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**Global Contact Centre Benchmarking Report 2008**

**A DECADE OF**  
**INSIGHT**  
**Executive Summary**

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**Global Contact Centre Benchmarking Report 2008**

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INSIGHT**

**Executive Summary**

The purpose of this section is to provide a very high level view of some of the key statistics emerging from each chapter. The findings mentioned here are certainly not exhaustive, but give an indication of what is happening in the market at this time.

We will begin this summary with the fundamental KPI scorecard. The table offers a snapshot view of the key KPIs with which contact centres measure their performance. In addition, we have included a column of best practice scores that we believe contact centres should aim to achieve in order to be best practice contact centres.

We now continue with the extract findings from each of the chapters contained within the report, namely:

**Chapter 1** – Sample specifications and research methodology

**Chapter 2** – Strategy and development

**Chapter 3** – Financial rationale and management

**Chapter 4** – Customer

**Chapter 5** – Performance measures and metrics

**Chapter 6** – Processes and procedures

**Chapter 7** – Organisation

**Chapter 8** – Technology environment

	Overall 2006	Overall 2007	Overall 2008	Best Practice
Customer Satisfaction Score	82.0%	81.5%	80.4%	> 85%
First Contact Resolution Rate	83.0%	80.6%	80.9%	>80%
Agent Utilisation (% talk time)	59.0%	58.9%	56.3%	60%
Staff Attrition Rate (agent)	21.0%	24.1%	27.0%	< 10%
Staff Retention Rate	79.0%	75.9%	73.0%	90%
Staff Absenteeism Rate (agent)	11.0%	11.0%	11.0%	< 5%
Staff Attendance	89.0%	89.0%	89.0%	95%
Abandoned Call Rate (% Calls Abandoned)	12.0%	13.7%	13.6%	< 5%
Answer Rate	88.0%	86.3%	86.4%	95%
Speed-to-Answer (% Calls Answered in 10 sec)	70.0%	61.8%	63.5%	90% in 10 seconds
Cost per productive hour				USD 29

## CHAPTER 1

### EXTRACT FINDINGS:

- Asia-Pacific as well as Europe and UK represent the largest portion of the sample at 32% and 33% respectively. The Africa and Middle East sample has also increased quite substantially to 25%, offering us a more balanced view of the regions
- The survey this year has attracted a greater number of participants from larger organisations. 19% of all participants classified themselves as having more

than 20 000 employees across their organisations.

- There has been a drop in numbers of contact centres across organisations in certain sectors. This could be explained by organisations outsourcing functions not perceived as core to the business to 3rd party providers and reducing the need for a greater number of wholly owned operations.
- The majority of participating contact centres reported an annual turnover (across entire organisations) of greater than 20 million USD.

## CHAPTER 2

### EXTRACT FINDINGS:

- Contact centres ranked service (69.2%) as the top business strategy setting the context and direction for their development strategy, with sales having the lowest influence at 28.8%.
- Respondents listed quality of service as the top issue again this year at 28.7%.
- There seems to be no let up in the speed of change within the industry as centres planning to expand their scope are even higher than last year at just under 70%.
- Use of the agent-assisted telephone call channel has dropped very slightly to 63% on last year and IVR self service has risen to 12.6%. These two channels still dominate how calls are handled.
- Increasing efficiency has emerged as a predominant commercial driver with 47.1% of participants ranking it as one of their top three drivers.

### CONCLUSIONS

- A general shift towards a more internal focus, with specific attention being placed upon performance efficiency and cost reduction.
- Less priority being placed on increasing customer value through integrated sales and service or CRM initiatives.
- Businesses are looking at different business models for contact centres and location choice is becoming an ever more strategic decision in light of new technologies, ease of travel, cost savings, risk management and emergence of new markets.
- The value of contact centres is gaining ground within businesses as their strategies are increasingly aligned with the organisations'.
- CRM has dropped from its top spot and service improvement continues to be a key driver for contact centres, but this doesn't necessarily mean a better customer experience.

## CHAPTER 3

### EXTRACT FINDINGS:

- The measurement of telephone channel interactions is still highest at an overall average of 53% but centres are still not measuring cost per interaction for all channels.
- Despite the rising number of transactions using self service, only 33% of centres are proactively measuring the positive or negative impact on inbound call volumes.
- Self service can mean real cost benefits in lower interaction costs. The overall average cost of an IVR self service transaction is about USD 4 while telephone agent-assisted transactions average at about USD 34.
- Surprisingly 69% of centres are still not incentivising their customers to use lower cost channels.

### CONCLUSIONS

- Self service interactions can cost as little as 15% of costs when compared to those of interacting with a live agent. Well designed and appropriate self service applications can mean an enhanced service experience and real, sustainable cost benefits.
- By understanding the channels a customer wants to use and by using this information to effectively segment their customer base, businesses can offer rewards to repeat customers.
- Organisations need to start incentivising their customers to use cheaper self service channels. With more technologies meaning greater choice for customers, businesses need to work together with technology vendors to optimise agent-assisted and self service channels.
- Today's contact centres are still charging customers the same fees for using self service instead of agent-assisted channels. The challenge must be to drive costs down and plan for appropriate automation.
- There has been very little change on last year in centres being viewed as profit centres. Disappointingly, the majority of centres are still viewed as cost centres as businesses fail to see the financial value in terms of measurement of contact centre activities.

## CHAPTER 4

### EXTRACT FINDINGS:

- Organisations providing a single contact number has risen to 70% (from 51% in 2006) and a further 20% are planning to do this.
- Contact centres are contacting customers proactively for negative reasons. After the first new customer call, the top three reasons for contact are lapsed payments (33%), retention triggers (33%) and complaints (74%).
- Across the areas, the minority of centres have single or partial views of their customers. While 30% of centres are at least planning to implement an integrated customer view over the next year and a half, 11% of organisations are still not measuring customer satisfaction.

### CONCLUSIONS

- Contact centres appear to following a trend towards integration with the wider organisation. By aligning centre policies with the whole business, contact centres will be able to use the same segmentation system as the rest of the business.

## CHAPTER 5

### EXTRACT FINDINGS:

- Average call duration is still growing, following the trend over the past 10 years. In 1999, the average duration was around the 187 second mark with this year's average now at 239 seconds – a 30% increase. This may be as a result of the increasing proportion of complex enquiries being handled by human agents (as basic transactions migrate to self service channels)
- The most dramatic drop has taken place in the direct, cross or up-selling areas, which has seen the percentage of centres fall from well over 50% to 20% or less this year.
- The most widely used KPIs on a strategic basis remain customer satisfaction and complaints at 87% and 80% respectively.
- Progress has been made in the use and acceptance of non-voice channels with a drop of human voice transactions at 90% as shown 10 years ago to just over 50% now.
- Self service has become a firmly established, accepted and used channel by customers. Web and IVR-related self service now account for nearly one third of all inbound transactions.

- As call duration has increased gradually, wrap up times have dropped from six minutes to 95 seconds over three years - a 73% reduction.

### CONCLUSIONS:

- Although web and IVR-related self service now account for nearly one third of all inbound transactions, that level of acceptance or use has yet however to extend to speech recognition-based self service.
- Average speed to answer has spiked in the Technology and Media sector with the longest average talk and wrap-up times by far. Across the board these statistics have risen by about a third on last year, partly due to the increased adoption of voice self service and outsourcing over the past 12 months.
- Average call duration is still growing, following the trend over the past 10 years.
- CRM is also on the downswing with centres engaging in less outbound campaigns to welcome new customers or retain lapsed customers. The most dramatic drop has taken place in the direct, cross or up-selling areas.
- Complexity of enquiries is up and contact centres are making progress in call resolution, even though the rate has remained fairly static. More basic transactions are now handled through self service and human agents are faced with more complex calls.
- Contact centres are still using customer satisfaction and complaints as top KPIs in measuring performance. This has not kept pace with overall contact centre development in better targeting and monitoring and reporting to senior management.
- Centres are still relying on standard efficiency metrics as opposed to more advanced customer-oriented KPIs. An advanced MIS capability is an essential requirement as opposed to a preferred ability. Without this capability in place, contact centres will continue to be viewed as strategic enablers whilst still being judged through operational targets. On the whole, the operational and tactical KPIs used in contact centres, and subsequent reporting to the Board, is extremely concerning.
- It is clear though that organisations increasingly view and position contact centres as central to fulfilling service or CRM strategies. To reflect this evolution, we need to start thinking smart and measuring smarter.

## CHAPTER 6

### EXTRACT FINDINGS:

- Almost half of respondents say their contact centre model has been developed without any marked process management intervention.
- A high number of contact centres are still reporting minimal or limited cooperation between themselves and other business areas in redesigning processes.
- The top method of identifying customers remains agent driven. This method is effective, easy to do and low cost but as voice and data systems converge, this could usher a whole new standard for authentication through agent and digital solutions.
- European and, surprisingly, African markets have the highest number of empowered agents in their contact centres who can take financial decisions when dealing with customers based on their own judgement.
- The average contact centre operates for at least 21 hours a day with the number of 24 X 7 centres growing slightly.

### CONCLUSIONS:

- While contact centres are still mostly focused on people and technology issues, process optimisation is also receiving significant attention. This is in line with the growing focus being placed on first call resolution. Contact centres are focusing on ensuring that there is full end-to-end process visibility, control and management within their own borders.
- Technology is still being used to make up for process deficiencies but is unlikely to be sustained for much longer. The contact centres that will dominate the industry in the future are those that add to their architecture and people models by using more process efficiency.
- The biggest challenge facing contact centres is their ability to identify and deploy the right processes. This will need to happen before deploying technological solutions and vendors will have to work in partnership with the industry to make that happen.
- As the industry matures, expect process to be a major factor in contact centres realigning themselves with the changing needs of the business.
- Contact centres looking for that quick return on investment and a chance to beat their competitors should focus on process management for the future.

## CHAPTER 7

### EXTRACT FINDINGS:

- The telephone channel still has the highest service level for resolution at 70% of calls answered within 20 seconds. Email service levels are still being measured in days.
- Agents are becoming effective far more quickly in mature markets which highlights the need for effective training.
- 86.7% of respondents say their objectives are aligned to those of the overall business. 72.8% of managers can clearly state the objectives and targets of their centre, but only 48.7% of staff can do the same. A clear and concise communication strategy is vital to improve this.
- 50.3% of respondents have defined and published a specific policy on staff retention. This would be understandable if they had other policies like career development and reward schemes which would net similar results. However, they don't. Admittedly, only around 20% of respondents do not have a policy on incentives, but 45% have nothing in place to cover career development. Given the cost of attrition, this is highly unusual.
- 84% of absenteeism is short-term, sporadic absence. This is by far the easiest type of absence to control as it tends not to be linked to ongoing medical conditions.
- The existence of training and development policies has risen from 85% in 2005 to 93% in 2007.
- Staff attrition could be on the rise unless areas like staff retention (one of the slowest moving policies, crawling from 47% in 2005 to just over 50% in 2007) and career development (taking a backward step from 58% in 2005) are addressed.
- The majority of respondents, almost 80%, review remuneration on an annual basis. Over 65% of centres assume a fixed percentage increase and only a third directly link it to performance by measuring it before budgeting.

### CONCLUSION:

- The contact centre industry has an older workforce who are better skilled and are seeking greater challenges, yet we show little success in developing careers and retaining talent.

- Short-term absenteeism remains a problem despite the fast paced nature of the industry.
- Much of the data presented in this chapter shows that while the contact centre industry steams ahead, there is little real change in how we recruit, structure, manage, train, develop and deploy our staff.
- Contact centres need to work on developing policies on incentives and career development to encourage staff retention.

**The modern contact centre in 2008 needs to leave manual processes behind and the true measure of success should be the basic requirement of resolving calls first time and meeting customer needs.**

## CHAPTER 8

### EXTRACT FINDINGS:

- The top two most important technology trends for contact centres include business continuity planning and service availability.
- Other top technology trends include a move towards service-based architecture, the use of open standards and a move towards niche self service with a focus on high value.
- This year's growth figure of 46% in core infrastructure shows how quickly the use of IP-based technologies in contact centres is happening.
- The high growth in the use of IP in recording (75%) and IVR (82%) is as expected and shows that the overall contact centre architecture has now embraced IP as a relevant technology.
- From this year's benchmark data, it's clear that the major reasons for contact centres moving to IP are flexible architecture and a technology cost drive. The fact that over 30% of contact centres that have moved to IP to meet a specific business or functional requirement in the contact centre is also encouraging.
- Contact centres making use of automated outbound email has risen slightly from 25% to 27.9%. Outbound email gives businesses the ability to keep customers up to date on the status of their enquiry
- The use of web technologies in the contact centre is entering a phase where more specific applications of the technology are being explored. The number of those who plan to install online self service has increased by over 50% from last year.

### CONCLUSION

- Contact centres need a well defined products and technology roadmap to ensure that they will be able to meet the ongoing demands of customers and the business.
- Information and the management of data will become key in handling the complexities of the contact centre in the future.
- The modern contact centre in 2008 needs to leave manual processes behind and the true measure of success should be the basic requirement of resolving calls first time and meeting customer needs.
- The flexibility of technology will mean that organisations can adapt and change as they look for benefits in future technologies. The alignment of technology with business and operational objectives is becoming critical.
- Businesses and contact centres that understand how future technologies can help them cut costs and give them flexibility will see a real benefit for themselves and their customers.



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**Please complete your details in full: complete one form for each contact centre you would like to participate.**

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Job Title	
Company Name	
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Switchboard	(please include country and city code)
Mobile	(please include country and city code)
Facsimile	(please include country and city code)
Email	

### DELIVERY DETAILS

Physical Address
Town / City
Country / State
Postcode / ZIP
Continent

### CONTACT CENTRE DETAILS

Number of seats in your contact centre	<input type="text"/>
When was your contact centre established?	<input type="text"/>

What industry does your contact centre operate in? (select one)	<input type="checkbox"/> Healthcare and Pharmaceuticals
<input type="checkbox"/> Automotive and Manufacturing	<input type="checkbox"/> Media and Entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> Business Services (including outsourcing)	<input type="checkbox"/> Service Providers and Telecommunications
<input type="checkbox"/> Consumer Goods and Retail	<input type="checkbox"/> Technology
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<input type="checkbox"/> Government and Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Utilities and Energy

How many locations does your contact centre have?  (Number of locations)

How many other contact centres in your organisation?  (Number of contact centres)

Has your contact centre participated in previous Global Contact Centre Benchmarking Surveys? Yes  No

Would you like to complete a Benchmarking survey for each centre? Yes  No

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