etc. Clearly, the trend is for consumers to make contact via the Internet – and in increasing numbers.

Like it or not, immediate gratification is a human desire that must be factored into your customer service program. This means that direct person-to-person contact will be the most popular and demanded method for sales, general information and in resolving product support issues. It could equally make the difference between winning or losing the customer. Further, to remain competitive in today's Internet markets, your contact center needs the support of a comprehensive Instant Customer Service offering — "N-Contact"!

Let's summarize the costs and benefits of a self-service customer solution (what we call — ICS) versus other customer contact methodologies. A Doculabs study (2001) calculated the average cost of a traditional telephone customer service call at \$32.74. Now when you move to the Internet, that same study showed that the average cost of an email response is \$9.99. Self-service answers to web site queries average a \$1.17 per response cost – something worth considering! Not only a great way to save money in your contact center, but to improve efficiency as well!

**Product Description:**  
N-Contact is a tool that makes it easy for anyone visiting your web site to chat with your support agents, instantly, "live", with the simple click of a button! With live, text based chat, the ability to push any web based content to customer desktops, and agent/customer collaborative browsing, your Web-enabled contact agents can immediately start a dialog with any online prospect requesting information or assistance.

### Features:

- **Chat Button**  
Click a button on web site—live, text based chat
- **Contact Queuing** Like the traditional Call Center ACD switch, routes chats to available agents
- **Response Libraries** Quick "canned" responses to contact inquiries, as well as pushing URL's and files
- **Transferring** Maximize agent efficiency, reduce contact escalation
- **Reporting** Get real-time and historical reports with N-Contact's Automated Chat Distribution reporting package.
- **Collaboration** Agent and contact share a browser
- **E-mail**

When live agent is not available, offers alternative via email

About NetLert Communications, Inc.

Based in the mountains of Western North Carolina, NetLert Communications produces and markets quality presence based real time communication products. The company's flagship product is NetLert Instant Messaging, an enterprise level instant messaging solution for the client/server market. At NetLert Communications, products are the result of customer input and technical know-how, and customer satisfaction is a result of unmatched service and support.

**For more information, contact Belinda Banks, S & S Public Relations at (718) 320-4898 (belinda@sspr.com), or Danny Councill, NetLert Communications, Inc. at (828) 670-9900 x 309 (danny@netlert.com), or visit <http://www.netlert.com>.**

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danny@netlert.com



## Washington Mutual Selects CB Richard Ellis Call Center Solutions Group for Site Selection of New Loan Servicing Center

### The Challenge

With a history dating back to 1889 and assets of \$275.22 billion, Washington Mutual Bank FA, is a national financial services company that provides a diversified line of products and services to consumers and small to mid-sized businesses. The company operates more than 2,400 consumer and commercial banking, mortgage lending, consumer finance, and financial services offices through the U.S.

Headquartered in Seattle, WaMu had an enterprise-wide requirement to consolidate the back-office loan servicing functions of its expanding commercial real estate loan portfolio. The company's key performance indicators

for favorable, less competitive labor markets included low labor costs and turnover, high underemployment rate, loyal workforce, and higher quality employees.

### The Solution

WaMu selected CB Richard Ellis' Site Selection Group (CCSG) because of the group's reputation for best-of-class industry intelligence, proprietary site selection modeling, superior market intelligence, economic development incentive analysis, and complete corporate real estate transaction services.

First, CCSG analyzed WaMu's targeted labor base and regional preferences. Then the group looked at demographics, available labor pool, government incentives, transportation, telecom infrastructure, economic and growth indicators, and more to identify a long list of candidate communities.

To narrow the candidates down to a short list, CCSG performed

benchmark and labor/wage analyses, identified premier employers, and evaluated competition, corporate climate, and accessibility. The process continued with visits to the final six communities to interview top city and economic officials, government agencies, telecommunication providers, and academic representatives. CCSG and WaMu also met with major employers to determine labor quality, availability, and cost.

### The Result

The winner was Coppell, Texas: population 36,845. Located in northwestern Dallas County, Coppell is just five miles north of DFW Airport. Key to the city's selection was its pro-business attitude that encourages the development of high-quality business and corporate relocation projects.

Washington Mutual has targeted occupancy for the project in September 2002. WaMu's new loan servicing center will employ approximately 200 people, with a projected annual savings

for payroll exceeding \$4 million.

### Call Center Solutions Group

CCSG is an industry focused group within CB Richard Ellis that provides companies with the ability to understand the significant impact on labor savings that a company can achieve by locating in the labor market best suited for their company. These labor savings have equaled to millions of dollars per year for many of our clients. For more information, please contact:

Jim Trobaugh  
Senior Vice President  
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jtrobaugh@cbre.com  
www.siteselectionservices.com ■



## Happy Customers, Happy Company: Virtual Hold Helps a Major Wireless Telecom Provider Decrease Costs and Increase Customer Satisfaction

One of the major US wireless telecom providers has 30 contact centers worldwide (18 in the US) and handles over 40 million calls per year from over 17 million customers. This company experiences several peaks in incoming call volume throughout the year due to special promotions. These surges in call traffic are in addition to unanticipated spikes that may occur due to service issues, as well as monthly peaks that correlate to billing cycles. Despite load balancing and workforce management forecasts, it is always difficult to match staffing levels to incoming call volumes. On a typical Monday, hold times in some queues are as long as 48 minutes!

In the highly competitive wireless market where customer satisfaction is a major differentiator, the call center management of this company realized that long hold times were having a negative effect on customer satisfaction, in addition to increasing toll costs and tying up valuable cellular tower resources.

### The Effects of Long Hold Times:

- Unhappy customers** – who may take their business elsewhere
- Increased demand on tower and trunk resources** – leading to busy signals and more unhappy customers
- High toll costs** – wasted money from hold time and abandoned calls
- High talk times** – from customers complaining to agents about their long wait
- Decreased agent morale and increased turnover** – from listening to customer complaints about wait time and being powerless to help

### The Virtual Hold Value Proposition:

- Happier customers** – empowered with information and choices

### **Reduced demand on tower and trunk resources**

– callers aren't waiting on hold and tying up ports

### **Reduced toll costs** – no more wasted hold time and reduced abandons

### **Reduced talk times** – callers aren't complaining about hold time, increasing call handling efficiency

### **Improved agent morale and reduced turnover** – happier customers = happier agents!

### Designing the Solution:

In order to improve customer satisfaction and operating efficiency of their contact centers, this company worked with Virtual Hold Technology (VHT) to pilot a 72-port system capable of handling over 1,650 calls per hour. The Virtual Hold system was installed in one of the company's call centers on 12 key queue groups. Thanks to VHT's clearly defined implementation plans developed from experience with numerous other installations, the Virtual Hold application was seamlessly integrated with an Aspect ACD, Genesys CTI and Cisco ICM enterprise routing solution – without requiring any third party assistance.

System installation and testing were completed prior to the arrival of VHT personnel at the customer site. During the "go-live" phase, VHT personnel were on-site to conduct training and monitor system performance. Since the application is transparent to agents and requires no agent intervention, the only training necessary was an overview of the Virtual Hold Management and Reporting System for call center management.

Throughout the pilot, VHT and the company's team members were in constant communication on ways to optimize system performance for their unique environment. As the leader of this company's project team noted, "In my entire professional career I have never experienced the level of commitment that I've experienced with VHT. I have seen some amazing technical accomplishments in my career, and a group of them already belong to VHT. You folks have a very special thing right now, and that is TRUE TEAMWORK."



## **Measuring the Benefits:**

The four primary areas to be measured in order to determine the success of the pilot were:

- Service Level** – the percentage of calls answered in 30 seconds or less
- Average Handle Time** – the time an agent spends on a call (talk time and after-call work)
- Toll Expense** – the money “lost” on hold time
- Accessibility** – the percentage of calls handled out of all calls offered

In order to quantify the value added by Virtual Hold, the pilot call center’s performance was measured against the enterprise average. Performance reports were provided for each week of the 8-week pilot.

## **Proof of Success:**

After comparing the data for the 60-day pilot, the call center with Virtual Hold outperformed the enterprise average in every category!

Call Center with Virtual Hold Enterprise Average  
**IMPROVEMENT** Service Level 65.29% 55.83% 17%  
(30,000+ additional calls handled at service level)  
Average Handle Time 5:36 6:26 13%  
(50 seconds saved) Accessibility 87.85% 84.74%  
4% (11,000+ additional calls handled)

In addition to these benefits, the call center also saved \$24,338 in toll charges from reduced hold time, and \$140,930 in toll and labor savings from reduced handle time! Based on this ROI, the Virtual Hold system would pay for itself in less than 4 months!

Caller comments show their satisfaction with the Virtual Hold system:

- “I really love that callback system.”
- “I’m very pleased with the new callback feature. My prior experiences with hold time have been very unpleasant. I hope you decide to keep the new service.”

- “I’m very impressed with the automatic callback. It told me I’d get my call in 4 minutes, and I was called back in 4 minutes exactly!”
- “I’m very happy with the new dialback service; it’s a great way to alleviate hold time.”

Employees also appreciate Virtual Hold:

- “I’m impressed; this will certainly help to improve customer satisfaction, and it was refreshing to hear the excitement and good comments from the customer.”
- “THIS SYSTEM ROCKS!”

## **From Pilot to Partnership:**

The success of the 60-day pilot clearly convinced this company to purchase the Virtual Hold system already in place at their call center — with additional licenses to increase system capacity, allowing them to offer the Virtual Hold treatment to more callers. As this company heads into the holiday peak, they won’t need to increase staffing to normal holiday levels thanks to Virtual Hold – resulting in additional savings.

This company is so delighted with the performance improvements resulting from Virtual Hold that they want to provide the same quality of treatment to all of its callers. Accordingly, plans are in development for implementing Virtual Hold throughout the entire enterprise.

If you would like to learn more about how Virtual Hold can eliminate traditional hold time from your contact centers, lower your ASA, increase service levels, and reduce your toll expenses, please contact Amy Roberson at 330-670-2202, or e-mail us at [sales@virtualhold.com](mailto:sales@virtualhold.com).



## Service as Competitive Advantage

As the economic hangover continues unabated going into the second half of 2002, the truism that it is much less expensive to retain a customer than go out to get a new one just became that much truer. Customer acquisition costs are skyrocketing at the very time companies have that much less to spend.

Unfortunately, for many companies, the period of skyrocketing revenues created some bad habits. Lost amid the new economy frenzy was an uncomfortable fact that is now confronting Corporate America head on: according to the American Customer Satisfaction Index, customer satisfaction among companies in a variety of industries slipped frequently during the late 1990s despite binge spending. Unbeknownst to many, a drop in customer satisfaction was quietly corroding customer loyalty at the very time companies needed to consolidate and retain their core customers. Jupiter Media Metrix reports that poor service will cost organizations \$1.3 million annually in direct revenue losses and countless more in diminished brand image.

How did we get here and, more importantly, how can companies transform the challenge into opportunity? When confronted with the poor service accusation, Corporate America may say in its own defense that it has made significant investments – to the tune of \$70 billion dollars through 2006 – in customer relationship management systems. Unfortunately, all too often, these CRM implementations have been built on the promise on cost savings. In an era of massive bottom line cost cuttings, customer service has increasingly been viewed as secondary.

The result? Poor service abounds. Many companies around the country are faced with customers drifting among competitors, with little loyalty to any particular company and brand. With the average sized call center handling 30,000 service incidents a month, even a small lack of attention to customer service can be deadly in this environment. It simply costs too much to acquire new customers. The internet is further empowering dissatisfied users through word of mouth. What was once isolated incidents of poor customer service can now become “viral plagues” as customers spread their complaints to friends and family.

The good news is that the combination of misguided CRM implementations and higher acquisition costs covers up a fundamental opportunity for companies that recognize the power of investing in customer service in this economy. Companies that do make investment in CRM systems with the proper balance of cost savings and customer service enhancement are well positioned to take on increased marketshare at lower acquisition costs as the economy turns. The reason: the lack of customer loyalty that many companies are feeling is equally afflicting competitors; and with a new generation of customer-contact technology available for companies large and small – combined with a vacuum of initiatives in the marketplace — there is a limited window of opportunity to convert the skeptics into customers, and, in the process, lower acquisition costs. Loyalty generated through exemplary customer service is the key competitive advantage.

An increasingly number of insightful companies are capitalizing on this trend. “There is a vanguard of companies with foresight that are indeed making investments in contact center technology,” says Mike Sheridan, Director of global product strategy and marketing at contact-center



software maker Rockwell Firstpoint Contact. "These companies are taking advantage of the fact that many of their competitors have shelved IT investments by investing selectively in new technology that enhances client experiences and contact. These companies will be best positioned to take advantage of the eventual upturn in the economy by quietly building out during this tough economic period." Sheridan points to the Famous Smoke Shop, in Easton, PA reseller of premium cigars and cigar accessories, which recently beefed up its customer call-center operation with new technology to deal with customers in a more highly-individualized fashion. Companies like Concord Insurance Services and Wisconsin-based Snap-on Tool Company are taking similar approaches.

Clearly, just as customer satisfaction dipped during the economic boom, Sheridan believes that companies must make the investment to increase customer satisfaction during the economic lull. The winners coming out of this period of economic stagnation will be the ones that see opportunity within a challenging marketplace. Customer service clearly is not a luxury, nor an expense, but an investment in a critical competitive advantage that will reap great rewards as the economic hangover subsides. ■

## **Budget Time? Assess Your Training Needs for 2003.**

**The Call Center School  
announces its Training Needs  
Assessment service.**

### **What is it?**

The TCCS Training Needs Assessment is a consulting project in which current training programs and call center operations are reviewed against industry benchmarks and organizational goals to determine opportunities for improvement.

### **How does it work?**

The project involves front-end data collection and analysis, observation of customer interactions, and interviews with a wide range of personnel. The results of these activities are analyzed and evaluated against both "best of class" operations as well as enterprise performance goals to determine areas in which training and education may improve performance, increase efficiencies, and improve customer and employee satisfaction. TCCS will provide an initial report of findings while on-site and will follow up with a written report of training recommendations.

### **What will you receive?**

TCCS will provide a written report that outlines results of our analysis. This report will provide an overview of the current

situation, areas that are being addressed well, and opportunities for improvement. The report will include recommendations on what types of training are recommended at the front-line agent, team lead/supervisor, manager, and technical specialist levels.

### **What does it cost?**

The cost of a training needs assessment depends on the size of center as well as the number of call types being handled. We will provide you a fixed quote (by telephone) for the assessment upon confirming the size and complexity of your operation. Up to one-half the cost of the assessment may be applied to public educational offerings from TCCS in 2003.

### **How can I learn more?**

Give us a call at **615-812-8400** or visit our web site at [www.thecallcenterschool.com](http://www.thecallcenterschool.com) to learn more about the Training Needs Assessment and other consulting and training services from The Call Center School.



## **“Controlling Costs” Remains a Top Challenge for Contact Centers, According to a Recent Survey Conducted by eOn Communications**

Contact Center Managers Predict Expansion of Multi-Media Contact Centers Through 2005

ATLANTA (September 9, 2002) - eOn Communications Corporation(tm) (NASDAQ: EONC), a leading provider of unified voice, e-mail and Web-based communications systems and software, announced findings of a recent survey taken at its annual Users Group Conference. The results show that 75 percent of contact center managers polled see “controlling costs” as the main challenge facing contact centers industry-wide in the year.

Also remaining at the top of the list of challenges that contact center managers will face in the next 12 months are: finding ways to increase customer satisfaction; decreasing agent turnover; and, measuring ROI in a meaningful way to show bottom-line results. Of the respondents whose contact centers are not already multi-media enabled, approximately 50 percent indicated that they plan to expand their centers’ technology capabilities by 2004 by

implementing e-mail and Web chat tools in their contact center. In addition, more than half of the respondents believe the call center industry, as a whole, will successfully transform itself into a true multi-media contact center environment by 2005.

Conducted as part of an ongoing measurement of the contact center marketplace, this study is comprised of responses from attendees at the recently concluded eOn 2002 Users Group Conference. The survey represents the views of contact center managers from the numerous industries that eOn serves, including: service bureaus; banking and finance; retail and catalogue sales; utilities and consumer services; telecommunications; transportation and hospitality; and, government operations including emergency 911. The eOn Users Group is independently operated by a collection of sophisticated contact center operators who use eOn’s eQueue® Multi-Media Contact Center Solution.

“Controlling costs while increasing customer satisfaction has always been the backbone of call center success; now more than ever contact center managers are looking for immediate ROI to justify contact center expenditures,” said

Kelly Bevan, eOn’s vice president and chief marketing officer. “We are encouraged that our user community are also focused on implementing programs to better serve their customers.”

Bevan concluded, “Advanced technology, such as our eQueue solution, provides contact center managers with many benefits, such as the ability to more quickly respond to customer requests, and more effectively communicate with customers and agents. Even more importantly in today’s market, technology offers users a true lower total cost of ownership.”

About eOn eQueue® Multi-Media Contact Center Solution The eOn eQueue® is a multi-media contact center offering a comprehensive and unified solution for customer interaction management. The universal or single queue approach enables contact centers to interact more efficiently with their customers regardless of the media. The eQueue applications include multi-media routing of all interaction types with robust ACD functionality, complete telephony capability, email, Web chat and Web collaboration, integrated voice response, voice mail with unified messaging, fax messaging, quality assurance recording and a complete range of desktop devices and applications. The benefits of



using an eQueue are improved customer service and loyalty, increased agent productivity and lower cost of ownership.

About eOn Communications\*  
eOn Communications Corporation(tm) (NASDAQ: EONC) is a leading provider of unified voice, e-mail and Web-based communications systems and software for customer contact centers and general business applications. eOn helps enterprises communicate more effectively with customers, convert inquiries into sales, and increase customer satisfaction and loyalty. To find out more information about eOn Communications and its solutions, visit the World Wide Web at [www.eoncommunications.com](http://www.eoncommunications.com) or call 800-955-5321.

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## CALL CENTER FURNISHINGS/ERGONOMICS A CASE STUDY

Kaiser Permanente is one of the country's largest and most successfully managed healthcare organizations. KP wanted to increase efficiencies within its extensive network of facilities in the Orange County, California area. This eventually resulted in the planning of the centralized appointment center in Anaheim, which would consolidate 2 shifts of telephone operators working around the clock, extensive record keeping functions, as well as a staff of nurses providing information and referral services via telephone.

As many workstations were needed to accommodate two shifts daily, with users varying in size and physical requirements, flexibility was a particular challenge. In addition, the client had an ongoing national account relationship with a major manufacturer, as well as their own in-house construction company.

The space planning decision indicated that a Penta (5-person) workstation configuration would make the best use of available space. As neither KP's in-house contractors nor their primary supplier could construct the configuration, architect Michael Swain specified Do Group Systems' Spacemaker 2000™ (with CenterCore Technology)

workstations with the Airflow 2000™ air circulation and filtration system. The system's unique design saved Kaiser Permanente over 25% in floor space, as well as providing its integral "core" to accommodate the very extensive telecommunications lines required.

As a leading HMO, the client was very sensitive to providing excellent indoor air quality, and without question, Do Group Systems' Airflow 2000™ system provided both clean, purified air and thermal uniformity and comfort. Both KP and the architectural firm are very enthusiastic about the end result, and consider Do Group Systems' flexible and health-oriented design to be the perfect choice for a progressive healthcare provider.

"The Spacemaker 2000 installation gave Kaiser Permanente more room, cleaner air, and healthier, more productive employees. They're the perfect fit for an HMO. Management is so pleased, in fact, that they're considering installing additional Do Group Systems products in other company locations"

—Architect

Michael Swain,  
Michael Swain &  
Associates

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**SandCherry's** SoftServer platform, which serves as an applications and resource broker, provides the key to the integration, management, and deployment of IVR, speech-enabled, multimodal, and multimedia enhanced/next-generation applications and services. The SoftServer solution's scalable, vendor-independent architecture is the foundation for cost-effective application deployments.

"ASA brings a tremendous wealth of experience implementing speech-solutions for large enterprises," said Hal Julsen, senior vice president of worldwide sales at SandCherry. "We believe they will be a tremendous asset in driving the SoftServer platform's new breed of call center and self-service solutions."

"The SandCherry SoftServer platform opens the door for clients to receive a complete, more cost-effective solution, regardless of what they currently have in place," said Sally Arnold, executive vice president for ASA Solutions. "We believe this next-generation technology is essential to overall success in our industry and we are excited to be able to expand our offerings to benefit clients."

#### **About The SoftServer Platform**

SandCherry's SoftServer platform, which serves as an applications and resource broker, integrates, manages and simplifies the deployment of enhanced and next-generation services and applications such as voice-activated dialing, voice portals, unified messaging, and voice-enabled conferencing. By enabling faster, easier rollout of services on a large scale, the SoftServer increases the revenue potential from existing and new services. The platform is designed to be a key strategic tool in service deployment, speeding application integration and providing increased control and integrated management over disparate service elements.

#### **About SandCherry**

SandCherry, Inc. ([www.sandcherry.com](http://www.sandcherry.com)) is a communications software company based in Boulder, Colorado. SandCherry provides a new class of software platform, the SoftServer™, to enterprises and Communications Service Providers for the delivery and management of speech-enabled, multimodal, and multimedia enhanced and next-generation communications services. The SoftServer platform enables scalable, managed, deployment of speech-enabled

and media-rich communications services by providing real-time service control and management. SandCherry's SoftServer platform simplifies service solutions on legacy, wireless, and IP-based communications networks.

#### **About ASA Solutions**

ASA Solutions, Inc. ([www.asasolutions.com](http://www.asasolutions.com)) is an information technology service company that provides Interactive Voice Response Development, Advanced Speech Recognition, Text to Speech, and Technology Staffing Solutions to companies in a broad range of industries. ASA specializes in advanced distributed client/server computing technologies to implement cost effective, scalable open systems solutions for companies of all sizes. ASA has developed and deployed advanced speech applications in the Americas, Asia-Pacific, Canada and Europe. The Company was incorporated in 1994 and has its principal offices at 8040 East Morgan Trail, Suite 21, Scottsdale, Arizona 85258 ■



# QUESTIONNAIRE

**ATTN: Call Center Director**

**Are you considering outsourcing your call center functions to a near-shore location?**

**Are you seeking clearer diction and neutral accent call takers?**

**Do you wish to reduce associate turnover problems? (And related costs)**

**Is the stability of government important in your consideration of a near-shore outsource partner?**

**Would you participate in a sponsored pilot project?**

Fax your response to these questions to 305-567-2844 today and begin planning a strategic partnership with Barbados Investment & Development Corporation!

Website: [www.bidc.com](http://www.bidc.com)  
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Phone: 305-442-2269  
Fax: 305-567-2844



## ProCore Solutions Delivers Customer Service Training

ProCore Solutions and Cobb Energy employees have a unique opportunity to continue their education on the Cobb EMC campus. ProCore Solutions, an affiliate of Cobb Energy, has partnered with Georgia QuickStart and Chattahoochee Technical College to deliver a Certified Customer Service Specialist (CCSS) program at ProCore facilities.

The CCSS program, created by customer service industry experts, provides students with the basic principles of business, quality service, customer contact skills, and computer skills. Chattahoochee Tech is providing technology and training to ProCore Solutions' trainers who will deliver the comprehensive 154-hour program. Upon completion of the program, students will receive CCSS certification and 15 academic credit hours at Chattahoochee Tech. Students can apply the credit to other diploma and degree programs.

ProCore Solutions is the first Georgia company to certify its employees as trainers through the Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education (DTAE). It is also the first to send its entire call center through the accredited CCSS program. Greg Steele, ProCore Chief Operating Officer, said, "our success will be the benchmark that all others will try to reach."

Steele pursued the alliance partnership to improve proficiency and growth for ProCore employees. He expects CCSS training will help ProCore score high in customer satisfaction surveys. Steele says that "these results will have a direct impact on ProCore clients customers' loyalty."

According to Steele, through the increased satisfaction with customer service, ProCore "will retain more employees and increase employee loyalty. The company will also improve its ability to recruit highly qualified candidates with customer service-oriented career aspirations. These enhancements will improve the quality of

service ProCore provides its clients. In addition, ProCore can confidently solicit new business because of the improved skill level and awareness of our staff. That will lead to increased revenue for our clients and ProCore Solutions."

Another goal ProCore hopes to achieve as a result of the CCSS training is to become recognized as a certified Customer Contact Center through the Customer Operations Performance Center, Inc. (COPC) – 2000® standard. COPC is a proven system that will help ProCore achieve operational efficiency with high customer satisfaction and retention.

The Georgia DTAE seeks to make the CCSS a standard for creating professional employees who have direct customer contact.

From bank presidents, to bureaucrats, to high school students, anyone completing the CCSS program will benefit from the training and skills the program offers. Companies that employ Certified Customer Service Specialists can be confident that their employees have a strong

customer service foundation.

ProCore Solutions is a subsidiary of Cobb Energy Management Corporation, which is an affiliate of Cobb EMC. ProCore Solutions provides outsource and co-source call center services that include:

- 24/7 call center
- Inbound electric, gas, and telephone call handling services
- Product sales including DISH Network™, Surge Shield Surge Protection, myCobbweb.com Internet service, InterLink Control(SM) security monitoring, and lead generation
- Resolution of outage calls and high bill complaints

To learn more about ProCore Solutions call (678) 355-3550, email [drew.brown@procoresolutions.com](mailto:drew.brown@procoresolutions.com), or visit [www.procoresolutions.com](http://www.procoresolutions.com). ProCore Solutions is located in Marietta, Georgia at 1000 EMC Parkway.



## **PRODUCT ANNOUNCEMENT**

Bay Bridge 'Release 2.5 of CenterBridge' Scheduled For October 17, 2002

Release 2.5 of CenterBridge incorporates multiple new analysis and forecasting capabilities, as well as enhancements to existing functionality, that further extend the value and usability of the contact center industry's premier performance forecasting, planning and analysis tool.

### **New Features Include:**

Instant Budgeting™. Release 2.5 includes new financial metrics (including revenue, cost, and profit per call) and automated reporting features that significantly increases the detail and speed with which users can develop contact center budget scenarios and export them to spreadsheet or other budgeting applications.

Enhanced Staffing Optimizer. The staffing optimizer, which automatically develops multi-year hiring plans by week that minimize cost or maximize profit while meeting service quality goals, will now develop optimal termination plans. In addition, the Optimizer will now create hiring plans that meet quality targets on an "always vs. sometimes" basis (to smooth weekly hiring or termination schedules in the event of variable caller demand), as well as for selected time periods within the forecast horizon.

### **Expanded Staff Hour Shrinkage and Labor Productivity Analysis:**

CenterBridge now enables detailed analysis and "what-if's" around planned and unplanned labor hour shrinkage and provides multiple new labor productivity ratios.

Improved ACD Data Management Capabilities. The

process of importing contact detail information (from the ACD or workforce management system) that drives CenterBridge's simulation models is now fully automated. CenterBridge also now includes "manual override" capability for the system administrator to edit import data to create new contact behavioral assumptions.

### **About CenterBridge**

CenterBridge is an enterprise-class contact center planning and analysis tool that offers the power and accuracy of simulation-based modeling with the ease of use of an intuitive and feature rich user interface. Designed for the call center manager, workforce manager, of financial analyst/planner, CenterBridge dramatically reduces the time required to develop staffing plans, budgets, and performance forecasts, and significantly improves the quality of

center operations and strategic decisions with its unparalleled accuracy and analytic depth.

### **About Bay Bridge Decision Technologies, Inc.**

Bay Bridge Decision Technologies is a supplier of innovative software tools that improves the quality of decision-making in customer contact organizations through the practical application of advanced analytic technology.

[www.baybridgetech.com](http://www.baybridgetech.com).



## CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



# Delta Dental Uses Hammer On-Call Service from Empirix to Achieve Scalability and Performance Goals for New Contact Center Application

**DELTA DENTAL** *Empirix's Hammer On-Call: the only load testing service that duplicates real-world call volume and traffic and provides real-time performance data*

Delta Dental Plan of California needed to ensure that their IVR (interactive voice response) application for federal employees would meet customer expectations, especially under sudden spikes in call volume. The company faced a challenge, however: they were not confident that manual testing would give them the results they needed. To verify that their application would function properly and scale to handle the projected call volume, Delta Dental chose Empirix's Hammer On-Call IVR load testing service.

Delta Dental, the oldest and largest dental benefits carrier in the United States, provides coverage to one-quarter of Americans who have dental insurance. The California Delta Plan's Federal Services Division runs the procurement and administration of federal dental programs on behalf of a consortium of members of the Illinois-based Delta Dental Plans Association (DDPA). Nearly 600,000 Uniformed Services retirees and their family members are covered through the division's TRICARE Retiree Dental Program, which is operated under contract with the U.S. Department of Defense.

When Delta Dental began designing a new IVR application for its federal employee customers, Cheryl Levine, Delta Dental Telecommunications Analyst, made sure that load testing was included in the development plan. "It's always wise to expect some performance problems with a new application. Ensuring that our customers receive the highest quality experience is our number one priority. To make sure we eliminated any problems before the application went live, we knew we needed to load test the application and infrastructure by emulating real-world conditions."

"BECAUSE WE USED THE HAMMER ON-CALL SERVICE FOR LOAD TESTING, WE COULD BE CONFIDENT, EVEN BEFORE OUR APPLICATION WAS LAUNCHED, THAT IT WOULD SCALE TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF OUR FEDERAL EMPLOYEE CUSTOMERS. WE ELIMINATED PERFORMANCE PROBLEMS AND LAUNCHED OUR APPLICATION USING FIVE FEWER AGENTS THAN WE HAD ORIGINALLY ANTICIPATED WE WOULD NEED. THAT TRANSLATES TO A SIGNIFICANT SAVINGS FOR US."

-- CHERYL LEVINE,  
DELTA DENTAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS ANALYST

In the past, the company had tested its new applications manually. For this project, Levine thought that an automated service would speed the process and free her staff to focus on other tasks. To handle the load testing, she selected Hammer On-Call, the award-winning IVR load testing service from Empirix. Hammer On-Call test experts work with customers to develop a test strategy and then execute the test duplicating real world traffic patterns and call volumes. By emulating virtual callers dialing in over the Public Switch Telephone Network and replicating variations in traffic levels, the service helps companies identify and resolve errors and performance bottlenecks early in the development process. This, in turn, allows for errors and performance bottlenecks to be resolved before an application is put into production, producing significant savings - in time and development costs -- and improving the customer Quality of Experience.

Working with Levine and her team, a Hammer On-Call consultant from Empirix assessed the requirements for the application and designed the test strategy. Empirix then created numerous scripts that would emulate real world caller traffic patterns and properly stress the application and infrastructure.

A variety of different testing scenarios were developed and executed to ensure that the application could meet the expected call volume. For example, ramp tests were used to show the behavior of the evaluated system under test in relation to load,



## Customer Success Story (cont.): DeltaDental and Hammer On-Call

allowing teams in Michigan and California to view results at the same time. During a typical ramp test, the call volume (measured in calls per minute, or CPM) begins at a low rate and increases to a high level. During steady load tests, the call volume is held at a constant CPM rate for a sustained period. These tests show a system's response to load over time and help detect problems with resources capacity and performance.

Taking this testing approach, Hammer On-Call helped detect a number of problems. For example, it found that the system was routing calls to an agent on the initial connection. Through iterative testing, the problem was revealed: the number of assigned ports was insufficient to meet the anticipated demand, causing the switch to route calls directly to an agent. Increasing the number of available ports quickly rectified the problem.

"Because we used the Hammer On-Call service for load testing, we could be confident, even before our application was launched, that it would scale to meet the requirements of our federal employee customers," said Levine. "Through iterative testing, Hammer On-Call experts were able to drill down into the test data, accurately isolate system bottlenecks, and let us know exactly where they were occurring. As a result, we eliminated performance problems and launched our application using five fewer agents than we had originally anticipated we would need. That translates to a significant savings for us."

The service also helped Delta Dental identify a problem in the transaction that is used to identify callers. "When valid social security numbers were reported to the system, they were seen to be invalid," Levine recalls. "Testing showed us that the problem was related to the number of connections allowed between the telephony application and the database. When all the connections were in use, attempts at connections behaved as though the social security number was invalid. By increasing the number of available connections, we were able to eliminate the problem."

"WITH HAMMER ON-CALL, WE WERE ABLE TO TEST OUR IVR WITHOUT JEOPARDIZING OUR DEPLOYMENT SCHEDULE, AND LAUNCH OUR APPLICATION WITH CONFIDENCE THAT IT WOULD MEET OUR QUALITY STANDARDS."

-ALISON RUBLE,  
DELTA DENTAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

A similar capacity problem was found - and easily fixed. Testing showed that one of every 44 (plus or minus 4) placed calls were being dropped. The Empirix testing team had seen this type of problem in other engagements and identified the problem as a poorly configured port on the IVR. Likewise, when call flows that utilized text-to-speech showed problems under load, testing confirmed that more text-to-speech ports were needed. "We added ports to make sure that our customers would always get the correct response to their queries," Levine said. "If we had not detected the port issues and the text-to-speech issues, we could have had many unhappy callers, who either would have been disconnected or encountered dead air."

"With Hammer On-Call, we were able to test our IVR without jeopardizing our deployment schedule, and launch our application with confidence that it would meet our quality standards," said Alison Ruble, Telecommunications Manager. "The service's Web-based interface showed us real-time test results along with historical data, allowing us to easily compare current and past performance. This allowed us to see how incremental changes to the underlying system affected performance of the application and ensured that the modifications we made resulted in clear performance gains. We'll continue to use Hammer On-Call to load test our IVR applications to ensure that our customers get the information or assistance they need when they call us - despite traffic level spikes."



HAMMER ON-CALL  
EMPIRIX  
JULY 2002

**HAMMER ON-CALL** IS A MANAGED LOAD TESTING SERVICE THAT EMULATES THOUSANDS OF REAL-WORLD CALLERS DIALING INTO YOUR IVR. BY DUPLICATING REAL-WORLD OPERATING CONDITIONS, PERFORMANCE ERRORS AND BOTTLENECKS CAN BE QUICKLY PINPOINTED AND RESOLVED PRIOR TO DEPLOYMENT, SAVING TIME AND MONEY

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## eOn Communications

*Interaction Management for the Customer Era*

### Product Of The Month

The traditional call center's voice-only capability has now expanded to include alternative, multi-media channels, such as e-mail and real-time Web agents, to meet customers' ever-growing communication needs. According to Gartner Group, by 2003, more than 45 percent of all contact center traffic will be initiated by means other than a telephone. And by 2005, 70 percent of call centers will support integrated live Web contacts and/or e-mail response management systems for their telephone-based agents.

While there is an industry consensus of where the future of contact centers is going, there are new

challenges as companies integrate media. There are specific steps that companies need to follow to best integrate multi-media channels, and there are also specific issues that companies must consider when working with a multi-media contact center solution vendor.

In order to determine how best to integrate multi-media channels in your contact center, you should first determine how your company will manage the three phases of automatic contact distribution. These phases include determining how your company: wants customers to contact them, wants to treat customers, and wants to handle customer data.

eOn's eQueue® Multi-Media Contact Center Solution offers a

comprehensive and unified solution for customer interaction management. The universal or single queue approach enables contact centers to interact more efficiently with their customers regardless of the media. The eQueue's single queue technology, open architecture and suite of comprehensive applications simplifies the technical, training and supervisory burdens of multi-media contact management, while enabling agents to engage in more sophisticated interactions that enhance customer satisfaction.

The benefits of using eQueue's proven and reliable platform are improved customer service and loyalty, increased agent productivity and lowered cost of ownership. The eQueue provides additional benefits that multi-media contact centers can achieve with a unified workspace management approach, including reduced administrative burdens,

lowered operating costs and improved contact center performance.

eOn's Supervisor WorkSpace, the management and reporting tool for the eQueue solution, provides contact center managers with a flexible set of monitoring, reporting and administrative capabilities necessary to ensure all forms of customer contacts are managed efficiently and at the highest service levels. With its package of standard reports, Supervisor WorkSpace allows contact center managers to effectively track agent performance and customer activity. Supervisor WorkSpace also provides real-time management displays and alerts, and can be configured for quick and easy identification of customer contact patterns and trends. Additionally, the eQueue provides all the agent productivity tools needed in a contact center through an intuitive graphical user interface, displaying each customer



interaction as an icon on the toolbar, complete with unique identifiers and visual alerts. Agents have easy access to the customer's contact history, and can view the data from all interactions that have occurred with a particular customer and follow the customer interaction through resolution, whether transferred or put on hold or placed in a follow-up status. Based on routing logic, the agent is also presented with a knowledge base to assist with each interaction.

The eQueue applications include multi-media routing of all interaction types with robust ACD functionality, complete telephony capability, e-mail, Web chat, integrated voice response, voice mail with unified messaging, fax messaging, quality assurance recording and a complete range of desktop devices and applications. Features include:  
*Comprehensive Applications...*Robust

functionality  
*Modular Solution...*Use what you need when you need it  
*Scalable...*From tens to thousands of agents  
*Reliable...*Proven in the industry  
*Universal Queue...*Single queue to manage all forms of media  
*Open...*Standards-based, interoperable with 3rd-party systems  
*Powerful Management...*Displays and reports  
*IP-enabled...*Including VoIP  
*Future-Proofed...*Allows for emerging technologies

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#### **Company Overview**

eOn Communications™ is a leading provider of unified voice, e-mail and Web-based communications

systems and software for customer contact centers and general business applications. eOn helps enterprises communicate more effectively with customers, convert inquiries into sales, and increase customer satisfaction and loyalty. eOn serves a wide variety of industries and applications – such as banking and insurance, government and emergency, service bureaus, and catalogue and reservation companies. eOn goes the extra mile every step of the way to provide a comprehensive state-of-the-art solution to our customers. eOn's experienced professional services team offers planning, design, implementation, development and integration of custom applications, system consulting and project management services. eOn also provides ongoing technical support and maintenance 24 hours a day, seven days a week. At eOn, we take a "no compromise" approach to

providing the best solutions and service in the industry for customer interaction management needs today and in the future. ■



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