Quality is not just for large contact centres

Customers · **Virtual Agents** · **Advanced Queuing** · **Intelligent Routing** · **Voice Prompt & Forms** · **360° Monitoring** · **Reporting**

Introduction

Looking back over the past, regardless of the size of your contact centre, it plays a critical role in delivering service to your customers. For many organisations it delivers the all-important 'first impression' to potential new customers and for others, it is the primary point of service delivery - playing a key role in customer retention.

Ensuring that your contact centre delivers a consistent high-level of service, therefore is essential. It will differentiate you from the competition and enable your business to maintain long-term profitable relationships with customers.

It is very difficult to manage what you do not measure and this is highly relevant for contact centre quality. Where are processes falling down? What is the customer's perception of your service? Which areas do agents feel are weak?

For many years larger contact centres have focused on agent performance management, agent quality and customer feedback - all tools that help them to continually improve service quality. However, many of the tools that are associated with these practices are expensive to purchase and often cannot be justified in the smaller contact centre.

Cloud-based telephony changes this by providing affordable access to the essential tools for measuring quality. Before we explore how this is possible, this Best Practice Guide will outline what every contact centre should be focused on to drive an efficient, effective and differentiated customer experience.

360⁰
Monitoring

Call Recording

Although it is possible to sit with an agent while they make/ receive calls or to perform live monitoring, this seldom provides a representative evaluation of agent performance, if the agent knows they are being monitored, naturally, they will behave differently.

The more effective way is to capture/record all or a large proportion of agent interactions and then to randomly select a sample of these to review.

In terms of quality, these calls can be used for two purposes. First is for the supervisor or contact centre manager to review and evaluate agent performance against a quality scoring matrix. Second is to present the recording back to the agent and have them perform self evaluation.

Although there will always be those agents who believe everything they do is perfect, you will find that the majority of agents are highly self-critical and will evaluate themselves far more harshly than their supervisor or team leader ever will.

A 360⁰ Perspective

To really understand what is going on in your contact centre and to gain a clear view of the impact of the service you deliver, it is vital to observe from every angle.

The Customer's View: How do they perceive the service that you are providing? Is it meeting their needs and more importantly- meeting their expectations? How do your customers rank you against your peers and other organisations providing service over the phone, email, chat or social?

The Agent's Perspective: How well do your agents feel they are performing? Do they feel they are equipped with the knowledge and tools to service the customer? What do they think could be done differently to deliver a better service?

The Contact Centre View: Holistically, how good is service across all agents? Is the level and quality of service consistent? What is the gap between a great interaction and a poor interaction?

There are two primary tools that can assist here, both available as cloud-based services on a pay-as-you-use basis.

Customer Feedback

The final element of the 360⁰ feedback is gaining the customer's perspective. This is achieved by randomly selecting customer's calls which are pushed to a post call survey.

Here a self-service IVR solution, again cloud-based, is used to ask a simple set of questions to gain structured feedback and provide the capability for customers to leave comments and opinions on the service they have just received.

Improving Process

Quality monitoring is not just about agent performance. It is about understanding how the people, processes and systems are working together to deliver a service to customers.

By gaining a 360° understanding of your operation, it is possible to quickly identify where processes are broken, or not optimised to deliver great service or operational efficiency. Customer feedback will enable you to gain a better understanding of why customers are calling, and you will learn from your customers how they think your processes work. For example; are they calling to chase progress because a promised call back has not happened? Were they routed to the right person, first time or did they need to be transferred?

Contact Centre Managers and Supervisors are also able to learn a great deal from reviewing calls, this is the equivalent of 'walking the floor'. By listening to calls it is possible to identify ways in which call flows could be better optimised, identify calls that could be avoided either with better customer communication, or through introducing self-service and by identifying areas where initial routing could be improved.

The agent's perspective on process should not be ignored. They are the people who day in and day out execute the process and are on the front line. They constantly receive feedback from customers and know which processes work and which do not.

Improving Systems

There is nothing worse than a long pause on a call while the agent waits for the relevant system to provide them with the information they need. It unnecessarily extends call durations and frustrates both the agent and the customer.

By reviewing calls it quickly becomes apparent where systems are having a negative impact on the efficiency/effectiveness of the interaction and the customer experience.

Systems are often designed around the structure of the data and not around the logical flow of the customer interaction. By listening to calls, it is possible to clearly understand and to map what information is required when, and what information is of most value at which point in the conversation.

Significant ROI can be achieved by identifying pauses in call flow while information is being retrieved- enabling you to address system issues. A simple fix of placing a key piece of information on the opening screen can shave many seconds off each call, increasing contact centre capacity and reducing pressure during peak periods.

The return on investment of optimising processes can be staggering. By identifying calls that could be better managed through self-service, this can reduce both interaction volumes and staffing needs. Simple improvements in routing and call flows can take several seconds off each call, increasing capacity and achieving greater levels of first call resolution, thereby taking significant pressure off the contact centre.

Improving Agent Performance

Most supervisors and contact centre managers know that they have some agents who perform better than others and also that they have some agents that are under-performing; yet they seldom know why this is and
this is therefore an issue that is difficult to improve.

This is where 360⁰ monitoring is invaluable. Through random sampling of interactions, it enables you to get a clear and accurate picture of agent performance. It allows for you to be consistent in the way you evaluate performance across all of your agents and it enables you to quickly identify the gaps between your top performers and those that require improvement.

By taking this approach, supervisors and managers can be objective in evaluating performance, and use captured examples to provide direct and undisputed feedback to agents.

To make best use of quality and performance monitoring, contact centres need to create a balanced scorecard that can be completed during the evaluation process. This is required to cover all aspects including:

Soft Skills: How good is the agent at interacting with your customers? Do they listen properly? Are they friendly and professional to the customer? Do they speak clearly, and check that what they have said is understood? These are the core skills of customer service which are vital in ensuring a quality customer experience.

Knowledge: How knowledgeable is the agent? Do they fully understand your products and services? Are they able to answer customer questions without having to ask for help? There are two angles here - first is the agents actual knowledge and gaps that exist, the second is their perceived knowledge, unless the customer perceives that the agent knows what they are talking about, they will seldom be satisfied with their answer.

Use of Systems & Processes: Does the agent follow the defined process for each type of interaction? Are they structured in their interaction and are they following the optimum call flows to get to a positive outcome quickly?

Are they able to navigate themselves around systems and obtain the information they need for the customer? All agents have their own style and their own approach, however, it is essential to ensure consistency across all agents without restricting individual flare.

By gaining this holistic view of agent performance and benchmarking agents across their peer group it is possible to continually improve agent skills and the quality of the work they do. From taking this approach you are able to quickly identify gaps in soft-skills, knowledge, and ability to follow the required process. This allows you to better focus training and coaching and set clear and measurable goals to each agent to improve their personal performance.

Time after time, agent quality and performance management has demonstrated a clear and substantial return on investment that includes:

- Increased first call resolution
- Reduced interaction durations
- Improved customer satisfaction
- Reduced agent churn
- Improved agent motivation
- Reduced management overhead

Customer Experience

Listen to Customers

Listen to Agent

Feedback

Training and Coaching
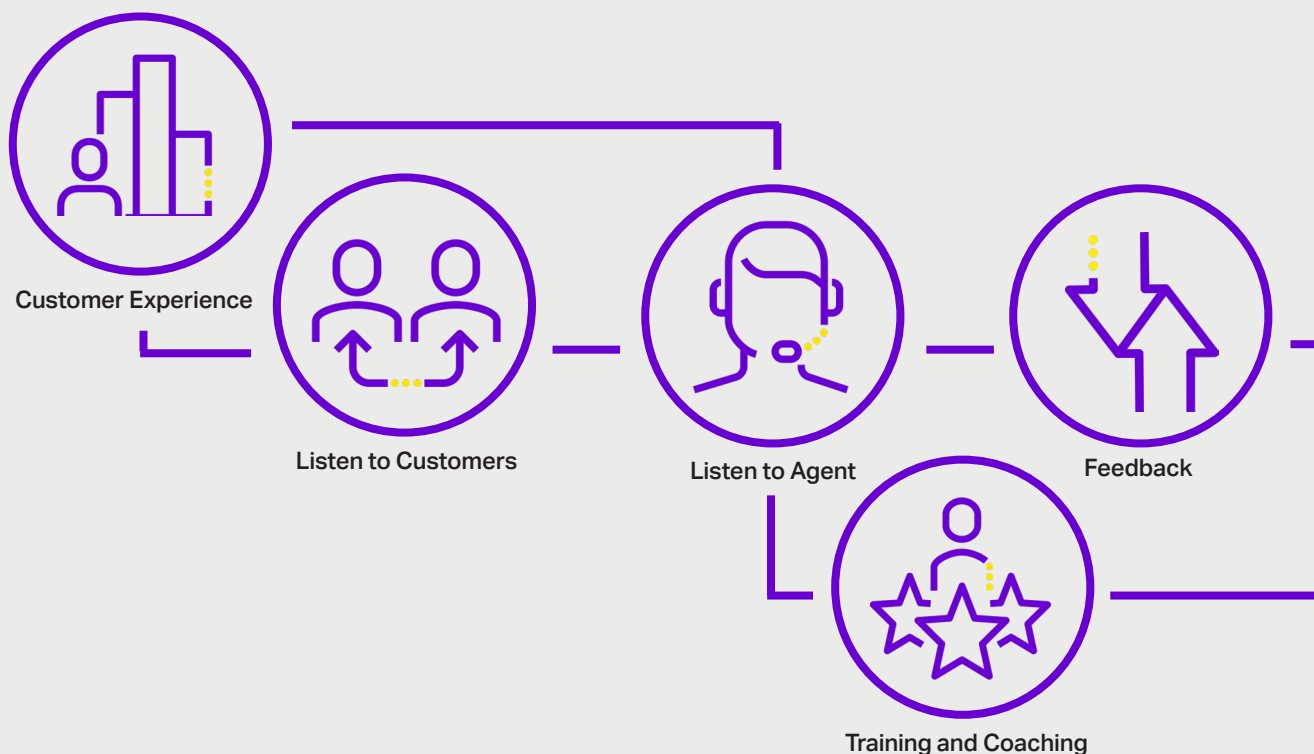
Summary

Every contact centre (regardless of size) is generally measured on two factors, the efficiency of the operation (the number of interactions it is able to address at the lowest cost) and the effectiveness (its ability to resolve interactions first time and achieve high levels of customer satisfaction and retention).

Both of these factors are driven by how well agents, processes and systems work to meet customer expectations and to deliver a first class customer experience. Being able to monitor these factors and understand how the contact centre measures up is critical to achieve objectives and to drive continuous performance improvement.

The best practice approach for this is to take a 360° perspective which involves listening to customers and to agents, learning from this feedback and then using it to drive agent training, coaching and to refine processes.

The tools are available to enable this and what is more through the cloud, they are affordable. They enable you to monitor calls and to obtain customer feedback.

Get agent performance and quality management right and the returns are potentially enormous:

Happy Customers: Every time they engage they know they will be connected to someone who can help them, the experience is consistent, and the quality of service is always of the highest level.

Happy Agents: They feel they are listened to, they are trained and coached in the areas where they need help, and their performance is evaluated objectively.

Happy Contact Centre: Fewer repeat interactions, shorter call durations, fewer complaints and far less pressure, all in all a happier place to work and a service that everyone is proud of.

Learn more about our Cloud Contact Centre solution or request a demo and learn how our solution can help your business improve its contact centre environment

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