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Driving customer satisfaction through agent performance management

By Rich Mahre

Customer satisfaction is a rich topic that can be daunting for any business to tackle, however there is a starting point that contact centers are well versed in that is the best starting point – managing agent performance. It's intuitively obvious to even the most casual observer that if an agent handles a transaction quickly, efficiently and with an outcome the customer expects, the customer will be satisfied. So how do we apply this jewel of an insight to your contact center?

If you record calls, you undoubtedly have an agent performance scorecard. Does it serve the purpose of your customer to deliver a frictionless and relevant transaction? Using the latter as your guide, apply a critical eye to the scorecard to assure you are meeting your customers' needs. Recast subjective measures into objective measures. An agent scorecard question that seems universal is variations on: "Did the agent hand the transaction smoothly." Forgetting for the moment that every supervisor might have a different interpretation of the question, what does the agent need to say to make the transaction go smoothly? It usually starts with "Thank you for calling, how can I help you today." Using speech analytics to report out that the agent said and reporting what the customer's response is the starting point for assuring that the agent is on track to handling the customer's needs. Conduct this exercise with every scorecard question. Apply changes liberally. Agent scorecards can be like flying a plane, even the same flight plan can deliver a different experience depending on conditions. Thus, the speech analytics truism: Implement the scorecard into production; evaluate results, tune the syntax, repeat.

Continuous improvements to agent scorecards are de rigueur for contact center managers and if not already, so should accurately capturing the measures that matter most. While a good greeting to ask the customer's name; repeating throughout the call is important, it is rarely as important as assuring that the agent understands what the customer is calling about and resolving the issue quickly. This is where the art of tuning a scorecard category comes into its own. How? Creating scorecard categories that capture the reasons why a customer is calling and scoring the agent's resolution is the prescription. While the latter is easy to say, it requires a nuanced understand of the alternate phrases an agent may say within a variable timeframe of the customer's response. One of the most telling descriptions I've heard from my speech analytics colleagues is "think like a transcription engine" and you'll be able to create a meaningful agent performance scorecard that will deliver a better customer experience.

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