

Thank you for holding.

Making the Shift from Call Management to *Experience Management*



A TASKE Technology White Paper

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TASKE[®]
TECHNOLOGY

Welcome to the Jungle

Before trudging into the call center jungle, it's important to step back and see the whole forest. In the world of inbound call centers – and primarily CRM centers – too often, we dismiss the people on the calls as merely callers. They are customers. They are consumers. Most importantly, they are people who feel that a promise has been broken. A brand promise.

Let's backtrack a bit.

A brand is a source of a promise to the consumer. It promises relevant differentiated benefits. A brand is the intangible culmination of:

1. The consumer relationship (Consumer buys company's product or service)
2. The actual promise to the consumer (Company promises meet the expectations of consumer)
3. The unique source of products and services (Company has established identity as trustworthy to consumer)
4. The sum total of each customer's experience with your organization (Company supports consumer throughout the term of the relationship)

Like any relationship, the key to longevity and true loyalty is **TRUST**. And the easiest way to maintain a trust is to follow through with promises made. Everything an organization does should be focused on enhancing delivery against its brand's promise. Or why bother getting out of bed in the morning.

Here's where it gets relevant: The call center is an extension of a company's brand, as important, if not more so, than the products they sell. The experience and interaction a customer has with a product or service affects their brand loyalty. The call center, be it for support, updates, information, maintenance or other product/service specific function, isn't just a vehicle for anchoring the brand promise. **IT IS PART OF THE PROMISE.** It's as much a part of the brand promise as the TV spot, storefront, sales people, packaging, shopping bag and anticipation of unwrapping and use.

Yes this stance, more than most attempts in the past, blurs the line between marketing and customer service to almost indistinguishable. And maybe that's not a bad thing. If marketing's purpose is to increase profitability by attracting consumers, then why is customer service after the fact a different entity, rather than the next logical stage in the consumer-company relationship? The call center is a marketing tool – the last weapon in the marketing arsenal to not only retain their hard-earned market share of consumers, but to enrich the experience and build a deeper loyalty. Call centers as lead generators? Not too long ago, turning inbound calls into proactive outbound leads seemed like too much to hope for.

We really should stop calling them call centers - they're interaction centers. And those aren't just calls - they're experiences. How a call center deals with the customer's experience will determine the lasting impression of the company's brand. And that's where Contact can help. Being able to monitor, visualize and react instantly to customer satisfaction, first contact resolution rates, agent utilization and aggregate call center performance – typically the TOP 5 KPIs that executives need to keep tabs on – and how they directly affect brand loyalty seems like a must have for any company.

This fragile balancing act of the relationship with the consumer and profitability is at the heart of a company's ability to extend the call management efforts into new and exciting waters. And that means focusing on the people on the line.

It's not you, it's me

They're the frontline of defense for your brand. The hail mary pass to secure the brand promise and extend the relationship between the company and the customer. That's the basic philosophy of customer relationship management (CRM) - it stresses that agents should consider every communication with a customer as an opportunity to maintain the customer's loyalty with the goal of generating even more revenue. As companies recognize that outbound cold call telemarketing isn't the only way to make sales, they are asking agents to sell products and services in addition to handling problems and transcribing orders. At the same time, agents who are primarily involved with sales are following up with customers to make sure they're satisfied and to uncover potential problems that could lead these customers to go elsewhere.

This relationship can only be extended when the efforts of the agent actually benefit the customer and enforce the brand promise. Trying to force a new sale on a dissatisfied customer is a lose-lose situation. Kind of like asking for an increase in your allowance after crashing dad's car. It doesn't end well.


So. How do we go from "caller" to "happy customer?" Let's define the barriers to a healthy relationship.



Barriers to Customer Satisfaction

- Not enough agents available - inability to forecast peaks and valleys leads to long waits and increased abandonment**
- Poor agent training/performance in resolution - inability to monitor calls in real-time leads to multiple forwards, long waits and frustration**
- At the mercy of the agent - inability for supervisors to intervene leads to customers feeling captive and their inevitable anger and frustration**

It's no surprise that these top 3 barriers are echoed in the top 9 challenges for call centers:



Top 9 Challenges for Call Centers

- Unable to manage contact center operations effectively**
- No information about abandoned calls**
- No forecast of expected demand**
- No information on service levels**
- Not enough agents available**
- Inability to manage remotely**
- Scheduling agents takes forever**
- Managing multiple contact centers from a central location**
- Reviewing the past to improve future conditions is impossible**

It's no surprise that, like in any relationship, what affects one will ultimately affect the other. It's not trickle-down, it's a direct causal link. The call center cannot react to a customer's dissatisfactions if they can't identify them prior to, during and after they happen.

How to improve customer experience

Customers are pretty easy to keep happy. Regardless of age, race/ethnicity, gender or socio-economic situation, they tend to have the same 7 expectations of a call center:



Seems easy enough, if not a tad demanding. But how does a call center, a veritable sum-of-its-parts machine, with shift-working agents, overworked supervisors and several avalanches in communications throughout any given day, manage these expectations without going broke. Many seem based on having agents that are well versed in their concerns and how to fix them be accessible almost immediately.

There's the rub. Many call centers will have no idea how many agents they require until it's too late. And when there are enough agents, there's no way to monitor their activity to ensure the center is profitable and the customers are being serviced. Finally, when calls are managed by competent staff and executed well, how do you measure the successes to ensure that proper credit is given when due? It'd be hard to retain superstar agents if they're never seen as any better than the hordes of mediocre phone jockeys.

The trend towards automated systems is declining as customers expectations and general knowledge of call center structure are increasing. A simple search on gethuman.com will help any customer bypass the expensive automated systems and talk directly to an agent anyways. The goal, then, is to ensure that enough agents are ready and able to help, supervisors have systems in place for peaks and valleys and call centers can fill that ever-present gap between the brand promise and the actual service the customer receives. And it's never been more within reach.

Enter TASKE® Contact, with its real-time ACD monitoring and historical call reporting abilities for call centers. With web-based browser access to real-time data combined with TASKE's singular advanced cradle-to-grave Visualizer, Contact is more than an easy-to-use call management software suite with advanced forecasting applications, but a one-stop-shop to help call centers continually improve their call service levels and meet the brand promise your customers so desperately crave.

Call center stakeholders and supervisors using TASKE Contact can respond immediately to ever-changing call volumes and resource availability, see what has happened so far today allow you to react accordingly and even improve fiscal management. With a few simple clicks, agents and supervisors can identify and target inefficiencies, enhance customer service and maintain service level targets and perform complex call record searches – with ease.

The real-world benefits? Better accessibility, better responsiveness to customers' needs, well-trained and informed employees and a bumper crop of kept-promises and happy customers.

Don't just queue customers, Contact them

Those 7 customer expectations we discussed? They are actually part of a larger paradigm shift. In short, customers are better informed and have higher expectations.

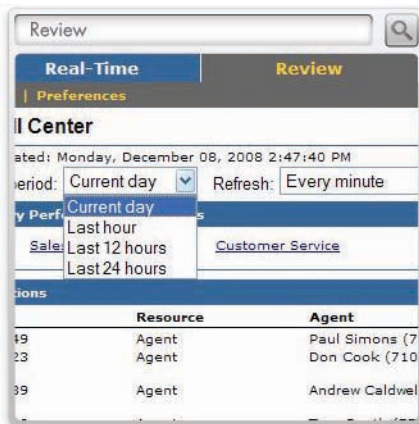
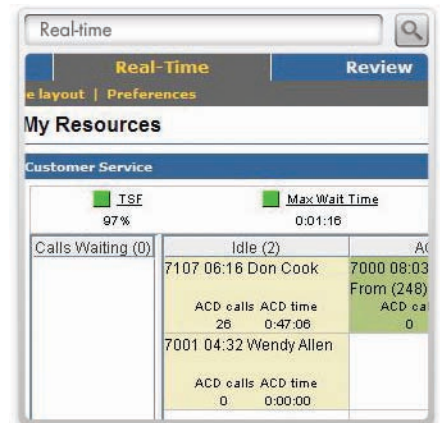
The global proliferation of wireless and broadband services, instant web-based information, sophisticated and intuitive search tools and ever-changing cultural expectations have created a better informed, more empowered and much more savvy customer base. The need to identify customers' needs and address them with lightning-fast speed, accuracy and professionalism has never been greater. And it's important to embrace that precept, because brand abandonment has never been more pervasive and disastrous. The recent economic downturn has seen countless companies that survived the initial onslaught turn to drastic rebranding, renaming and even complete paradigm shifting in their business modeling, simply to stop the hemorrhaging. Simply having a dense customer call management system in place isn't enough anymore. **The economics may have been easy to understand: A live, U.S.-based agent costs a company about \$7.50 per call. An offshore agent, about \$2.35. Automated systems, 32 cents.** And everyone knows how to press zero for a live agent these days. But every defining moment in a users experience will come down to a live agent and their ability to turn a situation into an opportunity.

The correct tools to manage the customer expectations can make all the difference to this emerging savvy super-customer. The direction you set now will, to a large degree, determine how you and your organization will manage successes and failures in the future. Regardless of current direction, it's still possible to change course and truly begin to engage your customers on a more effective scale and start building an end-to-end brand promise. It may require a change to cultural mindset, processes, your understanding of customers — and these sorts of things take time to change — but if the end result is a happier, more loyal following, then the pains to get there are negligible.

That in mind, let's look at the essential tools for effective contact center management. Equipped with real-time monitoring, historical reporting, forecasting, and call traffic analysis tools, contact centers using TASKE Contact are better informed and able to manage, plan, and expand operations with ease and confidence.

Real-Time

It seems obvious, but conveying vital as-it-happens information to agents and supervisors is the single most important tool a call center should have. With a real-time view of all queue-based inbound, outbound and internal calls, the Real-Time capabilities of TASKE Contact lets you track a variety of important contact center indicators, including agents available, longest call waiting, number of calls waiting, calls answered and average talk time. The ability to respond immediately to changing call volumes and resource availability is at the heart of maintaining a happy customer base and establishing the foundation for building on your brand promise. How else can you know what's happening by simply reading an after-the-fact report?

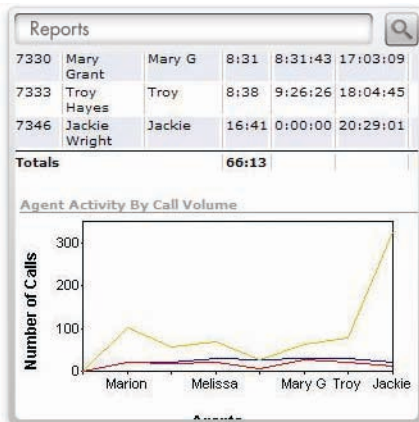


Review

Redefine the Meaning of "The Score." Many of the often-cited metrics and numbers are about the center's "availability" score -- service level, average speed of answer, abandon rate, et. al. All of these are great measures, but without a way to see them as they happen, they don't have much to do with "brand value." Tabular and graphical reports showcase what has happened so far today in your call center. Customize performance indicators with green light-red light icons to show visually when your resources are functioning within or outside of acceptable levels. Start thinking beyond a simple "score," and embrace better a way of looking at results.

Replay

Find out how you got here. Historical agent and queue activity for a new era in right-now information. With sniper-like accuracy, the trigger feature makes it easy to pinpoint the source of inefficiencies in performance by automatically halting playback at pre-selected thresholds. Improve fiscal management; Identify and target inefficiencies and manage and determine why specific breakdowns occurred.

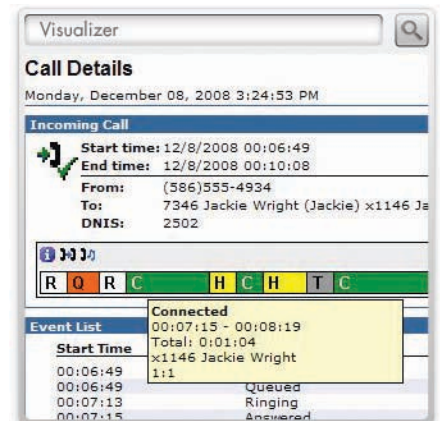


Reports

Data, data and more data. When you're gauging the efficacy and performance of your call center, data is king. Access "what happened when" agent, queue and trunk information, instantly view, print and email vital activity and performance data and identify concerns BEFORE they become problems. Enhance customer service and maintain service level targets – all while maintaining a watchful gaze on the minutia of details that make or break a call center.

Visualizer

Customer relationships are complex enough without the added pressures on agents and managers to recall the intricacies of a customer's call. Worst-case call center scenarios often begin with miscommunications and poor customer service. Visualizer is a powerful search tool with an unparalleled cradle-to-grave graphical interface providing in-depth investigation of where and when calls travelled within your phone system. Respond and improve call center performance – as well as your customer's call experience.



The software advances available with TASKE Contact can help call centers to define issues, address expectations and manage the brand promises that a company makes to its customers. To the customer, however, software and technology aren't a real concern. They just want things to work as they should. If they're browsing your Web site and need further help, they want a knowledgeable agent who's a click away.

Better experiences for customers

Customers are going to call. They are going to have concerns, questions, needs and demands. And if they end up in a queue, they'll expect a reasonably short wait time. They expect processes to be integrated and thoughtful. And they will expect to reach professional, competent agents. In short, they want services that are reliable, intuitive and accessible to use. And while we're at it, why not throw in enjoyable and fulfilling to use. They want to connect with answers and service. They want to make contact. **And there's no shortage of new connections:**



This army of new customers entering the call center jungle are bringing their new expectations, savvy, sometimes jaded, consumer experience and disposable income to a company based on the brand promise sold to them. The infrastructure in place to manage them must be a well-oiled machine, capable of adapting to trends, schedules and the occasional tsunami of calls.

The infrastructure and networks depend on more than just the ability to establish connections — the other part of the equation is the way information and services are digitally represented and transported. Communication technologies are rapidly redefining the environment. Examples include user-generated media and content, powerful online communities and networking capabilities, forums and information groups, virtually ubiquitous access to a growing variety of communications and media, and information from countless sources. And if (or when) those channels don't answer the questions and address concerns of the customers, they all lead to the same path - the call center.

The sheer number of customer connections is creating a powerful dynamic in delivering customer services — the impact you have, for better or worse, goes far beyond the customers you directly serve, and potentially reaches anyone in their circles of influence.

Each interaction with your contact center represents a moment of truth. A defining moment, if you will, wherein you can fulfill and act on the promises you have made to customers through marketing and advertising communications. The countless dollars spent to bring your products to market can all be undone at any stage of the customer experience - from the sales rep, to the packaging, to the ease of use, to the support relationship. Customers expect that the attitudes and actions of call center agents will accurately reflect your brand - be an extension of it. The onus is therefore on managers and supervisors to educate and manage their people on how to fulfill the brand promise - before, during and after the call – and measure their impact on customers. It's a simple matter of prioritizing the focus. The impact to customer loyalty, value and likelihood to recommend—metrics that demonstrate the impact on the customer, rather than the quality of the agent.

Like most business tools, the performance measurement analytics are best used as part of a larger solution - not simply to monitor the day-to-day operations with no real insight into the impacts on the bigger picture. A more holistic solution, like TASKE Contact, one that offers the sweeping abilities to view, review, replay and report on activity and performance in real time, is the most important investment you could make in the battle for customer loyalty. It's a jungle out there.

Better brand experience

Most vendors agree that businesses were getting better about seeing the call center as a valuable part of the enterprise. We've all heard the hilarious joke before: the call center doesn't have to be a "cost center." TASKE Contact can help to transition the call center from a cost center to a strategic operational asset aligned with corporate objectives. In other words, call center supervisors and stakeholders and the bigger-wigs higher up the food chain, are seeing ways to integrate the call center into the rest of the business, and TASKE analytics and performance management tools are helping.

Analytics aren't the be-all end-all. Analytics is not a product or a product category. It is a function, and a way to make sense of business activity through measurement of all sorts of data. More importantly, they reflect customer usage of your system. It can be easy and unfortunate to get lost on the numbers, both meaningful and meaningless, and lose sight of the true calling of a call center - to keep happy customers happy and turn the dissatisfied ones into reformed brand evangelists. Because of that, it can be a confusing and overlapping environment for the potential product purchaser. You will find analytics embedded into many other tools. The truest measure of the RIGHT performance measuring tools is their ability to help a call center see what's going on at any stage of the customer experience.

Building a better brand through building better customer relationships – seems so simple. And it all starts at the moment you make Contact.

About TASKE Technology

TASKE Technology Inc., a leader in communications management, is committed to delivering advanced solutions for the contact center and enterprise. Through continued product innovation and development, TASKE Technology enables businesses to provide exceptional customer service and increase customer loyalty and retention. With thousands of installations worldwide, the company offers unmatched technical support and expert training for its entire suite of management tools. TASKE Technology has an excellent, long-standing, reputation of offering proven, robust, and affordable products available for Avaya, Cisco, Inter-Tel, Mitel, Toshiba, and Iwatsu platforms.

The product suite, TASKE Call Management Solutions, ensures that contact centers and small business can service large numbers of telephone calls personally and effectively during peak traffic times. With its comprehensive reporting and analysis tools, TASKE software allows managers to easily coordinate and optimize business resources. An award-winning product, TASKE Contact, supports the real-time collection and management of information and activities. The replay feature of TASKE Contact features up-to-the-second accuracy on historical agent and queue activity and Enterprise allows supervisors to manage various office locations through one convenient user interface. TASKE Contact also includes seamless integration with various workforce management solutions. Other products include desktop and large display messaging tools.

TASKE Technology Inc.

2685 Queensview Drive, Suite 200, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K2B 8K2

T: 613.596.2533
F: 613.596.4392
TF: 1.877.778.2753