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In This Issue

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Quotes

"We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give."
            -Sir Winston Churchill

I exercise at the local YMCA. This quote is on a poster at the landing at the bottom of the stairs when I come down from sweating. While on the exercise machines I am always thinking of new ways to improve the NACC. So this quote and the NACC are interlaced in my mind. DB

How to Hire Better Agents Every Time

by David Filwood - david_filwood@telesoftsystems.ca

Typically, you will find three different types of Agents employed in a Call Center:
• **Top Performing Agents**: "Grade A" Agents with the "Right Stuff" that pushes them to succeed, and a seemingly natural compatibility with the duties of the position. You probably have a few in your Call Center now and wish that you could duplicate them.
• **Adequate Agents**: "Grade B" Agents who perform their duties adequately enough "to get by" – but no better.
• **Marginal Agents**: "Grade C" Agents who display High Levels of Absenteeism, Low Productivity, Poor Performance, and Weak Customer Satisfaction Ratings. These are also the Agents most likely to be having a Negative Impact on overall team morale.

While almost everyone can use a telephone, not everyone is cut out to work in a Call Center. Hiring the wrong Agent is a significant drain on your Budget and Bottom Line, on your Customer Satisfaction Ratings, on Cross-Selling/Up-Selling/Sales Results, and on your overall Call Center Agent Team Morale.

Every failed hire represents wasted dollars Hiring & Retraining recruits for the same position. Not to mention the Lost Sales Opportunities, Lowered Productivity, Higher Absences and Team Morale Issues associated with a Poor Job Fit.

Being able to Weed Out Job Candidates who aren't suited for the work, and identify people with the Personality, Motivation, and Work Ethic to be Top Call Center Agents means that your Individual Call Center Agent Productivity Will Go Up – along with Customer Satisfaction Ratings -

Fun Facts

From 2002-2006, the majority of call centers that were opened globally were within the US, UK, India, Canada, and The Philippines respectively.
Source: NACC State of the Industry Report 2006: Winners and Losers: Change in Call Center Location and Employment 2002-2006

Picture of the Week

This image is from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Organization's (NOAA) archive of images showing frozen telephone lines. This is a salute to those who lost power and communications this week during the unusual cold spell in parts of the US. Keep warm and keep talking.

and your Turnover/Training costs go down.

Unfortunately, the majority of Call Center Hiring Managers don't have the training, time, or appropriate tools with which to adequately identify job applicants who will be successful in the job. The Call Center Industry is notorious for the levels of bad hires made - followed by high turnover - and then escalating labor costs for the company involved. Call Center Agent Personality/Job-Fit Testing is a Critical Component to add to your Hiring Process in order to address these problems.

Candidates for Call Center Agent Positions such as:

• InBound Customer Service
• Inside Sales Agent
• Order Entry Agent
• OutBound Telephone Sales – Business-to-Business (B2B)
• OutBound Telephone Sales – Business-to-Consumer (B2C)
• Tier 1 Technical Support/Help Desk Agent
• Central Station Monitoring Operator
• Information & Referral Operator
• Telephone Answering Service Operator
• Reservations/Guest Service Agent
• Telephone Collections
• Telephone Interviewer
• Quality Assurance Agent/"Mystery Shopper"

all have a unique constellation of Personality Traits - and specific amounts of those Traits - that are needed in order to successfully complete the Job Requirements.

A Call Center Agent Personality/Job-Fit Testing Instrument that has been Specifically Validated for the Positions you are looking to fill can prove to be Very Cost-Effective and Highly-Predictive of an Individual's Suitability for your particular Call Center Agent Jobs.

Top Performing Call Centers Drive Revenue & Performance through Superior Hiring Tactics. Selecting New Call Center Agents who fit your employment needs better and stay on the job longer leads to a Call Center Agent Workgroup that has More Experience and is More Productive.

David Filwood is the Founder and Principal of TeleSoft Systems, a Call Center Improvement Consultancy focused on Hiring & Training Solutions.
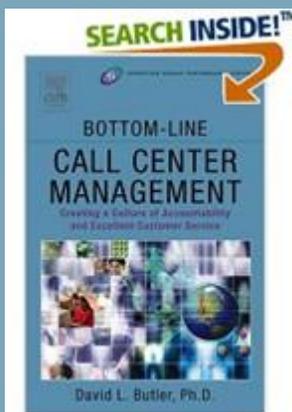
Note to readers. As I have mentioned in previous issues, the right
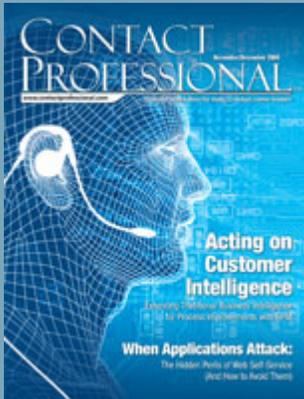
side of the In Queue *newsletter is for content and research, the left hand side is for advertising. If you are interested in finding out more about David Filwood and TeleSoft Systems, please see the ad for TeleSoft in the left hand column. DB*

History of the Call Center Industry

An important element of the professionalization of an industry, to which the NACC is dedicated, is to understand where an industry has come from, what the current institutions are, who the key leaders are, and where the industry is going. In short, what is the common history and shared future. To this end, the NACC has created a essay series called "History of the call center industry" and invites call center professionals and organizations to share with *In Queue* readers who you are and where and how you and your organization came to be associated with the call center industry. Below is the first of this series by Gerry Barber of the CIAC and a long time professional in the industry (Sorry Gerry, not meaning to call you old).

How CIAC is Helping Shape our Industry through Professional Development

by Gerry Barber - gbarber@ciac-cert.org

CIAC began in 1998 as a volunteer-based coalition of contact center practitioners, training professionals, educators, consultants, and industry representatives who came together around the cause of assuring the success and longevity of contact centers. Members of the coalition were chosen by an at-large group of practitioners that represented all types and sizes of contact centers. The primary concerns the group was charged to address were:

• The increasingly mediocre performance of contact centers (and fear this would become accepted as the standard). Although their role in the organization was growing in importance, few centers were meeting business goals.

• The growing demand for and shortage of qualified management professionals being driven by the rapid growth of contact centers. The lack of professionals with contact center -specific management expertise was putting the future of contact centers at risk.

The interrelationship between the two issues strongly indicated that the performance of contact centers was

directly impacted by the shortage of skilled people, particularly management talent. The group's further exploration uncovered a plethora of related issues that all had roots in human capital, caused by the wide-spread lack of awareness of contact centers as offering legitimate career opportunities.

Because the concept of a career in contact centers did not exist, there was no means of attracting people to the opportunity; in particular talent needed for the fast growing number of new management jobs. The reality began to emerge that few people set-out to work in contact centers - rather most somehow ended up in contact center jobs, typically while looking for their ideal job. Considering the general lack of knowledge about contact centers (what they were; what they did) it was an understandable, although unfortunate, predicament that put the business viability of contact centers at great risk.

In the year 2000 CIAC was incorporated as a non-profit, industry organization with the charge to enable and support the success of contact centers through a steady influx of qualified management professionals and a committed, skilled workforce.

CIAC's first initiative was focused on establishing the contact center management profession in order to bring visibility and legitimacy to the career opportunity, and thereby, attract and retain motivated and capable professionals. For the following 2.5 years CIAC worked with a broadly representative group of contact center executives, practitioners, training providers, etc., to develop industry competency standards and certification criteria for contact center professionals in leadership and management job roles.

In 2003, CIAC introduced the first industry-sanctioned professional certification for contact center executives and managers. Under CIAC's non-partisan guidance and governance, CIAC Certification has become known worldwide as the contact center "Credential of Leadership Excellence."

Today CIAC is working toward competency-based industry certification for other contact center job roles. Additionally, CIAC's focus has expanded to include other initiatives around contact center leadership and workforce development.

Gerry Barber is the Vice President of the Call Center

Industry Advisory Council (CIAC).

The Importance of Acronyms

In waves of creativity over several weeks in late 2004, a few of us finally decided on the name National Association of Call Centers. We thought the name descriptive and fitting. We paused long enough to realize that the initials or acronym for the name was not offensive, and bang, we are off to the races to create a non-profit organization. We should have paused, just a bit, and ask, "Are there other organizations out there with the initials N.A.C.C.?" The answer to the question is yes. Below is a short, but growing, list of other organizations and associations with the acronym N.A.C.C. which have come across the organization's desk with which we have/may/will get confused. Imagine the potential emails and calls!

Native American Chamber of Commerce
Northeast Alabama Community College
National Assessment of the Potential Consequences of Climate Variability and Change
National Association of Childbearing Centers
North American Courier Championships
National Aids Control Council
National AIDS Co-ordinating Committee

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