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The Leading Voice for the Call Center Industry

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THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI
CALL CENTER
RESEARCH LABORATORY

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

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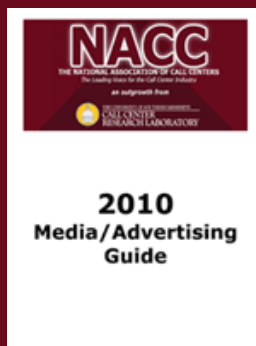
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Underwriters

All leading call center companies and suppliers should examine the *NACC Underwriting* opportunity in 2010 as evidence of their dedication to the growth of call center industry. See

Sailing into 2010 on the Winds of Optimism

Paul Stockford, Research Director, National Association of Call Centers and Chief Analyst, SaddleTree Research, Paul.Stockford@nationalcallcenters.org

Last week we thought we'd kick off the New Year by finding out what you, the customer service professional, think 2010 will be like for your business and for the industry as a whole. As is our wont, we decided to ask for your help by participating in a very short survey. The survey can be found here: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PLMDS3B>.

Perhaps the holiday hangover was still in effect because the rate of participation has been a little disappointing, but it's not too late to add your opinion in the mix. The survey is still open and we would appreciate your taking two minutes (literally) to answer a few brief questions about the way you see 2010 shaping up. As always, the results will be shared with everyone.

In the meantime, early results of the survey definitely point to a feeling of optimism in the industry, similar to the sense of optimism that carried the contact center through the recession of 2008 - 2009. It is also interesting to see from which vertical markets the most optimistic respondents hail. This could be a good indicator of which markets expect to recover faster than others and which vertical markets are entering the New Year with a less optimistic outlook.

As those of you who took the survey know, the first question we asked was how you thought your particular business would fare compared to 2009. 64.9 percent of you felt your business would do somewhat better this year than last. 5.4 percent felt that their business would do significantly better this year. Only 27 percent of you thought your business this year would be about the same as last year, and a miniscule 2.7 percent felt business would be worse this year than last.

The most optimistic of respondents came from the third-party outsourcing and telecommunications vertical markets. This is not surprising as both of these markets survived the recession amazingly well. Outsourcers found themselves the recipients of business as in-house centers in struggling verticals looked to save money and transferred the customer service function to outside contractors. With the way we have all come to depend upon our wireless communications devices in all facets of our lives, it is also not surprising that the telecommunications market thinks that this will be another good year.

We also asked how our respondents thought their spending on contact center technology would change in 2010. While the majority, 56.8 percent, thought their spending this year would be about the same as last year, 16.2 percent of respondents thought that they would be increasing their spending this year. Only 27 percent thought they would be spending less in 2010. Overall this is good news for suppliers as 73 percent of industry buyers believe their spending will be the same or more as last year. Companies that survived the recession should be able to survive 2010.

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NACC Investment Portfolio

Stock	Price	Value	Change
NICE	29.80	7.42	-2.58
VRNT	18.05	7.37	-2.63
SYKE	24.60	12.95	2.95
WIT	20.83	13.91	3.91
CVG	10.81	6.12	-3.88
TTEC	19.05	8.28	-1.72
ICTG	16.05	15.40	5.40
APAC	5.44	24.62	14.62
TOTAL		96.06	16.06

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

Humpy Dumpty sat on the wall...total Portfolio Value Now= \$97.93...and had a great fall. The NACC Portfolio dropped to below \$100 the last two weeks, down to the level late last year when it was climbing up nicely.

We still have four of the eight stocks in the red and four in the black. If we can get TeleTech up just \$2, we will have five of the eight in the black which always looks and sounds better than fifty percent.

NACC Composite Index

Not surprisingly, the vertical markets that expect to increase their spending on technology this year include financial services, government, third-party outsourcing and telecommunications. Smart suppliers will be targeting these markets in order to tap into the optimism that will fuel spending this year.

Before we delve deeper into the results of this survey we'd like to get more responses from you, our reader. Please take the two minutes required to complete the survey and go to <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PLMDS3B>. As always, no salesman will call and you'll benefit from knowing how your opinions and attitudes measure up to those of your peers. Thanks in advance.

From the Trenches

Becoming the Best: Assessing your Facilities

Lori Bocklund, President – Strategic Contact, lori@strategiccontact.com and Steve Suhn – Strategic Contact

Whether your contact center facility was purpose-built, redesigned, or you are making the most of what you have, you can optimize your plan for using any available facilities improvement budget through a focused assessment. Facilities are more than just space for people to handle calls, emails or chat. They are a critical tool to support business goals, ensure employee health and safety, optimize productivity and ideally attract and inspire agents.

Defining the Scope of the Assessment

When assessing your facilities, the scope can vary based on the age and condition of your facility, the contact center size and functions (agents and support staff), and the available improvement budget. We recommend you include the following categories in your assessment, at a minimum:

- Design/layout – for both call center teams and support/management functions to enable efficient communication, collaboration or quiet, as appropriate.
- Ergonomics – in agent work space including lighting, sound, chair and workspace design, chair to work surface alignment, access to drawers for personal possessions, and glare free monitors
- Location(s) – easy access to public transportation, abundant parking, and safe/secure access to the building
- Amenities – such as onsite day care, meal and snack options, fitness facilities or walking paths, and personal communication space and tools

Assessing and addressing each area enables call center management to attract and retain skilled agents, improve schedule adherence, bolster employee morale and ultimately improve customer satisfaction.

Facilities Issues and Opportunities

There are five areas we most often see contact center managers target for improvement.

Agent Workstation Ergonomics

Adjustable desktops, keyboard drawers which can raise or tuck away, and ergonomic chairs or balance balls for sitting are increasingly common, as is training focused on appropriate chair and work space alignment.

Lighting is More than What You See

Natural lighting through windows or skylights is ideal within the center. Centers located in the building interior can still get some of the benefits of a view to the outside world by posting large pictures of outdoor scenes and using special lighting to match the natural light spectrum. As an example, a large utility center altered lighting and found a positive impact on agent moods and energy.

Collaboration

In today's world, your first thought with collaboration may be technology, but facility layout can enhance collaboration, too. In a large center in the healthcare industry, teams worked in an open environment to optimize first call resolution.

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

The *NACC Composite Index* was down 12.81% during this past two weeks-ugh. The new index number is 97.93 back down under the starting value of 100 from November 2007. Last newsletter I said, "I am really enjoying reporting three digits on the left side of the decimal for the index." I must have jinxed us. I will try and refrain from such excitement in the future.

Dow Composite	-4.16%
S&P 500 Composite	-4.39%
NASDAQ Composite	-3.89%
NACC Composite	-12.81%

The *NACC Composite Index* was down 12.81% the past two weeks. This drop was as much as the other three major indices combined, each of them down around 4% each. I am used to reporting in this space that the NACC Composite beat the other indices and often quite handedly but this week I am reporting a big OUCH!

Quote

"Iron rusts from disuse, stagnant water loses its purity and in cold weather becomes frozen; even so does inaction sap the vigors of the mind."

-Leonardo DaVinci

Picture of the Week

Tiger Comes to Town

The open work space was bordered by meeting and collaboration rooms which ranged in size to support anything from special project team meetings to agent quality feedback and coaching.

Fun Break Rooms

Agent-focused break rooms offer more than coffee, a fridge and microwave. A top competitor for a Call Center of the Year award provides three separate areas adjacent to their break room. One room is for active entertainment with Foosball and ping pong tables. Another provides a quiet area with couches and bean bags for power naps or relaxation. A third room provides television, Internet access, and additional media capabilities. Creative break options result in inspired staff.

Positive Reinforcement

Repurpose your walls into Customer Kudos Centers, Employee Appreciation Centers or consistent reminders of team mission and goals. One center with a mission to shift from a cost center to a profit center used their walls to rotate an executive statement of agent value with quarterly goals and monthly/quarterly performance winners. The successful change to a profit center was worth the investment in a few changes to wall design.

Apply Best Practices to your Facilities and Physical Environment

While walls, cubes and desks may seem the most immovable of contact center resources, a little creative energy goes a long way in finding ways to optimize your facilities. Use these best practices to assess your facilities and physical environment, and undoubtedly you'll find some improvements that are worth the investment.

- Sites are easily accessible to employees by public and private transportation, and ample, well lit parking is provided. Amenities (food, exercise facilities, daycare, etc.) are available on-site or nearby.

- The facility is well-maintained and ensures employee safety and security.

- Work areas reflect ergonomic design to promote teaming and resource management while avoiding disruptions.

- Staff has ready access to bathrooms, copiers, faxes, mail rooms, break rooms, etc., to minimize time away from their desks.

- Training, quality review, huddle and break areas provide ample room for employee education, coaching and development at convenient locations.

- Conference rooms and/or small offices support collaboration as needed.

- Appropriate space is provided for display of operational feedback and recognition.

Aspect Reopens the Acquisition Trail

Paul Stockford, Research Director, National Association of Call Centers and Chief Analyst, Saddletree Research, Paul.Stockford@nationalcallcenters.org

On January 12, 2010, Aspect of Chelmsford, MA, acquired Quilogy, Inc., a nationally recognized information technology (IT) services firm. The point of the acquisition for Aspect was to gain Quilogy's expertise as a systems integrator partner of Microsoft with particular expertise in Microsoft SharePoint – Microsoft's content management and enterprise search server that facilitates information sharing and collaboration across enterprise boundaries.

The acquisition makes a lot of sense given Aspect's aspirations to become a provider of unified communications (UC) solutions in the contact center and for the enterprise as a whole. The addition of the collaboration capabilities brought to bear by SharePoint will be highly complementary to Aspect's UC applications, like its "Ask an Expert" solution.

I found this acquisition announcement of noteworthy interest for what it means to the industry as much as for what it means to Aspect in particular. For the past couple of years, strategic acquisitions in the contact center industry were nearly non-existent as they were replaced by acquisitions of companies undergoing "fire sales" as a result of financial difficulties. Acquisitions for the purpose of advancing a product strategy became rare occurrences.

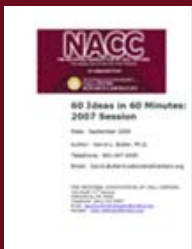


Sex addiction treatment: Tiger Woods is believed to be staying at this chalet at the Pine Grove clinic.

The photo above is just one of many photos that are attempting to capture a glimpse of Tiger Woods at a rehabilitation center in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. Yep, right here where I live, from out of no where comes a person who is known for headlines. Stories say that he will be at the clinic for three or four weeks. Other stories have suggested that his wife is also in town, but staying quietly away at Bret Farve's house, another sports person who lives in Hattiesburg and is known to be in the headlines quite a bit.

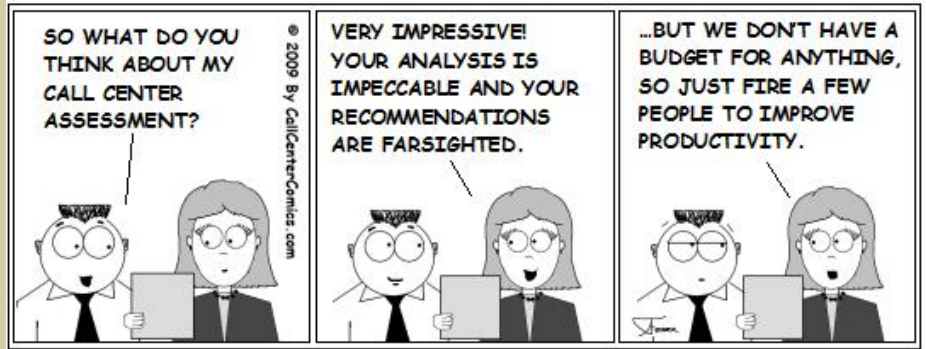
Reports from the NACC

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.



I believe this acquisition may signal the re-opening of the acquisition trail in the contact center industry and stand as an indication of the resiliency of the industry as a whole. It is a proof point that our industry is gaining strength and is able to return to growth mode. Aspect's acquisition of Quilogy is not just important to Aspect and its customers, it is an important event in the history of the entire customer service industry.

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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**North American Contact
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2008 - 2009
The Year in Review and
a Look Ahead**

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**State of the Call Center
Industry Report; 4th
Quarter 2008 Data**

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