

KomBea...from the Spanish Word for Change

One of the great things about a tradeshow is the opportunity to spend time with start-up companies, perhaps getting a preview of the next great application. This is especially true for VoiceCon in San Francisco, close as it is to Silicon Valley.



KomBea describes itself as a contact center technology start-up, right up my alley. KomBea believes their technology can change the industry...hence the name. After sitting down with their VP of Business Development, Dennis Adsit, I have to agree that their product could radically change how contact centers do business. How? By having live agents use recordings during customer calls to create more uniform compliance with both everyday scripts as well as regulatory information.

In a nutshell, using KomBea, an agent would have a series of recordings at her/his disposal that would be played as the agent makes certain choices in a script during a live interaction. An analogy that comes to mind is directory assistance, where an automated voice asks for city, state and listing. A live operator is often part of the call as well, picking the correct listing from a shortlist fed back from the database. The operator might ask a clarifying question, or in many cases just send the call directly to audio to have the listing read to the caller. Implementation of the technology was relatively swift in the telco business in the 1990s when it was shown how dramatically the length of a call could be reduced.

Think of KomBea's ProtoCall solution as a more custom, more sophisticated version of the directory assistance call. Take the example of a tech support call to activate a cell phone. There are a number of questions that the agent is first required to ask to verify the identity of the caller. Recordings could ask for this information, and ask for it in such a way that the caller provides it in the most efficient manner – every time. Let's say it's often difficult for customers to find the ESN number for the cell phone. Another recording is played with simple instructions on how to find the number. As a final example, the center may want every agent to ask the caller if they will answer a short survey, and a recording would be played explaining that – with 100 percent compliance.

Dennis, an iSixSigma process expert before joining KomBea, emphasizes that the ProtoCall is about process improvement. One vertical that I imagine should have a strong interest in learning more about KomBea is financial firms, with their many regulatory requirements.

The bad news? ProtoCall is a radical departure from the way live contact center calls have been handled for the last 30 years or so, and change is tough to achieve. While not expensive for the benefits it delivers, the KomBea ProtoCall application is also not cheap. A 200 seat deployment, with the required professional services fees, would be upwards of \$250,000 to implement. Based on the results with trial customers shared during the briefing, it appears that the hard dollar benefits from reduced call lengths provide decent ROI. KomBea, also offers ProtoCall on a per minute as opposed to per agent basis, creating an OPEX rather than CAPEX cost, which may help drive trial and adoption.

The good news? This is something truly different, something that could effect immediate change in not just individual contact centers, but in the industry as well. In addition, it doesn't rely on untested or untried technologies. It uses existing technologies – like voice recordings and scripting tools – in a new and creative way.