

## White Paper: Five Key Strategies to Improve Customer Service through the Call Centre

Having a happy, positive contact centre experience might seem like an oxymoron. We all have experienced dialing into a customer support line only to be left on hold, or to be transferred multiple times to the wrong agents, or being forced to give the same basic information over and over again.

The good news is that with the right planning, many of these common frustrations can be easily alleviated and avoided. Informed organizations today have access to flexible, user-friendly tools that are not only designed to help provide quality support to customers at a low, efficient cost; but also to provide the ability to realize a substantial return on your investment in technology. This paper highlights five simple strategies any organization should consider to cost-effectively increase the level of service of their support lines.

### Strategy #1: Design the Contact Centre with Your Customers in Mind

Building a base of satisfied and loyal customers should be the goal of every part of your business – from sales and marketing to human resources and customer support. When a customer is happy they will stay, continue to support your offering, and are more likely to promote your products and services to others. It requires a concerted effort to make and keep most customers happy

On the other hand, when they have a bad experience, it's likely they will simply take their business elsewhere. Unlike the happy customer experience, a bad customer experience takes little or no work at all.

Your contact centre is not exempt from this rule; in reality your contact centre usually “makes or breaks” the customer experience. In your client's eyes, contact centres have become the front line, and are an extension of your overall corporate image and brand. In many instances, the contact centre is the only point of contact your customers have with your organization. Therefore, it's critical that your contact centre experience is not only pleasant, but wildly exceeds customer expectations.

One of the best ways to make sure you are delivering a high-quality customer experience is to design a solution with your caller in mind. PipeVines sees this as two simple words; **anticipate** and **deliver**.

Anticipating caller issues will help you effectively address their needs and will help resolve them quickly. Once the need is identified, it then becomes critical that the resolution be delivered efficiently. In customer service, there is nothing worse than if the customer feels they are being ignored or have been forgotten about.

If your contact centre is built around a true understanding of the needs of your customers, your customer service levels and your bottom line will see the results. There is a proliferation of automated contact centre solutions on the market that are designed to help create a customer-oriented caller experience. These solutions include Integrated Voice Recognition (IVR) options and other intelligent design features that help a customer easily navigate the system, and help the system recognize the caller. For example, the system can recognize the caller based on caller ID and respond in a personalized manner.

It is less successful, however, if once transferred to a live agent the agent, the live agent needs to ask for information previously provided all over again. Even worse, if the agent needs to refer elsewhere in the organization for an answer, and promises to call the client back, and then does not – then that becomes a morbid offense in the client’s eyes.

### **Strategy #2: Don't Be Afraid To Automate**

You hear it all the time: when calling into an organization’s help line, callers would rather speak to a live person. What the caller really wants, however, is to get the information they need – quickly, easily and efficiently regardless of whether they are talking to a live person or an automated system. By supplementing your live agent support centre with automation – used by both your callers and your agents - you actually help increase the satisfaction of your callers by enabling your support personnel to more effectively address customer inquiries or concerns.

Today’s support centre solutions integrate automated, interactive options that help you more effectively identify customer questions or issues, ensure they are routed to the correct agent, and reduce the amount of data collection required by the agent once the call reaches them by collecting that data up front, among other benefits. All of this ultimately results in a streamlined and positive customer experience.

Unlike the ‘proliferation’ of automated contact centre solutions on the market, only PipeVines takes the standard telephone automation one expects in a robust contact centre, and factors it up a notch by turning it into a true Customer Interaction Management (CIM) centre. By delivering true CIM workflow management tools in the form of the PipeVines Business Process Management (BPM) on Demand suite, PipeVines provides the tools business’ need to track client interaction. Amongst its many capabilities, BPM on Demand tracks, manages and monitors the “tasks” and “promises” made to clients by contact centre staff, and ensures 100% client satisfaction through optimal customer interaction methodologies.

### **Strategy #3: Be Flexible**

You’ve invested in the hardware and software to build your contact centre. You’ve invested in the IT and technical support needed to make sure your system is configured based on your support centre needs. Now, the business has new requirements and you need new options. A marketing campaign requires 50 additional staff to take calls, but you have only 3 additional telephones in the contact centre. Or perhaps a new product release is causing a significant increase in calls, but no one seems to be able to tell the boss why these calls are coming in; better get the programmers to build a call tracking application.

Both are seemingly simple issues, but if you are using premise-based or other complex solutions, simple changes can be extremely costly and time-consuming.

Issues such as this are quickly becoming a thing of the past. Today, hosted support centre solutions, such as PipeVines Contact Centre on Demand, make it possible for any organization to easily build contact centres based on their own unique needs. They also provide the flexibility to modify or update options in the call flow, work flow and data capture details at any time.

If space or equipment is at a premium, hosted solutions allow agents to be at multiple locations and seemingly act and be measured and monitored as one. Issue tracking, contact management,

knowledge management and call scripting are all features that can be selected and integrated into a hosted solution at the click of a mouse, without requiring additional costs or internal IT staff support.

These tools enable you to take the money you would have previously spent on telephone systems, hardware, software, maintenance, and upgrades and allocate those funds other areas where your company excels. Hosted solutions are all about flexibility. They allow you to change the call flow at a moment's notice. They allow you to immediately scale to meet peak call volume levels. They allow you to quickly react to ever-changing customer needs and demands. Most important of all, the best-in-practice providers of hosted solutions immediately present you with information as to how well your company is meeting your client's expectations. All of these things were not previously possible with inflexible, on-premise solutions.

#### **Strategy # 4: Build a "Smart" Solution**

It doesn't sound like much, but so many businesses get it so wrong; the best way to serve your customers is to have the information they need, when they need it.

To maximize the benefits of your contact centre, it is important that your customer data is readily available to resolve customer issues or inquiries. It is also a huge benefit to tie your own customer information into your contact centre solution to enable information to be easily extracted and utilized on the call to quickly identify and resolve customer questions or issues.

Today's technology enables contact centre solutions to integrate fully with customer databases or even internal or web-based CRM systems. When a call comes in, these solutions are able to access your company's database to retrieve related details, such as customer records, purchase history, or billing information, to facilitate the call. The contact centre agent can then use this information to verify account status, identify problems with the online transaction, and more efficiently troubleshoot whichever issue prompted the customer to call.

Customer Interaction Management (CIM) systems, such as provided by PipeVines, add additional strategic knowledge to the contact centre. Whereas CRM may tell you that a client called, CIM tells you:

- Who called?
- When did they call?
- Who took the call?
- What was the reason for the call?
- Was the issue resolved?
- How was it resolved?
- If it wasn't resolved immediately, what subsequent events or "tasks" were to happen?
- Did they happen?
- Who made it happen? Did it happen on time?
- If it didn't happen on time, why not? Was the issue escalated?

This is very powerful information either for the next time the client calls, or in analyzing your contact centre for areas of excellence and / or improvement.

#### **Strategy #5: Measure and Evaluate Your Efforts**

Probably more so than any other department in your business, the activities of your contact centre agents are the most measured metrics; how long to answer, average wait time, average length of

call, etc. Monitoring and measuring the process of your contact centre is critical to the success of your customer service efforts.

CIM takes measuring and reporting to a higher level, and has emerged as the key area where technology brings significant value for contact centres. It was once quite an accomplishment to record that a client called. Now, we need to know why they called and how well they were serviced – beyond just how long we talked with them.

Pressed to achieve and prove their results in supporting customers, the key is to now focus on metrics that provide true insight into the overall caller experience. With new capabilities available in contact centre software, companies can analyze true client interaction, response activity, 3rd party tasks required and their response times and other key metrics on a virtual real time basis.

The availability of web-based, real-time reporting empowers contact centre management to adjust efforts on the fly to make adjustments to their support centres as often as they like, and ultimately improve results and enhance customer satisfaction.

## Conclusion

Satisfied customers are the key to any organization's success. When your customers are sitting in a call queue, your organization is losing valuable face time. You risk alienating important customers by not knowing every bit of their previous interactions with your business. By taking advantage of the range and flexibility of contact centre solutions like PipeVines, you can dramatically increase the productivity of your support centre, reduce costs to your organization, and increase your customer's overall satisfaction.

## About PipeVines

PipeVines is the customer interaction management expert, offering on-demand browser based tools organizations need to handle and measure the customer experience. Delivered entirely as a hosted service, the complete PipeVines Contact Centre solutions require no specialized hardware or software, no telecom equipment and no up-front capital expenditures, making it an ideal solution for blending in-house, offsite or multi-site agents.

Our hosted solutions deliver a complete and integrated customer interaction communications platform - which provides a robust contact centre management functionality, and real time activity reporting with analytical and workflow tools that measure the customer interaction experience. This provides you with improved efficiency and visibility on customer relations, offered on a flexible "pay as you go" basis.

For more information, visit [www.PipeVines.com](http://www.PipeVines.com)