

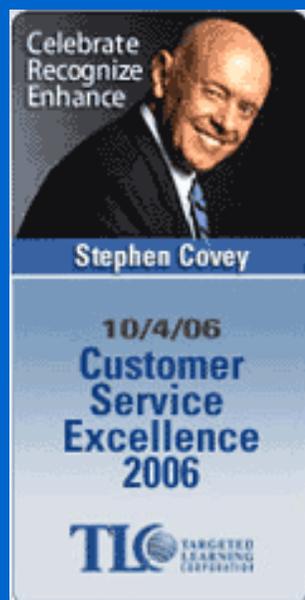
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Quotes

“Success is the ability to go from one failure to another with no loss of enthusiasm.”

-Sir Winston Churchill



Fun Facts

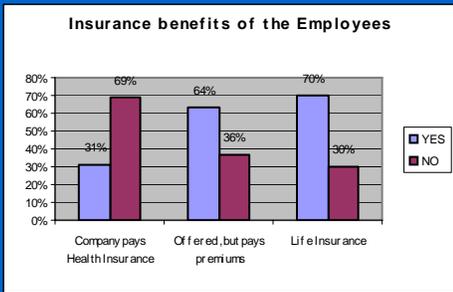
Director's Forum

I have wanted to get this off my chest for a while, so here it goes. A new Citibank credit card, Simplicity, debuted to me on TV during the college bowl series last year (I like college football). If you have not seen the ads, let me briefly describe them to you.

In ad one, a man is commuting to work on a train. He is talking on his cell phone, walking through the IVR/VRU with passwords and codes. The commercial shows him at various places along his commute, on the platform, in the train, indicating that this is taking much of his time. At one point he has to speak his password which he does so in a whisper since he is on a crowded train. The IVR/VRU prompts him to say his password again, and again. Finally he belts out “Big Boy” as other passengers turn to look at him. Finally he presses the correct button to get the live agent he has been hoping to talk to. When the automated voice says, “you are being transferred to a live agent” and a smile of finality crosses his face, the train enters a long tunnel, breaking his phone connection.

In the second ad, the same or similar man is in his kitchen cooking up dinner in a frying pan on the oven. He is using an old phone with a limited cord length walking through an IVR/VRU when the gas burner under the frying pan starts to create large flames. The man, having waited so long, fears to hang up the phone or to remove his ear from the phone headpiece. Instead, he grabs for a broom to reach across the kitchen and try and solve his flame issue on the stove. Instead of solving his problem with the flames on the stove, the straw end of the broom catches fire and now he is holding the phone to his ear, stretching out as far as he can, and is now banging the broom on the stove to put the fire on the broom out. We leave the man to his fate as the ad moves to introducing the Citi Simplicity card.

When I first saw these ads, I rolled with laughter. The second time I saw the commercials, my mind started thinking. By the time I had seen the ads over and over again, I was in full wonder. Here is what I pondered. CitiCorp/Citigroup is in the top 10 of the Fortune 500 companies. What this means is that when they launch a new campaign such as this card, they do so with the expectation of making money, lots of it. To justify such an advertising campaign, Citi must have obtained or conducted market research that indicated that customers, who pay the bills, desire to talk to a live agent in a call center that can and will answer their questions quickly, efficiently, correctly and politely rather than walk through an IVR/VRU



This graphic is from a national survey of CSRs. The question asks about benefits offered by the call center. Note that both medical and life insurance are offered but premiums for such benefits are not always paid by the employer.

Source: *NACC State of the Industry Report #3 2005: A Labor Survey of the Industry*

Picture of the Week



A beaded phone from the Steve Wilson Gallery. See the following link for more information

http://www.kentuckyarts.org/schedules/2005_schedule.htm

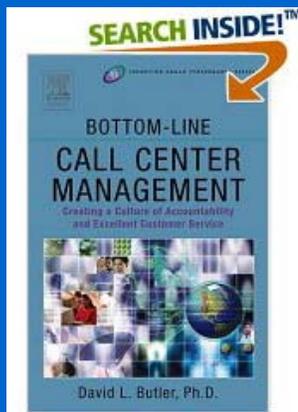


menu system. If this is actually the case, and the market research does indicate this desire on the part of customers, then maybe we are headed in the wrong direction by putting up more walls between us and the customer. Clearly there are cost benefits and efficiencies associated with call routing and obtaining basic information early; however, all the cost savings and efficiencies do not make up for unhappy customers who have options. Or as one person recently remarked to me 100% savings on zero market share equals zero revenue.

Reporters and Interviews

I am contacted on average about once every two weeks by reporters across the country (and sometimes overseas) on call center related issues. Most of the time some event has transpired, such as a call center opening or closing in the area, that prompts the phone call to the NACC. Most of the time the reporters ask "Does this event mean that all over the US and the world this event is happening as well?" At this point in the interview process I usually ask the reporter what they know about the call center industry. Most of the time what they know is little and mostly based on stereotypes of the industry. I do not hold these reporters responsible for their bad information, for their misconceptions of the industry are common, so common in fact they are usually held by most people within the United States. Because they do not have the basic information from which to start asking good questions, I usually spend 15-20 minutes with them going over the basics of the industry from how many call centers there are estimated in the U.S., how much the average worker makes, where these call centers are located, emphatically stating that call center jobs are not minimum wage jobs and call centers are not sweat shops or even closely tied to a fast food restaurant job. I then usually shock them by telling them that "no, not all call center jobs are going to India" but in fact, the call center industry is growing within the U.S., Canada, India, The Philippines, South Africa and Latin America. The only place that has indicated a decline of the overall market is Australia. This, as you can imagine, comes as a shock to the reporter, basically turning on its head all of the preconceived notions with which s/he entered the interview with. After this point, the interview goes quite well and I usually share data graphics with the reporter that the NACC puts out in its membership reports.

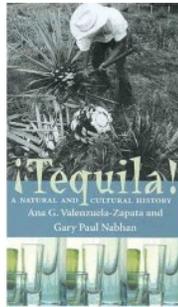
This issue with reporters is just a small slice of a larger issue and of recognition of the call center industry as an important industry within the United States and overseas. The burden of sharing this information is on our shoulders, those of us who work in the industry, love the industry, and want to see the industry grow and prosper. The key question is "how" to achieve this goal. What sort of information campaign is needed? How do we raise the profile of the call center industry to that of other more mature industries within the U.S. such as automobile manufacturing, software design, banking, and the list goes on? Please share you thoughts with me.



To advertise in *In Queue* or with the NACC, please contact the NACC at:
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To unsubscribe from the *In Queue* newsletter, [click here](#) and submit your contact information in the body of e-mail before clicking the send button.

What I am reading



Periodically I will share with you what I am reading which is not call center related. Reading, more than any other hobby, is something that I enjoy doing with a passion. In fact, one of my biggest fears is not being able to read all of the books that I desire to read before I die. An odd book that I have just completed

reading is *Tequila: A Natural and Cultural History* by Gary Paul Nabhan, Ana Guadalupe Valenzuela Zapata. My wife purchased this book for me a few years ago for Christmas because I am a big fan of tequila. I was hoping for the book to highlight the tequila industry, how it is made, its history, in a very clear and methodological and historical format. I was disappointed. Many of the early chapters meander and focus more on the life of the authors' university mentor and his contributions in articulating a specific niche species of the agave plant leaving the feeling that they are trying keep his research and name alive rather than tell an interesting story of a growing industry. The book finally does reveal how tequila is made, the problems with agave (this is the plant that tequila is derived from) and highlights the growth of this industry due to people like me in the U.S. purchasing this liquor in increasing volumes year after year. Additionally, the end of the book begins to talk about the new premium tequilas and the niches they fill not unlike premium bourbon or an aged wine (all of which are actually aged in oak barrels). However, if you can make it to the end of the book in search of this information, you are so tired of the poor prose and lack of focus of the book that it does little to make up for the other time spent with the rest of the book.

I am now reading *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* by Susanna Clarke which is a much more satisfying read. Please share with me what book you are reading and whether it was worth the effort and time.