



Post-Call Customer Satisfaction Measurement

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Publisher's Note: Information contained in this document is intended for guideline purposes only. etalk product documentation supersedes information contained in this document. The situations described in this document are offered as examples; actual configurations and results will vary from system to system.

Post-Call Customer Satisfaction Measurement

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Open just about any annual report from a leading public company and you will learn that customer satisfaction is a major goal of the enterprise. Besides the desire to be good corporate citizens, good service is good business. Customers that are extremely satisfied – even delighted – with service quality are not only more loyal but will also pay a premium to receive markedly superior service. Moreover, they are good ambassadors. Highly satisfied customers will tell five others about your great service.¹

But organizations cannot judge customer satisfaction just on the volume of complaint calls. Only 4 percent of unhappy customers will actually complain.* Instead, customers simply take their business to a competing company. More than 90 percent of customers who leave will not come back, and on the average each of these unhappy customers will tell nine other people about their experiences.¹

Contact center agents are often the primary – or even the only – human touch point to the enterprise and are therefore uniquely positioned to influence customer satisfaction and loyalty. Not surprisingly, customer satisfaction is a stated goal of virtually every major contact center.

The paradox is that nearly four out of ten contact centers don't measure customer satisfaction. And those that do tend to use costly and often ineffective methods. This strikes home in contact centers where agent scorecards capture details from quality monitoring (QM) evaluations and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

that portend to measure agent effectiveness. However, in the eyes of the customer – who is the ultimate arbiter of agent performance – these measurements are missing the mark. Moreover, contact centers that have attempted to correlate measured agent performance with customer satisfaction are often surprised and confused when they find no statistically significant relationship between the two. Service levels, average handle time, queue length, etc. may all be on target, and yet customer satisfaction scores can be low. Similarly, the KPI's may be heading the wrong way, and customers can be very pleased with the service.

However, agent performance and customer satisfaction are not completely unrelated. Research has established that positive experiences with an agent will drive up satisfaction levels – though slowly. The impact is more significant when satisfaction levels drop. Customers that are already at the margin (or “somewhat” satisfied) will quickly move down the scale if the experience is unsatisfactory. The apparent disconnect between agent evaluation scores and satisfaction level illustrates two important points. One, the metrics we use as proxies for customer satisfaction may be of marginal importance to the customer. In fact, only one KPI – first call resolution – consistently correlates to gains in

customer satisfaction. Second, there may be flaws in the way we collect customer satisfaction data.

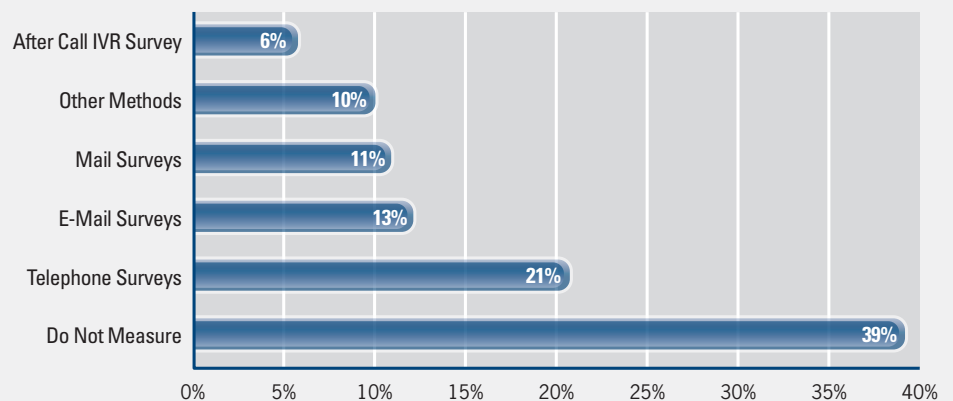
Timing is Key in Satisfaction Surveys

When conducting customer satisfaction surveys, timing is essential. Research by the Gartner Group reveals that surveys conducted immediately after a call are 40 percent more likely to get valid results than methods that involve long delays, like mail and outbound telephone surveys.² Unless an interaction was exceptionally good or exceptionally bad, memories fade fast. The customer satisfaction measures obtained from slow methods like outbound telephone calls and direct mail will reflect the consumer's impressions at that time. These will be heavily weighted by the totality of experiences with your company – not the single call center interaction.

Understanding Customer Satisfaction

The dynamics that drive “delight” customer satisfaction are complex. While call center interactions are an important contributor, it is by no means the only consideration that shapes customer opinions. The customer ultimately judges the strength of his or her relationship with a vendor or service provider on the totality of experiences with the company, of which agent performance is only one com-

Customer Satisfaction Measurement Practices



Source: Dr. Jon Anton, Purdue University Center for Customer Driven Quality

ponent. Nor do customer satisfaction measures provide the entire picture regarding customer churn or sales and marketing strategy. The reason is that when customer satisfaction is gauged days or weeks after the agent interaction, the scores will reflect satisfaction at that moment – not what their satisfaction was immediately after the agent interaction.

For example, consider a customer that ordered a wedding gift for a dear friend, and the gift arrived after the wedding. She is very upset and calls the contact center for the delivery service. The agent handles the interaction with compassion and follows every procedure to the 'T.' She quickly tracks down the errant shipment and waives the charges. The interaction went well, but the overall experience did not. If the unhappy customer was surveyed immediately after the call and the survey was limited to the interaction only, the evaluation would be fairly positive. But if this customer received a questionnaire in the mail a week later, the positive interaction with the agent will be subjugated to the overall negative experience of the late delivery.

Pros & Cons of Various Post-Call Survey Methods

Today, call centers that do measure customer satisfaction use a variety of methods. The most popular are conducting the surveys via:

- Outbound telephone surveys, using in-house agents or third-party survey specialists
- Direct mail
- Email
- Web surveys

Third-Party Telephone Surveys

Surveys conducted by companies that specialize in this activity offer a number of advantages. One, the surveys are performed by individuals trained in the art of conducting interviews. Two, the surveys can be fairly lengthy - allowing the call centers to explore topics of the moment like campaign awareness and the impact of various marketing initiatives on purchasing behavior. Thirdly, interviewers will ask questions in the correct sequence and probe for open-ended responses.

The major drawback to using this method for post-call surveys is cost. Traditional telephone surveys cost an average of \$30 per respondent, a cost that is not significantly reduced by bringing the task in-house. Agents are typically paid substantially more than part-time interviewers, and they do have responsibilities other than conducting interviews. At least 400 interviews for each time period and market segment are needed to produce reasonably reliable information. Even at that level, measured customer satis-

faction could vary from the actual by 4 percentage points or more in either direction at the 95 percent confidence level. For the effort and cost, the margin of error is high. Costs of quarterly surveys can easily reach \$60,000 per year, when factoring in related costs for analysis, tabulations and fieldwork. Further, separate measures for different geographies, customer classes or contact center groups can cost an additional \$60,000 for each segment.

The out-of-pocket cost is just one element of the total financial commitment when using third-party specialists. Call center personnel must be prepared to invest considerable time with the third-party survey company to extract the call list and help design the survey instrument. The cost in management time of just compiling the interview list (or "universe") is significant. With the prevalence of answering machines, private numbers and cell phones, response rates are little better than direct mail. Because of this, approximately seven names and numbers are needed for every one completed interview - or 2,800 contacts for each customer segment and time period. Outsourcing surveys also introduces a risk factor by requiring organizations to share confidential customer information with an outside third-party. Likewise, customers are asked to evaluate an event that may have happened days or weeks from the time of the interview, greatly compromising the accuracy of the data. In addition to the high cost, suspect accuracy, and business risk, traditional surveys take much too long to execute and analyze. Finally, there is no way to accurately tie scores back to indi-

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vidual agents or events, making quality monitoring and coaching opportunities difficult to identify.

Direct Mail

Direct mail is cost-effective and is widely used by contact centers. However, direct mail is the most imprecise survey method. Direct mail is slow. It typically takes several weeks from the time a call is completed until the results are in and analyzed, and it is virtually impossible to relate a specific response to a specific agent. Indeed, the people most inclined to respond are those who have had multiple interactions with the contact center during the intervening period. Because of the delay between event and evaluation, the consumer's views are heavily weighted by factors outside the control of the contact center.

Additionally, it is very difficult to incorporate "skip patterns" into the short, postcard-type survey forms typically used, and there is no way to probe for consumer attitudes and motivations. (Skip patterns are used when respondents are asked questions based on their replies to previous questions. For example, questioning callers about why they are changing banks based a previous indication to do so). Too, although the cost of printing and distributing the mailers is low, the cost of administering these surveys is not. Each completed form must be manually entered into the analysis software and each open-ended response carefully transcribed and categorized. Finally, mail surveys have to be short, or people will not complete them. This means that contact centers cannot adequately explore

the factors that drive customer satisfaction. The resultant data is useful for establishing benchmarks but has little diagnostic value.

Email

Email surveys can be executed quickly and economically. These surveys may incorporate a questionnaire in the text of the message or include a link to a web survey, which can incorporate skip patterns. Additionally, email surveys can be tied to specific agent interactions. Response rates are at least comparable to direct mail surveys, and respondents can include messages explaining the reasons behind their ratings. Responses to email and web surveys can be automatically tabulated, and they are the least expensive of the methods available.

However, there are two serious problems with this approach. First, most companies do not include email addresses in their customer databases, and when they do, the addresses may be out of date or inaccurate. Customers are reluctant to provide email addresses because of the prevalence of spam. The more significant problem is that about 30 percent of the public does not have Internet access – a large number and a major source of bias. People who have (and use) Internet access differ in many demographic characteristics from those who do not. The result is satisfaction data that is not reflective of the total customer base. Like the direct mail method, email and web surveys must be brief and to the point.

Automated, Post-Call, IVR Surveys - The Ideal Solution

In a perfect world, customer satisfaction data could be viewed in real time, tied to specific agents, be highly reliable and consistent and cost a fraction of traditional third-party surveys. Thanks to automated post-call IVR surveys, all of these things and more can now be delivered. Besides providing up-to-the-minute results on customer satisfaction, management can better pinpoint the causes of deviations and use the tool for general marketing purposes, such as campaign evaluations and testing new products and services. Survey systems can also be integrated with caller identification data. This allows for deep analysis of how customer satisfaction levels relate to customer metrics such as ZIP code, purchase frequency, call frequency, payment habits, credit limits and other customer data that may reside within the enterprise.

How Automated Surveys Work

Automated surveys are offered as integrated solutions with call recording technology, as hybrid solutions combining recording platforms with third-party specialists, and by independent service bureaus. With integrated, premise-based solutions, the survey software is linked to the call center's IVR system. Before the customer is connected with an agent, the IVR asks the caller if he/she would like to participate in a survey after the call. Typically, the customer is instructed to press one for "yes" and two for "no." This action queues up the software to

Static automated surveys ask the same questions of everyone and do not record their reasons for extreme satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Basic automated survey tools also make no provision for collecting and categorizing this "open-ended" information.

seize the call at the conclusion of the agent interaction. Alternatively, the agent may ask the caller during the call or at the conclusion if he wishes to participate. In that case the agent executes the hand-off to the survey engine. A third approach is to front-end the call with a recorded message offering an invitation and instructions on how to launch the survey before the caller disconnects. This latter approach is thought to increase participation rates, but it may skew the randomness of the survey as callers with especially good or poor interactions may be more inclined to follow through with the survey. Callers respond via entries on the touch tone pad. In the case of premise-based solutions, the actual questions and response choices are determined by the call center using administration tools provided by the vendor. The Incoming Calls Management Institute (ICMI) reports that response rates are a very respectable 20 to 30 percent, and the cost is a fraction of more popular methods like in-house and third-party telephone surveys.

etalk's Qfiniti Survey Enables In-Depth Analysis of Customer Feedback

Until etalk launched its latest release of Qfiniti Survey, there were some drawbacks – like inflexibility - to automated surveys that slowed their adoption rate. For instance, static automated surveys ask the same questions of everyone and do not record their reasons for extreme satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Basic automated survey tools also make no provision for collecting and categorizing this “open-ended” information. And since customer responses are not recorded, it is impossible to judge the intensity of the callers’ feelings. Finally, static surveys make it difficult to incorporate data in agent scorecards, since supervisors have to manually match customer satisfaction results to scorecards, using their best judgment as to which responses related to which

agents. On the other hand, professional survey tools like Qfiniti Survey typically incorporate skip patterns, allowing for a much more in-depth analysis of customer feedback.,

Automated Post-Call IVR Surveys – The Best Solution

Automated, post-call, IVR surveys offer many advantages over alternative means;

- The data is collected immediately after the call – customer satisfaction can be tied to specific agents and interactions
- No time is required to compile contact lists
- No customer data is shared with third parties
- The results are immediate and can be displayed on wallboards and dashboards in real time
- Organizations can conduct root-cause analysis to determine cause-and-effect relationships
- The results are continuous, enabling companies to plot changes over time and relate them to specific events
- The results reflect all callers – not just those that own computers with Internet access
- The tool is highly flexible. Companies can monitor awareness of a specific campaign simply by changing the questions

Call centers that use post-call IVR surveys have found innovative uses for the data. ING, a well-known financial services firm, uses etalk's Qfiniti Survey application to collect customer satisfaction data. Since they are able to track satisfaction levels to specific agents, ING introduced an agent incentive program that awards cash bonuses to agents that excel at pleasing the customer. The program was enthusiastically endorsed by agents. Another etalk customer, one of the nation's largest utility companies, used Survey findings to secure Utility Board approval of a new system-wide service initiative. Two utility boards wanted to know customer reactions to the proposal before they would grant approval. A quick survey established that customers did indeed favor the idea. The utility boards were

impressed with the thoroughness of the data and approved the proposal. This same organization previously retained third-party survey companies to collect customer satisfaction data through telephone surveys. The company was spending \$80,000 annually with the vendor and not getting buy-in from the agents. Agents challenged the data, contending that the findings referred to different agents or subsequent contacts by the same individuals. With etalk Qfiniti Survey, there are no disputes about the data's relevance, and the results are immediate.

Best of all, automated post-call IVR surveys are actually quite affordable. Compared to the cost of third-party telephone surveys, organizations that measure customer satisfaction quarterly will typically earn back the original investment in less than 18 months and achieve an annualized ROI of 38 percent³ by purchasing and installing etalk Qfiniti Survey. Of course, with Qfiniti Survey, it costs no more to monitor customer satisfaction daily than it does to measure once a quarter. And the results are much more accurate because of the larger sample size.

etalk's Qfiniti Survey

Dallas-based etalk Corporation introduced the nation's first automated survey tool for call centers in 1999. They have recently enhanced Qfiniti Survey to provide all of the time- and money-saving advantages usually associated with auto surveys with none of the limitations of competitive solutions. With Qfiniti Survey organizations can:

- Measure point-of-delivery customer satisfaction levels
- Capture and categorize responses to open-ended questions
- Directly (and automatically) incorporate agent-specific customer satisfaction scores into Qfiniti Advise, etalk's scoring and evaluation module
- Attach the actual recorded interaction to specific customer feedback sessions
- Associate customer satisfaction scores with agents, agent groups, and computer

- telephony integration (CTI) data
- Incorporate skip patterns into the automated surveys
- Link customer input to virtually any variable within the call center
- Receive automatic alerts of a poor customer experience via email or triggered transfer to a customer advocate
- Quickly and easily design your own surveys using the built-in authoring tools.

Perhaps the most important benefit is that call centers will have the data and reporting tools to not only measure customer satisfaction but also determine what factors drive upward and downward movements. This could result in a totally fresh look at agent scorecards and calibration methods. Organizations will be able to track the KPI's and events that matter most – in the eyes of the customer.

By knowing the status of the organization, where it is going, and setting measurable improvement goals, enterprises can chart the right course to pleasing customers and meeting the customer satisfaction goals of the organization.

About etalk

Since 1983, etalk solutions have been used to build valuable, long-term customer relationships at more than 1,500 contact centers across 40 countries around the globe, spanning insurance, telecom, financial, healthcare, technology, utilities, hospitality and manufacturing companies.

Now part of Autonomy Inc., the two companies are poised to radically change how contact centers operate and manage customer satisfaction. Autonomy, known in the market place for being highly innovative and on the cutting edge of enterprise search technology, helps companies manage large volumes of unstructured data. As the market leader in this space, Autonomy provides complex solu-

tions to the largest intelligent agencies around the world, including Homeland Security in the United States.

The two technologies combined now provide the best of both to the growing contact center industry – innovative solutions and in-depth knowledge and expertise.

Global, Enterprise Quality Management

The foundation of etalk's contact center management system is Qfiniti, an enterprise platform that provides a full range of functionality, from traditional call recording to agent evaluation to speech analytics. Qfiniti is designed to integrate seamlessly with other contact center technologies, allowing you to implement a quality management program that builds upon and enhances your current systems.

etalk delivers a unified, scalable, and centrally managed enterprise platform to help consistently ensure global quality across customer service and operations. A combination of software and services enables organizations to monitor, measure, and improve the performance delivered to their customers.

Understand and Anticipate Your Customer Needs

Beyond traditional call recording, today's contact centers involve a sea of information that must be captured, processed, and distributed on a daily basis. Effective use of this information enables companies to remain competitive in an increasingly aggressive and customer-centric marketplace. An overwhelming percentage of the information that circulates in a contact center—audio recordings, documents, web pages, and emails—is unstructured in that it resides outside of a normal structured database and cannot be managed efficiently. This unstructured information contains valuable information, yet historically has been difficult to organize, categorize, and access.

The Intelligent Data Operating Layer (IDOL) technology reigns in unstructured information so that companies can finally access and manage all of their information, not just the information that fits neatly into fixed databases. With the IDOL engine at the core of etalk's Explore application, every recorded voice transaction, as well as every element within those recordings, is easily searchable with unprecedented accuracy and speed. By automating data mining processes formerly performed manually, IDOL represents a major enhancement to traditional quality assurance and customer relationship management.

¹ *Customer Service at a Crossroads*, by Matt McConnell (founder of Knowlagent) and Dr. Jon Anton (Benchmark Portal, Purdue Center for Customer-Driven Quality).

² Gartner report, "Implement Customer Satisfaction Management Processes to Improve Revenue," March 2, 2006, by Esteban Kolsky

³ The ROI calculation is based on the cost savings of post-call IVR surveys versus quarterly telephone surveys of 400 consumers each at \$30/completed survey. All investment and support costs for the etalk Survey were considered in the equation, including software, engineering, service contracts and in-house support. The ROI calculation did not consider the additional savings in management time from supporting the third-party survey firm. Five-year savings were discounted to present value and averaged over five years.



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