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The Leading Voice for the Call Center Industry

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THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI
CALL CENTER
RESEARCH LABORATORY

In Queue

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

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Fast as Lightning

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In the last issue of this newsletter we asked for you to please participate in a survey on the subject of Unified Communications. Many of you chose not to participate, maybe it was because you don't know squat about Unified Communications. Well, that is fine, I did not know much about it either until recently, but we have space in the survey for you too. Not knowing is important. Plus, I know how many survey requests you get each week, I get them too, and they run, on, and on, and on. Well, we don't create surveys like that. Ours are short, sweet, and to the point. In fact, this survey can be completed in less than 1 minute. I was able to finish in a record time of 54 seconds, seriously. Bet you can't beat that time. Try it, I dare you, just click below to see.

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?
sm=BZGablY6s_2bmUuqb7Tx3ng_3d_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=BZGablY6s_2bmUuqb7Tx3ng_3d_3d)

Obama Administration and Call Centers-Part 2

David L. Butler, Executive Director, National Association of Call Centers,
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With Barack Obama winning the US Presidency on November 4th, it is important to understand what the potential influence of an Obama administration will have on the call center industry. I have taken his published plans and have divided them down into three categories: retraining, tax breaks, and unions. This essay will briefly discuss the secondary category of tax breaks. For the first essay on retraining, see the "In Queue" archives by [clicking here](#).

The Obama economic plan highlights corporate taxes, using taxes as both a carrot and a stick. If a company sends jobs overseas, then that company will lose tax breaks and deductions. Moreover, these companies will not be eligible to receive public contracts which are worth billions of dollars.

As a carrot, the Obama plan calls to reward companies that create good American jobs with benefits. Tax credits for companies that either maintain or increase their number of full time workers in the United States relative to the number of workers outside the United States. Companies need to keep their headquarters within the US, pay decent wages, prepare workers for retirement, and provide health insurance.

center industry. See the [2008 Media/Advertising Guide](#) link below for more information.

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NACC Investment Portfolio

Stock	Price	Value	Change
NT	0.52	0.29	-9.71
NICE	18.65	4.64	-5.36
VRNT	8.65	3.53	-6.47
SYKE	16.44	8.65	-1.35
WIT	6.23	4.16	-5.84
CVG	4.52	2.56	-7.44
TTEC	7.80	3.39	-6.61
ICTG	3.28	3.15	-6.85
APAC	1.40	6.33	-3.67
TOTAL		36.70	-53.30

Original Value start 11/6/2007
=US\$90.00 or US\$10.00 per stock.

Total Portfolio Value Now= \$36.70

The news is not positive again this week with the NACC Investment Portfolio down to its lowest level on record at \$36.70, having lost \$53.30.

NACC Composite Index

Supporting employees who serve in the military is also needed.

To assist displaced workers that lose their jobs due to the changing economy, the plan calls for creating flexible education accounts for retraining, retraining assistance to workers in sectors that are vulnerable to dislocation prior to job loss, and extending the Trade Adjustment Assistance to service industries.

Because the details are critical, the industry needs to keep an eye on the forthcoming legislation starting next year to see what the details are and where the exceptions are made to determine the potential impact if these plans are enacted.

60 Ideas in 60 Minutes-Round II

David L. Butler, Executive Director, National Association of Call Centers, David.Butler@nationalcallcenters.org

David L. Butler - Most contact centers I'm familiar with over the last 14 years seem to be almost isolated units in and of themselves away from a parent organization. As you're trying to keep your contact center budget in place when your company's going to start going through some cost savings (they'll never say cost cutting measures), it behooves you to learn as much about your organization as possible. Front office functions, back office functions, or anything that can be moved into your contact center is something worth exploring, so to proactively go out there and take what is a higher cost function in your total business and bring it into the contact center. Being proactive allows you to act before someone else does it for you and makes you a valuable player of the team and also keeps your operation afloat during these difficult times.

Samantha Kane - I'd like to build on Barb's and Vicki's points about lead by example and the trainers. What we've started doing in our practice is developing a super user group. And these super users within a call center either understand the work flow, business process flow, better than anyone else. Especially when you're about to upgrade your case management or your CRM, those are the guys that you want to kick the tires and discover before you do the screening and integration if you've missed or have forgotten a functionality that you used to have that nobody has anymore. Because when you start putting it into production all of a sudden that business process that the agent had has gone away and they don't know what to do, and if you don't tell anybody and so the super group users also becomes a mentoring group and what we're seeing is that you might have a team leads but if you have a super user in a group they can also do the mentoring in that area for you.

Barb Bleiler- I didn't mention it before but I've had a varied background working with training areas, the quality areas, and client support services and certain area and the technical area and operations. And one thing I found really important in that backroom experience is that if you can create an atmosphere in your work area where it's ok to make a mistake, now let me be clear here, I'm not saying it's ok to make mistakes, but it's ok for someone to identify that a mistake has been made but more importantly is what steps did they proactively identify to take to fix the mistakes that they have identified. It is hugely motivating for that person, because when you create an atmosphere when someone is able to say "oh hey I found my mistake and this is what we need to do to fix it," it takes away from finger pointing, the blame of who did this thing why did the mistake happen.

Date	Value	Change	Percent
11/6/07	100.00		na
12/5/07	94.38	-0.56	-0.60
1/15/08	80.89	-17.02	-21.04
2/13/08	75.56	-1.98	-2.63
3/12/08	65.47	-11.25	-17.18
4/9/08	68.98	1.06	1.54
5/7/08	77.31	3.14	4.07
6/4/08	81.51	2.93	3.60
7/2/08	70.28	-10.20	-14.52
8/13/08	65.57	-0.97	-1.48
8/27/08	68.24	2.66	3.91
9/10/08	66.55	-1.69	-2.54
9/24/08	56.91	-9.64	-16.94
10/8/08	43.24	-13.67	-31.62
10/22/08	41.83	-1.41	-3.37
11/5/08	43.26	1.43	3.31
11/19/08	32.89	-10.38	-31.55

The NACC Composite Index was up down strongly the past two weeks to 32.89, dropping over 10 points or 31%.

Dow Composite	-12.50%
S&P 500 Composite	-18.12%
NASDAQ Composite	-21.29%
NACC Composite	-31.55%

The NACC Composite Index underperformed all other indices the past two weeks. The Dow was best with a loss of 12.5%, the S&P 500 next with a loss of 18% and the NASDAQ lost 21%. The NACC Composite Index dropped 31%, quite a bad showing. Maybe it is time to reboot?

Quotes

"Success usually comes to those who are too busy to be looking for it."

-Henry David Thoreau

Picture of the Week



We are supposed to have internal controls to prevent that mistake. You remove the finger pointing and the blame and move more to the proactive of Iâ€™ve found it this is what we need to do to fix it and this is what we need to do to prevent it from happening in the future. It is hugely motivating.

Beel Yaqub-So one of the things that a lot of people talk about is service level and how to set service level targets. One of the ideas we have around service level expectation and what the measure actually means. It is ultimately about serving clients. So what we did was, we went and looked at the abandon call percentage correlated to wait time. This is different for each business. And we quickly found the client tolerance to wait time is different depending upon the reason they are calling for. So for example if you have a client that is calling in for credit or for a mortgage or investment their wait time is a bit higher than if you have a client that is calling you for a simple bill payment or a transactional type of call, they donâ€™t want to wait, they just want to get that task completed. So, essentially, mapping it out will allow you to understand what your clients are looking for in an answer perspective and allows you to set a service level right for the prime reasons they are calling and at the same time help you manage your operating leverage in regards to lowering your costs.

Vicki Herrell â€“ SWPP â€“ vicki.herrell@swpp.org â€“ Workforce management teams go to great efforts to forecast, schedule and hire for the "peak," when your call volume is going to be at its highest mark. So I think we ought to celebrate that peak. It can be planned in advance if your business is relatively stable and you see when it is coming. Or it can be recognized after the fact to make sure it really was the peak. And it can be a very specific time -- the specific interval when it happens during the day -- or even just sometime during the week when it happens. It can include just the workforce management team or it can be expanded to include the whole center. It can be a surprise or it can be a big build-up with a "count-down to the peak," with some sort of clock. Any sort of celebration is fine, whether you have a budget big or small. In one center, the phones were switched off for 30 minutes and a local marching band came and gave a performance for everyone in the parking lot. But even if your phones cannot be switched off and your budget is really small, there are creative ways to say â€œthank youâ€ to the workforce management team and the agents for meeting this milestone.

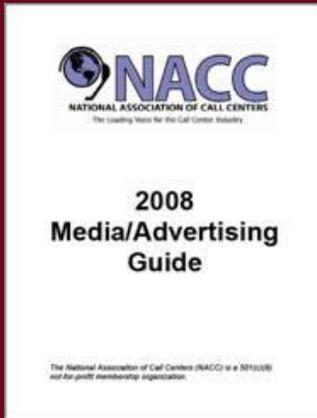
William (Bill) Durr-Well, our industry is certainly into averages, with average this and average that and average the other thing and frankly I think that a lot of people donâ€™t really understand averages very well. Some years ago I moved from Illinois to Texas and the average IQ in both states went up. You have to look at those things. So, we always look at the average to determine who the great agents are and who is struggling. In fact, I think that is the wrong way to look at it. I always look at outliers on both sides of the average. People who appear to be struggling may be struggling indeed. But the people at the other end who have really low AHTs, the ones we think are superstars, sometimes they are struggling as well and they are gaming they system and that is how they get a low AHT. Youâ€™ve got to look at both sides.

Call Center Comics

As a counter image to the economic bad news floating around here is a calming image of the Swiss Alps in Murren, Switzerland. Murren is within the Berner Oberland, a pristine alpine area is a favorite tourist destination. The Swiss government subsidizes many of the farms in the area to ensure that the idyllic landscape and imagery are not lost so tourists can see the landscapes as they imagine them, like in the photo above.

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