

# Coach & Learn: 7 Tips for Happy Agents and Delighted Customers

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## 7 Tips for Happy Agents and Delighted Customers

Industry analysts estimate that contact centers spend up to 70% of their annual operating budgets on expenses associated with staffing, such as recruiting, salaries, benefits, bonuses and other personnel costs. In addition, high contact center agent attrition rates can significantly drain operating budgets and reduce morale, production and the overall customer experience. Sometimes it's nearly impossible to document all of the lost expenses—like when you have to replace an experienced agent with someone who just walked in the door. Suddenly, all of the investments you made in the departing agent have to restart with the newly hired one.

The best way to combat this is to proactively arm agents, through coaching and learning, with the tools they need to deliver the best customer experience. When your people have the knowledge and skills to give your customers what they want, you are positioning your company for long-term customer loyalty, revenue growth and success. What's more, you're creating a work environment where agents feel successful and therefore want to stick around.

So, if contact center agents, team leads, supervisors, managers and executives all agree that coaching and learning are critical components to the success of any contact center and company, why do these initiatives often get pushed to the back burner?

### Coach & Learn

#### Seven Steps to Success

Coaching is not a “one and done” class, nor is it sitting new agent hires next to your best agent(s) hoping they learn to use your systems and speak with your customers properly. Contact center coaching is a proactive process that is engrained into a culture dedicated to continuously improving agent skills, disciplines and loyalty.

# Developing an ongoing coaching and learning initiative that becomes engrained in your culture benefits everyone... employees, customers, shareholders and the brand at large.

To be successful with coaching (and to see it improve your contact center metrics), you've got to have a strategic vision that everyone—from executives to supervisors to agents—model on a day-to-day basis. This is what will transform your contact center into a haven for proactive learning, sharing and collaboration, which is what makes everyone better at their job. Which, by the way, is what leads to customer delight.

## Step 1:

### Use Call Recording to Create Teachable Moments

Call recording is not just for mitigating legal risks and complying with rules and regulations. Recorded calls can help you determine the strengths and weaknesses of your agents and identify opportunities for training at the agent, team and department level. Have your supervisors and agents review call recordings so they can hear themselves and strategize ways to improve service, deal with customer disputes, and learn ways to handle all types of interactions more effectively.

## Step 2:

### Listen and Learn

Enable supervisors to listen in (silently monitor) to live agent calls from their headset or mobile device so they can pinpoint agent trouble spots and offer advice on the fly via whispers or instant messages.

## Step 3:

### Sharpen Agent Skills with Quality Management

Quality management applications can be powerful coaching and learning tools since they enable supervisors to review every voice, email or web chat interaction and then score them against industry standards. This helps ensure agents receive positive and constructive feedback on their performance. With all of this information, they're best able to understand your service expectations and hone their skills to meet them. To get the most bang, make sure your quality management tool allows agents to respond to, or even contest, their quality ratings to ensure a fair scoring system and a collaborative work environment.

## Step 4:

### Understand the Nuances in Your Interactions

Using speech analytics tools, supervisors can quickly mine interaction intelligence from large volumes of recorded calls. Get granular by searching certain keywords and phrases to detect frustration or stress. A good speech analytics tool will even analyze caller voices and recognize different



**Once you identify problematic calls or trends, you should be able to share them (in the form of call recordings) as part of a continuous learning environment.**

emotions by zeroing in on variations in tone and pitch. Once you identify problematic calls or trends, you should be able to share them (in the form of call recordings) as part of a continuous learning environment. Using speech analytics to identify the nuances of your customer interactions will enable you to understand what customers really think about your products and services, and take immediate action to address any customer experience concerns.

#### **Step 5:**

##### Assess Where System Training is Needed

Capturing screen recordings of customer interactions using desktop analytics applications can reveal how well or poorly your agents perform day-to-day back-office business and how they access customer information. This is a great way for you to figure out if and when business application training is needed for agents, a team or the entire department.

#### **Step 6:**

##### Measure and Then Measure Some More

To get a full view of your best and worst performers, look to balanced reporting scorecards. Contact center managers can create custom, role-based scorecards and dashboards to measure the KPI (Key Performance Indicators) performance of all agents, queues, teams, groups and lines of business supported by the contact center. Ah, the gift of data. Beyond simply reporting metrics to senior management, balanced scorecards give you the insight you need to improve performance deficiencies using training and coaching.

**Your job is to give them the tools, the feedback, and the content to get them there. It takes commitment to weave coaching into your daily contact center operations.**

## Step 7:

### Put the Perfect Platform in Place

To truly deliver integrated coaching and learning, of course there has to be a culture built on empowering employees and delighting customers. But from a practical perspective, you need the right technology or none of this can work. Your coaching and learning module should allow supervisors, using the performance intelligence gathered from the tips above, to build and deliver personalized training programs and quizzes via voice, audio, call recording snippets, documents, e-support transactions and more. The best part is managers and supervisors can set alerts so they know when agents have completed (or are not completing) training modules so everyone stays on task. Delivering the right learning content at the right time can help improve individual, team and department performance as well as reduce the time needed to prepare for employee review cycles.

Don't let disruptions or lack of time distract you from developing your most precious asset—your people. Developing an ongoing coaching and learning initiative that becomes engrained in your culture benefits everyone... employees, customers, shareholders and the brand at large. The goal is for every agent to embody your vision when they're on the front lines with customers, to deeply understand your service expectations and be armed to meet them.

Your job is to give them the tools, the feedback, and the content to get them there. It takes commitment to weave coaching into your daily contact center operations. Lucky for contact center leaders, there are tools available that will help you make it happen while improving agent performance, lowering agent attrition rates, and elevating the entire customer experience and customer loyalty... all leading to a greater share of customers' wallets. Remember: Informed employees feel better about their jobs, deliver better service and everyone wins.

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