



Effecting Behavioral Change

By Ted Gannan

Rolling out new software and processes to employees or bringing a new employee up to speed is much like trying to master a new video game. With many new rules, moves and tactics the learning curve is steep. Then as the game progresses and becomes more complex even more rules, moves and tactics must be mastered. This experience can be compared to solving complex customer issues within a dynamic environment in which the rules of the business, products and the operating environment are constantly changing. However, rolling out new software, products or processes across a call center can cost a great deal more than the bargain price of a hot, new game. The consequence of poor performance affects customers as well as creates a financial impact. Additionally, the cost of knowledge transfer to support change across a business grows exponentially as existing employees move to different roles or leave.

Furthermore, agents, who miscommunicate information, because they rely on memories of out-of-date information or are unable to accurately interpret new information on the fly, can have disastrous effects on customer service. Unfortunately, there is no reset button on customer interactions. Customer relationships suffer as customers call back and receive different information about the same issue – again and again.

Recent data shows the average knowledge worker spends 15% of their time looking for information – and only 50% of that time do they find it. Without role-specific knowledge transfer to support the change, the possibility of errors and rework are unbelievably high. Even when businesses incorporate training prior to a change event, support costs can increase dramatically days and weeks after roll out of a change initiative. Agents forget what they learned in class and then rely on peers supervisors or internal help desks. This escalation problem impedes productivity, and lowers first time resolution rates. Businesses may rely on self-support systems such as corporate search engines to answer employee inquiries. However, these often waste critical time with trails to inapplicable information, incomprehensible documents, or even out-of-date or wrong information.

Not Enough Learning Time Before the Game: Just as game players load a new game and play practice sessions just before diving into the game itself, new hires spend time in orientation, learning new processes and software skills. The difference is that in the business world newly acquired knowledge is often not immediately put into practice. It may take days or weeks before the new information is called into action on the job, by which time it may be lost and competency declines. In most work environments there is not enough time to go through training right at the moment it is needed. This is the cause of high internal support costs and poor adoption of systems, processes and the ability to keep up with constantly changing information.

Meeting Knowledge Transfer Challenges with Performance-Centered Knowledge Management: Even experienced game players can get stuck when they encounter a new situation in a game, which is why some games offer context-specific hints to the player at this time. When such inherent hints are unavailable, many players will look up a ‘cheat sheet’ or ‘walkthrough’ online to help them through. In

both cases they are not looking for more training – they just want a bit of help to get them moving with the game.

How can an organization establish a better knowledge transfer approach or offer fast access to the right information? Solid results can be achieved using a performance-centered knowledge management system.

Performance-centered knowledge management systems are much like inbuilt hints which are designed to support employees in the midst of performing the job. Such knowledge systems deliver the right and most up-to-date information available – at the “moment of need” – while executing the task. For call centers, such a system reduces call handling times, training times, and the number of call escalations.

Call Center Achieves Dramatic Results with Performance-Centered Knowledge Management:

An example of competency improvements through performance-centered knowledge management can be illustrated by Austar, a leading subscription television provider in Australia. Austar realized it needed to improve communications with frontline customer service personnel. Despite receiving regular updates, staff found it increasingly difficult to keep up with the growing amount of complex product and system information. Accessing that information in a timely manner while on the phone with customers added further pressure. Previously, Austar relied heavily on email, various intranet sites, meetings and briefings to communicate with staff. Because changes occur rapidly in business, this approach led to many inconsistencies in the way information was provided to staff and then managed by individuals across the organization.

By focusing on learning on-the-job through a support system, rather than through pre-roll-out instruction, Austar condensed training time from 8 to 3 weeks. Additionally, Austar experienced an improvement in the number of first time resolution of call inquiries as evidenced by a 20% drop in the amount of support escalation calls. Other benefits for Austar’s team were in-bound callers spent less time on hold.

Companies can decrease training costs and decrease costly personnel support with a self-service, performance-centered support system that improves workforce competency. Organizations should strive to transfer knowledge to employees in real-time, at the moment they need that knowledge. As employees gain competency and maintain it better, they enable the enterprise to support more products, higher complexity and intricate processes. An organization with these results would unquestionably be more popular than a best selling game!

For more information about how SupportPoint products can assist with your knowledge transfer strategy visit www.SupportPoint.com or call 888-254-4025. Ted Gannan is CEO of Panviva, developers of SupportPoint software. Designed to build competence in software, process and products by delivering actionable information, SupportPoint performance-centered knowledge management systems provides support for call centers and back-office operations with complex products, processes or application software. SupportPoint delivers continuous support after implementation for greater employee adoption and proficiency.