

## **Call Centre**

- A call centre is a centralised office used for receiving or transmitting a large volume of requests by telephone.
- An inbound call centre is operated by a company to administer incoming product support or information inquiries from consumers.
- Outbound call centers are operated for telemarketing, solicitation of charitable or political donations, debt collection and market research.
- A contact centre is a location for centralised handling of individual communications, including letters, faxes, live support software, social media, instant message, and e-mail.
- A call centre has an open workspace for call centre agents, with work stations that include a computer for each agent, a telephone set/headset connected to a telecom switch, and one or more supervisor stations. It can be independently operated or networked with additional centres, often linked to a corporate computer network, including mainframes, microcomputers and LANs.
- The contact centre is a central point from which all customer contacts are managed. Through contact centres, valuable information about company are routed to appropriate

people, contacts to be tracked and data to be gathered. It is generally a part of company's customer relationship management.

## **Components of call centre:**

There are 6 key components which should be integrated into the call centre operation:

- Location, building and facilities
- Customer
- Technology
- Process
- People
- Finance and business management

### **➤ Location, building and facilities**

Where a centre is located is critical in terms of the cost of the building but more importantly the ability to recruit and retain employees to work in the centre. The ease and cost to get to a

centre is important for those employed in the centre but also in the integration with the Head Office functions that the centre needs to work with. The facilities and working environment is more critical than for functional line departments because of the intensity with which the Agents have to sit at their desks and the need to manage resource patterns. Visiting a call centre and looking at how it might feel to work in it will be extremely telling as to how good the centres performance is, but also how the organisation view and treat their employees.

➤ **Customer**

Customers can be anyone, and the Agent needs to have the skills to be able to adapt their style and vocabulary to suit different customer types. The Agent talks to more customers in any one day than any other person in the organisation. If you want to know what is going on with customers, ask the Agents! With average call durations of less than 3 minutes, how do you form a relationship and build loyalty from a customer in that time. That is one of the biggest challenges that the Agents face, especially given many customers do not like the impersonal touch that call centres often provide.

➤ **Technology**

There are significant amounts of technology available and it is very easy to be bamboozled by it all! It very much depends on the size and nature of your business as to what you require. The basic equipment to handle calls is the Automated Call Distributor but these can range from basic to a Rolls Royce! Many centres do not fully utilise the technology that they have.

In addition there is usually a disjoint between what the technology can do and what it is actually used for.

➤ **Process**

Every centre has a multitude of processes, but the biggest challenge that it faces is to understand the end to end process from the customer perspective. The customer journey is what happens from the point in time when a customer decides to contact you through to the completion of that request or transaction. How long does this journey take and what does it feel like taking the steps along the way. How long is spent waiting? Does the agent have the customer details to hand? Can the agent answer the query first time? Does the fulfilment when expected? One very easy but critical way of looking at the customer journey is to mystery shop the centre and to see what it really feels like to be the customer. Put yourselves in the shoes of your key customer demographic type and call your own centre today.

➤ **People**

People are the most critical asset in a call centre as it is they who really deliver the business performance. Unfortunately the investment and perception of your staff may be rather poor. The people (Agents) often have to deal with difficult situations when things have gone wrong

in your organisation and deal with a large volumes of calls that result, whilst not always having the necessary training or skills. However, the teams in Centres can be very resilient and are often very social, making the centre a great place to work. There are many different roles on offer and so they can a good environment to start and develop a career.

➤ **Finance and business management**

There will be more management information statistics in a call centre than in any other part of the organisation. The centre is measured from every different angle but unfortunately, this does not always give a complete picture!

One of the most challenging roles is the planning, measuring and reviewing of performance because so many centres are under pressure from calls and other expectations, that being able to step back and take an objective view maybe difficult. Most centres are run to very tight budgets so factors such as turnover of staff will have a huge impact.

## **Customer-Premises Equipment:**

Customer-premises equipment or customer-provided equipment (CPE) is any terminal and associated equipment located at a subscriber's premises and connected with a carrier's telecommunication channel at the demarcation point . The demarc is a point established in a building or complex to separate customer equipment from the equipment located in either the distribution infrastructure or central office of the communications service provider.

CPE generally refers to devices such as telephones, routers, switches, residential gateways (RG), set-top boxes, fixed mobile convergence products, home networking adapters and Internet access gateways that enable consumers to access communications service providers' services and distribute them around their house via a local area network (LAN).

## **Key Performance Indicators (KPI)**

From the existing literature on the call centre industry, we can identify thirteen KPI:

service level (call's answered within target time), average speed of answer, average time in queue, average abandonment rate, percentage of first call resolution, adherence to schedule, average talk time, after call work time, employee turnover rate, percentage of call's blocked, time before abandoning, inbound call's per agent, total call's.

However, all these metrics were contemplated as internal service quality metrics in former studies.

In this sense, we may note that performance measurement implies a focus on

individuals, groups, organizations or systems. Thus, from this large pool of indicators, we have extracted three different groups:

- Employee attitude (commitment versus absenteeism): employee turnover rate; adherence to schedule;
- Employee performance: service level; average speed of answer; average talk time and average after call work time
- Company's system performance: abandonment rate; average time in queue, percentage of first call resolution, percentage of calls blocked, time before abandoning; inbound call's per agent; total calls.

On the one hand, this implies that the customer will be dissatisfied if, for some reason, he finds himself forced to abandon the call without interacting with the agent.

Once customers overcome technology difficulties and get the connection with the agent, their satisfaction will depend directly on the employee adequately providing the service.

In addition, these performances are expected to be achieved during the first contact. The problem is that in some cases, call centre jobs are designed in such a way that responsibilities are distributed among agents and in many cases employees are bound to transfer the call to another department. Consequently, customers find themselves repeatedly facing technology and paying the call's cost.

In other words, customers who are forced to abandon the call go on to a dissatisfaction status. However, by overcoming technology difficulties, the satisfaction would depend on employee's performance to provide quality information on the first interaction with the company. Hence, employees play the leading role in these actions that lead to customer satisfaction.

Therefore, we may highlight that almost all the metrics identified in the existing literature as KPI, in fact could be grouped as system performance or employee performance. Henceforth, we are going to address these variables as part of service quality or employee behaviour dimensions.

**Managerial Strategies.**

In terms of managerial approach, literature suggests that it also plays an important role in call centre operation. We can identify two main managerial approaches: the production-line approach, which focuses on quantitative performance; and customer orientation approach, which focuses on qualitative performance. In other words, call centres that adopt the production-line approach basically emphasise handling a large number of calls or focus on sales volume, and usually do not take into account the quality of the service provided or the satisfaction of customers. In this sense, in order to achieve their goals, these types of organizations try to standardize their operations by constantly pressurising and controlling their staff. On the contrary, call centres which adopt a customer-orientation approach are characterized by focusing on service quality and concern about customer satisfaction. In this sense, these types of organizations try to commit and motivate their employees by empowering and giving company support so that staff is able to provide service quality.

As we mentioned before, employees are the core part of call centre activity, as they directly deal with customers and at the same time use all the tools provided by the company. Thus, in order to achieve results, managers must design appropriate HR practices and leverage technology efficiently. But, as call centres are hybrid organizations, this inner management and control is sometimes determined by the type of contract between the client company and the call centre. In other words, it means that when a call centre is outsourced, the managerial strategies depend on what type of service has been contracted, the agreed payment system and the contract design within the outsourcing centre (pay per call resolved, pay per call resolved plus share costs, partnership contract or piecemeal). For example, the piecemeal contract (the parent company pays for each call attended) may coordinate the staff level, but not the effort level. Meanwhile the “pay per call resolved” contracts (the main company pays for call resolution) compel call centre managers to design their operations in order to deliver service quality. The other two types of contracts that are suggested are: partnership contract (where the call centre is paying a user fees and also sharing a part of the costs) and pay-per-call plus share costs (where the call centre earns for every call resolution

and in addition shares the cost with the main company), are considered to be the best options to achieve coordination within the supply chain, by assuring the optimal level of staff and effort within the call centre.

Therefore, the customer orientation approach is still considered the most appropriate managerial approach if the call centre's aim is to deliver service quality and achieve customer satisfaction.

## **Conclusion**

Considering the wide array of research contributions described above, we summarise and discuss the results of this literature review with the aim of better understanding the determinants of customer satisfaction in the context of the call centre industry especially in the eCommerce industry.

The first group of indicators, which have received most research interest, are service quality and performance indicators. Regarding service quality, the literature suggests that only human service quality can bring about customer satisfaction, as tangible dimensions lead to customer dissatisfaction. In addition, it is noteworthy that human SERVQUAL metrics influence negatively on employee satisfaction, being mediated by peripheral factors such as stress. We should note that the relationship between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction is bidirectional and mediated by outer factors such as customer attitude toward call centre.

The second group of indicators are related to managerial strategies and HR policies. As we can see, from both groups of managerial strategies, the production line approach is directly but negatively related to employees' outcomes, such as absenteeism, turnover, commitment or ability to deliver service quality. On the other hand, managerial strategies in many cases, especially in the outsourced call centres, depend on the type of contract

signed with the parent company. On the contrary, employees' positive outcomes are originated in positive HR practices. But we may highlight that these groups of indicators seem to be isolated from the core literature review on the call centre industry.

The third group of indicators refers to performance indicators, which could be grouped into system performance and employees' performance, both of them being positively related to customer satisfaction. A small number of researchers suggest that customers are dissatisfied because of rude employees and slow service, i.e. employee performance.

In this study we have contributed to the literature by identifying and grouping the determinants of customer satisfaction in call centres. In order to achieve this objective, we have had to draw from scattered bodies of literature, mainly in the areas of marketing, human resource management and operations management.

A major point to be highlighted is that the majority of studies address different concepts around customer satisfaction, but do not tend to consider its most immediate causes. That is, customer satisfaction does not tend to be the central construct or research aim in most studies carried out in this industry, both in terms of number of studies and also in terms of prominence of this construct within the existing studies.

Indeed, for decades, customer satisfaction was presented as a central issue by consumer studies, as in the traditional service encounter the main aim of a company is to satisfy customers. However, in call centres, whose whole business model centres on the idea of servicing customers, the pursuit of customer satisfaction seems to be all but elusive.

There are a number of limitations of this study that should be noted. Firstly, this kind of review deals with the texts from points considered and studied, but does not analyse the existing data, which could have been completed by carrying out a meta-analysis. Therefore, future research should endeavour to examine and accomplish a thorough analysis of the existent call centre literature by drawing on the contributions that have been made into customer satisfaction phenomena in the specific context of remote service. Secondly, the present study does not control for differences among dispersed bodies of

knowledge that address call centre industry (management, marketing, organizational behaviour, etc.), neither for differences among types of research (qualitative case studies versus quantitative studies). Thus, future research should focus on the identification and classification of these groups in order to frame the existent similarities and differences of the presented results.

**REFERENCE**

Cyber Law: Intellectual Property and E-Commerce Security Hardcover – January 1, 2011  
by Kumar & Sharma (Author)

Cyberlaw and E-Commerce 1st Edition by David Lee Baumer (Author), J. C. Poindexter  
(Author)

CYBER LAW AND E COMMERCE IN 60 MINUTES Jun 3, 2014 by sukhdarshan sehgal

Managing Cyber Attacks in International Law, Business, and Relations: In Search of Cyber  
Peace Jul 10, 2014 by Scott J. Shackelford