



Integrate. Automate. Communicate.

Five Key Points Hospitals Need to Make in Building an Effective Business Case for a Call Quality Management Suite

Ensure High Levels of Service for All Callers

The importance of the communications running through your contact center demands ongoing attention, which includes constant evaluation of the level of service callers receive. A consistent, intuitive system for recording and evaluating how all calls are handled enables you to provide agents with the tools they need to deliver top-notch customer service every time they're on the phone. This ability to strengthen service offers strong ROI in the form of improved customer perception and retention—key points to consider when justifying the expense of a new system for call recording and quality management. Above all, proper call handling leads to heightened patient care and safety as the appropriate information is transferred quickly and accurately to the right people.

Building the Business Case for Call Recording

No organization can afford to let the quality of its customer service suffer in any way. Proper communications are essential to protecting the well-being of current and prospective patients. Callers need to reach the right people quickly to ensure this. Especially given the trend of contact center consolidation, customer service is even more important than ever for many hospitals. This is because a single location often handles all call-answering functions across multiple regional facilities. Consolidation also occurs as 'operator services' groups are combined with those that handle appointment scheduling, billing, nurse advice, and other functions. Although operators working in larger groups do so far more efficiently than multiple small groups of agents, these teams also field a wider variety of inquiries and may need a broader knowledge base. This means quality control is essential.

Those responsible for hospital communications understand the value of using a system to record and log all calls in and out of the hospital's contact center. However, many healthcare facilities still do not utilize this type of technology. Why? Most contact center administrators struggle with the ability to justify the expense and value of such a system through a cohesive business case.

To this end, the following are five reasons that can be used in building a business case for a call recording and logging product. It is important to note that much of the value derives from call logging systems that come bundled with tools for quality management. These tools enable your organization to provide a higher level of customer service and additional value when paired with the audio of recorded calls.

1. ENSURE HIGH CUSTOMER SERVICE LEVELS AND A REDUCTION IN TURNOVER THROUGH ONGOING MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF AGENTS' CALL-HANDLING SKILLS

As those involved in a hospital's contact center can tell you, this group acts as the first level of contact to the outside population and potential customer base. Each patient forms a perception of the hospital based on the quality of customer service delivered. Poorly handled calls can cause patients to look elsewhere for healthcare services, resulting in tens of thousands of dollars being lost in downstream revenue.

The importance of the communications running through your contact center demands ongoing attention. Included in this is constant evaluation of the level of service being offered to callers. Here is where the right call recording and logging system is key, as today's offerings include products that not only perform call recording, but also offer tools designed specifically for quality management. These tools enable supervisors the ability to review, rate, and report on operator performance based on your organizational goals, including the ability to establish your own criteria for operator scoring. This allows contact center supervisors to easily identify areas of strength and weakness for individual operators. Based on these findings, training can be more targeted for the individual.

Many at contact centers have found that effective quality monitoring reduces staff turnover, generating strong ROI. Weak or poorly trained staff can drive down morale, productivity, and patient and staff satisfaction while driving out top performers. Rather than be subject to the detrimental effects of weaker staff, top performers often choose to leave for other opportunities, and take with them not only their skills, but also the organization's investment in their training. The cost to source, hire, and train replacements is substantial, leading many hospitals to be proactive about continually polishing the skills of all staff members.

Another method of quality management is real-time situational awareness. While any call recording system allows supervisors to listen to stored calls, other systems add to this the ability to monitor a call in real time in a listen-only mode. Paired with line status information, such as how long a particular operator has been on the current call, the ability to be a passive listener in a conversation from a desktop computer allows staff supervisors full situational awareness.

CASE IN POINT:

Advocate Medical Group – Chicago, Illinois

When Advocate Medical Group began acquiring new physician practices, the ability to provide detailed records and a better audit trail became essential for building trust, as well as establishing and maintaining quality service standards not only for the patients, but also for internal customers. These 24/7 services included appointment scheduling, messaging, physician pages, appointment reminders, and medical advice provided to patients through the nurse line. The ability to easily access recordings of these calls was essential to validate and improve the quality of all communications.

After adding contact center recording and quality management, the team has achieved the following results:

- Recorded all calls in and out of the contact center
- Instituted a well-received coaching and mentoring tool based on evaluated recordings
- Established a reliable repository of call records useful for settling disputes about what transpired during a call
- Created an automated, user-friendly method of archiving all calls

“ADVOCATE MEDICAL GROUP’S PATIENT CARE EXPRESS HAS REALIZED SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS IN CALL QUALITY, CUSTOMER SATISFACTION, ASSOCIATE PERFORMANCE, AND OVERALL CONTACT CENTER PERFORMANCE. WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO IDENTIFY IMPROVEMENTS IN OUR CLINICAL QUALITY AND SAFETY OUTCOMES BY THE ABILITY TO CONDUCT AND REPORT IN-DEPTH ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS ON ADVERSE EVENTS AND INCIDENTS. THIS MAKES ADVOCATE MEDICAL GROUP A SAFER AND MORE RESPONSIBLE ORGANIZATION.”

Karen Baker, Administrative Supervisor
Advocate Medical Group’s Answering Service Department

2. COMPLY WITH GUIDELINES AND REQUIREMENTS FROM THE JOINT COMMISSION AND HIPAA

The Joint Commission's National Patient Safety Goals (NPSGs) were introduced to promote specific improvements in patient safety. These requirements highlight problematic areas in healthcare and outline solutions to these problems. One requirement in particular (NPSG.02.03.01) specifically addresses an improvement in the effectiveness of communication among caregivers: *"The organization measures, assesses and, if needed, takes action to improve the timeliness of reporting, and the timeliness of receipt of critical tests, and critical results and values by the responsible licensed caregiver."*

Both the Joint Commission and HIPAA require hospitals to provide documentation on the risk of information being released to the wrong parties, as well as their ability to protect private patient information. Using a call recording tool can assist hospitals in their ability to verify that these policies are being followed as well as provide ongoing tracking of and training on these procedures. Random sampling of call audio will enable supervisors to answer important questions such as whether an agent verified a patient's identity prior to providing sensitive information or disclosed superfluous information.

In addition, call recording can be a powerful ally when dealing with Medicare. Regulations in place today put the liability on the healthcare provider if a Medicare-covered patient is given incorrect coverage information. Erroneous information can cost the hospital if the patient disputes what he or she was told, and the ability to provide documented audio proving the hospital is not at fault could save a great deal of trouble.

3. CONDUCT ONGOING STAFF TRAINING BASED ON REAL-WORLD CALL SITUATIONS

As the demands on hospital contact centers become more pressing, more advanced agent performance evaluation tools have become necessary. These tools enable supervisors the ability to review, rate, and report on operator performance based on your organizational goals, including the ability to establish your own criteria for operator scoring. This allows contact center supervisors to easily identify areas of strength and weakness for individual operators.

Based on these findings, training can be more targeted for the individual. In fact, one of the best methods of training agents on best practices for how to handle a particular situation is to allow the review of calls where the right skills are well demonstrated. Superior quality management products enable calls to be searchable by score, which provides training materials tailored to a particular operator's skill set. The broad result of this focused training is a reduction in both employee turnover and costs associated with sourcing, hiring, and training new staff members.

4. ENSURE ACCOUNTABILITY AND AN EASILY ACCESSED RECORD OF THE TRUTH WITH AN AUDIT TRAIL

Contact center agents are on the front line of contact with a hospital's patient community and serve as ambassadors to this group. However, disputes over what was or was not said are inevitable, and finger pointing may follow. The ability to maintain an audit trail of conversations between the operator group and all callers both external and internal to the hospital is vital to ensure accountability—and protect your operators from erroneous claims. A call logging system helps you locate and review patient-operator conversations, providing an easy method of identifying the source for any miscommunication. Whether related to billing or medical triage advice, disputes are best settled early and with accurate information.

Similar to patient disputes, intra-departmental disagreements can also be stopped early. Audio of conversations can help settle disagreements over operator-physician collaborations such as on-call schedules or code calls. In addition, allowing hospital staff outside the contact center to listen to themselves as they speak with an operator can give a different perspective on how they communicate with this vital team.

Providing an audio audit trail becomes especially important when related to emergency situations. The operator group is often responsible for deploying code calls to rally the appropriate teams quickly in the event of situations such as cardiac arrest, bomb scares, etc. Having a set of standard operating procedures established for this should include the contact center's role and how the event was handled.

In the aftermath of such a scenario, a post-mortem evaluation may be performed by hospital safety, security, and legal personnel to retrace all steps that occurred. Operators may deal with calls about the incident, so related call audio is of tremendous value during this process. A few call logging systems can take this a step further, and provide a tool for scenario re-creation. This helps you take the call audio from multiple operators handling different calls and use embedded timestamp information to replay all audio in the right sequence.

5. PROMOTE PROFESSIONALISM BY MONITORING EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOR AND PHONE USAGE

While your operator group is likely comprised of motivated and polished professionals, awareness that all phone interactions are being recorded greatly diminishes the possibility of phone misuse. When paired with the knowledge that any call may be randomly chosen for scoring—the results of which many organizations tie directly to performance reviews and raises—you can be assured that call recording and monitoring will result in each employee putting his or her best foot forward.

Many operators, initially wary of “big brother” watching over their shoulder, come to realize the value of this monitoring once the system is able to resolve a miscommunication or dispute in their favor. Having the ability to pull an audio file to exonerate an operator when he or she has been incorrectly accused of wrongdoing by someone outside the contact center provides a tremendous morale boost and leaves operators appreciating the fact that the technology is in place. Likewise, using a well-handled call as an example to peers can be a source of pride for operators demonstrating exemplary skills in particular areas.

CONCLUSION

Recording and logging all calls going in and out of your contact center gives you a clear view of how to improve customer service for those interacting with your organization. Today's powerful applications give supervisors and agents the tools they need to understand how best to respond to calls and various types of conversations. Ultimately, ongoing scoring and training enable you to keep quality high and protect the reputation of your organization at all times.

About Amcom Software

Amcom Software provides technology solutions for organizations that depend on speed, accuracy, and productivity to manage mission-critical, day-to-day, emergency and event-driven communications. Amcom Software's advanced solutions for contact center communications, emergency management, mobile event notification, and paging infrastructure are used by thousands of leading organizations in hospitality, healthcare, education, business, and government. Amcom's recent acquisitions of Commtech Wireless and SDC Solutions, along with the additions of Xtend Communications and Telident E911 solutions, further solidify the company's market leadership.



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