



Are you listening to your customers?

It's more than just call recording

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White Paper - "Are you listening to your customers?"

Traditionally, most service-based businesses have focused on collecting quantitative customer contact metrics. They have built their approach around measuring statistics related to call handling from call volumes to call answer time; average call handle time; abandonment rates and queue time, for example. These measurements are widely accepted across the industry and typically the business will have invested significant sums in enabling their production. Once captured, organisations often report these figures religiously and they invariably become the major indicator to business performance.

However, there are clearly some significant limitations with this approach to quality management. After all, it often only reflects the performance of the automated call distribution (ACD) technology deployed and processes built round it rather than the actual quality of the service delivered. In worst case scenarios, the approach can even lead to agents 'adapting' their approach to call handling by rejecting calls or manipulating the ACD log on, for example, rather than handling the call to the caller's benefit. This leads to management 'by and for' the numbers rather than a focus on the key business driver of delivering enhanced customer satisfaction.

Defining Terms

That's where quality management solutions (QMS), typically defined as suites that combine a variety of tools to measure and monitor the delivery of customer services, come in. QMS, which is widely used for customer interaction across all vertical sectors, provides an additional tier of information that can complement traditional ACD data by providing both real-time and historical qualitative measures of the service delivery. QMS tools can assist in measuring both efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation by providing insight into the customer interaction through multiple channels.

Although most commonly found in call centre arenas, these tools can be used across many business areas that need to understand the quality of the service delivered, from help desks, desk based sales teams to individual operators and call attendants.

In the past, these groups have simply recorded interactions and used the recordings to review performance both in real-time and historically. QMS provides extra value by delivering tools that add meaning and consistency to these reviews. It enables definition of performance criteria and allows consistent measurement against these criteria that can then be specifically tailored to each business process.

Reasons for Call Recording

Historically, QMS has been largely synonymous with call recording. There have been three key drivers for its development.

First, it has been driven by the need to comply with local and regional regulations, often governed by market-specific factors. This may include for example the need to record all interactions or transactions for a number of years.

The second key driver is the requirement to monitor and maintain the quality of customer interactions. Often used across the entire business, from finance, helpdesks, receptionist through to the call centre, the systems record conversations between agents/ employees and customers and measure interactive performance, with the results potentially used for training purposes.

Once captured and stored, the data can be mined and analysed and turned into intelligence that can form the basis of operational reports and ultimately helps drive business strategy. Businesses can segment information and analyse particular sub-sectors as and when required, all calls which resulted in sales, for example, or every call made by a specific agent.

Leading IT and office supplies reseller CCS Media is one company making extensive use of call recording to monitor agent performance. It recently decided to implement the Enghouse Interactive Call Recording software to help monitor calls made by 200 account managers across all 16 of its UK sites and evaluate the performance of those managers.

According to Tony Cooke, technical services sales director, CCS Media,

“we wanted to avoid overloading our existing network with voice data and impacting the quality of service for other applications as a result. The Enghouse Interactive solution was by far the most efficient of those we looked at in this respect. It also allowed us great flexibility in that it enabled us to record calls locally during the day at any one of our 16 sites and then bring those calls back into our core system overnight for review. In short, the system ticked all the key boxes for us – and ultimately the decision to implement it was straightforward.”

Tony Cooke, technical services sales director,
CCS MEDIA

The third and final key driver of call recording is for dispute management. In the event of disputes, calls can be reviewed to see if any errors occurring were made by agents or by customers. Recorded interactions can be indispensable in determining the best approach to resolving the conflict or proposing a valid compromise.

This operational use of call recording also drives several key customer benefits. First, the business is able to better monitor and improve its operational processes, which in itself leads to a better customer experience. Second, call recording can help enhance the agent training process, which in turn helps ensure that calls are better serviced and customer issues more quickly resolved. This helps the business focus on retaining existing customers rather than being compelled to go out into the market looking for new ones. This is important, especially when you bear in mind the widely held belief that it costs five times as much to create a new customer than to keep an existing one.

Third, it is not only the business but the customer also that is better protected as a result of call recording as the truth can be more easily verified as a result of a recording having been made. The recording is a literal transcription of the truth.

Interactions are Changing

Today, the nature of customer interactions is changing. In deploying QMS, most businesses are no longer focused purely on call recording. Instead, there is a move away from voice and towards multi-channel engagement. The ability to capture not just the voice recording but the screen that the operator is viewing as he or she handles a call enables the business to review the whole engagement from input to output and to more easily identify broken processes.

If the agent is giving the customer bad advice, it may be because the information on the agent's screen is out-of-date or otherwise incorrect rather than through any fault of the agent. The business would not be able to establish this simply by reviewing the call recording. However, by being able to simultaneously view the agent's screen, the organisation is able to identify the source of the error.

This can be key in enabling the business to identify discrepancies in order and transaction management, for example. In turn, it enables the business to improve its internal process and drive enhanced productivity as a result. It also helps with dispute resolution as the origin of any errors becomes much clearer to anyone reviewing the interactions.

The third element of today's QMS systems, which is now being increasingly widely used, is scorecarding. Typically used by managers and team leaders within the contact centre, this feature allows them to score staff against a range of criteria such as did the agent greet the customer, did he try to upsell products or was the customer provided with the correct information? It then enables high-level staff to review the information collected and review how individual users performed on specific calls and more generally.

Businesses can also set up the system to enable results to be shared across multiple users to help ensure objective consistency in evaluating agents.

“So how can you as a business focus on ensuring you are implementing the right system and then on achieving optimum benefits from your use of QMS?”

Over the next few pages we take a look at the Top Tips to help you address your quality management issues with case study examples:

- Understand where you can add value to your business
- Look for intuitive systems
- Use the system to pinpoint good service and address bad service
- Consider rolling systems out across the whole business
- Maintain agent happiness
- Focus on improving first call resolution

1. Understand where you can add value to your business

Before you can measure performance, you first need to understand what metrics you are looking to measure. You need to understand your own business before you can realise the value of it. You need to answer critical questions such as what are the key characteristics that indicate success for your particular organisation?

For financial services organisations, for example, the added value is likely to come from the fact that quality management helps them comply with regulations and therefore avoid the financial penalties of failing to do so. For retailers, on the other hand, the value of the approach is more likely to be around its ability to drive enhanced customer service.

The best QMS systems also drive faster ROI by reducing costs. There are several different aspects of this. By using quality management to monitor employees better, identify key strengths and weaknesses earlier in the development cycle and tailor training accordingly you can reduce labour costs while driving up productivity rates at the same time.

Quality management systems can give you a clearer picture of the interaction and engagement between business and customer. This enables organisations to identify broken processes more quickly and easily, allowing them in turn to improve their internal systems and deliver productivity benefits as a direct result.

You also need to look at the cost of the system itself. Quality management systems can be prohibitively expensive. Many SMBs and start-ups struggled to afford the cost of traditional analogue or time domain multiplexer (TDM) systems. The best of the latest systems, however are designed from the ground-up as digitally-based IP products and are therefore more flexible and typically available at much lower price points. When Yellow Cab Cooperative, the largest taxi cab company in San Francisco, moved from an analogue to IP telephony system, the existing call recording software was not able to record calls on an IP telephone system. Enghouse Interactive Call Recording software was selected to replace it.

According to Tomas Smith, IT and communications manager for Yellow Cab Cooperative,

“our call recording needs were simple. I needed a system that reliably records calls, efficiently archives recordings and makes it easy to retrieve recordings when necessary. Call Recording was the ideal solution for Yellow Cab.”

Tomas Smith, IT and communications manager
YELLOW CAB COOPERATIVE,

The Yellow Cab contact centre answers approximately 300,000 calls per month and is open 24 hours a day every day of the year. The information collected in these calls is therefore critical to the business – from pick-up times to addresses and customer information. Indeed, call recordings are widely used both to verify information and ensure that the Yellow Cab team is delivering the best customer service possible.

Ultimately, though the ROI you achieve as a business will also depend to a large extent on how effectively you can integrate your QMS with your overall contact centre or operator console solutions. There is value from deploying QMS alongside these solutions but the real ROI benefit is achieved when QMS is integrated with them. So you should look for systems that offer this kind of integration to drive value and ideally have a roadmap that drives tighter integration over time. This in turn is likely to lead to a richer flow of data between systems, allowing organisations to achieve better data mining and enabling them ultimately to develop actionable intelligence that drives their business approach.

2. Look for intuitive systems

If a business is to get full value from a quality management system, it needs to be simple to install and also intuitive to use. This drives a lower total cost of ownership.

This was certainly the case for wholesale power generation company, NRG Energy, who deployed Enhouse Interactive Call Recording following a bad experience with a recording solution that required telephony cards. NRG has enjoyed a lower cost of ownership with Call Recording because of its lower cost per licence and because of the complete flexibility in determining how many phones to record.

According to Sally Phillips, Telecom Manager at NRG:

“With our previous system, we had a technician on site for three days trying to get their system up and running. The ability to set up and use the [Call Recording] software within an hour was astonishing. It was a wonderful shock to see how easy it was.”

Sally Phillips, Telecom Manager
NRG

In addition, solutions that are easy to use ensure the agent is able to explore, to try out new features and functions and realise the full value of the system without having to rely on the skills of technical experts in order to tap into that value. Remember that the easier the system is to use, the faster and more effective your agents will be in leveraging it, and the better their customer service is likely to be as a direct result.

Enhouse Interactive Call Recording has proven to be easy to use at NRG Energy. As Phillips explains:

“Our power marketing employees like [Call Recording] because it is easy to search for phone calls. For example, a trader who wants to review the details of a transaction can search by outbound number, inbound number or they can search by time of the call, for example, looking at calls they handled between 9.30 and 10.30 a.m.”

At the same time, because the latest call recording and quality management software is intuitive to use and learn, users of these kinds of solutions across all types of businesses no longer need to worry about one or two technically able employees leaving the company and taking their skills and expertise out of the business.

3. Use the system to pinpoint good service and address bad service

The best QMS solutions enable you to pinpoint examples of good and bad customer service from within your internal team. You can use both audio and screen capture to monitor staff that are performing well and use the recordings as part of your training programme as examples of best practice.

4. Consider rolling systems out across the whole business

With the latest IP-based QMS solutions, you can be much more flexible with how you deploy the QMS solution and what you use it for. Traditionally most businesses have just used QMS with front office operations and often just within one department with a specific urgent need. Now they can extend their call recording and screen capture capability from the front to the back office, effectively helping to drive a more connected business. While with the latest IP or networking capability, you can extend QMS across the whole business and drive enhanced ROI as a result.

5. Maintain agent happiness

It is widely accepted in the customer service arena that the happier customer service agents are the better the quality of service the business delivers and ultimately the more satisfied the organisations' customers are over time.

Please see ContactBabel's UK Contact Centre Decision-Makers Guide 2014, available to [download now](#) to learn more.

Bottom line – a happy agent equals a happy customer. Agents are typically more motivated if they feel that their work and level of performance is being reviewed and also that any issues that they have are being addressed as a result of the monitoring process.

6. Focus on improving first call resolution

First call resolution should be a key target of any customer focused organisation. So you need to make sure that you choose a QMS solution that offers you an opportunity to achieve this. The best such solutions do this by enabling agents to enhance their call handling techniques and by providing greater insight into their call management together with the chance to improve it through tailored training programmes.

By getting better at handling customer interactions through focusing on what they do well and rectifying poor performance in other areas, agents can drive up first call resolution rates while helping ensure that the business retains a greater proportion of its customers as a direct result.

In Conclusion

Today, the latest breed of sophisticated quality monitoring systems are finally heralding an end to the era of quantitative customer contact metrics. Today's solutions are also far more than just call recording systems, used primarily for purposes of training, compliance and dispute management. With the addition of screen capture and scorecarding functionality, quality management systems are no longer the poor relation of the customer interaction suite, but are widely regarded as a key part of the portfolio, helping to drive enhanced productivity, customer satisfaction and even competitive edge for businesses across all sectors of the economy.

About Enghouse Interactive

Enghouse Interactive develops and supplies the widest range of customer contact solutions on the market through an extensive network of value-added partners. Enghouse Interactive's integrated suite of solutions includes multi-channel contact centre, self-service, attendant operator consoles and workforce optimisation. These solutions enable organisations to classify and respond to customers in the way that they want: quickly, efficiently and successfully, with minimal effort.



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