



**Seven strategies
for dealing with
queues**

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24th January 2013

The contact centre industry
is worth £21 billion
to the UK economy



Expectations of the industry are changing

- 41% of leaders expect the competition for customers to intensify this year
- 44% see retention as crucial in helping their business to achieve growth
- 65% of leaders agree that customer service is now the key market differentiator
- It is expected that customer churn will hit turnover by 11% over the next three years – costing over £2billion

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The Seven Factors of Caller Tolerance

- Degree of Motivation:
 - Is the reason for the call a question, a simple problem, a complex problem or a request for a change?
 - Is the reason for the call routine or an emergency?
- Availability of Substitutes
 - Fax, Email, Chat, In-person, IVR options, Other
 - If the customer encounters a busy signal, or hears an announcement indicating a wait time that is not to their liking, the customer will quickly consider alternative contact channels. If these channels have proven to be response, user-friendly and effective, the customer is likely to choose one of these alternatives.
 - It is always advisable to capture and compare contact channel volumes; this task is especially critical when call volumes are high.
- Competition's Service Level
 - If your competition can provide, or be perceived to provide, a higher Service Level, the customer may decide to shift their business to your competition.



The Seven Factors of Caller Tolerance

- Level of Expectations
 - Reputation for service
 - Level of service based on previous experiences
 - Contracted Level of Service, i.e., Platinum, Gold, Silver, Bronze
- Time Available
 - How much time does the caller have to wait?
- Who's paying for the call?
 - Long distance call?
 - Free-phone telephone number?
 - Telephone number billed to the customer?
- Human Behavior
 - Good Day/Bad Day?
 - Needs a cup of coffee; a bathroom break; has to go to a meeting; is interrupted by a friend or a colleague at the same time they are making a call



Creative staffing strategies

Actions to consider

- Home working initiatives
- 4*10 weekly shift patterns
- Staff-sharing alliances
 - Other departments
 - Other companies

Accurate forecasting and planning for busy periods

- Access to real time accurate information is critical
- The use of exponential smoothing for accuracy
 - A technique that can be applied to time series data, either to produce smoothed data for presentation, or to make forecasts. The time series data itself is a sequence of observations.
 - The observed phenomenon may be an essentially random process, or it may be an orderly, but noisy, process.
 - Whereas in the simple moving average the past observations are weighted equally, exponential smoothing assigns exponentially decreasing weights over time.

Triage incoming calls

Triage in the healthcare environment is the process of determining the priority of patients' treatments based on the severity of their condition

- Use call triage to determine the needs of the caller and gather information and rapidly transfer them.
- When the caller is connected to an agent the information is also relayed so that the customer does not have to repeat anything and enjoys better service as a result. The information can also be used to pull further details from a CRM or data management system negating the need to ask further questions which the caller has already answered, repeatedly.
- The contact centre also saves agent time because they have no need to spend time asking questions and can get on with giving the caller what they want; first contact resolution and a truly integrated caller experience.

Blending calls, emails and outbound calls

- Use the service level expectations of customers to determine handling priority e.g. Calls answered in 20 seconds, emails handled in 4 hours.
- Proactively inform customers about relevant, timely information before they make an inbound contact.
- Use automated systems to save even more agent time.

Using multi-skilling to increase your agent pool

- Identify situations that have some agents idle when other areas are swamped with demand
 - Review cause and implement remedy
- Implement across the organisation in conjunction with call triage and staff-sharing alliances

Call avoidance techniques

- Proactive contact
 - Minimising need for routine call enquiries
- Inbound automation for routine transactions
 - Preserve agent capacity for more complex enquiries
- Channel shift to email and web to have more control over service levels
 - Enables greater flexibility and accessibility

Focus on first contact resolution

- Prevent unnecessary repeat calls
- Improve the customer experience
- Identify the best metrics for your operation
 - AHT v FCR

How technology can help - Workforce Optimisation

right people: right place: right time

- **Forecasting**
 - with exponential smoothing and ability to add known events e.g. marketing promotions, annual payments etc.
- **Intra-day optimisation- don't manage the contact centre a day late.**
 - Use the information available during the day to modify training, shifts, breaks, additional skills, overtime etc.
- **Scheduling**
 - save valuable time translating demand into the most effective shift patterns

How technology can help – Callback

- Smoothes peak demand
- Improves the caller experience
- Increases occupancy
- Extreme demand ready
- Efficiently manage the process

In Summary

- Think the unthinkable
- Technology can help!
- Take time to design a process that's sustainable
- Put yourself in your customers shoes

	First impression	Wait time	Complete my transactions	Exit the contact center
Core	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal greeting or automated attendant that directs caller to the appropriate queue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pleasant music with intermittent announcements asking for continued patience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rep greets customer with "How can I help?" Transaction completed accurately, quickly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rep asks, "Is there anything more we can do for you today?" Rep thanks customer using customer name
Differentiated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greeted with direct access to a knowledgeable agent (especially VIP customers) A short and simple automated attendant menu ALWAYS with an option to talk to a human and ALWAYS with self-serve, IVR options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estimated hold-time with option to leave callback number Priority queuing for VIP customers to minimize wait time Pleasant – even entertaining – on-hold source 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rep offers suggestions when appropriate Customer never asked for the same information twice Comprehensive understanding of customer history across all channels When service is not met (when a great customer has to wait too long or an issue cannot be immediately resolved) send a goodwill offer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customers are sent a follow-up e-mail or provided with an 800 number for feedback with an incentive to respond Any open issues are "followed up" as promised in a timely manner by phone, e-mail, fax or other methods of the customer's choice
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CTI IVR Automated attendant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Priority queuing Callback queuing and routing Intelligent, skills-based routing On-hold source/ announcement flexibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unified agent desktop for 360-degree customer view Multi-channel, universal queue Analytics for understanding preferences and trends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process and technology for feedback and capture Agent empowered and trained to interact with customers across product lines or seamless escalation process





Any
questions?