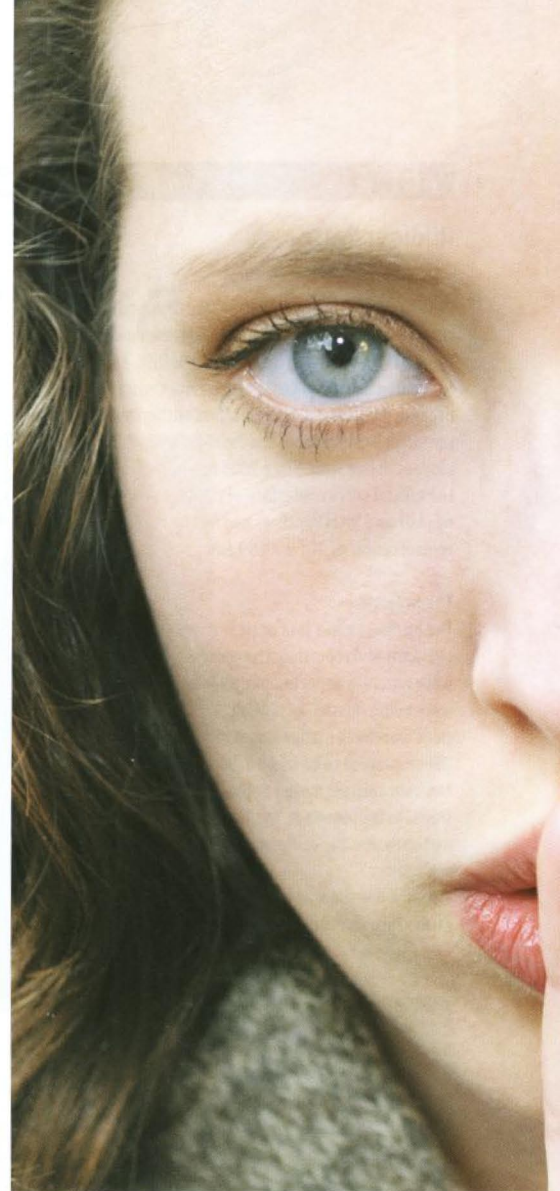


Silent Monitoring

Listen-In for Quality

Companies who want to beat their competition have to provide excellent customer care services and handle customer calls quickly and precisely. Silent monitoring works as an efficient tool for the quality management of a call center.



Quality Management is a critical tool for the continuous monitoring and improvement of inbound and outbound communications. It assesses the quality of companies' customer care performance as well as their call center providers.

In today's fast moving markets, compa-

nies can only differentiate themselves from competitors if they provide excellent service and quality in all aspects of customer care. Therefore, it is important to take a closer look at the total customer care process, regardless of which kind of channel the customer care contacts take place. Evaluating quality is key to benchmarking performance in all types of customer contact, e.g. on

- the intra-personal qualities,
- the knowledge or
- competence of employees.

Based on these experiences, call centers may uncover weak points in their customer care management. This highlights individual training needs precipitates personal development in order to close the gap between customer service expectations and the internal customer care performance.

SILENT MONITORING AS A COACHING TOOL

One method of evaluating the service performance of call centers is call monitoring, in which live calls from the agents are 'listened-in'. The different types of call monitoring depend on the technical equipment available in the call center and to the method of listening to the agents' calls. There are two basic types of call monitoring: Firstly, the so called 'open monitoring' method. This allows the quality control manager or the coach to listen directly to the agents' live-talk with a client, while using a second phone device. At the same time, the coach would complete a questionnaire directly at the agent's desk for the evaluation of the customer care quality during the ongoing call.

Secondly, 'silent monitoring' may be used: the evaluator is able to cut in to a live call, listening to the conversation without

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Agents should be convinced
that silent monitoring helps
to support their own skills.

either party being aware of it. The most common method is for agents to be informed about silent monitoring and given the concrete time frames used or even individual cases during which they will be observed.

Silent monitoring could be seen as a further development to open monitoring, or side-by-side-coaching. The advantage lies in the kind of quality evaluation: If open monitoring is used, the agent knows when his skills and service performance during a customer call will be measured. It is likely that he or she will feel like being in

a kind of exam situation. The additional stress this causes, in addition to the main task – that of the conversation with the client – might have an impact on his or her performance. Thus, the results may negatively influence the daily operations of the business and as a consequence, an objective overview on the quality level of the customer conversation in the call center would not be possible anymore. Using silent monitoring tools, these influencing could be eliminated. The agents would only be informed about the period of time when they would be monitored or they would be generally informed about the silent monitoring period. It is very important that the agents are supportive of quality monitoring, as the acceptance of employees, and, where applicable their unions is of crucial importance for the successful implementation of a quality control process.

It is essential that agents do not feel they are being 'controlled' during a quality monitoring process. The process should be presented in such a way that it is seen to support the agents' capabilities, helping to measure and compare them – and to incentivize them by providing them with adequate monetary rewards at the end.

HOLISTIC QUALITY MANAGEMENT

In many call centers, recording the results of open or silent monitoring uses paper, pencil or excel tables. Increasingly, more professional systems for quality management are implemented which not only support call monitoring, but also voice recording and monitoring of other customer contact channels, e.g. the management of customer requests via web, email or fax.

These solutions work well within a fully integrated quality management system for companies working with call centers or a customer care department.

The systems should always deal with two different requirements; monitoring and voice recording of all communication activities, and the evaluation and reporting. The insights gained from the report should then be reappraised and used for the purpose of coaching and training. They should also lead to a range of supporting performance indicators for the agent teams. Only responding to the results in this way will lead to a successful quality management program that guarantees the customer service objectives will definitely be achieved.

QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Side-by-side-coaching

Side-by-Side-Coaching is commonly seen as a direct listen-in to an ongoing agent communication at the service desk. A second phone device is used. At the same time, the agent communication with the customer is valued.

Silent Monitoring

Silent Monitoring means listening in of the supervisor or coach by being directly connected to the agent line without the agent knowing about it.

Quality-Monitoring-System

A Quality-Monitoring-System evaluates and systematically analyzes the live communication between the customer and the contact center agent, on the basis of recorded calls. The system serves as a management information system in order to control the quality of customer care contacts in the call center.

The advantage is that this will guarantee a cohesive view about the workflow in the call center. For all kinds of companies, this is of major importance for the management of the entire customer care process, as well as for the process optimization in the customer care management, regardless of whether external call center providers or inhouse centers are employed.

Call centers are the first contact for most customers, providing them with information which immediately creates added value. Like customer relation management tools or enterprise resource planning systems, they become the single point of reference for all departments of the company.

Thus, by using modern monitoring and controlling tools in order to enhance their level of overall customer care performance, companies benefit from a high-level of quality in their daily customer care business.

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COMPANY PROFILE

ASC is a leading global provider of innovative solutions to record, analyze and evaluate multimedia-based communications. ASC's software solutions are used in contact centers to continuously measure and improve the quality of customer contacts. The company runs subsidiaries and sales offices in France, Germany, Japan, Poland, Singapore, Switzerland, UA Emirates, UK and USA.