

Catalyst

Newsletter from
Customer Service Excellence Foundation

Volume 1, Issue 1, May 2011

Chairman's Message



On behalf of all of us at Customer Service Excellence, I am delighted to present the first issue of our Monthly Newsletter, CATALYST.

Customer Service Excellence has come a long way in the last few years - from an idea incubated by a group of people from Servion Global Solutions committed to customer service to a formal organisation registered as a Section 25 Company intending to be a Catalyst to drive service excellence in the country. My colleagues on the Board of Customer Service Excellence are distinguished professionals who have done much in their respective fields to promote service delivery and are fully committed to this cause.

CATALYST is one more initiative from Customer Service Excellence to connect all like-minded people and provide a platform for sharing ideas, thoughts and experiences in the area of customer experience and customer interaction - in fact in any matter relating to the CUSTOMER.

We would welcome contributions from Members and readers to use CATALYST as a forum to promote and drive a service culture across organisations in the country and make India a truly global competitive player by being a Customer Experience driven economy.

Best wishes and happy reading!

Ramesh Venkateswaran

Chairman

Customer Service Excellence Foundation

Service Excellence - the Competitive Edge: Hi-Tech or Hi-Touch?

Customer Service Excellence conducted a one-day workshop on Service Excellence on 21 April, 2011 at Hotel Taj Coromandel, Chennai. The program was designed to sensitize participants on the importance of Professional Customer Service in today's environment and help participants improve on-the-job effectiveness through a better understanding of customer expectations and customer interaction.



Ramesh conducting the program



The participants

There was an overwhelming response for the program. Forty-six participants from diverse industries like Telecom, Machine Tools, Banks, Food, Automobiles, etc. actively participated in the program. Most of the participants rated the program as Excellent or Very Good in the Feedback Form. They appreciated the Content and Delivery as also the examples and audio-visuals.

At Customer Service Excellence, we are happy to note that so many companies strive for Service Excellence - this motivates us to drive this initiative with greater thrust.

Members of the Board



Ramesh Venkateswaran

*Chairman Custommerce,
Director, SDM Institute for Management Development*

Ramesh has over 17 years of corporate experience and 20 years of experience as a management consultant and trainer. He has worked with Voltas and TVS Motors and has rich sales, marketing, and general management experience. As a certified Auditor for ISO 9000 Quality Systems, consultant and trainer, Ramesh has worked with leading international and national organizations. Ramesh is a Gold Medalist from IIM Bangalore; Member of Board of Directors, Patni Computer Systems Limited; recipient of the Distinguished Alumni Award 2009 from IIM Bangalore. Ramesh is a Mechanical Engineer from the Indian Institute of Technology, Mumbai and a post graduate in Business Management from the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore.



R. Muralidharan

*Vice Chairman Custommerce
President - IT & Operations, Dhanlaxmi Bank*

Muralidharan is currently the President of Dhanlaxmi Bank, handling Information Technology, Operations, Alternate Channels and Customer Service Delivery. Murali has over 25 years experience in banking, encompassing sales and business development in corporate and retail banking. He was among the team that set up ICICI Bank in 1994 and grew with it while it went on to become India's largest private sector bank. A graduate in Science and post graduate in Economics, Murali is a regular speaker/teacher at various apex training institutions such as Bankers Training College, National Institute of Bank Management, Tata Management Training Centre.



Dr. A. Parasuraman

*James W. McLamore Chair in Marketing
Professor of Marketing - University of Miami School of Business Administration*

Parasuraman began his career as a research assistant at the computer center, Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad in 1971. He rose steadily in the academic field and in 1986 he became a full professor of marketing at Texas A & M University. He is a prolific researcher and author in the customer service arena. Parasuraman has a bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, M. B. A. from the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad and D. B. A. in Marketing from Indiana University.



Carol Borghesi

Sr. Vice President Customers First Culture, TELUS

Carol joined Bharti Airtel as Director - Customer Service after completing 26 years of building unmatched customer and service standards. She has worked extensively on assignments in the telecom, retail, and technology domains. Prior to joining Bharti Airtel, Carol was the Managing Director of 21st Century Customer Experience, a critical division of 21C, which is responsible for British Telecom's £10 billion investment to transform core network, systems architecture, portfolio, and customer experience. Carol is recognized as an exemplary leader in the United Kingdom and Europe, managing and transforming customer service and customer-related operations.



C.K. Sharma

Strategic Consultant, The Gallup Organization

CK, as C.K. Sharma is known, has worked with The Gallup Organization, Singapore as a Strategic Consultant. In this role, CK has provided thought leadership on key client engagements which have included Citibank, The World Bank, VISA, the WorkForce Development Agency of Singapore and OCBC Bank among others. From 2000 to 2005, CK was Gallup's Regional Director - Research and Consulting, Asia Pacific. From 1996 to April 2000, CK was Managing Director of Gallup's joint venture in India.



C.N. Ram

Group President & Chief Information Officer, Essar Group

C.N. Ram began his career as a graduate trainee with the Tata Iron and Steel Company in Jamshedpur. He went on to join Bank of America in 1982 where he was Vice President. After twelve years at Bank of America, Ram joined HDFC Bank where, till recently 2008, he was Head - Information Technology. Ram is a Director of Rural Shores Business Services Pvt. Ltd., a company he co-founded with 5 others to set up BPOs in villages pan-India. Ram holds a B.Tech. in Electronics from the Indian Institute of Technology, Chennai and a PG Diploma in Management from the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad.

Members of the Board



G. Shankaran Nair

President - Corporate Strategy, Servion Global Solutions

Shankaran is an executive with proven experience in building businesses from inception to scale. He has led multiple functions and operating divisions in senior executive roles. In his current role as President - Corporate Strategy at Servion, Shankaran is responsible for providing a strategic impetus to business planning; constantly refining the positioning of the organization and consequently its execution. He has over 15 years of experience as an entrepreneur, and has extensive experience in establishing sales and distribution networks. He serves on the panel of mentors for NASSCOM Emerge, a platform for emerging companies that is part of India's largest IT trade group. He is a graduate in economics and an MBA from the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore.



K. Balakrishnan

Managing Director and CEO, Servion Global Solutions

Balakrishnan Kavikkal (Bala) founded Servion along with four other partners in 1995 to provide solutions that can optimally handle every business contact that comes into an enterprise. The solutions included Strategic Consulting, Systems Integration/Professional services and Multimedia products for the Contact Center industry. Bala brings with him 18 years of experience in the telecom and IT industries. Prior to his current position as Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Servion, Bala was President of the North American operations of Servion. Bala holds a bachelor's degree in Electronics and Communication engineering from NITK, India.



Ramanujam Sridhar

CEO, Integrated brand-comm

After completing over 25 years in business and holding high-profile positions such as CEO of Pratibha Advertising (now Quadrant), Executive Director, RK Swamy BBDO and Executive Vice President, Mudra Communications, Ramanujam Sridhar founded brand-comm, in 1998. He is also a former President of the Advertising Club, Bangalore, a former president of the IIMB Alumni Association and was recently awarded the status of Distinguished Alumnus 2010. Sridhar is also a visiting professor in several leading management schools in the country including IIM, Bangalore. He has published three books 'One Land, One Billion Minds', a best-seller in India and its sequel 'Googly: Branding on Indian turf'. He has custom-designed programs on branding and communication for major corporations across the country. Oracle, Tata Teleservices, The Hindu, Lowe and 3M are a few of them. Sridhar is a postgraduate in Management from IIM Bangalore and has an M.A. in Economics from Loyola College, Chennai.

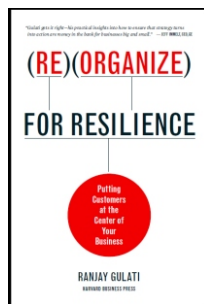
Book choice

Re-Organize for Resilience

by

Ranjay Gulati

Harvard Business Press

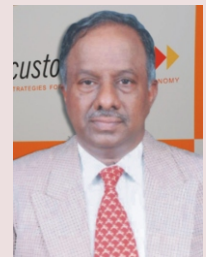


M. Venkatachalam

Chief Executive Officer

Custommerce Service

Excellence Foundation



Venkatachalam has worked in TVS Group for about 8 years handling Dealer Management, Advertising, Market Research and Planning for TVS Mopeds. He has also handled foreign collaborators like Suzuki, Japan and Whirlpool, U.S.A. He has about 18 years of business experience in durables marketing, printing, dotcom and online share trading. Prior to joining Custommerce, he was in water treatment industry. Venkatachalam holds a B.Tech. degree in Mechanical Engineering from IIT, Madras and a P.G.D.M. from IIM, Ahmedabad.

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Service Excellence in Contact Centres

How do you define and measure this?

Consumers call you either for doing a transaction or seek information or make a complaint. Increasing consumer base and large portfolio of services tends to exponentially increase these contact attempts. Every contact that a consumer makes is an opportunity to express your 'customer promise' and alternatively to break it too. Today, consumers are willing to switch their brands at the first instance of mismatch in expectations. And with the advent of social media, the word spreads pretty fast. So, a well thought out customer interaction strategy can help you leverage a situation which is a problem today. Contact centers help you to express your customer interaction strategy

Service Excellence in essence is meeting the promise made to your customer, while servicing him. This definition applies to all situations and channels of service. Disconnects arise when either the promise made to him is not in line with your brand or when the constraints you operate in, do not allow you to realize the promise made. Either way, it creates a gap between the customer's expectations and experience. The concept of service excellence is normally well understood in situations where there is face-to-face interaction with a consumer. It should not be any less for a contact center. However, it being a remote channel, service excellence is many times not construed as critical as it is seen in many other situations. Moreover, there are many non-persistent modes of interaction (e-mail) in which there is a possibility of a response time gap: hence scope for poorly serviced expectations. Contact management not being a key focus area for CXO's does not help either.

There are many metrics that are being used today to assess whether a Contact Centre is giving excellent service. Service Level, Sales per day and First Call Resolution are commonly used ones. Service Level helps you to measure productivity and experience, Sales per day helps track revenue earned and First Call Resolution captures your effectiveness in resolving customer issues at the first opportunity and hence measures customer experience. While one can see a lot of focus on the metrics, I am not sure if the larger impact is being understood and measured well. Take for example, a Service Level metric commonly called as 80/20 (Answering 80% of calls in 20 seconds). Call your friend and see whether you will wait for 20 seconds for him to answer (chances are that Telephone provider may disconnect you even before that!). You will realize that 20 seconds is a lot of time in today's context. The question is, are you comfortable having most of your customers waiting for 20 seconds and 20% of them waiting for much more than 20 seconds?

Is there a methodology for the same?

Towards process improvement, I would suggest a top-down approach where one starts from the promise made to the consumer. One needs to observe disconnects and misalignment in every stage there of - business objectives, operations layer and technology layer. For example, if an enterprise makes a promise to the market that it 'cares for the customer' then it has to be a conscious decision to build in experience improving scenarios in every node of customer interaction a customer could be greeted with

his name as soon as he calls in based on the details of the customer residing within the database of the enterprise. One could go further ahead and create a personalized IVR (Interactive Voice Response) menu with all the used transactions appearing right in the beginning. Alternatively, if cost control is important, an enterprise may promote the usage of IVR's with incentives like usage points. Disconnects arise when your promise to the market does not get validated with appropriate features in your services. Once these broad gaps are identified, they need to be quantified and substantiated with data as much as possible. The ones which can give maximum impact on the enterprises strategic objectives should be chosen, business case created, solution identified and a 'Bill-of-Opportunity' created. This then becomes the blueprint for all future improvements.

How do specific initiatives impact performance?

Let's take self-service as an initiative. IVR is a key technology to realize your Self-Service strategy An IVR is like your web page speaking to you. In simple words, an IVR can welcome, identify, segment and self-serve a customer - if done well, a customer may not need to speak to a human agent. A sound self-service strategy can bring the 'cost per call' down drastically. A transaction done by a human in a contact center can be even 40 times as costly as done on an IVR. Routine transactions like 'knowing your account balance' are the ones more suited to be realized through an IVR. However care should be taken that the self-service design does not deteriorate your customer experience while you drive your costs down. It also has to align with the market message. We have observed situations in India where they are diametrically opposite. I think the impact of a good self-service strategy on Contact Center operations and vice-versa is not appreciated enough in the industry.

In a country as diverse as India, every micro-segment has a specific expectation from a Contact Center / IVR. With the explosive penetration of mobile telephony, this problem has become very real. Needs of a well informed urbanite will be very different from, say a farmer in rural India. Today, both have the means of access to an enterprise through a common contact center. Any contact centre / IVR which does not mould itself to meet this diverse expectation leads to dissatisfaction. Hence currently, I think people use them either for convenience or as they have no other option. Even something as basic as accessibility is not up to the mark.

I think there are enough and more tools and means today to design a good contact experience. The future of communication including IP, 3G, Video Play, Virtual Contacts and Social Media make it very promising. We have all the answers and what we need are questions! Hence, what is most needed is a radical change in the decision-making environment on matters related to a contact center.



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The views expressed here are personal