NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CALL CENTERS
IN QUEUE
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Welcome to the April 2019 issue of the NACC In Queue newsletter!

Training To Your Call Center's Needs

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(Note: This article is a contribution from a NACC member. We appreciate and encourage member contributions to the In Queue newsletter and are open to any and all topic ideas. ~ Editor)

When I started my call center career, I was confident I would do well. After all, I had been speaking to people on the phone for most of my life. I passed the employer’s call center exam and was considered certified. But nothing really had me prepared for that first customer call. I froze as soon as I picked up the phone despite the fact that I had the call script right in front of my face, my information binder was within easy reach to my left, and the computer screen was right where it should be. The lady on the other end of the call said hello, and when I didn’t respond she waited a few more seconds and repeated hello again. I finally responded to her and then wasn’t sure what to do next.

The reason I froze up on that first call was probably because I wasn’t sure how to use all the information I was given during training. The training itself consisted of four weeks in a classroom, then one week shadowing an experienced agent. I thought I was prepared, but looking back it’s clear that I wasn’t. I asked some of the other new agents that went through training with me if the felt they were adequately prepared for the job and was surprised to find how many of them felt just like me. Despite all the information they had, like me, they didn’t feel they were ready for the job.

When we overwhelm our audience with too much of information, they can’t tell the difference between information that’s good to know and information they have to know in order to perform their jobs. When I became a contact center trainer, I was dependent in large part on on-the-job-training but I was eventually able to refine my skills to the point of developing training materials and facilitating training classes. What eventually worked for me was removing the lengthy manuals and large PowerPoint slide decks and replacing them with frequently asked questions (FAQ) references and other quick reference guides (QRGs).

I converted the lengthy materials into something much more manageable by focusing on what brought value to the customer and the agent. If the information wasn’t essential to doing the best job possible, it was removed.

Today I don’t take customer calls, so I depend on quality assurance, supervisors, team leads and the agents themselves to assist me in constantly identifying training needs and refining training programs. The one rule that has helped me the most in creating and constantly improving training programs is a rule that everyone can follow. **Keep it simple!**

Web Self-Service Driving Up Telephone Calls

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A **Verint blog posting by Paul Stockford** discussed research data that indicated that the use of the telephone for customer service was increasing significantly. Paul speculated that this was being driven by the Gen Z (which prefers the telephone) usage increase. A **Nuance blog posting by Josefine Fouarge** concluded that the increase in telephone callers for customer service was being driven by the poor chatbot implementations.

We published an article in the February, 2014 issue of ASRNews that discussed this topic. We’ve updated this article with data from 2019 and provided the updated article below

Industry myth is, that as the use of web self-service grows, that calls to the call center will decline. The belief is based on the premise that web self-service is a 1:1 replacement of call center self-service. Like most speech industry myths, virtually no data exists that would substantiate this. A comprehensive study that was performed a few years ago at Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) examined the behavior of 4 million insurance customers in an actual customer service setting. This was actual data from real callers. This is documented in a paper titled **Impact of Customer Web Portals on Call Center: An Empirical analysis.** **https://www.heinz.cmu.edu/~rtelang/Web-portal.pdf**

What is found is that consumers will much more readily go to a website for a customer service item than make a telephone call. They will go to a website for customer service for something that they would never dream of calling about. This means that with web self-service, the number of customer service requests increases dramatically. When the customers reach the support website, they will typically encounter much more information than they need. This additional information can create uncertainty leading to customers then seeking more information and hence making more telephone calls. The net result is that the number of telephone calls can actually increase by providing web self-service.

The amount of telephone call increase that occurs is dependent to some extent on the quality of the web self-service site. If the information is unambiguous and easily retrievable on the web, then the additional telephone calls are reduced and some replacement of telephone calls occurs. However, for ambiguous information, the telephone calls increase substantially. Considering the quality state of most web self-service sites, it should be apparent that telephone traffic is likely to increase significantly during the next few years. Web self-service is likely to replace the low-value end of the IVR calls.

Checking hours of operation, for example, is a simple function that can be done more readily via web self-service. The telephone calls that are the result of website confusion, are more likely to be higher-end calls where the caller is looking for a human. To handle these calls with self-service, a natural language (NL) interface is essential. From Figure 1.33b, it is projected that web self-service will increase at a CAGR of 25% during the next five years, while telephone traffic will increase at just over 5% annually during the same time period. It should be noted that the voice telephone mechanism will still account for almost two-thirds (66.4%) of the total self-service transactions in 2023.

Figure 1.33b Customer Service transactions by telephone vs web 2016-2023

In This Issue...

- Top 5 Contact Center Challenges
- NACC Could Use Your Help
- Voice Traffic Not Going Away
- Call Center Comics

Pearls Of Wisdom

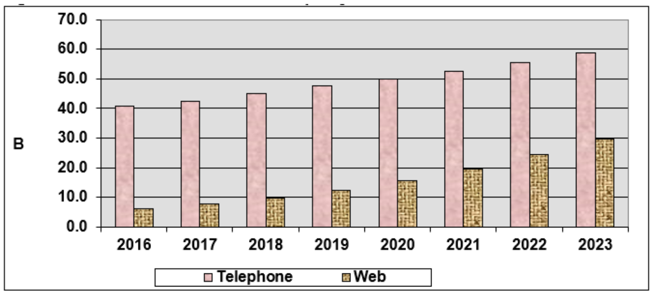
"Welcome those big, sticky, complicated problems. In them are your most powerful opportunities."

~ Ralph Marston

Reports From NACC

NACC has been burning the midnight oil and typing until our fingers are sore to bring out reports to our members. Each is listed below. If you are interested to see what we are writing about, click on the links below and download the executive summary of each. If you like what you see, join the NACC so that you can view these reports and others that will be coming out soon on our website. These reports will ensure that
you know the latest trends in the industry.

- Research Note: NICE Introduces CXone - Fully Integrated Open Cloud Contact Center Platform: August 2017
- Research Note: Verint Introduces Knowledge Management Professional Knowledge Management for the Masses: July 2017
- NICE Introduces Nexidia Analytics: Omni-Channel Analytics For The Contact Center: January 2017
- Text Analytics Market Update: April 2016
- HireIQ Candidate Optimizer Disrupts The Status Quo, Powers Revolution In Customer Service Human Capital Management: May 2015
- Verint Jumps Into The Gamification Game: April 2015
- Research Update - Strong 4th Quarter Tops Year Of Growthj For The 2014 U.S. Contact Center Industry Employment: March 2015
- Geo-Fencing: Expanding The Contact Center Boundaries?: November 2014
- Neural Phonetic Speech Analytics: The Brains behind Nexidia Interactions Analytics 11.0: July 2014
- Nexidia Pushes Speech Analytics Envelope with Nexidia Interaction Analytics 11.0: July 2014
- The Time is Now: Workforce Optimization Becomes Reality for the Small-to-Medium-Sized Contact Center: July 2013
- Finding the Silver Lining in the Contact Center Cloud: May 2013
- The At-Home Agent Movement - A Benchmark Quantitative Analysis: January 2013
- State of the Call Center Industry Report: 2nd Quarter 2012 Data
- State of the Call Center Industry Report: 1st Quarter 2012 Data
- Contact Center Mobility Study: May 2012
- State of the Call Center Industry Report: 4th Quarter 2011 Data
- State of the Call Center Industry Report: 3rd Quarter 2011 Data
- State of the Call Center Industry Report: 2nd Quarter 2011 Data
- State of the Call Center Industry Report: 1st Quarter 2011 Data
- State of the Call Center Industry Report: 4th Quarter 2010 Data
- State of the Call Center Industry Report: 3rd Quarter 2010 Data
- State of the Call Center Industry Report: 2nd Quarter 2010 Data
- State of the Call Center Industry Report: 1st Quarter 2010 Data
- State of the Call Center Industry Report: 4th Quarter 2009 Data
- State of the Call Center Industry Report: 3rd Quarter 2009 Data
- State of the Call Center Industry Report: 2nd Quarter 2009 Data
- State of the Call Center Industry Report: 1st Quarter 2009 Data



The fact that we have different explanations for what is causing telephone calls to self-service to increase is not as important as recognizing that we agree that the call volume is increasing and that we need to focus on handling this increased call volume properly.

New Report Available To NACC Members: Four Major Contact Center Trends For 2019

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NACC members now have the ability to download a recent Saddletree Research report that covers four major contact center industry trends for 2019. The report can be found here and is accessible to NACC members with a valid user name and password. The Executive Summary of the report is reproduced below.

Executive Summary

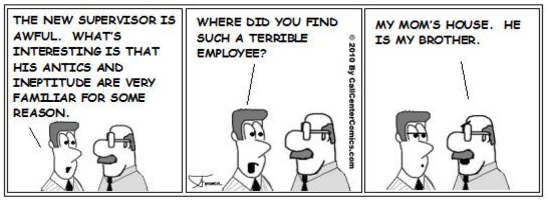
During the third quarter of each calendar year, Saddletree Research undertakes a research project that seeks to identify trends, issues, and technologies that are of importance to contact center professionals in the year ahead. This research is conducted in conjunction with the National Association of Call Centers (NACC) at Middle Tennessee State University.

Prior to the launch of formal survey work, Saddletree Research conducts a series of unstructured phone interviews that typically provide important insights relative to the direction our research project must take. 2018 was no different. Our telephone interviews revealed to us the relative importance of several trends and solutions that are on the collective minds of contact center professionals. The top four of these trends, mentioned by more research participants than any others, are as follows:

- Bots
- Web Chat
- Omnichannel
- “Gig economy” agents

We validated the importance of these trends in the formal survey work that followed the more informal telephone calls. The data, and other issues of importance revealed by survey participants are detailed in this report.

- North American Contact Center Industry 2008-2009: The Year in Review and a Look Ahead
- State of the Call Center Industry Report: 4th Quarter 2008 Data


THE NEW SUPERVISOR IS AWFUL. WHAT'S INTERESTING IS THAT HIS ANTICS AND INEPTITUDE ARE VERY FAMILIAR FOR SOME REASON.
WHERE DID YOU FIND SUCH A TERRIBLE EMPLOYEE?
MY MOM'S HOUSE. HE IS MY BROTHER.
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