

Call Center Times

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Assessment Tools: What They Do and Why You should be Harnessing Their Power

By David Ostberg, Ph.D.

Call centers are attracting more attention, from customers to company executives – and deservedly so. Without question, the call center has a direct impact on a company's brand, reputation and customer experience. Just as front-line call center agents are highly influential in forming lasting, positive impressions of a company, high agent turnover rates significantly damage a company's ability to maintain service levels and create a positive customer experience. When the exorbitant costs of hiring, training, and lost productivity are added to the mix, it is easy to see why agent turnover is high on the priority list of many of today's customer-focused companies.

Two dominant – and highly visible – problems that hinder a call center's operation are (1) agent turnover and (2) suboptimal agent productivity. In most cases, the root causes of such challenges include poor job fit or a lack of skills that are critical success factors for specific agent positions. Selection assessments and screening tools can help

address these issues by providing vital information about job applicants that directly relates to employee productivity and retention. A call center's selection and hiring process should address the root causes of turnover by answering key questions such as: Are the agents a good fit for the job? How well will they perform? How long will they stay?

In general, assessments are designed to capture information which relates to an individual's likelihood of behaving or performing in certain ways in the future. These tools do so by measuring three different kinds of candidate data:

- 1) What can they do based on their personality, natural abilities, or aptitudes,
- 2) What have they done in previous jobs, activities, and educational or training settings,

and

- 3) What do they want to do in the future based on their interests, motivation, and preferences?

In regard to what applicants *can do*, assessments are designed to measure stable characteristics associated with job applicants' personalities and natural abilities. For example, some jobs may be more suitable for individuals who are extroverted and less risk-averse, while others may require that an employee be highly detail-oriented and task-focused. Although every human being is unique, our differences all land somewhere along a continuum of each of several personality and ability dimensions. Assessment experts can develop assessments to accurately measure where an individual falls on various job-relevant



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RANTS & RAVES!

Randomly Timed Musings

Elimination is Infinitely More Powerful than Automation

By Kathleen M. Peterson
Chief Vision Officer, PowerHouse
Consulting, Inc.

Whether at home, at school, or at work, the ability to eliminate excess allows space for clarity, productivity, and a genuine contribution to well being.

Every business unit in every company today is faced with doing more with less (usually money), while simultaneously being asked to improve the customer experience, increase productivity, reduce errors, increase revenue, reduce cost ... and all manner of other lofty goals. Technology often enters here with great promises of meeting and even exceeding these goals. The touted solution often includes the recommendation to automate, automate, automate - add a channel, improve your web site, offload to an IVR, use speech recognition, etc., etc. The only thing that we have not been able to consider automating is in fact *the customer*, although I am quite sure that if someone found a way it would generate great interest. Certainly with all the bar codes and RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) technology it is a wonder that the vacuum, the fridge, or the water heater can't phone itself in for service or that our refrigerator can't report us to our physicians. Just wait ... I'm sure we're almost there.

For now however we must carefully evaluate automation recommendations and ask ourselves, *"Is this automation*

truly going to yield the greatest efficiency?" When technology offloads contacts does it then add staff in IT to support it? Simply moving costs around is not really the objective (although for some, moving it off their budget is good enough). Silos support this thought process or what I categorize as "Cross-functional Dysfunction." But this story is not about that; we'll save that story for another time.

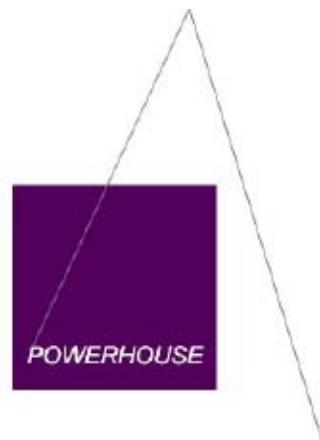
Automation is all about *process*. This is one reason why the best means to arrive at the decision to automate is to do a process analysis FIRST, then determine if there is a technology to improve it, offload it, or (more powerful than either of these) ELIMINATE it. The "best practice" of determining the WHAT before the HOW means that the analysis is done *prior to* arriving at the solution. Far too often the objectives are established or the technology is purchased with little or no process analysis. Few requirements are defined - leaving the way open for the people you are buying from to define your needs rather than you defining them. This is an abdication that often results in attempting to back your processes into a system that may cause more problems than it solves.

I once worked with a Call Center where a Senior VP charged the Call Center with increasing the percentage of calls handled in the IVR from 20% to 30%. The Call Center team nodded in agreement and returned to the Center. Their first order of business - remove the zero-out option and the calls will *look as if* they were completed in the IVR. Bingo! Stats were up and the Center was on the way to hitting that 30%. Problem solved. If only the VP

knew how this increase had been accomplished (a customer experience bummer) or that the most frequent call type was billing error. If only the Call Center team had been able to make the case for *fixing the billing system*, the majority of calls would have been ELIMINATED! This most certainly would have accomplished what the VP was after. Surely, it would cost more and take longer, but the impact would last longer and it would be a one-time cost. Elimination positively impacts resource requirements, the customer experience, cost, and quality.

Elimination is an outcome - not unlike cleaning the house, closet, or garage - where the objective is to get rid of things that are in the way (or no longer add value) or to re-organize for better access. We must be cautious when improving processes to assure that we are not just doing some "cleaning" and will soon refill the now available space due to habits, rituals, or lack of focus.

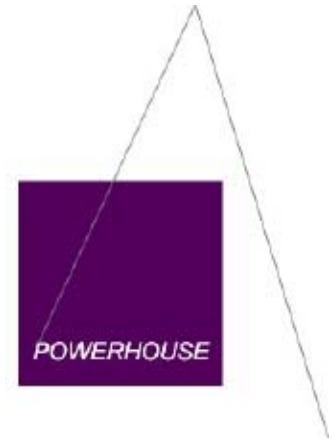
Tools are important in evaluating processes for improvement or elimination. They range from something as simple as asking your front line, *"What are the dumb things we do here?"* to the more sophisticated application of technology such as the new "speech analytics" software that is emerging as part of Quality Recording Systems (e.g., Verint). A great example of this is a Canadian financial institution that used the speech analytics application to "mine" recordings for phrases that were repeated within calls. This allowed the company to dig into specific issues and move from anecdotal to empirical data which is much more actionable. This operation now reviews all mailings to customers





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Randomly Timed Musings



in order to eliminate the cause of many phone calls that were generated by confusing language in mailings. This is only one of many improvements it was able to make in order to drive cost down and quality up. That is often the power and the outcome of elimination - there is a streamlining of the experience.

Too many steps in a process make it ripe for errors. Errors and rework waste time and cause customers to contact us. Streamlining a process translates to *fewer contacts* and an *improved customer experience*. Yet it takes time and the skill to know how to evaluate a process from end to end. It takes cross-functional support because like our Canadian example, the fix may lie outside of your particular area of responsibility. All those business units in the Customer Experience Continuum *must align* in order for elimination to occur.

Warehouses that receive poor order information from the web or the Call Center will waste time, energy, resources, and money on picking and packing the wrong merchandise. Never mind the returns, the impact on inventory, and the customer's needs not being met. At this time of year speed and accuracy are critical, so all participants in the process must commit to working together to discover opportunities for elimination.

I once wrote an article about an organization where the Call Center Manager instituted a role called "Director of Causal Analysis." Her job was to eliminate as many process issues as possible that drove customer complaints. Her team had responsibility

for all Quality evaluations, the Agent Assist queue, and all customer call data analysis. The team met weekly to identify any customer that had called in repeatedly (within thirty days). All recordings were pulled and listened to, records were checked, the cause of the call was identified, and a determination was made as to what exactly the trigger was for this contact. In some cases an agent needed more training, but in more cases it was a backlog or back-office bungle in another department that was contributing to the problem. The team's position was not to simply search for the guilty; it would partner with the department in question to resolve the process issue. This actually resulted in improvements within two business units, not just one.

The Director of Causal Analysis and her team did not wait until an issue arose to initiate a cross-functional dialogue; they identified those business units in the Customer Experience Continuum and proactively reached out to them. First they asked for a contact, one that would understand the relationship and be on board for contributing to the discovery of improvement opportunities. When issues arose, a relationship was already in place. They were not met with a defensive posture and many problems were eliminated due to collaboration. This is a "Functional Cross Function." In one case the Call Center sent several of its agents to be trained in order to help eliminate the backlog. Likewise, the back-office folks were trained to handle calls in order to be available during peaks. Everyone benefitted. The team enjoyed quite a good reputation. Unfortunately the company was recently sold and the new regime did not adopt

this model. My guess is that they will likely have to resurrect it in a few years!

We come to the end of another year, one that has taken us on such a wild ride - gas prices rose to \$4 a gallon; stock portfolios, 401Ks, and Wall Street tumbled; gas prices fell to \$1.95 a gallon; a presidential election (the likes of which one has never been seen) made history; the number of U.S. voters increased; and the young and the diverse established their credentials.

We are in a massive state of change. Let's hope it all works out for the best. Get on board this wild ride; look around your business unit and look into your life. *What is in need of attention?* Be silent for a while, listen to the wisdom of your inner voice, and it will come to you. Pay attention, take action, be kind, and have fun. Optimism is more important now than ever. *Be the messenger of possibility.*

Finally, ask that question about the dumb stuff you do. The frontline LOVES to let management know where it is being stupid. Make it FUN. Have the frontline vote for the #1 DUMB THING. Publish the findings and give away copies of the movie *Dumb and Dumber*. That will eliminate some of the stress folks are feeling this year and will very likely identify several processes in need of attention. This is a great time of year to do something nice. So be nice to yourself and to your team. Eliminate all your barriers to joy.

Joy to the World, Happy Holidays, and Happy, Happy New Year ... "Yes, We Can!"



dimensions of personality or ability and can thus create valid predictions about how a person may behave in various situations. The unique benefit to these types of assessments is that predictions can be made about future behavior in roles in which the applicant has no previous experience. As a result, these “can do” measures are usually the most appropriate type of screening tool for hourly jobs and should comprise a significant part of the assessment solution.

In regard to what applicants *have done*, assessments are designed to measure applicants’ previous experiences, past behavior, education or training, and accomplishments. Examples include resume scoring for education, relevant work history and skills training, behaviorally-oriented interview questions that focus on how an applicant handled a specific situation in the past, and job-specific knowledge or skills

tests. These types of assessments are based on the principle that future performance is best predicted by past performance. For hourly jobs, the most appropriate “have done” tools include basic qualifications screening questions and behaviorally-oriented interviews.

Finally, in regard to what applicants *want to do*, assessments are designed to measure differences in applicants’ motives, aspirations, preferences, and interests. These types of tools are less effective for predicting productivity but are well-suited to predicting job/culture fit, employee satisfaction, and retention. Realistic Job Previews fall into this category, as candidates can take a ‘sneak peek’ into the actual organization and job and opt out of the selection process if something looks particularly undesirable to or ill-suited with their interests and expectations.

Measuring motivation and preferences is valuable for almost any level of job, but again, primarily relate to employee satisfaction and retention rather than productivity and performance.

Some common criticisms of selection assessments are that they don’t work, they’re not fair, and they’re too ‘fake-able’. However, research indicates that a well-designed set of assessments can predict performance and early retention more accurately and fairly than traditional subjective approaches. Assessments help remove bias that hiring managers and recruiters unintentionally bring to the process. Further, assessment item formats such as those utilizing a balance of appealing or “socially-desirable” response options have been developed which truly minimize applicants’ ability to ‘game’ the assessments or figure out which answer is ideal. In fact, through the use of closed-loop analytics, assessment developers can identify

which items are susceptible to faking and can subsequently modify or replace them with content that is more effective. Also, research demonstrates that low levels of faking in any part of the selection process (including face-to-face interviews) do not impact validity in a significant way.

Although a wide body of evidence demonstrates how powerful and accurate well-designed assessments can be, there are, unfortunately, many poorly-crafted, inappropriately-applied assessments on the market. As a result, and in accordance with the *Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures* and the *Principles for the Validation and Use of Personnel Selection Procedures*, organizations need to take the steps necessary to ensure that any assessment strategy they use is valid for their environment and jobs. In addition to reviewing relevant job analysis reports and test



validation manuals, test administrators need to confirm that the assessments are effective within their organization by analytically evaluating the impact the selection tools and processes have on their performance outcomes.

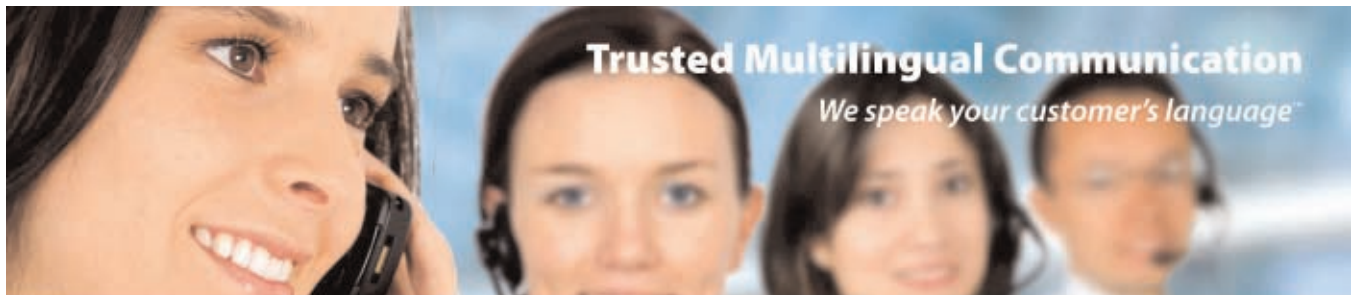
Further, because so many unproven, poorly-designed assessments and selection “solutions”

are available today, it is critical that organizations take time to investigate how and by whom the tests were developed. And although many vendors take a “one-size-fits-all” approach, no assessment is as effective and accurate as one that has been designed and validated by experts for specific positions within specific industries. Because previous experience is

less critical in most hourly jobs, a call center selection system should typically focus more on screening for behaviors (“can do”) and motivation levels (“likes to do”) and less on cognitive abilities and technical skills (“has done”), as might be the case with higher-level, salaried jobs.

Conclusion

No single, “perfect” solution exists for every selection challenge, but a well-thought out, well-designed process that leverages selection science and incorporates multiple components such as a realistic job preview, qualifications screening, validated assessments, and behaviorally-oriented structured interviews



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can dramatically improve the quality of hiring decisions. As a result, organizations that choose to invest the time and resources into evolving their selection processes will see a significant improvement in the productivity of their workforce, while improving retention and reducing the burden on their hiring professionals.

Taking it one step further, organizations need to evaluate the impact that selection tools are having within their organization by harnessing the power of closed-loop analytics and on-demand reporting and should require that their selection solutions enable them to do so. By improving your call center agent selection and hiring, you can put the right pieces in place to drive measurable improvements throughout your organization and get ahead of your competition.

David Ostberg, Ph.D., is an Industrial and Organizational Psychologist with 10+ years experience designing and evaluating selection systems for companies in service industries. A member of the American Psychological Association and Society for Industrial & Organizational Psychology, Dr. Ostberg is currently the Vice President of Selection Science for Evolv On-Demand. For more information, visit www.evolvondemand.com or call (866) 971-4473.

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Breakthrough Call Center Leadership Talent Development, Engagement & Benchmarking

Part IV of a Five-Part Series

By John S. Mattone, M.S., Cabot L. Jaffee, Ph.D.,
Michael R. Struth, M.S., and Scot A. Lake, M.S.

Effective talent leadership results in robust measures on two critical metrics for every call center: employee engagement and turnover. Engagement, in fact, makes or breaks the bottom line. And turnover, a hot topic in the final days leading to the Department of Labor's gloomy prediction of 10 million more jobs than workers by 2010, is quickly becoming a formidable obstacle to profitability.

Effective talent leadership in the immediate and foreseeable future will determine for many businesses, especially call center outsourcers, whether or not they remain viable. What matters now for all call centers is knowing how

to manage both engagement and turnover. To do this, call centers must know, (a) how committed their people are, and (b) how capable their people are. This returns us to the dictum reiterated throughout this series: Commitment and capability must be *measured continuously*, because **accurate information drives effective strategies.**

A 2006 study by the Gallup Organization reported bleak news on the issue of employee commitment. They report that 52% of the American workforce is disengaged, while another 17% is “fundamentally disconnected” from the



work they are paid to perform. Said differently, only one in three workers puts forth the effort that moves American companies forward. Staggering. The good news is, as an industry, call centers seem to understand the importance of engagement and tend to measure engagement diligently. Being “fundamentally disconnected” would be hard to get away with in most call center environments. But what about capability? As much as call centers know about engagement, many understand far less about capability, and they understand the least where it may matter most – with their leadership.

The responsibilities supervisors and managers have in fostering a work environment built upon

rapport, trust, and credibility cannot be overemphasized or underestimated. An engaged call center workforce is established by the quality of employees’ immediate supervisory and managerial talent, as well as by the quality, depth, and effectiveness of communication by HR and senior call center leaders. Call center agents must perceive that they are coached and developed (i.e., “can do”), as well as challenged and unleashed (i.e., “will do”), to execute the work that enables the organization to thrive and succeed (i.e., “must do”). Inherent in any call center’s quest to become a great talent leadership organization should be their unwavering commitment to measurement ? the “checks and balances” orientation implicit in

great coaching and performance management ? so that agents understand and respect that they will be held accountable for the knowledge, skills, and capabilities that do, in fact, lead to superior performance. When call centers use objective assessment to benchmark and certify knowledge and skill levels, not only are they building opportunities for “course correction,” but they are also reinforcing the importance of accountability and continuous improvement for individuals and teams.

How does a call center organization strengthen their leadership capability as a foundation for creating an engaged workforce? AlignMark recommends the following:

Objectively assessing supervisory and managerial skills
Leveraging assessment results (i.e., Development Planning)
Skill-based training programs that truly “raise the talent bar”:
Analysis & Problem Solving
Initiative
Influence
Team Building
Situational Style of Interaction
Change Management
Talent Leadership
Formalize mentoring relationships for newer supervisors and create structured opportunities for newer leaders to “process” their growth as leaders with more tenured and mature leaders

While all of these help “raise the talent bar”, the single most important and immediate need is providing all call center leaders with talent



leadership training opportunities where leaders begin to shape a more positive mindset, come to a greater appreciation of the full scope of their talent management responsibilities, and begin to take action for being outstanding talent leaders.

With respect to *Talent Development, Engagement and Benchmarking,*

AlignMark offers some of the following best practices:

Managers and supervisors need to be held accountable for talent leadership

Retention goals should exist for every manager and supervisor

Training for each individual is based on accurate diagnostic information

Learning sessions are brief, engaging, and

experiential
Managers and supervisors empower call center agents to take charge of their own development

The process of building employee engagement is ongoing and is best fostered through meaningful and enriching work experience. Effective employee engagement, a mixture of tangible and intangible factors,

is the result of an environment of stimulation, development, learning, support, and contribution. This will require, at a minimum, strong leadership, a sense of shared destiny, autonomy, accountability, and the kinds of opportunities for development and advancement addressed in this paper.



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Look for more about Talent Leadership in the fifth and final paper in this series: *Talent Affirmation and Differentiation.*

The Breakthrough Call Center Leadership Series:

- I. *It's About Your Talent Leadership "Mindset" and "Execution"!*
- II. *The Power of Your Leadership Value Proposition*

III. *Building a Strong Talent Leadership Foundation...Talent Acquisition and Deployment*

IV. *Talent Development, Engagement, and Benchmarking*

V. *Talent Affirmation and Differentiation*

###

A Case Study

Valvoline Instant Oil Change

Challenges:
Valvoline Instant Oil Change (VIOC) decided to change the way they interact with their customers after experiencing low satisfaction ratings. The company wanted to accurately track the number of incidents and customer requests so no issues or communications were missed in the queue. "We were losing the trust and rapport that

we had established with our customers because their requests were not being tracked and fell through the gaps in our system," says Shawn B. Castle, Manager of Installed Solutions Support Center for VIOC. "Also, we had very little insight on the status of each agent and how they were spending their overall time." VIOC's contact center agents need to be the proponent of high-value customer interactions by providing quality service, prompt responses, and

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facilitating a seamless escalation of issues. Tracking the workload of each agent was essential to ensure the optimum number of resources would be available for customer calls. By finding a solution to monitor the contact center in real-time, VIOC would ensure that agents were providing the best service possible.

Solution:

VIOC chose Syntellect Customer Interaction Management (CIM) for a consolidated view of customer communications across all channels. Syntellect CIM provides real-time contact center monitoring and enables VIOC to prioritize and manage any agent activity. All customer communications are monitored, including actual time spent on the interactions and any outstanding issues that are in the queue. "VIOC wanted a corporate wide customer interaction solution that was flexible enough to meet the various

demands and functionality requirements of departments within the company," states Castle. "We chose Syntellect CIM since it provided the best real-time monitoring and the flexibility that satisfied all our needs."

Using Syntellect CIM enables VIOC to identify gaps in their processes and procedures and fix them in an expeditious manner.

Results:

Since VIOC implemented Syntellect CIM, the company has reduced the average response time of an email request from 24 hours to a few minutes and reduced the average wait time for callers from over one minute to an average of 17 seconds.

"With Syntellect CIM we were able to decrease the time it took to identify and react to problems using queue alarms, which instantly recognize any issues and notify the appropriate

personnel," says Castle. "VIOC's contact center now has the highest internal and external customer approval rating." VIOC has seen dramatic improvements in customer satisfaction and uses their customer service as an advantage over their competitors. The company more efficiently utilizes their staff and resources based on real-time monitoring to save money on labor. VIOC has also reduced non-value added work for its agents and has them take on other responsibilities to increase their internal value.

Castle explains, "We have been able to improve the efficiency of each agent by setting goals related to the Syntellect CIM metrics such as wrap up time and availability. This has had a dramatic effect on our average speed to answer communications and our overall customer service strategy."

VIOC has been able to set obtainable goals for the agents and management using data extracted from Syntellect CIM. Knowing what the goals are allows the staff to use creative and fun ways to drive customer satisfaction and productivity to achieve their objectives.

###

Contact Centers and Self-Service Software: Working Together to Satisfy Customers

by Hope Schoenbacher

Call centers have a tough job in today's economy. While budgets are tightening, the demand for outstanding customer service continues to grow. With more than 200 billion calls placed to customer service centers around the world every year, call centers must find new ways to balance quality service while lowering costs in order to



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remain competitive.

Seeking to balance low costs and provide great service may seem like nothing new. But the current industry landscape and economic situation is pushing prices even lower and making this balance a necessity. Since it is always less expensive to retain a customer than to replace them, companies must focus on how to increase customer loyalty. At the same time, they need to lower overhead expenses to offset the budget constraints imposed by a less than favorable economy.

Customer retention is an important issue for every business that relies on contact centers. The companies that have contracts with these agencies depend upon them to ensure their customers have a positive experience. A recent study from the American Management Association says that 68 percent of all customers who stop

doing business with a company cite a bad service experience as their primary reason for ending the relationship. To combat this trend, companies worldwide are expected to employ more than six million call center agents and spend more than \$100 billion in customer care in 2008.

So what's the solution? For many companies, the answer to lowering costs and improving the customer experience is self-service software.

Higher call volumes have traditionally meant that contact centers hire more agents. This expensive solution is fast becoming outdated as companies are increasingly turning to self-service software as a cost-effective complement for the contact center. Self-service technologies encompass a broad array of services, each of which works to empower customers and lighten the burden

on contact centers through:

Comprehensive self-help sections on Web sites
Self-service options on mobile handsets
Intuitive, efficient call routing methods

The trend for self-service has already appeared with most companies updating their Web sites to include specific answers to common customer inquiries. All-inclusive, step-by-step instructions are archived in an easy-to-use format which empowers customers to confidently address issues and questions. This method of self-service reduces the number of tier-one calls to contact centers so that agents can focus on questions which demand more attention.

Improved Web sites are one valuable way to improve customer satisfaction, but they do not always serve the needs of customers on the go. According to recent statistics, an estimated one-third of

calls to customer service come from mobile phones, and this number is expected to grow to two-thirds before 2010. Improved handset technologies are helping to reach this audience as the Internet becomes available on mobile phones and users can work through questions online wherever they happen to be. By implementing self-service options on handsets, companies can harness the opportunity to support customers from their mobile phones. This leverages the economical Web-based self-service options to reach a growing number of mobile users.

To better illustrate how self-service technology can work, we can look to the example of customers trying to contact their mobile operators. Often times, mobile phone issues are related to devices and service plans. Self-service software enables customers to resolve many of these problems on their



handsets, and detects common problems before users notice they exist, proactively solving them to increase efficiency and customer satisfaction. Other settings, such as those required for roaming, messaging or data networking can be automatically updated. The software can also help customers to pay bills, check remaining minutes and obtain information about their accounts on the handset.

Customers are looking for immediate answers and solutions to their questions and problems and this type of approach enhances the customer's experience and ability to achieve this. Call center efficiency is also greatly increased because self-service software can automatically place a call to the correct customer support department, allow operators to categorize customers into groups to present each caller with personalized tools and direct calls to the most

appropriate department. The software also sends data already gathered on the product or service directly to the correct customer care representative so that the customer doesn't need to repeat information.

This type of self-service software for wireless operators is only one example of the growing trend to help customers help themselves. As technology improves and more businesses seek to gain a competitive edge, self-service software will become a crucial tool to increase customer satisfaction and lower costs.

Statistics demonstrate the efficiency of self-service software. Trials and pilots by Bellevue, Washington-based SNAPin Software have shown that self-service software has successfully solved 60 percent of customer issues.

An important benefit of self-service software for any industry is that

it helps contact centers focus more of their time on complicated problems that require human intervention. Call center agents are kept from being overwhelmed by a high volume of unnecessary calls. While self-service software is important, ensuring that there is an alternative avenue for the customer to contact an employee at a call center is vital to maintain a positive customer experience. Customers are then still able to speak with a call center representative if their issue is not resolved or if they prefer this approach to problem solving.

The trend toward tightening budgets will likely continue to affect call centers and the companies that rely on them. As companies work to increase customer loyalty, they want to provide a consistent, positive experience at every customer touch point. To achieve this goal, it is imperative that call centers gain a competitive edge over their competition by

adopting new self-service technologies that satisfy customers, lighten the burden for call centers and their employees and ultimately lower costs.

About Hope Schoenbacher, Vice President- Delivery, SNAPin Software

Hope brings over 14 years of experience in the wireless industry to the SNAPin team. Prior to joining SNAPin, Hope was a consultant focused on planning and implementing programs targeted to the mobile operators that dramatically improved the customer experience and the company bottom line.

Before becoming a consultant Hope spent 5 years at Western Wireless. As Executive Director, Customer Experience & Retention for Western Wireless, she developed the customer segmentation, direct marketing, customer lifecycle management and customer retention. These programs impacted more than 1.3 million



customers and resulted in 150 percent increase in customer renewals, resulting in over \$12 million in increased revenue annually. Prior to this role, Hope was the Director, Customers Systems in the IT organization. In this role Hope had full production and application development responsibilities.

Prior to working at Western Wireless, Hope spent 8 years at Verizon Wireless in a variety of leadership roles focused on implementing customer facing technologies. Serving as the Associate Director for CRM - Front End Systems group she led the regional teams through the development of the CRM roadmap for front-end systems including Credit & Collections, Point of Sale, Activations and Trouble ticketing, which was utilized by more than 16,000 employees across the sales and customer contact organization.

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About SNAPin Software

SNAPin Software provides on-device self-service software to mobile operators that lets them interact with their subscribers in real-time and in the context of their current mobile behavior. The company's handset-based SelfService product suite enables the delivery of interactive promotions, the resolution of most customer support problems, and allows operators to deliver a branded service experience to their subscribers. For more information, visit www.snapin.com.

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a Recession" - While

the US economy struggles from a crisis of confidence, enterprises are tightening budgets and bracing for a recession. Datamonitor reports that there is one thing that is certain; IT will continue to spend on technology to improve customer satisfaction and retention rates. In this webcast we review the customer satisfaction results from a recent study on speech applications. Learn why even in this economy, IT is shopping for speech. You will hear about the latest trends in speech self-service including outbound, personalized, and mobile applications. <http://www.crmxchange.com/webcast/voxifydec08.asp>

December 9th, LLE
Language Services -
"It's Time to Save You
Money: Understanding
Over-the-Phone
Interpretation Billing
Methods, and
Additional Rogue
Fees" - If you are a
user of over-the-phone
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services, or
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money by attending
this webcast. We will
share results of an LLE
sponsored research
study on the financial
impact of telephone
interpretation billing
methods on call
centers.
<http://www.crmxchange.com/wecast/lledec08.asp>

December 11th,
Portrait Software –
"How Merrill Lynch
Extended their
Customer Relationship
Strategy for
Individualized
Customer Treatment" -
Top analysts are
cautioning that while
today's business
climate requires a
customer centric
business model,
today's CRM systems
were simply not
designed for this,
leaving a critical,
fundamental gap
between many
organizations and their
business objectives. In
this webcast we
discuss how best-in-
class companies have
established a new
process for engaging
with their customers by
providing the most
relevant sales,
retention and service
messages at the time



when the customer themselves have chosen to interact - through inbound customer touch points such as service channels, call centers, IVR and web site.
<http://www.crmxchange.com/webcast/dec08>.
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**Pipkins Ends 2008
With Important New
Features**

Pipkins, Inc. ends 2008 with several important upgrades to their Vantage Point suite of workforce management software. Pipkins released

Vantage Point Real-Time Agent Adherence Global, a graphical adherence monitoring system that reduces the time and expense required to track schedule compliance for multi-site contact centers. RTA Global centralizes the monitoring process by displaying adherence levels for each center on a single color-coded map and allowing point-and-click drilldown to individual sites, enabling systemwide overview by a single analyst.

This new add-on to Pipkins' Vantage Point workforce management software can be used to track multiple in-house contact centers as well as monitor the performance of outsourced call centers. It builds on RTA *PLUS*, the industry-first graphical adherence control panel that Pipkins introduced for single-site contact centers last year.

RTA Global allows adherence violations at

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any contact center in the network to be instantly spotted and investigated with a click from a map that portrays each center's location and its compliance levels graphically instead of through text-heavy reports.

These tools reduce overhead for multi-site contact center operations by enabling a single, centrally located analyst to oversee adherence monitoring for all sites. The designated analyst can monitor all contact center facilities from a

single screen and alert local centers to compliance problems, eliminating the need for local monitoring as well as freeing local center supervisors to focus on other activities.

RTA Global complements RTA *PLUS* for single-site contact centers. In addition to providing graphical monitoring of agent adherence via color-coded avatars arranged in the same seating pattern as the agents themselves, RTA *PLUS* allows supervisors to modify schedules as well as

generate reports from the adherence monitoring screen with a click. Supervisors can log changes such as sick days or early releases, view agent schedules, send popup and email messages, and produce reports without switching screens.

In addition to RTA Global, Pipkins has developed a new interface with Blackberry, which enables users equipped with Blackberry's to check agent status at a glance and modify agent schedules with a

click while in meetings or off-site, allowing adherence violations to be quickly detected and corrected even from hundreds of miles away.

Pipkins' Blackberry-based remote access feature is one of the contact center industry's first handheld real-time adherence monitoring solutions, and represents another enhancement to Pipkins' agent adherence platform. Supervisors now have three choices for remote agent monitoring: they can use their PCs when possible and their



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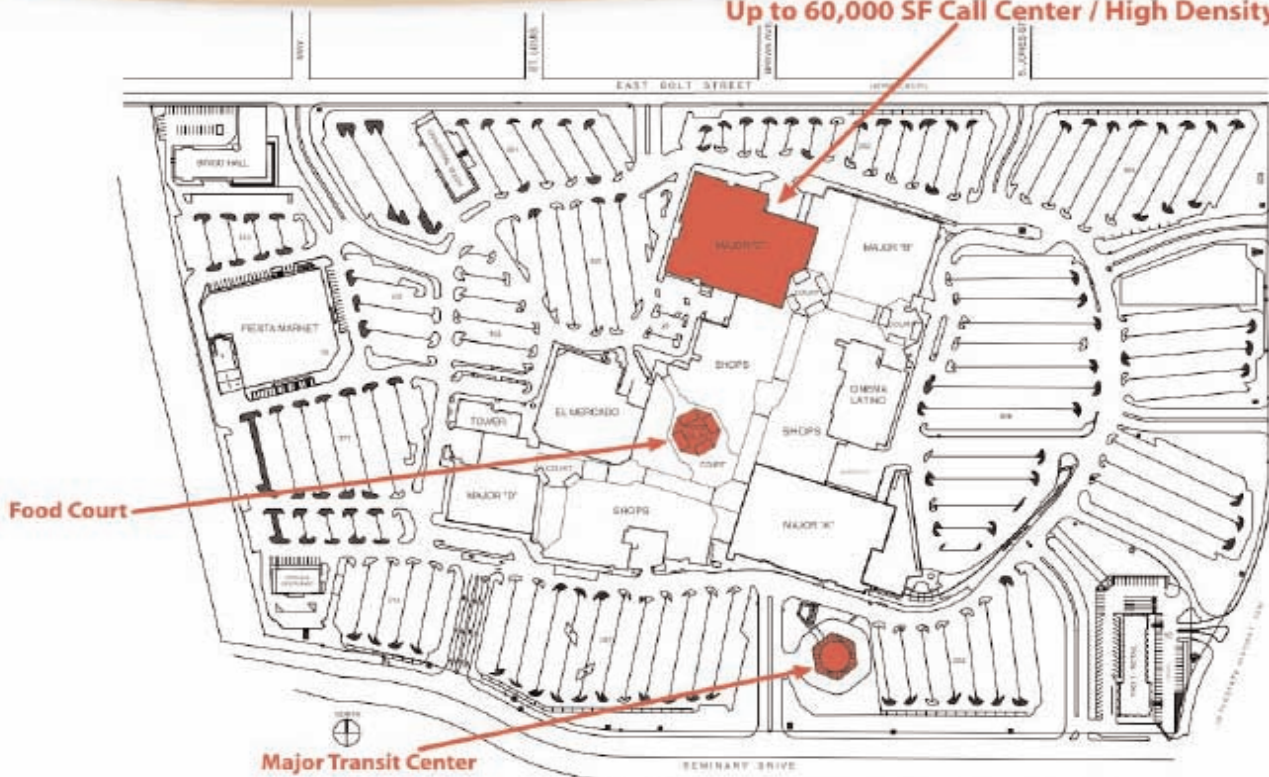
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###

Interior Concepts is Certified Green
 Industry leader in call center furniture now meets LEED Indoor Air Quality standards.
Spring Lake, November 21, 2008:
 Workstations manufactured by Interior Concepts now meet LEED Indoor air

quality standards set for low-emitting furniture. Use of these products qualifies for 1 point under the LEED for Commercial Interiors program EQ 4.5, credit provision.

To earn this certification, Interior Concepts products have been submitted, tested and approved by Material Analytical Services, LLC (MAS) an independent emissions testing laboratory. Individual material components and workstations were tested in accordance with the ANSI/BIFMA X7.1 Furniture Emissions Standards (an approved option by

the U.S. Green Building Council). Results of these tests are available upon request.

In addition, all of Interior Concepts composite wood products are certified to be in compliance with the California Air Resources Board (CARB) Phase 1 requirements that go into effect January 1, 2009.

According to company president David Kendrick, "Interior Concepts is confident that whether looking for LEED certification points, or just a healthier environment in

your building, our new certification will make you 'breathe easier', as we continue to provide independently certified green products."

Compliant with BIFMA
 X7.1
 ###

Epicor 9: Redefining the Enterprise Application Software Experience

By James Norwood, Vice President of Product Marketing for Epicor Software
jnorwood@epicor.com

Epicor is set to deliver Epicor 9, a unique solution that takes a new approach to the way enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems are designed, built and used. Epicor 9 raises technology to a level that delivers unprecedented business management and supports continuous performance improvement through real-time, in-context business insight.

The rigors and demands of today's real-time business



Joel Linchitz, CEO

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environment require that customer relationship management (CRM) processes are embedded within every facet of the organization, and so the enterprise software used to underpin it as well. By weaving CRM processes deep within the fabric of an overall business solution, the costs and complexities of integration are mitigated, or at least kept at arm's length, leaving the business to concentrate on the customer.

Epicor 9 features numerous essential embedded capabilities that manage the flow of processes right across the enterprise. This approach to core functionality, typically provided in other systems through after-the-fact integration or third party add-ons, includes customer relationship management (CRM), supplier relationship management (SRM), advanced planning and scheduling (APS), business process management (BPM), governance, risk and

compliance (GRC), product configuration, field service and more.

Expected to be generally available before the end of the year, Epicor 9 will virtually put "ERP everywhere," utilizing Web 2.0 concepts to provide users with a truly collaborative and dynamic enterprise business application experience.

###

NEWS

CallRex Call Recording Software Helps Keany Produce Cultivate Customer Service
Keany Produce Harvests Customer Relationships and Identifies Trends with CallRex

Kirkland, WA - Telrex, provider of the award-winning CallRex™ suite of IP call recording and call center optimization solutions, announced that CallRex call recording software has helped Keany Produce improve customer service processes and streamline dispute resolution. Telrex's call center optimization solution helped Keany Produce stretch their

current infrastructure while focusing their customer service efforts and pinpointing issues quickly using CallRex Professional™ software on their Mitel 3300 ICP system. "We focus on quality, providing great service and responding to issues quickly. We always strive to get it right the first time," said Dawn Eastwood, director of IT for Keany Produce. With the CallRex call recording solution, live calls are used for quality monitoring, employee coaching, dispute resolution, and to identify customer and process trends. "CallRex has allowed us to identify trends and correct issues or train agents," said Eastwood. "Using call recordings, we discovered issues that we hadn't even thought of." When reviewing calls, managers discovered that customer service agents were not necessarily answering the underlying or unasked questions. Eastwood explains, "We heard customer exchanges where agents were continually answering the customer question 'how much does that include' with 'five pounds,' when the real

question may have been 'how many servings are included?' We were able to identify this trend and coach agents to better respond to customer needs." Without the benefit of call recording software, and the ability to listen to real-life customer interactions, the company would not have the opportunity to fine-tune customer service and continue to improve relationships with employees, customers, and vendors alike. A market innovator, CallRex supports over 20 PBXs and softswitches, more than any other call recording vendor. CallRex is an all-software IP call recording solution that utilizes innovative packet sniffing technology to identify and record VoIP traffic on the network. Learn more at www.telrex.com or call 425.827.6156 x2.

About Telrex

Telrex provides IP call recording and call center optimization software. CallRex supports IP telephony systems, VoIP softswitches and unified communications solutions from Mitel, Inter-Tel, Cisco, Avaya,



Microsoft OCS, 3Com, ShoreTel, BroadSoft, Sylantro, Genband, Vertical, Digium/Asterisk, Pingtel, Fonality, TalkSwitch, Switchvox, and more. Telrex offers its award-winning CallRex software suite through value added resellers worldwide. Learn more at www.telrex.com. Contact Information: Jill Majors Marketing Manager Telrex phone: 425.827.6156 x131

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###

SugarCRM, the leading provider of commercial open source customer relationship management (CRM) software announces Sugar 5.2.

With 5.2, Sugar is introducing Cloud Services, a framework that allows developers to call any third party data source such as LinkedIn or JigSaw

and have the information available within Sugar. Because this is open source, there is no limit on the amount of data sources or types of data a developer can connect to Sugar. This is an advantage over Salesforce.com's closed platform model which doesn't allow developers to easily integrate between two sources without learning more about the interface first.

Also in 5.2, Sugar is

introducing Social Feeds, similar to the Facebook status feature or Twitter for Sugar, where colleagues can casually share what they are working on.

###

arvato digital services Expands Global Footprint with Opening of Customer Care Center Facility in East Wood City, Philippines

###

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VALENCIA, California, USA /EASTWOOD CITY, Philippines – arvato digital services, a global provider of integrated service packages in the IT/high-tech, bank, tourism, games, video and audio sectors, announced the successful opening of its new state-of-the-art customer care center facility at the Eastwood City Cyber Park in the Philippines. Headed by a recently appointed local management team and staffed by an initial group of more than 300 customer

care agents, the center will support Fortune 500 companies in the tourism, games, IT/high-tech and banking industry and grants access to a broad talent base of highly educated, experienced, English-speaking professionals.

###

Numara(r) Software Launches Numara(r) FootPrints(r) 9

Latest Version Adds ITIL v3 Support, Integrated Service Catalog and New

Mobility Solution Tampa, Fla., - Numara Software, Inc., a leading, worldwide provider of practical IT service management software, announced the release of Numara FootPrints 9, the latest version of its award-winning Numara FootPrints service desk management solution. Featuring new and expanded support for IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL) version 3 service lifecycle best practices and extensive usability enhancements, including powerful new mobile technology, this release further

demonstrates the company's continued focus on delivering advanced functionality to its customers at an affordable price and helping service organizations deliver a world-class experience to their service customers.

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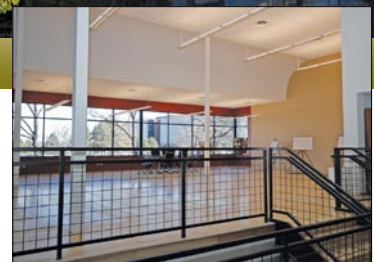
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What You're Missing at the Agent Desktop

All Contact Center agents use both a phone and a computer, yet today's quality and performance management solutions still focus primarily on the phone.

Call Recording products offer screen snapshots to record agent computer activity, but screen snapshots alone are insufficient in capturing ALL activity. They often miss important details, and snapshot images cannot be summarized into useful reports. Even the most expensive Quality Monitoring solutions only record a few other basic activities such as chats, emails, agent logon/logoff and program launch/exit times. These Contact Center offerings lack the ability to record and measure ALL agent activity on the computer and the network.

You can't manage what you can't measure, and to fully manage Contact Center performance, security and compliance you need a complete picture of both phone AND computer activity to answer questions like:

1. How efficient and effective are your agents in their computer-based activities?
2. Are they using software tools appropriately – or even at all?
3. Are agents missing required steps in your processes?
4. Are there steps that can be eliminated or simplified?
5. Who is transferring what files or documents to where?
6. Who is spending how much time on personal vs. work activities?

7. Which agents are violating contracts, company policies or industry regulations?

To answer these questions and more, computer monitoring must go beyond recording screen snapshots, chats and emails to also monitor EVERYTHING your agents do on the computer and the network. While expensive Quality Monitoring solutions currently lack this capability, more cost-effective solutions such as SpectorSoft (www.SpectorCC.com) have been providing award-winning computer monitoring software for more than 10 years. Still, it pays to do your due diligence in selecting monitoring software to meet your needs. Below are the minimum criteria you should accept from ANY computer activity monitoring solution:

Automatically Records ALL Agent Computer Activity

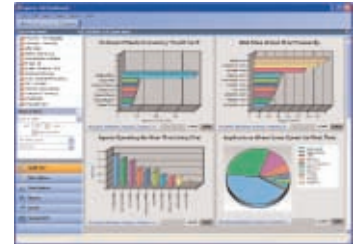
Automatically record EVERY detail of what your agents do on the computer, including:



([Click here](#) to see what SpectorSoft monitoring software records)

Centralized Monitoring and Reporting

Review recordings from anywhere, anytime using high-level charts and reports that you can drill into or customize to reveal the level of detail you need.



([Click here](#) to enlarge the sample Dashboard)

Easy to Install, Manage and Use

The solution should be simple enough to download and install in less than an hour without help. In most cases, minimal installation support and no specialized training should be necessary to install, use or maintain the software.

Non-disruptive

Computer activity monitoring must not disrupt your operations or negatively impact system or network performance.

Works with Existing Solutions

Computer monitoring software should work alongside – or even integrate with – your existing Call Recording or Quality Monitoring solutions.

([Click here](#) to see how SpectorSoft monitoring software complements these technologies.)

Cost-effective

The software must be affordable, and provide cost-saving and performance-enhancing benefits to Contact Centers large and small.

Stealth Mode Operation



Computer monitoring should include advanced stealth technology to ensure it is completely undetectable. This prevents unwanted discovery, tampering or disabling of the software.

Security

The software should allow you to exclude certain activities from being recorded, encrypt data transfer and storage, and authenticate using role-based access to securely review its recordings.

Conclusion

Managing Contact Center performance, security and compliance requires a 360-degree view of your people, processes and technologies. Computer monitoring software such as Spector 360 from SpectorSoft fills the enormous gap in today's Contact Center solutions by providing insight into all agent computer and network activity.

Just like Call Recording does for phone activity, Spector 360 captures EVERY detail of what your agents do on the computer. Use computer monitoring software as part of your total quality and performance monitoring solution to manage ALL agent activity – on the phone AND on the computer.



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surveillance products for business, education, government and home users, including Spector Pro for 2008, eBlaster for 2008, Spector 2008 for Mac OS, Spector CNE Investigator, and Spector 360. More than 50,000 companies and more than 400,000 consumers have purchased SpectorSoft solutions to improve productivity and security in their business or home, and SpectorSoft has been selected for four years by Inc. Magazine as one of the Fastest Growing Private Companies in America. SpectorSoft monitoring technology is a THREE-TIME winner of the prestigious PC Magazine Editors' Choice Award.

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###



Call Center Associates

This is an open letter to all call centers that do not have scheduling software today...

Our company provides scheduling tools that improve the efficiency of your workforce, reduces wait time for your customers, and almost as important we make it easy for the user.

Southwest Airlines and Windstream Communications (formerly ALLTEL) are among our largest clients while a company like Speed FC is among our smallest. Our customer base is not huge, nor is our company. We do things simply and effectively by providing powerful tools to schedule call center employees and do it in a way that cost less than you would expect.

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well as scheduling advice. You want to offer 4 10-hour work days? Should you? Can you? How do you do it? All questions you can ask our team.

Please contact us to learn more about our software and our simple pricing strategy. We believe you will be pleased with the software, the price, and you will be thrilled with the service we provide when you need it most; after the sell!

Sincerely,

Wayne Shaw

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