



---

# **RESEARCH UPDATE**

---

## **University of Southern Mississippi and NACC Establish Contact Center Test Bed Facility**

### **Summary**

The University of Southern Mississippi (USM) and the Mississippi Department of Economic Security (MDES) have established a contact center lab that will be available to the industry for the purpose of equipment testing, beta testing, comparison testing and product review. The contact center test center consists of two parallel contact centers that are run by the MDES and testing will be done by personnel currently employed by MDES. All testing will be accomplished under the auspices of the National Association of Call Centers (NACC).

One of the 50 seat contact centers is located in Canton, MS and the second 50 seat site is located in Hattiesburg, MS, home of the USM. With the full support and cooperation of the Mississippi state government, contact center personnel will work closely with university personnel to provide clients with objective analysis of test results which can be used by the client in a number of ways. The results of the test become the property of the company or companies that provide the grant that funds the test.

The minimum time period for any test is two weeks. The maximum test period is at the discretion of the client. Written test results are authored by NACC personnel and are delivered under the seal of The University of Southern Mississippi, assuring the objectivity and authenticity of the academic environment in which the test was conducted.

For more information visit [www.nationalcallcenters.org](http://www.nationalcallcenters.org).

## **The View From The Saddle**

In the interest of full disclosure, Saddletree Research will be contracting with the NACC to serve in the position of Research Director beginning Q4 of 2008 and continuing through 2009.

Saddletree Research is not aware of any other contact center testing lab in the industry that is administered under such strict guidelines as those found in an academic research facility. We believe that the rigor that will be applied to any test conducted at the USM test bed is far superior to the rigor that is applied to any other testing facility available to the contact center industry today.

The Mississippi Department of Employment Security was chosen as the test bed because it runs two almost identical contact centers. This configuration will allow side-by-side comparison testing, competitive testing, beta testing in one or two sites and product reviews in either or both sites. IT services are provided by a separate unit of the MDES and these individuals are responsible for the technology in both centers. They will also be responsible for running the tests under the supervision of the NACC.

The client will be responsible for providing technical support and on-site personnel to assist with initial set-up and testing. MDES' IT personnel will then take responsibility for running the equipment once the client approves the initial set-up.

Test results will be documented and the documents provided to the client. The client has the option to provide copies of the test results to others or to keep the test results confidential. The USM and NACC will provide test results to the client only. What is done with them after that is at the discretion of the client.

Saddletree Research believes USM's contact center lab test bed an exciting development that brings a degree of professionalism and academic sobriety to the contact center industry. It is in keeping with the NACC's mission of promoting high standards of practice for call centers and it certainly raises the bar relative to testing standards in the industry. It also provides the vendor community a unique opportunity to cut through the hype and deliver truly objective and useful product information to customers, prospects and the press.