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# How to deliver a better pizza

It's not just about the food; It's about the entire customer experience

By John Bardawill



don't have to tell you that agents are the life-blood of a contact center. The value of an organization's customer experience relationship is directly related to, and highly influenced by, the quality of the customer-agent interaction.

So the end goal, obviously, is to ensure a consistently positive and high value customer-agent interaction. Sounds easy, right? Well, not really.

## Take out or delivery?

Take a simple example like ordering a pizza. The customer states that they would like to order a pizza for delivery. The agent asks what size, what toppings, etc., and finally, 'take out or delivery'? It's a small thing, but if the agent had noted the customer's request upfront, it would make for a better interaction, and potentially a less expensive call in terms of talk time.

It is commonly assumed that if an organization has a good recruiting process and first-rate training and incentive programs, their representatives will be able to deliver a positive customer experience. But it's really not that simple. Even with all of these key pieces in place, you will still have good agents interpreting organizational mandates and training differently, resulting in vastly different customer experiences.

Many organizations focus their attention on call structure, but this alone will not maximize the customer-agent relationship. In addition to call structure, organizations should be focusing on the relationship building skills of the agent, and the quality of the interaction between the customer and the agent.

## 3 Requirements for improving the customer-agent relationship

### 1. A clear understanding of organizational objectives down to the agent level

While many organizations have objectives for their agents, often we find that they do not align fully with the organization's overall objectives. Every agent should understand the organizational objectives, and be held accountable for them. To accomplish this, their personal objectives must be tied directly to the overall organizational objectives. This provides agents with clear direction and the ability to measure their own success in supporting the organization.

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## 2. A well-resourced contact center that is able to support the required change

Contact centers must be appropriately resourced to effectively change. But I am not talking about having the latest in technology, generous staff levels, and a healthy budget. At a minimum, the following must be in place to ensure an organization is capable of making changes:

- an appropriate supervisor to agent ratio (1:12-15) to manage change
- a real-time reporting system to ensure ongoing effective measurement of key performance indicators
- a training budget that allows for sales and service training on an ongoing basis
- the ability to evaluate progress and provide ongoing communication on the state of the change

## 3. A methodology to ensure change at the agent level

There must be a methodology in place to manage the agents through the change process. To do this the organization must:

- Develop and implement a training program based on a redesigned future state call structure. This will help to ensure that current agent call behaviors change to match the requirements of the new call structure and objectives.
- Redesign the coaching model to reinforce the newly defined call structure. Greater focus will need to be put on the amount and quality of coaching as most organizations are coaching in a static environment and not in an evolving one. Typically, coaching training for supervisors is also necessary.
- Ensure that KPI reporting reflects the new state. This includes ensuring that the measures being tracked are the right measures, that they are highly visible to the agents, and that they are reviewed on a daily basis by all levels of the contact centre, from management to agents.
- Establish optimal performance management. In any substantial change management process, change does not come immediately, and does not happen “evenly”. A tightly managed process is required to ensure that things progress positively and that gains are clearly visible while set-backs are minimized. Best practice dictates the development of a real time process that allows for corrective action “in the moment”, with daily coaching and performance management reviews to determine how teams of agents are progressing.

Developing better results in a contact center environment is about change management. It requires a structured approach to transitioning individuals, teams, and organizations from the current state to a desired one. To accomplish this successfully, a contact center must first redefine its customer-agent relationship, and then provide the necessary support to ensure a successful transition. This does not mean that just one thing has to change, but rather a number of things need to change in an aligned and focused manner to ensure success. It's not easy, but nothing worthwhile ever is!

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