



In Queue
The fun, informative and interesting newsletter for
the call center industry.

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Underwriters

All leading call center companies and suppliers should examine the new *NACC Underwriting* opportunity in 2008 as evidence of their dedication to the growth of call center industry. See the [2008 Media/Advertising Guide](#) link below for more information.

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Share the Knowledge

Send this newsletter to colleagues by clicking "Forward this email" at the very bottom and end of this newsletter.

Blog

"I don't have IM on my desktop, don't own a Blackberry and don't text message on my cell phone. As far as I have been able to determine, these

Need Your Help

We need your help please. Let me tell you why. You have probably received some industry "white papers" in your inbox from time to time. In most of the cases if you look deeply enough into the methodology used to collect the data you will find that the responses received were few in number and often skewed (biased) toward certain groups of call centers, and the person collecting the data collects the data only from people s/he knows in the industry personally. This is not a good methodology because if the sample is skewed then the extrapolation to the industry as a whole cannot be done with precision. This usually does not stop people from doing it anyway. So we have launched our own survey, asking for your response, since as a reader you are a random and stratified sample. This means that if enough of you participate, then we can with some level of confidence extrapolate to the call center industry or particular sectors. However, we need for you to participate in order to get our response rate up. I know you have survey fatigue. I know that you have filled out surveys in the past only to receive a year or two worth of advertisements from those folks making you wish you had never filled out the survey to begin with. Not here. No sir no ma'am. We just want you to share your information with us so we can provide good information right back to you in this newsletter. It is anonymous and it is that simple. No advertising, nothing like that. And the survey is just one page long and takes about 3.287 minutes to complete it. So I am asking for your participation, please, so that we can begin to provide you and the rest of the fine folks in the industry with some good, solid, reliable and trustworthy data without a bunch of back end in advertising. Just click on the link below to fill out the survey. I thank you.

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=Ao51AuJqe5nJmE39L1mznw_3d_3d

Bad Apples

I was completing research on a project recently and ran across an article from February 2007. Researchers from the University of Washington were looking at group dynamics. They found that if one person in a group was a "bad apple" the whole group suffered. This finding came about when a group which was normally disheartened had one member of their team out sick for a week or so. During the absence the team morale increased, people were polite, happy and productive. Once the worker came back, everything quickly slipped into the former bad environment. Interestingly, the researchers also found that for every good apple you have does not counteract the bad apple. It takes three or more positive, uplifting, and team players to counteract one bad apple. So what do you do if you have a bad apple in your organization? The researchers suggest that you isolate them away from a group where they can do little or no harm and if that fails and there are no other alternatives, you let that person go. Does this ring true for your call center? My recommendation is slightly different from that of the researchers. First you try to work with the person, if they fail to respond then isolate them, do not give them a raise or any sort of bonus, and then if improvement fails, in short order fire them. Nothing will boost the morale of the total call center operation than when they hear that the bad apple has been asked not to return from lunch. Or better yet, pre-screen your employees before hiring them (see FurstPerson Ad above and to the left for example) so that you get good fruit to begin with.

60 Ideas in 60 Minutes Round V

For an introduction to the "60 Ideas in 60 Minutes" essays, or to read previously published rounds, please visit our archives and start with [Volume 2, Issue 22](#) of

devices/applications are best used to distract or amuse oneself when trapped in unpleasant surroundings such as meetings."

Hear this and what is being said in the [NACC blog](#). Just click on the words above to see the recent postings.

NACC Investment Portfolio

Stock	Price	Value	Change
NT	11.6	6.37	-3.63
NICE	31.99	7.97	-2.03
VRNT	17	6.94	-3.06
SYKE	17.75	9.34	-0.66
WIT	11.64	7.77	-2.23
CVG	15.05	8.52	-1.48
TTEC	19.24	8.37	-1.63
ICTG	9.99	9.59	-0.41
APAC	0.96	4.34	-5.66
TOTAL		69.21	-20.79

Original Value start 11/6/2007
=US\$90.00 or US\$10.00 per stock

Total Portfolio Value Now= \$69.21

The *NACC Investment Portfolio* regained some ground the past two weeks and has settled at the January 2008 value of just under seventy dollars. This is still 22% off of the original value in November 2007. We will see if the Federal Reserve's rate cuts will continue and if the market responds favorably to them in the coming weeks.

NACC Composite Index

Date	Value	Change	Percent
11/6/07	100.00		na
11/8/07	94.62	-5.38	-5.69
11/16/07	94.94	0.32	0.34
12/5/07	94.38	-0.56	-0.60
12/26/07	97.90	3.53	3.60
1/15/08	80.89	-17.02	-21.04
1/29/08	77.54	-3.35	-4.31
2/13/08	75.56	-1.98	-2.63

The *NACC Composite Index* was down 2.63% over the past two weeks. This is still a negative trend, but a slowing negative trend. It is interesting that for a second time the NACC Composite Index has moved down while the NACC Investment Portfolio gained some ground. This suggests that there are some people starting to put capital investments into some, but not all, of the stocks in the portfolio.

Other Composites Same Period

In Queue.

David L. Butler-Besides creating a career path for yourself you should career path everyone in your contact center. I have been doing research in contact centers for 13 years now and the top three reasons agents give for why they work in call centers in priority order are the following: benefits, pay, and then a career path. If you don't career path your agents then the best ones you have that can and will promote up fast are the ones that you will lose the fastest. This means then that your total call center performance will go down. So find a way to get the best people, even if they become your boss later on, move them up and around and keep them within the organization if they are good.

William (Bill) Durr-So how many workforce management people are in the audience this morning? This one is kind of for you, even though you may not like it. How many contact centers, after you have had a couple of bad hours, or even a couple of bad days, of service level attempt to make the numbers look better by over achieving on service level for the remainder of the day? Or the remainder of the week? Oh boy. Even when the volume spike goes away, the workforce management team beavers away cancelling training and one-on-one coaching in order to post very high service level numbers. You know the game they are playing. They are trying to make it look good for the executives. You cannot make up on bad service level. The customers that experience the bad service level are not in the queue later on in the day or the next day experience sub-second response times. You can't make it up; you are only playing games with yourselves. Stop it!

Penny Reynolds-I agree with Bill. And if you don't have time to go back and get your MBA (in reference past issue of newsletter), at least brush up on some math skills and understand where to apply what math function where to what numbers. And one of the dangers in the call center is just using averages. Taking all of the numbers, adding them all together and there is your average and here is your performance. We do that with service level numbers throughout the day and we are trying to get to that magic number at the end of the day and you may have periods that are horrible, others that you are cheating on to balance out the early part of the day, and you are relaxing because you get an average at the end of the day. Or even worse the end of the week or the end of the month. So be aware of averaging that is an approach that is overused maybe because it is easy and you don't know any higher math, but looking at doing that with service levels over the day or looking at quality scores or it may be that a rep is doing fine on three different areas but one area really sucks and their overall quality score is OK so we are not going to worry much with them. Or you are looking at team scores or team performance and there is one individual who is bringing down the group yet the average is OK. So be wary of overusing the averaging approaches. My next two ideas will give you different math approaches to try.

Garry Schultz-I am not getting to many of my points because they are saying things that I need to respond to. That is all fine and dandy, but in a real operation you have to use averages. When you are dealing with millions of calls and thousands and thousands of contacts per hour you've got to go to averages. And yes, you occasionally get into a situation where you are under-serving your customers. I think what needs to be done then is to pay attention to the averages because that is the broad scale that is going to tell you how you are doing but then consider some way to handle that traffic. So some of the things we have done are traffic calming techniques. Getting customers to call at times that are more opportune for us. We've changed our business hours for instance. We have put messaging on the IVR and on the internet saying "look don't call us Eastern Standard Time noon to 2, call us at this time." We put in priority queues, that sort of thing. So averages are your friend, you need to listen to them, but what you really need to do is respond to the averages and take corrective action and try and get your customers to call you when you can best serve them.

Chris Crosby-We actually did a newsletter the other month highlighting why service level is the epitome of all evil in a contact center. Things like ASA and service level when you look at the math they really don't tell you much. And like Bill said, then you overstaff to meet service level. Then the real question is if service level sucks, then what do you look at? What we did, and I can thank one of our customers for this, is they said they wanted to see an outlier report. We want you to look at our customer's call detail and put together what that customer's call experience looks like. And what we came up with is what is something that looks like, you probably can't see this in the back, but it is a bell

Dow Composite	0.58%
S&P 500 Composite	0.36%
NASDAQ Composite	0.67%
NACC Composite	-2.63%

The *NACC Composite Index* is still down more significantly than the broader-based industry composites with the Dow, S&P 500, and NASDAQ all in positive territory from the past two weeks but the NACC Composite is still down. This means that the call center sector is still viewed broadly by investors as softer than the aggregate composite stocks that reflect the total economy.

Real Estate

If you are looking for a new call center location you should check out the [NACC Real Estate](#) page by clicking on this link to see some of the available existing sites.

Quotes

"If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant: if we did not sometimes taste of adversity, prosperity would not be so welcome."

-Anne Bradstreet (1612 - 1672)

Picture of the Week



Photo from Jeff Birkenstein-an American literature professor at Saint Martin's University in Lacey, Washington. He is also an avid traveler, napper [yes, as in sleep], eater and amateur photographer. Taken in December 2007. This is a picture of Lake Tahoe after a fresh snowfall.

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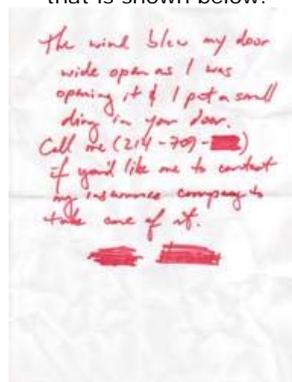
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curve. So imagine across the bottom here is your number of calls answered in X number of seconds. They also did this with AHT. So instead of looking at average handle time you if have customers that spend two hours on the phone it is going to skew your average. So look at your distribution of the calls versus trying to set a number or an average and hit that target. Look at your outliers.

Kevin Hegebarth-I want to riff on the vendor thing for just a minute because as a vendor it is something that is very valuable to me. Where we can actually serve our customer community much better is host us in your call center for a day. Host all of your vendors in your call center for a day. Have a vendor day, a vendor fair. Call it whatever you want. Let us come in and observe your operation. Not in a sales environment because when we come in we want to sell you stuff, we want your money, that is part of our job. Your job is that you want your customer's money, right? This is an opportunity for us to really learn about your operations and if we go to each one of you and learn about your operations we become much more responsive as a vendor, we develop products and services and capabilities and support that better satisfies you as our customer. Host us in your call center. Invite us in for a day, all of us, all of us that supply products and services to you.

Honest People

I was recently in Dallas-Ft. Worth meeting with an new NACC Underwriter (oops, did I disclose that) and had my car parked on top of the parking garage. When I came out after storm with high winds, I found a note under the windshield wiper that is shown below.

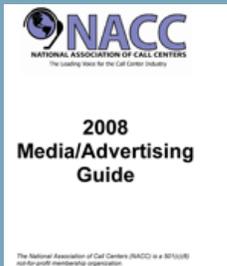


If you cannot read it, the note says

"The wind blew my door wide open as I was opening it & it put a small ding in your door. Call me (214.207-****) if you'd like me to contact my insurance company to take care of it."

The then note was signed. Most of the dents in my car and truck from parking lots have no notes left. Interestingly, I could not find the dent the person was referring to on either side of the car. They did not have to leave the note, there were no cameras watching them. They just left the note because it was the right thing to do. And I applauded them for it. I called them, thanked them for their honesty, told them it was refreshing, that I could not find the damage on the car, and don't worry about it. If more people were forthcoming as this person was, life would be much nicer and easier I think.

Call Center Comics



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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.

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