

Title:

Call Centers - A Backgrounder

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521

Summary:

The call center business has become one of the fastest booming industries today. In the era of customer-oriented services, the provision for accessible support is now a priority. With many companies trying to cope up with their customers' needs and demands, the concept of the call center was born.

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Article Body:

The call center business has become one of the fastest booming industries today. In the era of customer-oriented services, the provision for accessible support is now a priority. With many companies trying to cope up with their customers' needs and demands, the concept of the call center was born.

A call center normally operates with all its agents (or customer service representatives) in one central location. It is equipped to handle a large amount of transactions between customers and the call center agents. Transactions may be carried out through a variety of media. The telephone is the foremost form of communication in call centers today. However, transactions are also carried out via email and the live chat through the Internet.

Call centers offer a wide range of services. The first thought that comes to mind for many is support - product information, technical support, and all sorts of after sales services. However, call centers can offer more than that. They also deal with marketing and sales. Telemarketing is an aggressive form of selling your product and can yield very good results. Call centers cater to businesses which aim to increase their sales as well as provide customer services. One example would be credit card companies.

While aiming to provide information and assistance to customers, they can also

increase their revenue through sales spiels given by their agents. Another service that can be dealt with by a call center is debt collection. Credit bureaus also make use of call centers to provide information on a person's credit rating. In effect, basically anything that has to do with your customers can be done through call centers.

What is the typical set up in a call center? The term call center brings up images of wide open work spaces, with small workstations containing a computer, headset, and telephone dialer. The practice is increasingly turning to the linking of data and voice in one pathway. This integration makes for more efficient work practices and is called Computer Telephony Integration (CTI). Individual agents are normally managed by a floor supervisor who also takes calls when the need arises.

Setting up a call center requires certain technology to be applied. There is a wide range of available technologies for call centers today. More often than not, different types of technologies are combined in order to achieve the most effective and efficient set up. The Computer Telephony Integration has already been mentioned is one of the trends in the business today. In fact, CTI is used to combine most applications used in call centers - voice, email, fax, and web. CTI provides many functions such as caller ID, on screen dialing, on screen phone controls (conference calls, hang up, hold, etc.), and agent status control (whether agent is available for calls or not).

With all these advances in technology and developments in consumer-oriented practices, the call center has emerged as an ideal solution for many companies. The call center provides standardized service to customers and helps cut the cost. In addition to that, the separate entity of the call center subtracts from the actual operational considerations of the company.