

Call Center Times

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Secrets of a Great Employment Interview
(Hint: Are you asking the right questions?)
By Joseph T. Sefcik, Jr., President, Employment Technologies

What You Can Learn From Your Least Satisfied Customers by David Lewy

Call Center Social (Media) Hour by Mary Cook, Call Center Industry Practice Manager, Varolii

Job Opening: RalphLauren.com Hiring Team Manager Customer Contact Center

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Rewarding Excellent Service by Erika Blanchard

Has the Homeshoring Revolution Fizzled?
By Teresa Sinel

How to Integrate Social Media, the Newest Customer Contact Channel, into your Quality Monitoring Program — June 7, 2011 10am pacific/1pm eastern

12th Annual Call Center Week - June 13-17, 2011

ICMI Announces the ACCE 2011 Conference & Expo to Bring Contact Professionals Together to Better Understand “the Voice of the Customer.”
– June 13-16, 2011

MTA-NEW YORK CITY TRANSIT (NYCT)
REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ)

Direct Response Marketing: A Primer
By Heather Carter

How Smartphones Can Make Contact Managers Manage Smarter – A College Kid’s Perspective by Jimin Zheng, Marketing Assistant Intern, Centergistic Solutions

2011 SHLPreVisor Business Outcomes Study Report Proves Impact of People Intelligence on Driving Success in Contact Centers and Other Key Business Functions

CLASSIFIED AD

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(NYCT)

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ)

RFQ #: 6994

DUE DATE: 7/7/11

TITLE: Operation of Paratransit Call Center.

More detailed info & the MTA-NYCT contact for the above solicitations can be found on our website at

www.mta.info/nyct/procure/nyctproc.htm

The logo for SHL PreVisor features the letters 'shl' in a stylized, lowercase font with a red dot above the 'i'. To the right, the word 'PREVISOR' is written in a larger, uppercase, sans-serif font.

HERE ARE THE LOGOS OF THE LEADING PROVIDERS OF CALL CENTER PRODUCTS AND SERVICES...CLICK ON LOGO TO LEARN MORE ABOUT EACH COMPANY!





RANTS & RAVES!

Randomly Timed Musings

Are You Using 20th Century Solutions for 21st Century Problems?

By Kathleen M. Peterson

Chief Vision Officer, PowerHouse Consulting, Inc.

We are in the 21st century. This is not news to anyone I'm sure; although if you watch *Celebrity Apprentice* you may have witnessed two contestants debating the statement. It was embarrassing to watch ... as is so much of reality TV. Anyway, I believe there are many examples in business these days that point to the question, "Are you using 20th century thinking for 21st century problems?"

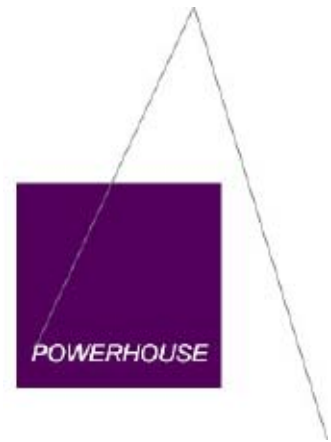
For example ... I recently listened to a case study delivered by a major U.S. corporation at a conference I attended. The case study described how they responded to complaints showing up on Facebook and other social media. Their "solution" was to create a "new" Contact Center to handle these issues; new management, new reporting structure, new location etc. They seeded the Center with "the best managers, supervisors, and staff" from the existing Contact Center. They set up in new digs and declared their efforts a huge success, so much so that they were adding CSRs at a very rapid clip (at 22 and heading for 30). So *what's wrong with that?* Well, in my view this is a perfect example of 20th century thinking. The characteristics I see that led me to this conclusion are (1) creating a "silo," (2) poaching talent from an existing business unit, and (3) isolating social media as a separate and distinct channel for customer complaints. By their own admission, this company is solving the exact same problems as the existing Contact Center and utilizing the exact same policies, processes, and appeasements. No

customer can ring the "I won" bell by being serviced via the social media channel.

What I see here is the addition of a new silo; silos are very much 20th century. They are a requirement in the industrial revolution business model of separation and isolation and supported by budget allocations, executive posturing, internal process failures, and cross-functional dysfunction. Silos do support the command and control model of management which in many cases has only been dressed up to look like a collaborative model.

In my example, the fact that there already exists an operation charged with solving the EXACT same problems bore no weight in the decision to open up a new, separate, and isolated business unit. Poaching the talent from the existing operation further illustrates that the skill set required to facilitate resolution had been well developed in the existing business unit. There seemed to be no consideration for the reality of leaving positions vacant in the existing unit, potentially to be filled by less skilled resources and creating the possibility of actually escalating the social media "talk." In a somewhat perverse way, this dynamic could *embolden* the new group. In fact, the presenters were quite smug about the fact that they were solving issues "faster" than the existing unit. Of course ... you took the talent!!!

Addressing social media "talk" as a totally separate channel simply creates a new environment for solving the same problems. (And just for the record, this organization has yet another unit - silo - handling contacts from the website.) *Is this a solution someone under 40 would recommend?* I doubt it. The challenge to business is that there is a platoon of young professionals managing 21st century operations who simply think differently. In my experience, they think in terms of finding out where the



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problem is coming from. *How do we capture the real issue and fix it rather than continue to throw people at the symptoms of the issue?* (Whether your people are responding to social media or managing internet communities, the cost of resources remains and most likely grows, while the core issue lingers unattended.)

I also believe it is kind of dumb to continue to create separate units (Budget, Facility, Technology, Management) rather than align customer contact to be managed under one roof so to speak. Consider the growing presence of Customer Experience executives overseeing all units in the Customer Contact Continuum ... that is 21st century thinking. Sure, in many cases it makes sense to separate the functions within the group. But talent generation and utilization, problem identification, business analysis, and process correction all increase in potential when reporting into the same stream.

This is why I would characterize the establishment of a third operation to respond to the same issues as a 20th century solution. Some may point to this unit and call it innovative. Hardly ... the customer is the only innovative party! The customers are engaging in a 21st century channel regarding a 21st century product; yet behind the curtain lays a 20th century business model. It is one that costs more, is less efficient, and continues to address and resolve only symptomatic problems. More often than not, the problems are rooted in the legacy infrastructures. They are the result of mergers, acquisitions, poor technology decisions, silos, budgets, cross-functional dysfunction, and human conditions.

Legacies run deep and can only be eradicated by a massive change in leadership thinking. *Do you consider yourself a 21st century problem solver?* It takes focus and belief that in fact there are new and better ways to operate,

organize, and deliver on the Customer Experience. Sometimes it is just the ability to swallow the fact that 20th century processes and infrastructure may not simply need to be improved. They may need to be REPLACED, not tweaked or band-aided, but totally REWORKED to address the business needs and realities of today.

What are the characteristics of 21st century solutions? In my experience, they include several inter-related components:

Senior level willingness to listen and act and a passion for adoption and integration of new technologies and processes

Problem statements that are clear and written without fear of “offending” the offenders; resources are included because of genuine skill, competency, and experience rather than the nature of the position (and they bring something more to the table than their “opinion”)

Organizational models that group talent and function to deliver on the branded Customer Experience

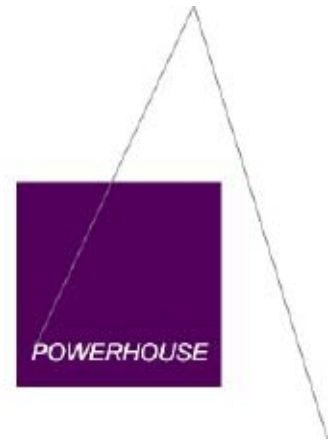
Intelligent use and access to technology internally and externally

Smart and proactive practices to share relevant actionable information

Passion for discovery and the utilization of advanced tools to identify and report on issues - as intent on elimination as automation

Respect for the cross-generational workforce

As well, expectations must be clear and sensible. “You have to” cut your budget by X% is definitely 20th century thinking. *How about* “we need to” increase revenue by X, manage our margins to Y, capture more market share *and wallet*



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share, and promote the branded experience? Let's figure out how your unit will contribute ... now there's a 21st century directive! Maybe the outcome will be the same. But the process will be improved, the ownership of the solution will be clear, and the risk of increased customer issues will be mitigated. *What do you think? Are you ready, willing, and able?*

The challenge to many businesses stuck in the 20th century management model may not come in the form of "reworking" the GIANTS. It may be that as the giants lumber along, a nimble and smart innovator will streak past them at such speed as to be invisible to the old trained eye ... until it devours them!

"I cannot help fearing that men may reach a point where they look on every new theory as a danger, every *innovation* as a *toilsome trouble*, every *social advance* as a *first step toward revolution*, and that they may absolutely refuse to move at all." *Alexis de Tocqueville, French Historian and Political Scientist (1805 - 1859)*

All the best,

Kathleen

(#49, Are You Using 20th Century Solutions for 21st Century Problems?, June 2011)

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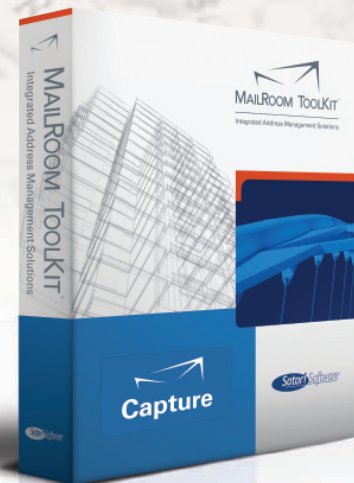
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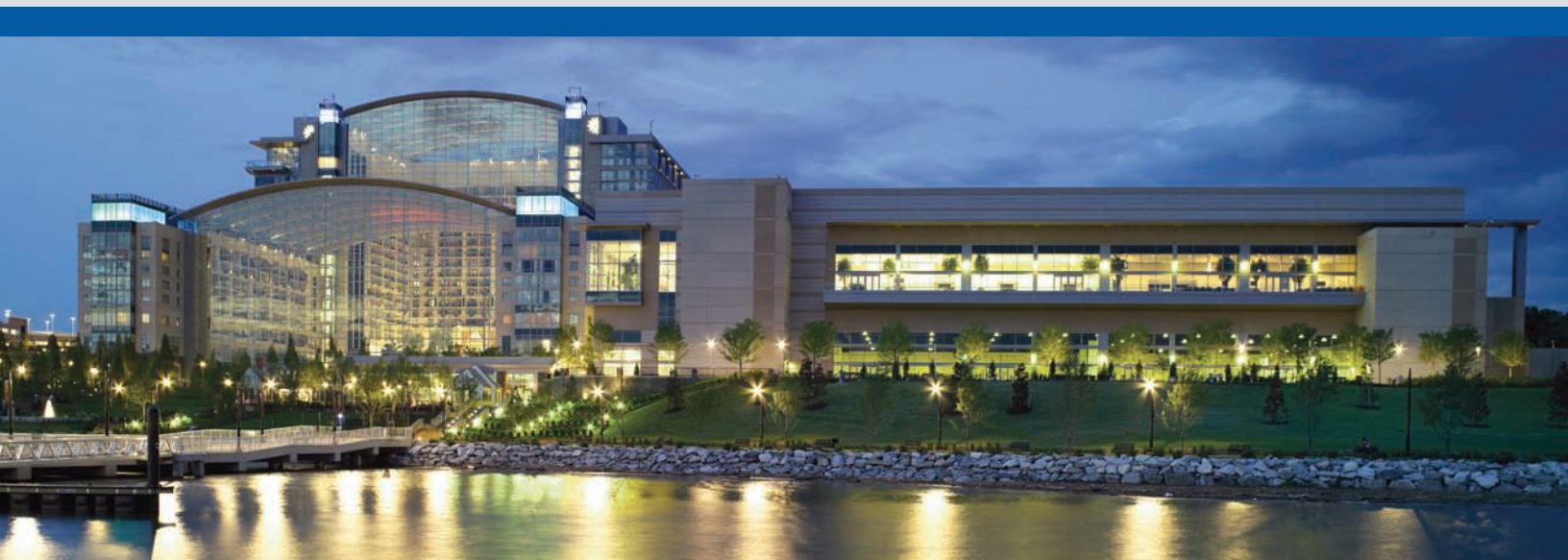
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