

Mind shift needed on contact centre quality measurement

Call volumes and talk time are the last metrics a contact centre should look at when assessing quality of service, said Karl Reed, chief marketing and solutions officer of Elingo.

A decade ago, the measures of an effective contact centre included the number of calls handled and short talk times. But while some contact centres still rely on these dated systems for quality control, times have changed. We now know that these metrics have very little to do with the quality of service delivered by the contact centre. Now, any company serious about customer service needs to re-evaluate its quality benchmarks and use very different metrics to assess its level of customer service.

A company intent on delivering service quality and retaining customers should not be concerned about average talk time, other than as a tool for staff and resource planning. The real measure of success is how customers are being serviced and how they are rating this service. Delivering customer service excellence may require a lengthy conversation and agents should not feel they need to rush the interaction in order to meet a performance indicator.

Delivering this service excellence requires a change in mindset and a suite of solutions that gives the contact centre a complete, 360-degree view of a customer. Achieving this requires a collection of data from the enterprise back end, CRM, social media, the history of the customer's interactions with the contact centre, and the customer's own evaluation of the service rendered by the contact centre. With the right tools and information at hand, the contact centre is then empowered to deliver excellent customer service and accurately assess the success of its customer service strategy.

Advanced new reporting tools are needed

The benchmarks for quality will differ across industry verticals and even by individual companies. What constitutes success may even change within a company, in line with evolving strategies or market changes. In order to assess the effectiveness of contact centre operations, advanced new reporting tools are needed, which can deliver reports based on changing parameters in a matter of minutes.

Where once, companies were forced to call in technical consultants to grapple with data for weeks before producing a formulaic report, now, contact centre managers are able to deliver customised reports on the fly. In the past, the time, cost and complexity involved in generating reports tended to stand in the way of effective reporting and resulting performance enhancements. New tools make it possible for companies to assess their contact centre performance on an ongoing basis, allowing them to change their strategies quickly in line with changes in their environment.

A corporate culture of customer service

Ultimately, the ideal for contact centres is to be supported by a corporate culture of customer service, with the right technologies to enable a 360-degree view of the customer, and advanced reporting that immediately highlights performance shortfalls or necessary changes in strategy.

However, the "ultimate" contact centre cannot be built overnight. In many companies, budget constraints, resource challenges and corporate culture stand in the way of large-scale adoption of the latest solutions and best practices in contact centre management. The good news is that contact centre solutions can be added in a phased approach; with each new set of tools enhancing service and showing measurable returns. It may take years to build a contact centre that meets all the needs of the business and its customers; and even once it is built, the demands on it will continue to change, forcing ongoing evolution of the contact centre.

The most customer service-focused companies recognise that ongoing improvement of the service delivered by the contact centre has ongoing bottom line benefits for the business.

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