In Queue

NACC
National Association of Call Centers

The fun, informative and unique newsletter for the call center industry

Volume 8, Issue 6 - June 7, 2013

Advertise with Us

Click on the image below to view the NACC Advertising Page where you can view our channels and prices.

NACC
National Association of Call Centers

2013 Media/Advertising Guide
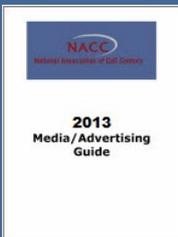
To advertise with the NACC, please contact the NACC at:
Tel: 601.447.8300
Fax: 601.266.5087
Email: paul.stockford@nationalcallcenters.org

Underwriters

All leading call center companies and suppliers should examine the *NACC Underwriting* opportunity in 2013 as evidence of their dedication to the growth of the call center industry. See the NACC Advertising Page for more information.

Share the Knowledge

Send this newsletter to colleagues by clicking "Forward this message to a friend".

Quote

"A life spent making mistakes is not only more honorable, but more useful than a life spent doing nothing."

- George Bernard Shaw

Reports from the NACC

The 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.

What's New in In Queue

Paul Stockford, Research Director, NACC and Chief Analyst, Saddletree Research, Paul.Stockford@nationalcallcenters.org

<u>Showtime!</u> I've recently had the opportunity to spend time a various customer group and analyst meetings including such companies as Interactive Intelligence, Aspect, Cisco and Genesys. After a few years of many of these gatherings disappearing due to the recession, slashed travel budgets, etc., these events are back with a vengeance.

I've been routinely blogging about these gatherings on either the company's website or on our own NACC blog, which can be found at www.nationalcallcenters.org. If you have attended any of these customer events, I'd like to share notes with you, perhaps comparing your impressions with mine. Please drop me a line at the e-mail above and let's exchange ideas. In the meantime, be sure to check out the NACC blog.

<u>Call Center Week Las Vegas</u>. I will be attending Call Center Week in Las Vegas on the 12th of June. If any NACC members are planning to attend, please let me know so I can keep an eye out for you on the exhibit floor, where I'll be spending my time.

The NACC hasn't attended an industry trade show since 2008, when the recession hit. For us, it was a question of whether or not these events were still a worthwhile use of time and most reports we heard from the field were that they were not. The simple fact that these trade shows are still around having survived the Great Recession tells us that people are finding value in them, so it's time we see for ourselves what these shows have to offer.

What we have to offer you is a free pass to the Contact Center Week exhibit hall on June 12 and 13. If you're on the fence about attending Call Center Week, perhaps the free pass will be enough to tip the scale. There's no catch, the show organizers just gave us a bunch of free exhibit hall passes and we're passing them on to you. Members and non-members alike are welcome to these passes. If you're in the Las Vegas area, this is a great way for you to sniff around the show floor at a minimal cost. If you would like some of these free passes, drop me a line at paul.stockford@nationalcallcenters.org.

<u>New Cloud Contact Center Report Available</u>. You may recall the research that the NACC conducted a few months ago regarding cloud-based contact centers. Given the amount of hype in the industry around anything cloud-based, we assumed all of you would be scrambling to move all your customer service solutions to the cloud. To test our assumption, we conducted a survey among NACC members and the results were not what we expected. There seems to be a large gap between vendor-hype and buyer intentions when it comes to the cloud. The numerical data as well as anecdotal data from members are included in this surprising report.

The introduction to the report is reprinted below. This report is available to NACC members by logging in to the website, www.nationalcallcenters.org. Enter your member information in order to download a pdf of the report. If you are not an NACC member but would like to get your hands on this report, keep reading. As always, member questions and comments regarding the report are welcomed.

<u>Volunteer Membership Drive</u>. Due to some recent changes in employment that has led to member turnover, we're shoring up our volunteer member corps with a summer membership drive. Becoming a volunteer NACC member is easy.

Volunteer memberships are provided at no cost in exchange for 30 minutes of your time during the one year membership period. All we ask of our volunteer members is to participate in our surveys, which typically take four minutes or less to complete. In 2012, we ran a total of three surveys. In 2013, we have yet to run a single one! That will likely change during the summer as we gear up our research efforts, but we still promise to ask for no more than 30 minutes of your time during the year.

NACC membership gives you access to reports, our Job Board, business opportunities as they come to us, and the opportunity to tap into the membership network for inquiries, advice and review. We promise to ask for no more than 30 minutes of your time in total to participate in our brief surveys during the course of the year. It's a great deal. If you'd like to join us, send me an e-mail with the word "Volunteer" in the subject line and I'll set up your membership. If you have questions, don't hesitate to contact me.

<u>How to Champion Your Next Great Idea!</u> This month's guest author, Lori Fraser of Strategic Contact, provides step-by-step instructions for unlocking the potential of your contact center and implementing your ideas, or those of your agents. When your suggestions fall on deaf ears, how do you make the leap from insight to action? Read for yourself in Lori's article below.

How To Champion Your Next Great Idea

Lori Fraser, Senior Consultant, Strategic Contact, Inc., lori@strategiccontact.com

Ever feel like you could unlock the potential of your center, but no one will let you turn the key? Maybe the ideas you – and your agents – create fall on deaf ears when you sound the call for more staff or technology, or a change in organizational structure? Unless you are able to say "the experts tell us…" or "best practices dictate…" it's hard to muster a receptive audience. So how do you make the leap from insider insight to action and successful implementation?

Frame the idea in the context of strategy
First, frame your need in terms of how it will support your contact center and corporate goals. Making this link is critical for executives to see that goal achievement is at risk without the right resources. Adding external validation such as industry best practices, expert articles, white papers, or industry analyst reports adds more credibility to your idea and lets management know your idea is rooted in proven strategies. Wherever possible, identify quantifiable gains to expect. External reference points may provide hard data to support the benefits that a center might realize when making a change to enable greater efficiency or effectiveness.

As you frame your idea, be clear on what you are driving for and any implications that may affect results. Is it cost saving, revenue growth, improvement in customer experience or something else? We may want it all, but conflicting priorities can hinder your success. For example, if excellence in customer experience is your key driver, you may experience initial additional costs before you realize increased excellence and possibly greater efficiencies. Clarity on goals and drivers helps prioritize decision making and define phased plans.

Be persistent
Old adages such as "persistence pays" and "if at first you don't succeed; try, try again" still ring true. An initial "no" may mean someone needs more information or the idea needs more explanation to strengthen the case. More often than not, leaders are caught in a no win situation with limited budget and unending requests. You have to help solve their problems in order to solve your problem. Be persistent in lobbying for your need while showing you are a team player; help them first with their problem and if your need can support and address their problem make the connection clear.

Persistence also involves taking the time to educate and build a support base for the idea, with a consistent drum beat of your idea in the context of strategy, as outlined above. Building support is key in getting the decision made *and* in successful idea implementation.

Build allies
Building a support base means building allies. It doesn't happen overnight, but takes persistence as noted above. A simple example shows how seeking internal allies to help support an initiative can change the outcome. Several years ago an insurance company reorganized their operation. With the re-organization, they sought an integrated quality monitoring (QM) tool to improve the QM process for analysts. Each year the answer to their QM budget request was a resounding "NO".

While the QM team originally wanted a tool to support their small staff, the more compelling business case focused on the customer experience. The QM team enrolled the front line in their cause, showing how QM would help agents improve their customer interactions, give supervisors tools for coaching, and enable the center leadership to hold agents, supervisors, *and* quality analysts accountable for customer satisfaction. Management bought in to the idea and funded QM. The difference between the first "no" and a successful answer, implementation and outcome involved building allies. With an alliance such as this, everybody wins.

Include change management
Championing your idea from inception to approval requires strategy, persistence, and allies…and that's just the beginning. Implementing requires robust planning, whether organizational change, process changes, a new technology, or moving to a new location. Every time you gain approval for an idea, think about the impact on people and include a change management plan. A proven methodology will minimize agent resistance, mitigate union concerns, and reduce technology hiccups, all of which can derail a project or compromise results. Every great idea needs buy-in at all levels of the organization and at all phases of implementation.

Public Sector Contact Center Changes

David Butler, PhD., Executive Director, NACC, david.butler@nationalcallcenters.org

The stereotype of the public sector (government) is that it does not change or is resistant to change and is likely wasting money due the resulting lack of efficiency. Compared to the private sector, where change has become common and technology adoption for efficiency is expected, the public sector often lags behind. While this is true in many areas of government, it is especially true in public sector contact centers. This, however, is beginning to change.

Since 2009, unusual pressures on government funding in terms of tax receipts at the local, state and federal level have forced government agencies and departments to lower costs and increase efficiency. As a result, government agencies are seeking out private sector solutions to their particular challenges. Add in the recent federal sequestration budget issue and the challenges are exacerbated. Government contact centers are now intensely scrutinizing their service operations for ways to save taxpayer money.

No doubt these public sector contact centers will walk down the same paths as their private sector counterparts. In the near future, we expect to see loss of head count, more temporary workers, more automation and self-service, and outsourcing. It won't be quite as simple as making those changes in the private sector since union contracts, workplace rules, outsourcing jobs out of the country, data privacy and protection issues will have to be considered with every decision. At the NACC, we'll be watching with interest as various government sectors respond to the cost cutting challenges that lie ahead. We believe government adoption of private industry strategies will be significant drivers behind the way the government will do business in the future.

Looking For The Silver Lining In The Contact Center Cloud

Paul Stockford, Research Director, NACC and Chief Analyst, Saddletree Research, Paul.Stockford@nationalcallcenters.org

The following is excerpted from the recently published report covering the state of cloud-based contact centers. Members may download the entire report from the NACC website at www.nationalcallcenters.org.

Introduction

The idea of providing contact center technology solutions in the cloud as opposed to on-premise solutions is a topic of great interest in the industry today. It has been the subject of numerous webinars and is continually highlighted in trade publications, trade shows and customer communications.

Delivering services via the cloud, or network, is not a new concept. In the 1980s it was not uncommon to find companies using telecommunications services that were delivered through the cloud, which in this case was the public switched telephone network (PSTN). Called Centrex, the service offered subscribers all the capabilities of an on-premise telecommunications solution without the capital outlay required to acquire the equipment. Instead subscribers paid on a usage bases, adding or removing lines as easily as making a phone call to their Centrex provider. As new technologies, such as voice mail and interactive voice response (IVR) became available, these solutions were also offered on a subscription basis by the Centrex providers.

Today, the cloud typically refers to the Internet rather than the PSTN and the term is used most often when referencing cloud computing, or computing resources that are delivered as a service via the Internet. Cloud computing subscribers access applications through a web browser on the desktop or on a mobile device. The applications and the user's data are typically stored on servers at a remote location. This same type of configuration applies to a contact center in the cloud.

The contact center in the cloud provides contact center applications through the Internet, allowing subscribers to access software on demand, as business conditions warrant. The software as a service (SaaS) aspect of the cloud contact center provides for hardware and software maintenance and management by the service provider while the shared resources aspect of the cloud contact center offers economies of scale for subscribers. Subscribers don't need to worry about installing new software when new releases become available as applications are hosted centrally and shared among subscribers.

Download the entire report at www.nationalcallcenters.org

Call Center Comics!

If you like this comic and would like to see more, write Ozzie at callcentercomics@yahoo.com and visit his website at http://callcentercomics.com/cartoon_categories.htm or just click on the comic to take you to his page. The NACC appreciates Ozzie letting us use some of his comics in our newsletter.

To view past issues of *In Queue*, please click here.

If you would like to contribute to *In Queue*, please reply to this email with "Contribute" in the subject line.

Copyright 2013 National Association of Call Centers