



► **Agent Development 101**



► **A New Beginning For Investment**



► **For the Offshore Industry**

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DRCCA *insider*

DRCCA IS DEDICATED TO PROVIDING CALL CENTER MANAGERS AND LEADERS WITH A COMPREHENSIVE RESOURCE PACKAGE THAT CONTAINS THE LATEST INFORMATION AFFECTING THE CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT INDUSTRY. WE WANT TO HELP YOU MOVE YOUR BUSINESS INTO THE WORLD-CLASS ARENA.

Agent Development 101:

By Keith Dawson

"Excellence is an art won by training and habituation. We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but we rather have those because we have acted rightly. We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit." -Aristotle

You are nothing without properly managed agents. Your center doesn't function, and by extension, the rest of your company suffers as well.

This is a cardinal truth, rarely stated, often overlooked, but if you ask anyone who has run a call center it will almost certainly be acknowledged.

Every aspect of call center management comes down to the care and feeding of agents:

- making sure you have the right number of them,
- that they have the right skills for the job,
- that they have the proper tools to do their work,
- that what you spend on them does not balloon out of control,
- that they perform at a consistent level, and
- that you properly measure that performance and relate it to other goals of the company.

And that's just the tip of the iceberg. It's not an exaggeration to say that the agent is the pivot point around which every other call center issue revolves.

Virtually every topic comes back to the agent. Off-shoring and site selection is another way of talking about labor cost arbitrage, which is about agents. Quality assurance is about ensuring that every agent handles every similar interaction according to set guidelines designed to enhance a company's image. Even highly technological discussions, like call routing and IP in the call center, are about what applications you put on the agent desktop and what that enables your agents to do during the moment of interaction with a customer.

These things are all plainly obvious to any call center manager when you put them in these terms. But managers, because of their proximity to the action, sometimes don't see all these issues as part of a whole, or see the common thread — the agent — that runs through everything. It's the forest/tree dilemma — they are so busy putting out fires and meeting daily (or hourly) targets that the big picture takes a back seat.

Continued on page 3



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A New Beginning For Investments:

By Patricia Olero



With the inauguration of Dr. Leonel Fernandez as President of the Dominican Republic for the next four years (2004—2008) a new beginning is marked in the country's history of democratic succession. Clearly the Dominican Republic has established itself as the largest working democracy in the Caribbean. The DR now has held successful uninterrupted democratic elections since 1966.

The recent electoral event proved to all that our democracy has matured and that new and old generations of Dominicans have embraced it as the just means to elect the highest ranking government officials.

Along with the new government comes new aspiring hopes and optimism for everybody and particularly for foreign investors. Since last May overall foreign investment in the country has registered significant increase in Tourism, Free Zones, Agricultural, Commerce and others.

The recently signed Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the United States of America has positioned the DR as an even more ideal location to do business by the fact of having duty free access to the US and European markets.

At DRCCA, we are very excited about our share of growth. Several clients are expanding as others begin to ponder future growth. Our business strategy is focusing on expanding our menu of services as well as upgrading our infrastructure to provide our clients with the most reliable and productive environment.



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Agent Development 101:

By Keith Dawson *Continued from page 1*

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But once you remove the call center from its splendid isolation and start talking about how it interacts with the rest of a company, folks both inside and outside the call center management hierarchy are forced to start talking about the role of the agent.

Some easy back-of-the-envelope calculating will show that in just three years, an agent will interact with 30,000 separate customers. Astonishing, no?

Depending on what you sell, that's either a lot of money saved, or a lot of opportunity squandered. Can the rep on the phone make the most of that opportunity by soothing someone who might bolt to a competitor? Or sell them something that they might not have thought of? Do you even know what they are capable of? If not, then you're looking at the question of value through the wrong end of the telescope.

When we properly identify the agent as the pivot point, as the nexus of the call center universe, we can more effectively run those centers for the benefit of the company as a whole.

What is Agent Development?

For a long time, call centers have been buying and using a broad spectrum of tools that all focus on improving agent productivity. Some of it has been hardware: call monitoring and recording systems, for example. Some is software, like workforce management, training tools, pre-hire assessment.

What we've noticed is that call centers don't care about the tools themselves; instead they are starting to ask the end-result questions that tackle difficult issues like turnover, retention, training costs, morale, and focusing those questions into a strategy for reducing labor costs. Not reducing headcount, necessarily, but reducing the real burdens of hiring, training, and then losing agents who aren't happy or productive, then going through that expensive hiring-training-retaining process

all over again. Centers are addressing the structural insanity of losing the entire workforce each year.

And when they tackle these questions, they look at that spectrum of seemingly unrelated tools from unconnected vendors, and they ask: Aren't these all part of the answer to a single complex problem?

We call this problem "agent development," and we see that some of the cleverer and more dedicated vendors in different sectors reaching towards each other, grappling to create coordinated solutions to this bigger question. It's not just monitoring, or training, or scheduling that solves the problem. It's all of the above, and more. The tools are not new, but they are newly used in concert. Applied intelligently, using coordinated business practices, agent development tools can shave costs off each step of the labor process. Starting at hiring, you can make sure you hire someone who's likely to last through training, rather than someone who will take a month of training and then

decide it's not the right job. Training can be more targeted, thanks to computer-based e-learning tools and evaluation systems that tell you what specific skills need bolstering. Farther along the chain, applying workforce management and performance management keeps people in their jobs longer, and it keeps the most qualified people on the job, so you can keep their skills and use them to elevate the performance of everyone else as well.

We believe that when approached from a tactical point of view within a call center, the benefits that arise from a coordinated approach are greater than that gained by using them piecemeal. The whole of agent development is greater than the sum of the separate tools that make up the category.



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For the Offshore Industry, it's About Virtual Call Center Technology On-Demand, not VoIP. :

By John Sung Kim, 03/10/05

Within the last couple of years, VoIP (voice over IP) has received a lot of "buzz" in both the mainstream press as well as industry magazines as it relates to the offshore call center industry. But if you lift the veil of hype surrounding VoIP, it's clear to see that VoIP has popular misconceptions surrounding it, and that its primary purpose is as a transport vehicle to deliver richer functionality on an On-Demand (otherwise known as "Virtual Call Center) basis as opposed to cheaper long distance. Before building or expanding your call center, it's helpful to understand VoIP's intricacies as they relate to the offshore industry.

SIP is VoIP

When VoIP was first introduced to mainstream audiences, it was widely based on a standard called H.323. Not only was the voice quality medium to poor, it was also not very secure – meaning it was relatively easy for someone to hack into your system and start listening to your phone calls. And for call centers who often deal with personal client information such as social security numbers and credit cards, this was a security loophole that many offshore centers simply could not afford.

When SIP (session initiation protocol) was introduced as an alternative to H.323, it quickly grew as the new standard of VoIP technology because it was easier for technology vendors to create new products, allowed for better security, and coupled with new QoS (quality of service) technologies, allowed for excellent voice quality that rivaled traditional telephone calls on the PSTN (public switched telephone network). As such, VoIP usage grew exponentially through the new standard known as SIP.

VoIP is Not Free Long Distance

There is a popular myth that VoIP does not come with long distance charges. In fact, most VoIP calls still result in a PSTN or cell phone termination fee by the carriers, meaning that while the voice may travel from an offshore location to the US via VoIP, from the US to the end caller it still travels over the PSTN. After all, when one thinks about it, the end caller usually does not have a VoIP phone at home or on their wireless phone.

The cost savings using VoIP come mainly from international trunking (hauling the voice from offshore to the US) the flexibility of scaling call volume quickly, and the ability to leverage an On-Demand service infrastructure.

What's On-Demand?

Quite simply, the On-Demand business model is a means for a call center to build an infrastructure (Predictive Dialer, ACD, IVR, Call Recording, CRM, etc.) without having to purchase any hardware, software, or maintain extensive IT personnel.

This is accomplished by having the On-Demand vendor manage all the hardware, software, and fiber optic lines at a secured location (called a "colo" or "data center") and leasing out the facility usage on an individual basis.

The benefits of On-Demand for offshore call centers is clear – no upfront capital to build a technology infrastructure (traditionally one of the most expensive components of getting a call center busi-

ness started) the ability to scale up or down as campaigns and seasonal fluctuations occur, and the fact that there are no long term commitments as there are with traditional equipment and software purchases.

Though On-Demand call center technology had been around for years, until VoIP, offshore call centers were subject to international toll charges to connect their call center locations to the On-Demand data center in the US, making the overall value proposition cost prohibitive. But now that the international trunking connection can be accomplished through VoIP, the benefits of On-Demand have never been clearer, or better defined.



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