Volume 3, Issue 7 - April 11, 2008

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All leading call center companies
and suppliers should examine the
new *NACC Underwriting*
opportunity in 2008 as evidence of
their dedication to the growth of
call center industry. See the 2008
Media/Advertising Guide link below

Call Center Comics-Winner

At the end of 2007 and into 2008 we ran a contest for people to submit their call center cartoon ideas. We have chosen the top two winners. The first winner is featured this issue and next issue will show the other top winner. Ozzie drew the cartoons from the inspiration of the submissions. Each winner has received a big box of goodies from the NACC for being a top winner. Thank you to all that submitted ideas.

This cartoon winner was submitted by Shelly from Wisconsin at the Northwestern Mutual Life call center. Great job Shelly.

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.

Call Center "Hidden Factories"

Alan Madison, Vice-President, Customer Care, H&R Block, alan.madison@hrblock.com.

A hidden factory is a group of people that are fixing a problem that didn't get done right the first time. An even less flattering term is "scraping burnt toast." Whether you call them hidden factories or toast scraping operations or one of the seven forms of muda (waste) in the Toyota Production System framework, they are part of the huge, often invisible, costs of poor quality and they are everywhere in companies today.

Call centers know the hidden factory problem all too well. In many cases large parts of a call center are not-so-hidden-factories themselves. For example, centers that provide product service and support are especially vulnerable to design and manufacturing problems and receive a huge spike in calls because of product flaws.

for more information.

Share the Knowledge

Send this newsletter to colleagues by clicking "Forward this email" at the very bottom and end of this newsletter or sign up for this newsletter by clicking here.

NACC Investment Portfolio

Stock	Price	Value	Change
NT	7.14	3.92	-6.08
NICE	29.15	7.26	-2.74
VRNT	18.50	7.55	-2.45
SYKE	16.88	8.88	-1.12
WIT	11.38	7.60	-2.40
CVG	15.05	8.52	-1.48
TTEC	21.81	9.48	-0.52
ICTG	10.10	9.69	-0.31
APAC	0.78	3.53	-6.47
TOTAL		66.44	-23.56

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

Total Portfolio Value Now= $66.44

The *NACC Investment Portfolio* gained another dollar and a few cents the past two weeks up to $66.36. This is a positive trend, but just looking at the value from $90 in November of 2007 clearly shows that there has been a significant loss in paper value of the portfolio in the past four months.

NACC Composite Index

But call centers also create hidden factories inside their own walls and in other parts of the company by doing work incorrectly. The most common hidden factory call centers create is call backs about an improperly handled issue.

Another example of a call center hidden factory comes from a colleague running another call center. His tech support agents are frequently misdiagnosing the problem or failing to check warranty terms and incorrectly authorizing a product return. The result is a mountain of unnecessary cost to process this wrongly returned merchandise.

Finally, in my own center, we were mapping a very complex call type as part of a larger effort to standardize the agent call handling process. I said to my team, "How on earth are we teaching this complex, conditional process to our largely seasonal agents?" My team said, "In the classroom and via web based training, but they don't always get it right so we just go in and clean it up afterwards." Because we were not able to ensure the agents were following the correct process, we created a hidden factory of people to go in and clean it up.

In H&R Block's call centers, we are determined to stop creating these hidden factories. The first step is to define, in detail, how we want each call type to go. Using a recently acquired agent desktop tool we then attach prerecorded audio files to the defined call flow, which the agents can control with a simple desktop interface. Using this agent-assisted voice solution, every one of my agents began following the process we engineered and defined for them on every call. The early returns from this approach are showing higher First Call Resolution, lower handle time, fewer customer escalations and dramatically higher adherence to internal system processes.

Call center leaders need to reflect on the hidden factories their own agents are creating. What are the agents doing on all those calls? Are they really following the correct procedure every time? Does monitoring really have any chance of detecting each agent as they make the mistakes that are creating hidden factories? Is coaching going to fix this problem at all, let alone fast enough? The answers are "We don't know," "Not always," "No," and "No way."

In my view, these should no longer be acceptable answers. Hoping for quality by improving agent-level scripts, side-by-side coaching, remote monitoring and chair drops won't change the outcomes in a fast-paced call center. It's time for call center leaders to change the game.

Here are three key steps to start eliminating hidden factories in your organization:

1. Find out where your biggest hidden factories are. Is it escalations/call backs? Reworking something the agents have done?
2. Define the exact call handling process you want agents to follow. Get training, QA, Team Leads and the best agents in the room to do this. I will bet you a paycheck that they initially do not all agree on what the process should be.
3. Do not try to fix the agents one at a time. Find ways to standardize what all agents do and say on the call using desktop consolidation and agent-assisted voice solutions.

The Human Factor in Customer Service

By Paul Stockford, NACC Advisory Board Member

Back in 2005 a Boston-based consumer advocate named Paul English launched a web site designed to help the average consumer navigate

Date	Value	Change	Percent
11/6/07	100.00		na
11/8/07	94.62	-5.38	-5.69
11/16/07	94.94	0.32	0.34
12/5/07	94.38	-0.56	-0.60
12/26/07	97.90	3.53	3.60
1/15/08	80.89	-17.02	-21.04
1/29/08	77.54	-3.35	-4.31
2/13/08	75.56	-1.98	-2.63
2/27/08	76.72	1.16	1.51
3/12/08	65.47	-11.25	-17.18
3/24/08	67.92	2.45	3.61
4/9/08	68.98	1.06	1.54

The *NACC Composite Index* was up 1.54% over the past two weeks. This is a four week trend of upward movement from the huge drop in mid March. The general rule is that the commodities market responds to the expected economic conditions six months out. If this is indeed the case, and the NACC Composite Index continues to slowly climb up, this would suggest that most investors believe that this recession will be short-lived and by third or fourth quarter the economies will be moving forward again with growth.

Dow Composite	0.84%
S&P 500 Composite	0.99%
NASDAQ Composite	-0.10%
NACC Composite	1.54%

The *NACC Composite Index* outperformed all of the other major indices again for the past two week. Yea for us! Up 1.54% from the previous two week, with the Dow and S&P 500 up almost a point and the NASDAQ trading slightly down, the NACC Composite Index performed well.

Real Estate

If you are looking for a new call center location you should check out the NACC Real Estate page by clicking on this link to see some of the available existing sites.

Quotes

"To err is human, but to really foul things up requires a computer."
-*Farmers' Almanac*, 1978

through automated telephone interactive voice response (IVR) systems in order to reach a human customer service representative. The web site (www.gethuman.com) obviously touched a nerve in the general population as there was a groundswell of interest and support with press coverage ranging from the Wall Street Journal to People Magazine and from CNN to ABC, NBC and Fox News programs. The web site's directory of companies with accompanying instructions on how to bypass their automated telephone answering system grew to about 650 by early 2008.

Also by 2008, there was a marked difference in the momentum behind the gethuman movement. It seemed that media attention had waned along with the attention of the consumer population and, apparently, the movement's founder. The latest posting in the NACC blog reviews the gethuman movement from its meteoric rise to changes in the works that you should be aware of. If your contact center hasn't gotten human yet, follow the link below:

http://nationalcallcenters.typepad.com/nacc_blog/

60 Ideas in 60 Minutes Round IX

For an introduction to the "60 Ideas in 60 Minutes" essays, or to read previously published rounds, please visit our archives and start with Volume 2, Issue 22 of *In Queue*.

David L. Butler-Let me bring up Jeff Bezos again. I guess he should have been invited to this panel since we are talking about him so much. And as a disclaimer, I am an Amazon.com shareholder, but you cannot find their 800 number on their website, even if you try. I spent years trying to find it. They have it hidden so deeply. They are trying to force you to a web-based system which brings me to my next point. Instead of trying to go multi-channel, go single-channel, go uni-channel. Most customers they just want to sit down and pick up the phone number. They don't want your IVR; they just want to get an agent and get the answer handled and get off the phone. That is what they want. So instead of to actually handle multiple channels, especially if you don't have the capability or people and thus do each channel partially, go single channel, do it with the phones. Simplify your IVR, keep it simple for everybody, that is when customers get satisfied and that is when they start repurchasing.

William (Bill) Durr-A real simple idea I saw at a contact center some time ago. At the end of each agent's shift they had the IT department build a little applet that put up a dialogue box for the agent just before they logged off. And in the dialog box was a question: "what single things frustrated you the most today?" Or "What policy could you not defend?" Lots of times the agents did not have a lot to put in, but every once in a while they do and it is a nugget.

Penny Reynolds-Many of you probably have new supervisors out there wondering what they are suppose to say in a coaching session. I am a big fan of doing a walk-by or fly-by coaching. You know, stop by three or four minutes as opposed to scheduling one hour two weeks from now. But there is a real technique to delivering that on-the-spot coaching and most supervisors make the mistake of what we call a love sandwich. And that is starting out with something nice and then we give them the critique and then we have to say something nice at the end. We have to sandwich the bad thing with two nice things on the end. That is actually a mistake. Some people hear both the good and the bad, they process both. Some hear just the negative things you said and miss the positive. Some people are just hearing only how great they did but they miss the point of what you are trying to fix. So separate the two. We can still end on an up note when you are delivering a critique.
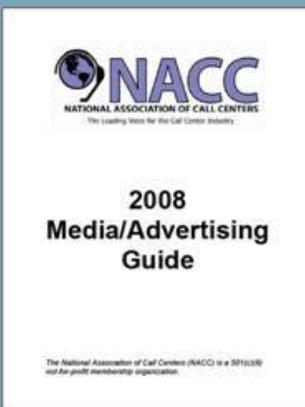
Garry Schultz-Do get involved with marketing, do get involved with the PM team as well as project marketing and project team manger. In fact, we go proactive with it so they do not come to us looking for data. We are trying to get it to them before they ask us for it. Who know most about the attach rate and what is going to attach well? The 600 people who you have on the floor taking telephone calls. Who knows what resonates with the customer best? Who knows the five closers on a product? Your agents do. Collect that data proactively and get that to the marketing people before they ask for it. Up-sell and cross-sell. Once again your agents are going to have that data. You just need the conduit to collect that data and get it to the marketing and product people

Chris Crosby-Whatever you do, do not go single channel. I understand David's point, but I think we are throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Solve what the real issues are; put the toll free number where people can get it. Make it easy for customers to do business with you in a way that is comfortable for them. I am a web guy. I would much rather get on the web site and solve the problem myself. Whether that's in a users group, or sending an email, or logging on to get my account balance versus calling an agent. We cannot make the assumption that everybody is like me and we cannot make the assumption that everyone wants to pick-up the phone and call a toll free number either. So back to my point early about caller types, take a dive in and understand how it is comfortable for your customers to interact with you and then take those channels and make it easy.

Kevin Hegebarth-Measure what matters. I don't have quite an endearing a story as Bill had with the King and the price, but I did run a call center for a major Southeastern telecommunications company for a while and our standard AHT was 120 seconds. We killed forest with reports of 120 seconds AHT reports. I had a call center rep working for me whose AHT way of the charts, I mean, way, way, way on the left side of the bell curve. He never achieved his AHT goal. And I continued to coach him on it, because that was my job- that is what I was told to do. We had to manage based on AHT so I did what I was told. I sat and listened to his contacts one day and I found why his AHT was closer to 5 and 6 minutes was that he was developing a rapport with the customer and ended up selling them more than any other sales person I had on my staff. Measure what matters.

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