NACC In Queue

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CALL CENTERS
The Leading Voice for the Call Center Industry

an outgrowth from

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI
CALL CENTER RESEARCH LABORATORY

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

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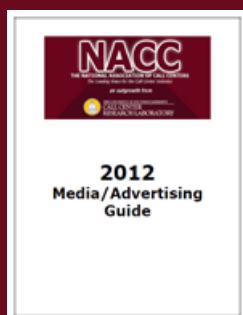
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NACC Investment Portfolio

Stock	Price	Value	Change
NICE	36.11	8.99	-1.01
VRNT	28.21	11.52	1.52
SYKE	17.46	9.19	-0.81
WIT	10.72	7.16	-2.84
CVG	13.72	7.76	-2.24
TTEC	16.96	7.37	-2.63
TOTAL		51.99	-8.01

New Year's Resolution #1: Join the NACC!

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

This year we hope you'll consider joining the NACC and help us to grow and expand our mission to advance the contact center industry by offering members high-value-added research, information and products to support effective decision making.

Although we are a not-for-profit, university-based industry membership organization, we have lots of big ideas for shaking things up in 2012, and we rely on our members to communicate their needs and desires to us in order to direct our activities. We're not like the big, for-profit industry associations you may be familiar with. We are motivated by a passion for useful research that translates to actionable information for our members.

To paraphrase the statement on our home page at www.nationalcallcenters.org, the NACC's emergence from a university makes us unique in the caliber of research we conduct, the type of data we provide our members, and the insights and advice we share, all conducted within the honest and open environment of a university.

For more information on becoming an NACC member, please visit http://www.nationalcallcenters.org/membership.php. For information on a no-charge volunteer membership, please send me an e-mail with the words "2012 Volunteer" in the subject line. We look forward to welcoming you to the NACC!

New Look to Debut in March

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

You may have noticed, or at least we hope you noticed, that there was no NACC *In Queue* newsletter in January. That's because we've been putting our efforts into a new look and format for the NACC in 2012.

Our new website, which will be launched along with the new newsletter format in March, will feature a new look and many new features including a password-protected job board that will allow members to post job openings in their contact center. All reports and briefs will be housed on the website and available via password to the membership. The website will also be the place to get information about, and sign up for, quarterly telephone briefings and other new activities.

We will be soliciting members for blog entries, article contributions and quotes. Response to these changes from members has been overwhelmingly positive and we hope to capture some of that enthusiasm for the new website.

This newsletter will be the last one in the old format. Please watch for the NACC in our new format in early March.

Ring in the New Year with the Top 5 Industry Trends for 2012

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

In case you're wondering what we do with the data we collect during our surveys and why it's important for you to participate, it allows us to come up with stuff like this. We can confidently forecast what industry trends will most likely impact you and your job in the year ahead. We can confidently forecast these expected trends because they are based upon information you provided us in our 2011 survey. For a five minute investment of your time, you get information that may help you and your contact center better perform in 2012.

Based on what you've told us, combined with some assumptions on our part based upon our combined decades of industry experience, here are what we expect to be the five most important contact center industry trends in 2012.

1. Voice of the Customer Analytics

Encompassing the foundation technologies of speech analytics, text analytics and

This is the last update of the NACC Investment Portfolio in this form in this newsletter. In the future the plan is to offer you a variety of types of information regarding the business of call centers including the publically traded companies and their performances.

Since our last reporting in November 2011, all of the major indices have increased by several percentage points including the NACC Investment Portfolio. However, the portfolio is still in the red and the only stock that is in positive territory from its original purchase price is Verint which has added 1.5%. The rest are still in negative territory with Teletech off over 2.6% from the original purchase price.

Quote

"Though no one can go back and make a brand new start, anyone can start from now and make a brand new ending."

-Carl Bard

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.
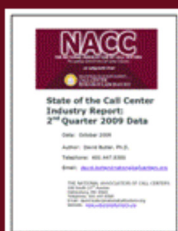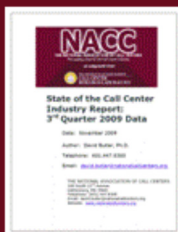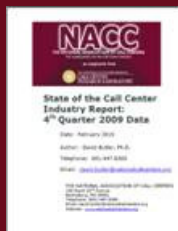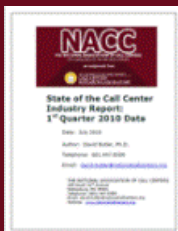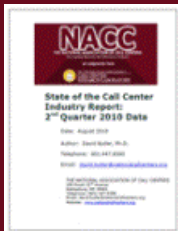
customer satisfaction surveys, Voice of the Customer (VoC) Analytics burst onto the contact center industry in 2011 and has captured the attention of the market. Although VoC has been a topic of conversation for years, we now have the means of effectively analyzing and using the customer data that is captured in a typical customer communication.

Our survey results indicate that user intentions for acquiring VoC technologies in 2012 are quite high. 24 percent of respondents will be looking at speech analytics this year, 23 percent will be looking to acquire a customer survey software solution, and 13 percent of respondents will be evaluating text analytics for acquisition in 2012.

While these percentages sound relatively small, they take on a new meaning when translated to real number terms. For example, nearly 16,000 contact centers will likely acquire speech analytics in 2012. If you've been waiting for validation of VoC solutions before acquiring them in your contact center, the time has come.

2. Customer Collaboration

This trend represents an evolution in the way customers are addressed by the contact center. Specifically, this refers to serving customers in the manner they prefer to be served and creating customer relationships through proactive customer contact. The most effective way to meet these objectives will likely be through social media channels, where companies can post customer communications and begin to create strong customer relationships.

22 percent of survey respondents plan to add social media channels to their customer care strategy in 2012, joining the 17 percent of respondents that are already using social media for customer care.

3. Agent Performance Analytics

This one came out of nowhere, led by the resurgence of demand for e-learning among survey respondents. Also high on the list of performance optimization tools that will be evaluated for purchase in 2012 is desktop analytics with 21 percent of respondents, representing nearly 14,000 contact centers, shopping for this solution. Performance analytics also remains popular among those evaluating performance optimization solutions in 2012.

4. Hiring Solutions and Strategies

Over 36 percent of you told us that you'll be adding agent headcount in 2012. That's pretty exciting news, but there's a catch. Over 60 percent of you told us that your agent turnover rates have dropped to less than 20 percent over the last year. Most likely due to economic uncertainty combined with management efforts to retain good workers, lower turnover means there will be fewer resources available to meet a growing demand.

Contact centers will have to get a lot smarter about their hiring efforts. This includes eliminating the time, effort and money wasted putting less-than-qualified candidates through the hiring process, and increasing enterprise collaboration between human resources recruiters and hiring managers. While other industries have been doing this for decades, this is still a fairly new concept for the contact center industry, which will have to rely on software solutions and proven recruiting strategies to keep hiring costs from going through the roof in 2012.

5. Shifts in Purchase Decision Influencers

Let's get the obvious out of the way first – price and return on investment (ROI) still top the list of factors that influence purchase decisions, based upon your survey input. What has changed, though, are the secondary factors that influence buyers' purchase decisions.

Intangibles have made a strong comeback in the list of factors that influence the way a buyer will lean when choosing a vendor. Specifically, these three factors finished at the top in the list of influencing factors:

- Company reputation
- Prior relationship with the seller
- Trust in the brand name

I think these factors, which all point to trust in one form or another as a major influencer, may be in response to the cold, hard pre-recession business environment. Perhaps the recession has caused us to rethink how we have to rely on each other more than the impersonal, greed-driven numbers that typified most of the last decade.

Have I missed anything? If you foresee any major industry trends for this year that I haven't included in my Top Five list, please drop me an e-mail at paul.stockford@nationalcallcenters.org and I'll include them in the February newsletter.

Mobile Mania: Will this be your next big thing?

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As we talk with industry leaders through our project work, it seems like the topic of mobile devices, mobile applications, and their link to the contact center keeps coming up. An ever growing population of customers – young and old – spend their days with their heads bent over smartphones. It's just a matter of time before "mobility" will need to be factored into your customer service equation.
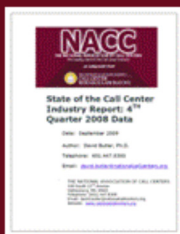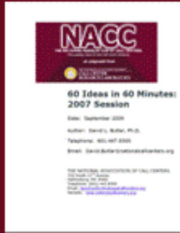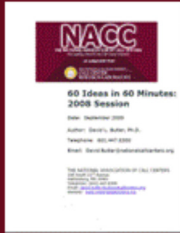
Things to consider

Mobile self-service ought to be a "no brainer." You want your customers to interact with your company using lower cost channels. They want to interact with you using their preferred media and devices. As with IVR and the web, application design must be consistent with this channel's interface (i.e., visual, but distinctly small). But who owns this channel (IT? Mobile group? Marketing?) and how will it cross-pollinate with other channels? Fortunately, the vendors coming at this market (see below) create the possibility for contact center involvement, which we hope bodes well for cross-channel integration.

Good mobile apps offer the option to seek help. But rather than just dial a call to the center, these applications can pass information that is used to route the customer to the right person/group and provide the assigned rep with the "who" and "what" the mobile app may have already gathered. With some solutions, contact is made via an outbound call rather than an inbound call, sparing the mobile customer time-consuming and irritating navigation and waiting in queue. Looking beyond calls, some vendors offer the ability to send email or text messages. The contact center needs to integrate these mobile triggered requests for service alongside phone calls and email or chats coming off the web.

Most application platforms support multiple mobile operating systems – iPhone, Droid, Blackberry, etc. – although they may start with one of the most popular (iPhone or Android) only. They offer GUI interfaces for app development, recognizing it has to be easy to develop, update, report on and optimize these apps.

Some vendors talk up the possibilities for mobile agents, but we're not yet convinced that will be the next big wave. Many companies are just getting settled with home agents. Mobile agents may be a next step or a good fit for some smaller, more informal centers.

Things to explore

A variety of vendors pitch a variety of possibilities around mobile:

- Fonolo encourages mobile phone users to self serve, but when someone needs help, it uses the information provided to identify the caller and call purpose, route appropriately, and "pop" information. To top it off, they might survey the customer on the experience.
- Many know Virtual Hold, using it for callbacks to customers who dial into their center. Now companies can use it for callback to a mobile user, again using the information provided.
- Nuance Call Intercept helps callers "discover" mobile apps by intercepting calls and providing a visual interface. It sure beats playing irritating messages like, "Did you know you could visit our web site/IVR?" to make customers aware of options.
- Speech Cycle provides pre-built mobile apps for customer care and mobile service and a GUI interface for easy development.
- West (a major outsourcer) works with Syclo on mobile application offerings to customers through a hosted solution.
- CRM/KM vendors (like RightNow, Salesforce.com) offer mobile apps that parallel web offerings.
- Core CC vendors (like Avaya, Cisco, Interactive Intelligence) seem to be focusing on the mobile worker but also offer options such as video for the mobile customer.
- Many vendors provide tools and services for building mobile apps, including vertical market application starters. Some focus on email or chat offerings with these apps.

Things to do

If you want to improve the customer experience, you need to offer self-service and contact routing from the customers' media of choice. It's time to explore mobile and the impact it can have on your customers and your center. Work cross-department to build a mobile applications and integration strategy – defining what you will offer, when, in line with your other channels. Then, define requirements and find the right partners to help you deliver your strategy.

Start the Year Right with a Saddletree Podcast

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

While the research elves at the NACC put their feet up in front of the fire over the holidays, the magical research fairies at Saddletree Research were hard at work so we could offer you fresh information to start the industry New Year.

In keeping with our promise of providing you with useful information in less time than it takes to drink a cup of coffee, we recorded two podcasts over the holiday break. Each one is less than 12 minutes long and guaranteed to get you thinking. There are plenty of other podcasts joining these two new ones. Check them out by clicking here.

New podcasts are as follows:

Collaboration in the Hiring Process: The High Cost of Ineffective Hiring

Collaboration is a word that is becoming more commonly heard and used in the contact center industry, but rarely is it used in the context of contact center hiring. As labor

markets constrict, as covered in this podcast, a more collaborative effort will be required to bring the best employees to the contact center. In this episode, Paul is joined once again by Kevin Hegebarth of Hire IQ (www.hireiqinc.com) to discuss the disconnects between recruiters trying to fill seats and tactical managers who are beginning to reject the notion that contact center hiring is just a numbers game.

The Practical Aspects of Speech Analytics

2012 marks the 10th anniversary of the introduction of speech analytics to the contact center industry. Although speech analytics has been slow to find acceptance and growth in the contact center, that is about to change. In this podcast Paul speaks with Jane Hendricks of Aspect (www.aspect.com) about recent Saddletree Research/National Association of Call Centers end-user research that shows speech analytics poised for growth in 2012. Jane discusses some of the practical aspects of speech analytics that are driving the demand for this highly effective customer intelligence solution.

Please visit www.saddletreeresearch.com to listen to these and other podcasts.

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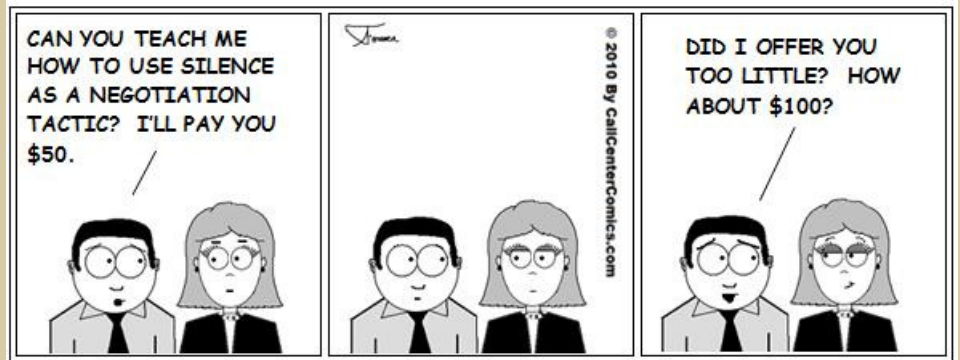
If you like this comic and would like to see more, write Ozzie at callcentercomics@yahoo.com and visit his website at http://callcentercomics.com /cartoon_categories.htm or just click on the comic to take you to his page. The NACC appreciates Ozzie letting us use some of his comics in our newsletter.

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