

The three reasons why callers see red

ONE three people prefer the phone for customer service yet nearly half (48pc) also find it the most frustrating.

The figures are from a survey of 2,000 UK consumers by Econsultancy.

Respondents said the telephone was three times more frustrating than email and eight times more frustrating than live chat. One in eight consumers said they would be happy to pay a fee in return for a superior level of service.

Econsultancy said its research sought to unearth consumer views on multichannel customer service.

It says the findings provide a clear picture of how brands are struggling to coordinate channels and eliminate customer frustration.

Despite the phone being the most established channel for customer service, 61pc failed to identify it as the most effective channel when trying to contact a UK brand. When asked about the reasons for phone frustration, respondents cited queues, automated responses and premium rate numbers.

BT's MD of customer service, Warren Buckley, said at an event

run by Econsultancy: "Customer service is an area where businesses, in a competitive marketplace, can really stand out and differentiate themselves.

"This research shows that while many are still lagging behind, there is a growing number of savvy companies that, instead of viewing customer service as a cost centre, see it as a way for them to excel and increase brand loyalty."

Email was identified as the preferred channel for customer service by 44pc of survey respondents and was also voted the second most effective. However, it was awarded second place, after the phone, for the most frustrating channel, highlighting that there is still room for improvement.

Respondents were also asked to identify which industries provided the best level of service.

Retailers were top at 47pc. Other industries fared less well: banks (16pc), travel (15pc), automotive (10pc), utilities (8pc) and telecoms (4pc). Among the companies cited as providing outstanding levels of customer service were Amazon, Tesco, Virgin and BT.

Fuss-free card payments without the pain

Encoded now offers real-time graphical reporting on its range of card payment products. It means, says the company, that users can adapt and improve according to customers' needs.

Encoded offers payment services via the web, IVR, live agent and stored/recurring payments. And it has offers a mobile phone payment app.

It says automating payments is secure, reliable and costs much less than a call handled by an agent. And outsourcing of automated payments aids in adhering to PCI DSS rules.

Encoded's sales director, Robert Crutchington, said: "The PCI DSS regulations have forced automated services to evolve and adapt to the ever changing business environment. Now that PCI DSS regulations are becoming common-place, businesses can save vast amounts of money by outsourcing their automated payments and thus reducing their PCI DSS scope..."

CALL CENTRE EXPO STAND NO. H41

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Don't dictate, just guide them

CallScripter has announced its integrated Agent Scripting product with Genesys Interaction Workspace (IW8) and Genesys Agent Desktop (GAD 7.6), as an alternative to Genesys' own Agent Scripting (GAS) product.

CallScripter is priced in the UK at £700 per concurrent

agent. The company says it is focused not on dictating what an agent should say, but providing a framework upon which to build personalised, interesting and appropriate conversations with customers.

CALL CENTRE EXPO STAND NO. STAND G24

FRONT COVER PROMOTION

Using all of the quality monitoring tools at your disposal

by **Kevin Burns**
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LONG ago, call recording was regarded as an expensive solution meant for only the largest of companies and call centres. Today, the technology is far from cost-prohibitive, but, despite the transformation, many SMEs may still harbour the belief that price remains a barrier to entry. Additionally, SME call centres may think advanced interaction management capabilities, beyond just simple call capture, remain unattainable. In reality, for call centres taking the time to explore the options available, solution sophistication and affordability need not be mutually exclusive.

At a fundamental level, most modern recording solutions appear to provide much the same functionality as it relates to call capture, storage and retrieval. However, that seemingly basic capability holds the potential for far greater value when bolstered by an advanced feature set. The ability to securely review, share and add text-based notes to recordings significantly enhances the utility of this valuable business intelligence. Can users organise calls in a way that makes sense to them? Can a wide range of search criteria be easily input to expedite call retrieval? These features simply aren't inherent to all solutions.

Those are just some core functionality aspects to consider. For SME call centres, there are many other advantages relative to advanced capabilities that should be evaluated, along with other factors such as overall adaptability, versatility, reliability and scalability. It is in these areas that many call centres already utilising call recording may be getting short changed.

Affordability should not equate to low quality or diminished functionality. SMEs have the same feature requirements as their counterparts in the larger enterprise space; it is their budgetary constraints that differ. These features include the ability to monitor calls live or automatically, coach agents via integrated instant messaging, administer customisable agent evaluations, append ad-hoc notes about agent performance and generate quality and resource utilisation reporting. Even the option of synchronised desktop screen recording, which enables a more complete view of agent activity, is a completely reasonable feature expectation for today's SME customers.

Quality monitoring solutions should be subject to continual improvements and innovations, driven by factors such as technological advancements, regulatory legislation and internal organisational growth. For example, as SIP (Session Initiation Protocol) and virtualisation enable reduced

costs and maximisation of infrastructure resources, call centres should be certain a solution can properly support these advancing technologies. Similarly, Financial Services Authority (FSA) regulations and Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI-DSS) compliance are high priority concerns for today's call centres, and a viable recording solution should be capable of competently addressing these obligations.

Finally, a recording solution's ability to seamlessly integrate with the business communications platform, predictive diallers, ACD and other call centre applications – as well as CRM applications, such as Salesforce.com and Microsoft Dynamics – can enhance the full value the organisation will realise.

The important point is that SME call centres should not be forced to compromise by paying too much or settling for a weaker solution that doesn't meet their current and future business requirements. The right solution choice can provide all of these robust tools and features in a complete, integrated platform, and at an amazingly affordable price.

● For information regarding the OAISYS call recording and call centre management solution portfolio, please email kevin_burns@oaisys.com or visit www.oaisys.co.uk.