

Call Centre Monitoring

If “the proof is in the pudding”, then in a call centre the pudding is the telephone calls. Listening to calls provides the biggest indicators on how to make dramatic improvements in the call centre.

Over the years, I have often found that it is possible to gauge a call centre’s efficiency by its attitude to listening to calls. A bad call centre usually has no facilities for listening to calls. In a well-run call centre, senior management will listen to calls on a regular basis and provide immediate feedback to agents.



Mel Mason, Call Centre and IT Director of Great Universal stores agrees, “If you’re in the Call Centre business you must regularly listen to calls to and from customers. Monitoring calls is the only way you really find out the important issues for customers and how they feel about your company, its products and its services.”

“I typically spend about 4 hours per month listening to live calls – a small sample of the 50 million we take each year. I urge the whole management team to listen to calls on a regular basis, with the Chief Executive also participating.”

There are a number of ways to listen to calls. My preference is to sit next to a live agent and connect an additional headset to the agent teleset. Many ACD systems have a facility to silently monitor agents from a supervisor’s set. Call recording devices can allow wholesale recording of all calls into the call centre and can be used to assess performance of the agent. Mystery shopper calling (where you pretend to be a customer) enables you to gauge how the customer views service, and can be carried out on your competition.

All of these methods of call centre monitoring allow you to develop a picture of the call centre. Monitoring from the caller’s perspective will give you an overall impression of what it is like to call your centre. It will demonstrate how frustrating it can be to wait in a queue and how friendly or annoying your voice messages really are. Sitting next to an agent will help to alert you to deficiencies in the contact management system and general workflow.

So how will listening improve the operation of the call centre? It should help to answer the following questions: -

- Is the service meeting the callers needs?
- Are there clear opportunities for up selling and cross selling?
- Are the agents adequately trained?
- What opportunities are there for Customer Relationship Management?

Monitoring calls can help to identify the difference between the service you are offering and the needs of the customer. A good example of this has been the need to confirm details in writing. All businesses have the need to maximize security and minimize risk. But there is a price to this. The smarter companies have eliminated the need for the customer to put anything in writing – except for the signature on contracts. They fill in the form during the telephone conversation and send the customer a copy to check. Call recordings can then be used in dispute arbitration – usually without the need to go to court. Once a caller is played back a telephone recording, misunderstandings usually become clear.

Up-selling or cross-selling opportunities become clear from call centre monitoring. In many sectors between 2% and 10% of service calls have direct sales potential. These could range from a direct customer query, or a clear cross-sell opportunity. By listening to calls as you try out new sales methods, it will become apparent which techniques work and where deficient ones can be improved. The campaign can then be refined to gain maximum effect.