



Call centre service standards declared a failure

In a widely reported UK survey earlier this year by internet market research firm One Poll, it emerged that 6 out of 10 people had switched companies because of a poor level of customer service. Last week another widely reported survey by Genesys Lab, this time of 16 countries, showed that poor customer service costs \$338.5 billion per year in lost business.

So what is going so very badly wrong in our customer service call centres?

Radical call centre experts Stuart Corrigan and Ron Skea believe these grim statistics have, ironically, actually been created by the very measures that call centres put in place to improve their performance.

They have been studying poorly performing call centres across the UK and Europe for 10 years. They claim that every blue chip organisation they have studied are using metrics, measures and design that are actually causing their call centres to fail. Now they want to address the problem.

As Stuart Corrigan, who is MD of Vanguard Scotland, said “Call centre managers are continuously taught that in order to optimise performance, call centres must manage their staff based on productivity measures (time per call, number of calls and wrap up time). What managers don’t seem to see is the poor service and high cost associated with this design. They genuinely want to improve and they are trying but the methods they are using just keep making it worse and they appear blind to the cause.”

The call centre experts also claimed that it’s common for up to 60% of call centre demand to be caused by a failure of the systems and processes of the organisation itself. Ron Skea said “When customers don’t get what they want when they call a contact centre, they inevitably end up calling back. This time they are angry and the calls take longer. So now the contact centre is busy with all the call backs and staff and customers are unhappy. When managers dump the thinking rooted in industry norms, customer service improves and costs fall dramatically.”

Here’s an example. Skea saw this first hand during his time as operations director at the VELUX contact centre. During this time he stopped all the usual metrics and functional design widely espoused as industry standards. Within a two year period away from these metrics they achieved:

- 12 functional units combined into a single point of contact for all customer transactions
- One-stop capability in excess of 94% (i.e. call dealt with by the first person to pick up)
- Highest customer satisfaction ratings of all VELUX sales companies in Europe
- Employee turnover and absence rates less than half the industry norm
- Call centre agent productivity increased by 30%
- Independent research found highest levels of employee engagement of any organisation studied
- Operating costs reduced by in excess of £1,000,000
- Average wait time reduced to 8 seconds
- Overall staffing 30% lower than would have been without systems intervention
- Failure demand and waste reduced dramatically

Having proved that their theories get impressive results in call centres like VELUX, Eon, Fujitsu, Standard Life, HBOS and many others, Corrigan and Skea have now released their method for purchase from the Vanguard Scotland website in the hopes of improving customer service for everyone. You can get a free taster of the method in a new 7-part series at www.callcentre-services.co.uk/