

BRS Outlook

A Sales and Marketing Publication from The Business Research ♦ Specialists

Issue 6

Contact Centre Top 10 Trends

#1 Increased proportion of customer contacts being handled by the contact centre

Currently over 80% of all customer interactions with organisations they are customers of are handled by contact centres. This percentage increases year on year. A decreasing number of customer interactions are handled by face to face or field force employees. Thus the contact centre is becoming an organisation's most strategic business unit.

Contact centres (other than internet transactions) will continue to be the most cost efficient service delivery channel in an organisation.

#2 Increased responsibility for revenue generation

Contact centres will become the primary channel for revenue generation activities for organisations. The Australian contact centre industry currently generates about AU\$45billion in revenue annually.

Contact centres (other than internet transactions) will continue to be the most cost efficient revenue generation channel in an organisation.

#3 Resolution, Speed and Knowledge need to increase

Customers' satisfaction/engagement is most often driven by 1) first call resolution 2) answering calls quickly and 3) knowledgeable agents. All contact centre configurations must ensure these three drivers of the customer experience are optimised.

#4 Higher reliance on self service channels to deliver service

Driven by the coming of Generation Y customers (under 31 years of age), increased internet usage by all demographics and the need to be more efficient in service delivery, organisations will need to provide many more channel options for customers to make contact. These channels in particular should include internet, web chat and speech recognition. Email is still an underperforming channel for B2C interactions.

#5 Virtualisation of the contact centre

Contact centre technology platforms will move to be IP based allowing for the virtualisation of contact centres. Virtualisation of the contact centre enables Remote Agents (agents based in an office near customer or employee demographics) or Home-based Agents (agents working from home, anywhere).

Remote and home based agent programmes allow access to regional, rural and disabled workers, otherwise potentially excluded from the workforce.

#6 Increased use of outsourcing and off-shoring

There is increased pressure on organisations to assess which organisations (themselves or a third party) are best

to provide back office and front office services. The current economic downturn has increased the pressure for organisations to reduce costs and look to outsource (typically a 15-20% efficiency saving) or off-shore.

#7 Increased flexible work conditions

Flexible work conditions are currently the most effective strategy for agent retention. Flexible rosters, shifts, break times will become more prevalent as a recruitment offering and a retention initiative (despite work-life balance currently losing importance under the pressure of the GFC).

#8 Interest in expert conferencing: presence

Organisations may use SIP based protocol (Session Initiated Protocol) that allows the whole organisation to be connected to the contact centre platform. Experts across the organisation can log on and be 'present' meaning they are available to take complicated or subject expert calls where they are 'conferenced in' to a call taken by a frontline agent. At other times overflow calls may be directed to other employees who are not typically working in the contact centre. Thus the notion of Presence dissolves the four concrete walls of the contact centre and allows the whole organisation to be service focused.

#9 Back office and Front office Merge

Increasingly back office administrative functions will be automated and come under the responsibility of the frontline call centre agent. The service function has at least 14 defined sub-processes of which only about one third are handled by the contact centre. Due to the general inefficiency of the end to end service interaction process plus the varied service levels provided at each sub-process, the merging of back and front office will be a key focus for organisations in the next few years.

#10 Greening of the contact centre

Currently about one quarter of organisations have a dedicated Environmental Policy for the contact centre. Only about 1 in 10 actively measure and offset their carbon footprint. The interest in the Green Contact Centre is likely to increase based on government, employee and organisational pressures to reduce energy consumption. Contact centres, particularly virtual contact centres (home based agents) are seen as an effective means to reduce an organisation's carbon footprint.

Source: from the latest Aus/NZ contact centre benchmarking report

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