

CONTACTCENTERWORLD.COM
The Global Support Organization For Industry Professionals

CONTENT COUNTER
TODAY'S QUICKSTATS
Articles: 1492, Research Items: 240
Exec Interviews: 750, Case Studies: 603, Videos: 214

FREE ADVICE
Ask an Expert

111,228 Members

About this Site
Contact Us
Help
Site Map

NATIONAL SITES

Dr. Dennis Adsit - VP, Business Development, KomBea Corporation
On Refinements In Contact Centers

© ContactCenterWorld.com

www.ContactCenterWorld.com

Since the inception of the call center industry, what do you think are some of the most significant advancements that contact centers of today have undergone?

My views here will annoy many, but I believe that while there have been a lot of changes in technology, there has not been a lot of advancement in the performance of contact centers over the last decade. Sure, you can route calls globally and with more precision. Sure, the information we can track and manage is more extensive. And yes, we are more productive, that is, fewer agents are needed to handle the number of contacts that come in from customers.

However, at its core, the industry today is fundamentally the same as it was four decades ago: customers call and agents do their best to resolve customer issues using the tools, training, and coaching they have been given. Since the first call center was opened right up to today, the experience the customer has is still largely dependent on the quality (knowledge, experience, conscientiousness, etc) of the agent that happens to answer the phone: get a good agent and you have a good experience; get a bad agent and it will not be pleasant. This wouldn't be so bad if we could attract and retain good agents, but the industry is being scourged by absolutely stratospheric levels of turnover.

In your opinion, what factors trigger the need for a change in the call center industry?

We are in an industry that annoys and frustrates customers in big ways and on a daily basis. We are also in an industry that can not demonstrate continuous year-over-year (YOY) improvement in a balanced scorecard of metrics like First Call Resolution (FCR), cross/up-sell, average handle time (AHT), after call work (ACW) reduction, process adherence and compliance, C-Sat, and productivity. This should be embarrassing to everyone in the industry, but most are inured and just shrug their shoulders.

While the call center industry has been going no where in terms of driving a balanced scorecard of metrics, our counterparts in manufacturing have demonstrated continuous YOY improvement in quality, productivity, and customer satisfaction. Moreover, they can show you plans to continue to drive improvements on those fronts for years to come.

Given the call center industry's dismal track record and the fact that a customer's experience is still dependent on the skill and conscientiousness of the agent he or she reaches; do you need any more indication of a need for change? What if the quality, cost, and performance of say a camera or an iPod was dependent on the guy who happened to put it together? How sustainable would that be?

What are good indicators that a call center needs change?

It's all about continuous improvement on a balanced scorecard of metrics. If a center can pull out actual graphs of performance over time that show continuous YOY improvement in the measures mentioned previously...FCR, cross/upsell, AHT, C-Sat, process adherence, productivity, total, cost per contact, etc. and it has plans in place to continue to improve those measures, it does not need to change. If a center can not pull out charts like that, the leaders of that center need to realize that their stagnant performance is jeopardizing the entire enterprise they serve.

What future trends do you see as far as enhancements in call centers are concerned?

Call centers leaders should be green with envy of the results achieved by their manufacturing counterparts. They should swallow their pride and quit talking about all the differences between call centers and manufacturing and then they should go study how manufacturing leaders are getting those results and steal pages out of their playbook. When call center leaders do this, they will discover that manufacturing is all about variability reduction: build a single process, assure adherence to that process, and continuously improve that process.

Agent-assisted voice solutions and desktop consolidation are two approaches that can accomplish all three of those objectives for call center leaders. They establish a single process for all agents to follow in what they say during the call and what they do with their systems. They ensure adherence to that process and they also create a platform for continuous improvement of the process. These innovations will change the industry at its core and will break the dependence of the quality of the customer experience on the skill of the agent who happens to answer the phone.

Among the improvements that contact centers of today have undergone, what for you is the least beneficial even detrimental to the industry? Why?

This is another answer that will surprise all and offend many. In my view, the biggest detriment in the industry today is something that was established to drive better results: call monitoring and coaching.

Monitoring/Coaching is the first, and in some cases only, method being deployed by call center leaders to improve live agent call handling. For a host of reasons, it not only doesn't work, it can't work. It might help the agents, but it is false logic to think that by helping each agent, I will raise the performance of my whole center. You can not improve a call center one agent at a time.

(http://www.contactcenterworld.com/static/ar/ar_%7BA7265613-EEE4-4517-905D-A8AB53C2CB51%7D.asp) As an aside, from a business perspective, it is unconscionable that business leaders are letting their call center leaders get away with spending millions on monitoring and coaching solutions that have shown no demonstrable ROI.

Moreover, believing that monitoring and coaching will help a center get better, prevents leaders from trying to find other, more sustainable methods for improving live agent call handling. Once leaders realize this, they will start focusing on process standardization and process adherence as the only sustainable levers for lifting the performance of their centers.

Despite my views on the quagmire the industry is in, I think this is a very exciting time. I believe we are right on the edge of a tipping point. Five years from now, we will look back and shake our heads at how tragically flawed the industry has been for decades and wonder why we did not try to change the game sooner.

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.

Date Published : 3/25/2008

About ContactCenterWorld.com

ContactCenterWorld.com is the world's premier on-line resource for the call and contact center industry. This article is one of hundreds available on-line to registered members. Our resource is updated every working day and includes content from every corner of the world. If you are not a registered member go to www.ContactCenterWorld.com and register today.
