

# Call Center Times

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## Is This A Profession?

By Mikael Blaisdell

In the course of doing presentations at industry gatherings and meetings of professional associations over the years, I've often posed a tough challenge: Is the role of a customer contact center manager or executive a professional one?

The answers vary. While many have been quick to proclaim themselves as professionals, when challenged to back up that claim with solid reasoning and evidence, silence has all too often been the only response. How would you reply? Do you consider yourself as a professional contact center manager? Should the role of Customer Contact Center Manager / Executive be considered as a distinct profession? If your answer is yes, can you back up your claim?

Claiming the status of a professional is something that anyone can do, regardless of job or personal qualifications. After all, no one owns the trademark on the term "professional." There is no governing body that holds the authority to grant or deny the right to use the term. But there can be a dramatic difference between a self-proclaimed professional and one that is so regarded by a community in

terms of the respect and material rewards pertaining to that status. Why should the world of corporations and companies regard and treat you and your customer support/service peers as members of a true profession?

There are two levels to be considered here. First, there are the core competencies of a customer contact center manager/executive that are required by the operational responsibilities of that role. Do you have those skills and knowledge? The answer to that question has to do with your claim to being a professional in your own eyes. To support that claim, if indeed you make it, you may offer evidence of some external certification as to your competence, or simply rely on the entries of your resume that testify to increasing levels of responsibility. But, as we'll discuss later, there is more than just the operational level that needs to be considered in determining the validity of the claim to being a professional. And there is more than just your own perception to be considered.

At the operational level, the key competency groups are Process, People, Technology and Metrics. As a manager/executive, how strong

are your skills?

Process Management. Inefficiencies in workflow handling have crippled many a contact center, wasting substantial amounts of time and causing extreme frustration in all group members. If both you and a team of your agents/ reps separately diagrammed the workflow of your center, would the two pictures match? They don't in most centers that I visit, and that fact tends to come as a shock when the gaps are revealed. Typically, the discrepancy is because the center managers haven't taken the time to test and validate their own assumptions about the operation. Following my standard assessment procedure, I always ask: Do you know the pattern of your incoming contacts? When are the peaks and valleys likely to occur, and what causes them? What is the Average Handle Time (Talk Time + Wrap Up = AHT) for a contact? Do you know the basic contact

categories and their volumes? What are the knowledge requirements and resolution rates for each contact category in your center? Unfortunately, the answers all too often are not forthcoming. This information, and the skills/means to acquire it, needs to be at the manager's immediate disposal. It's the bedrock of your operation. If you aren't measuring these things, you simply aren't managing your center – and your claim to professionalism is open to serious doubt.

People. This includes organizational structure, staff utilization, and leadership. The manager needs to know how to forecast staffing level requirements, and to optimally organize the people of the team in accordance with the process flow. At least a basic skill level in the use of scheduling and forecasting tools is required, so that an accurate determination of an attainable service level target can be made from the AHT and the contact



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volume/distribution patterns. Skills in assessing, choosing, and leading people on multiple levels towards a common goal are also on the core requirements list.

**Technology.** The manager at a minimum should be familiar with basic telephony, case/call-trackers and knowledgebase systems. These are the basic technological building blocks of the customer contact center, and the manager must know how to deploy and manage the use of these tools. Knowing how to integrate a web site into the center's toolkit is another core competency. Past the basics, there are monitor boards, automated e-mailer handlers and other items that can have a powerful impact. The manager need not know how to program these tools, but they do need to know how to use them effectively in the furtherance of the center's mission.

**Metrics.** Underlying the areas of Process, People and Technology, there is the crucial requirement that the center manager must know how to select and use the right metrics on all levels and aspects of the operation. One of the critical, and all too often overlooked, metrics is cost. What is the precise economic benefit that your group brings to your company? What is the cost of that benefit? The competency requirement here is to be able to employ metrics that consistently tie back into the mission/strategy of the group, that provide the information the manager needs in order to be effective.

It takes time to acquire and develop the skills and knowledge required of an effective customer contact center manager. It takes even more time to keep those skills and knowledge up to date. If your career path will take you out of the contact center management within a few years, to Development or Quality Assurance or Marketing, development of those skills beyond the minimum may not make much sense. Here is where your personal decision as to whether or not this is a profession, and you a professional, is critical. If it is and you are, you'll invest in the development and maintenance of your personal skill set. Otherwise, you probably won't.

### **The Role of a Professional**

But apart from the operational competencies, there is an even more important factor in distinguishing a professional from a person who simply serves in a particular job before going elsewhere. What do you, as a professional, profess? What's the vision of your role, what is your enduring and unique value-add to the company? How do you fit into the overall corporate strategy? You as a manager need to answer these questions for yourself in evaluating your own performance, but the appraisal definitely doesn't stop there. Does the Senior Management of your organization regard the job of the customer contact center manager or executive as a professional role? The answer to that question is

probably a function of how well you have presented that role and its overall value to the company to them.

Beyond, or more properly, *before*, the areas of Process and People and their supporting factors of Technology and Metrics, there is an even more important aspect called **Strategy**. The key competencies of Strategy are Vision and Communication. Where does the Customer Contact Center fit into the overall strategy of your organization? Are you the Break/Fix folks, or do you serve in a much wider and more strategically important role such as Customer Relationship Management? Have you communicated that perception to your company's Management in such a way that they could buy into that view?

All too often, the customer contact center is about some form or flavor of break/fix. Something went wrong, and the team in the center has the responsibility for doing whatever they can to correct the situation. While Break/Fix is definitely a recognizable strategy, it is not likely to be one that will take you into the ranks of senior management as a peer and a recognized professional unless you can generate and use significant profit contributions from your group to increase your visibility and value to the organization. If your break/fix operation generates a significant percentage of the company's net profits, and you've used that fact properly, you, too, may be or become a

Vice President in more than name. In general, however, break/fix is usually not seen as a profession, nor is it usually deemed worthy of inclusion in the Senior Management team.

Customer Relationship Management, on the other hand, offers a much better chance for being perceived as a profession. Sales people, who go out and find the customers and bring them home to the company, are definitely seen (and compensated) as professionals. The reason for this is not hard to see. The sales folks have a direct and very, very visible connection to the corporate revenues. Their profession, however, is much more about finding new customers than it is about keeping them. Sales people, in their own view, are Hunters. They pride themselves on their ability to find and close new sales, new business. As "Top Guns," their compensation is almost invariably and overwhelmingly tied to those new sales. Here is where the CRM opportunity for the customer contact team begins to unfold, for CRM is about keeping customers after they've been found. It's about maintaining and increasing the ongoing revenue streams from the existing customer base. CRM is about farming, and that's where the real wealth comes from. A simple comparison of the costs of getting new customers vs. making sales to existing ones will prove this point very quickly.

If the vision of the customer contact center and its organization is broadened so



that its purpose becomes the ongoing profitable maintenance of the company-customer relationship, and the role of the members of the team becomes that of Account/Relationship Managers, then some interesting things happen. The metrics applied to the group change, because the prime factors are now profitability and customer retention rates. The operation can be put on a sound business basis of cost and profit, and its contribution to the overall success of the corporation can be easily determined. With the enhanced visibility, the traditional rule about organizational status, that *Power Follows Money*, can now begin to have its effect.

Sales is a profession.

Engineering is a profession. Accounting is a profession. CRM can be one too. All it takes is a vision and people to profess it. Will you be one of them?

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## CASE STUDY

### Top Ten Best Practices in Agent Management

By Karen F. Browne, Vice President, PeopleScout

We all know that a company is only as good as its employees. Therefore, hiring and retaining top employees is a mission-critical part of any call center's operations strategy. Based on our own experience, and from consulting with hundreds of client call centers, the following are PeopleScout's Top Ten Practices for keeping its call center staffed with productive and effective agents.

#### 1. **Acquire Talent.**

PeopleScout's philosophy within the staffing industry is that *people are our product*. This requires a commitment to secure

talented individuals with a high ability to perform in an organization that expects operational excellence. At PeopleScout, we have determined that these outstanding individuals require deployment of selection processes to distinguish top performers from mediocre employees. This is best achieved by establishing a multi-tier process that moves quality candidates through the process in a timely manner, ensuring that exceptional people are recognized and given reason to stay.

#### 2. **Sustain a Culture where Excellence is the Norm.**

Talented performers expect excellence throughout the organization. PeopleScout empowers employees to add value at all levels, and with this approach, accountability at all levels is a natural byproduct. We proactively build a "pride factor" into our deliverables; hence our entire population is committed to ensuring that everyone is contributing to a strong work product. In essence, client satisfaction is as important to our call center agents as to a director or manager in client services.

3. **Be Flexible.** Every day call centers struggle with the immense challenges of meeting client needs and juggling hundreds of individual schedules and requests. Talented and experienced employees return performance and loyalty to employers who are flexible and considerate of work/life balance. Organizations that deploy rigid, inflexible scheduling exclude excellent pools of employees that offer significant people advantages. At PeopleScout, we designate one full-time employee to coordinate schedule flexibility for call center agents. The result is that we retain employees at a much higher rate, as we work together around their school, family and outside interests. The extra cost of a full-time resource in scheduling is returned in 20

additional employees staying with the company on an annual basis.

#### 4. **Recognize, Recognize, Recognize.**

While optimal work performance is expected, without question, everyone enjoys recognition. In addition to monthly and annual awards for outstanding performance, do not miss opportunities to acknowledge effort in other meaningful ways. Financial incentives are only one way to recognize employees. Encourage executives and managers to walk the call center floor and personally congratulate and thank agents who are doing exceptional work. At PeopleScout, we personally thank every call center employee by mailing a handwritten birthday card from the vice president of operations, acknowledging the importance of their contribution and letting them know how much we enjoy having them as part of our team. Exercise creativity in recognizing employees, and understand that the biggest impact does not always come from a financial reward.

#### 5. **Understand Impact and Target Incentives Accordingly.**

Incentives are a great way to add some extra energy around initiatives that need added attention. When determining an incentive program it is important that you understand what the improved behavior gets you in terms of returning dollars to the



business. Everyone understands the importance of attendance within the call center industry and PeopleScout has clearly defined what perfect attendance buys us and has structured a program accordingly. "Neglect your Rent" is a program where we pay an employee's monthly rent or mortgage (up to \$1,200 for full-time employees and \$600 for part-time) for eligible employees with perfect attendance. Agents with perfect attendance are entered into a raffle in which one agent is randomly selected and we "pay their rent for the month!" This program drives excitement and also really incites agents to go the extra step to arrive on time and keep their attendance record clean.

#### **6. Share Information.**

Companies that are the best at what they do don't hoard information; they share it. By letting our employees know what is going on at the company they become better employees and develop into a stronger part of our network. We have a weekly newsletter that we include with each employee's paycheck. The newsletter introduces new employees to the company, lists agents who received perfect quality scores, highlights birthdays for that week and provides client information. We

also have a company intranet site that agents can check stay informed about all the latest company and industry news.

#### **7. Train for Career**

**Progression.** Opportunity for advancement has an unmatched impact on keeping employees motivated. PeopleScout feels that by staffing our call center operation with talented and professional employees we have a built-in cherry-picking system for other departments. In the past year, more than 40 employees that started as call center agents have moved on to higher positions within the PeopleScout organization. This also has a significant impact on time to fill and overall recruiting costs.

#### **8. Mentor and Build Teams.**

All agents, especially new agents, need a mentor to guide them through their career. PeopleScout fosters a mentorship atmosphere to develop tomorrow's leaders and maintain our culture of excellence. We also use a variety of methods to ensure all our employees are a valuable, contributing part of our team – and we uncover problems that may have not been noticed otherwise.

**9. Be Current.** Only by using the latest technology can a call center offer its customers the

best service and retain its best employees. This is why we have agent focus groups that identify technology issues and brainstorm future enhancements. By interacting and performing as a team to identify and tackle technology issues, we improve our overall product and help retain quality talent.

**10. Take Time for Fun.** In the call center industry, attitude on the phone is vital to quality. Only by creating a comfortable, welcoming atmosphere can we ensure a positive attitude from our agents, and enjoy reduced turnover as well. Providing recreational facilities and break areas where employees at all levels of the company can socialize improves overall morale. By inviting top-performing agents to company functions such as awards dinners, and by rewarding them with perks such as event tickets, PeopleScout is able to keep "Call Center Burn-out" to a minimum.

— Karen Browne is Vice President of PeopleScout, an outsourced candidate screening and processing solutions company; a high-tech, high-touch solution to recruitment needs. ■

## **NEWS**

Talisma Seizes Customer

Interaction Management Market Opportunities  
Talisma signs over 100 customers YTD and cements its enterprise Customer Interaction Management leadership position

Bellevue, WA October 19, 2005  
Talisma(TM), a leading provider of enterprise Customer Interaction Management (CIM) solutions, announced today that it has signed more than 100 new customers in the first three quarters of 2005 and has doubled revenue year-to-year, documenting record growth and validating Talisma's Customer Interaction Management market leadership.

Talisma's continued success translates into a positive bottom line effect for its customers, as more companies are empowered to dramatically improve service quality while broadening the channels of communication they offer to their customers. For example, just one of Talisma's customers manages more than 24 million live customer interactions annually using Talisma CIM. In addition, Talisma is rapidly expanding its Fortune 500 customer base, signing an average of one new Fortune 500 customer per month and often displacing competitive



products. This demonstrates the strength of Talisma's offering and highlights the market demand for scalable interaction management solutions.

Canara Bank, Recreational Equipment, Inc, (REI), Allscripts, ProQuest, HealthNet, and Navitus Health Solutions are among the companies that recently purchased Talisma products and services.

"Talisma allows us to support each of our customers in ways that were impossible before," said Debbie Ludka, VP and Chief Compliance Officer at Navitus Health Solutions.

"With Talisma we get a completely integrated and auditable view of our customer interactions, which is critically important in the pharmacy benefit management industry. Additionally, Talisma provides us with the ability to tailor different contact channels for members, pharmacists, providers, and clients, thus optimizing the service experience for each group."

"We're at a critical and exciting juncture in Talisma's history and our footing in the market is solid," said Dan Vetras, CEO, Talisma Corporation. "This year's momentum is a direct result of our commitment to the Customer

Interaction Management space, our dedication to support our customers' evolving needs, and our ability to execute on key business goals. I anticipate more and more companies will turn to Talisma to enable their critical interaction management strategies."

Talisma CIM combines a variety of powerful Internet and traditional communication channels with integrated knowledge management and advanced reporting, allowing businesses to optimize support processes, increase customer satisfaction, and reduce costs. Talisma's scaleable and proven products are ideal for global businesses, of all sizes, looking to achieve a rapid return on investment and consistently deliver an exceptional customer experience.

###

**Richardson Launches Sales Coaching Assessment and Diagnostic Tool**

PHILADELPHIA , PA — Richardson ([www.richardson.com](http://www.richardson.com)), a leading sales training and consulting firm, announced the launch of a new 360° Sales Coaching Assessment and Diagnostic Tool as a part of its

comprehensive Sales Leadership and Coaching Curriculum.

Richardson's new online tool provides Managers with feedback on how they, their Managers, Peers, and Direct Reports perceive them relative to the impact of their sales leadership and coaching.

The assessment consists of 28 targeted questions which are based on Richardson's 27 years of research and experience in working with world-class sales organizations. Richardson's Web-based assessments and diagnostic tools are powered by SkillMeasure ([www.skillmeasure.com](http://www.skillmeasure.com)).

The assessment can stand-alone or can be integrated with Richardson's Sales Leadership and Coaching training. When integrated, Managers receive confidential data from the assessment as a part of the training to provide them with insights into their strengths and areas for improvement and to motivate behavior change.

"We are extremely excited to launch our Sales Coaching Assessment and Diagnostic Tool," said Linda Richardson, President and CEO of Richardson. "Turning effective Managers into effective Coaches remains a challenge for most sales organizations. Because many Sales Managers come up through the

ranks from sales and their sales skills are their strong suite, they often need to build equally strong management skills. The feedback on their coaching styles, from the assessment, helps open their eyes to the new skills required to grow others. It is the combination of the assessment data, practical coaching skills and process, and the specific coaching plans for developing their teams and themselves created at the end of the training that is a catalyst for transition to coach."

###

**IN EMPIRIX SURVEY, 4 OUT OF 5 CONTACT CENTER PROS REPORT THAT TECHNOLOGY PROBLEMS REGULARLY IMPACT PRODUCTIVITY**

Survey of ACCE attendees focuses on technology's impact on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

BEDFORD, Mass. - Empirix® Inc., the leading provider of testing and monitoring solutions for VoIP, contact center and Web technologies, announced the results of a survey conducted at the recent Annual Call Center Exhibition (ACCE) conference on call center technology and management. The survey focused on the impact that



technology has on contact center Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) metrics commonly used to measure the efficiency and quality of service provided by a contact center. Examples of KPIs include time-to-answer, queue length and first-call resolution rate.

Among the survey findings:

- When asked how often technology problems negatively impact agents or the caller experience, four out of five answered "Often" or "Sometimes;"
- 14 percent of respondents reported that their contact centers miss their KPIs every day, and 32 percent - nearly one in three - reported missing their KPIs at least once a week;
- 60 percent of respondents believe that technology problems are the primary cause behind failure to meet KPIs; and
- 54 percent of respondents are first notified of technology problems by their customers.

68 percent of respondents categorized themselves as "Contact Center Management" and 18 percent categorized themselves as "Information Technology Management/Staff." The balance of respondents were Line-of-Business

Management, Customer Service Representatives or Other.

"The data clearly show that technology problems have a major impact on overall contact center productivity," said Frank Moreno, Director of Product Marketing at Empirix. "Most contact centers apply substantial resources toward ensuring the quality of live agent interactions, but relatively few have taken the steps to ensure the quality of the automated systems that support those agents and callers. When you consider that in some industries, up to 80 percent of calls are handled entirely within automated systems, it is clear that most quality assurance measures are insufficient to accomplish their objectives."

Only 10 percent of survey respondents report using any proactive method for technology quality assurance - four percent test manually and six percent use automated monitoring systems.

"Automated testing and monitoring are best practices that should be commonplace in contact centers," said Moreno. "Up-front investments in quality can result in tremendous payoff later, in the form of better service, happier agents, reduced costs and

more loyal and profitable customers."

For an executive summary of the survey data, including a copy of the survey questions, visit [www.empirix.com/acce](http://www.empirix.com/acce).

###

Customer Service Newsletter Releases 2005 Salary and Benchmarking Report

(New York, NY, October 28, 2005) - The rate of growth in compensation for frontline and management service positions has stalled somewhat - especially for those at the lower end of the wage scale according to the Customer Service Newsletter's just-released report, "Salary, Incentives and Benchmarking Survey Results: 2005."

That's not to say that pay rates have declined, just that the rate of increase from one year to the next for most customer service positions has declined.

The survey, conducted online from August 2004 to July 2005, looks at customer service salaries, bonuses and incentives, and at key performance indicators such as wait time, first-call resolution,

call abandonment and occupation rates.

On the high end of the customer service pay scale, a vice president of customer service made an average of \$112,900 in base pay, representing a 5.9 percent increase over that position's prior year salary, according to the survey participants. On the low end, entry-level customer service reps earned an average of \$24,600 in base salary, representing an increase of only 1.8 percent over the prior year.

Other important highlights of the survey include the following:

— The average base salary for a customer service rep was \$29,300, representing a 3.6 percent annual increase. Last year's survey reported a 4.6 percent annual increase.

— Senior customer service reps earned an average base salary of \$34,100, representing an increase of 5.3 percent over their prior year's earnings. That's a bright spot - last year senior CSRs saw only a 4.8 percent gain.

— Technical service reps are



still the gold standard, however, with an average base salary of \$38,200, representing a 4 percent increase.

— Management and supervisory positions were all reported to have increases in excess of 5.2 percent. Average base salary for a customer service manager was \$54,900 and average base salary for a customer service supervisor amounted to \$40,700 per year.

The complete report is available for \$39.95 from the publisher, the Customer Service Group, at its website <http://www.customerservicegroup.com/csdsr2005.php> or by phoning 1-800-232-4317.

###

**US HISPANIC COMMUNITY MAKES IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION TO HURRICANE RELIEF EFFORT**

*Fundraising Telethons Receive Thousands of Calls from Spanish-Speaking America*

**Alexandria, VA** – Global Telesourcing, the leading provider of inbound call center services for the US Hispanic

market, reported a significant outpouring of support from the US Hispanic community during the recent telethons, which have been organized to raise funds for hurricane disaster victims.

“It’s heartwarming to see such tremendous generosity being displayed by Hispanics across the nation for those in dire need in the Gulf Coast,” noted Bill Colton, president of Global Telesourcing. “Hispanics living in the US want to give back to the community which has embraced them and helped them in their own time of need.”

Global Telesourcing has provided support for several of the telethons that have recently taken place to raise funds for Katrina victims. Among them was the *Shelter from the Storm: A Concert for the Gulf Coast* telethon, which was broadcast live this month on all major Spanish-language television networks and raised over \$30 million in donations for the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army. The various relief efforts resulted in tens of thousands of calls from viewers watching Spanish-language networks Univisión and Telemundo. Calls from the *Shelter* telethon were routed from Global Telesourcing’s telecommunications center in

Salt Lake City to ten call centers throughout Latin America. More than 700 agents handled the calls that helped raise millions of dollars.

“Global Telesourcing played a key role in providing significant Spanish-language capacity for the *Shelter from the Storm* telethon proceeds benefiting the Salvation Army and the American Red Cross,” commented John Hall, CEO of Greenwood & Hall, the firm responsible for handling incoming calls from the general market for the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army. “Global’s involvement was crucial in providing the capacity needed to process calls generated by Spanish-language networks, which would otherwise not have been available.”

After receiving the first call for assistance with the *Shelter* telethon, Global Telesourcing mobilized in less than 36 hours to orchestrate the network of call centers and provide special fundraising training for employees to handle incoming calls in centers throughout Latin America. Pro-bono training was provided for the agents that had no prior experience handling a large call volume for such a dramatic catastrophe.

“The vital component that made this relief effort so

successful was the speed with which we were able to put our teams together in Argentina, Colombia, Mexico and Guatemala,” Colton added. “None of this would have been possible without such an earnest desire to help and the extreme generosity displayed by people in those countries.”

###

**IEX Receives TMC Labs 2005 Innovation Award from Customer Interaction Solutions® Magazine TotalView® Workforce Management System Selected for Outstanding Innovation**

**RICHARDSON, TEXAS:** IEX Corporation, a Tekelec company (NASDAQ: TKLC) and leading provider of contact center workforce management and optimization technology, announced it has received a TMC Labs 2005 Innovation Award presented by Customer Interaction Solutions magazine. The TotalView® Workforce Management System from IEX was selected for outstanding innovation.

“Our commitment to research and development coupled with our continued success in turning customer feedback into product innovation keeps TotalView on the leading edge





of the market,” said IEX President Debbie May. “We are honored that Customer Interaction Solutions magazine has recognized our leadership role with this prestigious award.”

IEX is a leading provider of innovative workforce management and optimization technology for contact centers. Customer Interaction Solutions magazine has been a leading source of news and information for the CRM, contact center and teleservices industry since 1982.

###

### **Noble™ Virtual Site Viewer from Noble Systems Helps Contact Centers Visualize Real-time Agent Activities for Superior Program Management**

*- Global contact center software leader provides at-a-glance management tools with custom floorplans -*

Atlanta, GA – Noble Systems Corporation, a global leader in contact center technology solutions, introduces the Noble™ Virtual Site Viewer – an intuitive management interface for monitoring real-time agent activities and an option in the Noble™ DCR™ Management Suite.

The Noble Virtual Site Viewer

allows contact center managers to view the status of individual agents in a custom display based on the actual floorplan of the center. An addition to the Noble Solution Suite’s robust real-time reporting and management features, the Viewer offers ‘at-a-glance’ reporting by using color-coding for different agent states of activity, making it easy to see which agents are on calls, which agents are waiting for calls, and which agents are on pause. The Virtual Site Viewer allows managers to create custom layouts based on their center floor to display stations and agents. The Viewer can be used to show local agents, remote sites, and work-from-home agents. Multiple ‘virtual rooms’ can be created and displayed in their own windows. Managers can also use the Viewer to drill-down for detailed individual activity reports, or to monitor an agent’s audio and video. The Viewer is a part of the *Noble Dynamic Center Reporter (DCR™)* interactive management and reporting tools.

James K. Noble, Jr., President & CEO, states, “As the landscape of the contact center changes with distributed architectures, multiple sites, remote agents,

and flexible seating, it is crucial for managers to have real-time access to information on agent activities and performance. The Noble™ Virtual Site Viewer is the next step in our suite of intuitive management features. Just as the graphical tools in our DCR suite help managers quickly comprehend results and numbers, the Virtual Site Viewer allows managers to quickly visualize agents, their performance, and their location – further improving the ability to manage center programs and resources more effectively.”

### **Witness Systems Solution Now Rated “Avaya Compliant”**

Witness Systems (NASDAQ: WITS), a leading global provider of workforce optimization software and services, announced that its pre-packaged workforce optimization solution is compliant with key IP telephony and contact center solutions from Avaya (NYSE: AV), a leading global provider of business communications applications, systems and services.

The pre-packaged workforce optimization solution, which includes quality monitoring/contact center recording, workforce management, performance management and e-learning

capabilities, helps businesses improve agent and call center performance, grow overall customer satisfaction and achieve competitive advantage. Featuring Witness ContactStore and Quality for Communication Manager powered by Avaya, the solution now is compliance-tested by Avaya for compatibility with Communication Manager 3.0, a next-generation Avaya telephony software that combines call processing, call control, messaging and contact center capabilities in an open, scalable and highly reliable architecture.

“Witness Systems continues to set industry standards with its workforce optimization solution, and we are pleased to achieve yet another recognition in the marketplace by being rated Avaya compliant,” said Steve Byrd, vice president of global channels and alliances for Witness Systems. “The Witness Systems pre-packaged workforce optimization solution that is sold by Avaya and its business partners enables customers to leverage the benefits associated with quality monitoring/call recording, workforce management, performance management and e-learning functionality, which include generating additional revenue and increased profitability, improving staff productivity and performance,



and enhancing customer retention and loyalty.”

###

SER Solutions, Inc. announced that Dial-a-phone, Yorkshire Water, and CBB Call Center have selected SER's newest outbound call management solution, CPS E<sup>2</sup> to reach out to customers in the UK and Poland.

Dial-a-Phone, the UK's leading direct supplier of mobile phones, has selected CPS E<sup>2</sup> for a new outbound calling center rather than utilizing its current dialing solution. Yorkshire Water, the sole provider of water and sewage services to 4.7 million residents in the county of Yorkshire, England, has upgraded to CPS E<sup>2</sup> from SER's Centenium platform in order to take advantage of new features and functionality. CBB Call Center, a division of Bank BPH and the third largest bank in Poland, has selected CPS E<sup>2</sup> to automate outbound dialing in its centers.

Please feel free to call (703) 948-5647 or email [anne.perez@ser.com](mailto:anne.perez@ser.com) if you are interested in talking with one of our customers or an SER contact center expert.

###

### **Virtual-Agent Services Opens First European Location**

**SCHAUMBURG, IL** – Virtual-Agent Services (VAS), a leading provider of high quality contact center solutions, has established the company's first European location since its inception in June 1999. With fourteen North American locations, VAS President, Evan Blanco, made the announcement today regarding the newest center located in Milan, Italy.

“One of our primary growth initiatives for 2005 and 2006 is International expansion,” said Blanco. “Working to establish a worldwide network of centers, VAS recognized an industry need for premium multilingual European call handling and has opened our first European center in Milan in order to provide superior services to this market.”

With contact centers established in North America, VAS is a proven leader in the industry providing exceptional services to high profile clients. The company offers inbound transaction handling to a number of industries providing a variety of services. The new center will offer telephone, fax, and email support in both Western and Eastern European languages.

###

### **Citadel Telephone Company Launches VoIP-Based Do Not Call Compliance Service**

*Citadel first to bundle TeleBlock® call blocking service into its worldwide VoIP telephony network*

Citadel Telephone Company, a Division of Jasmin Communications, Inc., a leader in Voice-Over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services, today announced that it has successfully integrated TeleBlock®'s patented Do Not Call compliance service with its VoIP-based telephony services. With this integration, Citadel is now able to provide dialtone anywhere in the world within 24 hours, TeleBlock® Do Not Call blocking enabled. This service is offered to telemarketers worldwide, providing real time screening of outbound calls to those consumers on the various DNC lists.

###

**Telerox Eases into Convergence Using Aspect Uniphi Connect for VoIP Outsourcer Drives Cost-Effective Global Customer Care with Aspect Software's Solution**

Aspect Software(TM), Inc., the

world's largest company solely focused on the contact center, announced that Telerx, a best-in-class customer care outsourcer, has expanded the voice-over-Internet (VoIP) capability of its existing PSTN contact center using Aspect® Uniphi Connect. Aspect Uniphi Connect makes it possible to manage IP-based agents and PSTN-based agents from a single platform.

“Our clients, including well-known leaders in the consumer packaged-goods and healthcare/pharmaceutical industries, gain considerable efficiencies using voice over IP. Yet we didn't want to sacrifice the considerable PSTN infrastructure investments we've made something that would happen if we dove into pure IP,” said Carolynn Chamoun, senior vice president of technology solutions at Telerx. “Aspect Software's technology enables us to maximize our current infrastructure while offering enhanced, cost-effective contact management solutions to our clients especially those seeking to globalize their operations.”

###

### **Verint Receives Frost &**



## Sullivan Growth Strategy Leadership Award for India

**Melville, NY**, — Verint Systems Inc. (NASDAQ: VRNT), a leading provider of analytic software-based solutions for communications interception, networked video security and business intelligence, announced that global growth consulting company, Frost & Sullivan, has awarded the company its prestigious 2005 Growth Strategy Leadership Award for Call Monitoring Software in India. The award was accepted by Verint in a ceremony held in Mumbai.

###

## Avaya IP Telephony Solution Helps One of the Leading Providers of Floral Products and Services Deliver “Good as Gold” Customer Service

*FTD uses converged applications from Avaya to power new Arkansas contact center, and support approximately 20,000 U.S. florists*

**BASKING RIDGE, N.J.**, — When FTD, one of the world’s leading providers of floral products and services, decided to launch a new contact center to improve

customer service and accommodate growth in its operations, the company turned to an Internet protocol (IP) telephony solution from Avaya Inc. (NYSE: [AV](#)), a leading global provider of business communications applications, systems and services. Recently launched in Sherwood, Ark., the new center supports FTD’s “Good as Gold” brand of service with always-on reliability, and improved, expanded customer service handling. The new center will also help FTD better manage costs through greater operational efficiency.

“We needed a communications solution that delivered on two important business requirements,” said Larry Johnson, FTD Technology Executive Vice President. “Since a significant segment of our consumer business is based on phone and Internet sales, reliability was a must. We were also seeking new efficiencies to improve our bottom line — including greater flexibility in meeting the seasonal demands of this business. Avaya delivered on both those fronts with a new converged voice and data network and IP contact center applications.”

Based on the Avaya Customer Interaction Suite of contact

center applications and powered by Avaya Communication Manager IP telephony software, the new FTD contact center will support up to 500 agents who serve as customer service representatives answering the phone and receiving orders from customers across the U.S. High-reliability Avaya media servers and gateways host the applications at the new contact center and support FTD’s business continuity plans for its operations. Avaya Global Services monitors the Arkansas operation around the clock using Avaya Remote Managed Services for IP telephony. This continuous, proactive, automated service operates behind the scenes to monitor and manage the Avaya solutions and the Extreme Networks’ data infrastructure — finding and resolving problems before they result in major outages.

FTD uses Avaya Call Management System — a component of the Customer Interaction Suite — to monitor, analyze and report on the performance of its contact center operations. As a result, the company can determine where improvements are needed and can take fast, effective action. Since the new Arkansas center is IP-

based, the company also is able to ramp its operations up or down quickly in response to seasonal demand. The Avaya Call Management System reporting software is hosted at FTD headquarters in Downers Grove, Ill., and delivered to the Arkansas location over a high-capacity, highly reliable data infrastructure.

###

## Navman offers innovative customer service options through eGain OnDemand™

**SLOUGH, UK and MOUNTAIN VIEW, CALIF** - eGain Communications Corporation (OTC: [EGAN.OB](#)), provider of the industry’s top-rated customer service and contact centre software\* for in-house or on-demand deployment, announced that Navman, the world’s leading manufacturer of global positioning system (GPS) products, has built a trendsetting customer interaction hub with **eGain OnDemand™**, the hosted version of applications in eGain’s customer service software suite, **eGain Service™**. The hub enables Navman to offer high quality service in eight languages through multiple interaction channels in a very cost-effective manner.

###



## **ETELECARE GLOBAL SOLUTIONS NAMES MIKE DODSON CFO**

**Monrovia, CA** – eTelecare Global Solutions, a leading provider of outsourced customer care solutions, announced that Mike Dodson will join the company as Chief Financial Officer, effective December 8. Mr. Dodson is currently the CFO of Electro Scientific Industries (ESI), Inc., a Portland, Oregon-based, publicly traded semiconductor equipment company.

“As CFO of a successful public company with significant international operations, Mike brings a wealth of experience in many areas that will be beneficial to eTelecare,” said Fred Ayala, eGS Chairman. “We believe he will be a highly effective partner for all of us as we continue to build eGS into an industry leader.” Since beginning operations in 2000, eTelecare Global Solutions has grown from 20 agents to more than 6,000 working on 43 programs for 26 clients at seven US and four Philippine call centers. With a three-year growth rate of 1391%, eTelecare Global Solutions was recently ranked 50<sup>th</sup> on the 2005 Inc. 500 list of

America’s fastest growing private companies.

###

Pitney Bowes Named 2005 Gartner CRM Innovator Award Winner

Leading Integrated Mail and Document Management Company Honored for Successful Implementation of Talisma Software

Bellevue, WA - Talisma(TM), an enterprise Customer Interaction Management (CIM) solutions provider, congratulates Pitney Bowes, the world’s leading integrated mail and document management company, for being selected by Gartner as the recipient of the inaugural Gartner CRM Innovator award. The award acknowledges Pitney Bowes’ innovative use of Talisma Chat to boost agent productivity, ensure a positive customer experience, and increase revenues.

Gartner’s 2005 CRM Innovator award was presented at the Gartner CRM Summit in San Diego. New this year, the Innovator award candidates were evaluated on how well they demonstrated a particularly impressive level of creativity and innovation in

their CRM initiatives. Key evaluation criteria include: creative use of innovative customer channels, novel methods of achieving the transformation to a customer-centric organization, and innovative use of existing technologies and strategies.

###

## **Captaris Alchemy Brings a New Level of Customer Service for Financial Services Call Centers**

PFPC is a member of The PNC Financial Services Group, one of the largest U.S. diversified financial services companies. As a leading provider of processing, technology and business solutions for the global investment industry, PFPC has seen its digital services revenue grow in excess of 30 percent in each of the last four years, which is mainly attributed to the deployment of Captaris Alchemy. Clients of PFPC are experiencing a whole new level of customer service these days. They’ve taken matters into their own hands—literally. Using Captaris Alchemy, powerful document management software, PFPC clients now access electronic documents over the Web. The result has been an increase in service levels, response time,

and revenue for PFPC and its clients.

“With Captaris Alchemy, we can service clients in real-time, benefiting millions of shareholders who no longer have to wait days to receive an answer or replacement document.” says Barry Crawford, Vice President at PFPC Inc., a member of The PNC Financial Services Group, Inc. and the nation’s largest full-service mutual fund transfer agent. PFPC originally installed Captaris Alchemy document management with its Web Server option to meet legal document archive requirements and for internal staff to better support PFPC shareholder and broker inquiries.

**Now almost 500 employees in five Call Centers and Research Departments rely on Captaris Alchemy to handle hundreds of inquiries per day from any number of the 100 mutual fund companies PFPC supports and its shareholder/broker community.** For example, if a client has a question about a tax form, the staff member can view that information in real-time, and if the client wants a copy of the document, it can be printed out, faxed, or sent via email or postal mail.



This isn't the only way in which Captaris Alchemy has dramatically helped improved customer service at PFPC, however. To meet industry demands for electronic presentment of important shareholder documents on the Internet, PFPC implemented the Captaris Alchemy XML portal integration solution to integrate the content repositories into its existing Java and Windows Web portals. This has allowed millions of shareholders, as well as their brokers, access to their important financial documents. E-presentment is now combined with e-notification, e-marketing and suppression of hardcopy output, saving clients money and improving PFPC's communication with its customers.

"We've seen our digital services revenue grow in excess of 30 percent in each of the last three years," Crawford notes. "This service allows us to keep up with our growing demand and we're very happy with it."

When making the decision to invest in the Captaris Alchemy document management solution, Crawford compared it to five other products, and Captaris Alchemy was the

clear winner. It outscored other products on presentation, usability, speed, indexing capability, full-text searches, reliability, cost, market recognition and product stability. Crawford notes that the ongoing support has been outstanding, as well.

"Each year Captaris has supported us and the product has stayed ahead of our particular business needs," Crawford adds.

###

### **GN Netcom Announces New Headset Series Designed to Withstand the Most Demanding Contact Center Environments**

**LAS VEGAS, ICCM Conference & Expo** – GN Netcom, a global innovator of hands-free communication technologies, announced its GN 2000 Series of corded headsets designed to withstand the day-to-day rigors of contact center life. The GN 2000 Series rounds out GN Netcom's family of core headsets, which includes the best-in-class convertible Profile SureFit® and the GN 2100 Series of professional headsets.

###

### **Nationwide Computer Consulting Firm Selects inContact to Manage Multi-Site Support Operation**

Salt Lake City, UT – UCN, Inc. (OTCBB:UCNN), a provider of on-demand contact handling software and business telecommunication services delivered over the UCN national VoIP network, announced that All Covered, a nationwide computer consulting firm focused on the small business market, has implemented the UCN inContact™ call handling suite of applications to support its internal support organization.

All Covered™ founded in 1997 in Redwood City, CA., is the only nationwide information technology (IT) outsourcing company that focuses on the computing, networking and application needs of small businesses and branch offices of larger organizations. Today, the company employs over 300 employees, operating out of 24 offices nationwide, supporting over 2500 clients. The company provides continuous around-the-clock computer and network services.

###

### **Prolog Connect Chooses IEX Workforce Management**

### **System**

#### ***TotalView Selected Based on Depth of Functionality***

**NOTTINGHAM, UK & RICHARDSON, TEXAS:** IEX Corporation, a Tekelec company (NASDAQ: TKLC), announced Prolog Connect has selected its TotalView® Workforce Management system to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of its Nottingham contact center. IEX is a leading provider of workforce management and optimization technology for contact centers. Prolog Connect offers inbound and outbound telephone marketing, customer support and mail order services.

###

### **FrontRange Solutions® Partner Program Continues Building Momentum**

DUBLIN, CA — After posting overall 45 percent license revenue growth in the last year to reinforce its market leadership, FrontRange Solutions - the maker of the award-winning GoldMine® and HEAT® software products - is preparing to share these compelling successes with global members of its World Wide Partner Program. At FrontRange Focus 2005, the FrontRange Global Partner



Conference (www.frontrangefocus.com), new strategic partnerships, stronger partner propositions, and expanded product offerings comprise the agenda for the conference.

FrontRange executives, product teams, partners and customers will come together and discuss the FrontRange product roadmap. Customers will be able to engage one on one with executives and product teams, participate in all open sessions, view case studies and participate in best practice product-specific sessions.

###

**Mercom Systems Introduces Audiolog 3.3, its Most Versatile, Feature-Rich Recording Solution**

Lyndhurst, NJ,— Mercom announced its Audiolog Call Recording Server Release 3.3. Version 3.3 emphasizes security and reporting enhancements that lead the industry. With this release, Mercom continues to secure customer investments in call recording and quality monitoring solutions by sustaining upward compatibility and seamless scalability since its platform was first offered in 1996. Mercom’s stable-platform development philosophy

guarantees customers a versatile, fully featured audio recording system with low total cost of ownership.

###

**Exstream Software Announces French Version of Dialogue Anywhere for Marketing**

**www.exstream.com**— Exstream Software today announced the release of Dialogue Anywhere™ for Marketing for the French marketplace, demonstrating the company’s commitment to the localization of its products across the globe. An integrated module in its market-leading Dialogue enterprise personalization software, Anywhere for Marketing is a web-based design capability that allows marketing and business users across the extended enterprise to incorporate personalized messages into customer communications using an Internet browser.

###

FYI: Spanlink Communications, a leading IP communications and contact center solution provider headquartered in Minneapolis, today introduced Spanlink

Managed Services for VoIP-based customer interaction systems. If you are interested in speaking with someone from Spanlink about this, please contact Vicki Verhelst — (952) 346-6351.

###

**AnswerNet Network Launches Chinese Languages Services**

PRINCETON, NJ, - Enterprises, governments and non-profits can now effectively serve their Chinese-speaking customers, clients and donors, in North America or in China thanks to The AnswerNet Network [www.answernet.com](http://www.answernet.com) .

AnswerNet Network member TelePartners [www.telepartners.com](http://www.telepartners.com) now has a team of Mandarin and Cantonese-speaking agents at its Toronto, Ontario, Canada contact center. Toronto has one of the largest populations of Chinese speakers in North America.

The new service enables organizations to serve Chinese communities worldwide. TelePartners’ Chinese-speaking agents have begun answering calls

for unnamed clients for their customers. It also provides enterprises the ability to easily and affordably connect with customers in China from a North American-based contact center.

The Chinese languages capability is in addition to Spanish and French language services delivered at AnswerNet’s contact centers. AnswerNet can also answer callers in other languages through interpreter partners. AnswerNet has 53 networked contact centers across North America including the Toronto facility.

“China is the world’s most populous nation whose emigrants have admirably retained their culture and languages,” says AnswerNet President and Chief Executive Officer Gary A. Pudles. “We have responded to our customers’ requirements to serve Chinese-speakers by hiring agents who can communicate directly and effectively with them. And as new residents and their families learn English, French or Spanish our staff can converse with them in those languages as well.”

###



## AMAZON.COM TAPS STAFF MANAGEMENT TO HIRE SEASONAL EMPLOYEES

*-Employees Sought for Coffeyville, Kansas Warehouse Facility Become Eligible To Win A Brand New Car -*

**Chicago, IL** - Staff Management, the leading provider of vendor on premise staffing and management solutions, announced that they will be hiring as many as 1,500 new warehouse facility employees or more for its client Amazon.com in Coffeyville, Kansas to work through the holiday season. At least 400 of these new employees will be needed for weekend work between the hours of 6:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. As a bonus, new employees automatically become eligible to win a brand new 2005 Chevrolet Aveo through a performance-based raffle.

Hiring is currently underway and provides full-time positions (40 hours a week with the possibility of overtime), as well as part-time shift positions on the weekends that are well-suited for parents, college students, weekend workers, or as a second job for anyone interested in an opportunity to make great holiday money.

With the influx of seasonal employees, not only are additional jobs created for

those who need them, but it also generates new revenues for the community in which the facility is located," said Lisa Brown, Director of Operations for Staff Management. "Hiring more employees also helps Amazon.com fulfill their customer's holiday orders on time." She added, "And this year we are especially excited to promote the chance to win a new car."

Ms. Brown said that employees are being interviewed, hired and bused into Amazon.com's Coffeyville, KS warehouse facility from Joplin, Missouri due to demand. Job applicants must be 18 years of age as the work can be physically demanding. Positions include shipping, picking and packing, forklift operations and distribution. Starting pay for full-time positions begins at \$9.50/hour for the day shift and \$10.00/hour for nights and part-time positions during weekends with the possibility of overtime. Paychecks will be issued weekly. Interested parties are asked to call Staff Management at: **1-866-340-JOBS.**

###

# TIPS

## The ART of Asking Questions

*Call Path Control is the Key to Successful*

*Call Center Customer Service and Client Relationships*

*Since we recognize the need for profits and understand that the profits come through the relationship to the customer, why don't we teach the CSRs and TSRs how to communicate, carry on a dialogue and create a conversation with the customer/client that is quick and effective?*

*When I am speaking in front of a group of trainees in a training program that is about Communications of any kind, selling or service, as the speaker talks, he/she can use a technique that keeps the trainer in control of the class. The audience never hears a technique but the trainer is managing the conversation with the agents taking the course.*

*Control of the path of a conversation requires questions.*

*The person who asks the questions is the person in Control of the Conversation.*

*As the class moves from subject to subject a good trainer always tries to have*

*interaction with the trainees. In order to have interaction the trainer must ask questions. Here is the rub! When you ask questions you could make the trainee feel wrong or even stupid. When the trainer asks a question that is rhetorical in other words....for EFFECT! The student feels silly to answer it but the teacher feels smart. This doesn't work. It's ego builder for the trainer but a damaging use of technique for the trainee.*

*There is an art to asking questions both in the training room and on the telephone with a customer. Learn the art of the question and you will always be in control. Here is information that will help you to help your Call Center Learn. The ART of Asking Questions is imperative to learning how to control the call, manage the call and keep the customer interested.*

*Follow the Rules About the Art of Asking Questions and Succeed in Having a Profitable and Productive Conversation with the Trainees and Customers.*

*Rule Number #1*

**1. Always end your side of the conversation on a question.**

*Example: We have easy to use products for your home or office, they will save you money and some of them will*



even save you time. What type of cleaning products do you currently use?

**Example:** Today we will learn all about call path control. What types of questions are you currently asking your customer when they call you?

**NOTICE:** I didn't say, "Do you ask your customers questions?" Or "Are you probing for information?" Or "Would you like to save money?"

Each time you speak to the customer or the trainees with a question always make sure when they answer the question they look smart and right. It takes thought behind the question or a set up for the question so the responder doesn't have a feeling of being manipulated or pressed.

In example #1 follow the rule of always ending your side of the conversation with a question and notice that you should always preface it with Rule number # 2.

**Rule Number # 2**  
2. Always give the customer the information they need to make a decision and then ask a question to be sure you are on the right track.

When asking the question, "What types of questions

are you currently asking your customer when they call you?" is easy to answer even if the CSR says, "I get the customer name and account number. If the CSR says that, the trainer can make the CSR feel right and offer some other suggestions.

The trainer can use the technique again by saying: "Okay, this will be easy for you. Let's learn how to do the same thing, make a statement and ask a question over and over again until the call is complete. Okay?"  
**Example of CSR response:**

"I always ask the customer for their name and phone number and sometimes the account number. "

**Trainer:** "Great! That's exactly the right thing to ask, now after you get that information, what do you ask then?"

**CSR:** I ask the customer what I can do for them.

**Trainer:** Perfect! Then today I am going to demonstrate how you can use that same technique throughout the entire call to help the customer get the service they need and the product they may want.

You will use that same technique from the

beginning of the call to the end of it. It will be easy to teach you the technique because you naturally do it on the opener. Each time you spoke to the customer, you made a statement and then asked a question. Each time the customer responded with the answer, you acknowledged the answer you heard, commented on it and asked the next question. Let's begin to learn the art of asking questions. Ready?

When teaching the Art of Asking Questions, you must explain the "why" on each point you make.

The average person knows how to do each of the steps individually but never seems to learn how to put these things together so they can accomplish a goal. Most people are self centered and survival oriented so they will do what they need to do to survive and keep themselves in the spotlight.

To test this theory: Tell someone about the trouble you had on the drive to work today and they will immediately tell you how their drive was worse or at least as bad but they will take the subject away from you and put it on themselves. Test this today and watch what happens.

To teach the art of asking questions takes a person who knows how to do it!

**Start with this . . .**

What is the point of ending your side of the conversation on a question?

- The person who asks the questions is the person in control of the path of the call. If your agents want control, they need to listen, acknowledge what they heard, comment, present product solution, and ask a question to move the conversation to the next part of the call.
- If a person asks a question the customer can answer, knows the answer and looks good when answering it...the customer "feels" smart.
- When you ask the customer a question, he/she almost always answers it. This gives the agent time to prepare for the next pitch, presentation, solution or recommendation. This makes it more comfortable for the agent as well as the customer.
- If the agent controls the path of the call the customer never doubts himself. Instead he always knows what to do...answer the agent's question.
- When the customer is asked a question, he knows the agent is interested.





- When the agent asks a question that is about the customer's needs the customer knows the company wants to support as well as sell.
- When the agent asks a question that is soft in nature, the customer feels smart and right to answer the question.
- When the agent asks a question that is too direct, too personal or too intimate, this will irritate the customer. Make all of the questions soft.
- Ending your side of any conversation gives you power.
- If you have announced the price, given the customer the benefit and then ask for the order – the customer has time to think, has the information he/she needs to

make a decision and then responds with a yes or a no.

*Asking a feedback question...like: Is that okay? How will that work for you? Gives the agent a chance to check to see if he is on the right track. If not the customer will let the agent know and the agent can regroup, offer a different product and ask a different question.*

**WARNING!!!!**

**If you do not end your side of the conversation on a question you risk the following.**

**The customer:**  
 May not know what to say  
 May not know what to do  
 May not feel comfortable  
 Could leave dead air  
 Could take over with a question  
 Could feel wrong or stupid because of the dead air

Might not like the way the conversation goes  
 Might not want to take over the conversation  
 Might be embarrassed at not knowing exactly what to do  
 Will usually say or do something that is NOT what the agent wants.

It's time to make sure that all of your customer relationships work successfully to accomplish your goals. It's time to teach your agents Call Path Control without manipulation or evasion. It's time to train your trainers in the Art of Asking Questions so they can use it and teach it.

If you take this advice from a 25 year veteran of training, you will see the rewards are many. Your relationships will work, your training programs will gain more acceptance, your company will be successful and if your agents learn it your people will cut their call time.

Now that's MONEY!

Judy McKee – Author of Scriptwriting for Effective Telemarketing, Maximizing Customer Contact and the Sales Survival Guide.

Judy McKee  
 McKee Motivation  
 The Call Center Training Company  
[www.phonedamentals.com](http://www.phonedamentals.com)  
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[mckee@phonedamentals.com](mailto:mckee@phonedamentals.com)

**BILINGUAL TRAINING**

*Arial International*

Spanish Language Proficiency Assessments

Many organizations are now recognizing the opportunities presented in the US Hispanic market. Arial International, based in Washington state, had the foresight to see the



# Spanish Language Proficiency Testing

**Objective**

Assists you in screening and selecting bilingual applicants by conducting a 15 minute telephone assessment at the time the candidate is being interviewed. We also provide business writing and translation skills assessments.

**Benefit**

Assures that your bilingual employees are competent verbal and/or written communicators and provides objective information for paying bilingual pay differentials.

**Call to Action**

By contacting our toll-free number, our clients are serviced in every time zone across the US.

For further information, please call 888.446.2331, e-mail [info@arialinternational.com](mailto:info@arialinternational.com), or visit us on the Internet at [www.aerialinternational.com](http://www.aerialinternational.com)

**Arial International, LLC**



potential of this market in 1992 and developed a range of services to companies who service Spanish speaking customers including language proficiency assessments, bilingual training and certification programs, translations and Spanish language call monitoring.

One of the services they provide, which has experienced significant growth, is assessing the verbal communication and comprehension, writing and translation skills of bilingual call center job candidates and employees in a variety of industries. I had the opportunity to talk to Astrid Rial, President and Founder of Arial International, to gain some insight into why businesses use these services, the benefits they gain and invited her to respond to Frequently Asked Questions.

**Q:** Arial International has been testing the language proficiency skills of bilingual personnel for a number of years. What recent changes have you seen in the market?

**A:** Initially, banks, creditors and financial services companies led the requirement for call center representatives and branch personnel to pass verbal Spanish proficiency assessments to qualify for a bilingual position. We have experienced a marked

*increase in inquiries and new business from companies who require proficient Spanish speaking employees across all industries. As more and more companies see the potential in the US Hispanic market for their products and services we predict the need will increase.*

*Additionally more companies are requiring candidates to pass written proficiency assessments especially for supervisory positions and/or in contact centers that communicate with their customers via chat and e-mail in addition to the telephone.*

**Q:** The majority of our job candidates and employees are native Spanish speakers or were raised in a Spanish-speaking home. Why do I need to assess the proficiency of these candidates?

**A:** *Many Spanish speakers in the US speak colloquial Spanish and have insufficient vocabulary and/ or inadequate knowledge of grammar, syntax and verb conjugation rules to conduct a business conversation. Without conducting all or part of an interview in Spanish recruiters and human resource personnel are unable to detect the candidate's proficiency of using business terminology and formal language in Spanish.*

*It has been reported that more than 60% of US Hispanics are*

*under the age of 28 and are of second and third generation who have been educated in the US. Although 70% say they are fluent in spoken Spanish, less than 40% can actually read or write in Spanish and fewer than 30% of Hispanic college graduates can read or write in Spanish.*

*Discharging an employee after they have already been hired because they have inadequate skills that are required for the position can be costly for a company. Therefore assessing language skills during the interview process is a cost-saving measure and even more importantly is critical to delivering quality customer service.*

**Q:** I understand that Spanish speakers speak different dialects. How are accent and dialect scored on a verbal communication skills assessment?

*Just as in the English language, there are different accents, dialects and pronunciation in Spanish. In fact, there are 22 countries in the world whose native language is Spanish. Therefore assessment scoring evaluations and mechanisms must have no bias as to the speaker's country of origin or where the speaker learned Spanish.*

*In our experience US Hispanics who prefer to speak Spanish in a business*

*conversation report that as long as the company's representative can communicate effectively and is knowledgeable about the company's product or services, then the country of origin of the call center representative is not important. They are happy to talking to some who speaks Spanish.*

**Q:** Why are businesses using third parties to assess the language skills of their bilingual employees and job candidates?

**A:** *Many companies provide a bilingual pay differential to qualified employees. A third party can provide an objective, scientifically designed evaluation of the candidate or employees' communication skills. We also find that many companies do not have fluent Spanish speakers in their HR departments who can conduct an interview in Spanish.*

**Q:** How does your language proficiency testing work?

**A:** *When a client identifies a candidate or employee to be assessed, such as during a job interview, the client calls our toll-free telephone number. The assessment is administered by telephone and entirely in Spanish and/or English by a fully bilingual assessment professional. For bilingual positions many job candidates are assessed in both languages. A scored written report is sent to the client via*



e-mail.

**Q:** What is the ideal time in the recruiting and interview process to assess a candidate's language skills?

**A:** Some companies prefer to assess candidates for bilingual positions at the first stage in the interview process so that they only spend their internal resources on qualified candidates. Other companies assess Spanish proficiency as the last step in the interview process, after the candidate has fulfilled all other hiring requirements.

**Q:** What kinds of questions do you ask candidates?

**A:** When testing "Business Spanish" proficiency it is important to ask open-ended questions that require a multi-sentence explanation or response while using appropriate business language. For call center positions, effective questions require the person being assessed to use professional, business vocabulary. We customize questions for each industry or for specific positions within an organization.

**Q:** One of our supervisors speaks Spanish so why can't he assess job candidates?

**A:** It is important that language proficiency assessments are consistent, unbiased and uses a proven methodology so that all candidates are evaluated

*based on the same criteria. A Spanish-speaking employee who has not been trained how to conduct language proficiency assessments or is subjective in his appraisal will not be able to deliver effective and fair evaluations.*

**Q:** How will I find out the results of a Spanish proficiency assessment?

**A:** We provide a score to the recruiter at the end of the telephone assessment. Additionally we send the recruiter a written results report via e-mail scoring the candidate's proficiency in multiple categories.

*Candidates who score above a specific threshold are then recommended for a position requiring Spanish-speaking skills.*

**Q:** What are the qualifications of your Assessment Professionals?

**A:** Our assessment professional team is made up fully bilingual native English and/or native Spanish speakers. Each person is put through a rigorous verbal and written pre-assessment evaluation before hiring and a thorough new-hire training program. To ensure inter-rater reliability, we conduct regular internal assessments, testing, training and call monitoring.

**Q:** When should candidates be assessed in both Spanish AND English?

**A:** Some of our clients assess

*the Spanish speaking skills of native English speakers and vice-versa. This protocol is impartial and injects fairness into the interview process by assessing all candidates on equal terms. Other companies assess both languages if the representative would be handling calls in both languages.*

**Q:** My call center is open 24/7. How can I have candidates who work evening and/or graveyard shifts assessed?

**A:** Since many call centers now staff 24 hours per day it may

*difficult to find a provider to assess employees or candidates outside of "normal" business hours. Our clients use a "recorded assessment" option where the candidate calls and records their responses. This service is available 24/7.*

For more information about Arial International's "Business Spanish" services, please call Astrid Rial at 888-446-2331 ext. 89, e-mail her at [astrid@arialinternational.com](mailto:astrid@arialinternational.com) or visit their website at [www.arialinternational.com](http://www.arialinternational.com).

## WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT – A CASE STUDY

### Don't Get Burned by a Workforce Scheduling System: Lessons from Call Centers That Have Made Mistakes

In the last year, the vast majority of the workforce management systems sold by Pipkins Inc. have been purchased by call centers dissatisfied with their current applications. In one case, a well-known retailer abandoned three different packages over a six-year period because the programs lacked critical functions as well as the flexibility to meet the call center's needs. In another, a catalog company was prompted to switch systems

because their legacy platform was unable to maintain sufficient historical call data to generate accurate forecasts.

"All workforce management systems are not created equal. Most of them claim to have the same features, but the issue is how those features and functions are executed. Unfortunately, that is often difficult to determine until the application is installed, and then it's too late," said Bob Webb, Pipkins Vice President of Sales.

"If you don't select a best-of-breed system to begin with, whether you're buying a standalone package or a so-



called end-to-end solution, it may have too many limitations to deliver the results you're looking for," Webb noted. "If the forecasting or scheduling is not sophisticated enough or if you're doing too many processes manually, you are essentially leaving money on the table by failing to staff your center properly."

Here are some questions to ask to avoid making a costly mistake when purchasing a workforce management (WFM) package.

### **1 – Can the system produce a single optimized schedule?**

Many WFM systems generate a basic schedule, and then require analysts to spend costly time editing that schedule to accommodate breaks, lunches, meetings, training sessions and vacations. This consumes clerical time, risks input errors, and makes creating every schedule an inefficient multi-step process. It can also adversely affect your service levels by failing to consider these variables in the optimization process. Look for a system that automatically incorporates breaks, lunches and so on when producing a schedule.

### **2 – Does it collect enough data to produce accurate forecasts?**

Many workforce scheduling

systems store no more than 16 weeks of historical inbound call data to generate a forecast, and most fail to gather information on marketing campaigns, billing cycles or other variables that can affect call volume. Trying to predict future call volume without this information is like trying to balance your checkbook if you haven't recorded all of your transactions. Look for a WFM package that will maintain several years' worth of very detailed data for maximum forecast accuracy.

### **3 - Can the system recognize special events when forecasting call volumes?**

In call centers where workloads fluctuate due to special events such as catalog drops or discount offers, the only way to ensure proper staffing is with a system that can electronically calculate anticipated call volume based on how a given event affected incoming calls in the past. In a sales environment where something like a direct mail campaign or TV advertorial triggers extra calls, this correlated forecasting capability can mean the difference between profit and loss.

### **4 – How long does it take to generate forecasts and schedules?**

Some WFM systems may

require eight to ten hours to forecast call volumes, determine staffing requirements, and produce call center schedules. Others can do the same job in minutes. It depends on how the software is architected and how the call center is set up. To determine the performance of the system you're looking at, ask the vendor to perform a simulation based on a year's worth of your own forecast data, and then time it.

### **5 – Can you automate tasks that must be performed repeatedly?**

Setting up and disseminating call volume forecasts, agent schedules and activity reports can consume 50 to 60% of an administrator's time. You can do the work in half the time if these recurring functions can be pre-configured with shortcut wizards for one-click execution, prescheduled to run automatically, or linked in self-executing sequences. This latter feature makes it possible, for example, to generate a forecast, export it to one group of recipients, e-mail it to another group, and print copies without stopping for user input.

### **6 – Can the system adjust for daily 'surprises' like absences or unplanned meetings?**

When unexpected agent absences, meetings and/or call volumes require current-day schedule adjustments, intra-

day optimization tools make the job a lot easier. Find out if the WFM system you're evaluating can recalculate the day's staffing needs; modify breaks, lunches and work assignments electronically; and automatically alert agents by email and/or pop-up message to eliminate the need to print and distribute new schedules.

### **7 – Is there an integrated vacation planner, and can it adapt to your needs?**

This is a twofold test. First, the vacation planning module should integrate with the WFM software to ensure that vacation slots will be accurately calculated, reflected in agents' schedules without manual input, and so on. Second, it should be fully configurable to support your policies and staffing structure. Can it accommodate a Wednesday to Tuesday work week? Does it allow you to allocate vacation slots by skill set, shift type, given contact center, or across multiple call centers? Etc.

### **8 – Are busies and abandoned calls considered in calculating requirements?**

Systems that don't understand busies and abandons will always overstaff your call center. Since staffing typically represents 70 to 80% of your operational costs, overstaffing can have a severe impact on your budget. This is like the airplane that takes off with



empty seats: you will never have another chance to recover that revenue. Ask whether the software you're considering has an algorithm that incorporates busies and abandoned calls in its calculations.

**9 – Is the system scalable?**

Many WFM systems require call centers to perform a

forklift upgrade once they grow to a certain size. This is not only an added expense but a major administrative headache. A scalable system that can accommodate growth without installing completely new software is a much better way to go.

###

## AROUND & ABOUT

### AMCAT CALL CENTER TECHNOLOGY POWERS NATIONAL STOP SMOKING EFFORTS

American Legacy Foundation has a very unusual mission which is to help the U.S. public stop smoking. This is a new organization that was created and funded by the tobacco industry following the settlement of the major national law suit between tobacco and 46 states..

Their goal is to prevent youth from smoking and helping adults kick the habit. You may be familiar with their work through the [www.thetruth.com](http://www.thetruth.com) initiative, spreading the word

on smoking effects and cessation programs through television, websites, and other broadcast media.

Recently they added another tool to advance their efforts, Amcat's unified inbound outbound contact management system, Contact Center Suite. American Legacy Foundation uses the Amcat system to handle their inbound and outbound traffic generated from their various campaigns. Calls are routed through the Amcat self service IVR to waiting representatives to provide information ranging from advertisement responses to information on quit smoking programs in local communities. Each call is recorded in the Amcat database, useful in generating call tracking and volume reports, refining the call flow process to expedite service

and to determine follow-up outbound contact. Taking advantage of the unified capability that Amcat provides, American Legacy also employs Amcat for their outbound calling endeavors to contact previous callers alerting them to new information regarding their stop smoking efforts. Amcat provides a full featured system that allows American Legacy to reach their goals of stopping the spread of tobacco use. American Legacy reports that as a result of their efforts more and more people are quitting smoking and fewer teens are picking up the habit. American Legacy credits their success to the unique approach they take in getting the message out. They use edgy, "push the envelope" commercial spots to highlight how the tobacco companies plan to market their products to youth, along with website information for access to hard facts on the industry. For more information on American Legacy Foundation please visit their website at [www.americanlegacy.org](http://www.americanlegacy.org). For Information on Amcat visit their website at [www.amcat.com](http://www.amcat.com).

## TRENDS

Workforce Management in Retail Call Centers by Michaela Niss

### Multi-channel Retailing - the direct line to the customer

Today more than ever, retailers are facing greater competitive pressure and decreasing revenues. Markets are saturated, products exchangeable, and customers make buying decisions in a more critical and independent way than in the past. Also, winning new customers is still more expensive than keeping existing ones, putting pressure on retailers to find cost-efficient ways to gain new customers. Within this context, multi-channel retailing has become one of the greatest challenges facing retailers today. In addition to their retail locations, a growing number of retail companies offer mail-order, online-shopping or even home shopping through TV to create and fulfill the desire to buy any time, anywhere. Not only do consumers benefit from multi-channel retailing - retailers themselves gain more profit because they can lead customers and prospects from their websites or catalogs to their stores. This association creates ideal conditions for



better customer retention. Furthermore, web-shops and mail-order services are available 24 hours a day - the perfect supplement to traditional sales. It is crucial for multi-channel retailers to tie the differing access methods closely together with the associated services. Call centers are an essential link in the multi-channel retailing chain because the largest share of customer communication is gathered here. Free from fixed store hours, customers appreciate direct contact and are more likely to pick up the phone when in need of product information. To provide customer-friendly services, call centers listen to their customers' problems round-the-clock. Particularly in retail, call center agents not only provide general information, handle complaints or make outbound calls in the course of direct marketing campaigns; they also deal with purchase orders and selling the product. To guarantee excellent service in contact centers, demand-driven staff scheduling is as crucial here as in other parts of a company. Workforce management (WFM) has recently established itself as a powerful means to optimize and control staff deployment, especially in call centers.

InVision Software, WFM supplier for over 10 years, addresses the problem of creating the perfect plan by matching staff with actual demand and similarly optimizing schedules. For contact centers, this means schedules are based upon workloads (incoming calls, emails, faxes, outbound calls for campaigns, etc.) and they incorporate service factors, working time provisions or resource availability. For example, workforce management with InVision takes seasonal or daily demand changes into account and moreover, employees are scheduled according to their skills (multi-activity scheduling). This ensures that customers on the phone are served as quickly and satisfactorily as in their favorite store. InVision Enterprise WFM is a sophisticated software solution used to optimize staff scheduling. Especially in call centers, the system leads to significant improvements of productivity and service as well as to reductions of personnel costs by automatic schedule generation - all possible working times are combined into one perfect schedule. Employees are made available where their skills and manpower are required. This results in the

right number of people per shift (i.e. neither understaffing nor overstaffing occurs and personnel costs are easily controlled). Demand-driven scheduling increases productivity - the same number of employees can handle more work. For retailers, this means happier customers and increased sales..

The benefits of workforce management for retail call centers, at a glance, are: Short response and handling times

Optimal resource utilization  
Better customer retention and cost-efficient customer acquisition

Increased revenue  
Low TCO (Total Cost of Ownership) due to centralized administration

The benefits of workforce management are not limited to call centers or customer service departments. Demand-driven scheduling can be used in any part of a retail business to elevate employee efficiency. Thus, InVision Enterprise WFM is applicable company-wide, generating synergy effects wherever staff is the crucial resource. The software suits inter-departmental scheduling as well as multi-site planning. Depending on the planning environment, workforce management uses different data to determine staffing demand: in a contact center,

this may include the number and duration of calls, while in a retail store, the number of check-out transactions per hour, or the duration of customer contact, turnover, budgeted hours or the maximum wait at the check-out could be the basis for an efficient staff plan.

###

## COMPANY PROFILE

**Welcome to telecommunications the way it should be**

**Welcome to Genesis Telemanagement**

Established nearly a decade ago to serve the increasingly complex telecommunications needs of the business community, Genesis Telemanagement has become the standard by which all other telecommunications management companies are judged. The greatest testimony to the quality of our service is the fact that Genesis maintains what is perhaps the most fiercely loyal client base in the business – a major accomplishment in an industry where loyalty is most certainly



not the norm. Our clients' fierce loyalty is directly attributable to the unparalleled level of service we provide to them on an ongoing basis, coupled with what have been widely recognized as perhaps the most aggressive rates available in the world today. Rates that are coupled with features designed and acquired specifically for the Call Center Industry.

Just one example of what separates us from any theoretical 'competitor' is the fact that we maintain exceptional relationships with well over a half dozen different major carriers. Our highest priority being that of providing you with the most aggressive pricing possible with the carrier best suited to your particular needs. While the typical 'carrier rep' works for their employer, we work for you. We are uniquely positioned in the industry to provide you with a truly objective opinion as to which carrier is most appropriate for your specific project. We are a single point of contact for you, and as your needs change and/or grow, we will be here to guide you, and to handle any issues that arise along the way. We are focused entirely on developing long term relationships. As a result, we are obsessed with providing

first quality service at the most aggressive rates in the industry without any 'catches' or unpleasant surprises. Our clients literally depend on us to do so.

Because of the deep and longstanding relationships we have with our chosen carriers and the tremendous volume of business we bring to them, we are able to negotiate pricing with top tier carriers that would be impossible for any individual business entity to acquire on their own. Perhaps most unusually, there is no charge to you for our services whatsoever, now or at any time in the future. Our clients have described us as being 'on their staff, but not on their payroll'. We couldn't have said it better ourselves.

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**Welcome to Genesis Telemanagement**

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## EMPLOYMENT ANNOUNCEMENT

**Job Title:** Business Systems Specialist: IRC1982

**Job Information:** Ohio Savings Bank's Customer Contact Center (CCC) is looking for a Business System Specialist. The BSS will provide on-going evaluations of Call Center technology, processes, and procedures measuring the effectiveness of each. Make recommendations for improvements / possible replacement of systems. Implement approved enhancements in a timely manner. Qualifications are

Bachelor's degree in related field or equivalent experience. A minimum 3 yrs experience with Call Center systems such as, Voice Response Units, CRM's and ACD's. Moderate to Advanced knowledge of telephony systems. 3-5 years minimum Call Center experience needed. Preferred experience with Speech VRU and Nortel Call Center Systems.

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## CLASSIFIEDS/ ANNOUNCEMENTS

Subject: Help finding the staff planning and budgeting folks

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**The Power of One Book Available for Frontline Staff**  
Nashville, TN – The Call Center School (TCCS) announces the publication of its latest book, **The Power of One**. The book, written by TCCS founding partner Penny Reynolds, is a book aimed at the frontline staff in a call center.

Do you know who in your organization might be interested in checking out a demo of CenterBridge?

According to Reynolds, "The most important resource that any call center has is its people. We wanted to provide a resource that helped the frontline staff understand the important role they play in customer relationships and in the effective operation of the center."

We're holding a drawing for three \$100 American Express gift cards to individuals who help us contact the budget and staff planning person in their company and have them sign up for a web demo at:

**The Power of One** is an easy-to-read book that illustrates the importance of a single individual in a customer interaction. The book outlines the critical aspect of customer relationships and what role the frontline employees play in customer satisfaction and retention on every call. The book also helps describe in a practical way the impact that one person can have on speed of answer, staff occupancy, and bottom-line cost.

The book can serve as a resource for new-hire orientation to the center, as well as be a valuable learning tool for existing staff.

The cost of the book is \$5.95. Quantity discounts are available at a 100 level (\$4.95) and 200+ level ((\$3.95). The book is available at The Call Center School web site at: <http://www.thecallcenterschool.com/bookstore/index.html>.

Free preview copies are available for a limited time. To request your free copy, call Debi King at 615-812-8400 or respond to this email with your postal mailing address.

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(A Call Center Times' guide to providers of call center products and services)

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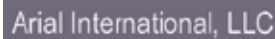
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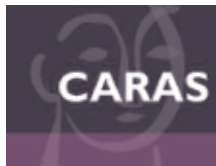
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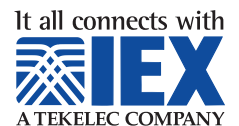
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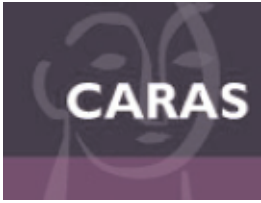
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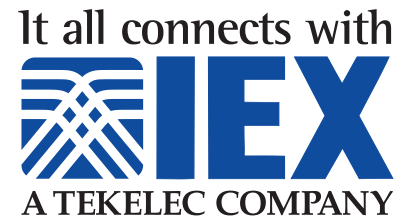


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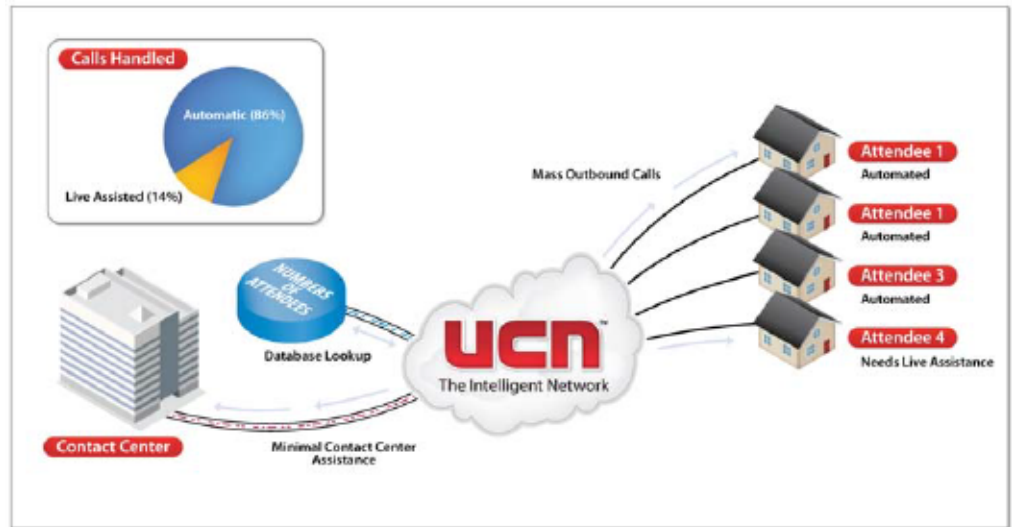
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## Time is money

Spoken communication has long been regarded as one of the most universal and effective forms of communicating. But when communicating with large groups of people using the telephone it can be time consuming, tedious, and expensive. With UCN this can be automated, making it faster, easier, and less expensive with the same or better results. UCN's Automated Announcement Broadcasting solution is an efficient and effective way of quickly communicating with a large number of people.

## Reminders and more

A US-based time management company offers time management seminars throughout the country as well as personalized time management products to accompany the training. When a client registers for a time management seminar, they also order personalized time management products to use at the seminar. The company has historically had problems with people forgetting the date or location of the seminar and missing the training. As a result, credits must be issued, the customer must register for another seminar in the future, and the company ends up with an expensive inventory of personalized products. Another problem the company frequently faced is backorders for the personalized materials resulting in customers at the training without the materials they requested.



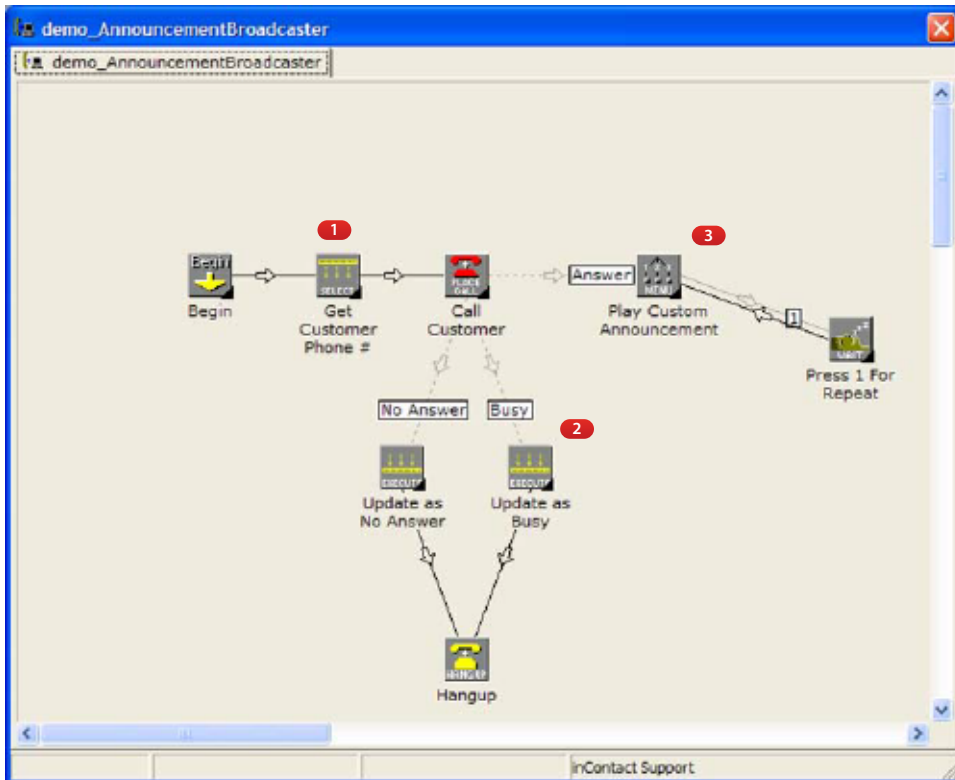
Two automated announcement broadcasters were implemented to solve these problems. First, the list of registered attendees of upcoming seminars are automatically called within 2 business days of the seminar and reminded about the date, time, and location of the seminar. The announcement starts with a friendly standard greeting then speaks their name, the name of the seminar and the date, time and location of the seminar, ending with a service number to call if they have any questions.

The second process was initiated to support backorder situations. In this case, the automated announcement broadcast begins with an automated greeting, thanking the customer for their seminar registration. Then the system announces that one of the items in their order is backordered and will be not be ready for the seminar. The system speaks the name of the item and offers the attendee a couple of options:

The first option maintains the order, which will be shipped as soon as it is available, and confirms that standard temporary materials will be available for the customer when they arrive at the seminar. The second option immediately transfers the customer to an agent so that the person can order something different which will be available at the time of the seminar. Finally, the caller is given a service number to contact if they have any questions about their order.

## Better attendance and happier customers

The company found that in the first few months of implementing the seminar reminder announcement broadcaster, the number of absentees dropped significantly. All that was needed was a little reminder, and attendance was improved significantly.



(Continued from front)

The company also reduced the number of complaints about backordered items by having a system in place that informed the customer ahead of time of the situation and giving them a set of alternative options. This increase in customer satisfaction was credited with higher sales of additional time management products.

In its most basic form, the automated announcement broadcaster gets a number from a database, places the call, detects the state of the call (busy, ring no answer), then plays a pre-recorded message to the person who answers the phone. 1. Customer numbers are selected, then automatically dialed. 2. The system detects an answer. 3. The pre-recorded message is played with an option to repeat.

*(The solution samples depicted here were built using inControl, a rapid application development tool that comes with the inContact suite. InControl features a visual drag-and-drop user interface for creating contact management flows tailored to meet the specific needs of a business.)*

