



# **OPTIMISING CALL CENTRE PERFORMANCE**

An integrated approach  
to streamlining the  
customer journey  
and reducing costs



## WHITE PAPER SUMMARY

In the current economic climate, managers of call centres face a dilemma. In the drive to make the best use of restricted budgets, they must maximise call centre efficiency. At the same time, to retain customers in a fiercely competitive environment, high service levels must be maintained.

This white paper shows how it is possible to achieve both increased efficiency and improved customer satisfaction.

By optimising the customer journey and influencing customer behaviour, call centres can reduce agent workload and cost per contact without any compromise on service. Practical examples show how leading organisations have achieved this through an integrated approach that enhances every step of the customer journey.

# SYNTHESISING YOUR TECHNOLOGY, PROCESSES AND PEOPLE

Investment in sophisticated call-handling technology and strategic use of automation free your agents to handle the exceptions that genuinely demand their intervention and skills.

Too often, however, this technology could be made to work harder to reduce agent workload and improve the customer journey. Certainly, before planning any further investment in equipment, call centre managers should investigate how to maximise return on their existing investment. Typical of the questions to ask are:

- How could you modify your IVR system to off-load a higher proportion of routine processes from your agents? Could it answer a broader range of frequently asked questions, for example?
- How could you influence customers' behaviour to reduce their dependency on agents and equip them to make informed buying decisions?
- How does traffic flow through the call centre? Which areas of your call centre have the highest call transfer rates; where are the bottlenecks; at which point(s) are customers most likely to abandon the call?

Off-loading tedious routine enquiries from call-handlers also helps you to retain key staff and protect your return on investment (ROI) in training and development.

## Putting the theory into practice...

### REDUCING AGENT WORKLOAD



Before undertaking an analysis of its call flow and call management processes, Germany's biggest theme park, Heide Park, handled just 14% of calls on its IVR system. A re-designed system using existing resources but with improved routing plans, menus and scripts now handles 63% of all calls. As a result, agents can spend more time selling tickets instead of answering questions.

### REDUCING CALLER ABANDONMENT



Following a review of its IVR, the UK's leading vehicle glass repair and replacement company Autoglass reduced its caller journey time by 65%. It was a low cost project that required no additional investment. However the impact was significant: agent time is now deployed more effectively; IT capacity is no longer stretched; customer satisfaction has improved; and the number of sales opportunities reaching agents has soared.

# TURNING JOURNEY TIME INTO 'WOW' TIME

Many IVR systems have unexploited potential for cross-selling and up-selling to callers. Provided it is not excessive, journey time represents a valuable opportunity to increase customer awareness of your products and services. Using this otherwise dead time capitalises on the marketing and PR initiatives that have already captured the customer's interest. Once again, while this is good for the business, handled sensitively it is also good for customers; they are equipped with helpful information that influences their buying choices.

However, taking a one-size-fits-all approach to on-hold messaging is a blunt instrument. A generic message may or may not appeal to the individual caller. In contrast, journey time messaging (or 'micro-targeting') allows you to identify specific call types and communicate relevant and powerful messages.

As micro-target messages are fed into the caller journey, you can guarantee they are heard by every relevant caller. When done subtly, the caller is often unaware of the underlying message but benefits from being kept fully up-to-date with accurate information.

## Putting the theory into practice...

Using micro-target messaging, Madame Tussauds increased advanced ticket sales from 16% to 53%. The London Eye and Littlewoods enjoy similar benefits. It's a sophisticated technique that's now being adopted across many sectors.



# THE TOTAL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

In seeking to optimise the customer journey and influence their behaviour, you need to look beyond your IVR system to how your customer interacts with your organisation across multiple touch points. Do these other communication channels support your call centre or are they undermining its performance?

## INBOUND COMMUNICATIONS

What other channels besides telephoning do your customers use? Your website and email are the obvious examples. How much unwanted phone traffic are you generating from your failure to control the communication across other channels such as email and web? Do you ensure all channels are consistent in style and objective?

## OUTBOUND COMMUNICATIONS

What other communications do you have with your customers? Do you follow up calls with a written response, or perhaps you use SMS? Do you still entrust the production of these important communications to your call centre agents? If so, could shortfalls in their writing or messaging skills actually be increasing your workload, as confused customers call for clarification?

You could make better use of your agents' time and ensure a consistent approach by equipping them with professionally written materials that increase first contact resolution. Once again, you would be uniting increased efficiency with improved customer satisfaction.

## Putting the theory into practice...



Dell ensures its emails, web pages, SMS messages and IVR recordings provide a joined up, efficient, positive experience for its customers, whatever their language.

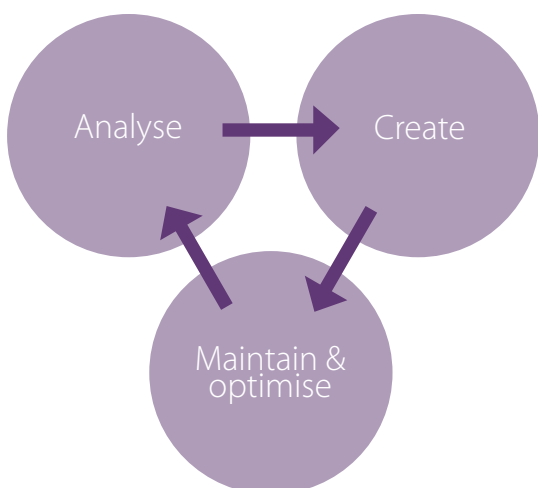


The global toy manufacturer LEGO® uses a library of professionally crafted pre-written letters to send to fans, packed with LEGO® language.

# BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

This white paper outlines the ways in which you can optimise your customer's journey to reduce contact centre costs while enhancing service. It doesn't have to be 'either/or': either increased efficiency, or improved customer satisfaction. By influencing customer behaviour, you ensure the two goals are completely compatible.

However, there is no simple, one-off fix. Optimising the customer journey requires rigorous analysis of the underlying call management structure, IVR menus and routing plans as part of a continuous process that comprises:



## **ANALYSING YOUR CALL CENTRE MANAGEMENT PROCESSES**

- Define the business objectives your call centre must support
- Map the customer journey: how do customers behave now and how do you need them to behave?
- Investigate pain points and areas of call abandonment

## **CREATING THE SOLUTION**

- Design and implement menus and routing plans capable of influencing caller behaviour
- Research and write effective scripts that motivate your caller
- Produce professional recordings that encourage the caller to have confidence in your system, and thus work with it

## **MAINTAINING AND OPTIMISING THE SOLUTION**

- Test your solution and continue to adapt and modify as required
- Identify seasonal changes in call flows and create solutions that adapt to that demand
- Keep refreshing your solution, let it evolve with your business, and keep measuring its performance

# 7 DOS AND DON'TS FOR IMPROVING CALL CENTRE EFFICIENCY

**1** **Do encourage customers to self-serve** wherever possible. The positioning of a self-serve option in the customer journey and how it is phrased significantly impact take-up rates.

**2** **Do remember having professionally scripted and recorded messages is not an instant cure-all.** It is the design and structure behind the customer journey that will make a tangible difference to call centre efficiency and customer satisfaction.

**3** **Do prepare for the worst case** and ensure your IVR system can handle it. As news of Michael Jackson's death broke The O2 faced a tidal wave of calls from saddened fans. Fast footwork using pre-planned emergency slots and re-designed menus meant that its IVR system took much of the pressure off agents' shoulders.

**4** **Don't regard call abandonment as necessarily a bad thing.** What information could you provide to encourage callers to hang up and leave the lines free for more critical calls?

**5** **Don't assume you need to invest in new technology** to improve efficiency. Ask yourself if an expert could help you maximise what you've already got.

**6** **Don't let your IVR remain static.** Your business changes, your products change, your customer behaviour changes and the seasons change – make sure the IVR is flexible enough to handle the real world.

## Finally...

**7** **Do make sure your IVR helps your agents sell.** Be inspired by the UK's leading theme parks: Thorpe Park made sure that every caller knew about its Stealth 1.1, Europe's fastest launch coaster; Alton Towers launched a special Halloween IVR, complete with blood-curdling screams and tales of terror. In both cases the IVR helped agents sell tickets.

## About **adexchange** media Ltd

Since 1997, Adexchange has been helping clients to lower their operational costs by influencing customer behaviour. Adexchange typically reduces agent workload by up to 30%.

Adexchange adds value to the exchange with the customer wherever an organisation handles large volumes of calls. Some of the world's most successful businesses in sectors as diverse as leisure, media, automotive and consumer electronics industries rely on Adexchange to optimise their call centre operations.

Find out how Adexchange could help you to maximise efficiency and ROI in your call centre.

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### **About the author**

Margaret Cain, MCIM, Chartered Marketer, FRSA, helps organisations ranging from not-for-profits to blue chip companies to communicate effectively with their customers, clients, partners and employees.

"I wanted our callers to press the right buttons – and reach the right agent. Adexchange re-designed our routing plan, re-scripted the words and supplied a great voice. Now my agents spend less time transferring calls. Adexchange really delivered."

**Littlewoods**