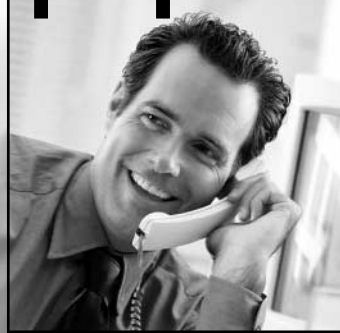


white paper

Rapid Results



Simply Powerful™



Key Elements To Making A Customer Contact Center Work

Strategies for Success



Technology alone will not make all the difference in creating a world-class customer contact center. It really comes down to a common sense approach towards business and a genuine commitment to attaining the highest level of customer service. What is required is the merging of four key elements. It starts with the right caliber of personnel. Put simply, hire people that have more than good technical skills. The right personnel have outstanding interpersonal skills that translate both over the telephone and via Web communications. Each is qualitatively different. Equip them with superior training, the use of the best tools and put in place processes for productivity, always with the customer's experience in mind. Let's look at each more in depth.

Personnel — What to look for

Top-flight technicians are not just seeking employment; they are looking for an environment that enables them to utilize and develop their professional skills. They understand customer service thoroughly. There is a degree of "empathy" that is conveyed when they interact with customers that can make the difference between a customer that stays and a customer that defects. As your customer's first line of defense against IT problems you must be confident they're in good hands.

To achieve that confidence, create a best-practices recruitment, development and retention plan. Considering that the human resources program typically accounts for approximately 70% of an IT budget, you want to ensure proper processes are in place to recruit, hire, train and retain the services of the best people.

Have a formal career development program in place. A good employee likes to feel they are in a progressive job with a chance for advancement and development based on above average effort and performance. Provide incentives to excel and processes capable of mapping a career plan for their future. This includes fair pay grades, regular performance reviews and recognition of excellence, concise growth paths, management opportunities and training, among others.

Training — A critical step for retention

There's little point in investing in high-dollar service and support software if you have no formal method of training your staff. Even the best technicians want development and training. While they come largely prepared with a high level of interpersonal and technical skills, supplemental training can make the difference in being just a technician versus being a world-class customer service professional.

Promote online and Web training; hire a specialized external contractor; provide continuous internal training and offer remote seminars. These are all useful ways of providing valuable continuing education for your contact center professionals.

The average burnout rate for technicians is typically 15–18 months. Most technicians are under qualified or do not have the opportunity to succeed due to inadequate systems and poor training. To avoid this trend, provide a formal skills enhancement program, which



includes: communications skills, customer service skills, technical skills and process skills. You'll be developing them personally as well as professionally.

Employee retention is knowledge retention.

Warning: If you are still using homegrown system, heavy reliance on any one IT professional that has developed leaves you extremely vulnerable. Everything that technician knows about your system is likely to only be in his or her head or scratched out in a makeshift manual that makes little sense to anyone else. If this is the case, once that person leaves your organization, so does their intellectual property of that system leaving you in a difficult situation.

Tools — Enable & empower your staff

Technicians need tools that enable them to succeed. The solution you use to interact with customers is another place you can make or break employee morale and a commitment to excellence. A system that is difficult to install and implement — one that is hard to use and has limited capabilities for viewing customer records and history is one that will frustrate even the most devoted among your staff.

Choose a software solution that enables proactive and informative interactions every time. One that is instinctive, robust, scalable and customizable to your business needs. Optimally, a solution that can integrate with automated sales and marketing functions and can show a 360-degree view of your customers. Nothing empowers excellence in customer service like having all the necessary information about a customer at the click-of-a-mouse. Not only does the customer appreciate and recognize it, but also technicians can deliver a level of customer intimacy they can feel good about.

Processes — The linchpin element

A proactive operation protects and increases customer productivity. It allows technicians the opportunity to enhance the customer's original decision to purchase their product with every single customer interaction. Quick and accurate resolution of customer issues using automated processes is essential to sustaining favorable customer relationships. Clearly, calls answered at the first-level are far more desirable for both customer and technician and are far less expensive. When a support staff is armed with tools that enable them to be proactive and effective, your customer contact center begins to perform at higher levels with less need to escalate calls.

Components to include in your processes strategy:

1. **Be informed & accessible:** Technicians equipped with knowledge from all areas can quickly and accurately lead customers through to problem resolution. In turn, customers are more likely to re-purchase your product and advocate it to others. Empowering your technicians with more on-demand, caller-specific information from marketing resources to product information to account status, has a direct impact on the number of calls they can field. The result: increased productivity and increased revenue.



2. **Establish metrics to determine success:** Establish “quantitative” metrics for measuring progress to determine if that course of action is working or whether a change in direction is necessary. Nothing is more discouraging than repeating the same, ineffective practices over and over again.
3. **Balance cost & functional complexity/flexibility:** Properly allocate human, technological and financial resources while setting reasonable expectations for all of them. In most cases, achieving a top-notch customer contact center means planning and allocating resources with future growth and enhancements in mind. Service and support software is more versatile than ever with operational processes accepted in more business contexts. The right solution can unlock the potential within your organization.
4. **Be proactive, not reactive:** Efficiency and effectiveness are the defining characteristics of a proactive customer contact center solution. Scalability is factored in early, workflow is efficient, knowledge is leveraged, turnover is reduced, motivation and productivity are up, and problem elimination strategies keep call volumes in check. Through the application of best practice tools, strategies and techniques, the impact on the resources needed to support new customers, new demands, new systems and new services can be minimized and the associated costs controlled. Plan and invest in a system that will allow for a smooth continuum of operations in the event of personnel departure. In even the best of programs, people will move on, so you’ll want to be prepared.

When all these elements are considered and implemented into a service and support plan, you are creating a win-win situation. On one hand, you create a confident technician who is willing to engage even the most problematic customers. And more importantly, you are creating a satisfied customer who can depend on a consistent and personalized experience every time.

Call (800) 683-0239 to speak to your Anton Systems representative or visit www.antonsystems.com



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