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CALL CENTER
RESEARCH LABORATORY

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

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Evidence that morale in your contact center ▶ might be low:

calabrio

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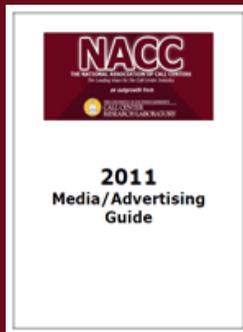
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NACC Investment Portfolio

Coming Your Way This Month from the NACC

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

Look for e-mails from the NACC next week offering access to papers that we think you will find worthwhile and informative.

First will be an invitation to get a copy of a paper written by a longtime friend of mine, Bill Durr of Verint. My friendship with Bill goes back to his days with Rockwell (remember them?), through the Blue Pumpkin years and now with Verint. I imagine many of you have already met Bill or heard him speak at trade shows and conferences around the world. I have two books authored by Bill on my bookshelf; Navigating the Customer Contact Center in the 21st Century and Customer Centricity through Workforce Optimization.

Always on the leading edge of innovations in customer service, Bill has authored a paper entitled "Voice of the Customer Analytics," which he is making available to NACC members and subscribers at no charge. Be sure to download your copy when our offer arrives in your inbox next week.

You will also receive an offer from NACC supporter eGain next week to take a look at a paper from them covering megatrends in web customer experience. The customer experience is top of mind for most contact center professionals today and we encourage you to take advantage of the information contained in this white paper.

Please support the companies that support the NACC.

It's Survey Time!

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

It's time once again for the NACC to launch its annual survey of end-users. If you've been a reader of this newsletter for any length of time you know that the results of the annual survey provide us with the basis for research that we share with readers of this newsletter for the following year. As I have for the past four years, I'm asking you to donate five minutes of your time (literally) to the NACC and participate in our survey.

We don't ask for any identifying information in the survey, only demographic information for classification purposes, so no one will call and bother you as a result of your participation – not even us. Please take a few minutes and go to:

www.surveymonkey.com/s/NACC2011

If everyone participates the results will be that much better. Thanks in advance.

This month's guest article was submitted at the invitation of the NACC by Tom Goodmanson, president of Calabrio, Inc., a longtime NACC supporter. Comments or follow-up questions to this article should be addressed to Calabrio's marketing director, Kristen.Jacobsen@calabrio.com

Why Workforce Optimization Needs to Change with Times

Stock	Price	Value	Change
NICE	30.97	7.71	-2.29
VRNT	27.33	11.16	1.16
SYKE	14.93	7.86	-2.14
WIT	9.59	6.40	-3.60
CVG	9.99	5.65	-4.35
TTEC	16.49	7.17	-2.83
APAC	8.50	38.46	28.46
TOTAL		84.41	14.41

The market in its wild ups and downs the past few months has hit the NACC investment portfolio pretty hard. Of the seven stocks in the portfolio only two, Verint and APAC, are above the purchase price of the stock. The rest of the group are all in the red, some, like Convergys are down over 40% while others like Sykes is only down 20+%. It is a odd world when I have to report that a stock is ONLY down 20%. On the whole, the portfolio is still in the black with a net of $14.41, but this is due mainly to the appreciation of APAC over the past few years. If it were not for the run up of that stock, the portfolio would look very weak indeed.

NACC Composite Index

Date	Value	Change	Percent
11/6/07	100.00		na
12/5/07	94.38	-0.56	-0.60
1/15/08	80.89	-17.02	-21.04
3/12/08	65.47	-11.25	-17.18
6/4/08	81.51	2.93	3.60
9/10/08	66.55	-1.69	-2.54
12/3/08	36.19	3.30	9.13
1/7/09	42.75	2.10	4.92
3/4/09	30.94	-2.42	-7.82
6/10/09	61.67	6.00	9.74
9/16/09	81.26	6.29	7.74
12/16/09	100.81	4.24	4.21
1/13/10	110.48	9.67	8.75
1/27/10	97.93	-12.54	-12.81
2/9/10	94.57	-3.37	-3.56
2/24/10	99.36	4.80	4.83
3/9/10	107.55	8.19	7.62
4/7/10	109.39	1.84	1.68
5/5/10	99.95	-9.45	-9.45
5/31/10	98.29	-1.66	-1.69
7/6/10	60.63	-37.66	-62.12
8/4/10	68.28	7.66	11.21
9/8/10	64.78	-3.50	-5.40
9/29/10	71.85	7.06	9.83
11/2/10	73.72	1.88	2.55
12/1/10	110.90	37.17	33.52
2/1/11	108.73	-2.17	-2.00
3/1/11	107.51	-1.22	-1.13
3/23/11	113.35	5.84	5.15
5/3/11	112.42	-0.93	-0.83
6/1/11	111.65	-0.77	-0.69
7/6/11	110.17	-1.48	-1.34
7/28/11	100.44	-9.73	-9.68
9/7/11	80.71	-19.73	-24.44

Tom Goodmanson, President and CEO
Calabrio, Inc.

In the past, workforce optimization has been implemented as a collection of applications for supervisors and managers to plan and measure the performance of their teams against contact center goals. This limited view of workforce optimization combined with several key changes in corporations has resulted in a suite that is not achieving its full potential. Some of these changes that companies are experiencing include:

- The next generation of contact center agent is changing the way a contact center works and how they want to be managed
- The contact center is beginning to engage with the corner office (and if they aren't then they should)
- Today's customer demands a new kind of service through social media and other channels – and your people and technology had better keep up

To be most effective in today's contact centers, workforce optimization tools and processes need to be accessed and embraced by more than just the front-line contact center supervisors and managers. Everyone from the agent to the executive manager has a stake in contact center success, so they all should have easy access to the information and tools that make them an active part of the process. Here's how.

Engage the Next Generation Agent

Without first-class service from your contact center, customer satisfaction suffers, as does the overall business. In order to help achieve good service, companies must focus on those who are the contact center engine – the agents.

With today's age of instant information, we want access to information now. Agents are no different – particularly as Gen Y enters the workforce. Studies show that Gen Y embraces instant feedback, and may tend to discount input on something that happened yesterday. They want to be managed differently.

The contact center is a fast-paced environment, and agents will be more motivated to do well if they have access to their performance metrics throughout the day. A personalized performance dashboard gives that instantaneous feedback. By allowing agents to monitor their performance metrics in real time, they can take ownership of their performance and make adjustments to improve their numbers if they see a dip. And agent self-service for schedule changes is a win-win for everyone. It automates the process to reduce a supervisor's time, helps agents manage their own schedule, and ensures that there's someone to answer the phone when the customer calls. These are just two simple changes that bring the workforce optimization to a new level.

Face Reality - Contact Centers are Becoming More Social

There's little doubt that social media is dramatically changing how people are sharing thoughts and opinions. Whether contact center supervisors like it or not, social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs are the new digital communication channels customers are using - gaining in popularity much like email did two decades ago. Ignoring these sites won't make them go away and will likely result in countless lost opportunities to address vital customer issues.

Contact centers must think about how to capture social media conversations related to their business and manage the resources that respond to them. Not doing so can have negative ramifications to the organization. Your customers are tweeting about your business and you need to @reply.

Before I write a summary for the financial data we report in the newsletter I ponder all of the forces that are at work, read the news related to the stocks and industry, and then try and distill that information into something short with an explanation. For this month, let me summarize the past several weeks with the following statement-Nothing Makes Sense! There, I said it. The people in the markets are doing odd-ball stuff. Each of them individually is making a decision but in aggregate the markets are just swinging wildly as if a drunk person is in charge. Run to treasuries, get out of treasuries. Jump to currencies, get out of currencies. Get into equities, run from equities. Put money in Europe, no, the United States, no, how about Switzerland, that looks good. What!? I have given up trying to give a rational explanation for the behavior of the markets. I do not think rational forces are at work. Fear is at work, fear of the future, fear of losing money when there is no where to put it that seems safe. So, what to do? I have kept investing my money in the stock market monthly as I was taught to do as early as middle school, holding onto the stocks for the long term (Warren Buffet style), in the belief that all will grow in the end. What other realistic options are there?

Dow Composite	-6.74%
S&P 500 Composite	-8.51%
NASDAQ Composite	-8.53%
NACC Composite	-24.44%

The numbers tell it all. What else can I say? Everything was down. The Dow, the S&P500, NASDAQ and especially the NACC Composite, all down. In fact, if you add up the top three indices and their collective losses, they will be less than the drop in the NACC composite overall. Now that is a bad month!

Quote

"Diamonds are nothing more than chunks of coal that stuck to their jobs."

-Malcolm Stevenson Forbes

Picture of the Month

What's next on the horizon? Who knows? But the lesson learned is that change is inevitable, and contact centers need tools that allow them to be fast and flexible to respond regardless of how the customer "calls."

Drive Enterprise Value

In many organizations, executives still tend to zero in on operational costs as it relates to the contact center and miss the link between contact center performance and business success. Focus should be less on cost efficiencies and more on the contact center as a barometer of customer sentiment, marketing strategy, product satisfaction and sales success. Contact centers need to find ways to elevate their importance and communicate their value to business leaders.

Many executives overlook the contact center's wealth of valuable business information resulting from thousands of customer exchanges. Recordings of agent and customer exchanges are being made every day, yet this information is often limited to archival for legal protection, mining for HR issues, or spot checking for quality issues and training needs.

Today's astute C-level executives are taking this information and analyzing business outcomes. The caveat is to identify information that correlates to business outcomes such as revenue, retention and other efficiencies, such as first call resolution. With this information, executives and others throughout the organization can better understand the important role the contact center serves to a business. So collect all your data, analyze it and share it in a meaningful way to help your business leaders make the link.

It's Time for Your Tools to Catch Up

This tidal wave of change is driving the need for contact centers to embrace new communications channels, new information technology and new management strategies in order to stay relevant to the organization. Updating your workforce optimization tools and techniques can help you set the pace. GenY isn't long on patience and let's face it, neither are executives, so access to information has got to be clear, it's got to be quick, and it's got to be flexible. Providing customers, agents, managers and executives with ready access to the right data at the right time with the right tools makes every worker better and helps makes the enterprise stronger and more successful.

Desktop Integration Leads to Process Optimization

Matt Morey, Strategic Contact
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With contact centers always searching for ways to improve performance, the agent desktop just could be the next best place to look. Desktop optimization can streamline processes and reduce handle times as well as simplify training and navigation between systems or applications.

When I sit with agents for call observations, I often find that they have many applications open at the same time – even several instances of their Customer Information System. You see them expertly jump between applications – some browser-based, some legacy or "green-screen." You see precious seconds wasted when agents update information by cutting and pasting data between multiple systems – or worse, write things down and then type them back in. When your CSRs are the integration points for your disparate applications, you'll wind up with longer training, longer AHT, and higher error rates.

Congratulations to Switzerland (see the Swiss flag image above) for being named by the World Economic Forum as the most competitive economy in the world. Second to Switzerland was Singapore followed by Sweden, Finland and then the United States. The United States has fallen for the third year in a row.

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 images below and download the executive summary of each. If you like what you see, join the NACC so that we can send you these reports and others that will be coming out soon to ensure you know the latest trends in the industry.
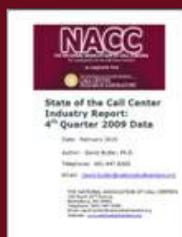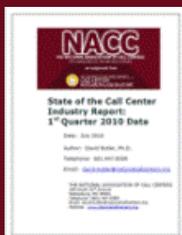
There is hope! A consolidated desktop application (CDA) has characteristics that can transform the desktop and improve operations quickly. Typical features include:

- Browser-based "cockpit" serving as an agent portal, providing access to all applications and data sources
- Support multiple lines of business, contact types, applications
- "Pops" customer information
- Highly integrated between applications
- Intelligent rules-based navigation and workflows
- Single sign-on and customer view

Where do you turn for help with your desktop optimization project? Typically there are three paths to consider:

- You could ask your IT department to build it for you. If you're pursuing this option, make sure IT has the time and expertise to build it, as well as maintain and enhance it. Otherwise, you're better off looking at solutions available in the market.
- You could look to a CRM vendor, especially if you already use one in your enterprise. Many CRM vendors have pre-built integration points to a variety of applications. They often include work flow engines to facilitate contact handling processes. Pega Systems (www.pega.com) and Salesforce.com (www.salesforce.com) are examples of applications that efficiently integrate the desktop.
- You could consider a CDA provider. These vendors focus on desktop integration and process improvement; many offer data capture and analytics as well, enabling you to see what is occurring at the desktop and further optimize. They often have CRM "lite" functionality. Representative players include Jacada (www.jacada.com), Openspan (www.openspan.com), or Cicero (www.ciceroinc.com).

If you are ready to tackle desktop optimization, consider a trial to capture key metrics to build a business case for a full deployment. Many of the vendors will work with you to identify systems and processes that they can optimize. This approach lets you prove out the value with a relatively low investment of time, money, and resources. Three areas to evaluate:

- Reduced handle time. The optimized desktop provides easy access to customer information across multiple systems without the need to jump back and forth between systems and/or cut-and-paste information across applications.
- Reduced errors and increased first call resolution. With an optimized desktop, you reduce errors and re-work while providing more efficient access to information. The company and the customer benefit.
- Improved agent proficiency. Simpler processes and system interfaces shorten training time and allow new agents to become productive sooner.

The agent desktop can be vastly improved through technology that doesn't take forever or cost a fortune. Not only can you improve some of your metrics like handle time and training time, you are taking a noteworthy step toward improving agent and customer satisfaction.

NACC Mid-Year Update and Forecast Report Now Available

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

The NACC published our mid-year report for members in August. Our
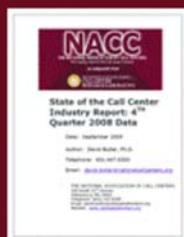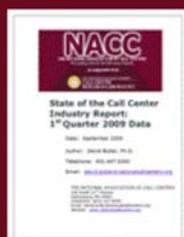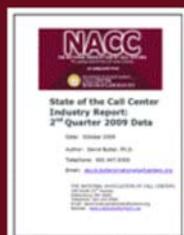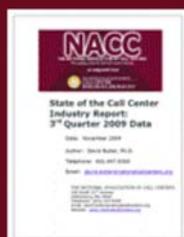
gratitude once again goes to the two sponsors of the report, Calabrio (www.calabrio.com) and VPI (www.VPI-corp.com). This report is delivered to NACC members as part of their membership benefits. To learn more about becoming a member of the NACC, please visit http://www.nationalcallcenters.org/membership.php.

To review the Executive Summary of the report, please click here.

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.

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