

# CONTACT management

www.contactmanagement.ca

Jan / Feb 2006

## work anywhere

**Web-enabled  
communication**

**Site selection  
and expansion**

**Plus**

- Canadian quality merits offshore work
- Marketing to ward off being outsourced

## Remember who brought you to the dance

"The moment an organization stops focusing on the customer, it will start to fall apart," writes Craig Cochran in *Becoming a Customer-Focused Organization*, published this past January by Paton Press.

Few would argue that your focus has to be on your customer as the reason you're here in the first place. But, of course, you must also address your employees' needs as this will have a ripple benefit for your customers.

Investing in Internet Protocol (IP) technology seems to be an effective strategy for many. IDC analyst Cushing Anderson suggests that by deploying IP telephony, multi-channel contact centres "can optimize productivity with new approaches to skills-based routing, better business process integration, easier staff management via the ability to flow-chart the caller experience and other capabilities."

Elizabeth Herrell, a Forrester Research analyst quoted in IQ Magazine from Cisco Systems Inc. is more blunt: "Contact centres that continue supporting customers with aging technology risk falling behind competitors."

Check out this issue's coverage of Web-enabled communication and IP telephony beginning on page 12.

Your customers will also gain if you maximize investments such as your physical facilities. In addition to Brendan Read's contribution on site selection starting on page 8, he offers the following suggestions for making the most of your site.

"Make sure it is set up and managed right. Look at if you are hiring the right people. Are skill sets you advertise and screen for matching the actual job requirements? Have you developed profiles of what makes successful agents?"

"Look for signs such as excessive turnover, absenteeism and tardiness. Are there many people quitting on the spot? Read agents' body language when they go on and off shift. Watch for reports of or see supervisors breathing down agents' necks, yelling at them in front of colleagues, playing favourites, offering no constructive suggestions, or showing no understanding of agents' needs, such as leaving early to pick up a child at school. Supervising people is a skill and arguably a talent. Yet too often, supervisors are selected because they were good agents, not because they know how to manage others.

"Consider giving your agents steady shifts and stick to them. While this method limits flexibility to meet contact demand, it improves employee morale. This way they can plan their lives around their work such as childcare, sports and education and training. Consider onsite childcare if you have many young women working in your contact centre; a much needed service for these workers."

Focusing on the customer, in our case, is bringing you, the reader, the most relevant and timely information. What is it that most concerns you? I look forward to hearing from you so we can be sure to tailor this publication to your needs.



Susan Maclean  
Editor



January/February 2006  
Volume 6 Number 1

Publisher  
Steve Lloyd

steve@contactmanagement.ca

Editor

Susan Maclean

susan@contactmanagement.ca

Marketing Information Coordinator

Adam Lloyd

adam@contactmanagement.ca

Creative Director

Susanna Ferguson

susanna@contactmanagement.ca

Advertising Sales Manager

Mark Henry

mark@contactmanagement.ca

Advertising Sales

Christian King

christian@contactmanagement.ca

For subscription, circulation and change of address information, contact [subscriptions@contactmanagement.ca](mailto:subscriptions@contactmanagement.ca)

**Publications Mail Agreement No. 40063311**

Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to:

**Circulation Department**

302-137 Main Street North

Markham ON L3P 1Y2

t: 905.201.6600

f: 905.201.6601

e: [info@contactmanagement.ca](mailto:info@contactmanagement.ca)

[www.contactmanagement.ca](http://www.contactmanagement.ca)

Subscriptions available for \$40.00/year or \$60.00/two years.

2006 Lloydmedia Inc.

All rights reserved. The contents of this publication may not be reproduced by any means, in whole or in part, without the prior written consent of the publisher.

Printed in Canada

Reprint permission requests to use materials published in Contact Management should be directed to the publisher.

Cover photo: Amanda Rohde

## features



4

### Call up a healthy industry

An update on Contact Centre Canada

By Susan Maclean



8

### Site selection/expansion

Smart planning your next contact centre

By Brendan B. Read

Labour is Key locating factor

Expanding virtually



12

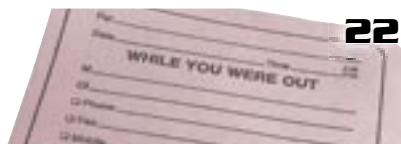
### Web-enabled communication

Dialling up savings

By Susan Maclean

Assessing the business case for Web-enabled communication

By Blair Allen



22

### Beyond message taking

Converging answering services and contact centre services

By W. Fletcher Keating and Gary A. Pudles

20

## association news

ContactNB - Report by Angela JM Matchim

Ottawa Regional Call Centre Association - Report by Julie Bazinet

International Customer Service Association - Report by Dolly Konzelmann

Alberta Call Centre Association - Report by Jayne Kowal

BC Contact Centre Association - Report by Margo Vanderweele

## departments



20

2 FROM THE EDITOR

5 READERBOARD - The latest industry news

15 TECH WATCH - Improving power quality

16 PROFILE

Nordia Inc. innovates to win and retain clients – By Susan Maclean

18 MARKETING - Making your centre attract investment – By Nick de Jong

19 COMING EVENTS



# Calling up a healthy industry

**An update on Contact Centre Canada, the industry's federally funded sector council to advance the initiatives of this sector.**

BY SUSAN MACLEAN

Although not an advocacy or lobbying group, Contact Centre Canada could well be this industry's best friend. After all, its mission is to contribute to the health and prosperity of the customer contact centre industry and its workforce.

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. Funded by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) as one of 33 federal government sector councils for various Canadian industries, its role is to work in partnership with industry, labour and the academic community to create a strong and vibrant workforce needed to advance the local, national and international initiatives of the sector. It achieves this by focusing on human resources development, researching and providing insight into the labour force implications of legislative and technological changes. It is then the industry associations and stakeholders who would determine how they can best use that information.

Executive director/CEO Elizabeth Thorn describes three specific projects currently underway.

## 1. Career image

"We are working on improving the career image of the industry so that more people will understand that customer contact centres are a great place to build or develop a career," Thorn reports.

She sees career growth as being available at all stages in this sector, even to the extent of students employed at junior or entry level positions in a small segment

of the industry developing workforce readiness skills to help adjust to working life. She cites other areas of the industry as requiring very highly developed skills, making the case that this industry offers a broad opportunity to develop skills in, for example, communication, technology and managing.

Focusing first on internal stakeholders, Contact Centre Canada conducted three focus groups, then drafted and surveyed more than 900 people across the nation to determine how customer service representatives, team leads, managers and executives view the industry, including their pay levels and career advancement.

A 205-page report of the survey is available online to members (membership is free) at [www.contactcentrecanada.ca](http://www.contactcentrecanada.ca).

## 2. Professional designation and occupational standards

"Many people do not realize the broad range and sector specific skill set that is required to manage in a contact centre environment," Thorn explains. "We believe that widespread industry adoption of a professional designation would increase professionalism and enhance the career image of the industry. Employees will benefit from a clear career path. Overall employee satisfaction should increase leading to higher levels of service to customers."

About 70 percent of respondents to the council's national survey to build a current profile of the management cadre indicated that a professional designation would better prepare team leads and supervisors to move into managerial positions. Thorn also reports that 71 percent of people in supervisor, managerial positions started as a customer service representative.

The council is currently documenting

the various professional accreditation programs to determine whether or not standards exist that could be adopted or adapted for the Canadian industry or whether standards need to be developed. The next phase of the project will focus on fully designing all aspects of the professional designation, based on the occupational standards.

A 95-page report on occupational standards is also online at [www.contactcentrecanada.ca](http://www.contactcentrecanada.ca).

## 3. HR impact of DNC, offshoring & more

In 2002-2003, Canada was second in the world to India in attracting contact centre projects. Canada attracted 56. India attracted not 600 as most people might think, but 60 – just four more than Canada, Thorn stresses.

The third project assesses the labour force implications of offshoring, the proposed regulatory changes in Canada related to the Do Not Call Registry, the impact of new technologies (especially Voice over IP), and restrictive trade measures that have been adopted or are under consideration in the U.S. At press time, a literature review dealing with these four themes was to be posted on the Web site in late January.

These three project areas tie into the human resource issues focus of all the 33 sector councils that represent about 50 percent of Canada's workforce. Contact Centre Canada claims its focus on human resources development will specifically help this industry answer the call for quality as follows:

- quality workforce so jobs come here and stay here;
- quality career choice and quality jobs to be enjoyed by Canadians; and
- quality experience by public through provision of quality service. **CM**

...CAM-X REVEALS WINNERS FOR 2005 AWARDS...

CAM-X, the Canadian Call Management Association, honoured a host of companies at its 41<sup>st</sup> annual convention and trade show last Nov. 29 to Dec. 2 in Kananaskis, AB.

Canpage Communications Ltd., Cornwall, ON, was the big winner with the first Year 16 Diamond Award of Excellence, having earned a score of 80 percent or higher every year since this mystery caller program's inception.

As CAM-X executive director Linda Osip explains, each company is evaluated by an independent panel of judges over a six-month period. Companies must consistently meet or exceed the honour-level score every year in order to maintain their multi-year ranking. If a company who has previously been awarded fails to earn the grading, that company again starts from scratch, back at year one.

Select Call Centre, Red Deer, AB, a Year 3 – Silver Award winner, was singled out as the top scorer of the Award of Excellence program. For being among the top five scorers, kudos also went to: Year 3 – Silver Award winners Select Call Centre, Calgary, AB, and Simcoe Message Centre, Barrie, ON; Year 6 – Pearl Award winner Select Communications Inc., Grande Prairie, AB; and Year 7 – Emerald Award winner Extend Communications Inc., Brantford, ON.

Another 15 contact centres were honoured in the fifth annual Call Centre Award of Distinction program. Tigertel/UTR, Toronto, led the pack with the highest score in this impartial evaluation with a focus on CRM, courtesy, etiquette and professional call handling.

CAM-X has a reciprocal relationship with Association of Teleservices International (ATSI) and runs the awards programs to include members in both organizations.

See the accompanying listing of the Award of Excellence and Call Centre Award of Distinction winners. Congratulations to everyone! **CM**

**Fifth annual Call Centre Award of Distinction winners**

- Extend Communications Inc., Brantford, ON
- Tigertel / UTR, Vancouver, BC
- Telelink - The Call Centre Inc., St. John's, NL
- Intercon Messaging Inc., Drayton Valley, AB
- 24-7 InTouch, Regina, SK
- FineLine Solutions, Winnipeg, MB
- PDL Mobility & Call Centres, Calgary, AB
- Answer Plus Inc., Toronto, ON
- Tigertel / UTR, Calgary, AB
- Connections Call Center, Squamish, BC
- Answer 1 Communications, Phoenix, AZ
- Tigertel / UTR, Nanaimo, BC
- Integrated Messaging Inc., Winnipeg, MB
- Re: Messaging Solutions Inc., Abbotsford, BC
- Tigertel / UTR, Toronto, ON—TOP SCORE

**16<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL AWARD OF EXCELLENCE WINNERS**

**Year 16 – Diamond Award**

Canpage Communications Ltd., Cornwall, ON

**Year 13 – Diamond Award**

Tigertel / UTR, Toronto, ON

Re: Messaging Solutions Inc., Abbotsford, BC

**Year 11 – Diamond Award**

MetroIert Ltd., Ottawa, ON

Answer Plus Inc., Hamilton, ON

**Year 9 – Sapphire Award**

Tele-Page, Montreal, QC

PDL Mobility & Call Centre, Calgary, AB

T.A.S. Communications, Belleville, ON

Northern Communication Services Inc. Sudbury, North Bay & Timmins, ON

**Year 8 – Ruby Award**

Connections Call Center, Squamish, BC

Select Call Centre, Edmonton, AB

Answer Plus Inc., Toronto, ON

**Year 7 – Emerald Award**

Extend Communications Inc., Brantford, ON—TOP 5

**Year 6 – Pearl Award**

KELCOM Telemessaging, Windsor, ON

Select Communications Inc., Grande Prairie, AB—TOP 5

Alliance Wireless Communications, Kingston, ON

**Year 5 – Gold Award**

Intercon Messaging Inc., Drayton Valley, AB

**Year 4 – Silver Plus Award**

24-7 InTouch, Regina, SK

**Year 3 – Silver Award**

Jarvis Business Centre Inc., Kelowna, BC

Select Call Centre, Calgary, AB—TOP 5

Simcoe Message Centre, Barrie, ON—TOP 5

Select Call Centre, Red Deer, AB—TOP SCORE

Central Communications, Welland, ON

**Year 2 – Bronze Award**

Telelink - The Call Centre Inc. St. John's, NL

FineLine Solutions, Winnipeg, MB

**Year 1 – Award of Excellence**

Combined Communications, Bowling Green, KY

Tigertel / UTR, Nanaimo, BC

Focus Telecommunications, Burtonsville, MD

HMC Communications Inc., Halifax, NS

Extend Communications Inc., Cambridge, ON

Answer 1 Communications, Phoenix, AZ

Integrated Messaging Inc., Winnipeg, MB

ACT Teleservices, Newington, CT

Linton Telephone Answering Service, Dorval, QC

Tigertel / UTR, Montreal, QC

Professional Answering Service, Charleston, SC

...CANADIAN QUALITY ATTRACTS U.S. OFFSHORE WORK...

Given that 90 percent of Canada's offshore contact centre work comes from the U.S. and given that the U.S. dollar has slid so much the last few years, can Canada still attract American investment?

We're still cheaper than the U.S. domestic market and we have the advantage of top quality, according to Montreal-based Datamonitor analyst Peter Ryan.

Ryan is author of the Datamonitor report The Global Offshore Cost Assessment which provides U.S. contact centres with cost comparisons in major offshore and nearshore markets. The report reveals that Latin America provides the lowest offshore agent price while Canada and South Africa are the most costly.

"We know quality is a huge issue within

the contact centre business right now," he says. "There are all sorts of concern about offshore location. Would it be better for American companies to look at Canada and say 'we're not going to save as much money as we used to but we can be assured of the quality or do we want to save a lot in terms of the exchange and labour costs and go to India but have the ongoing concerns about how people are being treated on the telephone?"

"Considering the legacy of contact centre offshoring in both Canada and South Africa, investors will pay a higher price per agent, however they will generally be guaranteed an excellent quality of labour as well as technology that is second to none," he notes. **CM**

..TOURISM WHISTLER ENDORSES NEW CRM PRODUCT..

In December, Microsoft Corp. announced the general availability of Microsoft Dynamic CRM 3.0, a new release of the company's customer relationship management solution that it bills as a "powerful suite of marketing, sales and service capabilities within a native Microsoft Office

experience."

Intended for companies of all sizes, the software was previewed by a range of companies, including Tourism Whistler, a not-for-profit organization that serves as the official marketing body for Whistler, BC, and represents all those who own, manage or carry on business on resort lands in Whistler.

Already a Microsoft CRM user, Tourism Whistler recently upgraded to version 3.0 and, according to a Microsoft news release, is realizing streamlined business processes in the lead-up to the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games and beyond.

"With about 70 employees interacting with more than 7,000 members as well as our global partners, clients and visitors, selecting the right contact management system is critical to our success as a marketing and sales organization," the release attributes to Diane Mombourquette, Tourism Whistler's vice-president of finance and operations. "Microsoft Dynamics CRM 3.0 helps us better manage the complex and evolving nature of our



stakeholder relationships and, ultimately, will enhance our ability to market and sell Whistler to the world."

The upgraded software is purported to address three key challenges that determine the success or failure of most CRM initiatives: user adoption, business fit, total cost of ownership.

Available in multiple languages, the full-suite Professional Edition is priced between \$884 and \$1,175 (CDN) per user and \$1,662 and \$2,353 (CDN) per server, depending on the Microsoft Volume Licensing program being used. Full-suite Small Business Edition is priced between \$588 and \$666 (CDN) per user and between \$705 and \$800 (CDN) per server. **CM**



**Call for Nominations  
Contact Centre Canada  
Board of Directors**

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, in partnership with its membership, works to create the strong and vibrant workforce needed to advance the local, national, and international initiatives of the sector.

As a National Board, we have representation from all regions of the country based on the following breakdown: West, Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic Provinces. We currently have vacancies in each region.

Contact Centre Canada is seeking nominations from experienced customer contact centre executives with primary accountability (strategic and tactical) for one or more physical customer contact centres.

If you are interested in submitting your application for nomination, please visit our website [www.contactcentrecanada.ca](http://www.contactcentrecanada.ca) for more information. Letters of application and accompanying CVs should be submitted no later than March 15, 2006 to:

Elizabeth Thorn, Executive Director & CEO  
Contact Centre Canada  
275 Bank Street, Suite 400  
Ottawa, ON K2P 2L6  
Tel.: 613-232-2063 ext. 213



This project is funded by the Government of Canada's Sector Council Program.

...GLOBAL CONTEST ENTERS SECOND PHASE...

Canadian entries number 24 out of 178 companies from 12 countries in north and south America competing in the Contact Center World Best of the Best (BOB) Awards.

ContactCenterWorld.com president Raj Wadhvani, the awards creator and organizer, reports the entries will be "trimmed down" to finalists in nine categories. "The finalists in some categories will present in front of the delegates and the delegates will have an opportunity to vote on whom they think should win the awards," he explains. "We will count up all the votes and the winners will be announced at the Americas awards gala dinner on the evening of the second conference day."

The event takes place March 28-30 in Dallas, TX, at the Southfork ranch from the original TV series Dallas. Winners of the Americas awards program will move on to compete at the global final confer-

ence in Las Vegas, NV, November 6-8.

The Dallas event includes a charity auction with proceeds going to Medical Missions for Children and Doctors Without Borders. Anyone willing to donate products or services can contact Wadhvani at [rajw@contactcenterworld.com](mailto:rajw@contactcenterworld.com) or 807-624-2080.

The 4th annual [contactcenterworld.com](http://contactcenterworld.com) Members' Choice Awards will also be presented in Dallas. These awards are given annually to vendors ranked highest in overall service and quality in the online ranking by [ContactCenterWorld.com](http://ContactCenterWorld.com) members at [www.contactcenterworld.com/2006mcaindex.asp](http://www.contactcenterworld.com/2006mcaindex.asp). Voters must be an end user of one or more of the solutions. Every valid vote will be put into a draw for one lucky voter to win US\$1,000.

Dallas conference details are at [www.contactcenterworld.com/worldawards](http://www.contactcenterworld.com/worldawards). **CM**

...24-7 INTOUCH CHOOSES NORTEL TECHNOLOGY...

Toronto-based call centre outsourcer 24-7 INtouch in February announced it was offering clients “more flexible solutions, customizable online reporting and increased call efficiencies and productivity” due to the deployment of “agent performance-enhancing” call centre technology from Nortel Networks. 24-7 INtouch is using Nortel Networks Symposium Call Center Server and Succession 1000M Call Center PBX Telephone Switch.

“For years, this type of technology has been accessible to only Fortune 500 sized companies with large volume campaigns, due to the associated high cost,” a news release attributes to Greg Fettes, 24-7 INtouch president and CEO. “Our mission has always been to invest in the best technology available in the industry and scale it back so that all of our clients, no matter what their expected call volume, can reap the same benefits as a larger company at an affordable cost.”

The Nortel Symposium Server is said

to enable real-time database driven call routing, allowing for complex call scripting and skills based routing. It can also be integrated with multi-media transaction handling and Web-enabled functionality.

Multiple redundancies promote a stable call centre environment while enterprise-level reporting capabilities are said to provide managers and clients with key decision making tools and critical marketing information – reflecting call activity, agent performance, sales statistics and more. **CM**

...IPSOS REID CLOSES EDMONTON CALL CENTRE...

Public opinion research firm Ipsos Reid announced early February that it will close its Edmonton call centre effective February 28, 2006. The Edmonton centre has been in operation since October 2000 and employs about 200 people. The closure is said to be prompted by an increasing difficulty in staffing the centre to full capacity in Edmonton’s highly competitive labour market, as well as the lease expiring in March prompting a move with associated significant business costs.

Work will be shifted to other Ipsos Reid call centres in Winnipeg, Ottawa and Montreal. Ipsos will continue to maintain

more than 750 telephone interviewing stations in Canada.

Ipsos Reid reports it will work with the Alberta Department of Labour to identify appropriate opportunities for Ipsos employees and to access available government support and services. Employees were given four weeks of working notice, during which time the company will support their efforts to find work. Ipsos Reid has also arranged workshops to assist employees in writing resumes and interviewing for new positions and is offering a resume review service to ensure employees are well equipped as they begin their job searches. **CM**

**OPERATION**

*Barbados*

Looking for a prime location for your Call Center Operations? Look into Barbados.

- Low Operating Cost
- Attractive Incentives
- Low Employee Turnover
- English-speaking Workforce
- Broadband Telecommunications
- Cash Grants for Training
- Modern Low-cost Facilities
- Social & Economic Stability
- Qualified Professionals With Technical and Management Skills

*Barbados Means Business*

Barbados Investment and Development Corporation  
 105 Adelaide Street West, Suite 1010  
 Toronto, Ontario, M5H 1P9  
 Tel: 416-214-9919 Fax: 416-214-9815  
 E-mail: Barinves@interlog.com  
 Visit online: [www.bidc.com](http://www.bidc.com)

**BARBADOS INVESTMENT & DEVELOPMENT CORP.**

# Smart planning your next contact centre

BY BRENDAN B. READ

**Opening a new contact centre is expensive and warrants careful planning to get the most out of the investment.**

**A** new 200-seat centre can cost between \$Cdn7.5 million-\$9.5 million/year, reports The Boyd Company, a site selection firm based in Princeton, NJ, that has helped American contact centres discover Canada as a location.

Building leases are typically seven to 10 years; a long time in today's fast changing business and technology world. A new facility can take up to several months from "go" to "thank you for calling" in site and property selection, design, construction, outfitting and staffing and training.

Given the costs and

commitment involved, take a hard look at whether you need contact centres, or at the sizes you had originally forecast. Begin by looking at your business, marketing processes, developments and trends.

## **Reassess your need**

Laws can affect your site planning. Canada's new Do Not Call regulations will, if the USA experience is any indicator, lead to fewer if more productive outbound calls by shrinking prospect pools. You will rely more on driving inbound contacts to your centres. Say you've outsourced your outbound calling but kept your inbound calls in-house. You may need to add more inbound seats and possibly a new contact centre to house them.

Many calls and seats could be avoided by delivering better quality products or services, or by having processes in place to catch foul-ups before they happen.

See what other functions your contact centres can provide. Many firms now have agents cross-selling and upselling to generate revenues or handling inbound and outbound calls. You could do away with seats and staff and consolidate sites hav-

ing one set of workers handle the tasks of two. But be careful. Agents who excel at service often do not make the best salespeople. Excellent salespeople may not like the more passive service environment. Customers who call in because they have had problems may not be receptive to sales pitches.

If you have brick-and-mortar locations, see about obtaining additional productivity from your existing people and property by directing some calls to your customer-facing staff when they are not busy. You should have reliable data from both your contact centres and in-person traffic such as from door counters to help you plan and schedule employees.

Take a close look at whether upgrading your self-service solutions—IVR and the Internet—can reduce contact volume and seats. Self-service interactions cost five to 10 percent of the price of live agent voice or email exchanges. These tools have cut the need for contact centres in many fields such as banking, catalogue/order entry, hospitality and travel.

You will still need live agents to solve out of the box questions. To reduce staff and seats, obtain as much information as is feasible from the self-service tools. That avoids agents asking callers to repeat the same information, thereby shortening call lengths. You will also discover any obstacles in your self-service tools that are prompting these calls.

Outsourcing can also eliminate or lower the size of contact centres. Outsourcing offshore can cut costs by up to 30 or 40 percent through taking advantage of low-wage high-skilled labour in countries such as India, The Philippines and South Africa. Many American and British companies have offshored their customer contacts.

There are several caveats with offshoring for Canadian companies: whether offshore agents can empathize and relate to Canadians; reports of poorer results; high program minimums (50 to 100 agents); and that no one offshore site has both fluent English and French-speaking staff.

Consider having your agents work from home. Nearly every contact centre function can be done off premises, the one exception being manipulating hardware in tech support.

**cont'd on page 10** ↗

## American site selection tips

When locating a contact centre in the USA, there are several factors to consider.

- Labour force quality is much more of an issue and must be carefully ascertained. There are variations between communities in educational achievement; language and math skills and work ethic. The American Diploma Project reported in 2004 that 60 percent of employers rated high school graduates' grammar, spelling, writing and basic math skills as fair to poor.
- You will need to have either your own or outsourced agents who can also speak Spanish. There are over 40 million Hispanics—the second largest American ethnic group—and they are retaining their language and culture.
- The US is more at risk to severe disasters. Regions such as the southeast that have some of the best contact centre labour pools take the brunt of hurricanes and tornadoes. That makes networking contact centres, such as your American and Canadian sites, much more important.

## Labour is key locating factor

BY SUSAN MACLEAN

The quality and quantity of the labour force is the number one criteria when locating a contact centre, reports Steve Demmings, president of Site Selection Canada. According to a recent study by the Winnipeg, MB-based firm, next in order of diminishing importance are: operational cost, labour cost, availability of real estate and availability of technology.

“Quality and quantity of the labour is number one, which makes sense given that labour is 80 percent of the cost of running a contact centre,” says Demmings.

Maintaining a database of more than 400 recent customer contact centre expansions or relocations in Canada for companies of more than 50 seats, Demmings notes that although 50 percent of all the deals in the last 48 months took place in Ontario, “the real story is who is in the business and who is not.”

He says New Brunswick and Nova Scotia are both “in,” with the latter the place to be watching.

As an example of NS showing leadership and resources, he cites the recent Waterloo, ON-based Research in Motion's last November announcement with Nova Scotia Business Inc. of a 1,250 full-time employee technical support centre to be established in Halifax.

He says that deal which takes contact centres to the more demanding level of sophisticated tech support will in turn “attract more companies and new synergies will be created.” He adds that the province recognizes that “it's a ladder of opportunity for educating people.”

Not “in” anymore is the Province of Manitoba, due to what he calls a lack of leadership in focusing on the knowledge industry, in spite of taking a leading role in this industry years ago.

He sees BC moving forward, focusing on its interior with deals occurring in Kelowna, for example. Ontario is also a prominent player. However, he notes that the east coast has been heralded as the new hot high-tech centre of Canada.

Demmings also has interesting statistics which reveal savings for companies locating in Canada rather than the USA, even with our dollar worth US\$0.86. He can be reached at [steve@sscd.com](mailto:steve@sscd.com).

## Canadian Customer Contact Centres 2002-2005 (Inclusive)

PROVINCE	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	NB	NS	PE	NF	TOTAL
# OF DEALS	21	7	7	4	105	18	37	21	2	2	224
# OF JOBS	8,190	3,950	1,930	550	31,227	7,575	8,023	6,844	250	1,600	70,140

Source: Site Selection Canada (www.siteselectioncanada.com)

...continued from page 9

Tools such as agent monitoring/recording; elearning; instant messaging and audio/data/Web conferencing enable these employees to be just as effective in their premises as on yours. Expanding residential broadband networks, coupled with virtual private networks, permit fast, secure information delivery and transmission. Voice over IP and network routing cut call handling costs.

Home agents offer significant cost savings and productivity improvements. Contact centre and home working consultant Jack Heacock reports that a 100-agent operation can save over \$10 million over five years.

Another advantage is that turnover is less. Kansas City, MO, USA-based outsourcer ARO realizes over \$1 million in savings by having home – instead of office-based agents. Turnover sank to seven percent from 60 percent. One reason: when it opted for home working, its labour force flipped from 20-somethings to more productive boomers.

Distance is removed as a labour pool constraint, enabling firms to hire, for example, agents living in smaller rural cities that are not large enough to support contact centres. People who are mobility-impaired or who have caregiver responsibilities and cannot commute have become great agents.

Home working can especially benefit small to mid-sized English Canadian organizations and contact centres that need Francophone agents, and vice versa. It is less expensive to hire and hook into these employees from their homes than it is to locate, build and manage separate facilities.

Home working also enables organizations to withstand disasters and severe winter weather by distributing the work over huge areas. Home agents work to as little as 30-minute increments. That enables more responsive and less expensive spike handling than conventional centres where staff must be called in, with time and calls in the interim.

Going to home agents may not make sense if there is plenty of capacity at existing centres. But a business case could be made when productivity improvements and reduced turnover are factored in.

# Expanding virtually

BY SUSAN MACLEAN

If expansion is in the cards for your business, instead of going to the expense of building or buying a new contact centre and duplicating existing infrastructure and management, you might consider adding new agents via a virtual network. This alternative is being promoted by Internet protocol (IP) technology vendors such as Avaya Inc., Cisco Systems Inc., Nortel Networks and Telus, to name some major players.

### “A contact centre is a value rather than a place.” – Fleming

Tracy Fleming, executive briefer at Avaya Canada, suggests you could add five agents in Halifax or Vancouver for possibly just \$10,000 or you might be looking at an all-inclusive \$100,000 price tag for bringing 100 new agents online – possibly one tenth the cost of establishing a physical presence and duplicating your infrastructure.

“You don’t duplicate your infrastructure,” he explains. Instead, you place intelligent gateways in other branches with each gateway location able to handle five to 200 agents. He says you can run 250 gateways off one system.

All these vendors tell tales of gaining

local presence through IP telephony, making an IP-using agent in Beijing or Hungary or Cornwall, ON, just another three- or four-digit extension to the firm’s Canada-based communication system. The advantage of being dispersed with multiple locations is that the lights could be off at one or more locations but calls are still answered because they get forwarded to another site.

Meanwhile, vendors are scaling down

their large enterprise solutions to serve the small- to mid-sized firms, including companies with as few agents as five.

Telus offers CallCentreAnywhere, an on-demand IP contact centre solution that provides a Web-based interface that can be accessed anywhere the user has a PC and Internet access. Last November, Nortel introduced Expert Anywhere, a SIP-based integrated suite of multimedia applications that allows businesses to direct customer calls to the most appropriate agent or knowledge worker, regardless of location or function.

“A contact centre is a value rather than a place,” Fleming stresses.

### Datamonitor’s prediction for agent positions across Canada

REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF CANADIAN AGENT POSITIONS (000s), 2003 - 2008					
	2003	% TOTAL	2008	% TOTAL	CAGR
BC & PRAIRIES	56.1	26.4	82.5	27.0	8.0
ONTARIO	141.9	66.8	201.3	65.9	7.2
ATLANTIC	14.0	6.6	21.4	7.0	8.9
TERRITORIES	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>212.3</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>305.5</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>7.6</b>

Source: Datamonitor



### CHOOSING THE SITE

You may now have a core group of workstations to be housed in a formal conventional contact centre.

The challenge becomes where to place it.

Canada's strong economy has led to low unemployment and plenty of competition from other contact centres and employers in many mid-sized/larger communities, especially in southern Ontario, Alberta and southwestern British Columbia.

Another constraint is sufficient volumes of fluently bilingual agents. They can only be found in limited areas of the country

including eastern/northern New Brunswick, Montreal/L'Estrie, eastern/northern Ontario and Winnipeg.

Consider dividing your contact centre into several smaller satellites and networking them. This way you can tap into the plentiful labour pools in high-unemployment, mostly Anglophone or Francophone communities located outside of the larger cities.

Small cities with excellent schools and strong work ethic that do not have the population or the buildings for 500-seat centres can readily support those with 25 to 50 seats.

Consider locating near trendy downtown areas on transit lines to get away from traffic jams and provide access to

workers who do not own cars which are major expenses for those living on contact centre wages. In a metropolitan area, you can also space your centres out in a constellation also on transit routes to be close to workers and provide disaster backup.

When you sign your leases negotiate clauses to permit expansion to adjacent space, if available, easy exits and sublease rights so you can respond effectively to changing needs.**cm**

*Journalist Brendan Read is author of Designing the Best Call Center for Your Business, Home Workplace and co-author The Complete Guide to Customer Support, published by CMP Books.*

For more on this topic please see **FROM THE EDITOR**, on page 2



Contact Centre Canada  
*Answering the call for quality*

## Make the national connection

*Join us to build the industry's future and yours*

Membership provides access to government funded reports

### Recruitment challenged by industry image?

Discover the views of 1000 industry professionals

*Key Finding: Contact centre agents' satisfaction equals that of general public*

### Curious about management compensation?

Review our national managerial profile

*Key Finding: The average annual training budget per contact centre manager is \$2300*

### Interested in offshoring, Do Not Call legislation & new technologies?

Examine the facts & case studies in our 175 page report

*Key Finding: Significant increase in the use of home-based agents forecasted*

*(Les études sont disponibles en français)*

*Membership is free of charge*

[www.contactcentrecanada.ca](http://www.contactcentrecanada.ca)

Funded by the Government of Canada's Sector Council Program.



# Dialling up savings

BY SUSAN MACLEAN



**Having enjoyed the competitive benefits of using Web-enabled communication for many years, this Albertan firm turned to voice over Internet protocol (VoIP).**

"We're not looking to be the big 500-seat centre doing two or three large clients," reveals Desiree Bombenon, president and COO of PDL Mobility & Call Centres. Started in 1982, the Calgary, AB-based firm has about 100 employees, including a contact centre in Calgary and a new one in Cornwall, ON.

"Between the two centres, we're about a 50-station call centre," she continues. "We try to put together a special plan or package for our clients. We have about 2000 clients that we answer for in specialized, customized applications from emergency response to order entry to information services."

PDL offers a Web portal package that clients can use to get online information about their contact centre services. Clients can see how many and what type of calls went

any of them. PDL has a contract with one vendor for its contact centre business and another contract with another vendor for its wireless data services business. A third vendor is used for a long distance toll-free number as a back-up and to provide additional numbers on short notice.

## Lessons learned

Bombenon found the implementation more time-consuming than difficult. Don't expect your time lines to be met, she advises. "If you plan on moving to VoIP, do so with the outlook that the ends justify the means and the time you spend on it. Otherwise you'll be pulling your hair out."

"I used to factor in double the time of

mails and emails and telephone tags."

She cites a U.S.-based investment house client where "bringing together the Web, Internet telephony, VoIP and voice recognition had wonderful business benefits. Between the ITG and voice recognition on the Web we were able to streamline a very complicated load application process and automate it all."

## VoIP has dropped PDL's phone bill 35 percent.

through, get reporting services, even listen to the actual call so they can judge call quality for a service. Bombenon says most new customers want such a service.

Now, PDL also uses VoIP technology for their in-office communication and at the contact centres.

"It simplifies everything," reports a pleased Bombenon. "It reduces the whole complexity of the network switching issues by combining both the voice and data over the same network."

Less complex means less expensive to manage. Long distance costs are also slashed. "It has dropped our phone bill 35 percent and in our business, that is huge," she adds.

There are no quality issues and it's convenient. "It allows us to do so much more with our voice mail. Voice mail can be forwarded and moved around just like email. For me to call my Cornwall office is like a local call for me; like calling another extension in my Calgary office," she says.

PDL is involved with three different vendors, but Bombenon refused to name

what people told me; I now take it as five times," warns analyst/consultant Roberta Fox, senior partner, Fox Group Consulting. She says executive sponsorship is vital. "You're bringing together IT and data and telecom. They act very differently. Each one of those is like a herd of cats."

She advises pressuring vendors to help figure out how your organization has to change. "That's the hidden 'gotcha' stuff. People sometimes don't factor in the change part of it and then they blame the technology."

But, Web-enabled communication benefits such as boosted productivity and cost savings are real, she stresses. She cites the example of the financial services market offering wealth management or high-end clients a personal level of customer service. She says that computer servers using Internet telephony gateway (ITG) technology can accept and route a browser-based phone call to the appropriate party with the appropriate information. As a result, financial institutions provide service faster and cheaper "compared to sending voice-

## Pre-qualifying customers

The company had the equivalent of RRSPs with an annual peak in investment applications and would have to hire extra people. By integrating an Avaya ITG, Unisys Natural Language server and Oracle financial database system, the screening and filling in information was done by the system by the voice recognition servers and the ITG servers. If approved, all that information was transferred to the agent and it was only then that the human cost kicked in. The company didn't have to bump up its staff. The customer experience was very good from a relationship perspective. The return on investment was realized in about 18 months, says Fox.

She adds that VoIP/Web-enablement need not be complex. She has found productivity improves measurably with just a system providing 'find me/follow me' outbound voicemail notification, convenient authentication and listening to messages, and one-key call back – all without incurring long distance charges that have to be expensed. In her firm's case, she enjoyed a

**cont'd on page 14** ↗

# Assessing the business case for Web-enabled communication

BY BLAIR ALLEN



An expanded use of Web-enabled communication technologies is receiving greater scrutiny and adoption as contact centres strive to re-evaluate, differentiate and adapt in the context of evolving business requirements, increasing competition and escalating customer expectations.

Business, in general, is migrating to a more “customer-centric” strategy focused

on finding the right balance to both improving services and growing profitability. For most organizations, this adds a new dimension in process design and development by assessing needs from the “outside in” (customer perspective) as well as the “inside out” (business perspective).

This makes evaluating the return-on-investment (ROI) now more complex given that a greater range of vantage points must be taken into consideration. While this may appear to be a nightmare of assessment and conflicts in the making, this is actually an opportunity to identify overlapping value propositions to justify the design, technology and integration expenditures related to Web-enabled communications.

## What is it and why do it?

The potential exists to leverage the significant adoption of the Internet to provide enhanced communication tools between businesses and customers. The term “Web-enabled” has a broad connotation regarding customer communications and integration between the various operational components and technologies that comprise your organization’s processes.

Web-enabled components/tools include:

- **Web site** – access to information and self-service opportunities
- **Voice over IP** - enhanced voice communications over data/Internet networks
- **Email/chat** – viable alternatives to

cont'd on page 14 ↗



**Colin Taylor**  
Chairman & CEO

31 Barr Road  
Suite 2  
Ajax, Ontario  
L1S 3Y1

**Office:** (905) 426-5055  
**Mobile:** (416) 276-9068  
**Fax:** (905) 426-6793  
**Email:** ctaylor@thetaylorreachgroup.com  
**Web:** www.thetaylorreachgroup.com  
Offices in North America & Australia

When you guarantee a 300% ROI in 4 months,  
it's no surprise you run out of business cards.

voice communications

- **Browser** – universal networked interface (accessible to customers and service providers)
- **Collaboration** – real-time visual augmentation to voice communications (screen sharing for a virtual face-to-face)

From a customer-care perspective, the objective is to empower the customer; expand communication touch points, and provide an enhanced customer experience while, at the same time, striving to assimilate processes to achieve greater ease of doing business.

Voice over IP (VoIP) technologies are offering alternatives to traditional circuit-switched voice networks. The objective is to have voice/data/video communications converge to lower capital costs through unification of network infrastructure and equipment. Operational costs can be lowered through reduced toll, administration (moves, adds, changes), departmental duplicity, maintenance and support. Greater efficiencies can be achieved through a broader range of features and applications enhancing accessibility and mobility of staff. The customer experience is therefore improved by centralizing access to resource and services, enabling these multiple touch points, and facilitating custom-tailored applications.

#### Dialling up - cont'd from page 12

six-month payback. Fox Group has been using the Mitel 3340 SMB VoIP server and Mitel 6000 managed applications server with the contact centre software. Early this year, Fox Group will be testing Nortel BCM 50 SMB VoIP. The firm has already tested Avaya's IP Office and IP 600 servers.

She finds the benefits driving early adopters go beyond hard cost savings to include "leadership, innovation, improving customer service, improving your brand. It could be the retention or attraction of staff; going into to new markets and wanting to have new ways of doing business."

"Within the next two or three years, everybody doing smart business will be moving to this technology," Bombenon predicts. "So, you might as well hop on it as an early adopter, especially in the call centre industry." **CM**

Organizations can empower customers with Web site tools that readily define products and services while providing self-service options to manage the most common interactions. Well designed email/chat communications are directly linked to these Web site interactions and can rival access and response times of traditional voice communications.

Effective browser designs align processes

### There is never a viable ROI for developing tools that customers perceive to be more cumbersome and time consuming than just picking up the phone.

and information access for all users (internal and external) which segues into collaborative opportunities. For instance, a customer-service representative can combine voice communications with the ability for both parties to access a centralized Web/browser interface and share visual information and documentation in real time. This is powerful in creating a virtual face-to-face interaction with a remote customer.

#### Evaluating the ROI

"Ease-of-use" is the operative mantra regarding the process design. Technology is only the enabler. Each Web-enabled process must be assessed and designed to provide the customer with an equivalent or better experience in achieving resolution to their enquiry than through traditional processes. Design to serve the customer requirements (outside-in perspective) vs. creating operational short cuts (inside-out perspective). There is never a viable ROI for developing tools that customers refrain from using when they are perceived to be more cumbersome and time consuming than just picking up the phone.

Multi-departmental input is critical. Each department that touches the customer must be consulted to ascertain the optimal design and value proposition that any proposed Web-enabled service enhancements will offer their business unit. Single process changes often produce multiple departmental returns across the enterprise. These returns are added together to support the business case for Web-enabled modifications. In addition, this exercise typically facilitates effective prioritization of development and integration requirements to realize objectives.

To accomplish these lofty visions effectively, back-office planning and design must achieve greater universal integration of internal processes and access to information. Whether customers are interacting with a customer-service representative or a self-service function, customer information must be centrally accessible and linked with fulfillment processes. Cost of integration of these often-disparate data sources must be

compared with the value proposition of the enhanced services offered and the benefits of internal process streamlining.

#### Bottom line considerations

- Effective customer-centric design planning is always the first step in developing Web-enabled solutions that will achieve service objectives and meet investment expectations;
- The collaborative design process is also the foundation for establishing the incremental departmental returns that are the basis for the business case that will drive the initiatives;
- The inherent redesigns to back office infrastructure are certain to offer broader-reaching organizational-process improvements; therefore, accounting for these expenditures must reflect the distributed benefits; and
- The overall Web-enabled solutions must be designed with the appropriate reporting tools to measure the ongoing results and benefits to justify the original business decision and indicate areas for future design enhancements.

If you follow this approach to assessment and design for your Web-enabled communications, qualified decisions will be based on what it's worth as opposed to what it costs. **cm**

*Telecom and call centre consultant Blair Allen brings more than 20 year's experience in design, technology and process reengineering as a principal with Allencom Communications and a senior consultant with Cutting Edij Consulting. blairallen@sympatico.ca or www.allen-com.com.*

# Improving power quality

Power-related issues are frequently the cause of time outs, unexplained downtime and other commonplace system or networking glitches. In fact, blue screens, system freezes and logic errors are more often caused by power supply quality problems than by virus, spyware and other malware according to data gathered by SmartPower Systems Inc. of Houston, TX. The company markets a range of uninterruptible power supply (UPS) with transformer based filtering (TBF) products to provide "computer grade" power.

According to a Bell Laboratories study, 82.2 percent of power-related issues stemmed from surges of less than 200 volts while a similar study by IBM upped that number to 87.5 percent. While these events are usually not disastrous, they generate all kinds of mischief, consume end user time, result in data loss and generate a torrent of help desk traffic, according to SmartPower. Meanwhile, blackouts cause only 1.4 percent and 0.5 percent of computing power problems according to Bell Labs and IBM respectively.

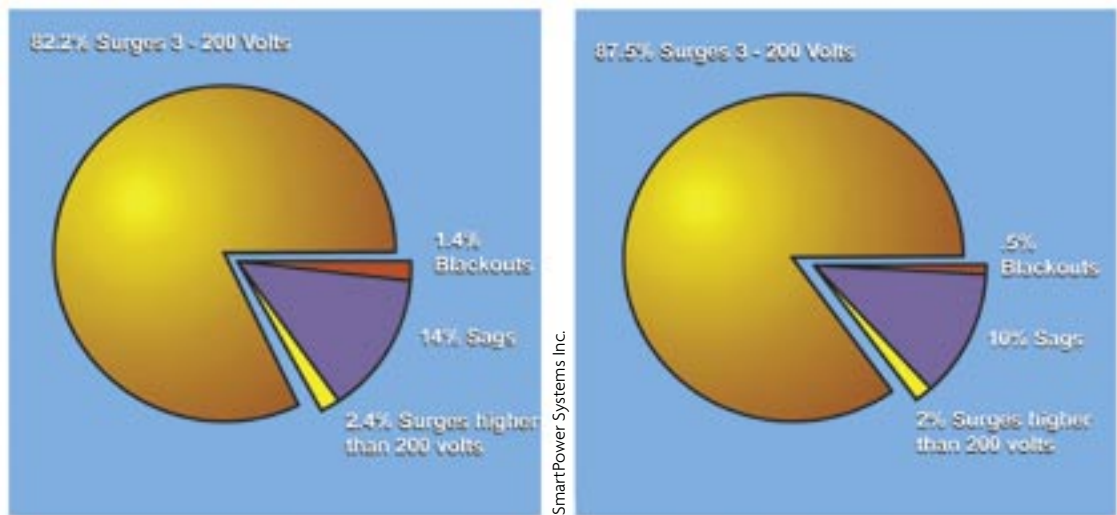
"Power problems caused by small surges, spikes and sags in the electricity supply cause 15 times more problems today than viruses," a recent company report attributes to SmartPower CEO Bahram Mechanic. "Servers, workstations and networking gear can best be

protected by using transformer-based filters. Whereas old style power conditioners were large and expensive, a new breed of inexpensive electronic power conditioner is being deployed today in the computer room."

While your systems are likely protected against lightening flashes or blackouts that can damage power supplies and cause PC board blowouts and other catastrophic

an excellent way to filter out larger and the small (down to less than 0.5 volts) spikes, but notes that they are heavier and more expensive than more modern alternatives.

Transformer-based filtering (TBF) devices, also called electronic power conditioners, are described as providing "computer grade" power at the same price as limited-function surge protectors and a fraction of the price, weight and size of isolation



Two major studies of power quality, one by Bell Labs and the other by IBM, show strikingly similar results: That blackouts and large surges only make up a small percentage of power quality problems. On the other hand, 80 to 90 percent are caused by low voltage surges that cause networking problems such as logic confusion, system errors and frozen screens.


issues, they may still be unprotected against the far more common tiny surges that occur from "noise" between the hot or neutral wire and the ground wire.

According to SmartPower, surge suppressors or surge protectors fail to handle these relatively small over- and under-voltage.

Isolation transformers, also known as line conditioners, change one voltage to another to prevent the electrical current from flowing directly from one side of a circuit to the other. The company sees these as

transformers. TBF devices, such as those sold by SmartPower, include transistors, thyristors, capacitors and relays to handle power conditioning duties in tandem with a small transformer. This digital circuitry is said to provide greater functionality than a traditional line conditioner/isolation transformer.

SmartPower also notes that UPS devices with TBF units are smaller, lighter and about half the price of a comparable UPS with line conditioner unit. **CM**



Lucie Maillet, national sales and marketing director, and Pierre Grimard, vice-president, information technology, are justly proud of Nordia's IT innovation award last November.

# Innovating to win and retain clients

BY SUSAN MACLEAN

Photo: Jean-François O'Kane

**Being ahead of the curve is a familiar position to Nordia Inc., a Montreal-based firm founded in 1999 as a co-venture by Bell Canada & J-Telecom Interest Inc.**

Nordia Inc. employs more than 2,000 people in seven inbound and outbound contact centres in Quebec and Ontario. Its private and public sector clients outsource, in whole or in part, their customer-service business in a 24/7 environment adapted to their specific needs. Services include customer service, technical support, telemarketing for promotional campaigns and surveys, information on products and services, activation, billing inquiries, order processing, retention/churn management, up-selling and cross-selling, reservation and collection services. Nordia also offers specialist programs such as directory assistance, relay services and teleconference services for North American customers.

As part of a strategy to support clients with reliable, future-proof solutions, Nordia makes a point of keeping its technology infrastructure current at the very least. In 2005, it became one of Canada's first contact centres to deploy a secure voice over Internet protocol (VoIP) network that links the company's sites so they can be virtually managed as one.

As an early adopter of VoIP, Nordia

claims that converging data and voice enables it to better meet clients' ever-changing needs. Since March 2005, the company has been leveraging Bell Canada IP virtual private network (VPN) technology. Being IP-enabled means Nordia can offer the full range of contact modes – phone, e-mail, chat, Web and fax at multiple sites for a same service. The centralized routing via the IP VPN and company-wide dial plan of the VoIP capability also help Nordia handle the peaks and troughs of customer demands.

"It touches more than 600 positions across contact centres so we can connect people with skills and proficiency for a given customer," explains Lucie Maillet, national sales and marketing director.

"A large part of the technology driver is to enable calls to get to the right agents regardless of where the service is located," says Pierre Grimard, vice-president, information technology.

## Skills-based routing

He sees the key advantage of VoIP is that it enables distributing calls according to skills, thus complementing and optimizing

the HR schedule. "We have an SIP [session initiation protocol] enabled soft switch [a programmable network switch] where agents in five cities log in as if they are beside a [regular circuit] switch."

"It's easier to create business rules regarding how to allocate and handle calls wherever the agent is located," Maillet says of their VoIP. "If there is seasonality to a customer or a new promotional campaign, we can optimize to address the peaks by using all the capacity that exists across our seven centres rather than being limited to the main centre the service is initially delivered from."

Nordia has received several awards in recognition of innovative solutions deployed in HR, training and quality benchmarking. Its most recent claim to fame is creating its multimedia relay centre (MMRC), a dual-party relay system allowing specialized Nordia agents to connect persons of normal hearing with individuals who are deaf, hard-of-hearing or speech disabled.

As reported in our previous issue, Nordia's MMRC earned a gold award in the efficiency and operational improvements category for profit organizations at the Canadian Information Productivity Awards (CIPA) gala in Toronto last Novem-

ber. It also won the 2005 Gold Flèche d'Or Award from AMR (Québec Association of Relational Marketing) and the 2005 Concours des OCTAS in the technological innovation category.

Prior to that and more importantly, MMRC secured for Nordia the relay-service contract the company sought from the State of California in 2002. More than 500 functions were identified in the contract specifications. The call centre needed to handle calls relayed from the U.S. from callers using new technologies, including IP and wireless technologies, as well as specialized technologies used by and for the hearing and speech impaired – and in several languages including English, Spanish and French.

Nordia was determined to set up a call centre in Canada to meet the contract requirements for sophisticated relay services, however it was impossible to do so using existing technology. Nordia needed an entirely new way to route and manage long-distance interactions, initiated on a wide variety of old and new platforms, into one efficient contact centre that would meet the needs of the hearing and speech impaired.

### One single platform

Grimard reports that Nordia integrated Nortel contact centre products with a newly developed application to handle the 60 call types used by the hearing and speech impaired, including speech-to-speech (STS), ASCII, 20+ year-old TTY-teletype, three-way calling, conference calls, IP chat relay, IP video relay and Instant Messaging. By developing control tools to integrate the multiple call protocols, Nordia succeeded in centralizing management of multiple call types on one single platform.

Nordia also had to find a way to ensure a geographic transparency for the interactions it relayed. For every call received at the Nordia centre, there are often many outgoing calls that return to the U.S. These calls must contain the original information of the related incoming call so it can be displayed on the called party's telephone and for interstate toll billing purposes.

The resulting MMRC enables the relay service user to simulate a person-to-person

call (usually hearing- and speech-enabled) with the intervention of a relay service agent. Management of relay subscribers' communication preference profiles permits more efficient placement of calls to people frequently called by the user and quicker number dialling. IVR recording accelerates the process, giving time for users to make their selections without calling back several times. As a result, where relay services in the U.S. and most countries require a 10- to 20-second average response time and must convert the call processing to the modality selected, Nordia's system permits the user to reach a relay service agent in less than 3.3 seconds on average and in the modality regularly employed by

to give access to the various Nordia relay services offered to its American clients.

"Nordia agents handle 60 types of calls," Maillet explains. "Some people are deaf but can talk, so the agent can let the voice pass but has to type the reply coming back. Some are speech impaired or have disabilities. A deaf person has a teletype phone or a PC. Nordia simulates a real phone call. 'I have a call for you from....' is how the agent starts talking."

### Training special agents

Nordia relay agents get five weeks of training and have to type 65 words/minute. They are required to service quickly as if it were a normal call. "It takes someone

## Technology enables calls to get to the right agents wherever the service is located.

the user. This improves the quality of service to the user while increasing efficiency and capacity to handle a greater number of calls or interactions.

As the only relay service provider among those competing for the contract that successfully met the target implementation date of December 2, 2004, Nordia was allocated additional call volume. In 2005, it added additional IP relay volume to its platform and contact centre with a new agreement with a U.S. national IP relay provider.

"Integration between old protocols such as ASCII, TTY (baudot) and IP, as well as connectivity between the Canadian and American telecommunication systems were great challenges," Grimard admits.

Nordia met these formidable challenges with help from Bell Canada and Nortel as partners in the telecommunication special assembly delivery, Circumference Technology Services for the development and call-management software components integration, and Concept S2i who designed the Web site [www.myrelay.com](http://www.myrelay.com)

special," she adds. "You have to have empathy."

Nordia has provided hearing impaired relay services in Canada for five years. It estimates it handled more than two million interactions across all modalities in 2005.

With access to the latest technology, perhaps it is no surprise that Nordia claims one of the industry's lowest staff attrition rates. It probably also helps to have an "open book management philosophy" which is described as "the industry's most advanced system of interaction between a company, its clients and employees...empowering employees at all levels to continuously improve the company's performance."

But, it's hard not to come back to its proven prowess with technology.

"We're using innovation to serve customer needs the most efficient way," Maillet stresses.

Indeed, Nordia opened three new 150 to 200-seat contact centres in less than eight weeks each, all within six months ending June 2005. **cm**



# Making your centre attract investment

BY NICK DE JONG

**It's a new year and time to re-evaluate your call centre's purpose and present it more favourably to senior management who views it as overhead.**

Much is being made of metrics these days and rightfully so. But before we start measuring, there is a question to be answered which is becoming even more critical. What is the purpose of the contact centre? You may think that it is obvious and perhaps it was in the beginning, but now senior management is seeing it as overhead that they would like to eliminate. We believe it is time to take two new approaches. One, what really should be the purpose of the centre in the future? Two, how will we present ourselves more favourably to our constituency?

What should the mission of the centre be? If we think along the lines of what senior management would like, it is for all functions to add value, to contribute directly to the core business. Senior management often sees the call centre as a defensive move, a cost of sales. It's the service needed after the sale is already made. Overhead! Something to reduce! Now, you may say we protect and keep our customer base. True, but that is a defensive posture! Can we make it an offensive posture? Could we add to the customer base? Could we encourage new business?

How can we change slightly and become a function for investment? Begin with mission and vision statements updates for the centre. Involve the centre personnel. Set the task for the entire staff to update the mission statement to reflect adding value to the business in a more proactive way. This is an iterative process and will take a number of rewrites and hopefully much discussion. Since a call centre operates in real time and staff can't just leave the phones for meetings, use a chat line or blog for the discussion. Once we have a new mission statement (the reason the function exists as seen from

the underwriter's view), we can create a vision. This will speak to how we wish to be viewed and by when. From these two statements we develop goals. Goals are SMART – specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound.

## Develop a positive picture

Step two is to begin marketing the centre to all stakeholders. A picture of your centre shouldn't just happen. If you do not create the centre you want others to see, a picture will develop willy-nilly from rumour and innuendo.

Start a marketing campaign to create the reputation you want for your centre. A campaign is just what it suggests: an ongoing long-term continuous program of presenting the information about your centre to each group of stakeholders in the language they want to hear. Begin by having your updated mission and vision on every document generated by the centre. It will let everyone know who and what you want to be.

Look at all your statistics and reports and determine whom they are meant for. Then put in the information that will mean most to them in the most prominent place. Create graphs for senior management. Show trends, presenting positive trends first. Stay away from cost dollars. The CFO may want to see costs but defocus on absolute dollars and show reducing costs lines.

## Be proactive

Be present at every executive meeting. No, you are not going to be invited into the boardroom meetings, but if your executive has some positive information to report every month, you will be present without being there. You have more in-

teractions with customers than any other group in the company. Bring opportunities to the table. Reword complaints into opportunities and make suggestions on how they can be exploited into new business or better processes. Be careful with cost saving suggestions. They tend to get out of hand and sometimes backfire.

Make sure you have plenty of reward and recognition days. Once a week is a good rule of thumb. Keep it simple like a potluck lunch. Find some positive event to celebrate and give recognition for it. Invite an executive to give the award. If you receive a compliment from a sales person for being helpful, celebrate it and ask the VP sales to come in and say a few words. Execs are busy, but a multicultural lunch and the chance to give a positive reward are fun things to do even for busy execs.

Ensuring additional business from the existing customer base is very much a centre responsibility. Find repeat business sales numbers in the sales totals and break them out so you can report on them. Sales will insist they are responsible and they are, but so is the centre. Report on them. It changes a perception. If you can, report on the profitability of repeat sales. They are up to five times more profitable than new sales and so make the centre look good.

The above suggestions will help the centre become a strategic part of the business – very important for the centre in the future. If the centre is not a proactive part of the core business, senior management will continue to look at it for ways to reduce overhead costs. Sooner or later an outsourcer will look like the right answer, unless you act first. **CM**

*Nick de Jong is president of Service Minds Inc., a consulting company specializing in processes and training to optimize call centres and service desks. [www.serviceminds.com](http://www.serviceminds.com)*

## coming events: 2006

### March 15

Deadline for nominations for the Contact Centre Canada Board of Directors. See page 6.

### March 15\*

7 am – 12:30 pm; BC Contact Centre Association's annual Call Centre Tours; Burnaby, BC.

### March 22

Listening skills using improv techniques: Mississauga; Contact Professional Alliance Inc.; www.cpacan.com, 1-416-410-4663.

### March 29 & 30

International Quality & Productivity Center (IQPC) Canada's 2nd annual IT Help Desk & Service Desk Management conference; Maximizing Internal Resources to Improve Customer Satisfaction, Increase Efficiency and Ensure Corporate Buy-in. Westin Prince, Toronto, ON; www.iqpc.com; 1-800-882-8684

### April 21 & 22

Toronto; CAM-X Supervisor Coaching Clinic; www.camx.ca; 1-800-896-1054.

### April 26

Using agencies to recruit; Forensic background checks; Mississauga. Contact Professionals Alliance Inc.; www.cpacan.com, 1-416-410-4663.

### April 26 & 27

The Canadian Communications Congress; Ensuring the Strategic Value of Your Internal and Corporate Communications Function. Doubletree International Plaza Hotel Toronto Airport, Toronto, ON; www.iqpc.com; 1-800-882-8684.

### May 1\*

deadline for nominations for the second annual ContactNB Awards of Excellence.

### May 5 & 6

Calgary; CAM-X Supervisor Coaching Clinic; www.camx.ca; 1-800-896-1054.

### May 15-17\*

"Year of the Leader" – Alberta Call Centre Association's 8th Annual Conference and Tradeshow; at the Westin, Edmonton, AB.

### May 15-17

Canadian Marketing Association 2006 National Convention & Trade Show; Palais Des Congrès, Montréal; www.the-cma.org; 1-416-391-2362.

### June 2\*

Ottawa Regional Contact Centre Association's 3rd Annual Career Excellence Awards Gala.

### June 8\*

2nd annual ContactNB Awards of Excellence gala; Delta Beauséjour Hotel; Moncton, NB.

\* See our association news page for details.



# listen to this...

*We deliver great conversations, for whatever you do.*

GN Netcom headsets keep people working, prevent misunderstandings, and reduce talk time.

To get a GN Netcom headset - give us a call. We'll listen.

**CTS**  
CORPORATE TELECOM SERVICES INC.

1-2333 Wycroft Road, Oakville Ontario Canada L6H 6L4  
Tel.: (905) 827-7200 • (888) 827-7200 • Fax: (905) 827-4514  
www.cortel.com



**CONTACTNB**

*Report by Angela JM Matchim*

ContactNB is as busy as ever and is planning a full slate of events for the coming year.

May 1<sup>st</sup> will mark the close for nominations for the second annual ContactNB Awards of Excellence. As the name suggests, the awards celebrate excellence in such areas as workplace environment, community involvement, customer experience and others, not to mention the Member of the Year! The awards will be conferred at the gala event June 8, 2006 at the Delta Beauséjour Hotel in Moncton, New Brunswick.

Contact Atlantic, the only annual conference and exposition for the customer contact industry in Atlantic Canada, is being held October 4-5, 2006 at the Delta Brunswick Hotel in Saint John, NB. This is the seventh annual event and it will include two full days of informational and educational sessions for managers, a program designed just for agents, keynote addresses and a dinner theatre social evening. We're very proud of this conference which brings the community together for networking, learning and sharing of best practices. A mini trade show also highlights many new and emerging technologies and services available to the customer contact industry.

We will be releasing the results of our Annual Compensation Survey at the end of February. The survey collects information on working conditions, overtime practices, and benefits as well as starting, current and incentive compensation among front-line and supervisory staff.

ContactNB is the association serving the needs of the customer contact centre industry in New Brunswick. There are 100 customer contact centres in the province employing 20,000 New Brunswickers. For more information, please visit [www.contactnb.ca](http://www.contactnb.ca).

**OTTAWA REGIONAL CONTACT CENTRE ASSOCIATION**



*Report by Julie Bazinet*

Celebrating the region's leading customer contact agents and customer contact centre support associates, ORCCA is set to launch the third Annual Career Excellence Awards Gala. The gala stands to be one of the year's hottest events for local organizations. Scheduled to take place on the evening of Friday, June 2, 2006, companies will endeavour to claim the highest order of local industry recognition for employees who demonstrate outstanding excellence in the categories of customer service, teamwork, efficiency and attendance.

Nominees, their guests and attendees will experience an exhilarating evening of celebration punctuated by keynote speaker Dr. James Barnes.

Dr. Barnes holds undergraduate degrees in Commerce and Economics from Memorial, an MBA from the Harvard Business School, and a PhD in Marketing from the University of Toronto. Considered an international authority and thought leader on customer strategy, Dr. Barnes has served as consultant and advisor to such national and international companies as Aliant, eircom, Kraft Foods Canada, Tesco, Ivanhoe Cambridge, CIBC, HSBC, Xerox USA, IKEA and others. Dr. Barnes is a widely-published author of seven books including the best-selling marketing textbook in Canada, *Fundamentals of Marketing*, and the internationally-acclaimed book *Secrets of Customer Relationship Management: It's All About How You Make Them Feel*.

Throughout 2006, ORCCA will continue to provide a forum for networking and the exchange of ideas between contact centre professionals in the national capital region by conducting contact centre tours, hosting workshops and delivering powerful information sessions that focus on real contact centre issues and best practices in the industry. For more information including an overview of upcoming events visit [www.callcentres.org](http://www.callcentres.org) or if you are interested in the 3rd Annual Career Excellence Awards please contact ORCCA at [info@callcentres.org](mailto:info@callcentres.org).

**INTERNATIONAL CUSTOMER SERVICE ASSOCIATION**



**TORONTO CHAPTER**

*Report by Dolly Konzelmann*

ICSA is dedicated to promoting the development and awareness of the customer service profession. ICSA is a non-profit association led by people who have walked in your shoes and understand your challenges and motivation.

Organized in 1981 by a group of 59 customer service management professionals, today's ICSA has come a long way! Globally, our membership tops 2,000 and we offer a full range of programs that provide members with a forum for sharing knowledge and experience, searching for solutions and networking with other customer service management professionals.

ICSA members are managers, directors, vice-presidents, owners and CEOs of companies of all types and sizes in virtually every industry—manufacturing and non-manufacturing—from the Fortune 500 to the entrepreneur.

The Toronto Chapter (the oldest and largest customer service association in Canada) is led by the president Dolly Konzelmann and supported by the Executive and Advisory Councils. Both councils are composed of recognized industry experts who provide guidance and direction to the chapter. The Toronto chapter holds regular workshops, Webinars, conferences and special events. The chapter is also the premier source for providing on site training, certification and consulting services in the area of people, process and technology. For additional information, contact Dolly at: 905-477-5544, [info@icsa.on.ca](mailto:info@icsa.on.ca) or [www.icsa.on.ca](http://www.icsa.on.ca).

**ALBERTA CALL CENTRE ASSOCIATION**



*Report by Jayne Kowal*

On behalf of the ACCA's Board of Directors and members of the Conference Committee, we are pleased to invite you to attend our eighth Annual Conference and Tradeshow, the 'Year of the Leader'.

Following last year's sold out event, the 'Year of the Leader' celebrates the spirit of leadership within the call centre industry.

We have put together a powerhouse program for you this year. Headlining the event is Jim Reid, providing the keynote and half-day workshop Good to Great. Rounding out our roster are keynote speakers and learning session facilitators on the leadership and industry topics that matter to you. New this year, Tradeshow and Sponsor Spotlights is an opportunity for exhibitors and sponsors to get in front of their target audience for some focused airtime, sharing their products and services with you in an informal theatre-style setting.

Our Call Centre Tours were so popular last year, we've planned a separate afternoon and evening just for this event. You won't want to miss touring on the luxury coaches to some of the leading edge call centre sites in Edmonton, followed that evening by a site discussion panel and 'Thai One On' reception.

As many speakers as there are presenting

at this year's conference, there are different leadership styles, experiences and visions. What does leadership mean to you? To your organization? To your family? To your community? Come and learn from some of the best business thinkers in the industry, at the 'Year of the Leader', May 15-17, 2006, at the Westin, Edmonton, Alberta.

ACCA Board of Directors: Brenda Bauer (president), Dave Vanden-Bosch (vice-president), Darlene Berscht (treasurer), Yvonne Whittaker (past president), Jayne Kowal (sponsorship), Trish Roy (events), Marco Zambon (communications), Desiree Bombenon (membership), Sue Hagen (conference), Kerri Michalczuk (human resources), Greg McPherson (ACCA manager). [www.abccallcentre.com](http://www.abccallcentre.com).

BC CONTACT CENTRE ASSOCIATION

Report by Margo Vanderweele

The BC CCA is in full swing



for 2006. Our first breakfast conference of the year was held January 18, 2006. The topic was "Work Force Optimization" presented by Nathan Stearns, director, Business Solutions Group, at IEX Corporation. Mr. Stearns gave us an informative and interesting presentation.

We are very excited about our annual Call Centre Tours scheduled for March 15, 2006. The event begins with a panel discussion and breakfast; registrants will then board chartered buses to their selected destinations. Support from the call centre industry for this event is tremendous. This year we have representation from several industries; the four great call centres are: Accenture Business Services for Utilities, Coast Mountain Bus Company, FedEx, The Pacific Newspaper Group (Vancouver Sun & Province).

Our Call Centre Tour was sold out last year and we anticipate the same interest this year, so we are recommending early registration. For more information visit [www.bccontactcentre.com](http://www.bccontactcentre.com). **cm**



**Learning together one call at a time.**

- **CALL CENTRE COACHING CLINIC**  
Toronto: April 21 & 22  
Calgary: May 5 & 6  
Chicago: September, 2006
- **42nd ANNUAL CONVENTION & TRADE SHOW**  
Cancun, Mexico  
November 14 - 17, 2006

## Networking • Learning • Sharing

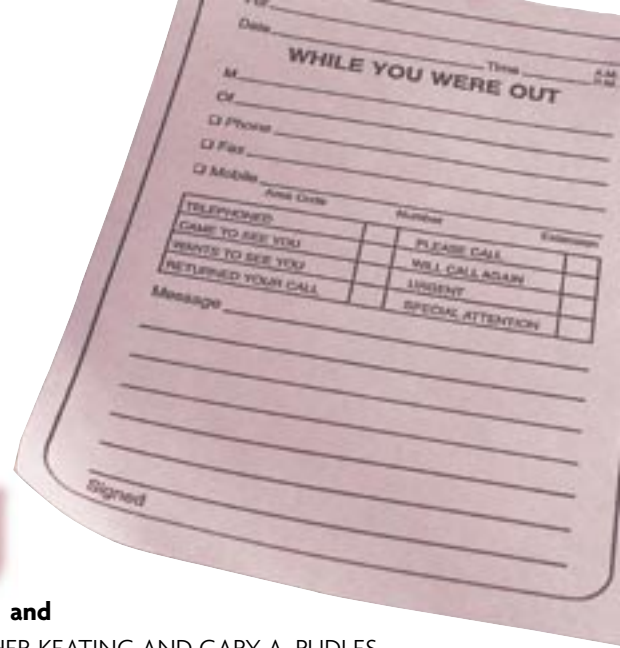
The networking is high powered and the meetings are filled with relevant topics and lively discussions. **CAM-X** is an exceptional organization that will truly benefit your business.

**Join today for access to these benefits!!**



- Award of Excellence
- Call Centre Award of Distinction
- Coaching Clinics
- Annual Convention and Trade Show

**Canadian Call Management Association**  
**[www.camx.ca](http://www.camx.ca) 1-800-896-1054**



# Beyond message taking

**One company's experience illustrates the converging of answering services and contact centre services.**

BY W. FLETCHER KEATING AND GARY A. PUDLES

Think contact centre and the impression most people have is of agents at modern workstations using computers. Think 'answering service' or 'telemessaging' and the image that may come to mind is rows of operators scribbling down messages and dialing out on rotary phones.

But when you walk into TelePartners' Toronto contact centre you will see agents handling answering service calls at the same terminals where they take and make inbound and outbound calls and contacts. Our MessageCentre is integrated with our Customer Care Call Centre; only the types and lengths of calls, the screens that pop up, and sometimes the technology used is different from contact centre customer care.

has reduced but not eliminated the need for answering services.

Our clients have found that it pays to have live agents connect and empathize with callers and to triage and prioritize contacts. No answering machine or voicemail system can do that alone. The time saved and the ability to find out about important matters sooner, with detailed information, easily justifies the reasonable costs. Courteous and helpful voices at the other ends of the lines help turn prospects into customers and ensure their loyalty.

## **A sample evolution**

When we formed Keating Communications in 1991 that later became TelePart-

ners that had been connected to the CadCom with PCs. We could now support other software including off-the-shelf packages and customers' applications and network our computers, which the old solution did not allow us to do effectively. With that investment we expanded the range of services we offered to order entry, dealer locator and outbound.

A year later we installed a Tadiran PBX that enabled us to route calls more effectively, based on our clients' needs. It also provides sophisticated reporting that gives us a clearer picture of our performance.

We began transferring customers' databases over the Internet. That provides realtime database access whereas before we could only transmit data via paper that had to be re-entered or on limited-capacity floppies that had to be downloaded.

The next big leap forward occurred in 2003 when we acquired a Tascom Evolution router, which is built on a Braxtel switch and has two SQL databases, replacing the CadCom. It enabled us to offer Web-based services including online appointment scheduling, email handling and text-messaging and convert voicemail into .wav files and send as email. We attracted larger customers and gained the ability to handle higher-end contracts like virtual receptionist.

The AnswerNet Network, which TelePartners has been part of since 2004, has also evolved its telemessaging services. Based in Princeton, NJ, USA, AnswerNet is completing fitting out most of its sites with computers and Internet access, enabling a full range of voice and text-based answering/

## Today's answering service agents do more than take messages.

What is occurring is the evolution of answering services. Today's answering service agents (no longer called operators) do more than take messages from callers. They act as virtual receptionists, schedule appointments and send reminders, screen and forward calls, alert clients by pager or wireless device, and record voicemails and transmit them as emails or faxes. Agents also enable efficient email response by identifying and throwing out spam, prioritizing and directing emails and, if urgent, alerting recipients.

While the majority of our business is from inbound and outbound contact centre services, there has been steady demand for the MessageCentre answering service. Voicemail, which we also offer,

we had seen voicemail eat away at low-volume low-end accounts that had been the answering service industry's bread and butter. We offered from the outset a high-end solution using a CadCom switch with DOS-based caller ID screen pops and data entry.

Our agents could key in the messages, save them in a database and either read them back or print them. Agents could also page/dispatch staff. The technology improved speed and accuracy over the traditional writing and stuffing messages into pigeonholes that most other answering services then used.

The evolution did not stop there. In 1994, we replaced the dumb terminals

**Message taking - cont'd from page 22**

telemessaging services. Being part of AnswerNet lets us handle greater call volumes and scalable capacities and answer in Spanish. We recently added Chinese languages (Cantonese and Mandarin) answering to serve the Chinese-speaking community in North America.

**Convergence advantages**

The core of what answering services are about—people meeting the needs of people—has tremendous applications in contact centre customer service, sales and help desk. They can lower total contact centre costs by reducing live agent talk time.

By triaging customer service and sales inquiries, callers are directed to the right people. That cuts down 'I don't know if I've reached the right department' calls. If the staff members are not available, agents can give callers options including paging, voicemail, call backs or IVR/Web self-service. Expensive and customer-annoying escalations between customer service or inbound sales agents and other departments are minimized. Callers are freed from voicemail jail.

As a result of this evolution, small/medium-sized organizations now have access to sophisticated inbound, outbound and multimedia contact centre services previously unavailable to them. They had lacked the high call volumes to justify the expense. Because contact centres that provide answering services can scale very low, they enable such clients to offer quality service and deliver results that match their larger competitors and peers. **CM**

*W. Fletcher Keating is TelePartners president/CEO; Gary A. Pudles is The AnswerNet Network president.*

**CUSTOMER SATISFACTION** *Contact Management* examines tactics that will bring your business customer-satisfaction success.

**HEALTH AND THE WORKPLACE** Discover the latest guidelines on creating and maintaining a healthy work environment.

**Coming up in May/June:**

**ANNUAL CALL CENTRE INDUSTRY DIRECTORY** in association with *Direct Marketing News*. Don't be left out! Visit [www.contactmanagement.ca](http://www.contactmanagement.ca) or call 1-800-668-1838.

**classifieds**

**Is technology or the lack of it clouding your vision?**

Get a **clear view** of how to leverage the power of your technology so you can optimize your contact centre operation.

- Migration, Integration and Convergence of Traditional Voice Systems with VoIP Multichannel Systems
- IVR Applications and Computer Telephony Integration
- Reporting and Real-time Monitoring Solutions
- Specialized Applications to Service Your Customers

**CIRCUMFERENCE**  
 info@circumference.ca | www.circumference.ca | 877.882.9253

**Introducing CallCentreAnywhere™ from TELUS**

For more information visit [telus.com/calcentreanywhere](http://telus.com/calcentreanywhere) or call your TELUS representative or 1-877-288-2810

**TELUS®**  
the future is friendly®





## We've made it easier to stay close to your customers.

### Introducing CallCentreAnywhere™ from TELUS.

Every business, regardless of size, needs to stay close to their customers. By providing easy access and timely responses, you can acquire new customers while keeping existing ones committed to your company longer. In turn, your customers stay satisfied and your business stays informed and in tune to their needs and issues. To date, keeping in touch has been an expensive and complicated task. Until now. Introducing CallCentreAnywhere from TELUS. A revolutionary new solution that gives you all the benefits and features of the latest call centre technology without having to make massive investments of time and money. CallCentreAnywhere is easily scalable, which means it's ready to work for small, medium and large businesses and can grow and shrink as business requirements change. It also allows your customers to reach you by email, phone, fax, text messaging and through the web. Each customer inquiry is then routed to the person best qualified to help and once they reach you, you'll get real-time access to their customer history and waiting time so you can deliver a personalized and impressive experience that will leave a lasting impression. So no matter what your size or budget, CallCentreAnywhere gives you all the business benefits of staying close without the work, cost and hassle of setting up and managing a traditional customer service centre. For more information about CallCentreAnywhere visit [telus.com/callcentreanywhere](http://telus.com/callcentreanywhere) or call your TELUS representative or 1-877-288-2810

**TELUS**®  
the future is friendly®