

# NACC

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CALL CENTER  
RESEARCH LABORATORY

# In Queue

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

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All leading call center companies  
and suppliers should examine the  
*NACC Underwriting* opportunity in  
2009 as evidence of their dedication  
to the growth of call center industry.

## Tis the Season...

David L. Butler, Executive Director, National Association of Call Centers,  
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...for going berserk at malls and Wal-Marts around the US it seems. If you were one of the unlucky ones to run with the bulls at 5am or earlier at shopping centers only to miss out on that one discounted item, I have a consolation prize for you. You can, without being trampled, participate in our survey. This is the last chance to do so before we close it out. Tis the season for giving and we would love for you to give us your feedback on Unified Communications. And you don't have to camp out all night in a parking lot with strangers/competitors to get this deal. In under a minute, you will be finished. It is faster than shopping online for all of your Christmas gifts. Just click below to give-you can hear me ringing that bell outside the store cheering you on.

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?  
sm=BZGaklY6s\\_2bmUuqb7Tx3ng\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=BZGaklY6s_2bmUuqb7Tx3ng_3d_3d)

## The U.S. Economy and the Contact Center Industry

Paul Stockford, Research Director, National Association of Call Centers,  
Chief Analyst, Saddletree Research,  
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As the daily economic news in the general media gets increasingly gloomy it is important to try to keep things in perspective, especially as far as the contact center industry and customer service function are concerned. It is also important to consider the source of the economic news that we are bombarded with on a daily basis.

I was motivated to write this article by newspaper headlines last week that blamed the falling price of a barrel of oil as a contributor to economic destabilization. I recall similar headlines this past summer that pointed toward rising prices of a barrel of oil as a contributor to economic destabilization. Both of these headlines were in the same newspaper. It struck me that if both rising prices of oil and falling prices of oil destabilize our economy; we are facing quite a dilemma.

Of course it can't be true that falling prices are as destabilizing as rising prices are but the media wants you to believe it, not because it is true but because it sells newspapers, magazines and on-line advertising. Rather than taking media reports of economic conditions at face value,

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

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## NACC Investment Portfolio

Stock	Price	Value	Change
NT	0.57	0.31	-9.69
NICE	21.09	5.25	-4.75
VRNT	6.90	2.82	-7.18
SYKE	17.68	9.30	-0.70
WIT	6.81	4.55	-5.45
CVG	5.84	3.30	-6.70
TTEC	8.24	3.58	-6.42
ICTG	3.62	3.47	-6.53
APAC	1.07	4.84	-5.16
TOTAL		37.44	-52.56

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

Total Portfolio Value Now= \$37.44

The news is getting better. The value of the NACC Investment Portfolio is up .37 cents. Now it may not seem like much, and what can .37 cents buy nowadays, but it is up, which is a positive direction over the past two weeks. This is not to say that we are not in a deep well looking up at the \$90 starting price, but the only way to climb out of the hole is one step at a time, and this is hopefully the first step, and we have found the bottom.

## NACC Composite Index

we thought it would be a worthwhile to look at business strategies that have helped companies survive and conquer economic recessions and depressions over the past 100 years.

Click [here](#), or below, to read the remainder of the essay.

<http://www.nationalcallcenters.org/economy.php>

## Obama Administration and Call Centers-Part 3

David L. Butler, Executive Director, National Association of Call Centers, [David.Butler@nationalcallcenters.org](mailto:David.Butler@nationalcallcenters.org)

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 third category of unions. For the first and second essays on retraining and taxes please see the "In Queue" archives by [clicking here](#).

The Obama economic plan highlights two key issues regarding unions. The first aspect of this plan is to strengthen the ability of workers to organize unions through the passage of the Employee Free Choice Act. The second part is the desire for legislation that bans the permanent replacement of striking workers. A corollary to the union legislation is a desire to increase the minimum wage and index it to inflation to ensure it rises every year.

Unions are a very sensitive topics for call centers since 70-85% of a call center operational budget is in wages. Because of this, unions are often avoided by most companies with call centers. In fact, many call centers I have worked with do not have solid flu pandemic plans in place, but they all have a threat of a union plan ready to go at a moment's notice. If the Employee Free Choice Act and the permanent replacement provision passes, this will tie the hands of many companies and require them to rewrite their emergency union plan for their call center operations. Given the current unemployment glut that is emerging within the United States, I doubt this legislation will be forthcoming in the first few years of the Obama Administration. As for the minimum wage hike, most call centers pay significantly above the minimum wage and offer good benefits, so any increase in the minimum wage will have little direct impact on call centers.

## 60 Ideas in 60 Minutes-Round III

David L. Butler, Executive Director, National Association of Call Centers, [David.Butler@nationalcallcenters.org](mailto:David.Butler@nationalcallcenters.org)

**David L. Butler-** Alright, everyone should examine outsourcing your workforce, not to India not to a third-party provider but to your customers. Self-service is a solution and I know many of you hold what you do dear, but the reality is that the customers can do it well, they're very happy with doing it. In fact they give themselves very high rewards and satisfaction scores when they do it themselves, it saves a ton of money and that allows you to focus on other things you can bring into your contact center that need attention. So I would suggest you would look for self-service solutions and implement them as fast as you can without losing market share or losing your customers.

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
12/3/08	36.19	3.30	9.13

The *NACC Composite Index* was up the past two weeks to 36.19, hooray for us. I can hear the band playing and it makes me want to do a dance. Yes, we are still down \$62 dollars and some change, but it is a two week trend that is positive, and I will take it.

Dow Composite	7.43%
S&P 500 Composite	7.37%
NASDAQ Composite	7.10%
NACC Composite	9.13%

The *NACC Composite Index* outperformed all other indices the past two weeks. Again, let's have a party! The Dow, S&P 500 and NASDAQ were all up 7% and some change, while the NACC Composite Index was up 9.13%. Whose on top now? Whose bad? We're bad! That's right, we are trash talking now over a winning two weeks.

## Quotes

*There is no problem in business that cannot be solved by more revenue.*  
-Warren Buffet

## Picture of the Week

**Samantha Kane**- Iâ€™d like to go to the virtual front door. Most of us think we know as management at a call center how our front line people are providing the process, the business process, the call flow. The reality is that what management thinks the frontline is doing, and what the frontline is doing, is apple and oranges. So the best thing you can do for yourselves is do call process mapping to business process alignment. And what that really is, is mapping out visually everything from the time a client or someone touches you, whether it be the web, whether it be the email, whether it be a phone call, whether it be a desk when they walk in the door, and map it out. But donâ€™t just map the transaction in the call center. Map out everything that it touches because you will be a little surprised at what the true cost of handling, the true handling time, and how many people you touched.

**Barb Bleiler**- If you ever have the opportunity, if you can get the chance to be able to create job shadowing from your call center rep to the other areas they work with its fantastic. Because first of all being in a call center is just a hard thing and though people in the other areas sometimes just donâ€™t understand it, but itâ€™s also difficult the other way around. And if you can get these areas to combine where you can have for example my claims area you can have for a claims person sit with a call center rep and understand what itâ€™s like to answer both calls from the customer over a claim that they processed and understand how much they have to go through to answer the questions for the customers so that they understand it gives them a different perception. But on the other hand also for that call center rep to understand how much information you have to understand to process a claim the right way and not necessarily give them all the correct information up front, it builds from understanding on how sometimes itâ€™s difficult to understand how a claim might process one way or the other. It gives a new respect for each area to understand how technically difficult each of their jobs is and gives them a new respect and honestly builds off of a networking between the two of them to try to work together. So if you can try to do that sometimes just even a half an hour, or an hour at a time to do it, itâ€™s a great opportunity for both areas.

**Beel Yaqub**-This next point is around what the enterprise can do to help shape your contact centre. There is so much information in your contact centres which can be leveraged to help inform the rest of the enterprise on how they can further empower your channel to better serve your clients. Millions of calls are handled each year many of which are actually recorded. Essentially you can leverage new and emerging technologies, like speech analytics for example, and be able to convert your calls from voice to text and efficiently mine your calls so that you can query, search for words and phrases, and get true client insight. This will help you drive the voice of the client deep into your organization.

Now I totally agree with Bill about averages and average handling time ([Vol. 2, Issue 23](#)), it is a very dangerous metric when it comes to day-to-day measurement of your operation. In many cases, the tenure of the agent does impact handle time especially during the ramp up period as they get more comfortable in their new role. However, from a day-to-day perspective, your handle time is primarily impacted by complex processes & procedures, client communication, and fulfillment. So there are lots of ways your organization can simplify the up-stream planning stage in order to make it easy for your representative to support your clients in addition to reducing your operating cost.

**Vicki Herrell**- SWPP â€™ [vicki.herrell@swpp.org](mailto:vicki.herrell@swpp.org) â€™ There are a lot of fun activities out there that help demonstrate workforce management concepts. One of our SWPP members told me about a real fun activity



Well, how do I go about talking about this picture. Is it very European. While I was in Austria in the summer, there was a Milk Protest. Yes, you heard it right, a protest over milk. Apparently the European Union (EU) set fixed prices on milk throughout the EU. So farmers are paid a set number of Euros per liter of milk. As fuel prices were rising last year and into this year, the farmers' costs were going up but the fixed price they were paid was set and remained fixed. So the farmers asked for a price increase and it was rejected, so they had a strike and chose not to deliver milk to the towns over a period of a few days. The citizens of some of these European countries supported the farmers and held different sorts of events in each town. The image above is from Salzburg where a whole park was taken over, techno music played on loud speakers, and dozens of artists in white representing different molecules in milk were silently moving/dancing as a molecule would. You had to pay a few Euro to get into the park to watch this event which lasted a few hours with the entry fee going to the farmers. While there, I asked some of the Europeans about the protest. They stated they supported it. I then told them that if the protest worked, and they increased the fixed price of milk paid to the farmers then they would have to pay more for milk themselves, in essence they were protesting for a price hike for themselves. Each looked at me as if I was from a different planet.

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where they did something called "Taste O' Staffing." They baked a cake. They started with the bottom layer of the cake and talked about long range and short term forecasts and the correlation was that the foundation of the workforce management process was just like the first layer of the cake. And then they talked about the scheduling process. And the schedules that were generated fit into the forecasts much like the second layer of the cake fit on top of the first layer. And then they used the icing between the layers as an opportunity to talk about the intra-day management function and how that ultimately holds the forecast and scheduling together. And then they asked the agents what they thought the icing on top of the cake was and most of the time they came up with the right answer which was that the icing on top is the agents. The connection between the workforce management department, which generates the forecast, creates the schedules, and monitors the intra-day events, and the agents actually doing what they are supposed to do to be doing -- is the icing on the cake.

**William (Bill) Durr**-Every time I come to one of these conferences, I go to these things all over the world, I hear the same three words over and over again, "people, process, and technology." There are a lot of people in charge of people and there are even people in charge of technology. I have never run into anybody who is in charge of process. Are you? That is what you really want. If I could put us in a time machine and go back 20 years and visit a contact center in 1988, it would seem very much the same, not much has changed; the processes are almost identical. Everything else in the world has changed except for the processes inside a contact center. It is time for somebody to be in charge of processes and look at the whole thing from end to end and cut out some of the wastes of time and energy that our existing processes impose.

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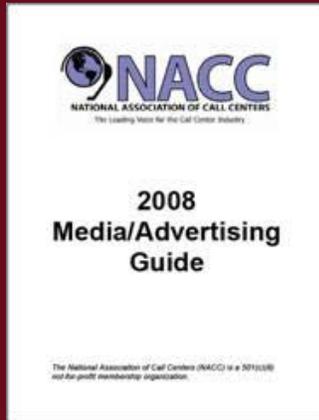
David L. Butler, Executive Director, National Association of Call Centers, [David.Butler@nationalcallcenters.org](mailto:David.Butler@nationalcallcenters.org)

As I was searching for a call center book at Amazon.com the other day I saw my book pop up. Always curious to see my Amazon.com sales ranking I clicked on the image of [my book](#) to notice a surprising thing, my book is available on the Kindle (A Kindle is Amazon.com's electronic book reader). So I wondered, is everyone's book on the Kindle? I searched some other leading call center books and noticed, nope, only mine, is Kindled at this moment. I suspect it is because my book was published by Butterworth Heinemann Business Books (now Elsevier) which is a large press and most other call center books are published by other call center related organizations which may or may not have the capacity to Kindlize (yes I am making these words up as I go) a book, however that process works. It was an interesting discovery.

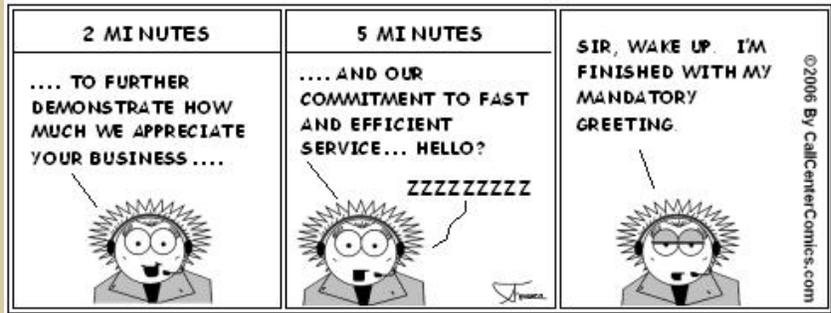
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