

Contact centers are rapidly adopting real-time post-call surveys. Research proves, measurement of the service experience should be done immediately upon completing the service to accurately measure the contact center experience. Essentially...the customer is quality monitoring the call. With the acceptance of this methodology comes the danger of using customer feedback that brings you closer to the brink of disaster. Melodrama? Perhaps - if poor management decisions and incorrect agent performance is assessed it will have a damaging impact to your organization. The end of your career is always closer than the end of your organization as you will ultimately be held accountable.

Your post-call survey program has been checked off of your list by implementing a 4-question survey. Short and sweet and what a great technical solution to your problem of not knowing how customers perceive the service delivered. What can you do with this information to drive change? How can you coach your agents to improve? How can you possibly use this information within your incentive or performance plan? How can you defend yourself and your center with this information?

Defending your center

When you hire agents, you hire an ambassador for the company. What customers assume when they call into your centers is that the agents *are* the company and are speaking directly for the company. Whether the call is an inquiry or to resolve problems, customers assume that agents can assist them. As research shows, if the interaction is successful (by the customer's definition) with a successful resolution or answer, the customer will have a more positive company image. An important part of your armor is the quantification of your center's effect on company image.

Customers do not hang up the phone and say "Well, Mary was very rude to me and I will never talk to her again." More likely - "I had a bad experience with Mary from XYZ company when I called and I will never buy their product again". Customers are likely to share their story with friends in an effort to impact their purchasing behavior. Good stories are told, but not as often.

If customers are not provided the opportunity to vent frustration about the company then the Agent ratings are negatively impacted. When this happens the survey results become an unfair Agent assessment and damages their trust in your performance measurement programs.

Understanding the impact of your center requires more than 1 of the 4 survey questions.

Defending your Agents

Customer feedback is a carrot and not a stick. We need to quantify service delivery to insure that the high level of service provided is proven and along the way, we find opportunities for improvement. You need armor for your agents to defend against the Ivory Tower when attention is focused on them because a customer contacted the CEO's office. When you know it's an aberration can you prove it?

Understanding the impact of your agents on the company requires more than 2 of the survey questions.

Customer Relationship Metrics (Metrics) provides fully-hosted EQM (External Quality Monitoring) services that centers leverage to collect Voice of the Customer data beyond the 4-question surveys. Agent feedback for coaching and performance models are more effective with a robust set of questions and supporting customer explanations for the scores. A few examples taken from the thousands of real-time post-call surveys Metrics collects every day provide the proof that you would need to defend your agents or to defend your HR team when an agent is dismissed:

For Coaching:

- “Have a better tone of voice and take an interest in the customer. She just sounded like she didn't want to be there today. I know we all have our bad days, but it would be nicer to hear someone more cheerful on the other end of the phone.”
- “I spoke to someone named Mary. The only thing is that unfortunately maybe she's having a bad day, but Mary has a tone of condescendence in her voice. It wasn't comfortable talking to someone who was condescending. At least it seemed that way. I don't know if you record your calls, so have a listen to the call and you'll understand what I mean.”
- “Treat people like you would want to be treated.”
- “The representative should act like she at least cares or likes her job. She acted like she doesn't care about the customer and I did not appreciate it. She just wasn't professional and acted like she didn't care so maybe she needs to get a new job.”
- “The associate should sound more awake. I felt I woke her up with the phone call.”
- “The representatives need to learn that when they're speaking to customers, not to change their tone of voice. When you get someone who you're trying to get them to help you, they don't need to get nasty about it. Please stay calm and courteous, and help the customer in a nice way. Don't get nasty about it.”

For Defense:

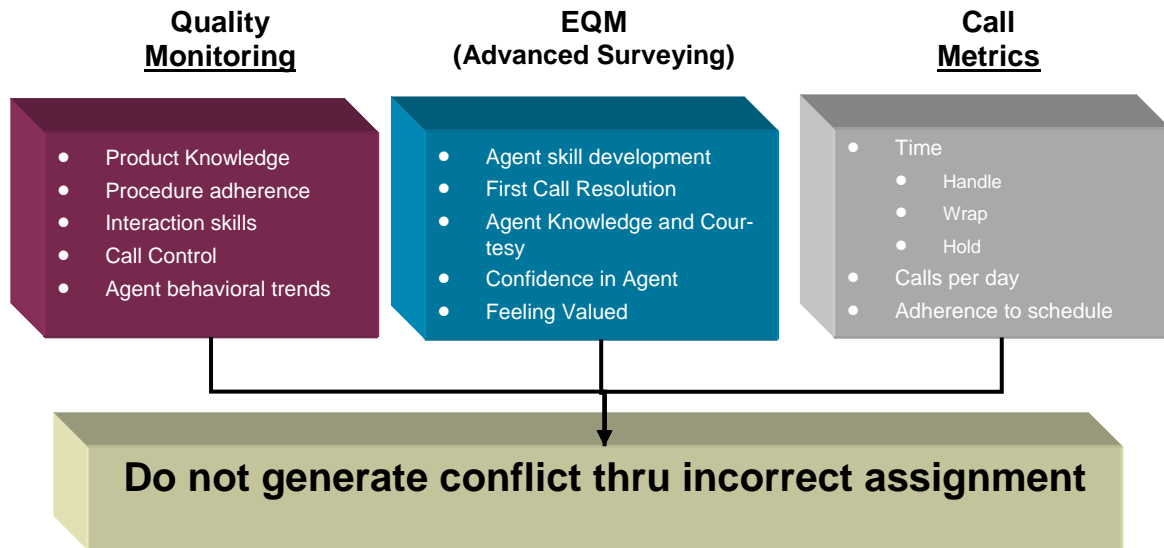
- I have never received such wonderful service, from any company that I've called. Wow!
- Whatever you are doing there at XYZ to make things better for us, keep doing it. I've noticed a big improvement over the past year.

The comments offer insight to what is happening with your agents and within your center. By listening to the voice of the customer, in conjunction with monitoring and call metrics, no one element is solely responsible for agent evaluation.

A common defense from your agents is “I am having a bad day”. Discounting this statement ignores the impact that each agent has on the company. One bad day equates to 50 customer contacts that do not drive satisfaction and loyalty and may actually cause defection. Assume 25 of the 50 defect at a customer lifetime value of \$1,000. One bad day just cost the company \$25,000 plus the cost for that agent to do the work (wage, benefits, technology).

The essence of a defensible process is one that is fair and comprehensive. The checks and balances that are in place allow the center management to be proactive rather than reactive. Someone having a bad day needs an intervention. Someone with periodic improvement opportunities needs to be coached. Someone who consistently delights every caller should be modeled.

Creating Alignment



With a more robust measurement program, you can clearly identify the management items. Customer feedback is just one of the elements of the three-pronged approach to quality which includes: 1. Call Metrics, 2. Quality Monitoring, and 3. An Immediate Evaluation by the caller regarding the call or External Quality Monitoring (EQM). By ensuring you use a three-pronged approach for your definition of quality, you will be able to see the whole picture and examine exactly what training or coaching a particular agent may need. This ensures a fair and consistent approach for all agents and allows for the voice of the customer *and* the voice of the agent to be heard when quality is at stake.

First Contact Resolution

First contact resolution is one of the most important and also one of the most difficult metrics to measure. Ultimately, your focus and effort must be to quantify FCR from the customer's perspective. There are issues within the resolution measurement that many do not understand. Do you understand Inquiry Resolution, Problem Resolution or First Contact Resolution? These are not the same concepts, have largely different success rates, but still drive caller satisfaction and ultimately drive satisfaction with your company.

Understanding the concepts and their subsequent impact requires more than 1 of survey questions.

Understanding Resolution and the impact to your center requires more than 1 of the 4 survey questions.

What is the Number?

So if you do a quick tally, you need 10-14 survey questions with the ability for the customers to explain the scores for a well rounded survey (customer EQM evaluation form). Anything less prevents you from properly analyzing, reporting, and defending your value and impact to the company. So next time you are trying to argue your cost center label ask yourself, "Is our 4-question survey fully helping us?"

Dr. Jodie Monger, is the President of Customer Relationship Metrics (www.Metrics.net), and the inventor of real-time post-call surveying in the contact center industry. Prior to creating Metrics she was the founding Associate Director of Purdue University's Center for Customer-Driven Quality. Her expertise is working with organizations to help capture and analyze the Voice of their Customer.



**For more information or to schedule an interview with Dr. Monger, please contact Jim Rembach at 336-288-8226 or Jim.Rembach@metrics.net.