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## **Dennis Adsit - VP, Business Development, KomBea Corporation On Agent-Assisted Voice Solutions**

### **How would you describe what an agent-assisted voice solution is?**

An agent-assisted voice solution allows live agents to interact with and resolve a customer's issues using pre-programmed system actions and pre-recorded audio files. We start by identifying a call type for which the KPIs...C-Sat, escalations, first call resolution, handle time, compliance, process adherence, cross-sell...are below target. Second, we then completely spell out what we want agents to do with their system and what we want them to say to customers. Third, we pre-program the system actions we want the agent to do and pre-record audio files for what we want them to say. The agent drives the call using a simple interface on the desktop, listening to the customer, "talking" with them using the pre-recorded audio, and executing the appropriate pre-programmed response all with simple mouse clicks. If the call goes off the path or if the agent or the customer wants to engage in small talk, the agents just break in with their live voice.

Yes, customers might hear multiple voices during the call. We tell them up front we are using a computer to speak important information to ensure the process is completely accurate. Customers never complain. To the contrary, escalations to supervisors usually plummet.

### **What is the difference between agent-assisted speech solutions and agent-assisted voice solutions?**

The focus of Speech Recognition solutions is to take the agent out of the equation by automating all or part of the call. If you can use a Speech Recognition system to deliver a great customer experience and your customers can effectively resolve their issues, you should, by all means, do so.

We start with the premise that even after driving a lot of customers to the web and other self-service applications, and even after well designed IVRs and speech recognition solutions have handled another big swath of calls, you still can have hundreds or thousands of live agents talking to customers. By giving the agents a single process to execute...exactly what you want them to do and say...you can drive dramatic reductions in between-agent variability and dramatic improvements in performance. This approach combines the efficiency and reliability of technology with the warmth and flexibility of humans.

### **How do agent-assisted voice solutions improve contact center performance?**

To understand how our solution can improve performance, it helps to look at why performance on a given KPI might be below some standard. First, the process...what to do and say on a given call...has often never been explicitly defined or it changes and the changes are not kept up to date. Second, every agent is different. Some are slow, some are fast. Some are conscientious, some are careless. Some talk with an accent, some are easy to understand. We have spent billions of dollars trying to drive out this between-agent variability, and we have been spectacularly unsuccessful. Third, there is no way to see how every agent performs on every phone call. The best you can do is some sampling and thus a lot of mistakes and improvement opportunities are missed. Finally, call center turnover is through the roof, which means good agents leave and are replaced

by lower performing newbies.

An agent-assisted solution addresses all of these drags on performance. The exact process is defined and kept up to date as changes are made. Second, the software gets 80-99% of the core call process exactly right every time...with a pre-recorded voice that the customer never has trouble understanding. Sure an agent could still make a mistake, but it is dramatically less likely. Third, since our agents are pressing keys on their keyboards, we know exactly what they did on every call. This gives us a kind of visual control: we can see the performance of every agent on every call, which shows us exactly where we need to focus our improvement efforts. Finally, when experienced agents leave, the performance of the center does not suffer because with an agent-assisted voice solution, performance is much less dependent on the agent. It is much more a function of how well the process has been designed and improved.

To give a simple illustration, on a cell phone activation call, agents using our agent-assisted voice solution lowered their handle times by over 50%, had perfect adherence to the sign-up process and the process of updating systems during the call and had 5X better cross-sell numbers than they had when they were working without our solution. Moreover, there was so little between agent variability in handle time, the center was able to reduce the number of agents it carried to meet service levels.

### **What call types are appropriate for agent-assisted voice solutions?**

There are definitely some calls that our solution would be inappropriate for. For example, calls from high net-worth customers or highly complex tech support calls would probably not be good candidates for our solution. The agents handling these kinds of calls are highly educated, highly trained, and highly compensated.

But any call that you are currently handling with entry level employees with no special education or training could be done much more effectively using our solution. How can I say this? Because right now you are teaching agents how to handle the call, hoping they remember to do everything you taught them and hoping that sample monitoring and intermittent coaching will identify the underperformers and fix them before they quit. Hope is not a very effective process improvement strategy.

If that is your approach, it would be much easier and more effective to build a single process for the agents to execute, breaking in with their live voice as needed. And do agents like using this tool? They love it because they can relax knowing the process is right and because they don't have to talk as much. And once the agents are following the process you built for them, all metrics...AHT, ACW, process adherence, FCR, C-Sat, X-Sell all start to dramatically improve.

### **What are some critical success factors in implementing agent-assisted voice solutions?**

In a call center today, no one owns the performance of a given call type. A call center leader will have someone in charge of technology, someone in charge of monitoring, someone in charge of scheduling, someone in charge of the agents, and someone in charge of training. But if that leader asks for a chart of the first call resolution rate, the compliance rate, the C-Sat, the AHT on, say, a lost credit card call and if that performance is not where s/he wants it to be, there is no one around the table for that leader to hold responsible for making it better.

In this way, the biggest single critical success factor in implementing an agent-assisted voice solution is to add a "Process Engineering" function to the call center leader's team. This group is responsible for performance by call type. They are responsible for defining the process for a given call type, getting it built, testing it with a small group of agents, rolling it across all the agents and then studying and continuously improving that process.

Once that role and this solution are in place, the sky's the limit in terms of the kind of performance improvement you can drive across every one of your live agent KPI's.

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**About Dennis Adsit :**  
Dr. Adsit has been achieving results with organizations for over 20 years. He is currently the VP of Business Development for KomBea Corporation. Prior to KomBea, he was Senior Vice President of Call Center Operations at Intuit, where he drove dramatic change and tens of millions of dollars in benefits. From 1995 to 2000, Dennis provided leadership counsel to top executives in the area of Six Sigma quality improvement at Rath & Strong Management Consultants.

**About KomBea Corporation :**  
KomBea Corporation is a call center technology company. Their ProtoCallSM solution is designed to reduce variation in call process and output, deliver a better customer experience, and lowers costs. Their ReCallSM solution can allow low-cost, open-format call recording with no PBX-integration requirements and can make call recording and screen capture more affordable to any size center with any technical configuration.

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