

What does Good Look Like?

I once interviewed a group of young, graduate contact centre staff in Mumbai who had recently resigned, for new jobs outside the contact centre industry. It took a while to get to the root of the issue, but the crux was the lack of face-to-face interaction and the ability to provide end-to-end service. Typically they were seeking front of house jobs in the numerous hotels that cater for western visitors. When you are helping a customer face-to-face the experience for both parties is much richer, largely because of eye contact and body language etc., Back in the day when you could go to a hardware shop and be served by a man in a brown overall who would advise you on the length, type, finish of the nails you require and sell you 12 plus one for luck, both customer and shop assistant knew immediately if the customer went away happy. Wouldn't it be nice if we could translate that awareness to modern day contact centres?

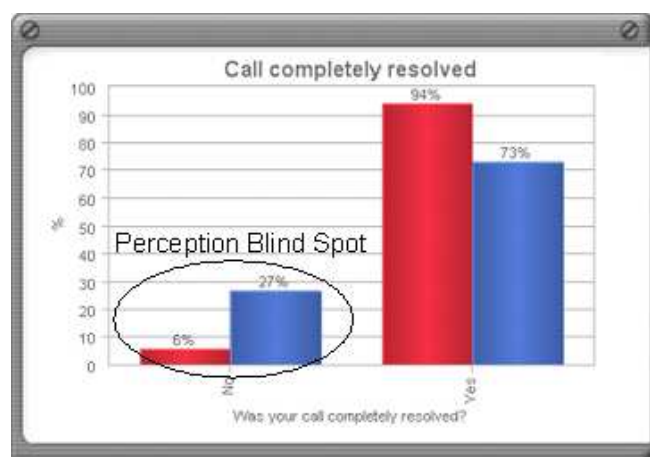
In November 2006, Sir Martin Sorrel, chief executive of WPP – a marketing services and advertising business responsible for 40% of the worlds' advertising and marketing spend – said that business had to realise that the only truly sustainable point of competitive differentiation was “what happened at the point of contact with the customer”.

A survey conducted by YouGov, in April 2007 revealed that 69% of respondents complained about customer service in the past year compared to 55% when the same survey was conducted in 2006. The research also highlights a huge divide between customer expectations when it comes to making a complaint and the actual resolution, with 60% of respondents expecting the problem to be fixed to their satisfaction, but only 27% reporting that this was the case. This gap of 33%, between expectation and delivery, is a major source of opportunity for our industry to transform customer experience and deliver competitive differentiation by understanding *what good looks like, from a customer perspective*, and aligning advisor competencies, behaviours and enabling processes around this basic customer need. The approach we have adopted to answer this question is real simple; at the end of a call:

1. Conduct a very short real-time customer survey (can be IVR, e-mail or mobile phone/PDA).
2. Focus the questions on call resolution, and attributes of service delivery that the advisor can influence; i.e. being welcoming, knowledge, friendly etc.
3. Ask the customer, advisor and team/leader or a third party to complete the questionnaire and display the three different perspectives especially the gaps - on advisors' personal dashboards so they can gain immediate feedback on:

- how their customers rated the last interaction;
- how their scores compare to best practice within the contact centre;
- whether or not their scores improving over time.

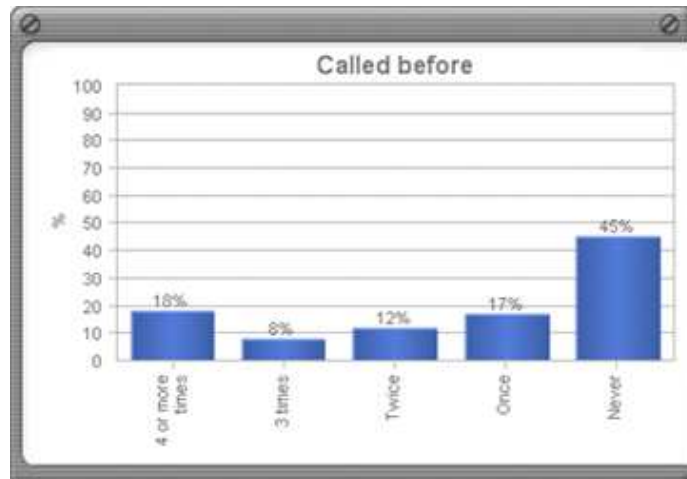
The adjacent graph shows a typical response to, arguably the most important question, "Was your call



completely resolved?" For simplicity we have omitted the team leader score and focused on the perception gap between the customer and advisor.

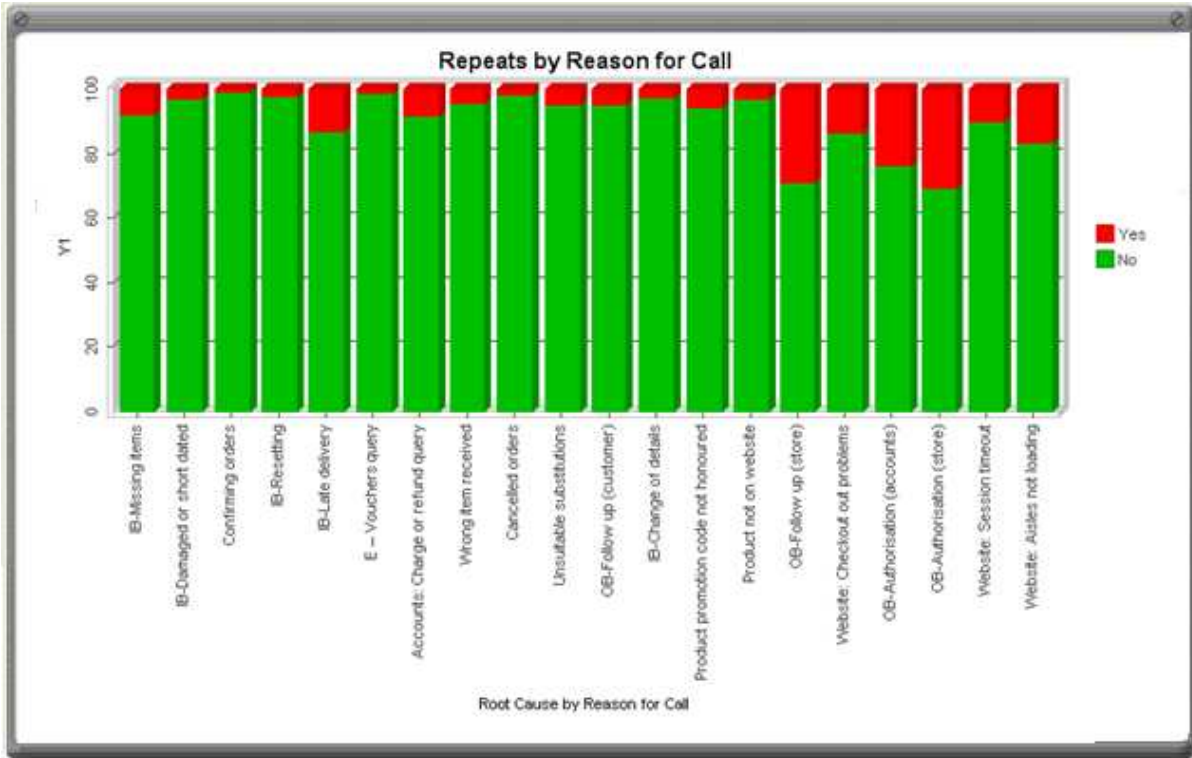
- 27% of customers end the call believing that it had not been resolved to their satisfaction but
- Only 6% of advisors thought the call was unresolved.

The difference in call resolution perceived from a customer and an advisor perspective is far from uncommon. We conducted over 20,000 surveys in 2007 and found similar trends across all sectors and locations. In the above example advisors thought 1 call in 20 was unresolved but the actual percentage was much closer to 1 call in 4. This perception blind spot is the major driver in repeat calls and negative customer experiences. Advisors just don't know what good looks like.



Apart from asking customers if their call was resolved, our clients frequently ask "How many times before have you called about this issue". Having an insight into the percentage of repeat and the number of calls required to complete a transaction is totally new news for the bulk of contact centres we have worked with.

In the above example 55% of all calls are repeats and 18% took 4 or more calls to get resolution - a vital insight into the customer experience and the percentage of failure calls that are consuming valuable contact centre capacity. To really understand the drivers of repeat calls and the impact they have on the effectiveness of the operation our application provides a variety of drill downs. The example below shows repeats by RFC (reason for call), this enables targeted interventions to be developed specific to individual RFCs.

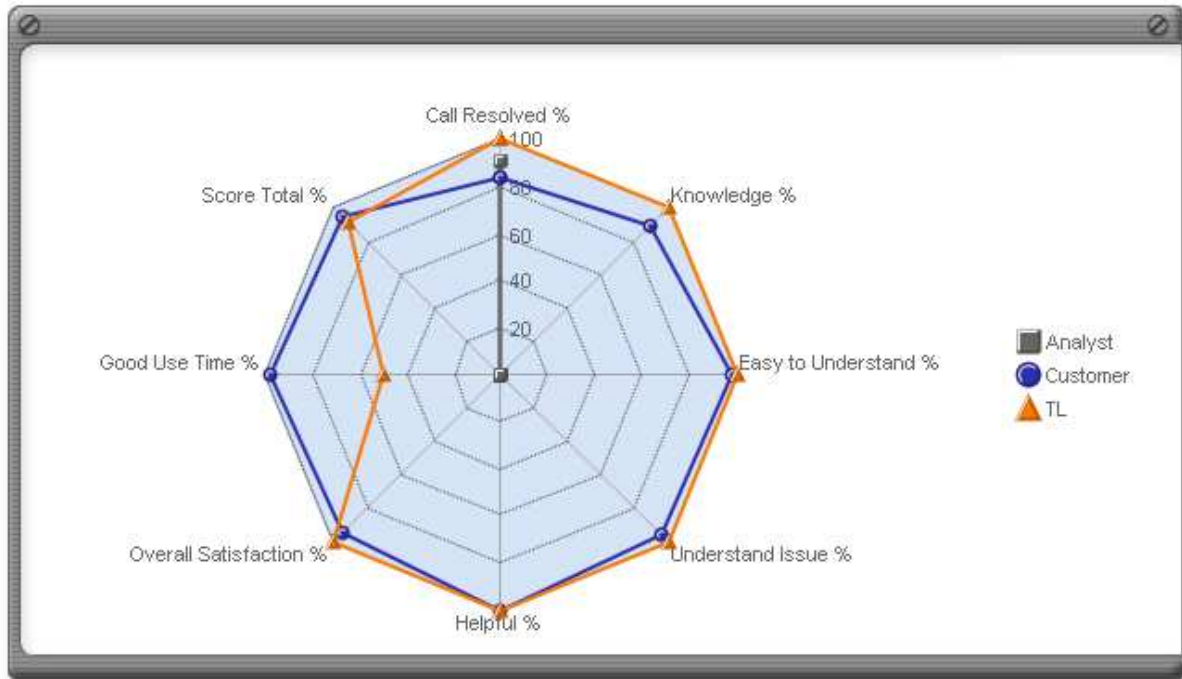


Bringing it all together

The above diagrams are examples of a small proportion of the information we provide on our real time dashboards to enable advisors and team leaders and coaches to learn from the moment of every interaction.

Shown below is an extract of the summary screen that an advisor has on their home page. The first table shows the customers scores for the last three surveys. The graph shows the cumulative scores for all three perspectives over the period and the final table shows the scores over the period. (The advisors were only asked to score on call resolved).

Customer response?	Survey Sent	Outcome	Call Resolved	Knowledge	Easy to Understand	Understand Issue	Helpful	Overall Satisfaction	Good Use Time
2008-03-10 14:59	2008-03-10 14:51	Issue resolved	Yes	5.Strongly agree	4.Agree	5.Strongly agree	5.Strongly agree	5.Strongly agree	Yes
2008-03-10 13:53	2008-03-10 09:11	Issue resolved	Yes	4.Agree	4.Agree	4.Agree	4.Agree	4.Agree	Yes
2008-03-10 12:57	2008-03-10 11:25	Issue resolved	Yes	5.Strongly agree	5.Strongly agree	5.Strongly agree	5.Strongly agree	5.Strongly agree	Yes



Who	Count Responses	Call Resolved %	Knowledge %	Easy to Understand %	Understand Issue %	Helpful %	Overall Satisfaction %	Good Use Time %	Score Total %	Diagnosed Accurately
Agent	89	91	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TL	2	100	100	100	100	100	100	50	92.9	100
Customer	62	83.9	90.3	98.4	96.8	100	95.2	98.4	94.7	-

Finding the Local Heroes

Without doubt the most fulfilling aspect of our approach is identifying what we call “local heroes” whose performance is so good that it becomes the gold standard for the rest of the advisor community to aspire to. The advantages of using internal champion’s behaviour to set goals for learning are:

1. Relevance: (superior performance is being delivered by advisors sat in the same chairs, breathing the same air, using the same systems, being managed by the same people).
2. Aspirational: (if he or she can, then so can I)
3. Agility improvement: (best practice can be communicated and implemented on a daily and weekly basis).
4. Sustainability: (because best practice is discovered and developed from within the organisation rather than from some consultant, it becomes inclusive and “badge of honour” to those participating).

The following table shows the typical size of the opportunity to drive performance based on best practice, where the top 1% of advisors call handling skills were analysed and decomposed into discrete training modules and individual goals set for performance improvement for every advisor.

Question	Top 1%	Upper quartile	Average	Lower quartile
Call resolved	92.00%	85.00%	72.00%	60.00%
Overall customer satisfaction	95.00%	89.00%	74.00%	62.00%

In this instance the reward for the top 1% of advisors was a promotion to a coaching and mentoring role and the upper quartile advisors joined them in forming a FCR/Customer Experience Forum to continually improve service delivery.

Summary

Our approach is refreshingly simple and proven to work across a range of contact centre sectors: inbound and outbound, captive and outsource. The key principles that underpin our approach are:

- **Awareness:** provide advisors with real time customer feedback on their call handling capabilities.
- **Alignment:** help advisors and team leaders in aligning their perception “of what good looks like” to those of their customers’.
- **Aspiration:** provide advisors with the role models, tools, and techniques to support real-time learning and development.

---oo0oo---