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2012 White Paper

OPERATING A CUSTOMER-FOCUSED CONTACT CENTER

By Brian O'Mara
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"You'll never have a product or price advantage again. They can be easily duplicated, but a strong customer service culture can't be copied."
- Jerry Fritz, Author of *Breakthrough Customer Service, Best Practices in Customer Service, Success Is A Team Effort, and Sizzling Customer Service*

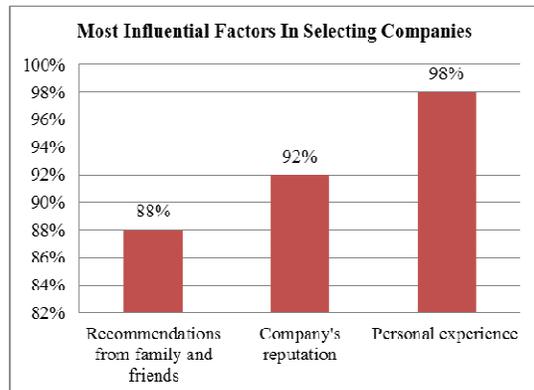
Call centers have become the target of many jokes and criticisms in the U.S. today. They have notoriously been painted in a negative light thanks to the increase of automated answering systems and outsourcing to foreign countries. The Discover Card "My Name is Peggy" commercial and television comedy series, "Outsourced," are just a couple examples.

Clearly, Americans do not consider these practices good customer service. Yet, many companies fail to deliver on their brand promise, risking current and potential customers. According to the 2010 American Express Global Customer Service Barometer¹:

- 61 percent of Americans report that quality customer service is more important to them in today's economic environment
- Only 37 percent believe that companies have increased their focus on providing quality service during economic struggles
- 27 percent feel businesses have not changed their attitude toward customer service
- 28 percent say that companies are now paying less attention to good service

In fact, consumers say the three most influential factors when deciding which companies they do business with include personal experience (98 percent), a company's reputation or brand (92 percent), and recommendations from friends and family (88 percent).

Often, the call center is a customer's first point of contact, so making an early positive impression is crucial to customer satisfaction.



¹ <http://about.americanexpress.com/news/pr/2010/barometer.aspx>



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Case Study in Customer-Focused Contact Centers

Safelite AutoGlass® is a multi-faceted vehicle glass and claims management service organization that operates four contact centers handling an average of 15 million calls per year. The contact centers are ISO-certified and boast an average speed to answer of 11 seconds, 88 percent of all calls answered within 20 seconds or less, and an abandon rate of less than 3 percent. Following are our strategies to create customer-focused contact centers.

Hire for Talent and Create an Empowering Training Program

At Safelite AutoGlass®, our contact centers are staffed by professional Customer Service Representatives (CSRs). Our hiring philosophy is to hire for personality and train for skill; it is a philosophy that serves us well. Efforts are focused on finding talented people that exhibit self-discipline, ambition, compassion and empathy. These "soft skills" are more important than text or mechanics that can be developed in a training lab.

Safelite® uses a targeted selection process that was developed by internal and external experts. The focus is on thorough, fact-based identification of the behavioral traits and the use of multiple, trained interviewers. Interviewers use techniques that seek to identify past behavior as a predictor of future behavior and performance.

Once hired, training for CSRs includes a two-week program. The goal is to help them build confidence and affirmation that they can do what they need to do to serve the customer. Some call centers place too much burden on the CSR, not providing the systems that allow them to succeed. Safelite® invests in a sophisticated Internet-based system called the Safelite® University to manage calls and seamlessly integrate with insurance companies as well as our technician scheduling system.

The first week is instructor-led classroom training. This includes interactive practice with the Internet-based system. Potential CSRs are then tested for retention before the second week of training, which consists of taking live calls with a sales coordinator close by to assist as needed. Ongoing assessment along the way helps identify gaps in knowledge so they can be address quickly. Once they are comfortable, they are then introduced into the official call center. Easing them into the system in this controlled environment ensures they are ready to take customer calls professionally and courteously.

The Five Bs of Customer Service

Among the training CSRs receive is an easy-to-remember system for remembering how to delight clients. We call it "The Five Bs":

1. Be Sure
2. Be Helpful
3. Be Sympathetic
4. Be Honest
5. Be Appreciative



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Sophisticated Systems, Personal Touch

Safelite® University supports the philosophies in which CSRs are trained so that the practices are enforced right from their desktops and easy to use. It replaces all written materials including frequently used phone numbers, FAQs, internal information, and so on. In fact, Safelite® University earned the Outstanding Human Performance Award from the International Society for Performance Improvement. The platform received recognition as part of the Award of Excellence Program, which showcases excellence in the field of human performance technology.

The online Safelite® University is a better solution as opposed to outdated catalogs or binders that are hard to search for needed answers. This results in a better experience for the customer as well – they are not inconvenienced while CSRs research answers to their questions. With the digital format, it is updated daily so information is always fresh.

In addition to empowering CSRs with Safelite® University, we staff one coach to every 18 full-time equivalent CSR. Coaches are readily available to provide support as calls come in and they provide frequent real-time feedback on performance. All calls are recorded so on a regular basis, a coach will review them with the CSR to identify strengths and areas for improvement. They review voice volume, tone and pace in addition to how calls are managed. They are performed at random so a CSR does not know when they may be reviewed, which means they are encouraged to always perform at their highest ability.

As a checkpoint, quality assessment teams also audits calls at random to calibrate between what the coach observes and an independent, unbiased observer.

As simple as it seems, the environment has a big impact on performance. Safelite® has gone to great lengths to create conducive work stations with natural light, clean spaces, attractive walls and carpet. What is good for the employee influences the customer experience.

All of these elements together support simplicity so that the CSRs' personalities can come out while serving customers.

Rewarding Success

A strong employee engagement and incentive program must be in place. While Safelite's compensation model rewards top customer service performers based on quality, not volume, there are also many award programs in place to recognize and celebrate these individuals. The Excellence in Service award is given to CSRs when a customer writes in with a compliment. As these awards add up, employees earn points that can be used for discounts in groceries, apparel, gas, movies, and electronics through our Safelite® Reward Program. Those who earn the most Excellence in Service awards become part of the "Hall of Fame" where their photos are framed in our lobby.

Our parent company, Belron®, which has a presence in 34 countries, also has an international Excellence in Customer Service Award for which we nominate our best CSRs.



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It's also important to recognize the simple things. When CSRs celebrate service anniversaries and letters of praise from customers, they receive a helium balloon at their desk – a little gesture that means so much to them (and brightens up the call center space).

Make It Work For You

The bottom line is that CSRs must feel appreciated in order for them to deliver customer delight. This can be achieved by giving them the tools to succeed, communicating to them what success looks like and celebrating it daily.

Unfortunately, the call center industry has become cost-focused. This sacrifices the customer experience. How each company implements this process may vary, but the model is the same everywhere. Happy employees make happy customers.

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About Safelite AutoGlass®

Safelite AutoGlass®, founded in 1947, is the nation's leading provider of vehicle glass repair and replacement services. In addition to nearly 500 stores, Safelite® provides mobile service to more than 95 percent of the U.S. population in all 50 states. The retail vehicle glass division specializes in replacing all types of vehicle glass damage in all types of vehicles. In addition to replacement services, the company operates a team of repair specialists that are dedicated to delivering the highest-quality windshield chip and crack repairs in the industry.

In addition, Safelite® provides property and claims management services to more than 100 insurance and fleet clients, including 18 of the top 30 U.S. property and casualty insurance companies. A Safelite® operates four national contact centers and manages a network of more than 10,500 claim fulfillment providers.

Safelite® is also the nation's largest exclusively domestic producer of windshields for the vehicle glass replacement market.

The Columbus, Ohio-based company employs nearly 10,000 people across the United States and served more than 4.4 million customers last year.

For more information, visit Safelite.com.