# National Association of Call Centers

## *In Queue*

### *The fun, informative, and unique newsletter for the call center industry*

Welcome to the November 2017 issue of the NACC In Queue newsletter!

## The Best Attributes Of Inbound Call Center Sales Reps

Marcia Jenkins, Senior Operations Manager, Quality Contact Solutions, marcia.jenkins@qualitycontactsolutions.com

Here's a question for call center managers and supervisors: How do you know you have the best call center reps on your team? In my experience, the best call center reps share the same characteristics.

**Persistence**

The best call center reps (particularly reps on sales-oriented programs) are persistent. They continue firmly in a course of action in spite of difficulty or opposition. If you have ever worked on the front lines in a call center operation, you know it's tough! When an inbound call center sales rep has been around a long time, you know they are a persistent person, working hard, day in and day out to overcome the obstacles in their way!
They have confidence and know they can get the job done. They take ownership and don't look for reasons to explain away their poor results. These persistent reps keep trying to get better and use available resources. These reps grow every day and get better every day, they are not happy with mediocre results.

**Curiosity**

Another characteristic of the best inbound call center sales reps is curiosity. These curious people want to learn. Discovering new things is part of their learning. They speak with others, read information and really think on things they don't yet understand. They are also persistent in getting the answers. When they fail, they recognize it is a learning experience. They take what they learn and use it to their advantage on the next call.

**Optimism**

One final characteristic is their optimism. Their glass is always half full and they can keep it positive. They can take the information they have learned, apply it and be successful. There is no whining or making excuses. The inbound call center sales reps are coachable and know that in order to get better, some things must change. When you provide feedback, you can help them get better as they take what you gave them last time and implement it, ready and willing to move to the next level, they are respectful and listen.

*Marcia Jenkins is the Senior Operations Manager for **Quality Contact Solutions**. Prior to joining Quality Contact Solutions, Marcia was a sought- after 10-year call center veteran with the ability to manage and sell.*

*Marcia is responsible for the day to day operations for the At Home Division. QCS At Home is a work-from-home telemarketing and call center solution focused on business to business inbound and outbound telemarketing, test-bed projects and special programs which are typically not well-suited for the traditional brick and mortar call center operation.*

## Telecommuting Problems Or Management Problems!

Michele Rowan, President, Customer Contact Strategies, Rowan.Michele@gmail.com

Recently some large companies made announcements about pulling back on their telecommuting programs. In general terms, the notifications advised many professionals who had worked remotely for years - that they needed to come back to the office to work, or lose their jobs.
For many, the challenges of returning to the office could be insurmountable. In

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### In This Issue...

- Best Attributes Of Inbound Agents
- Telecommuting Problems
- The Rise of Contact Center Gamification
- Call Center Comics!

### Pearls Of Wisdom

"The way to develop the best that is in a person is by appreciation and encouragement."
~ Charles Schwab

### Reports From NACC

The NACC has been burning the midnight oil and typing until our fingers are sore to bring out reports to our members. Each is listed below. If you are interested to see what we are writing about, click on the links below and download the executive summary of each. If you like what you see, join the NACC so that you can view these reports and others that will be coming out soon on our website. These reports will ensure that you know the latest trends in the industry.

- Research Note: NICE Introduces CXone - Fully Integrated Open Cloud Contact Center Platform: August 2017

- Research Note: Verint Introduces Knowledge Management Professional Knowledge Management for the Masses: July 2017

- NICE Introduces Nexidia Analytics: Omni-Channel Analytics For The Contact Center: January 2017

- Text Analytics Market Update: April 2016

- Kodak Alaris Launches AI Foundry To Deliver Artificial Intelligence-Based Solutions For The Contact Center: November 2015

- HireIQ Candidate Optimizer Disrupts The Status Quo, Powers Revolution In Customer Service Human Capital
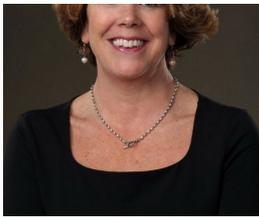
several cases, local offices had long since closed. So effected remote employees would have to either uproot their families to move to a location where there was an active office, or take on a 2-3 hour commute each way.

This was a well thought through, huge step backwards for companies involved. So, what went wrong? And which groups were impacted? Specifics about impacted groups (i.e. contact center reps vs. corporate employees) were not available publicly.

Here are some significant considerations and likely scenarios:

1. Impacted remote workers were corporate employees, not contact center employees. Contact center jobs are highly transactional, and 100% of visibility of output is maintained with the move to work at home (via ACD views, etc.). As long as companies make the right investments in collaboration and communication platforms, there are no downsides to contact center work at home programs. There are only upsides, including larger talent pools, increased schedule flexibility/employee satisfaction, improved attendance and retention. Effective management/leadership is an obvious requirement.

2. Corporate telecommuting programs can have poor visibility of outputs, poorly managed teams or programs. I do a good deal of onsite consulting work around work at home initiatives, for both contact centers and corporate telecommuting programs. I have seen a number of cases of non-contact center telecommuting programs that suffered from weak leadership or weak management. When managers don't take the care to set clear expectations and agree on ways to consistently measure performance against agree upon outputs, chances are targets won't be met. When leaders are weak, disorganized or otherwise ineffective, employees will disengage. And telecommuters are more likely to disengage faster, and further.

3. Telecommuting (non-contact center) no longer meets corporate objectives. This can happen. Company objectives usually change every couple of years. Telecommuting may no longer be a strategy that's aligned with objectives.

4. Overhead cost cutting strategy. In some cases, reduction or elimination of corporate telecommuting programs may be a way to contribute to cost cutting strategies or work force reduction strategies, while avoiding the headaches of performance-based or seniority-based reductions.

Contact center work at home programs work, unless they are peppered with weak ineffective leaders. It's far easier for the contact center organization to get work at home right than any other function within the organization.

How does your organization stack up against others? Join us at the
2018 Remote Working Summit, Dallas March 7-8. Learn more here:
https://www.customercontactstrategies.com/2018-remote-working-summit/

# The Game Is On! Gamification in the Contact Center

Paul Stockford, Research Director, NACC and Chief Analyst, Saddletree Research,
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Perhaps the best-known of all contact center employee engagement solutions is gamification. Early implementations of gamification reach back to the mid-1970s. One of the first examples of gamification was provided to Saddletree Research by Dr. Brooks Mitchell, retired professor from the University of Wyoming.

In this 1974 example, a gamification experiment was conducted in a real-world factory environment that had been experiencing high absenteeism. In this case, the experimental group participated in gamification while a control group of employees did not. The experimental group was given a playing card each time they arrived for work. The control group was not. At the end of the week, the member of the experimental group who had the best poker hand was awarded with $20.

At the end of the experiment, absenteeism among the experimental group was down 18 percent. Absenteeism among the control group had no change.
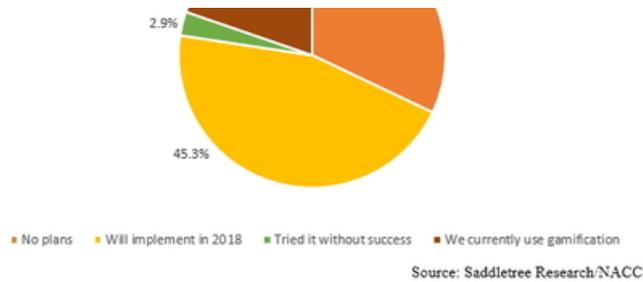
Dr. Mitchell replicated this experiment with the City of Garland, Texas, in 1982, albeit without a control group. All employees participated. The city was experiencing a high degree of absenteeism on Mondays and sought a solution through gamification. Using the same card game utilized in the 1974 factory experiment, the City of Garland experienced a nearly immediate decrease in Monday absenteeism of 35 percent.

Despite solid examples of success, such as those described above, gamification has yet to find its footing in the contact center industry. It appears, however, that this will not be the case going into 2018. As illustrated in the figure below, interest in gamification is showing significant gains as the importance of employee engagement grows in the industry.

Contact Center Gamification Deployment

19.7%

32.1%

2.9%

45.3%

■ No plans  ■ Will implement in 2018  ■ Tried it without success  ■ We currently use gamification

Source: Saddletree Research/NACC

The source of the above data is the NACC/Saddletree Research survey of customer service professionals conducted during the third quarter of 2017. The results reveal that over 45 percent of the industry will be evaluating gamification for implementation in 2018.

We believe that the major factor driving this renewed interest in contact center gamification deployment is the evolution of the contact center agent workforce. The Millennial Generation, generally defined as those individuals born between 1982 and 2004. They are now the nation's largest living generation with a population of about 75.4 million. Millennials have been the majority of the U.S. workforce since 2016 and will represent 75 percent of the workforce by 2030.

A number of studies conducted over the past several years reveal a set of Millennial generation work characteristics and preferences that will, we believe, prove to be increasingly important in the years to come. Some of the best-known of these characteristics and preferences, especially relevant to the contact center industry, include:

• Maintaining a work/life balance
• A collaborative approach to work in groups or teams

• Instant recognition and gratification for work performance
• Excellent multi-taskers
• Constant connectivity with peers and colleagues
• Open and honest relationships with management
• Clearly defined paths for career development

We believe that the implementation of contact center gamification in 2018 is only the beginning of the deployment of what can best be described as solutions that address employee engagement and the evolving expectations of Millennials in the workplace. We expect gamification to be one of the breakout industry solutions in the year ahead.

I recently participated in a webinar entitled "The Game is On! Gamification and the Next Generation Contact Center." Sponsored by Calabrio, a replay of the webinar can be found at https://www.calabrio.com/recorded-webinars/contact-center-gamification/. If gamification is of interest to you, listening to the replay of this webinar will be a good investment of your time.

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## Call Center Comics



If you like this comic and would like to see more, write Ozzie at callcentercomics@yahoo.com and visit his website at http://callcentercomics.com or just click on the comic to tak you to his page. The NACC appreciates Ozzie letting us use some of his comics in our newsletter.

### Did You Know That NACC...

Offers several types of membership opportunities. **Click**

Offers a job board where top employers & candidates go to find their next call center rock-star!

Offers classifieds for your contact center space, furniture, and just about anything else you can think

Offers the ability to **advertise with NACC. Click here to view the NACC Advertising Guide** where

here to find out more... | their next call center rock star! **Click here for more...** | about anything else you can think of. **Click here to sneak a peek...** | you can view our channels and prices.

Get Social with us

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