



COLLABORATION THAT IMPROVES CUSTOMER SERVICE

First Call Resolution (FCR) has long been the Holy Grail of customer service operations. Now the most forward looking organisations are using Unified Communications to make sure that responsibility for FCR doesn't lie solely with the Contact Centre.

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In the current economic climate there is more focus than ever on delivering a great customer experience – and this is something that is being felt as keenly in the IT department as it is any other business function. In fact, a recent survey claimed that over 40 per cent of IT leaders now see delivering customer satisfaction as the most important way for them to contribute to the success of their organisations.¹

It's easy to see why. Numerous other research reports have shown that people will stop doing business with a company simply as a result of a poor contact centre experience. In a post-recession economy, this kind of factor can be the difference between success and failure.

The modern Contact Centre

In response, Contact Centres within enterprises are evolving rapidly. In fact, Contact Centres have moved far beyond the old 'factory farm' image to become a hotbed of enlightened management practice that encourages greater initiative, doesn't necessarily tie agents to one work station or location, and even enables

the recruitment of skilled home-based agents – many of whom are better motivated because of the flexibility on offer to them.

But these 'softer' factors notwithstanding, it's still hard results that really matter.

Traditionally, these have been measured through operational factors such as speed of answer, talk time, call abandon rates, occupancy rates or call monitoring scores.

Today, however, it is First Call Resolution (FCR) – defined simply as the ability to answer a customer's inquiry or problem in one call – that has emerged as the performance indicator that matters the most.

There are a number of very good reasons why:

- Firstly, resolving FCR reduces operating cost – the higher the total call volume that comes from customers who have to call back because their issue wasn't resolved

¹ Fujitsu, Dynamic Infrastructures and the Future of IT, 2009

the first time, the higher the cost to the business.

- Secondly, improving FCR improves employee satisfaction – it stands to reason that the stress on employees who handle second and third calls from customers is always going to be higher.
- And finally, better FCR increases customer satisfaction – according to figures from Service Quality Measurement Group, for every 1 per cent improvement in FCR, organisations get a 1 per cent improvement in customer satisfaction².

That latter point demonstrates a pretty strong correlation between cause and effect. And to meet the challenge of achieving this kind of result – the Contact Centre is evolving in other important ways too...

Unified Communications: enabling more effective collaboration between the Contact Centre and the rest of the enterprise

When people talk of the benefits of bringing together all forms of electronic and voice-based communication (Unified Communications, or UC) in the enterprise today they are usually referring to internal collaboration applications. So we often hear about how UC can improve the efficiency with which we use today's multiple communication tools; and how UC can also bring dispersed workers together to exchange ideas and solve problems in ways that just weren't possible before.

When we talk of UC in the Contact Centre on the other hand, unsurprisingly it is all about improving customer service. And the story here is usually about how new multi-media Contact Centres enable customers to communicate and interact with agents through whichever medium they choose – be it through email, voice, video, IM or even a Facebook application.

But what happens when you bring these two worlds together?

- Think about life in the linear, non-UC environment. When calls can't be resolved immediately, details are taken by a call centre operator and followed up with relevant technical support experts. Once the query has been resolved, the customer is contacted by the call centre operator. Hopefully, with a solution to their problem.

- Now think about the possibilities of dynamic, UC-enabled Contact Centre environment. The call centre operator captures the problem, through whichever medium it is posed, and then, with the customer still on the "line," reaches out to a number of resident experts within the enterprise simultaneously by using a combination of Presence and 'Find me/Follow me' functionality. The call is then handed directly to an expert to resolve, or by the operator directly based on feedback from the expert. *Or even via a three way conference call or text conversation with the customer.*

This is what's happening in the most advanced organisations today. They are exploiting the UC capabilities that enable the management of multiple multi-media interactions. They are mixing those capabilities with UC technologies that help customer service operations to break beyond the four walls of the Contact Centre and engage the entire enterprise in the all-important drive towards FCR. And the move is being made by businesses that don't just see the Contact Centre as 'cost centre', but who see their customer service function as a potential, defining strategic advantage.

² Service Quality Measurement Group, First Call Resolution: The Metric That Matters Most, 2006