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NACC Investment Portfolio

Volunteers Needed -- The NACC Wants YOU!

Paul Stockford, Research Director, National Association of Call Centers and Chief Analyst, Saddletree Research, Paul.Stockford@nationalcallcenters.org

As we begin to plan the NACC's 2010 activities, surveys remain an integral component of our research strategy as it allows us to provide information that is directly relevant to our members and readers. We can provide you with data and probabilities based upon input by those involved in the customer service profession on a daily basis. We don't have to make up our numbers as so many high-dollar research firms do - our results come directly from you. We believe this provides us with a unique niche in the industry and with a unique way to serve our membership.

Of course, we can't accomplish our survey goals without the cooperation of those willing to participate in those surveys with us. Anyone who has taken one of our surveys in the past will tell you that they tend to be short and to the point, literally taking less than five minutes to complete. Some of our surveys have taken less than a minute to complete and the results of these surveys are always reported back to members via articles in the In Queue biweekly newsletter.

Many of you have taken these surveys over the past year and have asked for nothing in return. For that we thank you, but we also want to make you an offer for 2010. In order to create a diversified pool of respondents that we can count on to participate in surveys with us throughout the year, we are once again offering a FREE annual membership in the NACC in exchange for survey participation when the occasion arises. The details of the benefits of NACC membership, which is priced at $500 per year, can be found at http://www.nationalcallcenters.org/membership.php.

With this offer we are looking to supplement, not replace, the group of volunteer members already in place. The greater the number of survey volunteers we have in place, the greater the value of the information we can provide you over the course of the next year. All information regarding the identity of volunteers is held in the strictest of confidence. No one beyond executive management at the NACC will know who you are. That's our promise to you and it's a promise that our current group of volunteers can confirm that we keep.

All are welcome to volunteer for 2010, even if you've never participated in one of our surveys in the past. If you are interested in joining us for 2010 as a survey participant in exchange for a free NACC individual membership over the next year, please contact NACC executive director David Butler at david.butler@nationalcallcenters.org.

From the Trenches

Stock	Price	Value	Change
NICE	31.85	7.93	-2.07
VRNT	16.90	6.90	-3.10
SYKE	24.15	12.71	2.71
WIT	18.80	12.55	2.55
CVG	11.07	6.26	-3.74
TTEC	17.98	7.82	-2.18
ICTG	15.97	15.33	5.33
APAC	6.51	29.46	19.46
TOTAL		98.96	18.96

Original Value start 11/6/2007 =US$90.00 or US$10.00 per stock. Then Nortel went bankrupt so we have adjusted the investment portfolio and now the new start value would be $80.00 or $10.00 per stock.

Total Portfolio Value Now= $98.96, up $12.61 from the past two weeks. Wow, what a jump! Now we are in the black over $18.96 dollars. Do not forget, the NACC Investment Portfolio started out at $90.00 in value way back in 2007. That $90.00 included Nortel, which is now bankrupt. So being above $90.00 is not only above the $80.00 for the portfolio minus Nortel, it is even above the value if you include the losses of Nortel. We are in new territory here. Sing with me, "We're in the money, we're in the money."

NACC Composite Index

Ten Things We Learned at the ACCE Conference

Lori Bocklund, President, and Brian Hinton, Principal Consultant - Strategic Contact, Lori@strategiccontact.com and brian@strategiccontact.com

Many people find it difficult to get the travel or training budget to attend conferences these days. Or, they think that the many free, web-based educational opportunities they can tap are adequate. Call us old school, but we still find great value in the face-to-face communications that happen at a conference - whether facilitating or attending sessions, engaging in informal conversations at meals, or exploring "what's hot" with vendors in the exhibit hall. For those of you who missed this opportunity at the ACCE Conference & Expo (October 5-9), we wanted to share some interesting things we learned.

1. Speech analytics continues to be a hot topic, with financial services, utility and telecom centers leading the charge. Vendors have applied "downsizing" to create new product offerings (lower cost, limited functionality) to make the price point attractive to a broader audience. As the customer base grows, speech analytics may transform from a mere glimmer in everyone's eyes to a practical technology to apply.

2. Innovation is alive and well in mature product areas, such as WFM and QM. For example, Verint is enabling more agent visibility into real-time adherence on their portal to WFM. In addition…

3. Vendors such as Verint and NICE have extended their reach to capture data on back office processes for forecasting, scheduling, and optimization of these other critical business functions. Similarly, desktop tool vendors such as OpenSpan [*see Vendor's Corner essay below for more information on OpenSpan-ed*] can monitor desktop activity for process and system performance analysis and optimization.

4. If proven, a new round of technology may finally make collaborative, web integrated interactions take root. We talked with a new vendor, YakFree, in the hallways. They described a way to let customers place a call from a web site without having to download an application. LiveLink talked about how easy it can be to collaborate with customers on your web site. Stay tuned on these types of innovations.

5. Vendors are offering "try it, buy it" packages - probably a response to the economy as well as the easier channels for delivery (hosted) and open desktop tools for implementation. For example, Social Text will let you try wikis and other social media tools (up to 50 seats) for free. OpenSpan offers a no cost trial of their desktop development using Visual Studio, with the hope that small and medium businesses will see the value of their tools as well.

6. There is more emphasis on testing. Vendors such as IQ Services are focusing on how the call center and IT can work together to ensure the IVR and web site are working well, especially as volumes grow.

7. Speaking of working well together, we facilitated a session on "bridging the divide" between departments. Collaboration between the contact center and IT continues to be a hot topic. Marketing and contact centers seem to be getting their act together, which bodes well for Web 2.0 opportunities. Suggestions to foster better coordination between departments included: establishing routine meetings (biweekly or monthly); creating liaison roles; establishing governance policies that include formal review, prioritization, and approval; scheduling routine call observations (and we heard EVERYONE at Zappo's spends a week in the center); and truly defining accountability models.

8. Speaking of Web 2.0, tons of people showed interest. There was a wide range of understanding about what it means, but a firm belief that the contact center should own and drive it, not marketing. (Do you think there's a little bias here?!) We discussed the opportunities and tradeoffs of knowledge management tools and Wikis. We saw examples of companies that got fresh insights about their customers and products by tapping their community of customers and prospects. We even "tweeted" about the conference. It's exciting stuff with lots of possibilities but right now it comes with a fair dose of caution: this sea change in customer interactions will demand new rules of engagement.

9. As you'd expect, there was a lot of discussion about how to do more with less. Like-minded colleagues brainstormed about how to get more value out of existing technology, how to optimize the use of the highly skilled contact center agents, and how to tweak processes to deliver higher value the company and customers. The good news: vendors "get it" and are working to help prospects

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
9/10/08	66.55	-1.69	-2.54
10/8/08	43.24	-13.67	-31.62
11/5/08	43.26	1.43	3.31
12/3/08	36.19	3.30	9.13
1/7/09	42.75	2.10	4.92
2/4/09	35.68	-0.55	-1.54
3/4/09	30.94	-2.42	-7.82
4/15/09	43.13	5.25	12.18
5/13/09	50.72	2.19	4.31
6/10/09	61.67	6.00	9.74
7/8/09	54.48	-0.59	-1.08
8/5/09	73.97	7.50	10.13
8/19/09	72.54	-1.43	-1.98
9/2/09	74.97	2.44	3.25
9/16/09	81.26	6.29	7.74
9/30/09	85.36	4.10	4.80
10/14/09	90.05	4.69	5.20

The *NACC Composite Index* was up this week by 5.20%, a solid gain topping off at 90.05. The composite index has been rising slower than the investment portfolio since the investment portfolio does not balance the stock price versus outstanding shares. Even so, the index continues to climb and is closing in on its original starting place of 100.00 points.

Dow Composite	3.13%
S&P 500 Composite	3.20%
NASDAQ Composite	2.29%
NACC Composite	5.20%

The *NACC Composite Index* was up 5.20% this past two weeks while the other major indices were all up between 2.3%-3.5%. This means that the NACC Composite Index outpaced the other indices once again. It is noteworthy since the Dow closed on October 14, 2009, above 10,000 points for the first time since the drop due to the financial crisis and recession.

Quote

"If you ever start feeling like you

see and customers achieve the business value of the technology they have to offer. And centers are getting creative with staffing strategies and a focus on process optimization that should prove beneficial long after the economy recovers.
10. Finally, IT and contact center management were looking for guidance on positioning technology projects with senior management. A compelling case for purchase among the rank-and-file does not necessarily break through decision maker skepticism. They need business cases that transcend the clamor of economic uncertainty. So centers must step up with more robust analysis to turn wish lists into to do lists.

Aspect Walks the Unified Communications Talk

Paul Stockford, Research Director, National Association of Call Centers and Chief Analyst, Saddletree Research, Paul.Stockford@nationalcallcenters.org

There's a lot of talk in the market about what unified communications (UC) can and can't do for enterprise communications and customer service, most of it conjecture. I've always taken the position that UC proves its worth in the customer service center by improving first call resolution through the use of the presence function. Presence allows a user to instantly see what resources might be available to assist in a customer call and get that call resolved without the need for a callback. Conjecture on my part.

UC has garnered the attention of the customer service industry but has yet to really take off. I think the industry is waiting for a little less talk and a lot more action, which is why I was interested to see that Aspect (www.aspect.com) is putting its money where its mouth is and is deploying UC in all its offices across the globe. Beyond that, Aspect is now using UC in its own contact centers where it supports customers in a variety of capacities.

Aspect's initial UC deployment began in February of this year and it was finished up by the end of last month. On the enterprise side, the savings have been pretty significant. Aspect got rid of 16 PBX switches at a savings of about $300,000 per year. Telecommunications charges have also dropped by about $250,000 on an annual basis. They rely heavily on instant messaging, conference calls and application sharing in order to accomplish tasks and collaborate as necessary, all supported by a single hub-and-spoke technology architecture that resides in company headquarters.

In the contact center, Aspect leans heavily on presence to have instant visibility as to who is available to assist with customer inquiries. Customer service reps can call anyone in the enterprise with a point-and-click of the mouse and go as far as routing the call to that enterprise expert if necessary. This has increased first contact resolution by seven percent. In addition, the time to reach a qualified support technician has improved by eight percent.

New functionality allows Aspect reps to go from an instant messaging session with internal expertise resources to a live call that includes the customer or a call transfer with the click of a mouse. The combined effect of these new UC capabilities has been an increase in overall customer satisfaction by six percent in just the short time these capabilities have been in use. Aspect customers now rate Aspect service at an average of 4.79 on a scale of 5.

After 20 years of covering the contact center industry as an analyst, I'm less impressed these days by buzz words and marketing schtick from PR flaks and more impressed by proof-of-concept reality. Aspect has done itself and the industry a service by showing us how UC works in an actual deployment. I think that deserves recognition.

Vendor's Corner

have the goofiest, craziest, most dysfunctional family in the world, all you have to do is go to a state fair. Because five minutes at the fair, you'll be going, 'you know, we're alright. We are dang near royalty.'"
-Jeff Foxworthy

Picture of the Week

Source: http://ottodestruct.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2008/04/cfb.jpg

Source: http://www.blogcdn.com/www.slashfood.com/media/2009/09/090909-deepfriedbutter.jpg

Speaking of state fairs (see quote above) I was watching college football this past weekend (my little vice) and during one game the commentators were talking about the Texas State Fair and the unique food found there. The unique items were all fried food of some sort, such as fried Snickers and Fried Oreos. I have heard of these things, but never had one. Two items on the list however, caught my eye, as being quite beyond particular. One was Chicken-Fried Bacon and the other was Fried Butter. First, the term "chicken fried" is a Texas term whereas other parts in the US use the term "country fried" as in "chicken fried steak." So, apparently chicken-fried bacon is cooked bacon that is dipped in the batter used for chicken-fried steaks and then deep fried. And based on the photos I could find, they serve this fried delicacy with a side of white gravy (top image). The second unique culinary find is fried butter. Yes, let's pause for a second for that one, fried butter. Hmmm. OK. So you take a stick of butter, cut it into pieces, and the dip it in batter, then deep fry it. Based on the picture

NACC to Co-Host Agent Effectiveness Webinar on October 27th

Paul Stockford, Research Director, National Association of Call Centers and Chief Analyst, Saddletree Research, Paul.Stockford@nationalcallcenters.org

As you may already know, the NACC conducted its annual survey of members and readers of In Queue this summer in order to gauge the attitudes and intentions toward several issues that face the customer service professional in 2009 and going into 2010. The results revealed that agent effectiveness was at the top of the list of issues that needed to be addressed in the coming year, verified by the fact that agent desktop software was the top technology solution that had been funded for purchase by our survey respondents (see http://www.nationalcallcenters.org/pubs/In_Queue/vol4no13.html).

On October 27th, I will be hosting a webinar that will further discuss some of our survey results and will provide a specific focus on improving the effectiveness of contact center agents through the use of desktop tools such as those noted as being funded for purchase by our respondents. I will be joined on the webinar by Francis Carden, founder of OpenSpan, who will share some best practices for achieving rapid agent productivity gains. Francis will include both a case study and a live product demonstration highlighting how contact centers can automate a number of manual, time-consuming tasks and speed access to key customer data without having to replace any of the applications currently deployed to agent desktops.

This webinar is offered at no charge and is open to everyone. As a non-profit organization, we are pleased to welcome OpenSpan as a supporter of the NACC and we encourage you to attend this event and support those who support your NACC. Only through this mutual support will the NACC be able to continue to bring our members and readers our unique brand of research and industry insight. To join us for this webinar, please register here.

Editor's Note: If you scroll back up to the top-left you will see a nifty banner ad for this free webinar. Click on that banner ad to find out more and to sign up. We hope to 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.

Sponsors

above that I found, apparently some people then sprinkle on some powered sugar, just for the extra taste I am sure. I need to know, have any of you out there tried these things? And if so, what were they like. I am fascinated by these eats since they are nothing I would ever have dreamt up myself even if I had several lifetimes to try.

Reports from the NACC

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

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

60 Ideas in 60 Minutes: 2008 Session

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

60 Ideas in 60 Minutes: 2007 Session

The NACC has been burning the midnight oil and typing until our fingers are sore to bring out reports to our members. The latest batch is listed above and we have a two more due out in a few weeks. If you are interested to see what we are writing about, click on the image above and download the executive summary of each. If you like what you see, join the NACC so that we can send you these reports and others that will be coming out soon to ensure you know the latest trends in the industry.
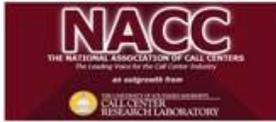
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