NACC
National Association of Call Centers

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

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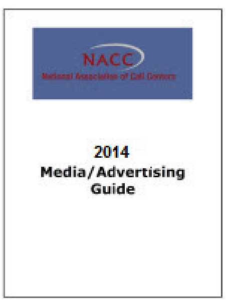

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Quote

In This Issue . . .

How Healthcare Will Drive Contact Centers, Mobile Unified Communications

Art Rosenberg, The Unified View / UC Strategies Expert, artr@ix.netcom.com

I have long expected that health care would become an important driver for Mobile UC because interactions with health care personnel (doctors, nurses) will require all modes of contact to replace expensive face-to-face visits whenever possible. This recent article in the Los Angeles Times shows that health care is rapidly becoming able to do that.

Since health care affects all consumers, once they start exploiting Mobile UC for that purpose, they will rapidly want similar capabilities for all their personalized interactions with other business activities, including financial, government, education, shopping, etc. (Or, maybe it will be the other way around, i.e., they will want to do the same with healthcare visits as they can do with online shopping!)

Doctors and Nurse Practitioners in "Virtual" Health Care Contact Centers?

The legacy "contact center" has traditionally been a way for "agents" to handle simple customer needs, including questions, information requests, and business transactions. For anything more complicated, the agent would then involve a "subject matter expert." Automated online self-services and "mobile apps" have started to take over that basic agent responsibility, coupled with the option to "click-for-assistance" when necessary, e.g., Amazon's "Mayday button" for their tablets.

With health care increasing demands for doctors and nurse practitioners, it is now becoming important to make interactions with patients less dependent on expensive face-to-face office visits and more available remotely or from convenient walk-in local venues. This is particularly practical, when a patient simply needs a prescription for common ailments.

So, we are now starting to see UC becoming a fundamental capability within various forms of direct, person-to-person communications between consumers and specialists (aka subject matter experts), rather than just through an available agent. This approach must therefore also give consumers more direct control over the choice of health care specialist they need, including a listing of available doctors or nurse practitioners, their qualifications, and current availability. (This capability will fit in well with Interactive Intelligence's OrgSpan technology, which lets customers with smartphones or tablets see such information on a screen.)
Most importantly, we won't expect doctors and nurses to work in a "contact center," monitored by supervisors, etc., but rather independently from their home offices or wherever they prefer to work. On the other hand, we will be able to record all patient interactions to evaluate and compensate health care personnel for their services, as noted in the L.A. Times article.

Business communications are now becoming differentiated by the specific needs of the individual consumers/customers/patients, the self-service "mobile apps" involved, the business processes that control direct contacts between people, and the skills and availability of the individual service experts. This is becoming very important to providing more efficient and less costly health care to consumers, as doctors become less available and health care costs rise. By becoming more "virtual" and UC-flexible in interacting with patients, health care resources can now be more efficiently and cost effectively provided to the consumer public.

"Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there."

~Will Rogers

Reports from the 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.

Neural Phonetic Speech Analytics: The Brains behind Nexidia Interactions Analytics 11.0: July 2014

Nexidia Pushes Speech Analytics Envelope with Nexidia Interaction Analytics 11.0: July 2014

The Time is Now: Workforce Optimization Becomes Reality for the Small-to-Medium-Sized Contact Center: July 2013

Finding the Silver Lining in the Contact Center Cloud: May 2013

The At-Home Agent Movement - A Benchmark Quantitative Analysis: January 2013

State of the Call Center Industry Report: 2nd Quarter 2012 Data

State of the Call Center Industry Report: 1st Quarter 2012 Data

Contact Center Mobility Study: May 2012

State of the Call Center Industry Report: 4th Quarter 2011 Data

State of the Call Center Industry Report: 3rd Quarter 2011 Data

State of the Call Center Industry Report: 2nd Quarter 2011 Data

State of the Call Center Industry Report: 1st Quarter 2011 Data

State of the Call Center Industry Report: 4th Quarter 2010 Data

State of the Call Center Industry Report: 3rd Quarter 2010 Data

State of the Call Center Industry Report: 2nd Quarter 2010 Data

State of the Call Center Industry Report: 1st Quarter 2010 Data

State of the Call Center Industry Report: 4th Quarter 2009 Data

State of the Call Center Industry Report: 3rd Quarter 2009 Data

State of the Call Center Industry Report: 2nd Quarter 2009 Data

State of the Call Center Industry Report: 1st Quarter 2009 Data

Second Quarter Bounce-Back Offsets First Quarter Employment Disaster

Paul Stockford, Research Director, NACC and Chief Analyst, Saddletree Research, Paul.Stockford@nationalcallcenters.org

In an unexpected turn of contact center industry events, the first quarter of 2014 saw the industry's first decline in employment numbers since the fourth quarter of 2008. Through the worst of the recession, the industry held its own against economic circumstances that should have forced shrinkage in employment numbers, but against all odds the industry continued to grow. Much of the force behind growth, however, also became agents of shrinkage in the first quarter of this year.

Every quarter the industry sees a fair amount of up and down activity in terms of the number employed. Business Process Outsourcers (BPOs) routinely hire and downsize as contracts and other business conditions warrant. One quarter may see a particular BPO hiring while the next quarter may see that same BPO downsizing. That's all part of the game. In the first quarter, however, many of the rules of the game changed.

Looking back at 2013, there was considerable growth in employment during the second through fourth quarters. Much of this growth was directly attributable to the ramp-up required to support the Affordable Care Act (ACA), also known as ObamaCare. Health insurance exchanges sprang up around the country bringing thousands of jobs with them. But, to quote an old saying, what goes up must come down.

The first quarter of 2014 was hit hard by the closure of many health care exchanges around the country. Contact center companies such as Maximus and General Dynamics each posted thousands of job closures in Idaho, Virginia, and Florida. These health care exchange providers did not show any significant job gains in the second quarter so we can assume that these headcount reductions were permanent.

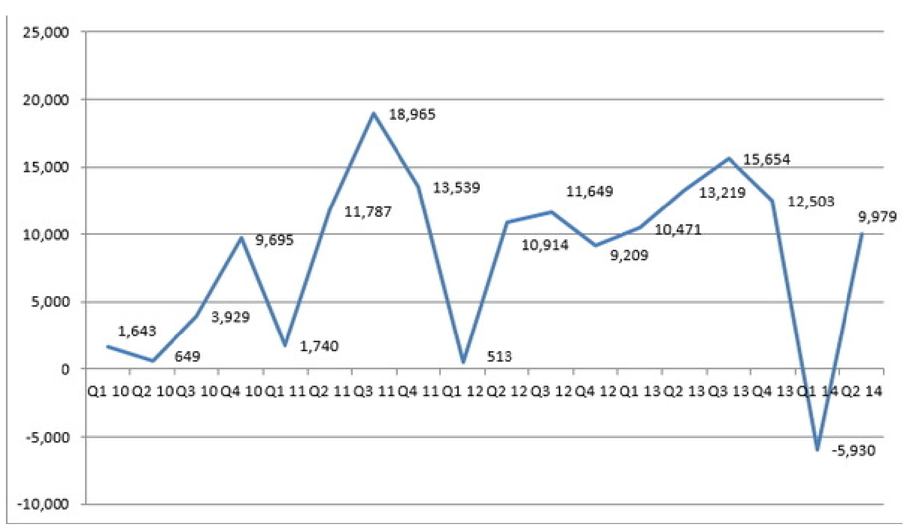
Compounding first quarter job losses were major closures by at least three major communications services providers; Verizon, Sprint and Cox Communications. These three companies represent the loss of nearly 9,000 jobs. While a few regional contact centers were opened by these companies during the second quarter, we believe the majority of these jobs went offshore.

The net result of the closures of contact centers in the first quarter of 2014 was a loss of 5,930 jobs in the U.S., representing the first quarter of job losses since 2008.

Fortunately, the second quarter of 2014 showed more typical growth patterns with a diverse set of vertical markets represented by the organizations in the growth column. Interestingly, two of the strongest growth contact centers were interpreters, both located in Arizona. Our suspicion is that these services became critical as waves of immigrants from Central America, including many unaccompanied children, came across the southern border of the U.S. Many of these undocumented immigrants spoke neither English nor Spanish, making communications with U.S. authorities difficult. Thus, the immediate need for interpreters.

Leading employment growth during the second quarter was Nielson, the market research people. They added over 1,100 jobs during the quarter. Other verticals represented among the growth contact centers were BPOs, insurance, roadside assistance, and tourism.

The net gain for the second quarter was 9,979 jobs. In terms of first half 2014 contact center industry growth, the gains of the second quarter offset the losses of the first quarter with the result being a net gain of 4,049 jobs for the first half of 2014. The chart below illustrates industry growth from the first quarter of 2010 through the second quarter of 2014.



Source: National Association of Call Centers

New Tern Systems Report Examines Interactive Voice Response (IVR) Market

Walt Tetschner, TERN Systems, tetschner@aol.com

North American Contact Center Industry 2008-2009: The Year in Review and a Look Ahead

State of the Call Center Industry Report: 4th Quarter 2008 Data

60 Ideas in 60 Minutes: 2008 Session

60 Ideas in 60 Minutes: 2007 Session

We recently looked at the customer support IVR systems of the leading publishing companies and the information that we gathered is summarized below:

IVR deployed in the Publishing Industry

Item	**#**	**% of total**	**Speech IVR type**		
Speech-enabled IVR	31	20.7%	*Type*	*#*	*% of total speech*
Non-speech IVR	96	64.0%	Directed-dialog	31	100.0%
No IVR	23	15.3%	Press 1 or say 1	0	0.0%
Total	150	100.0%	Natural Language (NL)	0	0.0%

Source: Tern Systems IVR Telephone Self-service market report – 2014

20.7% offer a speech-enabled capability. They are all directed-dialog.

None of the publishing self-service lines was implemented as a natural language (NL) user interface. 15.3% had no IVR at all.

IVR type by vertical industry: Table VI-1

Vertical Industry type of IVR						
Item		***Total***	***NL***	***Retro DD***	***No IVR***	***Speech***
Utilities	No.	213	1	148	5	59
	% of total	36.6	0.5	69.5	2.3	27.7
Cable	No.	50	0	42	3	5
	% of total	8.6	0.0	84.0	6.0	10.0
Airlines	No.	45	0	23	7	15
	% of total	7.7	0.0	51.1	15.6	33.3
Government	No.	64	0.0	42	16.0	6.0
	% of total	11.0	0.0	65.6	25.0	9.4
Insurance	No.	60	0	42	7	11
	% of total	10.3	0.0	70.0	11.7	18.3
Publishing	No.	150	0	96	23	31
	% of total	25.8	0.0	64.0	15.3	20.7
Total	No.	582.0	1.0	393.0	61.0	127.0
	% of total	100.0	0.2	67.5	10.5	21.8

Source: Tern Systems IVR Telephone Self-service market report – 2014

So far, we've looked at six different vertical industries to determine the sort of telephone self-service that is provided. To do this, we've called the customer service lines of almost 600 enterprises. Over two-thirds were retro to the 60s, directed dialog DTMF that callers dislike so much. 21.8% of the systems were speech. The vast majority of these were directed dialog and many were "press or say 1". The enterprises that we have been calling are typically the largest ones in each industry.

This situation would appear to be a marvelous opportunity for providing a high-quality NL IVR that callers like to use.

Summer Volunteer Membership Drive Continues

Paul Stockford, Research Director, NACC and Chief Analyst, Saddletree Research, Paul.Stockford@nationalcallcenters.org

If you'd like access to the reports on the NACC website, solicit advice from and share information with other NACC community members, and be in on business opportunities as they become available to us, consider joining the NACC as a volunteer member.

Volunteer memberships are provided at no cost in exchange for 30 minutes of your time during the one year membership period. All we ask of our volunteer members is to participate in our surveys, which typically take four minutes or less to complete. In 2012 we ran a total of three surveys. In 2013 we only ran our annual survey at the end of the year. This year we have done one survey that took about three minutes to complete. As with our regular memberships, volunteer members must be employed in a contact center in a supervisory or management capacity.

NACC membership gives you access to reports, our Job Board, business opportunities as they come to us, and the opportunity to tap into the membership network for inquiries, advice and review. We promise to ask for no more than 30 minutes of your time in total to participate in our brief surveys during the course of the year. It's a great deal.

Remember, the NACC is a 503(c)(6) not-for-profit organization so we don't have the resources that the marketing companies disguised as industry organizations have. Your participation in the NACC is vital to its success. If you'd like to join us, send me an e-mail with the word "Volunteer" in the subject line and I'll set up your membership. If you have questions, don't hesitate to contact me.

Cloud Contact Center Information Overload? One Demo Worth A Thousand Webinars!

Paul Stockford, Research Director, NACC and Chief Analyst, Saddletree Research, Paul.Stockford@nationalcallcenters.org

If you're suffering from "Cloud Information Overload" and still have questions regarding what the contact center in the cloud is really all about, you should sit in on one of Aspect's demos of its cloud contact center offering, Zipwire. You'll learn a lot in a short period of time and leave with a better understanding of why the cloud has the potential to fundamentally change the contact center industry in the future.

Demos are available on two separate days. Click on the links below for more information:

Thursday, September 18, 1 p.m. EDT
Thursday, September 25, 1 p.m. EDT

I'll be attending the September 25th session but each session will offer the same demonstration. I've found that seeing a solution in action is often the best way to really understand what it's all about. See you there!

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/cartoon_categories.htm or just click on the comic to take you to his page. The NACC appreciates Ozzie letting us use some of his comics in our newsletter.

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