In Queue

NACC — National Association of Call Centers

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

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Underwriters

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Quote

"The will to do springs from the knowledge that we can do."

- James Allen

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.

What's New in In Queue

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

Real-Time Analytics! We've been researching real-time analytics solutions in the contact center since last year. This year real-time analytics has shown up in the list of the top 5 industry mega-trends for 2013 (see my article below). If you're not familiar with the impact that real-time analytics is having in the customer service world take a listen to a podcast I just recorded on the topic. In this podcast, which you can hear in its entirety in about the time you're drinking a cup of coffee at your desk, you'll hear how real-time analytics are applied in such areas as collections, agent coaching, communications and the management of at-home agents. You can access this podcast, entitled "Real-Time Analytics: Redefining Contact Center Efficiency" here. Take 10 minutes and give it a listen.

Send 'Em Home! You've probably noticed that the at-home agent movement is gaining real traction this year. It is a topic of many articles, blogs, tweets and now webinars. I know because I participated in this particular at-home agent webinar with Vicki Steere of major outsourcer TeleTech. Vicki is the Director of Talent Acquisition at TeleTech and is responsible for recruiting and hiring thousands of agents who work at home. If you have or are thinking about supporting home agents, this webinar is a must and lucky for you the recording is available! Go here to download and learn about best practices in hiring and managing home agents.

Volunteer Membership Recruitment Continues. Apparently agents aren't the only ones involved in contact center turnover and personnel churn. Several of our 2012 volunteer members have left their employers, creating vacancies in our volunteer membership ranks. If you'd like to become a part of our community and interact with your peers as well as have access to our reports, such as the recently published "The At-Home Agent Movement: A Benchmark Quantitative Analysis," in addition to accessing our job board and the business opportunities that come our way, you should consider becoming 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'll probably run one per quarter but we still promise to ask for no more than 30 minutes of your time during the year.

Mobility in the News. Mobility in the contact center continues to get the attention of the industry as the number of contact centers currently supporting both iPhone and Android smart phones approaches 40 percent of all contact centers. Our guest author this month, Art Rosenberg, is a well-known industry writer and consultant and is a longtime business colleague of mine. In his feature article he addresses mobile customer services in the feature article below. For more information, Art can be reached at artr@ix.netcom.com or by phone at 310-395-2360.

Moving To Mobile Customer Services

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

Customer service is changing dramatically as consumers become more mobile and have greater direct access to online information and services. Organizations, both large enterprises and small businesses, will all be affected by the impact of multi-modal smartphones and tablets on traditional telephone-based interactions.
As confirmed in many recent market studies, mobile customers are now expecting:

- More access to mobile online self-services
- Pro-active mobile notifications and alerts, rather than calling in or checking online
- Greater flexibility in choice of user interfaces (voice, visual)
- Options for multiple forms of "smart" access to live assistance when needed

The contact center of yesterday must start planning now to accommodate the new technologies that support such interactions for both mobile customers and customer assistance staff, wherever they may be located. Migrating contact center applications for mobile customers will be most cost-efficiently facilitated by moving to "cloud" based hosted and managed services, but "Customer BYOD" needs will also require self-service applications to be designed for device-independence and offer more flexible choices for user interaction interfaces.

Telephone calls are not going to disappear, but voice conversations are being subsumed by other forms of inbound and outbound contacts, including social network postings, text chat, and video calls. As reflected in a recent market study, customers prefer interacting with online applications first, before requiring access to live assistance.

Providing good customer experiences will be key to customer satisfaction and operational support efficiencies, so providing a unified analytics view of all customer contact activities will be critical in designing both personalized self- service applications and live assistance on demand.
Stay tuned as your call center of yesterday evolves into a mobile interaction center.

Art Rosenberg is an industry analyst and thought leader and has been involved with pioneering contact center technologies since the first automated answering services were developed. He sees customer services and the contact center as being one of most important areas of business communications that can benefit from Mobile UC and the cloud.

A Reverse On The Work At Home Trend?

David Butler, Executive Director, NACC, David.Butler@nationalcallcenters.org

This week an internal memo was leaked to the media that shows the new Yahoo! CEO recalling all of the employees who are currently working from home. This leaked memo has people from all walks of life pondering if this is an industry reverse from at home workers or if this is something unique to Yahoo!

It appears that Yahoo! is learning what the contact center industry has experimented with and learned over the past decade and that is that work-at-home employees can be successful if the process is executed correctly. People must be trained to work at home – it is not something that most people instinctively know how to do.

Home means family, friends, TV, meals, pets, etc. For many, home does not equate to work productivity. Not all people or people of all generations are disciplined enough to work from home without distractions. However, once these items are ironed out, working from home offers great benefits which include more productivity, less commute time, more family time and access to a larger workforce than the company could access with a brick and mortar establishment and a finite commuter radius. This story demonstrates what I have been saying for years; specifically, the contact center is filled with great lessons learned that should be shared the entire enterprise.

Top Five Contact Center Mega-Trends For 2013

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

Predicting industry trends is a practice about as old as the contact center industry itself. Conventional wisdom tells us that the best way to spot or predict trends is to talk to a bunch of different solutions providers and see what's flying off the shelves, then extrapolate that trend into the future. We take a decidedly different approach. Instead of asking vendors what they're making or what they think will sell, we ask you, the buyers, what you're buying.

We consider our demand-based forecasting to be superior to supply-based forecasting and a more accurate means of gaining insight into the mindset of the industry. With that qualification in mind, here are the five mega-trends that we believe will have a significant impact on the industry this year:

- Big Data

- Mobility
- Real-Time Analytics
- Human Capital Management
- Shifting Purchase Influencers

The trend toward Big Data speaks for itself. With so much structured and unstructured data residing in the contact center combined with the advent of reasonable analytics solutions there is no doubt in my mind that Big Data will be a big trend this year. This was further verified by the demand for analytics solutions, which heads the list of the top contact center solutions that will be evaluated for purchase this year.

Mobility is another intuitive trend given the fact that there are 330 million mobile devices in use in our country of 315 million people, and over half of these devices are smart phones or tablets. Our user surveys revealed that mobility is a customer service issue that is worthy of investment in 2013. Our year-end research verified that over 40 percent of contact centers in the U.S. are now supporting both iPhone and Android mobile devices.

Real-time analytics will be driven by a combination of customer experience, regulatory compliance and remote agent management objectives. 2012 research revealed that the majority of performance analytics users are dissatisfied to some degree with the time it takes to get performance metrics to supervisors and agents. Real-time analytics addresses this shortcoming.

In addition, real-time analytics enables the management of remote agents as the at-home agent movement gains industry momentum in 2013. 2012 research showed that 53 percent of U.S. contact centers have some percentage of their workforce working from home. About 70 percent of these contact centers intend to increase their at-home agent population in 2013. Real-time analytics offers the only timely means of managing this remote workforce.

Human Capital Management will also be driven by the at-home agent movement as companies attempt to recruit and hire agents with the appropriate attitudes and attributes that will make them successful remote workers. Specialized needs of large outsourcers, who have to hire large numbers of employees in a short period of time and at a reasonable cost in order to compete with offshore outsourcers, will also contribute to this trend. Year-end survey results show that 33 percent of the market will be evaluating hiring software for purchase during 2013.

Shifting purchase influencers speak to the fact that price is not as influential in the purchase process as it used to be. Every year since 2008 we've asked participants in our year-end user survey to choose the two top factors that influence their technology purchase decisions. Return on Investment (ROI) and Price always top the list and they did this year too, but nipping on the heels of Price are such factors as company reputation, prior relationship with the vendor and trust in the brand name. This indicates the return of intangible purchase influencers in the post-recession contact center industry. It also means that the lowest price won't always win the deal.

It is clear that analytics will be an important industry growth driver in 2013, but it will not be dominant. This year's mega-trends indicate an overall focus on efficiency, most likely driven by conservative management in the post-recession era.

Call Center Comics!
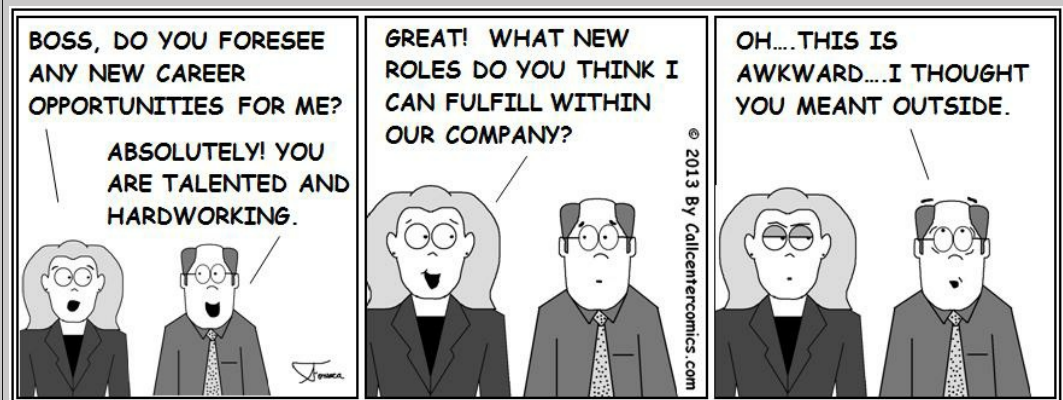
If you like this comic and would like to see more, write Ozzie at callcentercomics@yahoo.com and visit his website at http://callcentercomics.com/cartoon_categories.htm or just click on the comic to take you to his page. The NACC appreciates Ozzie letting us use some of his comics in our newsletter.

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