

# CONTACT management

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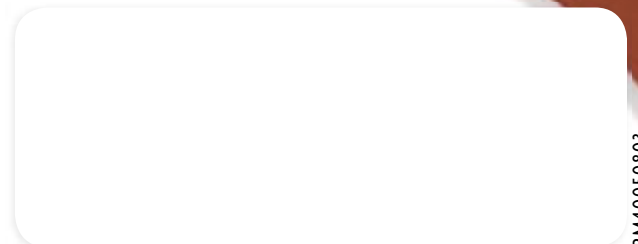
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## unwrap your centre's hidden gifts

Plus

- State of the industry
- Change management





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## features

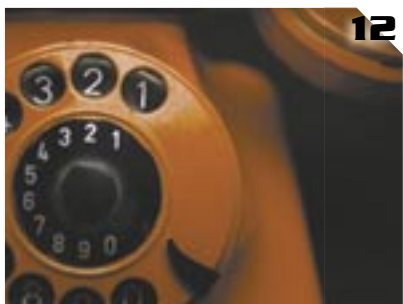


7

### Branching out

How to ramp up a centre in 90 days

By David Keating



12

### State of the industry

New rules being developed for Canada's telemarketers

By Phil Rogers & Jennifer Hefler

Technology helps meet customers' changing demands

By Jim O'Farrell

Global context is customer focus driven change

By Bill Durr

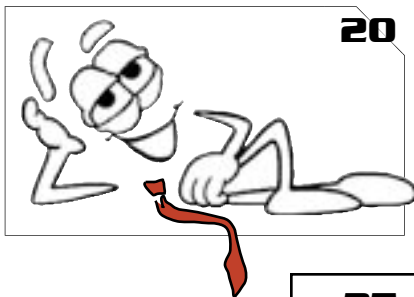


16

### ICCM Canada report

Contact centre cornucopia at Toronto show

By Susan Maclean



20

### Change management

Tips for properly managing change — By Frank Spitzogle

Apply knowledge management to create a performance culture

By Jacques Gaumond

Getting comfortable with change — By Sangeeta Bhatnagar

27

## association news

Canadian Call Management Association - Report by Linda Osip

ContactNB - Report by Angela Matchim

BC Contact Centre Association - Report by Jean Mitchell

## departments



24

4 FROM THE EDITOR

5 READERBOARD - The latest industry news

8 COMMENTARY

Adjust to new labour reality, warns CCC chair — By Doug Downing

24 PROFILE

Customer feedback affirms CorporaTel's strategies — By Susan Maclean

26 VOIPWATCH

Traditional phone systems become endangered species — By Bob Morgan

## Unwrapping your centre's potential

"Over the past five years, the call centre or 'contact centre' industry has exploded in Canada. Changes in the nature of the workforce, the acceleration of expectations for customer response times and improvements in technology have coalesced to drive activity in the contact centre environment in ways never before seen. As businesses look to service their customers and clients both more quickly and more cost effectively, the phone based 'call centre', and recently the technologically more sophisticated 'contact centre' have become key delivery models for many firms."

So reads the introduction of the *Contact Centres in Canada – the Competitive Landscape for Pay*, 2006 Compensation White Paper 1 from Mercer Human Resource Consulting and commissioned by Contact Centre Canada.

The report continues: "The contact centre model differs from the traditional call centre in several key respects. Contact centres use technology to communicate with their audience in several formats: phone, fax, email and web. None are face to face, and each requires an educated workforce of capable communicators with strong verbal and, increasingly, strong written communications skills."

Having attended the ICCM events in Chicago this summer and this fall in Toronto, I can attest to that explosion and sophistication also at the vendor level, particularly in terms of range and depth of offerings. Finding the best product or service that meets your centre's needs is clearly a challenge in itself. But, it's a challenge obviously worth facing – and without delay.

While we all know technology won't compensate for weak processes or poorly trained or motivated users, the competitiveness of this industry makes a higher degree of technological sophistication a requirement for success. Check out the profile of CorporaTel in this issue and the advantage its management feels it is getting from implementing VoIP technology, for example.

Further in the Mercer document introductory comments, it reads: "As the contact centre industry continues to expand in North America, employers must be prepared to face the challenges of dealing with attracting and retaining the best talent. Unfortunately, the demographic reality of the Canadian labour market is that of an ageing and shrinking pool of skilled workers, relative to the demand for qualified staff. Over the next five years, the annual growth rate of the labour force is expected to be less than one percent. This means increasing competition for skilled labour in Canada, at a time when the economy is strong, and unemployment is already at generational lows. This will be a tight market in which to attract, grow and keep key talent."

Equipping your staff with the best tools for their jobs will go a long way to attracting and retaining staff. Good luck with the hunt! We've got an aggressive editorial plan during the coming year to help you find the tools and deploy them to your greatest advantage. Stay tuned – and stay in touch! We want to hear how you're doing as you strive to embrace your centre's potential as a "key delivery model!"

Susan Maclean  
Editor



Thanks to Jeff Doran for photo.



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### next issue...

**JAN/FEB** — Strategies for the multi-channel environment; Web-enabled contact centres; and the controversial first call resolution goal; Internet technology guide; regional profile on BC

**MARCH/APRIL** — Developing global partnerships; International site selection strategy; the how and why of mystery calling; regional profile on Quebec

...SECTOR COUNCIL POSTS COMPENSATION WHITE PAPER...

The 2006 Mercer Compensation White Paper *Contact Centres in Canada – the Competitive Landscape for Pay* is available online to members of Contact Centre Canada. Membership is free.

In its white paper earlier this year, Mercer revealed that given over the next five years the annual growth rate of the labour force is expected to be less than one per cent, there will be increasing competition for skilled labour in Canada at a time when

the economy is strong and unemployment is already at generational lows. This will be a tight market in which to attract, grow and keep key talent. This paper explores current trends in competitive compensation levels to support attraction and retention strategies for contact centres. At the same time, we have explored skill-based role assessment which will allow employers to remain competitive while addressing the skill needs of the many types of contact

centres in the marketplace today.

With this latest white paper, Mercer Consulting reports that in our growth industry, the models used to staff contact centres vary widely to match the business objectives of each centre – and pay varies accordingly. The latest white paper offers this industry an overview of current compensation levels for agents across Canada at benchmark levels and in each of the core skill or functional areas of the contact centre. More detailed benchmark data is available by subscribing to Mercer's Contact Centre Compensation Survey, which this year marks its eighth year of publication. **CM**

...TELUS WINS CIPA AWARD FOR CSR TOOL...

It's not for sale, says Rob Durham, senior vice-president, client operations at TELUS, but it's already a winning product. On Nov. 1, the Smart Desktop developed by TELUS Consumer Solutions and implemented at more than 1,000 of the telecom's customer service sites earned the company a Canadian Information Productivity Award (CIPA).

The annual CIPA program celebrates innovation that leads to productivity. The Smart Desktop brought TELUS a silver award of excellence in the efficiency and operational improvements category.

In the past, customer service representatives relied on a customer-service-management application with various screens that required the CSR to enter the same information in multiple places, increasing the risk of transcription errors. Because multiple applications and tools often had to be used to serve the same client, time that could have been invested in selling to customers was often wasted navigating and sifting through information on multiple screens. Although responding to immediate client needs is the CSR's primary function, no tools were readily available to help identify current or future customer requirements.

To support the myriad of client requests, and wireless plan and feature options, the organization was eager to develop a comprehensive tool that would do better. Between the end of 2004 and mid-2005, TELUS invested \$6.5 million in its in-house development of Smart Desktop.

This sophisticated Web-services application permits CSRs to efficiently and easily characterize any customer account thoroughly and provide real-time set

up and provisioning of service. Requests from the customer service application are directed to the appropriate application at the legacy tier and the business logic tier at the back of the system. The result is immediate customer service.

With Smart Desktop, CSRs have everything with which to serve a customer on the screen. They can view offerings and promotions, move through a number of accounts quickly, open multiple accounts simultaneously and converse with one or multiple customers at the same time. Information is provided through pop-ups on the screen and "mouse-overs" for certain functions. Eliminating multiple re-keying tasks and automating business rules has decreased user errors tremendously.

The solution has reduced the tedious administrative aspects of the role and enabled CSRs to focus on up-selling. Between 2004 and 2005, feature sales, based on additional services to rate plans, have increased by more than 25 per cent across all products and more than 125 per cent for the Mike all-in-one communications tool.

In 2005, training time was reduced by four hours for each full-time equivalent staff member (FTE), saving \$112,968. The ramp-up time for each new hire was also reduced. This resulted in \$570,000 in savings or the equivalent of 10 FTEs. Estimated savings from reduced client service time and errors were \$744,575. Cost savings of approximately \$650,000 were realized due to a reduction of more than 80,000 call transfers. Total IT cost savings were \$1.3 million.

Watch next issue for a profile on Halton Region's contact centre, honoured by CIPA as a finalist. **CM**

...NORDIA WINS FLECHE D'OR AWARD...

Multi-contact customer care solutions provider Nordia received the Silver Flèche d'or Award in the Outsourcing category (50 agents and more). The Flèche d'or is organized by AMR (Relational Marketing Association). The St. Laurent, QC-based company was also a finalist in two other Flèche d'or categories with Chantal Couombe, a Nordia Agent, finalist in the "Agent of the Year" category, and Nadine Tournay, Team Manager at Nordia, in the "Supervisor of the Year" category.

The Silver award was largely the result of the VoIP Migration Project which delivered a state-of-the-art system enabling Nordia to channel all incoming calls from a given contract to two redundant soft-switch servers based in Nordia's centres. It seamlessly redistributes the calls, using VoIP, to any of Nordia's six contact centres, where skilled agents are available to support the service in a transparent manner, regardless of their geographical location. This makes it possible for Quebec and Ontario contact centres to act as a unique and virtual customer contact centre.

Last year Nordia won a "Gold Flèche d'or Award" with its MultiMedia California Relay Platform (MMRC), the OCTAS Award in 2005, and a Gold Best of Category CIPA (Canadian Information Productivity Awards) Awards for Efficiency and Operational Improvements, the most prestigious Canadian recognition in the technological industry. [www.nordia.ca](http://www.nordia.ca). **CM**

...GLOBAL FORUM: THREE DAYS TO SET THE INDUSTRY'S AGENDA FOR CHANGE...

The Inaugural Contact Centre Global Forum, which will be held in Cannes, France, from 25 – 27 April 2007, is the first event to bring together contact centre decision makers from four continents.

The Contact Centre Global Forum, through its partnership with 25 international industry associations, will focus on the results of the world's first survey to examine the thoughts and opinions of contact centre leaders from around the world. The Forum's delegates will address the challenges facing the industry and work together to outline an agenda for change.

The issues to be addressed by the Contact Centre Global Survey, which will be conducted amongst Forum delegates in the run up to the Forum, will include rising consumer expectations, the relevance of global standards, the rise of automation, the future of outbound, return on investment and the future of offshoring. The results will be presented in Cannes by Cara

Diemont, who also edits the Merchants Global Contact Centre Benchmarking Report. Her presentation will draw parallels between the Contact Centre Global Survey and the findings of the latest Global Contact Centre Benchmarking Report.

Forum Director Christina Wood comments: "The Contact Centre Global Forum is more than an industry event. It will act as a catalyst for change and progress within the increasingly global contact centre market. Our delegates, drawn from contact centre operations around the globe, will work together to identify positive actions that can be taken to address the challenges they face, as identified by the survey."

The 25 industry associations from four continents have become Forum Partners and will contribute to the Forum's agenda and benefit from a share in its revenues. "The associations will use this money to finance programs that will improve industry performance and perception in their

market," says Wood. In Canada, CAM-X has become a Forum Partner.

Details at [www.ccglobalsforum.com](http://www.ccglobalsforum.com)

...SCOTIABANK BRINGS HOME SILVER...

Like an Olympic sport, Canada won silver in the global competition created by ContactCenterWorld.com. Scotiabank won for Best Contact Center (250+ agents), beating out NIIT SmartServe in India and coming in second to the UK's National Australia Group Europe.

The competition ran on several levels for much of the year and concluded Nov. 9 with a gala dinner attended by 120 delegates of the two-day Contact Center World Awards Conference for Best of the Best in the World. Congratulations to Scotiabank! **CM**

...CONTACT CENTRE CANADA APPOINTS NEW HEAD...

Donna J. Miller, a human resources professional with over 20 years experience, replaced former executive director and CEO Elizabeth Thorn at Contact Centre Canada on Nov. 13, 2006.

Miller previously served as director, Human Resources Canada, at Assurant Solutions in Kingston, ON. Prior to joining the Ontario Lottery & Gaming Corporation in 2001, she was the president & CEO of Ideal Professional Services. Her work experience also includes the position of executive director of Kingston Area Training Advisory Committee and 10 years as area manager for Manpower Services Inc. Her degree in human resources management from Queen's University is augmented by experience in recruiting, hiring and training over 2,000 employees under budget and ahead of targeted schedule; developing retention programs that were adopted and implemented internationally; and developing and implementing corporate assessment tools that resulted



DONNA MILLER

cont'd on page 7 ↗

..TAKE-UP OF MULTI-CHANNEL STILL TOO LOW..

"Why aren't companies offering a myriad of ways for customers to reach them?" That question by Jim O'Farrell, vice-president of marketing, Talisma Corp., was preceded by his observation that there's a lack of co-ordinated response between phone, email and Web.

Talisma recently completed an audit of the customer service of the Globe and Mail's list of leading companies and, in November, released its findings in its 2006 *Canadian Top 100 eService Survey*. We'll have more on this in our next issue.

O'Farrell said Talisma performs individual company audits of how employees send emails, handle phone calls, search on the Web site and address frequently asked questions. With the eService Survey completed, audited companies can compare against the index.

He noted that some companies are "getting killed" with email. Nearly half of all email queries were ignored by the companies included in the audit.

Talisma is a provider of integrated, multi-channel Customer Interaction Management (CIM) solutions. O'Farrell explains that CIM is a layer managing the number of

different ways customers come in contact with a company – text message, self-help, phone log interaction. The company in early November released its CIM 8.0, said to empower organizations to proactively engage customers and prospects to further enhance the customer experience, improve service quality, and uncover new business opportunities.

"Our strategy is to augment CRM systems—static information like account addresses, phone numbers, opportunities, help tickets—and enterprise resource planning (ERP) and other order entry information systems," O'Farrell explained.

Talisma is one of the sponsors of the CIM Forum formed in July with founding members AOL, Dell, Microsoft, Epson, Pitney Bowes, eBay, Outsell, and Sprint. Co-managed by the management consulting and systems integration firm eVergance, the CIM Forum is like a user group with member business and technology organizations exploring best practices, technical infrastructure, and key performance indicators associated with creating consistently positive customer experiences. **CM**

# How to ramp up a centre in 90 days

BY GRANT LOMAS

**W**ith more American companies turning to India and China for inexpensive labour, North American business process outsourcer StarTek has called on Canada for thousands of call centre jobs to see what it has to offer and has been “very happy” with the decision.

In fact, StarTek is so happy with Canada that it recently opened two call centres in Canada, including Ontario sites in Thunder Bay and Hawkesbury, bringing approximately 250 jobs to each community. This is in addition to five existing centres located throughout Canada. The third call centre was launched this year in Petersburg, Virginia.

Ramping three call centres doesn't seem that significant until you consider that StarTek built out spaces for the three

centres to be operational in just 90 days - a task rarely attempted in the call centre industry, until now. And one that StarTek does not take lightly.

How does this company, which employs a total of about 8,000 people, including 3,500 in Canada, go from zero to three call centres in 90 days? It is all in the planning.

When considering Canadian sites, StarTek typically looks at small and mid-sized cities where the unemployment rate is higher than major Canadian cities.

The planning starts with crafting a build-out plan, developing community partnerships and improving the space, typically leased, for call centre functions. The community partnerships are instrumental, allowing StarTek to move quickly

in a team environment with local vendors, architects and city officials.

StarTek has a thorough due diligence process for selecting sites that are a good fit with StarTek's culture and business model. Some factors include unemployment rates, wage rates and union presence. StarTek also considers the willingness of the community leaders and city government to ensure StarTek's presence is of mutual benefit. The Canadian people have been a pleasure to work with.

Once the site is selected and partnerships established, StarTek quickly sizes up any physical improvements to the environment, which typically means power and mechanical infrastructure upgrades and the installation of emergency back-up generator.

Over the years StarTek has improved this build-out plan by sticking to tried-and-true facilities standards for things like workstations. Generous room between work stations is one standard for which StarTek is known. StarTek's standards squeezes more productivity space in its workstations than the law requires and designs large break areas for agents, wide corridors and high ceilings. We average about 110 to 120 square feet per person in the common areas and supervisors have 6' x 4' spaces. These types of design features make the centres more open, airy and less congested.

As any call centre manager will tell you, finding people to fill the jobs isn't always easy, but designing pleasing environments for its agents certainly helps employee morale. **CM**

Grant Lomas is VP of Real Estate, Facilities and Procurement for Denver, CO-based StarTek. [www.startek.com](http://www.startek.com) 303.262.4500

Photo: StarTek

## appoints new head - cont'd from page 6

in increased employee retention rate by 15 percent. This background is expected to enable Contact Centre Canada to follow its mandate in the face of a number of human resources challenges including raising the profile of the customer contact centre industry and recruitment and retention tactics.

Incorporated in February 2004, Contact Centre Canada is a national, not-for-profit organization made up of contact centre organizations, labour representatives, provincial industry associations, educational institutions, and vendors and consultants that provide services to the Canadian contact centre industry. Contact Centre Canada works in partnership with industry, labour and the academic community to create the strong and vibrant workforce needed to advance the local, national and international initiatives of the sector. **CM**

## ...TRG PUBLISHES THIRD VOLUME...

The Taylor Reach Group, Inc. (TRG) has published the third volume of its compendium series *Delivering Operational Innovation to Your Contact Center*. The publication is comprised of the past 10 issues of TRG's newsletter *Customer Reach*, which is distributed to 5,000 senior call and contact centre executives around the world.

The 105-page compendium Volume 3 covers *Customer Reach* issues from November 2005 to October 2006 and features articles, case studies, surveys and news related to call and contact centres. It is available from TRG for US\$69.95 or C\$77.00, plus \$5.00 shipping and handling, plus GST for Canadian orders. Orders of 10 copies or more will receive a 10 percent discount. 905-426-5055 or [cmacintyre@thetaylorreachgroup.com](mailto:cmacintyre@thetaylorreachgroup.com). **CM**

# Adjust to new labour reality, warns CCC chair

**The chair of the sector council Contact Centre Canada traces the growth of the industry and its failure to date to heed the signs pointing to massive staffing problems.**

BY DOUG DOWNING



As call centre leaders we have slowly come out of the dark, “behind the scene” processing areas of our companies and found ourselves accountable for the “front line” of customer contact, the hub of profit centres and the strategic assets of our companies.

Started much like Henry Ford’s assembly lines of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, call centres were a company’s version of internal outsourcing. They were a way to take large groups of lower paid staff and have them produce high volumes of transactions in low cost facilities. Wow! What a great business model.

There were empty facilities wherever you looked and an abundant supply of employable staff. Centres were built throughout the country. These huge warehouses didn’t house car parts and conveyor belts; they held computers, headsets and cubicles where we placed our people. They became amazingly efficient and effective “assembly lines”. The next task was having our companies gain our appreciation for the model.

As call centre leaders, we marketed, presented over and over and ultimately gained what we were asking for – we became recognized as one of our corporation’s strategic assets! We were able to show our boards and senior executive how, if they invested, we could produce more, cost less and add positively to the bottom line. The early 1990’s internal marketing campaigns by call centres entailed sales for a variety of technology from new PBXs, bigger and faster ACDs, CTI tools, and let’s not forget, CRM, intelligent desktop, workforce management software and speech recognition – the wishes were

endless. More staff? Certainly, but “we’ll reduce effort elsewhere in the operation and those areas can downsize.” (No internal competitions there, right?)

Call centres were a growth industry, a positive effect on the bottom line and they became profit centres. As the early days of the new millennium hit, call centres managed well through the great efforts put into corporate downsizing. They were the areas where work processes moved. They had vast numbers of highly productive people tethered to their desks, producing great volumes of work. These centres were able to track the efficiency of their staff with phenomenal metrics. The measures were in seconds. They tracked who talked too long, who took too many calls, who took too few calls, and the average number of seconds it took to conclude a call. They could tell within seconds the occupancy rate of their people and when they weren’t productive. Supervisors were walking data banks. They knew the numeric pulse of the operation. Henry Ford would have been envious of this perfect business model. So what is the next evolution of the strategic assets that we now call contact centres?

Can we expect to continue to grow and take on new tasks and functions? Are our customers hugely satisfied with our offerings? Technology has stabilized so we’re confident we are well positioned – right? Our staff surveys are all positive and our attrition rates confirm that. Maybe? Maybe not! We have all the data at our finger tips, internal numbers and economic indicators, bench marking reports, surveys and other data but did we put all the pieces together?

Did we as leaders miss signs that sat in our own statistics? Did our strong com-

mitment to efficiency cause us to forget what our “Strategic Asset” was? It’s not the plant; it’s not the technology, not the great assembly line, but the people! Did we forget their key value in our success equation because of their abundant supply? Did we not take note of the messages they subtly passed to us through things like rates of absenteeism or attrition? Did we take these actions for granted because we always had a line up of new candidates at the door? Had we just factored this churn, as overhead, the cost of doing business? These people just didn’t appreciate, did not understand, how we focused on them. They didn’t know how good they had it. We invested in all that new technology to make their job better – right? Or was that investment based on a CBA (cost benefit analysis) showing reduced compensation costs? We outfitted our centres with great ergonomics like sit/stand workstations so they’d be more comfortable, or was that so we would have less “downtime”?

We constantly shared statistics and targets with them so they could feel valued. We offered great career opportunities. Staff could be assigned to many different roles identified as “opportunities” to broaden their knowledge. These roles, quite often, were simply different queues but the job was still answering the phone or email. Once skilled, they could move up to supervisory roles which would typically mean large numbers of agents vying for small



*The CEO: "These numbers are killing my long-term strategy!"*

*Marketing Director: "Our customers aren't buying, and I don't know why!"*

*CFO: "Ooh! Ooh! What will the shareholders say?"*

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numbers of supervisor/team lead roles.

Our focus has been on the assembly line, the throughput. We always tried to keep the staff in mind but sometimes we may have missed the facts that we faced. Sometimes our drive to be the most effective and efficient operation may have blinded us to reality. Our operations were not necessarily the “best” places to work.

The signs were clear, or should I say, that by looking in the rear-view mirror objects are now closer than they appear! We constructed great recruitment plans, hiring models and training programs to feed the assembly line but didn’t ask the question, “what if the supply dries up?” What if we can’t recruit like we have in the past? How will our offerings of employment compete when the supply is diminished? Can our attrition rates be sustained? As we now look to the future, our biggest risk may be that we, the contact centre industry, face major shortages of our most important resource – people. We will not be alone as we face this shortage but that will just add to the competition for assets. We could begin recruitment strategies now. We could outsource, offshore or reengineer, but we’d miss our best opportunity. We would forget to consider the signs.

We have lived with attrition rates of 20 – 40 percent annually in our last 15+ years of operation and we’ve filled those and new positions at even higher rates. We brought in bright, energetic, enthused people. Why would we not focus our effort at retaining these people? Businesses serving customers have learned it is far less costly to retain a customer than win a new one, yet we seem to have forgotten that

*“We need to put our energies to finding ways to work with our people to make their roles rewarding.”*

knowledge when it comes to our staff.

We need to focus the efforts of our managers, supervisors and human resource departments on retention of our key assets. We have invested in their skills development and they have invested their time in learning our business. It is in our mutual benefit to find ways to continue our working relationships. We need to refocus our leadership teams, managers, supervisors and team leads on understanding the human element of our business – our staff. We must understand what our people need to feel the desire to stay. We need to listen and coach and work with our staff to become “employers of choice.”

If the measures of success for your operation are imbalanced by process measures rather than qualitative and engagement values, you may find your staff feeling like “just a number”. Numbers have no loyalty! Staff members do not leave when they feel like they count and that they are a part of something. When they have a role, a position within the operations social entity, they feel more engaged. When they are more than just another person working the assembly line, they become advocates of the company. When your staff members are your advocates, you will have an edge in attracting the best of a limited pool of future employees.

I know this may be heresy for those who live by the numbers, but the base metrics which have driven our direction do not disappear. Rather, they rebalance with the

human measures. We need to lead with a strong focus on coaching, on recognition and on understanding. We need to put our energies to finding ways to work with our people to make their roles rewarding. They need to be part of the solution, for if we ignore this key opportunity we will face a day when we open that door to invite the next new applicant in and find no one there.

If we, as leaders, do not drive towards making our operations “employers of choice” we will face a new world where we are interviewed and rejected by potential employees. Their options may be endless and we will just be one of many vying for their attention. For any of our operations to avoid this scenario, a first step is to focus on retention. Look for opportunities to make your own employees your best recruiters. If they are singing the praises of your company as a place to work, you will be seen as an employer of choice.

Almost all economic indicators tell us that we are rapidly approaching a staffing shortage. As a high turnover industry we can not be complacent. We need to focus on keeping the great people we have today and attracting a share of that diminished market. Don’t continue to misread the signs! **CM**

*Doug Downing is VP, Customer Service, Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC), North Vancouver, and chairs the sector council Contact Centre Canada. 604-646-7437; www.contactcentrecanada.ca*

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# New rules being developed for Canada's telemarketers

DO NOT CALL LIST UPDATE DO NOT CALL LIST UPDATE DO NOT CALL LIST UPDATE

BY PHIL ROGERS AND JENNIFER HEFLER

**Like their counterparts in the U.S., members of the Canadian telemarketing industry will soon fall under the new rules of the federal Do Not Call law, once the CRTC works out the details. Recent amendments to the Telecommunications Act by the Government of Canada have begun the process to create a Do Not Call List (DNCL) for Canada – a list of telephone numbers that telemarketers will be legally prohibited from contacting either by phone or by fax. A similar Do Not Call regime has existed in the United States for several years.**

Many people do not realize that the new DNCL rules are not the first rules regulating telemarketing in Canada. Telemarketing rules have been in existence since the mid-1980s and have been reviewed on several occasions by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC). For example, in May 2004, the CRTC conducted a general review of all telemarketing rules. The Commission expressed support then for the creation of a Do Not Call List, but also indicated that it lacked the statutory authority to set up such a system.

In December 2004, the Government of Canada announced that it was tabling new legislation to amend the Telecommunications Act and create a statutory framework for a Do Not Call List. The Act came into force in July 2006. The legislation gives the CRTC authority to implement and manage the DNC List, including the power to assess monetary penalties on parties that contravene the provisions of the Act.

Certain individuals and organizations are statutorily exempt from the Do Not Call rules of the Act. Perhaps the most important exemption for telemarketers and businesses is the

exemption for calls to a person with whom the caller already has an existing business relationship. Briefly, an existing business relationship exists if there has been voluntary communication arising from the purchase of goods, a service or lease within the past 18 months, or an inquiry was made within the past six months by a potential client with regard to the services offered by the caller. Further, the caller and the person receiving the call are deemed to have an existing business relationship if they have a current contract for goods or services or one that expired within the past 18 months.

The new Do Not Call provisions of the Telecommunications Act amount to much more than a simple list of phone numbers. The creation of a DNC List will require the formation of an entirely new administrative and enforcement framework. An initiative of this magnitude requires extensive consultation and deliberation. Following the passage of the new legislation, the CRTC began a consultative process in February 2006 to establish the framework to implement the DNCL. This consultative process included: seeking comments from interested parties on how best to develop the DNC List, forming a consortium of interested parties to select a company to whom the Commission will delegate

the day-to-day responsibility for managing the List and creating a working group to study and report on specific issues.

The Do Not Call List Working Group is an implementation committee created by the CRTC and made up of a wide range of participants. The Group includes Aliant Telecom Inc., AT&T Government Solutions, Bell Canada, Canadian Bankers Association, PriceWaterHouse Coopers, the Canadian Marketing Association, consumer representatives and many others.

One difficult issue the Working Group was tasked to examine – and one of the most contentious issues related to the new DNCL – is the question of funding. Telemarketers are expected to provide the major source of funding for start-up costs and on-going costs of the List. However, there is a debate as to whether this obligation should fall on all members of the industry, or only on those telemarketers who are required by the new law to check against the DNC List before making a call. Unlike other government registries, it appears that the costs of DNC registry will not be paid by the government. Certain parties have argued that the DNC List should be funded by government. Other groups argue the costs should be borne by the telemarketing industry. Most parties agree that Government should fund the costs associated with investigating and enforcing compliance with the DNC List.

Certain guidelines on 'best practices' for telemarketers are currently in development and it is expected that the final decision from the CRTC on the DNCL framework (to be released in late 2006 or early 2007) will provide telemarketers with a list of guidelines, which will be available on the Commission's Web site. These guidelines will be important for telemarketers in defending themselves against any charges of non-compliance with the DNC rules and in demonstrating due diligence, a defence specifically available under the Act.

In order to register their telephone number on the List, individuals will be permitted to do so online or via telephone from the phone number they wish to register. However, many issues are still left to be resolved. The Working Group has yet to determine the exact form of the DNC database of telephone num-

bers and how to safeguard the database against potential mis-uses.

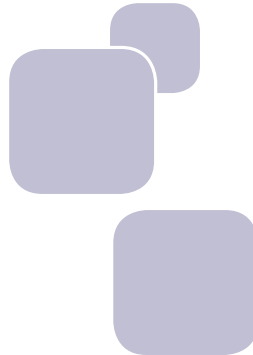
Currently, the CRTC expects that the framework of rules for the DNC List will be completely finalized by mid-2007. By then, Canadian telemarketers should plan to be ready to apply the new Do Not Call rules in their businesses. **CM**

*Phil Rogers is a Partner with Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt LLP. Phil is a member of the Communications and Technology Group in the Ottawa office of Osler, specializing in telecommunications, broadcasting, regulatory, Internet and privacy law. Jennifer Hefler is currently an articling student in the Osler Ottawa office for the 2006-2007 year.*

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# Technology helps meet customers' changing demands

BY JIM O'FARRELL

Contact centres have been in existence for many years, and although they are continuously altering the way they operate they still are focused on one key goal, successfully managing customer communication. Over the past decade, the rapid adoption of the Internet and Web-based applications has forever changed the way contact centres interact with their customers.

In previous years, contact centres have been able to get away with inadequate customer service without it significantly affecting business. Today with the evolu-

tion of technology, bad customer service is no longer an option as consumers have many companies to choose from that provide the same services. A major factor that is causing customer dissatisfaction is the lack of technological innovation and adoption. Many early adopters of Web-based communications applications are demanding the same type of communication and interaction from customer service solutions.

As more people begin to adjust to these technologies, organizations must

change their strategies to meet today's consumer demands. But how can contact centres do this?

A September 2006 survey conducted by Talisma revealed that 97 percent of Canada's top 100 companies are not able to view interaction records of customer communications across different channels (e.g., email, phone, and self-service).

In order to effectively change the way companies interact with their customers they will need to implement an integrated solution that manages any type of contact, and offers personalized interactions.

Contact centres will need to understand how customer demands are changing and how they are adapting to new technologies, and which solutions and channels they

see **technology** page 15

## Global context is customer focus driven change

BY BILL DURR

Having recently completed an extensive tour across Asia Pacific—discussing workforce optimization trends and opportunities—and now involved in a North American seminar tour, it is clear that the global contact centre industry is undergoing rapid change owing to powerful new drivers.

The Internet has profoundly changed the balance of power from the enterprise to the consumer. With so much unfiltered information available, contact centres struggle to equip their agents with necessary skill, knowledge and authority. Further, hyper-competition among companies is endemic. There is a relentless pressure on revenue and profit. Increasingly, senior executives are aware of the contact centre's potential to impact the top and bottom line. Pure customer service centres are evolving into revenue centres, creating some operational challenges along the way.

The response to these and other drivers is a shift from an inward focus to an outward orientation. Many analysts refer to this shift in orientation as moving from company-centric to customer-centric.

While the contact centre is the most common touch point for interactions, customer centricity isn't just something that needs to be embraced in this one particular area of the business. The

entire enterprise needs to become exclusively focused on the customer. Customer centricity requires that functional silos inside the contact centre break down to ensure better and speedier collaboration. It also requires the contact centre to become an agent of change for the rest of the enterprise. These are the two most significant trends confronting contact centres and form the basis for workforce optimization.

The two most isolated silos in the contact centre are the Quality Assurance team and the Forecasting and Scheduling team. Each functional specialty beavers away at their respective tasks, blissfully unaware and largely uncaring of the other's problems and challenges. Each silo provides inputs to the front-line management team, schedules and agent assessments. Both functions are inwardly focused and, as a result, must be changed to enable the centre and the enterprise to secure the required outward focus.

Quality Assurance – in the new environment – will always do some level of agent assessments but the majority will be done by the front-line. Instead, Quality Assurance will be repurposed to discover what the customers are telling us every day regarding what is right and what is wrong with the company's products, policies and

procedures. Instead of listening to what the agents say and how they say it, the Quality Assurance team must acquire new ears to fully listen and comprehend what callers are telling us – an approach that is not easy to accomplish.

Forecasting and scheduling teams need to step back and realize that average handle time and service level have little meaning or value to customers. Oh sure, callers will be annoyed with unreasonable queues. But that is a relatively easy problem to solve – when a centre cancels one-on-one coaching sessions because the interval service level goal is in jeopardy, they make a profound mistake in the execution of a customer-centric strategy.

The adoption of customer centric strategies means that we can't keep running contact centres the way we have been in the past. Excellence is no longer internally defined – it is defined entirely by the customer. And, we'd better figure out what their expectations and definitions are... right now. **CM**

*Bill Durr serves as principal solutions consultant for Witness Systems, a provider of workforce optimization software and services. [www.witness.com](http://www.witness.com) 1-(888)-3-WITNESS or (770)-754-1900*

expect to be able to communicate with. Successful contact centres will be able to unify all types of communication from email to chat, and any other new methods of interaction that people use on the Internet in their everyday lives. While contact centres will implement these new communication strategies, they need to ensure that they don't lose the personalization that the traditional telephone provides.

Although telephone customer service can be costly, some customers still prefer to speak to a live agent rather than communicate via the keyboard. Fortunately one new technology that is beginning to gain momentum in contact centres is the usage of Voice over Internet (VoIP). The analyst firm Yankee Group reports that 38 percent of contact centres are currently researching the benefits of VoIP, and that 60 percent of agent seats will be VoIP by 2009. VoIP technologies allow companies to interact with customers verbally to

provide the level of personalization that lets the consumer know they are getting the best effort from their company or service to solve their problem.

By the end of this decade, contact centres will have to decide which solutions are right for their business. In addition, they will have to determine what the most effective way is to integrate all existing solutions to provide exceptional customer service.

This industry is always changing, and by the time that most contact centres imple-

ment modern communication strategies there will be new technologies that will come into existence and will need to be evaluated to determine their effectiveness for customer service.

*A September 2006 survey conducted by Talisma revealed that 97 percent of Canada's top 100 companies are not able to view interaction records of customer communications across different channels.*

For now, it is important for contact centres to catch up so when the next wave of innovative communication technologies come into existence businesses won't be left behind. **CM**

*Jim O'Farrell is VP of Corporate and Channel Marketing for Talisma Corp.*

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# Contact centre cornucopia at Toronto show

BY SUSAN MACLEAN

Photo supplied by: Tayco



**Contact Management was a media sponsor at the recent International Contact Centre Management (ICCM) conference and expo in Toronto. Here's a sampling of the many exhibitors seen and heard on the show floor.**

**Q**uality monitoring, compliance and IP recording, workforce management, performance management and eLearning – that's what Witness Systems claims its Impact 360 workforce optimization solution handles. Impact 360 is intended to enable organizations to improve interactions and the underlying back-office processes that enhance the customer experience and build customer loyalty.

The recent acquisition of Boston, MA-based Demos Solutions and San Diego, CA-based Exametric, Inc. by Witness Systems brings contact centre and back office functions together, said Kevin Hegebarth, Witness' director of Strategic Analysis. "For example, retail banking can be using available bank tellers to handle the contact centre queue if needed. Contact centres have 'adherence' but in the teller environment you lose everything between clocked in and out. The new acquisition

enables adherence in the teller setting. This is important because there is the potential for using a lot of unproductive time. Knowing when downtime occurs allows enterprises to schedule better.

"The impact on the contact centre world is a better appreciation of back office functions and how a failure on one potentially impacts the behaviour of another," he added. "For example, if I process an insurance claim incorrectly, the customer will pick up the phone. So, the linkage enhances the understanding to avoid the mistake in the first place and it is easier to correct mistakes. This leads to the customer getting better service overall which leads to customer loyalty and a greater share of the wallet."

In addition to insurance and commercial banking, Hegebarth sees advantages of the enhanced Witness workforce optimization solution in hospitality. [www.witness.com](http://www.witness.com).

## **Comprehensive offerings and turnkey services**

Meeting staff retention and training challenges head on with cost reduction tools – that's the focus of Xenrax Contact Centre Solutions, Inc. The Mississauga, ON-based company promoted etalk Qfiniti Performance Management and IEX TotalView Workforce Management.

Explore, the newest etalk Qfiniti advanced speech analytics application module, automatically analyses a recorded call for certain words or phrases such as 'cancel my account'. This analysis can provide real-time notification for immediate customer intervention and coaching, help enhance and evaluate corporate policies and procedures, provide visibility to call recordings for customer intelligence and quality monitoring, save time and cost over manual call monitoring.

Lina Fernandez and Cliff Gentle esti-

**Toronto-based Tayco exhibited its Cosmopolitan line of functional furnishing for the modern office at the recent ICCM event in Toronto. Tayco is one of Canada's leading manufacturers of office and call centre furniture.**



ated that depending on the industry, for most centres with 30 agents and up, a six month full payback is typically achievable from their workforce or quality management offerings. [www.xentrax.com](http://www.xentrax.com)

Richardson, TX-based IEX was also at the show exhibiting its TotalView Workforce Management software. IEX claims that about 840,000 agents in nearly 3,000 centres in more than 47 countries rely on its workforce optimization solutions.

Data-Tel Info Solutions of Mesa, AZ, provides turnkey solutions and services for centres of any size. Account executive Matthew Thomas said that its hosted solutions have been heating up in the last year. He sees a key advantage of a hosted offering being that centres can get equipment like a predictive dialler up and running at 10 percent of the cost of premise-based investments. For example, with its xSELLerator ASP, access to an Internet connection is all that is needed to have a complete inbound/outbound VoIP solution. Data-Tel also sells debt collection (Caesar) and enterprise centre (xSELLerator.NET) software and services. [www.datatel-info.com](http://www.datatel-info.com)

Aspect Software, Inc. was on hand to promote such products as EnsemblePro, a one-source multiple application offering, and eWorkforce Management to optimize workforce performance. Aspect claims to be the world's largest company solely focused on Internet Protocol (IP) and traditional voice-based products and services for customer service, collections, and

sales and telemarketing business processes. The company also claims to daily power more than 125 million customer-company interactions at thousands of in-house and outsourced contact centres around the globe. [www.aspect.com](http://www.aspect.com)

Pulse Voice, Inc. of Markham, ON, promoted its all-in-one product pulsecms – call management solution which it claims reduces HR inefficiency, increases ROI and improves customer satisfaction. CEO Mohan Markandaier said the company has been cited as one of the 100 fastest growing companies in Canada. The acceptance of its pulsecms has been a major factor and that acceptance has had to do with pricing being a key differentiator. Pulse claims its pulsecms combines the functions of a PBX, ACD, CTI and IVR plus an optional VoIP connectivity into one platform. This single solution is said to eliminate expensive hardware purchases, costly software upgrades and compatibility problems with multi-vendor components. [www.pulsevoice.com](http://www.pulsevoice.com)

Montreal-based VocalCom has more than 900 installations around the world, with many in Europe as the company began in France. The company offers North American centres a range of products and services to enable organizations to take advantage of all communication interfaces – telephone, e-mail, Web, fax, mobile telephony, SMS. [www.vocalcom.com](http://www.vocalcom.com)

### **Recruiting**

Targeting the Generation Y labour market – that's the focus of CallCenterjob.ca, the recruiting site launched last year by Job Wings, a Montreal-based provider of 14 niche boards federated within the Publipac.ca network, and completed by the job search engine Nicejob.ca. Presi-

dent Manuel Francisci said employers can post a job on CallCenterjob.ca either for \$150 for 30 days, including a logo on the first page and an email alert to candidates, or on a pay per click basis. Part-time positions can also be posted on [parttime.ca](http://parttime.ca).

"The main problem with online job searching is that it is faster to apply than to read the job description," he said. "For example, someone can send 600 resumes in one day!" The Job Wings approach attracts a specific pool of candidates so they are already filtered.

Nicejob.ca indexes new jobs and sends pre-qualified candidates to the company. An automated refresh feature means every three weeks the job will come back up on the list. A company without a career section can get the solution for free to post jobs on site. 1-888-562-9464; [www.Nicejob.ca](http://www.Nicejob.ca)

### **Headsets and telephones**

John Larsen at the Headset Express booth noted that the Viking brand of headsets offers the highest Canadian content of headsets for sale, being the only headset with a final assembly in Canada. Its quick disconnect cable assembly mates with a variety of headsets and with an amplifier or direct connect, ending the worry about mismatches or models being discontinued. "That saves companies from 10 to 25 percent right off the bat," said Larsen. In addition to a range of headsets and telephones, Headset Express also has a full repair centre with a 24-hour return service. [www.HeadsetExpress.ca](http://www.HeadsetExpress.ca)

Aastra Telecom announced the Model 480i CT as its newest addition to its Enterprise IP telephone portfolio. The IP screen telephone base station can support multiple separate cordless handsets. Based

see **ICCM Canada Report** page 18 ↗



in Concord, ON, Aastra provides IP-based phones, integrated network platforms and productivity applications for unified communications, audio/Web conferencing and contact centres. [www.aastratelecom.com](http://www.aastratelecom.com)

Mississauga-based Anixter Canada has 175 sales and service locations in 41 countries distributing communication products including voice, security and CCTV, data networking, power, electronics and fiber optic solutions. The company claims to be the leading distributor for Plantronics headset and MCK PBX Extender products in Canada. [www.anixter.com](http://www.anixter.com)

Call Centre Products of Markham, ON, has been supplying quality headset solutions for over 15 years and claims to be the largest distributor of all major brands of headsets in Canada with more than 500,000 customers. [www.headset.com](http://www.headset.com)

**Outsourcing**

Réal Bergevin, CEO of NuComm International, attracted a standing room only crowd to his presentation where he gave copies of his latest book of secrets, *23 Steps to an Effective Call Centre: A Complete Model of Call Centre Operations to Assist Businesses in Reaching Their Goals*.

“We give away all our secrets and then invent new secrets,” said marketing coordinator Daniel Willis. “We want the whole industry to be successful and managers to make the contact centre industry more revered than reviled.” *The Call Centers for Dummies* book authored by Bergevin was also available at the show. Based in St. Catharines, ON, NuComm International is Canada’s largest privately-held provider of customer relationship and contact centre services. Named one of Canada’s 50 Best Managed Companies for five years in a row, the company manages a fast-growing customer base. Services profiled at the booth included automated voice services, customer satisfaction on-demand survey service, credit services for credit solutions, and Oncall for pay-as-you-go outsourcing.

St. Laurent, QC-based Nordia, is a multi-contact customer care solutions provider and one of the largest users of IP telephony in Canada. It has over 2,300 employees in six contact centres based in Quebec and Ontario handling 24/7 services in French, English and Spanish for Canadian

and American companies in seemingly any industry sector. It offers customized inbound & outbound services to help clients retain their customers and grow their loyalty. Nordia also offers specialized programs such as Directory Assistance, Teleconference & Relay services (Canada, U.S.). [www.nordia.ca](http://www.nordia.ca).

Xceed Contact Center from Cairo, Egypt, operates the largest contact centre in North Africa. With a capacity of 1200 Web-enabled, multi-channel workstations, Xceed’s contact centre manages programs for clients covering more than 10 countries in nine different languages. [www.xceedcc.com](http://www.xceedcc.com)

**Multi-site workforce forecasting and scheduling**

SpanLink, the company that acquired Longuevil, QB-based Calabrio, leverages Cisco VoIP in its InteractiveEdge product line. Spanlink’s Calabrio workforce management and quality management is said to enhance agent and supervisor interactions whether local or global. [www.spanlink.com](http://www.spanlink.com)

**Hosted call logging**

VirtualLogger claims to be the world’s first quality monitoring and call recording service provider. With more than 200 million calls recorded to date and a storage and retrieval platform “second to none”, the company offers a flexible menu of services that provides a custom fit that’s available on a pay as you go basis. The company based in Charlotte, N.C., has Canadian customers and sales staff.

“Hosted lends itself to home-based and multiple small offices,” said president Jim Veilleux. “With hosted, it is easier to consolidate recording across multiple sites into a single database so someone can log on and search through. There’s no annual maintenance and no replacement or upgrades.”

He suggested VirtualLogger’s VoiceLog is a \$5 per agent alternative to a \$1,000 per agent premises-based call logger hardware

investment. “Our vision is to be a universal interface for any recording platform,” he added. [www.virtuallogger.com](http://www.virtuallogger.com)

**Education and development**

Jeff Doran, president of Contact Center Employer of Choice (CCEOC) Institute, knows the secrets of leading contact centres and what makes them great places to work. He shares many of those in the CCEOC Institute Annual Best Practices Report which is based on his company’s CCEOC certification program. The Institute provides a diagnostic review of participating centres wanting to understand their critical people issues better and develop an action plan to gain the many benefits of building a stronger, more employee-focused culture. [www.cceemployerofchoice.com](http://www.cceemployerofchoice.com)

**Reporting software**

Smart Telecom profiled its QSD HelpDesk which it claims is the only product you can install yourself in less than an hour, connect to your digital phone and receive all the ACD data to improve your call centre team’s performance. The company is based in Ottawa. [www.smarttelecom.ca](http://www.smarttelecom.ca)

**Messaging systems**

Interalia Inc. of Calgary offers iProMOH which is a music and message announcer that promotes products and services to on-hold customers in a business environment or a call queue in a call centre. Product marketing manager Cliff Nywening said it is suitable for a single site and can be migrated to a multi-site environment. A company using iProMOH can upload the message once into a Web application and let the sites pull down content for a common message throughout all locations. Interalia also finds call processing systems is a growing area. Interalia was established in 1976. [www.interalia.com](http://www.interalia.com) **CM**

*Coming up in a future issue: a snapshot look at 60 Ideas in 60 Minutes.*

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# Tips for properly managing change

**Change is a way of life and the rate of change is accelerating. Enterprises skilled at managing change can build this into a strong competitive advantage.**

BY FRANK SPITZNOGLE

Strategic Focus, Inc. estimates that less than five percent of senior executives have had even minimal formal training in managing change in today's fast paced, highly competitive world.

If change does not result in vision, mission, strategy and culture that are in alignment, understood and supported at all levels in the company, failure is likely. Sustainable change is not a decree to the employees, an email or an "all hands" meeting or video from the CEO, or a layoff to reduce cost.

Change is often inhibited by barriers between organizations. Often these barriers are much more of a factor than even the CEO recognizes. For example, if your new service development cycles are longer than the change cycles in the industries you serve (which is increasingly common), then long-term success is almost impossible.

Know where you are going – what is the end point and how do you know when you are there? The senior team needs to be involved in this process; it must not be decreed by the CEO, nor is it developed in four hours in a conference room with a dozen interruptions. And communicating the change is not one email or a video to all employees.

Anticipate resistance at all levels of the organization, including some of your direct reports – seriously develop a plan for addressing resistance. SFI's experience is that 50 percent of employees and executives will buy in quickly and 30 percent will be fence-sitters. The other 20 percent will be hard core resisters, and at least half of these will be passive resisters – the

## Drivers of Change

- o New Market or Technology Environments
- o New Products or Services
- o Mergers and Acquisitions
- o New Vision, Mission, Strategies
- o New Senior Management
- o Adoption of New Processes
- o Economic Factors
- o Outsourcing Strategies

most troublesome kind.

The goal has to be to convert the fence-sitters and either neutralize the hard core resisters, or eliminate them – with noise and without much mercy. My own experience leads me to believe that the majority of change failures result simply due to the unwillingness or inability of a company's senior management to deal with specific individuals who resist change. A few such resisters can and will destroy any change initiative.

Develop face-to-face communications messages and processes throughout the company – with the CEO or business unit manager and his/her team highly visible.

## Tips for successful change

- o Train the executive team in managing change
- o Develop and execute a change project plan
- o Know where you are going – will vision, mission, strategy, and culture be aligned?
- o Know the end point
- o Anticipate and address resistance to change
- o Communicate, again and again, at all levels of the organization

Communicate a consistent and believable message again and again. Team building sessions are important at all levels of the organization, but avoid silly team building games and fancy tag lines that undermine the seriousness of the changes needed. Just assure that every person in the company understands the urgent need for the change and what it means to him or her, the meaning and risk to each individual if the change is not made, and the end point once the change is successful.

## Change process stages

There are three basic stages to change—applicable to companies of 25 employees

### Stages of a Change Process

- o Unfreeze the organization – achieve an understanding of why the change is necessary
- o Change – make the necessary changes, quickly
- o Refreeze the organization, assuring that Vision, Mission, Strategy, and Culture are in alignment

or to a business unit or company of 25,000 employees—the fundamentals of which were originally documented by Lewin 50 years ago, and extended by Harvard's John Kotter in more recent years.

**1.** Unfreeze the organization. Understand the end point and why. Determine what changes are required to bring the new or modified vision, culture, and strategies into sync, and develop a formal plan for accomplishing this. Prepare a consistent message that is understandable by the employee base, achieve buy in from throughout the employee based that the planned changes are necessary and to the



**Tips for properly managing change** - cont'd from page 20

benefit of the company and to most, but likely not all, employees.

Do not even consider moving forward until this stage is complete. Don't move the end point or message continually – employees will simply become emotionally immune to continual change in message or desired end point.

**2.** Make the necessary changes, and make them quickly. If downsizing is involved, do it in one quick reduction, not a series of reductions that drag on for weeks or months. Where fundamental organizational structures have to be destroyed to eliminate organizational barriers, don't be hesitant. If significantly new processes are involved, assure that the executives over these areas are trained in such processes, and that the working level organization has been "seeded" with strong individuals with applicable experience.

**3.** Refreeze the organization. Force a period of minimal additional change until the organization has reached the desired (and measurable) end point associated with the change plan. However, assure that you are in a position to plan and implement change faster than your markets change, and faster than your competitors can react.

Then, knowing that continuing major change is required for many companies to gain and hold market leadership, continue to develop a part of your culture that involves continuing change, with the employee base fully understanding the need for such a culture and accustomed to adapting quickly to change.

Lastly, there is one common failure point for many change initiatives. This is the delegation of leadership of a major change initiative to someone a level or two (or three) down in the organization. A formal change project plan is needed, and someone needs to be accountable for the hour-by-hour implementation of the plan; ultimately the CEO or business unit manager has to be the project manager and heavily involved on a continuing basis.

The risks, and typical failure rates, of major corporate change can be significantly

mitigated by properly training key executives in the 'science' of change management, proper planning and an awareness of a number of relatively simple processes – 'must do's' and 'must not do's', and the preparation and execution of a change plan that has the support of the entire

company...not a plan that is decreed by the CEO and sent down the organization as an ultimatum via an email. **cm**

*Dr. Frank Spitznogle is president and CEO of Strategic Focus, Inc. (303) 554-0177 or frank@strat-focus.com.*

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# Apply knowledge management to create a performance culture

BY JACQUES GAUMOND

The only thing certain about today's business environment is uncertainty, and the only thing that doesn't change about this business environment is that things are changing all the time. The contact centre that grasps these twin truths is already halfway to success.

Contact centres have had to learn hard lessons about uncertainty and change—the drive to boost performance while lowering costs has led to turbulence here, with some centres imposing dramatic changes and others leaving the country altogether for India and the Philippines.

But before leaving Moncton for Mumbai, consider the body of experience

- the HR consultant, who helps with performance management and competency assessment processes;
- the trainer, who assists with individual development planning as well as the creation and delivery of training programs; and
- the IT consultant, who delivers new technology-based tools and applications.

## Adopt the Five Pragmatic Practices

Once those four key actors are in place and clear on their joint roles, it is time to implement a five-part plan that leads to the creation and maintenance of best practices, ongoing performance appraisal

the wilderness with one or two improvement projects that are riskier than the others—but potentially more rewarding. Let people know that failure is an option here, but that the goal is to foster a climate of experimentation for larger opportunities and where something can be learned from the potential failures.

- Make employees accountable for their own development by providing them with self-service tools they can use to learn and advance while meeting the business unit's goals. This offers the twin advantages of empowering employees to take more of a hand in their own success while ensuring lasting improvement.
- Use career assessment and development tools to provide a periodic opportunity to examine or re-examine the job fit and career aspirations. This can help employees who realize it is not working to move on, and it can help those who are doing well to pursue career goals in more concrete and positive ways.

In contact centres where a culture of knowledge management has been deployed, know-how is shared freely and new information coupled with individualized learning becomes an every-day reality. Such cultures also foster the sense that adaptation and evolution are a way of life, making change commonplace and less threatening. And they ensure that communication flows openly from management to the employees and vice-versa, not just between employees at the water fountain, making it easier for the right messages to get out and result in expected action and accomplishments during times of change. **cm**

When know-how is shared freely and new information becomes an everyday reality, change is less threatening.

around Knowledge Management that already exists and has helped Canadian contact centres meet the most demanding client needs while helping staff adapt to constant change.

## Identify the Four Key Actors

At the heart of any contact centre are the people taking or making the calls, and answering the emails. Often, however, management relies far too heavily on one person—the line manager—to make it all work in a complex workplace with 100 or more agents. It is unrealistic to leave that enormous responsibility in the hands of a single person, especially one who may not have the complete training or latest competencies, let alone the time, to pull it off. In order to succeed, these large teams need the coordinated commitment and talent of four key actors:

- the line manager, who supervises contact centre agents;

and reappraisal, and sound career development for employees:

- Make time for the entire business unit to come together and articulate its shared values. It is at this stage that the unit should also collectively identify behaviors that support those shared values—and behaviors that don't.
- Invite the people in the unit to identify a reasonable number of concrete improvement projects for the coming year, set precise goals for, and commit resources to those projects. Five to 10 undertakings is typically a good number; any more and there is the risk of the unit being swamped by too many simultaneous projects. There is no surer recipe for breakdown or decay than to forget about follow-up, so be sure and factor in time for milestone progress reviews and year-end post-mortems to assess what worked and what didn't.
- Leave the beaten path for a stroll into

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# Getting comfortable with change

BY SANGEETA BHATNAGAR

Most people like order, stability and consistency. What happens when our workplace requires us to change? Most people do not like even a slight change in their desk. So how then will they accept change in their primary functions on the job?

One example of a change that is quite common is the trend of moving from pure service delivery to sales and service. This kind of cultural and functional change usually faces some challenges. There is usually fear from staff that have held a position for some time, as they may feel that "I can't sell", "What if I fail", "I can't work under that pressure". The CSRs need to see themselves as able to perform this new function/skill. The fear of failure and fear of the unknown causes significant anxiety and stress if the change is not handled correctly.

There must be an *Environment of Learning* that encourages growth and a reasonable learning curve. Communication to the staff is critical and must be done in a timely manner. With open doors of communication and full knowledge – the fear of the unknown is drastically reduced.

In this example, if the CSRs are involved in the change process and if they are shown how a few changes in their traditional call could increase revenues for them and the company as a whole – the acceptance of the change would be much greater. Each small change in behaviour needs to be recognized and encouraged by all levels of management.

Change must be implemented in the right environment, the right time and for the right reason. In the book 'Thinking for a Change', John Maxwell quotes J.P. Morgan as saying "a man always has two reasons for doing anything: a good reason and the real reason".

Finding out the *Primary Motivating Factors* for your team will increase the acceptance to change. Some people are driven by dollars, while others by security, praise or recognition. Since we are not cut from a

cookie-cutter, it is important not to apply a cookie-cutter approach when dealing with individual feelings, goals and aspirations.

To avoid being a 'flavour of the month' idea, the change needs to be accepted by:

- 1) Yourself – as this will give you integrity
- 2) Key Players – Senior Management and Team Leaders should be enthusiastic to accept the change or the new ideas as they will be instrumental in influencing the front line. The key players are necessary to move the ideas towards full implementation.
- 3) Front Line – the ideas should be shared and accepted by the front line as they will give you the most insight and they are actually the most critical for the change to occur. The CSR can tell you the true heartbeat of the centre. Sharing ideas with the front line will help ensure that you did not miss the mark.

John Maxwell states that, as you prepare to present new ideas to people, keep in mind that they are most willing to change when they:

- "hurt enough that they are willing to change" ie., to avoid layoffs, revenues must increase;
- "learn enough that they want change" ie., participate in interactive training and feel confident that a change in function is important and possible;
- "receive enough that they are able to change" ie., consistent recognition through the company embracing the change.

To create strong teams during the change process, it is important to share the big picture so team members see the whole picture and not just their own function or role. Each member of the team needs to understand how their 'changed' role fits within the team as well as within the company's goals.

## Change begins with you

It is important to remember that strong

leaders who bring about any change, lead by example in every way. "Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself," wrote Leo Tolstoy. Here are some basic steps in ensuring that you lead your team to success and not out the door.

People do not care what you know until they know that you care. To develop solid relationships remember your staff will be thinking "Can I trust you? Do you care about me?"

If you come from a position where you worked independently here are a few skills/habits that will make you a more effective leader.

- Listen to your team
- Use their names instead of 'you or hey'
- Praise and recognize accomplishments
- Take time to answer questions – give thought and consideration
- Acknowledge anyone waiting to meet with you. Your success is only as good as your team's contribution.
- Pay attention to each member within your team as everyone needs to feel important.

In a leadership role, continuous growth is critical because you can only develop others if you are also developing yourself. Here is a recommended reading list:

- How to Win Friends and Influence People – Dale Carnegie
- Skill with People – Les Giblin
- Creating Leaders Around You – Zig Ziglar
- 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership – John Maxwell
- Thinking for a Change – John Maxwell
- The Servant – James C. Hunter

Through honest communication, consistent training and shared goals, you will be part of the solution in removing fear and minimizing the stress of change. **cm**

*Sangeeta Bhatnagar, head of SB Global, can be reached at sbglobal@rogers.com or (416) 564-0399*



CorporaTel president Don Mills in the company's new Halifax site.

Photo: CorporaTel

# Customer feedback affirms company's strategies

BY SUSAN MACLEAN

**We hear it over and over again: the successful contact centre has the right balance of investment in its people, process and technology. CorporaTel is a winning example among even larger organizations since its customer feedback earned it the 2006 Contact Centre World Award for "Best Outsourcing Solution in the Americas."**

The award is based on the quality of feedback from customers. Companies vying for Best Outsourcing Solution in the Americas were judged on results in categories including quality and level of product knowledge of agents, flexibility to meet changing customer needs, quality of reporting, quality of account management, customer care provided by agents, proactive suggestions to enhance customer's business, and overall value for money.

Over the past decade, CorporaTel has

grown from a small contact centre serving Atlantic Canada clients to a company with over 400 professionals serving Fortune 500 clients around the globe. CorporaTel agents field incoming calls from all over North America, as well as South East Asia, Australia, New Zealand and Singapore. Meeting a wide range of customer contact needs, the company offers tourism information and reservation services, customer service and support, technical help desk support and market research data collec-

tion. Customers for whom they provide help desk applications include Microsoft, Cisco and Sun Microsystems.

CorporaTel is headquartered in Halifax, NS, and has four contact centres – one in its headquarters, a second in Saint John, NB, a third in Vancouver, BC and the fourth is an acquisition of a company in Quebec. The number of employees and seats—370 to 400 in total—vary as some projects, especially the tourism based ones, are seasonal.

The company was founded in 1994 and president Don Mills proudly claims that it still has "our very first client – and this is a business that is tendered on a regular basis and we have to re-win in a public bid process."

Mills attributes the company's success to its people, processes and technology, beginning with "the quality of people we have in our organization. We have an outstanding group of people. We have strong operational processes that allow us to recruit and retain the best contact agents in the industry. We have good technology tools for the size of company that we have. We're not that big compared to some of the big players in the industry but we have the very latest technology tools which allow us to compete with a much bigger organization."

This past April when the head office was moved to a brand new facility in Halifax, CorporaTel took the opportunity to invest in voice over Internet protocol (VoIP) technology as a full-featured, lowest cost solution. "After a full RFP (request for proposal) process to determine our technology partner, we did a side by side comparison of what was available out there and we talked to users of these systems to help us make a determination of their value," Mills recalls. The company chose a Cisco IP Contact Centre Enterprise system for intelligent call routing including network to desktop CTI and multimedia contact management to agents over an IP network.

"It allows our platform to combine software ACD functionality with IP technology," Mills enthuses. "It's a very sophisticated platform that allows us to really do advanced things to serve and add value to our clients. We have features such as skill-based routing, multimedia channels that include voice/email/Web chat and co-browsing, IVR capability, the ability to use remote agent supervisors. We also have digital call recording so we can record every single call that we do and have available in case there are any problems with those calls. So it is a fairly sophisticated system to really provide our clients with an integrated platform to handle multi-channel contacts that they may have. We're finding that we're really not in the call centre business anymore but in the contact centre business and those contacts come from many channels, including Internet and telephone."

It wasn't just a question of moving that prompted the VoIP investment. The new

technology is helping CorporaTel win new business in a niche it is targeting – the high end of the market.

"When we set up this business, we never ever did telemarketing kind of work – unsolicited cold calling for clients," Mills explains. "We never felt we were very good at that. We always felt we were more of a customer care contact centre which would mean that we could represent our clients in a seamless transparent way and be as good as they would be in terms of dealing with their customers. I think that philosophy in terms of where we've come as an organization has been the backbone of our success today.

"For us to get into the market niches that we wanted to get in, we had to im-

## **The VoIP technology is helping CorporaTel win new business in the niche it is targeting – the high-end of the market.**

prove our technology," he adds. "The ROI has been almost instantaneous for us with the new technology. We've been able to win new business from clients we would not have had before. It will take a couple of years to recoup our investment because of the multi-year nature of most of the contracts in this business, but we basically have secured our ROI already. The sophistication of our system to be able to integrate the numbers of different channels and route calls on an intelligent basis depending on the nature of those calls are all that is needed to go after the high end of the market."

Now the company faces the challenge of keeping up with technology and staying at the leading edge. "At the moment there is nobody that has anything better, but technology changes very rapidly so the challenge is to keep up to date with the technology," he adds.

Of course that's not the only challenge. "In this business you always have HR challenges," Mills is quick to add. "I think we do a better than average job in terms of recruitment and retention of HR because we put a lot of emphasis on it in the way that we treat people and the way we reward people. It's reflective of our overall

strategy which is to treat people with respect and dignity. We think we do a better than average job on that.

"With the labour pool shrinking right across North America over the next few years, it's going to be challenging to find people not only in our industry but in all industries," he adds.

Another challenge is the continuously increasing competition from the global outsourcing market which continues to expand dramatically as people continue to get cost out of their business. "We are playing against some very big players who are very sophisticated and tremendously larger than we are," he says. "You can do work anywhere in the world from where we're located."

While a lot of the offshoring competition takes certain types of business out of play, he is wary of offshoring firms becoming very sophisticated and able to deal with the more advanced work that CorporaTel handles. "That's a possibility that we will have to watch."

But, he doesn't see the company's smaller size as an obstacle – particularly now when "the very latest technology tools allow us to compete with a much bigger organization." In fact, he sees an advantage to their relatively small scale as offering personal access to executives, and being adaptable and flexible to clients. For example, the company can—and will—readily customize reporting to exactly the way the customer wants it. Mills also sees their size as indicating to customers that their particular business is important.

Mills expects the company will continue to build a strong IT orientation offering sophisticated agents with higher skill sets that bring "a distinctive competence."

In the meantime, he sees that Best Outsourcing Solution in the Americas award based on customer feedback as a validation of his company's business model. The customers have spoken with a voice that obviously counts. **cm**

# Traditional phone systems become endangered species

Photo: IBM Canada

**While the application of new technology to a business need like a call centre is usually evolutionary, there is powerful evidence that IP telephony represents a major evolutionary jump forward.**

BY BOB MORGAN

Today, some 80 percent of businesses report that they are either planning an IP telephony implementation, or will be planning one, within the next few years. While those that criticize IP telephony often complain that there is no “killer application” for the technology, it may be that the killer app everyone is looking for can be found in the call centre.

For call centres to operate using traditional phone systems it has been necessary to add specific pieces of technology to meet specific needs. Calls may need to be moved around in a more intelligent way, or auto attendant or IVR may need to be added. Organizations may have to have to add more features, like enabling callers to check the balance in their bank accounts or to pay bills.

As call centre managers added more of these functions, many decided they wanted to divide their organizations into skills-based groups, which meant their systems needed even more intelligence. All this meant more boxes, and therefore, more complexity.

And while this evolution is taking place, more locations might be added. Suddenly all these boxes must be duplicated at every location. In some cases, there could be 100's of call centre employees spread out across five or six locations. This becomes immensely difficult and expensive to manage, especially if the intelligence on the system needs to be tweaked or enhanced.

But IP telephony has dramatically changed this model, in complexity, cost and ability. Because it is part of the company's data architecture, it is more flexible than a traditional PBX and not nearly as location dependent. Three or more PBXs no longer need to be independently managed because the system can be changed from a single, expertly managed location.

This centralized management also extends to application management. If the call flow in a system needs to be changed, instead of having to go to multiple boxes in multiple locations, the new application can be uploaded to all locations at the same time.

IP based systems also allow calls to be

**As part of the company's data architecture, IP telephony is more flexible than a traditional PBX and not nearly as location dependent.**

queued and delivered across the country. For example, in a three-call centre operation, people in the west would be queuing and prompting in the Calgary location, but an agent in Montreal could become free more quickly, or an expert agent might become available in Halifax. With IP telephony it becomes very easy to queue a call in Calgary but deliver it to any other location. Calls could be queued locally but distributed virtually, saving a lot of long distance costs and network fees. More importantly, the caller gets to speak to the best available agent.

The reason that technology in the call

centre tends to evolve slowly is cost. As hot as IP telephony is, organizations still require a solid return on investment.

IP telephony enjoys an enormous ROI just on moves, adds and changes. IBM Canada installed 4,000 IP phones at its Markham headquarters that never have to be moved or changed again. When a user signs into the system, no matter which handset they are at, they instantly have access to all their personal attributes. The same applies in IP based call centres.

Updating and changing a call centre's phone system is faster and less expensive as well. In 2005 Toronto-based Foster Parents Plan implemented VoIP in their call centre and they're able to update their system much more quickly than they could before. Now, when a major disaster occurs, it only takes a few hours to make changes across their entire call centre.

While the application of new technology to a business need like a call centre is usually evolutionary, there is powerful evidence that IP telephony represents a major evolutionary jump forward. In most cases it won't be rip-and-replace overnight, but manufacturers are not doing further development on their traditional phone systems. The benefits of IP telephony are so great that traditional telephone systems are moving onto the endangered species list. **CM**

*Bob Morgan is solutions executive, Contact Centres, IBM Canada.*

**Canadian Call Management Association**

REPORTED BY LINDA OSIP

CAM-X is thrilled to announce that the 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Trade Show and Convention held in Cancun, Mexico from Nov. 14 – 17, 2006 was an overwhelming success. Members from all areas of the United States and Canada had an opportunity to network with industry-specific vendors from Canada, the US, England and Sweden.

Keynote speaker Michael Kerr, one of North America's leading authorities on how to create a healthier and more inspiring workplace, opened the sessions by regaling a packed house with anecdotes on how to bring a little levity, while still striving for excellence, into the day to day operations of a business.

On day two, the delegates and sponsors alike attended The CAM-X Award of Excellence and Award of Distinction reception and lavish barbeque dinner which was held at the beautiful Omni Resort beachside restaurant. Karaoke and an on-site hot-tub bar followed the awards presentations.

The final day included a well-attended

whirlwind of information sessions, culminating in the prestigious gala dinner and banquet. Michael Leibowitz with received a hearty welcome as he was presented with the CAM-X President's gavel upon assuming the role of President for the upcoming term. Leibowitz is with Call Experts, Charleston, SC, making him our first American president.

In conjunction with the Board of Directors, I would like to extend their mutual appreciation to everyone whose efforts and commitment resulted in the 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Trade Show and convention being such a success. [www.camx.ca](http://www.camx.ca)



**CAM-X 2006 Award of Excellence Winners from Canada**

*Year 1 – Award of Excellence*

On Call Message Centre, Ottawa, ON; Tigertel/UTR, Calgary, AB; Directors' Choice, St. John, NB; Tigertel/UTR, Richmond, BC; PDL Mobility & Call Centres, Cornwall, ON; Tigertel/UTR, Red Deer, AB; Scotia Business Centre, Bridgewater, NS; Tigertel/UTR, Oshawa, ON; Infinity Telecentre, London, ON; Finning (Canada), Edmonton, AB; Tigertel/UTR, London, ON; All Call Communications, Georgetown, ON

*Year 2 – Bronze Award*

Extend Communications Inc., Cambridge, ON; Tigertel / UTR, Montreal, QC; Integrated Messaging Inc., Winnipeg, MB; Linton Telephone Answering Service, Dorval, QC; HMC Communications Inc., Halifax, NS; Tigertel / UTR, Nanaimo, BC

*Year 3 – Silver Award*

FineLine Solutions, Winnipeg, MB; Telelink Call Centre Inc. St. John's, NL

*Year 4 – Silver Plus Award*

Select Call Centre,\* Red Deer, AB; Encore Telesolutions,\* Barrie, ON; Central Com-

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munications, Welland, ON; Select Call Centre, Calgary, AB; Jarvis Business Centre Inc., Kelowna, BC

*Year 5 – Gold Award*  
24-7 InTouch, Regina, SK

*Year 6 – Pearl Award*  
Intercon Messaging Inc., Drayton Valley, AB

*Year 7 – Emerald Award*  
KELCOM Telemessaging, Windsor, ON; Select Communications Inc.,\* Grande Prairie, AB; Alliance Wireless Communications,\* Kingston, ON

*Year 8 – Ruby Award*  
Extend Communications Inc., Brantford, ON

*Year 9 – Sapphire Award*  
Select Call Centre, Edmonton, AB; Answer Plus Inc., Toronto, ON; Connections Call Center, Squamish, BC

*Year 10 – Diamond Award*  
T.A.S. Communications, Belleville, ON; Tele-Page, Montreal, QC; PDL Mobility & Call Centre, Calgary, AB

*Year 11 – Diamond Award*  
Teleconnect International, Wetaskiwin, AB

*Year 12 – Diamond Award*  
Metrolert Ltd., Ottawa, ON; Answer Plus Inc., Hamilton, ON

*Year 14 – Diamond Award*  
Re: Messaging Solutions Inc., Abbotsford, BC; Tigertel / UTR, Toronto, ON

*Year 17 – Diamond Award*  
Canpage Communications Ltd., Cornwall, ON  
\* denotes top scorers

The winners of the CAM-X 2006 Call Centre Award of Distinction are:

Tigertel / UTR, London, ON; Appletree Answering Service, Inc., Anaheim, CA; Extend Communications Inc., Brantford, ON; Tigertel / UTR, Oshawa, ON; 24-7 Intouch, Regina, SK; Answer Plus Inc., Toronto, ON; Focus Telecommunications, Inc., Burtonsville, MD; Tigertel / UTR, Montreal, QC; PDL Mobility & Call Centres, Calgary, AB; Re: Messaging Solutions Inc., Abbotsford, BC; Tigertel / UTR, Toronto, ON; Telelink Call Centre Inc., St. John's, NL; NETELLER, Calgary, AB; Intercon Messaging Inc., Drayton Valley, AB; Tigertel / UTR, Calgary, AB; Integrated Messaging Inc., Winnipeg, MB; Answer 1 Communications, Phoenix, AZ; Appletree Answering Service, Inc., Portland, ME; and, the top scorer, FineLine Solutions, Winnipeg, MB.



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**ContactNB**

REPORTED BY ANGELA MATCHIM  
ContactNB held its seventh annual Con-

tact Atlantic Conference October 4 - 5, 2006 in Saint John, New Brunswick and reviews are tremendous. Deemed by participants to be the best yet, the conference welcomed two keynote speakers as well as an exciting line-up of session facilitators.

Our opening keynote session was led by Penny Reynolds, co-founder of The Call Center School and author of "The Power of One". She spoke of the integral role of each person in an organization and how understanding this concept is the key to employee engagement and corporate success.

Our second day keynote speaker was Kenny Moore, former monk, now Director of Human Resources and Corporate Ombudsman at KeySpan Corporation, a multi-billion dollar New York City Fortune 500 Energy company and the largest distributor of natural gas in the Northeast.

Other sessions covered such topics as Change Management, Home Agent Solutions and Identifying Conflict Clues. Sessions were organized into two streams: one for management and one for agents – with a healthy mix of plenary sessions where the topics are suitable to all.

But by far our most popular speaker was Jon Shearer, Ottawa-based sleep researcher who spoke about sleep and shift work. Jon has been in the sleep research business since 1977 and a teacher since 1964. He was one of the founding members of the Carleton University Laboratory for Sleep and Chronopsychology. For the past thirty years Jon has been involved in numerous studies looking at the effects of shiftwork on various shiftwork populations. His humorous approach made the science of sleep highly accessible by the front-line through supervisory to management personnel who attended his session.

The social highlight of the conference was the Dinner Theatre that capped the first day. A four-course meal was served during a full-out, lively and entertaining production called Fuel Cell-Vation.

We were extremely pleased to welcome a record number of attendees as well as exhibitors to this, our seventh annual event. We are welcoming a broader spectrum of registrants in each successive

year and we're very pleased to offer a well-coordinated and enjoyable event.

Contact Atlantic was also the backdrop for the Association's seventh Annual General Meeting where our 2006-2007 Board of Directors was elected from a slate of nominees.

The executive members are: President Perry Kendall, Delta Hotels Global Reservation Services; First Vice President Sean Donegan, Fairmont Hotels and Resorts; Second Vice President Brian Sypher, TD Insurance; Secretary/Treasurer Bill Swift, Moneris Solutions; and Executives At

Large Rick Desbrisay, Rainmaker Call Centres, and Anne Woodside, Avis Budget Group.

Plans are already underway for next year's event. We are offering a discount to sponsors who commit to the eighth annual Contact Atlantic by December 31, 2006. Our 2007 conference will be held October 24 - 25 in Moncton New Brunswick.

In coming months, our efforts will be put toward the design, promotion, judging and organization of our third annual ContactNB Awards of Excellence. This is our opportunity to celebrate the great work

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## coming events: 2007

### JANUARY 22 - 25

Second annual Call Centre Summit conference and call centre excellence awards; Renaissance Atlanta, Atlanta, GA. [www.iqpc.com/callcenterIQ](http://www.iqpc.com/callcenterIQ)

### JANUARY 29 - 31

Boosting ROI through Employee Engagement; 3rd Annual Internal Communications Summit, Renaissance Toronto Hotel Downtown, Toronto, ON; under the aegis of International Quality & Productivity Center (IQPC). [www.iqpc.com](http://www.iqpc.com)

### APRIL 25 - 27

The first Contact Centre Global Forum for senior contact centre decision makers across the globe; Palais des Congrès, Canne, France; [www.ccglobalforum.com](http://www.ccglobalforum.com)

### MAY 14 - 16

Alberta Call Centre Association ninth annual conference, Coast Plaza Hotel & Conference Centre, Calgary, AB. [www.abcallcentre.com](http://www.abcallcentre.com)

## Association News - cont'd from page 21

being done within our centres as well as within our communities by our workforce. Last year's gala was attended by over 250 people and we're planning for even more this year as an increasing number of our members send in their entries and submissions for awards.

ContactNB is the provincial industry association serving the needs of the customer contact centre community in New Brunswick. Together we work to promote a positive image of the industry to the general public, offer an annual conference & exposition and an awards of excellence program to recognize and celebrate excellence in the industry. We are fostering excellence in the customer contact centre industry. We're more than you think.



### British Columbia Contact Centre Association

REPORT BY JEAN MITCHELL

On November 14th nominees for the 2006 BC CCA Awards of excellence gathered at the River Rock Casino in Richmond BC. An evening to celebrate began with a wonderful dinner, entertainment, followed by true Academy Award glamour and recognition of the best of the best. Wind and rain did not stop over 180 attendees from spending the next day November 15th visiting the Trade Show and Vendor Booths and attending educational breakout sessions.

2006 Vendor of the Year winner is Canadian Communications Products. 2006 Contact Center of the Year award goes to BC Automobile Association. 2006 Community Spirit winner is Accenture Business Services for Utilities. 2006 Employee of the Year winner is Samin Arjomandi of Sage Software.

Congratulations to all of the winners and all of the nominees. Your contributions to our contact centre industry made everyone a winner in this dynamic BC CCA event! **CM**

*We're short of space and time this issue, so watch next time for the news from Manitoba Customer Contact Association's eighth annual Manitoba Excellence in Customer Contact Achievement (MECCA) Awards night. And much more!*

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